

THE MAIN STAGES OF THE FORMATION OF THE KURDISH NATIONALISM IN IRAQ AND IRAN AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR

AGHASARYAN V.

v.ghasar@gmail.com

Today the Kurdish question is considered as one of the most complex geopolitical problems of the Middle East. Kurds live in Iraq, Turkey, Syria and Iran. Their number reaches 30 million. Considering the important role of the Kurdish factor in the internal political processes of the abovementioned countries, as well as the overall geopolitical situation in the world, it should be noted that it plays a fundamental role in the resolution of the Syrian crisis.

In this article we have tried to explore the main stages of the formation of the Kurdish nationalism in Iraq and Iran after the Second World War, as well as the geopolitical factors that had influenced its formation and development

In the 1930s, in comparison with Turkey, the conditions in Syria and Iraqi Kurdistan were favorable for strengthening the national Kurdish movement. Since the Kurdish ethnic area was divided by 4 state borders, the Kurdish national movement had a local character that promoted the Kurdish political nationalism.

The emergence of the Kurdish intellectuals had played a fundamental role in the development of Kurdish nationalism. The latter blatantly declared their Kurdish identity.

The Kurdish tribes in Iraq, which had been subjected to arabization in the period of the British mandate, gradually began to experience the impact of new unifying factors that had weakened the Kurd's tribal attachments and strengthened their national identity. The situation was difficult in Iranian Kurdistan. In 1941, after the fall of the Shah's regime, power passed to tribal leaders, who relied on the armed detachments of their fellow tribesmen. Reza Shah conducted discriminatory policy towards Kurds. He prohibited them to wear national costumes, limited Kurdish books, banned them to live in cities. Kurdish tribal leaders were arrested. The situation changed after the allied troops had been deployed.

The Main Stages of the Formation of the Kurdish Nationalism in Iraq ...

Reza Shah's policy became a basis for the oppositional mood of the most influential Iranian Kurdish tribes, who got weapons through smuggling or from their hiding places.¹

The Formation of the Republic of Mahabad.

In 1941, as a result of the Operation Countenance, Iran was occupied by the Soviet and British armed forces. The USSR was controlling the northern part of Iran (Eastern Kurdistan and Southern Azerbaijan, Caspian ports and Iranian-Turkish border), and the southern territories of Iran (oilfields and southern ports) were under England's control.

The Soviet Union was extremely interested in strengthening the border with Turkey, as well as in amplification of its influence in Southern Azerbaijan. As a result of these processes, two states were formed in the north of Iran: the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Mahabad.²

Kurdish autonomy was proclaimed on 24th of January, in 1942 in Iranian Kurdistan, in the region of Mahabad, which was recognized as a neutral territory by the agreement between the USSR and Great Britain. The organization "Komala" had played a huge role in this process, as well as the fact that the Soviet Union was interested in the proliferation of its influence in the south of Iran. The USSR was extremely interested in separating the region from Iran and joining the latter to Soviet Azerbaijan.

The ruler of Mahabad Kazi Mohammed was invited to Baku in 1945 and received a proposal from Moscow to annex the Republic of Mahabad to Soviet Azerbaijan on the rule of autonomy, however this proposal was rejected, and it was decided to use only Moscow's assistance in organizing a large Kurdish party in Iranian Kurdistan.³

In October 1945, Kazi Mohammed was elected as the head of the Democratic Party of Kurdistan.

The Iranian Kurds were inspired by the proclamation of the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan and, seizing the moment, had proclaimed the independence of the Mahabad Republic. Immediately after independence, the

¹ **Вертяев К.В., Иванов С.М.** Курдский национализм, М., 2015, с. 175.

² <https://ria.ru/spravka/20160825/1475040623.html>

³ **Вертяев К.В., Иванов С.М.**, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

Kurds went over to organizing of the defense of the republic, as they understood that Tehran would no longer tolerate 2 newly-arising states on its territory.

Considering the fact, that the Kurdish tribal elite was in close ties with Pahlavi, it was decided to form armed forces that would consist of Kurds from the tribe Barzan and be led by Mahmoud Barzani.

