

Kurds in the context of Integration and autonomy “Syria and Iraq”

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Abstract:

The “Kurdish movement” in both “Iraq and Syria” has been an outstanding example of a “post-modern” struggle towards autonomy and federalization over decades of strife, political transitions, and profound changes. The Kurds have pursued their rights despite numerous challenges. In today’s political landscape, Kurds are to be considered a model for minorities struggling towards autonomy and recognition within states and advancing to reach federalization.

Keywords: Kurdish minority, Iraq and Syria, Political Struggles, Autonomy, Federaliza

الاکراد في سياق الاندماج والاستقلال العراق وسوريا نموذجا

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المُلخَص

يعدُّ الاكراد في كل من سوريا والعراق نموذجاً إستثنائياً في مسار السَّعي نحو الإستقلال الذاتي والـفـدـرـالـيـة. لاسيما أنَّه على إمتداد عقود من التاريخ السَّياسي، عانوا من الصَّراعات والانقلابات السَّياسيّة وتبدلات الأنظمة، إلا أنَّ الأكراد إستطاعوا بنضالاتهم الطويلة أن ينتزعوا العديد من حقوقهم المسلوبة. كما شكّلوا في إطار السَّياسة الحديثة نموذجاً للأقليات التي تناضل من أجل الاستقلال الذاتي، وتكافح في طريقها نحو الفدراليّة.

الكلمات المفتاحيّة: الأقلية الكرديّة، العراق وسوريا، الصَّراعات الانقلابات، الاستقلال الذاتي، الفدراليّة.

Introduction

The Kurds in Iraq and Syria have faced many hardships and challenges, including “massacres”, “deportations”, and the “deprivation of civil rights”, over the last decades.

This minority, however, has struggled to face overcome these challenges, through uprisings, revolutions, conflicts, political parties, alliances and disputes with the central governments in both Iraq and Syria.

The changing regimes and the coups in both countries reflect a very sensitive attitude toward the rights of the Kurdish minority in terms of federalization or autonomy.

While the Kurds in Iraq have achieved a Federalization model under the 2005 “constitutional amendments”, their peers in Syria still face many challenges regarding their autonomy and demands for federalization.

Moreover, the integration process of these minorities in Iraq and Syria has been an issue of changing regimes and shifting internal relations between these regimes and these minorities, in the context of constitutions, laws, and civil rights. This research presents a political-historical representation that relates constitutional aspects to political ones. It focuses on the transitions that have dominated the political and constitutional eras in Syria and Iraq since their independence until the present day.

I. Significance and objectives of the study

This study aims to shed light on the key political and constitutional aspects of the relationship between the regimes in “Iraq and Syria” and the Kurdish minorities, with a particular focus on the main institutional transformations, and political developments affecting the Kurdish minorities in both states, to reveal the ongoing issue of the “Kurdish question”.

II. Justification for the study:

This study addresses a critical and an unexplored area in modern political studies such as the situation of Kurds during periods of political transitions in both Iraq and Syria, observing various eras until the present day. It highlights how the shifting political scene has influenced the status of the Kurds. Further, the ongoing transition in the Levant offers many opportunities for minority politics and beyond, with one of the most dynamic and challenging issues being the political future of the Kurds in both Iraq and Syria.

III. Research problem

Responding to a main problematic question: What are the key constitutional and political transformations in the aspects of changing regimes in both Iraq and Syria? And how did these transformations impact the autonomy and integration of Kurds within both states?

IV. Research Hypothesis

1. The Kurdish movement failed to secure civil and cultural rights under successive changing governments.
2. The establishment of the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq reflects the complex challenges of Kurdish self-governance.
3. In Syria the Kurdish minority is likely to face clashes with the central government.
4. The “March 10th agreement” between the new Syrian government and the SDF (Syrian Democratic Forces) would prevent the SDF from achieving their demand of federalism.

V. Research methodologies

This research adopts a historical methodology in addressing the main political-historical phases affecting the Kurdish question, from the independence of both states to the present day. Within this historical trajectory the “analytical approach” is utilized to interpret how the past events shaped the present and still influence the Kurdish transition towards their new and upcoming status.

