

Sources for Kurds

0:33

The relationship of the Kurds to the central Ottoman government and the level of autonomy that Kurdish-inhabited regions enjoyed shifted over time. Overall, however, the arrangement was mutually beneficial. The Ottomans could be assured at least nominal rule over this important frontier zone with Iran and Kurdish rulers could operate under broad conditions of self-rule.

This flexible understanding that served both sides for centuries changed markedly in the middle of the 19th century, when the central Ottoman government embarked on a series of modernizing and centralizing reforms, some of which were intended to counter the rise of competing nationalisms in the empire.

https://origins.osu.edu/article/kurds-stateless-turkey-syria-iraq-iran?language_content_entity=en

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1:01

There was a brief opportunity for Kurdish nationalism after World War I with the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. Western powers (particularly the United Kingdom) promised the Kurds they would act as guarantors for Kurdish freedom, a promise they subsequently broke. Some of the autonomist Kurdish groups received British support leading up to the Treaty of Sèvres (1920), which prepared for local autonomy for the Kurdish regions and envisaged later independence. Opposition from Kemal Atatürk, leader of the new nation-state of Turkey, and changes in British policy, prevented such a result. Following the Treaty of Lausanne (1923) the Kurdish territory was partitioned between Turkey, the French mandate of Syria, the British mandate of Iraq, and Persia.

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In May 1919, Atatürk began a nationalist revolution in Anatolia, organising resistance to the peace settlement imposed on Turkey by the victorious Allies. This was particularly focused on resisting Greek attempts to seize Smyrna and its hinterland. Victory over the Greeks enabled him to secure revision of the peace settlement in the Treaty of Lausanne.

In 1921, Atatürk established a provisional government in Ankara. The following year the Ottoman Sultanate was formally abolished and, in 1923, Turkey became a secular republic with Atatürk as its president. He established a single party regime that lasted almost without interruption until 1945.

https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/ataturk_kemal.shtml

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1:29

The treaty recognized the boundaries of the modern state of Turkey. Turkey made no claim to its former Arab provinces and recognized British possession of Cyprus and

Italian possession of the Dodecanese. The Allies dropped their demands of autonomy for Turkish Kurdistan and Turkish cession of territory to Armenia, abandoned claims to spheres of influence in Turkey, and imposed no controls over Turkey's finances or armed forces. The Turkish straits between the Aegean Sea and the Black Sea were declared open to all shipping.

<https://www.britannica.com/event/Treaty-of-Lausanne-1923>

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1:43

Interview with Dr. Yerevan Saeed.

He describes the border in the region, even through to today and porous, allowing transit between countries without much trouble.

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03:45 Ch.1 Snapshot of Kurdish Movements

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4:06

big citation as to why we're not including Armenia

Immigration: Many Kurds arrived in Armenia in waves, fleeing persecution in the Ottoman Empire in the 19th and early 20th centuries. These were primarily Yezidi Kurds, a religious minority.

Soviet Era: Under Soviet rule, Kurds in Armenia enjoyed a period of relative cultural freedom. Kurdish radio broadcasts and publishing houses existed.

The Modern Situation:

Smaller Population: Compared to the Kurdish populations in neighboring countries, Armenia's Kurdish population is much smaller, estimated around 40,000.

Less Conflict: Unlike the other countries, Armenia doesn't have a major Kurdish insurgency or separatist movement.

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Major events taken partially from interview with Dr. Yerevan Saeed

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4:36

Kurdish-government tensions in Iran have a long history of many centuries. However, in focusing on its recent history one can begin with Reza Khan's (later Reza Shah Pahlavi) backlash against the Kurds in 1922, recapturing control over the lands that Kurdish leaders had gained control over since 1918. He recaptured their lands and dealt ruthlessly with the Kurdish leaders. Once again, after the abdication of Reza Shah in 1941, some Kurdish leader reasserted themselves and spread their control in western Iran. The Kurds even declared the Mahabad Kurdish Republic in January 1946, but it only lasted 11 months and the Iranian government recaptured Mahabad and eliminated the Kurdish leaders involved.

The period after 1946 saw the decline in Kurdish fortunes, the co-option of the Kurdish tribal leadership and the downgrading of the political power base of Kurdish landowners through the land reforms of the 1960s.