Three detachments with up to 1500 people were formed, and Barzani received a title of General and led the military formations. Already in April, 1946, under Sekkez, the general managed to repel Iranian troops, which at that time did not have serious resources.

After that battle, the Kurds adopted the constitution of the Mahabad Republic, according to which, the Kurdish language was proclaimed the official language. Already in the shortest time possible educational centers, hospitals, scientific and educational centers were opened. The Mahabad government had begun to publish newspapers and magazines in Kurdish, as well as it formed post offices and laid communication lines.⁴

Given the fact that the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan included territories with a Kurdish population that didn't seek to recognize the power of the DRA, the organization of united defense was ineffective.

Soon the threat of Shah's Iran nevertheless accompanied the unification of the detachments of Tabriz and Mahabad under the leadership of Mahmoud Barzani, even though any political union between DRA and KAR had not been reached.

After Iran's request to the UN Security Council to hold bilateral negotiations, the USSR insisted on the extension of its troops in Iran for an indefinite period, as well as on managing the oil resources of Caspian Iran.⁵

Only after Truman's statement on sending troops to Iran on March 21, 1946, the USSR decided not to aggravate the situation and declared that it would withdraw its troops within 45 days.

After two weeks the Soviet troops including 60 thousand people were withdrawn from Iran, enabling the Iranian army to resolve its issues with Tabriz and Mahabad.

⁴ **Jwaideh W.**, p. 253.

⁵ <https://holicin.livejournal.com/8681438.html>

The Main Stages of the Formation of the Kurdish Nationalism in Iraq ...

In August 1946, during a meeting in Tehran with the Prime Minister of Iran Qavam al-Saltane, Kazi Mohammed was trying to negotiate to provide Kurds with autonomy within Iran. But his suggestion was rejected.

In December, 1946 the Iranians entered Tabriz and launched an attack on Mahabad. In view of the fact, that Kurds were left alone with government forces, disagreements over further policy had arisen between Barzani and Kazi Mohammed. The latter didn't want to be disposed to the mountains, because he didn't want to endanger the Kurdish population. So he was executed with other leaders of the movement, and Barzani had retired to the mountains with his detachment numbering 500 people. The Republic of Mahabad suffered a crashing defeat.

Kurdish people did not manage to eliminate the tribal disunity and the close ties of their leaders with Shah's regime. But it should be noted that the Republic of Mahabad played a key role in Kurds' identity and gave a new impetus to their movement.

During the Iranian revolution (1978-1979), the Iranian Kurds tried to raise the question of the formation of Kurdish autonomy within Iran and consolidation of their rights in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, but they didn't manage to reach an agreement with the leadership of Iran.

Mustafa Barzani's National Liberation Movement in Iraq

In the postwar years, Sulaimania became a Communist hotbed for the whole Iraq, meanwhile being a stronghold of Kurdish nationalism. The urban population grew, and the working class had gradually began to form. Most peasants found themselves in difficult situation, as land owners increased the pressure on them, trying to boost production of agricultural products. As a result of these processes, the slogan "Land to Peasants" became very popular.⁶

The pro-communist newspaper "Azadi" became a stronghold of the young Kurdish population in Iraq, that called for the creation of common political alliance between Kurds and Arabs.

In 1952, Bahaheddin Nuri, a Kurd by nationality, became the secretary general of the Iraqi Communist Party, and already in 1953, the latter and the Democratic Party of Kurdistan, on a common roll, took part in Iraqi parliamentary elections.

⁶ **Вертяев К.В., Иванов С.М.**, op. cit., p. 188.

Aghasaryan V.

In 1956, at the Congress of ICP, it was decided to include the acts, enshrining the rights of Kurds in party's program.

Kurds, who had lived in Egypt since the time of the Ottoman Empire, were contributing to the development and improvement of relations with Naser's government. Already in 1957, Cairo radio began broadcasting in the Kurdish language.⁷

The Kurds had supported the military, who staged a coup in the country and overthrew King Faisal II, who was supporting the course of rapprochement with the West. A republican system was established in Iraq, and Abd-al Karim Qasim became the leader.

