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The Significant of the New Republic of Iraq for the Kurds 1958-1975

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Abstract

In the first days of the new Iraqi republic system, everything appeared perfect for the Kurds of Iraq. Their leaders recognized the Kurds as the partners with the Sunni and Shiites in new republic of Iraq. They promised Kurds to give them their political and national rights within Iraq. Conversely, these anticipation lived-short; sooner differences emerge between the Iraqi administrations and the Kurdish leaders. The Kurdish leaders saw no wish, however to seek struggle with the purpose of getting their national rights. In 1961, the first major breakout of war between the central government and the Kurds occurred. This fighting was keeping on with some interruptions until 1975. This paper will explore how the Iraqi governments managed with the Kurdish leaders. It examines the three successive Iraqi governments' policies toward the Kurdish issue, which are logically and functionally related to Iraqi national policy, constitutional framework, level of regional autonomy and the Kurdish relations with Iraqi governments. This study presented a significant amount of positively not published details about these parties. Particular attention is paid to link between successive Iraqi government policies as well as reaction to the Kurdish issue. This study is a historical research based on qualitative analyze of perspective from various actors. This study is used Kurdish and non-Kurdish sources.

Keywords: the Kurdish issue; Kurdish political situations; Successive Iraqi governments; Iraqi agreement with Kurds and collapse of Kurdish movement.

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1. Introduction

In 1920, Great Britain was recognized as the mandate power over the Iraq by the League of Nations. At the time, the victors of the First World War signed a treaty of Sevres with the Ottoman regime on 10 August. 1920. Article 62, 63 and 64 of the treaty were designed especially to show the Kurdish question in the Middle

East. Article 64 specified that if a majority of the population of the Kurds, residing in areas lying east of the Euphrates, south of the southern boundary of Armenia as it might hereafter be determined and north of the frontier of Turkey with Mesopotamia and Syria, wanted independence from Turkey and if the League of Nations considered that these peoples were capable of such independence, it should be granted to them. Article 64 further specified that if an independent Kurdish state were to materialize, the principal allied powers should facilitate the voluntary unification of the Mosul city with the proposed Kurdistan state.

In 1921, the Iraqi state was formed. The British mandate believed monarchy to be a more appropriate form of government for new Iraq than a republic, however could not find a local person to their liking to become king. Hence, the British authorities invited Prince Feisal from Syria and crowned him king of Iraq. It could be said that the British government imposed a foreign Sunni ruler. Feisal, upon a predominantly Shiite population in Iraq. Thus the Iraqi administration was dominated through Sunni Muslim Arabs who comprised a minority in the state. The British politics of ethnicity in Iraq through heightening ethnic and religious differences by elevating Sunni Arabs to higher positions of power in the administration. Such preferential treatment given to Sunni Arabs antagonized the Shiites and the Kurds [1].

Unfortunately, with the emergence of the Soviet Union within the international arena, along with the defeat of Greece, French and British by the founder of modern Turkey Mustafa Kamal Ataturk led to the treaty of Lausanne on 24 July 1923 putting an end to the Kurdish aspiration and the idea of creating a Kurdish state was abandoned. The Sevres-Lausanne period was a tragic incident in the Kurdish history for the political autonomy. The recurring and unfulfilled promises led many Kurds to consider that they were expendable tools in the hands of the Great powers. Furthermore, after Sevres, the creation of new national boundaries, which distributed the Kurds among several states Iran, Syria, Iraq and Turkey further complicated the Kurdish problem.

As for the oil-rich Mosul city, and who it belongs to, the issue was left open. "It was only solved when French and Britain reached an agreement between them in which French obtained a packet of shares in the oil company of Iraqi and Mosul with its surrounding Kurdish areas were assigned to Iraq" [2]. But the Turkish new republic representative advocated for the Mosul province to be an integral part of Turkey. The British on the other hand argued that Iraq needed the Mosul province for strategic and economic viability. The Mosul question was deferred for the arbitration. The League of Nations decided to send a commission to the region in attempted to seek a resolution to pacify the disquiets in the end of 1924 [3].