This research was divided into two sections:

- **Chapter one** focuses on the Kurds of Iraq, also it examines the Treaty of Sèvres, the rise of the Kurdish movement under Mustapha Barzani, the impact of Baath regime, the establishment of the KRG, (Kurdish Regional Government) and the KRG’s relations with the federal government.
- **Chapter two** discusses the political development of the Kurdish movement in Syria, starting from the era of the French mandate to the present day. This chapter also reflects the evolution of the Kurdish identity, the effects of the Syrian civil war, and the emergence of the “Autonomous Administration in North and East Syria”.

Chapter One: Kurds in Iraq

I. The treaty of Sèvres.

It is well known that the first significant opportunity for the Kurds to establish an independent state arose with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire following World War I. Consequently, the Treaty of Sèvres 1920⁽¹⁾, envisaged the creation of an independent Kurdish state. “Article 62” of the treaty reveals this recognition, as does the Article “64” of the same treaty. Although both articles defined the need to establish an autonomous Kurdish area⁽²⁾, no Kurdish autonomy was achieved.

II. Kurds- Mustapha Barzani -Abdul Karim Qasim

The 1958 major revolution in Iraq ended the “thirty seven” year Hashemite monarchy of Iraq⁽³⁾, establishing a republic under “Abdel Karim Qasim”. This event allowed the return of the powerful Kurdish political leader “Mullah Mustapha Barzani”, who had been exiled to the Soviet Union for 11 years; following the failed uprisings against the Iraqi government in 1943.”Barazani”, along with other Kurdish nationalists, had previously founded, the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) in 1946 and was elected as its president⁽⁴⁾ while he was in exile in Iran.

After his return from exile in 1958, a temporary “Kurdish -Iraqi implicit understanding was established”. And the 1958’s provisional constitution of Iraq stated in article 3: “Arabs and Kurds are considered partners in this nation and their national rights within the unity of Iraq are recognized by this constitution.”⁽⁵⁾

“Abdul Kareem Qassim’s” relationship with the Kurds in general and Barazani in particu-

(1) **Kerim Yeldiz, The Kurds in Iraq, The past, present, and future**, Pluto press. London, 1st ed 2004, p10.

(2) **Art 62:** “a commission sitting at Constantinople, composed of 3 members appointed by the British, French and Italian Governments respectively shall draft within 6 months from the coming into force of the present treaty a scheme of local autonomy for the predominantly Kurdish areas lying east of the Euphrates, ...etc. **Art 64 :** if within one year from the coming into force of the present treaty the Kurdish peoples within the areas defined in article 62 shall address themselves to the council of the league of nations in such a manner as to show that a majority of the population of these areas desires independence from Turkey, and if the council than considers that these peoples are capable of such independence, turkey hereby agrees to execute such recommendation and to renounce all rights and titles over these areas. If and when such renunciation takes place, no objection will be raised by the principle allied powers, to such an independent state,wich has hitherto been included in the Mosul vilayet. “www.dipublico.org

(3) **The Iraki revolution of 1958**, A moment in Us diplomatic history, Middle East military,**www.adst.org**

(4) **Biography Barzani the legend**, **www.Barzani.info**

(5) **www.cia.gov** Interim constitution of the republic of Iraq, 13th august 1958.

lar was not motivated by an “ethnic conflict” mentality, but by political calculations.” Qasim’s centralization policies limited the autonomy of the Kurds which led to an increase in the Kurdish separatist movement. “Qasim” worked on undermining the Kurdish tribal elites, who had previously been the link between the old regime and Kurdish rural society, especially with the agrarian laws he stipulated, which were considered a big threat to the Kurdish “aghas”.

Meanwhile, Qasim aimed to tie the Iraqi Kurdish population closer to the state by inviting Mulla Moustapha Barazani, the Kurdish “chieftain”, back to Iraq from exile.⁽¹⁾ However, this “agreeableness” did not last long, as Barzani expected autonomy for the Kurdish region, while Qasim rejected this expectation. In 1959, the United Kurdish Democratic Party (UKDP), formed by Kurdish communists and nationalists, published its new party constitution. This constitution declared a Leninist-Marxist doctrine and expressed its aspiration for Kurdish autonomy.

