

## ON THE DEVELOPMENTS OF THE KURDISH QUESTION IN THE NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST IN MODERN TIMES

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In ethnic sense the Kurds are a divided people; hence, they are often called a divided nation, a nation without country and state<sup>1</sup>. The English diplomat lord Curzon has written that the history of the Kurds is entirely dark, and that “this is a people without literature and almost without history”.

The Kurds are dispersed in vast territories of the Near and Middle East, but reside compactly mainly in Turkey, Iran and Syria. There are Kurds residing in the newly independent republics of the South Caucasus and Central Asia and in Russian Federation as well. There is a Kurdish diaspora in the countries of Western Europe (more than 1 million), the USA, Australia and elsewhere. No exact data about the number of the Kurds throughout the world is available. Some Kurdish authors lift their number up to 50 million. Nevertheless, 30-50 million is considered as more credible, being 15 million in Turkey (20 percent of the entire population of Turkey), 8 million in Iran (11 percent), 6 million in Iraq (20 percent) and 2 million in Syria (10 percent)<sup>2</sup>.

The Kurds are the fourth people in number in the Near and Middle East after the Arabs, Persians and Turks. At present, no people exist in such a number throughout the world, who do not have a statehood. The Kurdish political parties as well as the nationalistic circles pretend to found Kurdish state in the so-called frames of the “Ethnic Kurdistan”, which includes the eastern parts of Turkey (Western Armenia), Iranian and Iraqi Kurdistan as well as the northern, Kurdish-inhabited areas of Syria<sup>3</sup>.

Despite the fact that the term “Kurdistan” has occupied a stable place in the literature, there is no such a country on any of the geographic maps of the world. Therefore, the concept of “Kurdistan” has merely a conventional meaning. The area covering this concept was a part of both Ottoman Empire and Qajar Iran up to WW I. After WW I, when a reshaping of political map of the Near East took place, the “Ethnic Kurdistan” became a part of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. From that time on there can be found the conditional names of “Turkish Kurdistan” (or “Northern Kurdistan”), “Iranian Kurdistan” (or “Eastern Kurdistan”), “Iraqi Kurdistan” (or “Southern Kurdistan”) and “Syrian Kurdistan” (or “Western Kurdistan”) in the literature.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Michael Eppel, *A People without a State. The Kurds from the Rise of Islam to the down of Nationalism*, Austin, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> See Michael M. Gunter, *The Kurds: A Modern History*, Princeton, New Jersey, 2016, pp. XIV-XV.

<sup>3</sup> See Graham E. Fuller, Ian O. Lesser. *Turkey's new geopolitics: from the Balkans to Western China*, Colorado, 1993, p. 62.

The Kurdish world is not definite. It differs with its multiplicity and contradistinctions, difficult to be explained at first glance, among other things. This is a spotted mosaic, nomads, semi-nomads and sedentary population, tribes and tribal confederations, tribal zones, linguistic and religious diversity, geographical and political division etc.

The consciousness of national unity and congeniality as well as of united homeland was muddy amongst the Kurds up to the XX century. The idea of collective independence was also absent among them because of tribal structure; besides, the tribal independence of feudal character was a final ideal. Just for that reason the Kurdish people never succeeded in creating their own statehood during the historical developments they had undergone.

The “Kurdish Question” was for the first time a matter of discussions in international instances in 1919, at Paris peace conference<sup>4</sup>. But in international legal practice this question was for the first time formulated in the form of a contract on August 10, 1920, in the Treaty of Sevres, which was guaranteeing a right to autonomy in Turkey for the Kurds. This autonomous formation could be turned into a sovereign state with the consent of the League of Nations after a year. It was planned to create Kurdistan in the territory of Western Armenia by the map the president of the USA, Woodrow Wilson had drawn<sup>5</sup>, which was in itself strange and incomprehensible for Armenian people. But, as is known, the Treaty of Lausanne, signed in 1923, denounced the Treaty of Sèvres, thus pushing the “Kurdish Question” into nonexistence.