Struggles for independence in the Kurdish regions continued after the 1979 revolution. Ayatollah Khomeini warned Kurdish leaders in 1979 that any attempts towards independence would attract the harshest response. A well-organised rebellion by the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI), Komala and the Kurdish branch of the Fadayan was nevertheless launched in spring 1979. The Iranian regime responded harshly with the banning of the Kurdish Democratic Party followed by an armed campaign against the Kurds. Subsequent to the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war, both sides became engaged in ongoing violence in order to bring the Kurdish areas under their own control and wipe out the Kurdish guerrilla fighters. Hundreds of villages were bombed, with their lands seeded with landmines and its populations dispersed.

<https://minorityrights.org/communities/kurds-4/#:~:text=Kurds%20comprise%20around%2010%20per,different%20linguistic%20and%20cultural%20backgrounds>.

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4:54

Disturbances in the Kurdish area and several attempts to overthrow the regime kept the Ba'ath leaders preoccupied and prevented them from launching planned social and economic programs. The attempts to overthrow the regime were suppressed without difficulty, but the Kurdish problem proved more complicated.

Even before the Ba'ath Party achieved power, the Kurdish question had been discussed in several meetings of the Ba'ath Party leadership. However, in late 1968 fighting between the Kurds and the Iraqi army began once again and escalated to full-scale warfare. With military aid provided by Iran, the Kurds were able to pose a serious threat to the Ba'ath regime. By early 1970 negotiations between the Ba'ath leaders, with Saddam as chief government negotiator, the Kurdish leader Mustafa al-Barzani, and other leaders of the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) were under way. The government agreed to officially recognize the Kurds as a "national" group entitled to a form of autonomous status called self-rule. This would eventually lead to the establishment of a provincial administrative council and an assembly to deal with Kurdish affairs. The agreement was proclaimed in the Manifesto of March 1970, to go into effect in March 1974, following a census to determine the frontiers of the area in which the Kurds formed the majority of the population.

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Iraq/The-revolution-of-1968>

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5:15

In 1973-74 negotiations with al-Barzānī and the KDP to implement the March Manifesto failed. The census promised in the March Manifesto had not been taken, and al-Barzānī and the KDP refused to accept the Ba'athist determination of the borders of the Kurdish area, which excluded the oil-rich Kirkūk province. Nevertheless, in March 1974 the Ba'ath regime proceeded to implement its own plan for self-rule, establishing a provincial council and an assembly in cooperation with Kurdish leaders

who were opposed to al-Barzānī's militant approach. Iraq also set up the Kurdish autonomous region in the three predominantly Kurdish governorates of Erbil, Dahūk, and Al-Sulaymāniyyah.

The Kurdish war started in March 1974. Al-Barzānī's decision to go to war with the Ba'ath government seems to have been made with the support of the shah of Iran, who sought to pressure Iraq to alter the water frontier in the Shaṭṭ al-'Arab to the thalweg, or the deepest point of the river. (Under the terms of the 1937 treaty, the boundary was set at the low-water mark on the Iranian side, giving Iraq control of the shipping channel.) Soon after the conflict broke out, however, an agreement between Iran and Iraq caused Iran to suspend support for the Kurds and ended the Kurdish war. Al-Barzānī's forces and political supporters were given a few days to withdraw into Iran, and the Iraqi government took full control of Iraqi Kurdistan.

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Iraq/The-revolution-of-1968>

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In 1962, an exceptional census stripped some 120,000 Syrian Kurds –20 percent of the Syrian Kurdish population – of their Syrian citizenship. They were left stateless, and with no claim to another nationality. Decree No. 93, issued in August 1962, ordered that a census be carried out in Hasakeh governorate in northeastern Syria for the purpose of identifying “alien infiltrators.” The stated purpose of this census was to discover how many people had illegally crossed the border from Turkish Kurdistan. Kurds had to prove that they had lived in Syria at least since 1945 or lose any claim to Syrian citizenship. The census was one component of a comprehensive plan to Arabize the resources-rich northeast of Syria, an area with the largest concentration of non-Arabs in the country.