Between January and March 1925, a committee, appointed by the League of Nations, conducted a survey determine the fate of the people in the Mosul province. Most Kurds voted in favour of Iraq rather than Turkey. The main reason for the Kurds' preference to join Iraq was grounded on previous promises given them by the

British and Iraqi monarchy, especially their joint statement about the provision of a form of self-rule inside Iraq. The second reason was the still-fresh memories of the brutal suppression of the Kurdish revolution of 1925 in Turkey by Turkish forces. In December 1925, the League of Nations suggested that Mosul be attached into Iraq provided that its non-Arab character be recognized and the status of the Kurdish language safeguard. Britain's mandate was to be extended for 25 years to protect the integration of the province of Mosul into Iraq. As a result, the province was, in July 1926 added to Iraq. Kurds wished for more and were disappointed with the League of Nations for not endorsing autonomy, which had explicitly been promised them by the British government. The people of the province considered their inclusion in the new state as a betrayal through the great powers which had promised Kurdish independence in the Treaty of Sevres [4].

Anderson and Stansfield [5] showed three reasons why the Kurds were not granted an independent state. First military, the use of the Kurdish mountain range in the north was seen as a useful natural barrier to any threats on Iraq coming from adjacent countries. Second, economically, the discovery of huge oil reserves in the Kurdish areas made the British keen to annex it to Iraq. Third, politically the British wanted Iraq to be dominated by Sunnis, and hence they incorporate Kurds into Iraq to add more Sunnis to the Sunnis Arab minority [5].

The Iraqi Kingdom signed the 1930 agreement with the British government, under the Iraqi-Anglo agreement of 1930, Iraq was granted independence, however ignored the Kurdish question of political autonomy and barely tolerated Kurdish interests. This led to protest and strikes in the Kurdistan areas to protest the Iraqi kingdom's treatment of the Kurds. An influential Kurdish leaders to emerge from the turmoil of the 1930s was Barzani Sheikhs. In 1932, the British attempted to settle the Nestorian Christians who had been expelled by the Turkish government near Barzan. Sheikh Ahmed, the older brother of Barzani, attacked them. The armed forces of Iraq with the assistance of British air forces forced them to flee to Turkey. They were pardoned and returned back to Iraq. They exiled to Nasriyah in Southern Iraq for four years, and then Sulaimaniyah where they stayed until 1943[6].

It was in Sulaimaniyah that Barzani was in contact with Kurdish intellectuals and nationalist. He was influenced by the idea of Kurdish nationalism in Sulaimaniyah. In 1943, with the help of the hope (Hiwa) party, Barzani escaped from Sulaimaniyah to Barzan where he resumed a revolt against the government of Iraq. Therefore, the first phase of Mullah Mustafa Barzani's revolt started. Barzani led a Kurdish revolt in 1943. This revolt and the subsequent made him one of the greatest Kurdish leaders. He turned out to be the symbol of Kurdish nationalist liberation movement for about 32 years [7].

Mullah Mustafa Barzani's revolt attained a nationalist character. A part from his tribesmen, some Kurdish officers and soldiers in the Iraqi army joined Mullah Mustafa [8]. He was able to gather a forces of 700 composed of tribesmen and Kurdish armed forces likewise soldiers who deserted the Iraqi army to join him. On 12 February 1945, Mullah Mustafa Barzani with the support of Kurdish officers formed a political organization so called the "Freedom Group". The freedom group demanded autonomy for the Kurds of Iraq. Its objective was to unite Kurdish tribes and formed contacts with other Kurdish organization [9, 10].

Mullah Mustafa Barzani could not have resisted the superior forces of Iraq so retreated to Iranian Kurdistan. Barzani's revolt was still in its infant stages [11]. He had not yet organized his armed forces well and had not enough forces to combat the Iraqi army supported by the British Royal Air Forces further Kurdish tribes hostile to the Barzani tribe [12]. In September 1945, he retreated to Iranian Kurdistan where there was no government control. His forces established the back bone of the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad of 1946 in Iran which was formed on 22 January 1946 [13].