In the final stage of the WW II the “Kurdish Question” ascended again on the surface of political realities, this time by the leader of the Soviet Union, Joseph Stalin. The latter raised a number of issues simultaneously just after the war, which were tended to change the correlation of powers in the Near and Middle East in favor of the Soviet Union. The issues of Iranian Azerbaijan, Black Sea straits, “Armenian Question”, “Kurdish Question” and others were among those matters. A Kurdish state formation was created in the north-western part of Iran by the immediate initiative of Moscow on January 22, 1946, which was named “Kurdish people republic” or “Republic of Mehabad”<sup>6</sup>. Stalin had planned to enlarge gradually this newly established state at the expense of both Iranian and Iraqi lands with the Kurdish populations, as well as to scotch the oil fields and oil refineries of the Near East by the Kurds to bring down the fuel feeding of the Mediterranean fleet of Western countries. It was believed in Moscow that “the Kurds are a sharp dagger, which can be directed against Turkey, Iran and Iraq”<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> See General Shérif Pasha, Memorandum on the Claims of the Kurd People, Paris, 1919.

<sup>5</sup> See Treaty of Peace with Turkey, Signed at Sèvres, August 10, 1920. The Frontier between Armenia and Turkey. As decided by President Woodrow Wilson, November 22, London, 1920.

<sup>6</sup> See Eagleton W. Jr., The Kurdish Republic of 1946, London, 1963.

<sup>7</sup> Sergo Beria, My father Beria. in the Corridors of Stalinist rule - <http://books.google.az/books?id=LK9> (in Armenian).

As is known, the Armenian project of Stalin was crashed on various grounds. As to the annexation of Iranian Azerbaijan to the Soviet Azerbaijan, Stalin himself declined the project, making out that a widespread Turkish zone would come into existence along the southern borders of the Soviet Union let the project be carried out. Concerning the “Kurdish republic of Mehabad”, it has also a very short life, just 11 months<sup>8</sup>. Stalin had probably moved backward under the pressure of the Western Powers. There is a viewpoint (not proven) that the USA was threatening the Soviet Union to exploit a nuclear weapon, if the latter had not stopped her “attacking” policy in the Near and Middle East. Nevertheless, it is supposed that Stalin had not absolutely resigned of employing the Kurdish card and was waiting for the time of establishing nuclear balance with the West.

It is beyond any doubt that in our days the Kurdish question is becoming more complicated when the intersection of the interests of both world leading countries and regional states within the said area are considered. Virtually, not a single country of the Near and Middle East (except, probably, Israel) is not interested in establishing an independent Kurdish state. The reasons for such a state of affairs are numerous; first, the birth of a new state formation is possible only on the lands belonging to the states of the Near and Middle East. It is difficult to believe that any country in the region will be ready to allow the shortening of its own land. Then, the chain of the armed conflicts will destabilize deeply the situation of the region after creation of the Kurdish state. All the states of the region will be immersed in this conflict in a varying degree. And considering the fact that Turkey is a NATO member, the conflict can be turned into interregional one. This will place the oil and gas pipelines, operating now and to be constructed in the future, under a threat. The same concerns also the Eurasian transit corridor. Finally, nobody knows what will be the orientation of the Kurdish state to be created; the diapason is very large – from the liberal secular country to the theocratic state on the basis of Islamic radicalism. Hence, the ruling circles of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria are always making joint efforts to counteract the Kurdish nationalism and the leaders of these states are having secret meetings on the Kurdish question from time to time for the purpose of coordinating their actions. For instance, there is information on the agreement obtained between Turkey and Iran to exchange intelligence data about the situation in their borderline regions<sup>9</sup>.

The Great Powers, too, do not show any interest on resolving the “Kurdish Question”. All this provides a ground to conclude that the creation of the Kurdish state is impossible in the visible future. On the other hand, it is reality that the “Kurdish Question” is being gradually subjected to internationalization, becoming a more serious problem in relations of the USA, European Union, Russian Federation, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria and other countries. Decidedly, the Kurds are become serious regional players on the background of events, evolving in the Near and Middle East in recent

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<sup>8</sup> See Pisyany N.K. From the bleeding Mehabad to the banks of the Araxes (transl. from Persian), Teheran, 1943, Part II.

<sup>9</sup> See “Iraq and the Kurds: International Crisis Group (ICG)”, report No. 120, Middle East Institute, 19 April 2012.

years. One can even say that they are key players in the Near Eastern policy. It is beyond doubt that the absence of the statehood always helps the Kurds to operate out of the existing legal relations. This fact as well as the fighting efficiency of the Kurds make them one of the most important players of the present-day Near East.