By many accounts, the special census was carried out in an arbitrary manner. Brothers from the same family, born in the same Syrian village, were classified differently. Fathers became foreigners while their sons remained citizens. Kurds who had served in the Syrian army lost citizenship while families who bribed officials kept theirs. This report includes the names of Kuridsh men and women, born in Syria in 1935 or earlier, who lost their citizenship as a result of the census and became “foreigners” (ajanib, in Arabic) in their own country. According to Syrian lawyers, as a result of the census “thousands of people went to sleep as Syrians and woke up to find that they no longer were [citizens].”

<https://www.hrw.org/legacy/summaries/s.syria9610.html>

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5:40

Various historical periods taken from here, brief civilian rule, military coup, brief union with Egypt, then Ba'ath party rise to power

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Syria/The-French-mandate>

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5:50

The first three coups following Syrian independence were carried out by officers of

part-Kurdish background, each relying on officers of similar background. Following the overthrow of the last of them, Kurds were purged from senior army ranks. During the heyday of Arab nationalism from 1958 to 1976, Kurds came under increasing repression, partly because of their close identity with the Syrian Communist Party. Many Kurds were arrested, imprisoned and tortured. In 1961 a census in Jazira discounted 120,000 Kurds as foreigners. In the following year the government announced a major population transfer, intended to settle Arabs all along the Turkish border. Although never fully implemented, 60,000 Kurds left the area for Damascus. Repression lessened, but continued under Hafez al-Assad. In March 1986 police fired on thousands of Kurds in traditional dress gathered in Damascus to celebrate a spring festival, killing one.

<https://minorityrights.org/communities/kurds-5/#:~:text=During%20the%20heyday%20of%20Arab,discounted%20120%2C000%20Kurds%20as%20foreigners.>

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6:40

Turkification

The government adopted a policy of Turkification – the forced transition from the multicultural Ottoman Empire to a homogenous Turkish state. Turkification was an extreme form of nationalism. The government implemented a paramilitary training program for young men. Launched in 1913, the Association for the Promotion of Turkish Strength trained young warriors for the fight for Turkish identity. Enver Pasha's War Ministry provided free rifles to youth groups. Government propagandists argued that a strong society must have only one culture, one religion, and one level of education. CUP leaders portrayed non-Muslims as an invasive virus within the Turkish nation.

<https://neareastmuseum.com/exhibit/a-crumbling-empire/turkification/>

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In 1925, the new secular state crushed a rebellion in eastern Turkey led by Sufi sheikhs with strong Kurdish nationalist implications, which set the tone for state relations with Kurds across Turkey. Like other Turkish minorities, Kurds were subjected to Turkification policies under early nationalist regimes. A unique Kurdish ethnic identity was discouraged or officially prohibited by the Turkish state until the 1990s, which included banning Kurdish publications, radio and television programs, and Kurdish-language devotional activities, as well as various forms of political and economic repression. Following decades of repression, the Kurdish separatist movement was revived in the 1970s, the PKK emerged in 1978, and swiftly all other views were marginalized, alienating large segments of the Kurdish population. On account of violent acts committed by the PKK against the Turkish military and security forces, any support for Kurdish rights was framed as a form of criminal sympathy. With decades of immense suffering now past, many Kurds feel that violence is an ineffectual means of achieving rights and it is common to see political engagement and are supportive of Turkish democracy.

While the PKK offered a radical leftist perspective, Islamic Kurdish groups also emerged in the 1980s, including Hizbullah (unrelated to the Shi'a Hizbullah of Lebanon). Hizbullah launched attacks against the PKK during the 1980s, accusing it of divisiveness, secularism, and for murdering Muslims, for which it was supported by the Turkish government. The Hizbullah lost favor in the 1990s after kidnapping and executing individuals in the Southeast, and has since reorganized as an Islamic social services organization. Its interpretation of Islam has limited appeal for its vilification of Sufism.

<https://rpl.hds.harvard.edu/fag/kurds-turkey>

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7:02

See state dept list.

<https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/>

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in July 2015, a two-and-a-half year long ceasefire broke down, Türkiye's fight against militants of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) - recognised as a terrorist organisation by Türkiye, the U.S. and the European Union - entered one of its deadliest chapters in nearly four decades.