In 1946, the revolution (Shorash) group sent Hamza Abdullah to the Kurdistan of Iran in Mahabad to see how they could have cooperated with the Iranian Kurds. In Mahabad Hamza met with Mullah Mustafa Barzani. They discussed the feasibility of establishing a new party on the model of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDP-I). In 1946. The remnants of Hiwa, Shorash and freedom (Rzagri) joined together to establish the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) [14]. When the Kurdistan republic of Mahabad in 1946 defeated the branch of the KDP-I in Sulaimaniyah rejoined the KDP. On 16 August 1946, a congress was formed in which the formation of the KDP was declared. In this congress the KDP admitted the political and economic situation of the Kurds in Iraq were different from that of Iran. It demanded autonomy for the Kurds of Iraq. Mullah Mustafa was selected as the president of the new party in addition to two other landlords, Sheikh Latif and Sheikh Zaid Agha were appointed as vice-president. Hamza Abdullah was elected its secretary-general [15].

When the Kurdish republic of Mahabad was defeated in December 1946. Barzani attempted to reach an agreement with the Shah of Iran over his settlement in Iran. Conversely he was unsuccessful. His forces were attacked by the Iranian armed forces and the hostile Kurdish tribes in Iran [16]. He retreated to Iraq. However, he caught between three hostile countries, Iran, Turkey and Iraq. Mullah Mustafa Barzani had no choice however seek asylum in the Soviet Union. He finally decided to march towards the Soviet Union in 1947, with 5000 of his followers. In the "Great March" Barzani and his forces walked about 200 kilometers in 52 days. In their ways to the Soviet Union. They attacked by the Turkish, Iranian forces and the Kurdish tribes of Iran. They finally managed to pass the Araz River into the Soviet Union on 15 June 1947 where they remained for about 11 years or so [17].

2. The Iraqi Coup D'états and the Kurdish Issue 1958-1968

The coup d'état of 1958, opened a new chapter in the Kurdish nationalist liberation movement history in Iraq. On 14 July 1958, "free officer" in Iraq under the leadership Abdul Karim Qassim staged a triumphal coup against the pro-Western monarchy which came to be called the "Iraqi coup d'état of 1958". In a power challenge ensued among the free officers [18]. The coup d'état was widely welcomed in Iraq and particularly in Kurdistan. The Kurds viewed the new coup as a chance to secure a measure of political autonomy. On its side the new coup leaders dealt with the Kurds as allies. After coming to power, Qassim formed a new republic system in Iraq. The new administration established a new constitution for Iraq. Qassim was on good term with the Kurds. Article 23 of the provisional constitution on 27 July 1958. Recognized the Kurds of Iraq as the partners with Arabs in the Iraqi state. It assured the Kurdish national rights within an Arab state. The new government permitted teaching Kurdish in schools. Mullah Mustafa Barzani who was living in the Soviet Union sent a telegram to the new administration. He congratulated Qassim and demanded to pardon him to return back

from exile. Qassim permitted him. On 6 October 1958, he was welcomed by Qassim as a national hero. For the Kurds everything appeared to be ideal during that time [19].

However sooner differences come out over autonomy and tension developed between Barzani and Qassim. It appeared that Qassim was not ready to recognize the national rights of the Kurds. In early 1961, the Qassim administration conducted to harass the Kurdish leaders; some of them were arrested additionally Kurdish newspapers were outlawed. The Qassim's administration prohibited the holding of a Kurdish teachers' conferences, and it started a campaign against the Kurdish language by altering Kurdish name of the places to Arabic names. Alongside the new constitution which redefined Iraq as a country of two people Kurds and Aras, the policy of replacing (Arabzation) particularly in the oil-rich areas of Kirkuk and Kurdish areas around Mosul continued. The policy was one of the reasons behind the breakdown of the friendly relationship between the Kurds and the central government in Baghdad [20].

The relationship between the Kurds and Qassim had been deteriorating for some time, especially over the deportation of Kurds from the oil-rich Kirkuk and Kurdish areas around Mosul. The Qassim regime further looked at the Kurdish leader as the great powers agent particularly the United States and the Soviet Union. In July 1961, Mullah Mustafa sent a petition to the government and requested autonomy. The requested was refused by the Qassim's regime. Barzani who turned out to be wary of the intention of the Kurds Qassim's administration, wanted from Barzani to get ready for a new war [21].