A question arises, if one can talk of the worldwide Kurdish movement as a united whole? It is difficult to answer to that question. But one thing is evident; despite even the deepening contradictions among the militant Kurds, the dominant idea in the Kurdish ideology was already become the creation of an own independent state, which remains unchanged for all parts of this separated people.

It is absolutely evident that the peculiarity of the “Kurdish Question” requires some alternative ways for its solution. This is conditioned by the fact that the Kurdish community is not, virtually, homogeneous in any of the Near and Middle Eastern countries and does not pursue common goals. Moreover, their behavior and manners have no fixed focus and are conditioned by the dictation of time.

The last decades of the XX century brought huge tragedies for the Kurds. Saddam Hussein annihilated tens of thousands Iraqi Kurds with chemical weapons in 1980. Five thousand Kurds were exterminated in Halabja city in just one day; another 4500 Kurds were annihilated during the so called operation of “Anfal”<sup>10</sup>. More than forty thousand Kurds were killed in consequence of the clashes between the Turkish army and the fighters of the Kurdish Workers’ Party (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan [WPK in English]) after 1988; tens of thousands people are forcibly displaced from their homes<sup>11</sup>.

Now the situation in the Near East on the “Kurdish Question” has the following scenery; the ongoing war in Syria gave a new breath to the Kurdish national movement for the past ten years in the Near and Middle Eastern countries (for the first time it took place after the invasion of American troops into Iraq in 2003). The prevailing part of the Kurds in Syria struggles against the islamic combatants supported by Turkey. The Kurdish militia detachments of Syria fight actively against the military subdivisions of the fighting Islamic groupings called “Jebhad an-Nusra” (“The front of victory”), who are included in the so- called “Free Army” of Syria. The Kurdish national council of Syria, which incorporates 12 parties, submitted an application to the command of the Syrian “Free Army” in January of the last year demanding to immediately put an end to the “criminal war”. An accent is made in the declaration on the fact that the mercenaries who fight on the side of the “Free Army” are becoming “an obedient tool” in the hands of Turkey, and that Ankara pursues its own interests.

The renouncement of Damascus from the centralized control over the Syrian Kurds’ lands became an inspiring stimulus for their kinsmen in Turkey as well.

At present, various organizations of the Syrian Kurds have been united to obtain a regional autonomy like the Iraqi Kurdistan. They are receiving military aid from the USA to fight against the combatants of the “Islamic State”. Moscow, too, declared many

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<sup>10</sup> David L. Phillips, *The Kurdish Spring. A new Map of the Middle East*, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 2015, p. 39.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

times that the struggle of the Syrian Kurds against the terrorists is absolutely affective and legitimate.

The Kurdish autonomy, proclaimed in Iraqi Kurdistan in 1974, is the only Kurdish state organization despite its autonomous status. It is hard to say so far whether it can become the nucleus of the prospective united Kurdish state or not. One thing is obvious in any case; the existence of the Kurdish autonomy in Iraq can be an infectious example for the states with the Kurdish populations in the Near East.

At present, the national aspirations of the Iraqi Kurds are favored by the USA. Perhaps for that reason the leader of the Kurdish autonomy Masud Barzani calls that autonomy a "Strategic Trench of the Near East". Nevertheless, wishing to save the territorial integrity of Iraq, Washington speaks out against the projects of Kurdish independence, considering that this can become a new seat of instability in the Near Eastern region, being explosive even without that.

It is important to note that the disposition of the USA toward the Kurds living in various states of the Near and Middle East is quite different. If the USA and Kurds are cooperating closely in Iraq and Syria, then Washington calls the "Kurdish Workers' Party" in Turkey a terrorist organization. Thus, it is very difficult to speak about the Kurdish policy of the USA in general terms, for the American political scientists distinguish two groups or types of Kurds - "kind Kurds" and "bad Kurds".

In recent times, along with Washington, Moscow, too, tries to make use of the Kurdish card more effectively, who is not only watching closely the Kurdish developments but also tries to influence them. The Russian Federation has also undertaken active steps in the field of exploitation of the rich energy resources in the Kurdish autonomy of Iraq. The Russian company "Gasprom Neft Middle East" is also working actively along with British "BP", French Total, American Ekson Mobile and Gulf Keystone, having been involved in the sphere of carrying out four projects in Iraq, of which three (Halabja, Shaqal and Garmiya) are in the Kurdish autonomous area.