<https://www.crisisgroup.org/content/turkiyes-pkk-conflict-visual-explainer>

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07:16 Ch.2 A Tool for Conflict

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7:42

Crisis Phase (December 15, 1945-April 23, 1946): The Kurdish Republic of Mahabad was established in Kurdistan on December 15, 1945. The Soviet Union provided military assistance (6,200 rifles and ammunition) to Kurdish rebels in December 1945 and February 1946. The KDPI formally declared Kurdistan's independence from Iran on January 22, 1946, and appointed Mohammed Ghazi as president of the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad on February 11, 1946.

Conflict Phase (April 24, 1946-December 16, 1946): Government troops and Kurdish rebels clashed near Saqqiz on April 24, 1946, resulting in the deaths of 21 government soldiers. Government and Kurdish representatives held negotiations on May 3, 1946. Kurdish rebels killed two government soldiers in northern Iran on May 20, 1946. Government troops launched a military offensive against Kurdish rebels near Saqqiz on June 13-15, 1946. Government troops occupied Mahabad on December 14, 1946. Mohammed Ghazi, president of the KDPI, surrendered to government troops in Miandoab on December 16, 1946. Some 1,000 individuals were killed during the conflict.

<https://uca.edu/politicalscience/home/research-projects/dadm-project/middle-eastnorth-africapersian-gulf-region/irankurds-1943-present/>

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Seeing a window of opportunity, the newly-formed Komala-i Jiyani Kurdistan (The Committee for the Revival of

Kurdistan - Komala), a predominantly middle class democratic nationalist party, began to negotiate with the occupying Soviets with the idea of creating a Soviet-sponsored Kurdish republic, independent of Iranian control.

Leading the nascent Kurdish republic and fully endorsed by the Soviets was Qazi Muhammad, the religious and titular leader of Mahabad. Muhammad, who had become democratic Komala's sole leader - a position the communist Soviet leaders were comfortable

with - was pressured by the Soviets to leave Komala and create a more centralized party.¹⁹³ In

September 1945, for example, the Kurdish leadership, including Muhammad, was taken to Soviet Azarbaijan where the Soviets agreed to supply the Kurds with money, military training,

and arms, including tanks, cannons, machine guns, and rifles, thereby ensuring autonomy from

Iran.¹⁹⁴ In exchange for the support the Kurds had to abandon Komala, which Soviet Azarbaijan

President Bagherov labeled "an instrument of British imperialism"

¹⁹⁵ and create the "Democratic

Party of Kurdistan - Iran" (KDP-I). Bagherov also warned the Mahabad leaders not to trust

Mulla Mustafa Barzani, whom Bagherov called "a British spy".

<https://web.archive.org/web/20131029191132/http://etd.lib.fsu.edu/theses/available/etd-11142005-144616/unrestricted/003Manuscript.pdf>

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US Pressures the Soviets to Leave

Paper summarizing Soviet refusal to withdraw from Iran post WW2 and some of their motivations for trying to stay.

[https://www.idosi.org/mejsr/mejsr18\(11\)13/4.pdf](https://www.idosi.org/mejsr/mejsr18(11)13/4.pdf)

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8:22

8:46

The PKK was established in 1978 in Lebanon's Beqa Valley, which was then occupied by Syria. Moscow supported this development in order to destabilize Turkey, a key NATO member during the Cold War. In running a proxy war against Ankara through the PKK, the Soviets and Syrians provided the group with training and arms. The PKK made forays into Turkey from Syria, engaging in terrorist attacks. With the collapse of communism, Soviet support to the PKK ended, but Syria continued to harbor the group to gain leverage against Ankara in bilateral disputes. Namely, Damascus claimed the Turkish Hatay province and disagreed with Ankara on sharing the waters of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers.

In seeking to end Syria's harboring of the PKK, Turkey first took the diplomatic route, attempting to persuade Damascus to end the policy. This approach did not work.