War breakout between Barzani and the government of Qassim in September 1961. When Barzani got ready for the war Qassim refrained from attacking his forces. Instated he pursued the Kurdish tribes antagonistic to Barzani to fight to fight him. The full scale fighting began when the Ako detachment led by Abas Mamand, a tribe allied to Barzani, angered by the administration's land reorganization law, attacked the government's forces between Kirkuk and Sulaimaniyeh. The central government retaliated by bombarding Barzan villages. Barzani armed forces retaliated by occupying army's frontier posts, Kurdish villages and towns. Consequently, a full-scale war began on 11 September. On 16 September the government launched a major offensive which turned out to be known as the "First Offensive". The clashes the Kurdish forces and the Qassim army continued until the administration of Qassim was deployed in 1963 [22].

War suppressed between the Kurdish forces and the central government when Qassim was removed from power in a bloody coup d'état led by his soul mate Abdul Salam Arif and the Baathists followers. In a power challenge between the Baathist and Arif, the Baathists over-powered by Arif in November 1963. Ironically, the central government was not in a position to fight the Kurdish forces. The central government in Baghdad was concerned to consolidate their position against their rivals. The Kurds as well as refrained from attacking the weak administration forces wishing that the new government would approve their national rights within Iraq [23]. The Arif's government launched a regime of terror. However, a ceasefire was negotiated with the Kurds, as usual the objective was to gain time. The Arif administration ignored Kurdish autonomy demands. The coup government of 1963 started another period of offences and brutality. The Arabzation program in Kirkuk area was extended the promotion of the Kurdish language through the republic government started to decline in 1960 and policy of preventing Kurdish schooling became more evident on the outbreak of the Kurdish movement.

Since then the relationship between successive government in Iraq and Barzani characterized through repeated conflict. The central government policy as a response to the Kurdish revolts was more restriction on Kurdish schools and less attention to education in general in Kurdish areas [24].

As a gesture of good will, he employed two Kurds Baba Ali Shiekh Mahmud and Brigadier Fuad Arif, to his new government. However, Abdul Salam Arif, soon gave the indication that like his predecessor Qassim he was not interested to meet Kurdish demands for Kurdish autonomy. Tension sooner developed between both sides. The war breakout between the Kurdish forces and central government armed forces. On 10 June 1963, the armed forces of Iraq conducted its "Second Campaign". The Kurdish nationalist were labeled as a group of gangs by the government officials.

On 2 July 1963, Lieutenant General Saleh Mahdi Ammash the defense minister, denied that there was war keeping on between the Kurdish forces and central administration forces. He considered the fighting in Kurdistan as a national picnic by the army helped by civilians to destroy the gangs. The fighting intensified. On 5 April 1965 and on 4 May 1966 the Iraqi forces started their "Third and Fourth offensives". During the "fourth campaign" Arif died in a helicopter crash in Basra. His brother Abdul Rahhman Arif as a new president of Iraq declared himself [25].

When Abdul Salam Arif died Mullah Mustafa Barzani declared a month case-fire. Both the central government and the Kurdish forces were lack of having break. Arfi lacked of consolidating his new position; the Baathist had improved strongly. He survived an endeavoured military coup in June 1966. Sooner it turned out to be evident that Abdul Rhaman did not desire compromising. Abdul Rahman Arif appeared to follow his predecessors "footpath". He declared he would never grant any sort of autonomy to the Kurds in addition to he would never negotiate with them. The Iraqi armed forces attacked the Kurdish forces Peshmargah, however, suffered a main defeat [26].

The central government Prime Minister Abdul Rhaman Bazzaz, who believed the Kurdish question would not be solved by armed forces, moved in to negotiate with the Kurdish leaders. As an outcome, on 29 June 1966 Prime Minister Bazzaz declared a "Fifteen Point project", which was approved by Mullah Mustafa Barzani [27]. The project recognized the Kurdish national rights within Iraqi republic. The Kurdish language was recognized as an official language. The Bazzaz administration assured decentralization of the country's political system, free elections of administrative council and proportioned representation for the Kurds in central government [28].