The armed subdivisions of the Kurdish autonomy ("Peshmerga"), which are operating in Northern Iraq, are likewise receiving a certain military-technical assistance from the Russian Federation. In general, Moscow is interested in the stable development of the Kurdish autonomy of Iraq inasmuch as this can become a guaranty for the safety of Russian investments.

The Iraqi Kurdistan is also in the center of the permanent attention of Turkey and Iran, as they have large-scale economic, political and strategic interests there. Ankara, which has refused to recognize the Kurdish autonomy for a long time, is its primary economic partner now. It is succeeded by Teheran in that sense, acting as a second partner.

In April 2011 Recep Tayyip Erdoğan made an official visit to Erbil for the first time as a prime-minister. During the negotiations the parties spoke about expanding bilateral cooperation, especially in the field of energy carriers. It is beyond doubt that the activity of Turkey would disturb the Islamic Republic of Iran inasmuch as Ankara acts in Iraqi

Kurdistan as competitor<sup>12</sup>. In general, Turkey tries to brake the Iranian influence in Iraq, including the measure of assistance to the Sunni population of that country, while Iran, acting from the positions of protecting the Iraqi Shiites, tries to prevent the reinforcement of the Sunni population's positions in every way, including the governmental structures of Iraq.

Generally speaking, the rich supplies of the Iraqi Kurdistan's energy carriers opened a door for rivalry between different states. At present, its oil reserves are estimated at 45 million barrels, and the natural gas reserves at 115 trillion cubic meters. An oil pipeline goes to Turkey from the Kurdish autonomous formation, exporting one million barrels of oil daily. These resources are reaching the Mediterranean port of Ceyhan in Turkey through pipeline.

The autonomy of the Iraqi Kurdistan, which is officially called "The Kurdish Regional Government", produces 200 thousand barrels of oil daily at present. But it should be noted that the Iraqi Kurdistan has no exit to the sea; hence, it faces some difficulties in exporting its energy carriers.

Turkey continues to hold its military presence in the north of Iraq, pursuing a purpose of restraining the WPK's militants, situated in mountainous areas. Turkey tries to acquire the assistance of the Iraqi Kurdistan in the struggle against the WPK's militants, based in the mountains of Kandil, within the zone of the Turkish-Iraqi borders.

No doubts that Turkey and Iran consider the stopping of the Iraqi Kurdish autonomy's aspiration for independence their primary strategic goal. These two states are fully consonant with the fact that the Iraqi Kurdistan should not be converted to a state formation with an independent status from that of Iraqi federation's member. At the same time, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey try to isolate the Iraqi Kurdistan in every way not to let it to have contacts with the political oppositions of their countries.

Now the characteristic line of the internal political processes in Iraqi Kurdistan is the sharp conflict between two mighty clans, having centered the country's rule in their hands, which sometimes grows even into armed clashes. The headman of one of those clans is the leader of the Democratic Party of Kurdistan and the head of the autonomous Kurdistan Masud Barzani, and the other is Jelyal Talabani, the leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, who used to hold the office of the Iraqi Republic's president. The latter calls the clan and party of Barzani "tribal feudals" and proclaims himself the leader of the "Kurdish social-democrats". One of the most important reasons for rivalry between them is the issue of dividing huge incomes, originating from the oil sale, custom houses and other sources as well as the question of monopolizing the resources of the state, in general.

Though an agreement about the ceasefire was signed between the parties by the intermediation of the USA in 1998, the confrontation between them is going on up to now, sometimes in disguised way and sometimes explicitly. The new political parties and groupings (Gorra, the Islamic Union of Kurdistan, the Islamic Grouping of

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<sup>12</sup> See Turkey and Iran Vie for control of Iraq. - <http://www.peyamner.com/details.aspx?1=4&id=238922>.

Kurdistan), born in Iraqi Kurdistan, are further complicating the internal political situation of that region. But Washington tries not to allow the chaotic situation to be created in Iraqi Kurdistan or, as Americans say, not to let Kurdistan to turn into a “Near Eastern Kosovo”.

The viewpoint of all the political parties and groupings, operating in Iraqi Kurdistan, about turning the autonomy into the complete independence is consentaneous. All of them require to pass a referendum regarding that question.