The Syrians denied they were sheltering the PKK even as the group's leader, Abdullah Ocalan, gave on-site interviews to the international media from the Syrian capital. Ankara then tried a tougher strategy: buoyed by its strategic relationship with Israel to Syria's south, Turkey threatened to invade unless Syria curbed PKK activity in its territory. This approach worked. Syria kicked Ocalan out of the country, whereupon he was apprehended by Turkish officials, with American assistance, and sent to prison. Damascus also signed the 1998 Adana Protocol with Turkey, promising to end all its support to the PKK.

In the years that immediately followed, Turkish intelligence and military officers verified the Assad regime's claim that it had, in fact, stopped harboring the PKK. Relations between Turkey and Syria improved in turn.

<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/syria-and-turkey-pkk-dimension>

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9:09

Shortly after the onset of the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-1988, the Iraqi government began to woo the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) as potential leverage in its war effort. In January 1981, Saddam Husayn's regime established its first major weapons supply route to the KDPI near the Iranian cities of Nowdesheh and Qasr-e Shirin. Securing Nowdesheh was Iraq's prime objective, as the city's strategic location would deny Iran the use of the Baghdad-Tehran highway. The KDPI, for its part, had hoped to create "Kurdish liberated zones" throughout Iranian Kurdistan by relying on Iraqi-supplied weapons and those captured from military depots inside Iran. The tide, however, began to turn against both the KDPI and Iraq by later 1981 as Iranian forces managed to inflict heavy casualties on Iraqi forces in the northern front and push them across the border. Consequently, the Iranian forces launched a series of debilitating attacks against the KDPI, rendering them a marginal military factor during much of the Iran-Iraq War.

By 1983, Iran began to play its own Kurdish card against Saddam Husayn's forces. Having secured the support of both Massoud Barzani's Kurdish Democratic Party of Iraq (KDP) and Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and forming a united front against the Iraqi regime, Saddam Husayn, in a last ditch effort to untangle the Iranian-Kurdish threat in the north, opened a secret channel of negotiations with the Kurds by promising them greater autonomy in their internal affairs. Baghdad was also concerned about possible Kurdish attacks against a strategic and highly lucrative pipeline that connected the Kirkuk oilfields to the port of Iskenderun in Turkey. Given Iraq's numerous attacks against Iranian oil installations, Tehran felt compelled to threaten the safety of the Kirkuk-Iskenderun pipeline.

<https://www.mei.edu/publications/kurdish-factor-iran-iraq-relations>

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9:20

Saddam's Genocide of the Kurds Numbers Source

Human Rights Watch reported in its 1993 comprehensive report on Anfal in Iraq that at least 50,000 and possibly as many as 100,000 Kurds are estimated to have been killed

at the hands of the Ba'ath regime.¹ However, since then, several sources have stated that as many as 182,000 or even more people were killed in that operation

<https://us.gov.krd/en/issues/anfal-campaign-and-kurdish-genocide/>

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9:30

The campaigns of 1987-1989 were characterized by the following gross violations of human rights:

- mass summary executions and mass disappearance of many tens of thousands of non-combatants, including large numbers of women and children, and sometimes the entire population of villages;
- the widespread use of chemical weapons, including mustard gas and the nerve agent GB, or Sarin, against the town of Halabja as well as dozens of Kurdish villages, killing many thousands of people, mainly women and children;
- the wholesale destruction of some 2,000 villages, which are described in government documents as having been "burned," "destroyed," "demolished" and "purified," as well as at least a dozen larger towns and administrative centers (nahyas and qadhas);
- the wholesale destruction of civilian objects by Army engineers, including all schools, mosques, wells and other non-residential structures in the targeted villages, and a number of electricity substations;
- looting of civilian property and farm animals on a vast scale by army troops and pro-government militia;
- arbitrary arrest of all villagers captured in designated "prohibited areas" (manateq al-mahdoureh), despite the fact that these were their own homes and lands;
- arbitrary jailing and warehousing for months, in conditions of extreme deprivation, of tens of thousands of women, children and elderly people, without judicial order or any cause other than their presumed sympathies for the Kurdish opposition. Many hundreds of them were allowed to die of malnutrition and disease;
- forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of villagers upon the demolition of their homes, their release from jail or return from exile;

<https://www.hrw.org/reports/1993/iraqanfal/ANFALINT.htm>

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9:50

Two days after the liberation of Kuwait, the then US President, George Bush made a statement to the Iraqi population, "In my own view... the Iraqi people should put Saddam aside, and that would facilitate the resolution of all these problems that exist and certainly would facilitate the acceptance of Iraq back into the family of peace-loving nations."