On the other hand, Ibrahim Ahmad, the head of the Kurdish Democratic Party (the KDP), responded to Qasim’s objections the doctrine and the aspiration for autonomy by changing the wording of the party’s constitution. Yet Qasim still didn’t change his stand towards the new party and its doctrine.

However, Qasim turned against “Barzani” in the aftermath of tribal clashes, allying with the tribes against Barazani and offering his support in every necessary aspect. This resulted in Barazani turning to the USSR for aid. Then, in 1961, Qasim made his crackdown on Barzani after his return from a visit to the USSR, confiscating his car, evicting him from his residence, and cutting off his monthly government state pension.

However, in 1961 the tribes reconsidered their position and adopted the KDP’s demands for autonomy, especially after the arrest of “Ahmad Ibrahim”, viewing Qasim’s policies as a threat to the Kurdish identity itself. Yet, a coherent military united Kurdish alliance was not achieved by this point.

All the above mentioned shifts and events resulted into an atmosphere of mistrust that ruled the relations between the three factions, Qasim, the KDP, and Barzani, all of whom weaponized violence and media campaigns against each other, restricting any attempts to reach acceptable agreements.

(1) Avshalom H. Rubin, Abd-Al Karim Qasim and the Kurds of Iraq: centralization, resistance and revolt, 1958-1963, www.academia.edu

In the middle of 1961 Barzani launched a coordinated military offensive targeting villages of adversary tribes like the Rikani and the Zibari, showing his readiness to use armed force. This offensive undermined the Iraqi government's control over large areas and gained the alliance with the rest of northern and southern tribes.

However, Qasim responded with a strong, harsh military campaign, which resulted in entire villages being destroyed. And on the 23rd of September Qasim announced that the Kurdish revolt had been crushed and declaring the official ban of the KDP on the 26th of September. However, the Kurdish rebels remained undefeated and unconvinced, and in the following year, 1962, various factions of rebels, tribes and parties declared a coalition⁽¹⁾ with a collective decision making body and formed a united Kurdish military organization headed by Ibrahim Ahmad and Jalal Talbani. The Peshmerga was born.

In the aftermath of these events and having achieved a stronger command of the Kurdish society, the KDP prohibited all the Kurds under its influence in Kurdistan from serving in the Iraqi military and paying taxes to the central government, kicking starting a self-ruling policy. While the regime of General Qasim was brought to an end by a coup of the Ba'ath Party⁽²⁾, the Kurdish movement was planning for post- coup political reframing of relations with Baghdad, a necessity that was clear even before the coup that the Kurdish movement supported.

III. Kurds vs Baath regime

In its "seventh article", the Baath manifesto stated: "The convention stated a peaceful democratic settlement to the Kurdish issue, on the basis of "self-rule", within the framework of Iraqi unity, and in a manner ensuring the best conditions of cooperation and solidarity between the Arab and the Kurdish people".⁽³⁾ Although, the manifesto was kind of a "peace invitation", the Baath regime decreed its own Autonomy Law of 1974. The regime" gave "Barzani" a notice of a few weeks to accept the "law for autonomy", but Barzani refused and fighting followed.

Meanwhile, the autonomy law mentioned: "the autonomous region as an integral administrative unit with legal personality and autonomy within the republic of Iraq, having Erbil

(1) Avshalom H. Rubin, Abd-Al Karim Qasim and the Kurds of Iraq, precious reference for more details : www.academia.edu

(2) Kerim Yeldiz, the kurds in Iraq, the past, present, and future,p 17

(3) The political Manifesto of the tenth national conference 1-10 March 1970, Arab baath socialist party. www.libraryofagarth.com

as its administrative capital”.