The “Kurdish Question” is also a matter of deep concern for Iran, where a few million Kurds are living, in Iranian Kurdistan and Iranian Azerbaijan, in a collective form, as well as in different districts of the country, in a dispersed form. The religious-theocratic regime, created in that country after the Islamic Revolution in 1979, had adopted the principle of formation a unitary (homogenous) state on the basis of Islam. The unitarianism denies and does not accept any form of autonomy or sovereignty of any minority of the country, based on the Turkish, Iranian or Arabic nationalism.

The Kurds have always been a headache for the government just after the creation of Islamic Republic. In general, they are an element, whom is very difficult to keep obedient. Besides other circumstances, Teheran is also afraid that the Kurdish factor may be put into action by her potential adversaries.

That is right, the Kurds have not raised armed insurrections up to now, but they are usually compared with the unleashed fire, which could be inflamed in every second. Now Teheran is able to successfully use the Kurdish card in the Near Eastern turmoil. But despite all of this, the Kurdish issue continues to be the problem of primary importance in both the internal affairs and foreign relations of that country.

According to the current constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran the activities of political parties are prohibited in that country. Hence, the great part of the Kurdish active political parties is abroad, in exile. Many attempts of negotiations between those parties and Teheran on returning to homeland are ended with failure, since the Kurds pose preconditions that they will return to homeland only in case the rights of Kurds will be recognized and supported by the state<sup>13</sup>.

As concerns the Kurds of Turkey, they have riot flares against the authorities for decades and were in constant struggle for the sake of their national rights.

Beginning from 1984 the “Workers’ Party of Kurdistan” of Abdullah Ocalan (WPK), which is organized in 1978, wages an overt armed struggle against the government with a view of creating Kurdish state in the south-eastern part of Turkey and north-western part of Iraq. This party pushes forward the “federative” principle for the creation of Kurdish state, which implies the creation of Turkish-Kurdish, Iranian-Kurdish and Syrian-Kurdish federation<sup>14</sup>. Of course, that means a requirement for the creation of Kurdish state within the frames of the so called “ethnic Kurdistan”, which, certainly, cannot be acceptable for Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. Ocalan declared that there can be applied

<sup>13</sup> See <http://www.odnako.org/magazine/material/poteryanniy-Kurdistan/>.

<sup>14</sup> See Muradyan I., Problems of security in the Near Eastern policy of the USA, Yerevan, 2003, p. 125 (In Arm.).

the experience of Northern Ireland when resolving the “Kurdish Question” during a TV bridge with London still in 1997 before he was imprisoned.

The WPK had a large military base in Syria until 1998, where its fighters were being trained.

Now there is no unity between the political parties and organizations and a general viewpoint is missing not only on the matter of creating Kurdish state but also on the tactics of struggle. A large part of the Kurdish society demands to recognize constitutionally the ethnic, cultural and language rights of Turkey’s Kurds; to grant an autonomy, which will include such components as decentralization of administrative system of Turkey and provision of broad authorizations to the local self-governing bodies<sup>15</sup>.

Another group requests separation from Turkey and complete independence. The resistance and confrontation between different parties and groupings, having various standpoints on the political future of Kurds turn into fratricidal armed clashes time by time. The weakness of the Kurdish movement is just in that matter.

It is hard to say what is worth the present leadership of the WPK. Abdullah Ocalan, who was a Marxist of Mayo-Castro type at the beginning of his activities, abandoned it later on to attract the Kurdish intellectuals to his side, professing socialist-nationalist ideas. At present, he is sentenced to life imprisonment in the prison of Imrali island in the sea of Marmara. The administration of the party during his absence is carried out by the comrades-in-arms of Ocalan, Zubeir Aydar, Murad Qarailan and Jemil Bayliq<sup>16</sup>.

The political views of A. Ocalan are not distinguished with stability. Those are fluid and contradictory. He declared that he himself stops the armed struggle of the WPK against the Turkish authorities for a while still in 2011. In this regard the Turkish government changed its policy toward the WPK. In jail he was visited by the Turkish delegation with whom Ocalan had allegedly come to terms and signed some kind of agreement letter about the “Kurdish Question”<sup>17</sup>. Nevertheless, the contacts of Apo (the Kurds call their leader this way) with the government of Erdoğan does not mean anything yet. Furthermore, the figures of the WPK estimate such actions of Turkey’s leadership as an attempt to further isolate Ocalan.

