

Division of Kurdistan: Its Impact on the Unity of Kurdish National Psyche
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In the wake of the Chalderan War, for the first time in 1639 our beloved Kurdistan was divided between the two warring empires, the Turkish Ottoman and the Persian Safavis. Although, this division formally ended or at least diminished the Kurdish political sovereignty, it did not impact the everyday livelihood of our people. Nonetheless, the geographical disunity caused our people to carry an alien identity, because the divide land was no longer able to represent the national identity of a distinct and independent people. Our people and their land became parts of the two empires.

Instead of thinking about the future of their people and try to reunite the fractured Kurdistan, some local leaders began cooperating with the central authorities and others remained indifferent to the Turkish and Persian threats. Kurdish manpower were used either against each other on both sides of the border or against enemies of the empires. Our people were the immediate victims of any hostility that took place between the warring factions, because Kurdistan on both sides of the border was the battleground of the hostile enemies.

Over the course of history, each central government tried to expand its political influence over the people of Kurdistan; particularly the Turkish Sultans—in addition to heavy-handed atrocities, they imposed a heavy tax burden on people, which made life for innocent people of Kurdistan almost unbearable. The Turkish Sultans were also using religion to control our people. Their motto of Muslim brotherhood allowed no negotiation for the Kurdish national rights. For centuries, the Turkish Sultans were able to maintain their power and influence in Kurdistan. Not until Amir Badarkah's revolution in the 1840s were there viable Kurdish oppositions to the Turkish rule. Our people, under Amir Badarkhan were able to seriously challenge the Turkish authoritarian rule in Kurdistan. Badarkhan's revolution changed the Kurdish political dimension and for the first time Kurdish nationalism in a modern sense was born. Although, the revolution was brutally subsided, its influence on the Kurds remained and the Kurdish nationalism continued against Turkish racist policies.

In the Iranian occupied Kurdistan, the oppression against our people had a similar dimension. Our people were subjected to the most inhumane policies where there was no chance for our people to feel secure in their national characteristics.

This division and the ensuing policies of the two occupying empires marked the beginning of weakening or assimilating the Kurdish national psyche into the Turkish and Persian national

psyches. However, Kurdish resistance against oppression and assimilation continued and was able to linger until after the WWI in 1918.

Following the WWI, and the subsequent division or re-division of Kurdistan, this time into four pieces, our motherland was divided among Iran, Turkey, and two newly established Arab states, Syria and Iraq. This division drastically impacted every bit of the Kurdish national aspect. This division added to the number of the occupying countries and consequently diminished the capability of our people to effectively challenge the racist policies of the central governments.

In the wake of this new development, three different alien cultures were imposed upon our people and our people were forced to carry four different passports. This time, each central government used all the means available to them to subdue the Kurds. This time, the chauvinist governments with the help of the Western hypocritical powers used a new strategy to culturally, mentally, and psychologically assimilate our people in their own national “melting pots.” Our people became second or third class citizens of Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey—literally with no rights of their own. In Syria and Turkey, as of today, constitutionally, Kurds have not even been recognized as a distinct ethnicity.

The xenophobic central governments deprived our people from benefiting from the developments that were taking place in other parts of their respective countries and left the Kurds in political, social, and economic destitution. The forced cultural assimilation and the ban of Kurdish language not only weakened our native culture, but also made the educated Kurds to read, write, and think through the dominate cultures. This ill strategy of the occupiers has affected some members of the Kurdish society to claim their Iraqi, Iranian, Syrian, or Turkish political psyche. These assimilated Kurds not only became distanced from their own indigenous culture, but also servers of the dominant political cultures. Other Kurds who have challenged the forced assimilation have been subjected to alienation, persecution, discrimination, and/or physical annihilation.

As a result of the biased policies forced upon our people, the infrastructure of our national psychology has been fractured by the most brutal measures, because our people against their will, have been shackled to live under the most inhuman system—the system which was established to create disunity and lack of self-esteem and self-confidence in our national psyche. Therefore, the impact of such a system has touched all the Kurdish social, cognitive, academic, economic, and political aspects. This has created an unfriendly environment in which our people have not felt neither secure nor welcome.

Further, the legal systems of the occupying countries have been operating under an ill dominant mono-culture which has contributed to and formed their racist mentality. The legal applications that have been applied in Kurdistan contain no ethical or civil standards acceptable by any civil society. The societal illness in these countries has given rise to and strengthened the legal and political awkward mentality against the historical reality of our people.

Furthermore, the disunity that has been created as a result of the division of our homeland has created huge obstacles before us. It has made our people in each part of Kurdistan to struggle independent from each other. This has weakened our people in their struggle to achieve their national dream and confined them in the minority mentality. In addition, we have been distancing ourselves from thinking like a nation, thus we have not been able to have a national school of thought; which means we, knowingly or unknowingly-intentionally or unintentionally, have been playing the cards that the occupying countries have put before us.

At the national level, another crucial factor has deepened the division of our national psyche. In the last three decades, the attitude of the Kurdish political factions from the Iraqi occupied Kurdistan toward our people in Iran and Turkey, and their occasional cooperation with the Iranian and Turkish aggressive forces against our brethren in the respective parts of Kurdistan has shattered the prospect of the future unity of Kurdish national psyche.

No doubt, the lack of unity in our national psyche and national thinking as one nation has been affected by the disunity of Kurdish national politics. The way in which the Kurdish political parties in all parts of Kurdistan have been politicking has not been able to unify the masses under a unified national identity. In fact, the way in which the Kurdish political factions have been preparing their members has been based on party partisan to shape their mentality and prepared ill-informed followers who have no or weak national political mindsets to put the national interests above their narrow political interests.

Such a school of thought has not been able to gather masses in and around one national front that could lead the struggle and put the national goals and objects above the party politics. As a result, disunity in and among the Kurdish political factions has weakened the Kurdish National Movement in all parts of Kurdistan.

The Kurdish party politics has been indirectly enforcing the policies implemented by the occupiers to maintain the Kurdish political psychology divided. By maintain the Kurdish political psychology divided, the occupiers of Kurdistan have been able to strengthen the disunity they have created before the Kurdish national liberation struggle.

Thus, in order to prepare current and future generations for a lengthy and rigorous struggle, we need to have an unbiased and patriotic political school of thought in which politicians are prepared to focus only on the national unity and preserving and promoting the national interests.

To achieve this highly needed political mentality, the Kurdish politicians must do away with party politics and put Kurdistan and her children above their narrow political mindsets. They must realize that their interests are inseparable from the national interests.

Therefore, at the national level, to strengthen our national spirit and dream our sacred dream of freedom and independence, we must come together and go beyond and above psychological

division and political disunity. We need to model our political and national psyche on the unity of our national geography and remain united.

At the international level, we must do our due diligence to repudiate the minority status with which the world has identified us. To obtain this status, we need to speak in one voice as one people. We must form a National Council that is supported by our people in all parts of Kurdistan. This council should represent the national cause and people of Kurdistan as a whole. Because, as long as we continue to separate ourselves from each other under a false primes such as “Iraqi Kurds”, Iranian Kurds”, “Turkish Kurds,” and “Syrian Kurds” we continue to play the cards of the occupiers, and in the end they are always come out victorious.

Finally, we must try to shift the political vision and transvalue our national struggle, where we conceptualize the importance of having a unified national political psyche and see ourselves as “one nation under God indivisible with liberty and justice for all.” Only then can we repudiate the unrealistic politics of minority status and continue to strive for independence of our ancient people.