

Committee: SPECPOL 2

Topic: The Question of Iraqi Kurdistan

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Summary

In the Sykes-Picot agreement British and French segmented the Middle East. Kurds are descendants from the Aryan people, who have lived for at least 6,000 years in the mountains which we now call Turkey, Iran, Syria and Iraq. There is an actual Kurdish Region in the North of Iraq with between 5 or 6 million inhabitants, many of them come from Iraq and Syria. Many Kurds consider their region part of a greater empire which covers neighbouring areas such as Turkey and Syria. There is now a conflict between the Iraqi government and the Kurdish region as the Kurds want a state of their own. In 2017 Iraqi federal government launched an operation to restore Iraqi sovereignty over the disputed territories, including Kirkuk and its oil fields.

Definition of Key Terms

Autonomous region: A subdivision or dependent territory of a country that has a degree of self-governance from an external authority. Typically, it is either geographically distinct from the rest of the country or populated by a minority.

Levant region: A geographic term that refers to the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea.

Peshmerga: Kurds are famous for their military force which is known as Peshmerga. They played a key role in finding Saddam Hussein in 2003. They also assisted in the capture of Hassan Ghul, a high level Al Qaeda operative who was instrumental in the intelligence case that brought the US to Osama Bin Laden was apprehended by Peshmerga forces in 2004.

Predate: Exist or occur at a date earlier than something.

Background Information

(Overview)

Kurds lived freely under the Ottoman Empire, however things changed at the beginning of World War I. Kurds had a chance to get their own state at the meeting of Sevres in France 1920. In this meeting, Kuwait, Iraq, and other countries were formed. However, there was a decision not to create a Kurdish nation because it would create conflict, their intention was to try and avoid problems, with Turkey, Iraq, Syria and elsewhere.

Kurds predate Arabs and have their own identity. They do not consider themselves to be Arab. The majority of them are Sunni and there are some Christian Kurds as well as Yazidi and Shia Muslims. Yazidi are a Kurdish ethnic minority and Sunni are the second biggest branch of Islam. They are in Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq. Iraqi Kurds supported Iran in the Iran-Iraq war of 1980 to 1988. When the war was over Saddam Hussein butchered tens of thousands of Kurds, although about one million Kurdish refugees fled to Turkey and Iran others stayed and fought against Saddam Hussein. It is estimated that the number of deaths reached up to 180,000.

The new Iraqi government the Kurds have an autonomous region, meaning they are self-governed, in the north of Iraq which is a valid example of a Kurdish state. Kurds have a good relationship with the United States of America, which has armed Peshmerga, but doesn't actively support the creation of a Kurdish state. Peshmerga is the Kurdish army. President Trump, openly admitted to 'loving' the Kurds and supports them. Below is a diagram displaying the distribution of the Kurds.



Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Canada: Supplies weapons to the Kurds.

Iraq: Iraq is against Kurds as Kurds attack them on a daily basis, and if they got independence it would lead to a revolution within Iraq and they cannot take a chance.

Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP): This is one of the biggest parties in the Northern part of Iraq.

Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG): This is the government for the Kurdish state.

PKK: Kurdistan Workers' Party. Their aim is to create a state within Turkey.

Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK): Founded in Syria, but is now in the northern part of Iraq.

Syria and Iran: None of them want a Kurdish State created as it would destabilize an already fragile state and it could lead to a domino effect, as it would cause other minority groups to also try and gain independence.

Turkey: Turkish government asked Iraqi forces to arrest members of the PKK as they used north Iraq to attack through the borderline. Turkey is against the Kurds as the PKK wants part of Turkey's territory to create a state.

United States of America: United States does not have a good relationship with Iraq however they do have one with the Kurds, as they helped fight ISIS and have always been a great ally. Even though they do not admit it publicly they would support Kurds on the matter. They also armed the Peshmerga. In 1990 the United States launched Operation Desert storm and the First Gulf War, they took this opportunity to impose a no-fly zone over Iraqi Kurdistan.

Timeline of Events

(Just a brief description of the main events to provide context)

Date	Description
1920	Meeting of Sevres, calls for the creation of an autonomous Kurdish state. Instead, they are split up, majorities living in Iraq, Iran and Turkey.
1931	Kurdish leader Ahmad Barzani rebels against Iraqi government.
1961	Son of Ahmad Barzani, Mustafa Barzani, launches a new round of armed resisting against Iraqi rule, with Iranian support.
1963	American diplomats encouraged the Kurds to support the new Ba'ath government in Baghdad.
1970	Main Kurdish group in Iraq KDP, negotiate with Vice-President Saddam Hussein. Months after, four Kurdish leaders become Cabinet ministers in Iraqi government.

1971	Iraqi agents try to assassinate Kurdish leader, head of the Kurdish Democratic Party, Mustafa Barzani.
1972	Saddam Hussein signs a friendship deal with the USSR
1973-75	Iran, Israel and the US work together to fund the Peshmerga.
May 1994	Fighting breaks between two of the biggest parties, the Kurdish Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.
1999	U.S. government states that an Iraqi attack on the Kurds would lead to a heavy response.
2002	Joint session of the Kurdish parliament convenes in parliament.
2003	Kurdish leaders reject proposals to bring Turkish trucks into northern Iraq.
2004	An alliance of Kurdish parties comes second in Iraq's landmark national election. PUK leader Jalal Talabani is elected as interim Iraqi president.
2005	The head of Turkey's military says his country should launch an operation against
2007	Kurdish guerrillas based in northern Iraq.
2015	Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga forces and Turkish - Kurdish PKK guerrilla fighters recapture Sinjar from IS
2017	A cross-party meeting led by President Barzani agrees to hold an independence referendum
2017	President Barzani resigns.

Information courtesy of:

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/saddam/kurds/cron.html>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-15467672>

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- **Sykes-Picot agreement:**

Drafted in the final years of WW1 this agreement was a secret document between the British and the French which divided the Levant Region in two.

- **The Treaty of Sevres:**

After the fall of the Ottoman Empire the agreement was passed, which started the conflict. Which was to divide the terrain into countries which separated the Kurds.

- **Treaty of Lausanne:**

This treaty was signed by the Allied powers which amended the previous treaty. Forming what is now known as Turkey and Syria.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

A referendum from part of the Kurdish region which ended up with more tension than before. It did not help as the referendum was illegal and had not been approved by the Iraqi government as most Kurds voted for independence.

Iraq has openly admitted to agree to talk with the Kurds under their conditions and if the Kurds stopped attacking. Kurds accepted as it was an acceptable situation for both parties.

Possible Solutions

- **Outside intervention:** UN established base in Iraq
- **A legal referendum:** A vote where every citizen can decide for or against
- **Kurdish independence:** A conference in a neutral country and focusing on the topic at hand

Bibliography

(Title of source, author, date of publication – you may also wish to list some useful websites)

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