According to the new Constitution, adopted after 12 days since King's overthrow, the rights of Kurds and Arabs should have been guaranteed by the Constitution within the borders of the united Iraq.⁸ It was planned to establish Kurdish educational centers and schools, as well as to legalize DPA.

In 1958 Barzani with his associates returned from the USSR and received Iraqi citizenship. He received weapons and strengthened his position in Iranian Kurdistan, which Kurdish tribes Jaff and Pishdar didn't like. They helped Iraqi government to expel Barzani in 1945.

However, this time Mahmoud Barzani succeeded in defeating Kurdish tribes Pishdar and Bradost, that had rebelled against him. He killed their leader and destroyed villages in the north of Iraqi Kurdistan. After that, Barzani's associates attacked other tribes, such as Harki and Surchi.

Abd-al Karim Qasim wasn't satisfied with the fact, that Barzani was trying to expand his power throughout the whole Iraqi Kurdistan. So, he launched a cooperation with the hostile tribes of Barzani.

An even greater aggravation in relations between Barzani and Karim was caused by the celebration of 15 years of the Revolution.⁹ It aroused anti-Kurdish moods among the Arab population, that considered such events secessionist.

Barzani's visit to the USSR had played a key role in further relations. There the question about the mediation of the Soviet Union in the relations between Barzani and Iraqi government was raised.

⁷ **Gstrein H.**, Avukatsizhalkkurtler, Ist., 1977, p. 21.

⁸ История Курдистана, М., 1999, с. 341.

⁹ Хабат, 13.08. 1960.

The Main Stages of the Formation of the Kurdish Nationalism in Iraq ...

At the end of 1960, Iraqi government began a very strict policy towards Barzani, fearing a split in the country. Qasim supported Barzani's hostile tribes trying to split the Kurds.

The branches of the Democratic Party of Kurdistan in Kirkuk and Mosul began to close, the Kurds were dislocated to the south of Iraq, and the most active representatives were arrested.

On July 30, 1960 a memorandum was issued "About the seriousness of the situation in Kurdistan", which stated Barzani's requirements to determine the status of Iraqi Kurdistan and to open educational institutions, where the teaching was to be in the Kurdish language.¹⁰

Qasim didn't accept the regulations of this memorandum. He had decided to strengthen the military forces in Iraqi Kurdistan. Soon, an overwhelming uprising began.

On September 7, 1961 an armed conflict started between the the Kurdish detachments and the Iraqi army, which began to bomb territories, where the Barzan tribe lived.

Qasim believed that Great Britain and the United States were the sponsors of Kurdish separatism. He had mentioned about it at the conference on April 1961.¹¹ The Democratic Party of Kurdistan, in turn, was appealing to organizations, such as the Red Cross, the Committee on human rights, etc. declaring that the Kurds didn't want to fight against Arabs. They only wanted to end the pressure of Qasim's regime, who didn't recognize the rights of the Kurdish people.¹²

Despite the fact that the Iraqi government had been using aviation and controlling big Kurdish cities, Barzani succeeded in resisting governmental forces and keeping the balance of power due to good organization and mobility of his small detachments.

There were fewer and fewer people in Iraq, who believed Qasim, and the situation was becoming more difficult, as the Kurds weren't going to give up.

¹⁰ **Вертяев К.В., Иванов С.М.**, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

¹¹ **Жигалина О.И.** Мустафа Барзани: политический портрет, М., 2013, с. 145.

¹² История Курдистана, *op. cit.*, p. 354.

On February 8, 1963 Qasim's regime fell. Oppositional nationalist forces that came to power had reached an agreement with the Kurds before the coup, promising them autonomy in return for their support.¹³

However, the Baathists, who came to power, began to carry out stricter policy. Repressions of the KDP members began.

A month after the revolution, the government published a plan for a solution to the Kurdish issue. The plan was aimed at giving a limited autonomy to Kurds in Suleymaniya, meanwhile depriving them of oil-rich Kirkuk.