Thus emboldened, in early March, the Shia in southern Iraq, and the Kurds in the north, made almost simultaneous uprisings against the regime.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/in-pictures-35967389>

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10:17

Both the Bush and the Clinton Administrations previously pursued unsuccessful efforts to topple Saddam Husayn. Many of the past difficulties are relevant to the current debate on whether or how to oust the Iraqi President. Prior to Desert Storm, which began January 17, 1991, President Bush called on the Iraqi people to overthrow Saddam. Opposition Shiite Muslims in southern Iraq and Kurdish factions in northern Iraq, heartened by the U.S. call (and probably anticipating U.S. support) launched all-out rebellions against Saddam and his Sunni Muslim-dominated regime² within days of the end of the Gulf war (February 28, 1991). The rebellion in southern Iraq spread northward and reached the suburbs of Baghdad, but Republican Guard forces gained the upper hand against the rebels by mid-March 1991, and the uprising there petered out. (Saddam had largely kept the Republican Guard out of the fighting in Desert Storm for the purpose of preserving his hold on power after the war.) The Kurds in the north, benefitting from a U.S.-led no fly zone established in April 1991, were able to carve out an autonomous enclave in northern Iraq, free of Iraqi troops and governmental presence. However, Iraq is an Arab state that would not accept Kurdish independence or leadership, and the 4 million Kurds in northern Iraq did not represent a major threat to Saddam's rule.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20121103122106/http://www.fas.org/irp/crs/crs-iraq-op.htm>

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10:28

In March 1991, following Iraq's defeat in the Gulf war, the Kurds of northern Iraq and Arabs of the south rose up against the Baath regime. For two brief weeks, the uprisings were phenomenally successful. Government administration in the towns was overthrown and local army garrisons were left in disarray. Yet by the end of the month the rebellions had been crushed and the rebels scattered, fleeing across the nearest borders or into Iraq's southern marshes. Those who could not flee did not survive summary executions.

Despite the calls made during the war by Western leaders for Iraqis to rise up and dispose of Saddam Hussein, these dramatic and tragic events were the last thing any outside powers anticipated. Did the uprising also take the Iraqi people by surprise? There is good cause to think so. Iraqi opposition leaders had long been calling for a "popular uprising" that would end the war with Iran and the deprivation and tyranny foisted upon them by Saddam's regime. Yet when the moment did arrive, the opposition was totally unprepared.

<https://merip.org/1992/05/why-the-uprisings-failed/>

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10:45

Paper detailing the relief effort made by the US to help Kurdish refugees attempting to flee into Turkey as well as the no fly zone strategy.

<https://media.defense.gov/2012/Aug/23/2001330108/-1/-1/0/Op%252525252520Provide%252525252520Comfort.pdf>

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10:59

The most recent, following the First Gulf War in 1991, prompted a brutal response, in which Saddam Hussein's forces infamously used poison gas on Kurdish civilians. As a result, Washington instituted a no-fly zone in northern Iraq that helped Kurdish forces (the peshmerga) achieve de-facto independence. In 2003, this status was formalized in the new Iraqi constitution, which created the Kurdistan Regional Government as part of a federal Iraqi state. Since then, Baghdad and the country's Kurdish leadership have clashed over the division of the country's oil revenues, the status of oil rich, contested regions like Kirkuk, and, more broadly, the irreconcilability of the Kurds' desire for independence and Baghdad's desire to maintain its territorial integrity.

<https://bipartisanpolicy.org/blog/iraqi-kurds-seek-independence-vote/>

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11:23

Ironically, despite being the KRG's biggest international supporter, the United States, which has fought to keep Iraq together since 2003, is also opposed to the referendum. Washington fears that a divided Kurdistan facing widespread opposition from its neighbors could prove unstable, giving new opportunities for ISIS and Iran to exploit its weakness. At the same time, Kurdish independence could also create destabilizing conflict with Iraq, and undermine moderate politicians in Baghdad.