On 6 August 1966, Bazzaz was forced to resign and his successors had no intension of implementing his project. Nonetheless, the Kurds leaned back and carefully watched the political process in Iraq likewise maintained dialogue with Arif. Dissatisfaction among the Kurdish ranks grew. Conversely no major incident occurred between the government and Kurdish forces. President Arif deployed by a Baathist coup led by Ahmed Hassan Bakr and Saddam Hussein on 17 July 1968 [29].

3. The Iraqi Baathist Coup D'état and the Kurdish Issue 1968-1975

The Baathist government was conscious that the Kurdish question precipitated the downfall of the previous governments. It attempted not to oppose the Kurds directly, conversely, play them against each other. From the beginning the Baathist administration declared its commitment to Bazzaz project. Meanwhile it endeavoured to play Jalal Tabani and Ibrahim Ahmed groups against Mullah Mustafa Barzani. Barzani, angry at government endeavours to dislodge him, reacted by opposing the central government. He reactivated his secret radio moreover his forces clashed with the Iraqi army [30].

At the same time there were clashes between the forces of Talabani and Barzani. As the forces of Talabani were no match for those of Barzani, the central government entered into the fighting in favour of Talabani faction. As a result, the full-scale of fighting between the government and Mullah Mustafa Barzani forces began in spring 1969. The central government declared what turned out to be known as the "fifth offensive". In this fighting Mullah Mustafa's armed forces were capable to resist the central government campaigns well likewise the central government realized it could not have made any peace with the Kurds unless Barzani consented [31].

Finally, the Iraqi government decided to figure out the Kurdish question by granting autonomy to the Kurds. The central government's inability to defeat the Kurdish armed forces, fear of intervention by Iran, economic decline resulting from war, weakness of the army, and instability of the government forced the Baathist regime to find a resolution to the Kurdish issue. After a series of negotiation, on 11 March 1970, the government of Iraq signed a peace agreement with the Kurdish leaders which became known as the "March Manifesto of March 1970" [32].

The manifesto of March 1970 was the most comprehensive autonomy agreement the Kurds had ever had. It was embodied in the new Iraqi constitution that the Kurds were co-nationals with the Arabs. The Kurds were given legislative power in their region. One of the two vice-president was to be a Kurd. There was provision for a Kurdistan development budget, likewise the Kurdish language was recognized as an official language beside Arabic language. Although Mullah Mustafa was suspicious of the central government sincerity, he approved the agreement. The Kurds and the central government forces for a while live in peace [33].

Lack of mutual trust between Mullah Mustafa and the central government in Baghdad prevented the implementation of the "manifesto of March 1970". Each side blame on the other for failing to implement the agreement. There were two main matters in the way, one was oil-affluent province of Kirkuk status likewise they regarded Kirkuk as an inseparable part of Kurdistan [34]. The central government in Baghdad was not ready to relinquish such oil-affluent province. Both sides agreed to conduct a census to determine the future of the region. The central government to decrease the number of the Kurds settled Arabs in the province. The Kurds accused the central government of delaying the census and seeking to Arabize Kirkuk, Khanaghin and the Kurdish areas surrounded Mosul as evident Sinjar, Shiekhan and Zumar. In July 1970, the Kurdish leaders nominated Habib Karim as a candidate for the Iraqi vice-presidency. His nomination was refused by the central government on the ground his background was a Faili Kurds [35].

Moreover, problems increasingly developed between the Kurds and central government. Each side accused the other of breaching the manifesto. The Kurds blamed on the central government for building up its armed forces likewise attacking the autonomous region. On 7 December 1970, Mullah Mustafa Barzani's son Idris escaped an assassination endeavour by the central government. On 29 September 1971 and on 15 July 1972, endeavours were made to assassinate Mullah Mustafa Barzani. The central government was accused of being involved in these plots. The Baathist administration furthermore accused Barzani of getting arms support from Iran, Israel and the United States, helping the Iranian intelligence Service to gather information on Iraqi armed forces, having a new broadcasting station radio in Iranian soil, siding with the Iranian forces in definite border clashes, what is more, and the training of Kurdish Peshmarga (those who face death) by the Iranian officers. The tension high rose between the two sides [36].