Generally speaking, this leader of the Kurdish political movement often changes his standpoints and the lack of realism and, sometimes, also the fact of not taking into consideration the historical reality are characteristic to the programme documents of his party. The WPK has a pretentiousness of sole leadership in the national political affairs. Therefore, all the other Kurdish parties and organizations were declared conciliating, opportunistic, and, sometimes, even traitorous, who violate and reject the national dreams of Kurdish people, and against whom a lasting and uncompromising struggle

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<sup>15</sup> See Meliha Benli Altunishik, The possibilities and limits of Turkey’s soft power in the Middle East, *Insight Turkey*, vol. 10/No. 2/, 2008, pp. 32-35.

<sup>16</sup> See [www.mfa.tr.PKK/KONGRA-Gel](http://www.mfa.tr.PKK/KONGRA-Gel).

<sup>17</sup> See Ocalan and Turkish Government Reach a Deal, <http://www.peyamner.com/details.aspx?1=48&id=239734>.

should be waged. Such a tactic, when the WPK has obtained almost monopolistic positions in the Kurdish movement, weakens considerably that movement.

In the programme documents the WPK proclaims himself an apologist of the idea of freedom for all peoples of the region. Nevertheless, there is no mention about the rights of Armenian people regarding the Western Armenia in the mentioned documents, or, even though, about some kind of assistance by the Kurds to that affair. On the contrary, the territories of the Western Armenia are included within the geographical borders of the so called "Kurdistan", which comprises the political claims of the WPK. Generally speaking, no Kurdish party or serious organization is known, which has different viewpoint on that matter. As concerns the Kurdish nationalists of all kind and color they are all calling Western Armenia "Kurdistan" without exception. Also they are calling arbitrarily the Kurdish population of Western Armenia indigenous (autochthonous) as though the Kurds are living in their "ancestral lands" from the times immemorial.

At present, the Kurdish nationalists, residing in various countries, are publishing books, maps and different kind of booklets in various languages and in a large amount of copies, in which the Western Armenia is called either "Kurdistan" or "Western Kurdistan", having scattered those materials throughout the world.

It is quite obvious that beginning from the Ottoman period the Turkish governing circles have been consistent in their works for the Kurds to perceive the Western Armenia as their "homeland".

Now many people in Turkey defend the viewpoint that the "Kurdish Question" is the number one for the country. But the general view of the Turkish governing circles is that the "Kurdish Question" should be resolved within the frames of country's unity. At the same time, the standpoints about the political future of the Kurdish people are quite different in Turkey. Some say that the "Kurdish Question" should be solved exclusively by military means; others consider that this question has no military solution, since all the attempts to settle the issue have not achieved the desired results. There is also the variant of resolving the "Kurdish Question" through the economic methods, that is, the Kurds won't claim for autonomy or statehood if the Kurdish-populated areas develop economically and the situation of people becomes improved. In that case they won't support the armed Kurdish groupings as well.

Now Turkey proclaims herself a regional superpower. Accordingly, the Turkish politicians declare constantly that how strong the pressure of foreign powers (they have in view, first of all, the USA and Israel) will be upon Turkey on the "Kurdish Issue", so strong will be Turkey in making no concession.

Anyhow, it is beyond doubt that the solution of the "Kurdish Question" in one way or another and as soon as possible is a vital issue for Turkey, for the Turkish ruling circles think that this question not only threatens the security of the state (in the sense of destabilization), but also can result in crashing of Turkey and losing a huge part of the country's territory. Moreover, not only the Kurds of Turkey, but also those of neighboring countries are deemed a threat by Turkey. Therefore, Ankara is vitally interested in

restraining the Kurdish nationalism not only in its territory, but also in Iraq, Syria and Iran. Generally, Turkey tries to make obstacles on the way of creation of some kind of Kurdish independent or autonomous territorial formation.

The president of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan shows that he is under the strong influence of the ancient Turkish nationalism through his behavior and manner. The Kurdish policy and, in general, the orientations of the foreign policy of Turkey are based on the ideology of Neo-Ottomanism for that reason<sup>18</sup>. The government of Erdoğan makes efforts not to allow the rise of the Kurdish nationalism in the “Ethnic Kurdistan” on one hand and tries to mitigate the relations with the WPK and the Kurdish opposition, in general, on the other hand.