In March 1963, the Kurds dissatisfied with those decisions, convened a Congress in Sanjaq Koy, in which the memorandum about the formation of Kurds autonomy was adopted.

This step had a very negative impact on the relations between the rebels and the new government, as a result of which an award of 14 million franks was promised for Barzani's head.¹⁴

Military actions broke out between the rebels and the Iraqi government, which also attracted Turkey, Iran and Syria to suppress the Kurdish insurgency.

It should be noted that because of the difficult political situation in the country, a rift had developed between Talabani and Barzani Kurdish clans. The members of Barzani were supporters of complete independence of Kurdistan, which wasn't acceptable for Talabani supporters. In June 1964, at the 6th Congress of the DPA, Talabani and its supporters were expelled from the party.

As early as October 1964, the Kurdish Revolutionary Council was created, the main purpose of which was to establish broad autonomy within Iraq.¹⁵

The Revolutionary council had its own military forces called "Peshmerga"¹⁶.

Already in early 1965, government troops, numbering 100,000 people, began a military operation against the forces of Barzani, while Talabani came to the aid to the latter. Iraqi forces failed to achieve any major victories.

The complex political situation in Iraq led to several changes of power; Tahir Yahya, Abduzzaz Aref, Abdul Rahman Bezzaz. All of them were convinced that

¹³ **Талабани Дж.** Курдистан и курдское национальное движение(на арабском яз.), Багдад, 1970, с. 26.

¹⁴ **Вертяев К.В., Иванов С.М.**, op. cit., p. 194.

¹⁵ **Эммин Сами Эль-Гамрави.** История курдов северного Ирака, Каир, 1967, с. 19.

¹⁶ Пешмерга–военные формирования Иракского Курдистана, дословный перевод: «идущие на смерть».

The Main Stages of the Formation of the Kurdish Nationalism in Iraq ...

Barzani was a tool of other states, that wanted to take control over rich oil sources located in Northern Iraq.

In 1966, President of Iraq, Abdul Salam Alif was killed in an air crash, and his brother Abdul Rahman replaced him. Despite the fact that he was a supporter of negotiations with the Kurds, Iraq's army Chief of staff wanted to solve the Kurdish issue by military means. Hostilities resumed on May 1, 1966, despite the fact that the Kurds had proclaimed a truce. After 15 days, the bloodiest battle of all five years took place near the Revanduz, which resulted in a strategic victory of Barzani.¹⁷

This war caused the destruction of several hundred villages and the economic decline of a whole region. Aware that military actions were causing tremendous damage to the country and population, both sides made a decision to conclude reconciliation agreement, which was adopted on June 29, 1966. According to the above-mentioned settlement, the sides were obliged to accept the conditions of Iraqi Prime minister's declaration.

However, Barzani demanded greater autonomy and declared that Kurds are ready to fight for several decades to eliminate Iraqi dictatorship and achieve full independence of Kurdistan.¹⁸

At the end of very difficult negotiations between Barzani and Bazzaz, a program of country's decentralization was adopted. The above-mentioned program consisted of 12 points, three of which referred to the formation of the separate autonomy in Mosul, the release of Kurdish political prisoners and the recognition of the Kurdistan Democratic Party's activities as legitimate. The Kurdish language was getting official in areas inhabited by the Kurds.¹⁹

However, these agreements weren't approved by the security forces of the BAATH party, and as early as on June 30, 1966 a new change of power took place in Baghdad. Naji Talib, a former general, coming to power, didn't consider it necessary to adhere to agreements adopted by the former government. But he was ready to launch new negotiations.

The ongoing struggle of the Kurds had a temporary success, and on March 11, 1971 the Kurdish autonomy region was created in the north of Iran. Kurdish

¹⁷ <http://www.kurdistan.com.ua/history-of-kurds>

¹⁸ Жигалина О.И., *op. cit.*, p. 177.