<https://bipartisanpolicy.org/blog/iraqi-kurds-seek-independence-vote/>

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11:38

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/dec/17/turkey.iraq1>

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11:39 Ch.3 The Syrian Civil War

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11:55

12:08

In Syria, civil war between the Assad regime and its supporters and myriad antigovernment groups has killed more than 320,000. The Islamic State, which is fighting against both government and antigovernment forces, controls territory in the north and the east. The Kurds have not taken a side in the civil war but, filling the void after Syrian government forces left the area, have established self-rule in two regions. The PYD has governed since mid-2012, and its military arm, the People's Protection Unit (YPG) has been fighting against the Islamic State, with support from U.S.-led air strikes. The coalition's support for the PKK-affiliated group has caused tensions between the United States and Turkey, a NATO ally. As the major component of a mostly Kurdish fighting force known as the Syrian Democratic Forces, the YPG has made significant gains since expelling the Islamic State from the northern Syrian

town of Kobani in 2014 and raced to consolidate its territory and capture Raqqa in 2017. Rights groups have compiled evidence of Kurdish efforts to alter the demographics of the captured territories, including the razing of some Arab villages.

<https://www.cfr.org/article/time-kurds>

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12:18

Timeline of ISIS in Syria events found here. Includes significant events in the history of the SDF.

<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/timeline-the-rise-spread-and-fall-the-islamic-state>

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12:44

<https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN1A62SS/>

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13:06

Turkey won't hesitate to act against Kurdish-led groups in northern Syria that Ankara accuses of links to outlawed Kurdish militants, if they proceed with plans to hold local elections in the region, Turkey's president said Thursday.

A Kurdish-led autonomous administration that controls northern and eastern parts of Syria has announced plans to hold municipal elections on June 11. The vote to choose mayors will be held in the provinces of Hassakeh, Raqqa, Deir el-Zour and eastern part of Aleppo province.

Turkey, which has launched military operations in Syria in the past, considers the move a step by Syrian Kurdish militants toward the creation of an independent Kurdish entity across its border. It has described the planned polls as a threat to the territorial integrity of both Syria and Turkey.

<https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/turkey-signals-new-military-intervention-syria-kurdish-groups-110671771>

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13:18

<https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.americanprogress.org/article/trumps-syria-shambles/&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1720551570795883&usg=AOvVaw0UC1HjA1biw90Vwr9h6LWJ>

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13:28

For the past several years, the U.S. military provided air support and a limited number of U.S. forces inside Syria to combat the terror group. With the SDF in the lead on the ground and the U.S. in a supporting role, the SDF pushed ISIS out of 20,000 square miles of territory in Syria – but at the cost of thousands of SDF lives.

Trump is repaying this sacrifice by withdrawing the U.S. military backup that keeps the SDF and their families safe from two equally existential threats – military

action by Turkey, a more powerful neighbor that sees the Kurds as their enemy; and the Assad regime and its backers, Russia and Iran, that control the rest of Syria and aim to retake the third of the country under SDF control.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/trump-s-troop-withdrawal-gives-turkey-access-syria-isis-space-ncna1063821>

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13:30

Since May 2022, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has threatened a military incursion into northeast Syria targeting the cities of Tel Rifaat and Manbij in Aleppo governorate. The two cities, west of the Euphrates River, are under the control of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a United States-backed Kurdish-led armed group. The group militarily controls most of northeast Syria, which is governed by the quasi-autonomous self-declared Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria. This planned incursion would be Turkey's fourth into northern Syria since 2016.

Turkey last conducted a military operation into the region in October 2019, alongside the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army, a coalition of Syrian opposition armed groups. Since then, Turkey has occupied a segment of the border area previously held by the Autonomous Administration between the city of Ras al-Ayn (Serekaniye in Kurdish) and surrounding areas in al-Hasakeh governorate and the towns of Tal Abyad (Gire Spi in Kurdish) and Ein Issa in al-Raqqa governorate.

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/08/17/questions-and-answers-turkeys-threatened-incursion-northern-syria>

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13:42

Turkish military incursions into northeast Syria have been fraught with human rights abuses, and in Turkish-occupied territories today, Turkey and local Syrian factions are abusing civilians' rights and restricting their freedoms with impunity.