Arguments increased almost immediately regarding the boundaries of the autonomous region, fueled by each side's interest in the oil-rich Kurdish areas. The central government in Baghdad and Kurdish leaders' relations remained strained, however, an endeavoured coup in 1973 led the Baathist government to invite the Kurds to join the government. Through this time, the Kurds mistrustful of the administration since they had reneged so frequent on prior agreements. Some communist party Kurds joined the administration, nonetheless others allied with the Kurds [37].

The central government was not satisfied with the way the Kurds escalated their demands so on 11 March 1974, the central government in Baghdad unilaterally declared its own new offers "Autonomy Law Version" for the Kurdish region with hostile tribe leaders to Barzani. The central government gave Barzani two weeks to approve the new deal [38]. Conversely, the new autonomy law deal limited the Kurds autonomy and Kurdish region in addition to it was refused by Mullah Mustafa Barzani. Fighting between the central government and Mullah Mustafa Barzani forces underway. It lasted until March 1975 [39].

During the organization Petroleum Exporting Country (PPEC) summit on 6 March 1975, the Shah of Iran and Iraqi vice-president Saddam Hussein signed an agreement [40]. In this agreement Saddam accepted to recognize the Iranian authority over half of the Shat-Al-Arab, abandon the Iraqi claim of the Khuzistan province of Iran, moreover ended up the subversion of the Iranian Baluchis along the border with Pakistan. The Shah promised to withdraw his support to the Kurdish movement in Iraq. The Shah withdraw his support to Kurds in a few days. The Algiers agreement ended up the Kurdish nationalist liberation movement which had been going on since 1961 [41].

The Algiers agreement had devastating outcome for the Kurds. When Barzani declared the collapse of the Kurdish movement, thousands of Peshmarga surrendered to the Iraqi forces and about 100,000 to 200,000 Peshmarga likewise their family in addition to supporters sought asylum in Iran and Turkey. The central government razed to the ground some 800 Kurdish villages along Iraq's borders with Iran and Turkey to form a "security belt" to prevent the Kurds contact between the Kurds of Iraq with Iran and Turkey. It was also taken as a provision to prevent future rebel activity in the area [42].

The Kurdish families in Iraq were bundled up in army trucks to be settled in southern Iraq. They were distributed in groups five to be settled in special places build for this purpose or were distributed among the Arab villages [43]. Life turned out to be very tough for the Kurds who were not accustomed to the desert. It was estimated that 85 per cent of those refugees who returned from Iran under the provision of general amnesty were deported to those desert camps. There is no actual figure of the Kurds exiled to Southern Iraq. It estimated something between 50,000 to 350,000 persons. The casualties of the war were further very high. On 15 January 1979, Al-Thawra, an official newspaper, put the numbers of Iraqi casualties about 16,000 while the Kurds claimed to have lost 2,000 Peshamrga, excluding the civilian casualties who numbered thousands [44].

4. Conclusion

The new Iraqi republic system from 1958 to 1975 signified three developments in Kurdish nationalist liberation movement in the Kurdistan region of Iraq.

Firstly, the new Iraqi republic system signified a new chapter in Kurdish nationalist liberation movement history in Kurdistan region. A movement which was no more tribal, conversely backed up by the different classes in Kurdish society such Merchants, students as well as teachers and so on.

Secondly, the new Iraqi republic system made a new line of separation within Kurdish nationalist liberation movement. This time the separation was not only based on tribal footpaths, however on conceptual basis likewise differences of opinion that has continued to the existing day

Thirdly, for the first time the Kurds of Iraq were legitimately recognized as partner in an Iraqi state likewise their cultural and national rights were documented in the constitutions. Before that the Kurds had never had appreciated an official position. This concreted the technique for the development of mass Kurdish nationalism' further contributed the Kurds a confidence that one day they would be capable to delight in their cultural and national rights.

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