

# “Kurdish Factor” In the Current Political Processes of Turkey, Iran and Syria

Tamar Kupreishvili

**Abstract—** Political modernization, which began after coming to the power Turkey’s Justice and Development Party, Turkey aims to be a leader-state in the Middle East. In this situation, the central condition is political stability. But into the state exists anti-powerful factors: the Kurdish minority activity, which is contrary to the official government, which has intensified since the start of the Syrian crisis. Their activities have given rise to a new impetus – started internal negotiations for the political and educational rights of the Kurds.

Kurds' factors play a huge role in Turkey’s domestic politics and its relations with its neighbors and the subsequent fate of the country will largely depend on how successful the government will be able to settle the difficulties that are the “Kurdish question” notion.

Kurdish issues have been an important part of the myriad political and socioeconomic problems that have preoccupied the Islamic Republic of Iran since its inception. The Kurdish factor has also been an important determinant of Iran’s regional foreign policy in the past three decades.

**Keywords—** The Middle East, Kurdish Factor

## I. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, three million Kurds live in Syria, which is about 10% of the population. Currently, the north-east part of the country, the populated area are in the hand of the Kurdistan activists, there are relatively self-governing districts. It is obvious that any event on another side of the Turkish border, on its side, the expectations of Turkish Kurds promote their own achievements. In Turkey, there is the experience, on the basis of which he may extract the possible development of events its eastern borders.

The Syrian crisis is a predominantly important process for Turkey in the Middle East, from which it will seek to receive maximum political and economic dividends. Ankara’s potential tasks are the followings: to prove its ambitions as a regional leader’s ambitions, which does not exclude even military intervention with the recipe of the "Little Victory War", the export of the Turkish model after the overthrow of the Assad regime, also to approve its status as the main ally of the United States in the Middle East.

As it is known, the United States pursues a course, which aims to reduce US activity in the Middle East. This is planned and lengthy measure. The Americans began coordinating their actions as it is called in the spirit of “Big Explosion concept”,

they were observing the events, such approach got the name – Leading from behind.

Each of the Middle East countries had the different attitude to Kurds and nowadays too, they keep these attitude by more or less changes.

The Kurdish region of Iran is a geographical area in western Iran that has been historically and is presently inhabited by a predominantly Kurdish population. This region includes parts of three Iranian provinces; the Kordestan Province, the Kermanshah Province, and the West Azerbaijan Province. These three Iranian provinces share borders with parts of Iraq and Turkey that are also inhabited by the Kurds.

During the early 20th century, there was a growing sentiment of Kurdish nationalism and political activism. While Kurdish leaders were unable to secure independence after World War I, the Kurdish state was created with support from the Soviet Union in the city of Mahabad after WWII. However, the so-called Kurdish Republic of Mahabad collapsed after the Soviets pulled out of Iran.

The rule of the Pahlavi dynasty in Iran was particularly brutal for the Kurds, and Kurdish activists were active supporters of a regime change during the 1979 revolution. After the revolution, however, the new Islamic regime of Ayatollah Khomeini viewed the Kurds, with their different language and traditions as outsiders, as dangerous to the new republic. Armed conflict between the new republic and the Kurds broke out as Khomeini tried to establish governmental control in the Kurdish regions. [1]

Nowadays, Rouhani, Iran’s current president has the different relationship with Iranian Kurds.

In October 2017 Iran’s President visited in Erbil and said to Iran’s Kurdish population: “We trust you 100 percent. We will in no way count the political mistakes of some people in the Kurdistan Region on you. You are part of the great Iranian nation. You are a loyal nation. You are among Iran’s oldest nations in the region. You have always stood by the Islamic revolution and stood by the Iranian nation in the imposed war with Iraq. The Kurdish nation as a peaceful nation in the region pursues advancement and deserves respect. We love the Kurds in Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Syria and don’t want any pressures to be put on them.” [2]

In Turkey, the activity of Kurds has given a new impetus to start the negotiations within the country to get the rights of political and education of Kurds.