It also contained some deep restrictions and granted great authority to the central government. For example, the law contained the following provisions: “the president of the republic” shall appoint a member of the legislative council to form an executive council”. Moreover, the Anfal campaigns that “Saddam” unleashed inflicted major damage and casualties on the Kurdish population, especially in Halabja and other Kurdish towns, leaving thousands of Kurdish victims dead and deported and being the theater of the use of chemical weapons.⁽¹⁾

IV. KRG the Kurds regional government

The KRG is the council of representatives of the Kurdistan region in Iraq. Its legal status was first established in the “Transitional Administrative Law” (TAL), which later resulted in the 2005 Iraqi Constitution with the latter document formally recognizing the existence of the KRG ⁽²⁾, as a federal entity.

The primary articles regarding the legality of Kurdish autonomy within the TAL and later Iraqi Constitution are articles 54, 55 and 115.⁽³⁾ While the new constitution of “2005” has recognized the right of forming regions within the federal state, the Kurdistan region was considered as the only federated region within the Iraqi state.

a. “Article 116”: The federal system in the Republic of Iraq is made up of a decentralized capital, regions, and governorates, , as well as local administrations.

b. “Article 117”: This constitution, upon coming into force, shall recognize the regions of Kurdistan, along with its existing authorities, as a federal region.

(1) No place to call home: The Iraqi Kurds under the Baath, Saddam Hussein and Isis. Craig Douglas Albert, www.scholarship.kentlaw.iit.edu

(2) Kurdistan regional government assessment, working paper august 2015, Nicholas Shallcross university of Arkansas, www.researchgate.com

(3) **Art 54 TAL**: the Kurdistan regional government shall continue to perform its current functions throughout the transitional period, except with regard to those issues which fall within the exclusive competence of the federal government as specified with this law, financing for these functions shall come from the federal government, consistent with its current practice and accordance with article 25E of this law, the KRG shall retain regional control over police forces, and internal security, and it will have the right to impose taxes, and fees within the Kurdistan region.

Art 55: Each governorate shall have the right to form a governorate council, name a governor, and form municipal and local councils. No regional officials may be dismissed from the federal government, or any official thereof, except upon conviction of a crime by court of competent jurisdiction as provided by law. **Kurdistan regional government assessment, www.researchgate.com**

While the right to form autonomous regions was stipulated in Articles 118, 119 and 120⁽¹⁾.

c. Also, article 115 of the Iraqi constitution stipulates the following: “All powers not stipulated in the exclusive powers of the federal government belong to the authorities of the regions, and governorates that are not organized in a region, with regard to other powers shared between the federal government and the regional government, priority shall be given to the law of the regions and governorates not organized in a region in case of dispute.” (Iraqi Constitution).

In this context, the relations between the KRG and the local government in Iraq went through two distinctive eras: First era: 1991 - 2004 - Second era: 2004-2025

a. First Era: 1991 -2004 -Saddam era

After the war with Kuwait, new Kurdish revolts erupted in Iraq, this time they were oppressed even more severely by the “Anfal” campaigns. This suppression led to a restricted fly-zone area over Kurdistan region in Iraq, which encouraged the Kurdish parties to hold new elections in 1992, also to form the first KRG government, followed by the withdrawal of Iraqi government’s administration from the area in October 1991. By holding new elections in 1992 the “KRG”⁽²⁾ was formed.

The first cabinet was established with equal power-sharing between the” KDP and the PUK”, since both parties’ popular representation was quite similar, as the election results marked this.

The Baath regime did not recognize the legality of the” KRG” during its formation. Further, the “Kurdish civil war” started between 1994-1998.⁽³⁾

The civil war lasted four years, while The KDP (received the support of Saddam), the PUK (supported by Iran). Many casualties were reported in the war, with the killings of thousands of Kurds.

The “KDP” and the “PUK” together held the majority of the parliament and were the only players in the KRG.

However, the economic imbalance between each party’s region of control, where the KDP controlled the oil fields and revenues obtained from oil trade due to its border relations

(1) www.constituteproject.org Iraq constitution art 116-120.

(2) Kerim Yeldiz, *the Kurds in Iraq, the past, present, and future* p44.

(3) The Kurdish civil war, (1994-1998) and its consequences for the governing system in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, Beston Husen Aref, Tunku Mohar Mokhtar, www.researchgate.com

with Turkey, while the “PUK” had much less economic revenues led to a direct conflict between the parties.