At present, the Turkish army and special services have gained great skills in struggling against the Kurdish movement and undermining it. Special army units have been formed, which are trained for the struggle against the mountainous guerilla battles. The national Security Council of Turkey has adopted a document entitled as “An anti-terrorist strategy of Turkey”, which also includes the struggle against the “Kurdish terrorism”<sup>19</sup>. Ankara is also working energetically to shatter the social mainstay of its principal adversary, the WPK. There are created Kurdish “Pocket parties” for that end; something that is not new in the political practice of Turkey. At present, it is the party of “Peace and democracy” that is acting in the Turkish parliament as a sole spokesman of Turkey’s Kurds. There were created armed detachments of the so called “village guards” by the initiative of the Turkish government still in the 1980’s, which were consisting solely of Kurds. Their task was the struggle of “Kurds against the Kurds”.

One of the peculiarities of the Turkish policy is that there are underground power centers in that country, which affect significantly domestic and foreign policy. These influential semi-military organizations are cooperating closely with the government to crash down the Kurdish movement.

According to the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, the non-muslim communities of Turkey are considered national minorities, consisting of Turkey’s citizens of Jewish, Greek and Armenian backgrounds. The Kurds are not recognized as a national minority by the legislation of Turkey; they are deemed as members of the United Islamic community, *umma*. Hence, the situation in the south-eastern provinces of Turkey is not interpreted from the position of national minorities by the Turkish government.

The representatives of the European Union do not agree with that position of Ankara. Furthermore, they think that the “Kurdish Question” should be viewed from the perspective of human rights and freedom. Europeans are afraid, by the way, that in case of being included in the European Union Turkey will move the ethnic rigid conflict to the European territory. It would not be superfluous to note as well that the European

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<sup>18</sup> See A.Davutoğlu, *Stratejik derinlik: Türkiye'nin uluslararası konum*, Kure yayinlari, Istanbul, 2001; See also A.Davutoğlu, *Foreign policy of Turkey and Russia* - <http://www.globalaffairs.ru/number/n-14562> (In Arm.).

<sup>19</sup> See Official site of the Turkish Prime-minister - <http://www.Basbakanlik.gov.tr> Türkiye'nin yeni terörle mücadele stratejisi.

Union included the WPK in the list of the terrorist organizations since 2004 with all of its consequences. The USA also classifies the WPK as a terrorist organization.

One should take into consideration an important reality of the present times, that is the Kurds are acting as allies of the USA. The supreme strategic and security interests require to constantly keep the Kurds in the front-rank positions of their Near Eastern policy. Probably, Washington intends to heal the aspirations of the Kurds within reasonable limits to gain national sovereignty, but not to allow them to pass the permissible limits. It seems that the presence of the USA in the region is securing the balance of powers and do not allow to carry out the pretensions of regional players such as Turkey and Iran.

The hypothetical possibility of the Kurdish-populated areas of Turkey to be separated from the Turkish state impels Ankara to apply the policy of “whip and pie”. Turkey runs a rigid policy, including the usage of military force, on one hand and applies some concessions, not characteristic to the political tradition of Turkey, on the other hand, having a goal to equalize to some extent the contradictions and confrontation between the center and the south-east of the country. Time after time Turkey tries to make impression that has began to approach the Kurdish problem with apprehension. In such a way Turkey wants to leave an impression for the outside world of being a democratic country. The activities of human rights organizations of various countries restrains Turkey, by the way, to act against the Kurds by the traditional methods, typical to that country.

Summarizing the article, one can reach the following conclusions; though the talks that it is the time to unravel the “Kurdish node” are often heard in the USA and Europe, no premise for the settlement of the “Kurdish Question” is still seen in the Near East. The Kurds have great hopes on the US support in that matter.

Certainly, a considerable part of the Kurdish population of Turkey raises the question of creating their own statehood, and another part is supporting the autonomy in Turkey, which means decentralization of the Kurdish-populated areas and transfer of the authority to Kurds. The study of the “Kurdish Question” in Turkey leads to the conclusion that, at present, those Kurdish circles who demand a solution of the Kurdish problem within the borders of Turkey instead of supporting the separation from the Turkish state are not small in number. People with such an orientation suppose, as a rule, that in case of the solution of the Kurdish problem the large country, which has exits to Europe and the outside world, in general, will provide the Kurds with more opportunities than the independent Kurdistan, geographically separated and having Turkey as a hostile neighbor.

Certainly, those of the Kurds in Turkey who have solid consciousness that in case of not resisting the anti-Kurdish policy of the Turkish government the Kurds will be eventually condemned to Armenians' fate are not small in number.

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by V. M. Gharakhanyan***