The Kurdish conflict, “Kurd Factor”, comes from a very earlier. It is important, to notice that the conflict has got very

acute character after the announcement of the Kemalism politics. From the “Six Arrow” of the politics of Kemal, one was nationalism, which was understood by Ataturk in the French manner- as the ideology of the political nation in the borders of the Republic of Turkey (and not the Turkish nation, as it was with the Panturkists).

Gradually the Kurds began to act more actively and the turning point was the creation of the Kurdistan Workers' Party in 1978. Kurds' conflict has grown into a large-scale civil war in which more than 40,000 people have died. [3]

The internal political crisis, which started in Syria in the spring of 2011, cardinally replaced the development vector of Turkey-Syria's union, caused the tension and then termination of the relationships between these two countries. Ankara began a multilateral aid for the Syrian opposition, it supported to change the regime of Damascus. Thus, during the last decade, the Turkish-Syrian relations secondly have occurred the sharp transformation and became the subject of discussion, as for Turk and as for foreign political experts.

The reaction of Turkey in relation to the revolt of Syria, it cannot be considered any of Ankara's common approaches, which he revealed during the "Arab Spring". Turkey, which claims the role of regional leaders, has sought to use the fluctuations in the Arab world in order to strengthen its influence in the region and promote its own experience of democratization and liberalization.

To the consolidation of regional efforts for change the Syrian regime, former Foreign Minister of Turkey, A. Davutoğlu participated in a number of frames of the Arab League. Turkey supported the decision to suspend Damascus membership in this organization in November 2011 and announced its intention to coordinate its actions with the League of Arab States in relation to Syria. Ankara's support has also led to the imposition of sanctions by the League of the Arab States, which consisted of nine positions, which were closed to Turkish analogs. The relations of Turkey-Syria was the most painful point of Ankara's foreign policy, which was reflected in the situation inside of Turkey.

In relation to the crisis of Syria, the result of the politics of Turkey became the cooling relationships between the countries-neighbors, such are Iran and Iraq. Also, started the disagreement with Russia, with which cooperation was one of the main priorities in recent years for Turkish foreign policy. In Syria, prolonged instability contributed to the problem of the Kurdish territories in Turkey.

Turkey has put forward with coming of Syrian refugees the issue of their staying and security in the provinces where there were situated the camps of refugees, where also were hiding armed members of the armed formations. The numbers of

refugees in Turkey were more than 120 thousand persons. At the same time, by 2012 the impact of the crisis of Syria has become more noticeable in Turkey, affected the economy, the areas of security, also, in the Turkish society led to split. There was doubt about the correctness of the ruling party's foreign policy course. Turkey tried to take over the role of “Coordinator” in Syria and wanted to make much more pressure on Damascus - by taking active participation in the transformation of the social-political appearance of the Syrian society. [4]

Turkish political scientists Atila Sandikli and Ali Semin said the following on the politics of Ankara in relation to the crisis of Syria: The most notable consequence of the crisis includes the refugee problem, although it has had direct and indirect effects on Turkey. It would be reasonable for Ankara to show willingness towards finding a solution to the crisis through diplomatic channels with the Arab countries. However, since the beginning of the Syria crisis, Turkey, through its statements and actions, has become part of the problem rather than being part of the solution. Turkey was not able to recognize that the crisis in Syria would not be developed in the same scenario as it happened in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen. Turkey was involved in the events. Ankara could not have the ability to evaluate and to define correctly the perspective of turning into a regional and global scale problem of crisis of Syria. [5].

## II. CONCLUSION

“Kurdish Factor” is one of the most important for the countries of the Middle East. Especially, in Turkey, Syria, Iran, and Iraq. This process has become more active in the Syrian crisis. The Kurdish factor has a great influence on both, Turkish and Iranian national interests and the regional policies.

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