Clashes remained until 17 September 1998, when “Barazani” and “Talbani” met in Washington, in what was termed the “final statement of the leaders meeting”, which ended the civilwar.⁽¹⁾

b. Second Era 2004 - 2025

Initial movements to unify the “KRG” were launched in 2003.

”Jalal Talabani”, and “Massoud Barzani” agreed to merge their administrations, a decision that was finally taken in 2006.⁽²⁾

By then, the KRG consisted of 41 members, including the prime minister and a deputy prime minister, and the Kurdistan parliament had a total of 111 representatives.

The legal authority of Kurdish security forces is derived from Article 121, Section 5 of the Iraqi Constitution: “The regional government shall be responsible for all the administrative requirements of the region, particularly the establishment and organization of the internal security forces such as police, security forces and guards of the region.”⁽³⁾

The Peshmerga defends the Kurdistan region, according to the Article 117 of the Iraqi constitution.

However, the Kurdistan Region is set to complete the unification of its Peshmerga forces into a single national military structure consisting of 11 divisions fully established by the end of the year 2025, while “Babakir Zebari”, military advisor to the president of the Kurdistan region mentioned : ”this is an important step towards a creation of a unified national army for the Kurdistan Region”.⁽⁴⁾

Although long disputes between the “KRG” and the federal government had been overcome on main issues like oil, security, and diplomacy, Kurdistan announced on the 13th of august 2025 an oil export agreement with the federal government. The agreement concluded: “after receiving 50 thousand barrels of oil to meet local needs, the remaining quantities will be handed over to the Iraqi Oil Marketing Company (SOMO) for export. This new agreement signals a positive shift towards federal oversight of all Iraqi oil exports, a central demand from Baghdad, while maintaining production in the Kurdistan Region.

(1) Kerim Yeldiz, the kurds in Iraq, the past, present, and future p 50

(2) Kurdistan regional government assessment, www.researchgate.com

(3) www.constituteproject.com art 120 iraq constitution section 5.

(4) Kurdistan to complete Peshmerga unification by year end www.basnews.comthe

Chapter two: Kurds in Syria

I. Kurds in Syria under the French mandate

Mainly, the Syrian Kurds, because of their origins, history, lifestyle, and settlement of diverse environments, were not considered a homogenous group at the beginning of the twentieth century; instead, they were considered a segmented group.⁽¹⁾ This segmentation, could not prevent the emergence of nationalist ideas: “tribal and religious dynamics served to cultivate Kurdish nationalism” (Tejel).

However, a new league appeared, the “Khoybun” league, with a main goal of nationalistic effort at “overcoming deep divisions between tribal and urban society by propagating a common Kurdish cultural heritage. (Martin Strohmeier).

In its charter, the second article described the main character of the Khoybun league, stating that the purpose of the society is the liberation of Kurdistan and Kurds under Turkish domination and the establishment of an independent Kurdistan within its natural borders.”⁽²⁾

Although the French mandate didn’t object to the movement, it’s also to be stated that the mandate refused any military actions that would disturb relations with Turkey. Abandoning the sword for the pen signified a return to the intellectual activities of the Ottoman period. This shift launched a Kurdish renaissance in the Levant area, especially with the “Badra-khan Brothers” intellectual movement. (Jordi tejel).

Terrier a French officer who advocated for granting the Kurds autonomous status, implemented his plan between 1928 and 1936. During this period, several measures aimed at autonomy were put into effect including:

The formation of a battalion of the Levantine army comprised of Kurds and Kurdophone Christians, opening of a course in Kurdish at the Arab College for higher education in “Damascus”, and the intelligence service intervention, obliging the Syrian government to grant identity cards to Kurdish refugees having lived in the country for several years” (Tejel). Despite the Terrier Plan, the mandatory period ended without the Kurdish demands for autonomy to be fully met.

(1) Jordi Tejel, Syria’s Kurds, History, politics, and society, Routledge Taylor and Francis group, London Ny, 2009, p9.