¹⁹ Вертяев К.В., Иванов С.М., *op. cit.*, p. 198.

leaders promised to stop hostilities and not to interfere with the government in the territory of Kurdistan. Within 4 years, the Iraqi government was obliged to create all conditions, ensuring that the Kurdish language be recognized as regional, and the Kurds would be able to carry out the state and military service, independently controlling the situation in the autonomous region.²⁰

However, contrary to the given agreements, Iraqi authorities didn't rush to provide the Kurds with the promised rights. Moreover, the policy of forcible location of the Kurds was resumed.

In 1974, however, the autonomy was created in Dokhuk, Suleymaniyah and Erbil. But in 1975 Iraq signed an agreement with Iran not to provide assistance to the Iraqi Kurds. The Kurds were no longer able to keep the balance. As a result of military operations thousands of soldiers and peaceful Kurds were killed, and the rest were forced to move to the mountainous regions of Turkey, Iran and Iraq.

Mustafa Barzani had immigrated to the USA.

The Kurds have failed to achieve their goals in Iraq. The reason was the reluctance of other states to encourage the creation of Kurdish autonomies in Iraq, Turkey and Iran. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States began to actively intervene in the domestic affairs of Iraq in order to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime. At the end of the 20th century, Iraqi Kurdistan became a semi-independent region, where the Kurds were able to establish their own legislative and executive authorities.

Ultimately, most initiatives to create Kurdish autonomy in 1920s–1970s weren't successful. The USA, the USSR and other countries weren't interested in the formation of Kurdish autonomy in Iran, Turkey and Transcaucasia. During the cold war, the United States and the Soviet Union had been building their foreign policy in the Middle East primarily taking into account their interests in relations with Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. The Kurdish question had often been used to put pressure on those countries. The Kurds, in turn, were organizing protests and uprisings while facing discriminatory harassment. It's important to note that the Kurdish movements in Syria, Iraq, Iran and Turkey had differences and their own specific features.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 199.

**ԵՐԿՐՈՐԴ ՀԱՄԱՇԽԱՐՀԱՅԻՆ ՊԱՏԵՐԱԶՄԻՑ ՀԵՏՈ
ՔՐԴԱԿԱՆ ԱԶԳԱՅՆԱԿԱՆՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՁԵՎԱՎՈՐՄԱՆ
ՀԻՄՆԱԿԱՆ ՓՈՒԼԵՐԸ ԻՐԱՔՈՒՄ ԵՎ ԻՐԱՆՈՒՄ**

ԱՂԱՍԱՐՅԱՆ Վ.

Ամփոփում

Քրդական հարցը այսօր Մերձավոր Արևելքի ամենաբարդ աշխարհաքաղաքական խնդիրներից մեկն է: Քրդերը ապրում են Իրաքում, Թուրքիայում, Սիրիայում և Իրանում, նրանց ընդհանուր թիվը կազմում է մոտ 30 միլիոն մարդ: Քրդական գործոնը կարևորագույն դեր ունի վերը նշված երկրների ներքին քաղաքական գործընթացներում, ուստի արդիական գիտական արժեք է ստանում Երկրորդ համաշխարհային պատերազմից հետո Իրաքում և Իրանում քրդական ազգայնականության ձևավորման և զարգացման հիմնական փուլերի և դրանց վրա ազդած աշխարհաքաղաքական գործոնների ուսումնասիրությունը:

**ОСНОВНЫЕ ЭТАПЫ ФОРМИРОВАНИЯ КУРДСКОГО
НАЦИОНАЛИЗМА В ИРАКЕ И ИРАНЕ ПОСЛЕ ВТОРОЙ
МИРОВОЙ ВОЙНЫ**

АГАСАРЯН В.

Резюме

Курдский вопрос сегодня является одной из самых сложных геополитических проблем Ближнего Востока. Курды живут в Ираке, Турции, Сирии и Иране, их общая численность составляет около 30 млн. человек. Учитывая важную роль курдского фактора во внутривосточных процессах вышеперечисленных стран, а также общую геополитическую ситуацию в мире, следует отметить, что курдский фактор является фундаментальным в урегулировании сирийского кризиса. В данной статье мы попытались рассмотреть основные этапы формирования курдского национализма в Ираке и Иране после Второй мировой войны, а также геополитические факторы, которые повлияли на его становление и развитие.