During and in the immediate aftermath of the October 2019 invasion, Turkey and the Syrian National Army (SNA), a non-state armed group backed by Turkey in northeast Syria, indiscriminately shelled civilian structures and systematically pillaged private property held by the local Kurdish population, arrested hundreds of people, and summarily killed Kurdish forces, political activists, and emergency responders in areas they occupy in northeast Syria.

By December 2019, Turkish authorities and the SNA had arrested and illegally transferred at least 63 Syrian nationals from northeast Syria to Turkey to face trial on serious charges that could lead to a life sentence. Most are reportedly still detained in Turkey pending the outcome of their ongoing trials. The SNA has also apparently blocked Kurdish families displaced by Turkish military operations from returning to their homes.

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/08/17/questions-and-answers-turkeys-threatened-incursion-northern-syria#Q3>

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14:26

Map of Turkish strikes across Kurdistan

In July 2015, a two-and-a-half year long ceasefire broke down, Türkiye's fight against militants of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) – recognised as a terrorist organisation by Türkiye, the U.S. and the European Union – entered one of its deadliest chapters in nearly four decades.

Since that date, the conflict has progressed through several phases. Between roughly 2015-2017 the violence devastated communities in some urban centres of Türkiye's majority-Kurdish south east and – at times – struck into the heart of the country's largest metropolitan centres. From 2017 onward, fighting moved into rural areas of Türkiye's south east. As the Turkish military pushed more militants out of Türkiye, by 2019 fighting shifted to northern Iraq and northern Syria.

<https://www.crisisgroup.org/content/turkiyes-pkk-conflict-visual-explainer>

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14:27 Ch.4 The State of the Kurds Today

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15:06

Iraq's parliament has rejected Kurdish plans to hold an independence referendum aimed at creating a Kurdish state in Iraq's northern territory, a legislator announced on Tuesday.

The resolution, which labelled the ballot due to take place on September 25 a “threat to ... the civil peace and regional security”, authorises Haider al-Abadi, Iraq's prime minister, to take any measures necessary to preserve Iraq's existing borders.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/9/12/iraq-parliament-rejects-kurdish-independence-referendum>

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Additionally, the Iraqi army and Hashd al-Shabi advanced to take back the disputed territories unilaterally controlled by Peshmerga in 2014 amid the confusion of the IS takeover of Mosul. The Kurds lost a significant amount of land and oil resources they once controlled, which shattered the dream of independence in the foreseeable future.

<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/what-caused-krk-miscalculation-in-independence-referendum>

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Interview with Dr. Yerevan Saeed

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15:10

The United States does not recognize the Kurdistan Regional Government's unilateral referendum held on Monday.

The vote and the results lack legitimacy and we continue to support a united, federal, democratic and prosperous Iraq.

We remain concerned about the potential negative consequences of this unilateral step. Prior to the vote, we worked with both the KRG and the central government in Baghdad to pursue a more productive framework and to promote stability and prosperity for the people of the Kurdistan region. These aspirations, ultimately, cannot be advanced through unilateral measures such as this referendum.

<https://tr.usembassy.gov/iraqi-kurdistan-regional-governments-referendum-tillerson/#:~:text=The%20United%20States%20does%20not,consequences%20of%20this%20unilateral%20step.>

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15:27

Absent any credible evidence of wrongdoing, Turkey should release dozens of Kurdish journalists, political party officials, and lawyers arrested in raids on April 25, 2023, in advance of the May 14 national elections, 18 organizations including Human Rights Watch said today. The following is their statement:

Turkey: International groups demand release of Kurdish journalists, lawyers, political party officials arrested in pre-election crackdown

Media freedom, freedom of expression, and human rights organisations call on Turkish authorities to stop the systematic harassment and intimidation of Kurdish journalists, media workers, media outlets, the lawyers that defend them, and Kurdish political party officials, give them access to legal counsel, disclose full details of charges brought and to ensure that they are released from detention. We reiterate the need for a free and pluralistic media atmosphere in the run up to the elections that will be held on 14 May 2023.

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/04/25/turkey-pre-election-crackdown-kurds>

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