(2) Mamdouh Salim and the founding work of Khoybun, Seid Veroj, Kovara Bir, www.kovarabir.com

II. Kurds in Syria under The Baath regime

After Syria's independence, "Husni Al Zaim" became president of the state after a coup in 1949, the first coup that "Syria" had experienced. A strong debate took place on the "Kurdish origins of Al Zaim". However, the leader's chief of staff, "Nadhir Fansa", attempted to cast doubt about his Kurdish origins, as the leader's Kurdish background was used to incite opposition against him, citing his relation to "Mohsen Al Barazi" his prime minister, and appointing his special guards being from the "Circassians" and the "Kurds."⁽¹⁾ However, after the second coup and the execution of "Al Zaim" on the 14th of August 1949,⁽²⁾ also from the end of the 1950's, the Syrian army would experience several changes, from which Kurdish officers were expelled from the army and police forces.⁽³⁾

Moreover, after the United Arab Republic "UAR", "Gamal Abdel Nasser imposed radical changes in Syria, abolishing all political parties, including the Ba'ath party, also merging Syrian army with the Egyptian army. In 1958, the unification and establishment of the "UAR" united Arab republic, and the so – called excessive nationalism, led to the formation of the Kurdish democratic party of Syria (KDPS). The KDPS faced much oppression, firstly due to its objection to the UAR's decision to abolish all political parties, until the Ba'ath regime came into power in 1962.⁽⁴⁾

During the first stages of Ba'athist rule, under the presidency of "Nazim al-Qudsi", and due to the 1962 "al Hasakah census", a republican legislative decree "no 93" was issued on August 23 1962, determining the citizenship status of individuals, and also identifying "Kurds" who were foreign nationals coming from Turkey and Iraq, and correcting the civil records.

The census resulted in the division of the Kurds into three categories: The first: Kurds enjoying Syrian citizenship, the second: Kurds stripped of citizenship but registered in official records as foreigners. Thirdly, Kurds stripped of citizenship and not registered in the official civil records, referred to as "maktoumi al kayd".

This matter resulted in the deprivation of "300 thousand Kurds from citizenship", also led

(1) The Kurdish center for studies, Hussni Al Zaim, www.nkla.net

(2) **First Arabs rebels, Hussni Al Zaim**, Mohamad Chaaban Ayoub, 22/04/2022 www.aljazeera.net

(3) Jordi Tejel, Syria's Kurds, History, politics p47.g

(4) **The struggle of Syrian Kurds**, under the Baath rule 1963-2011, Abd El Basset Sida kalamoun newspaper, 2023, www.harmoon.org

to various aspects, from deprivation of the right to register marriages and births in the state records, deprivation of the right to hold passports, being unable to travel abroad, delayed enrollment of children in schools, deprivation of the right to work in government institutions, denial access to loans in banks, rights to vote, and political rights.⁽¹⁾

However, after serious splits in the “KDPS”, the party resulted in three other parties, and attempts at unification were not achieved until the rise of ‘Hafez Al Assad’ into power on the 16th of November 1970. Indeed, “Hafez Al Assad” was pragmatic through his political era, while “Abdullah Ocalan” took refuge in Syria in 1980’s, it was considered that “Hafez Al Assad” allowed to construct camps for the “PKK” in Syria, and he supported it with funds, weapons, training of Kurdish youth in Syria, even the “Baath regime” allowing the “PKK” to declare several “demands” within “Syria” like the liberation of Kurdistan and its unity. The regime in the same phase, held oppressive measures over other Kurdish parties in Syria.⁽²⁾

However, the situation was settled in 1999 after the pressure of the “Turkish government” on the “Baath regime” to the expulsion of “Ocalan”. Yet, the “PKK” remained powerful in Syria, under many other aspects like forming parties, gaining the incentive of the Syrian regime.⁽³⁾ However, the Kurdish position on the Syrian revolution “2011” was particularly in 4 trajectories:

- a. The first manifestation was into demonstrations held in various kurdish regions, in the “Jazira”, in “Kobani”, and “Qameshli”. The major of youth Kurds participated in the demonstrations, alongside various traditional parties like the “Yekitis” and the “Azadis” parties.
- b. The “second trajectory” was undecided.
- c. The third trajectory was in “opposition” to the revolution, which was led by the “PYD” initiated in 2003, well known for its strong relations to the PKK. (Abdul Baset Sieda).

(1) Census of Hassaka 1962, www.aljazeera.net

(2) The struggle of Syrian Kurds, under the Baath rule 1963-2011, www.harmoon.org

(3) **Understanding the history of the PKK alliance with the Syrian regime**, www.Trt.golobal

III. New regime and the Syrian democratic forces

In the beginning of the Syrian revolution in 2011, the Kurds took a neutral stance and neither confronted the regime nor joined the uprising. Early on, President “Bashar Al Assad” tried to win the “Kurds” over by granting Syrian nationality to 300,000 Kurds.

In 2012, the Syrian regime gradually withdrew from areas inhabited by Kurds in northern and northeastern Syria, though the Kurdish parties united and established the People’s Protection Units (YPG), taking control of multiple areas and confronting “Al- Nusra” and other factions.

In 2015, the YPG formed a military union with other military parties, Kurdish, Turkman, Arab, and Syriac, known as the “Syrian Democratic Forces’ (SDF).⁽¹⁾ Also the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria is a governance model established in 2018 with the aim of organizing the region’s affairs based on the principles of participatory democracy, social justice and equality among all ethnic and religious communities.⁽²⁾ While, the March 10th, 2025, agreement signed between the Syrian government and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) represents an important step towards achieving political and military unity in Syria, also the agreement main purpose is to integrate the “SDF” in the military formation of the Syrian state. Indeed this agreement faces too many challenges⁽³⁾, the obstacles in executing the agreement and the insistence of “Mazloun Abdi” head chief of the “SDF” on federalism to achieve any execution of the agreement, however this agreement it-self, shows many challenges in the confrontation between “Ahmad Al- Shara’a,” Syrian “new president” facing the minorities in Syria and the unity of Syria under his governance. Until now, negotiations are still ongoing, with the fear of an uprising and military clashes if the negotiations face more obstacles.

(1) The autonomous administration in syria,18/07/2024, www.aljazeera.net

(2) www.daanes.org Daanes official site.

(3) March 10 agreement, www.yallasirians.com

Conclusion

The Kurdistan region has faced numerous challenges over the past decades, since the establishment of federal Kurdistan Region in Iraq it faced a civil war between the main parties, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan “PUK” and the Kurdistan Democratic Party “KPD”. Also, the rise and fall of the Baath regime, the Anfal Operations, the Gulf war, multiple elections, and the creation of key institutions such as the Kurdish Regional Government KRG, the parliament, and the amendment of the constitution. These developments shaped the federal Kurdish region within Iraq, which continues to confront significant challenges in its future relations with the federal Iraqi government, including challenges of military integration, economic disputes, territorial conflicts, and ongoing struggles for greater autonomy in different financial, economic, and military matters.

In “Syria”, the Kurdish movement established after its independence was mainly “cultural” focusing on cultural uprising of Kurds in the Levant, with many aspects of self- autonomy that were abandoned by the succeeding Syrian regimes and governments.

The 1962 Hasakah census and the republican legislative decree no. 93 issued on August 23, 1962, both created a sense of deprivation of civil rights for the Kurdish minority in Syria.

The Ba’ath regime’s pragmatic policy of strong centralism implemented a status -quo on the Kurdish uprising; however, the Syrian revolution and the fights against ISIS in Syria nourished the uprising, leading to the “self - determination autonomy” declared in 2014.

The March 10th agreement has faced many challenges:

the preservation of Syrian unity, Kurdish demands towards “federalism” as a framework for a peaceful settlement between both sides, and the fear of new military clashes between both sides in the near future.

Recommendations:

1. Agreements between the KRG and the Iraqi federal government about unresolved economical - military issues are needed.
2. Resolving conflict matters between both Kurdish parties in Iraq is needed to avoid more clashes.
3. The new Syrian regime has to be more strategic in its actions towards the Kurdish “question” to avoid any military clashes, which only result in casualties and conflicts.
4. The Kurdish democratic forces need to be more precise about their interactions towards the Syrian state, more open to negotiations in the future to avoid military clashes, also to the statement of “United Syria” or “Federalized Syria”.

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