
THE KURDISH FACTOR IN THE POLICY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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Annotation - an article devoted to the study of political and economic interests of Russian Federation in the context of the Kurdish issue.

According to the analysis of available materials, Russian-Kurdish relations actually began in the 1920s with the recognition of Kurdish nationality by the USSR. [1] At the same time, it was legally a “nation without a state” - the total area inhabited by Kurds exceeds 500,000 square meters in northern Iraq, eastern Turkey, western Iran and northeastern Syria. [2] Indeed, Moscow has recognized the national identity of the Iraqi Kurds since 1970, after which the general ideology and support of the national liberation movement became structural elements of the Kremlin-Kurdish relationship, as well as vectors of Soviet (later Russian) influence in the Middle East.

It is important to note that Kurds have a long time formed a positive impression of Russia. Russian-Kurdish relations have a long history, in the Russian Empire according to the general census of 1897 - Kurds (Muslims and Yazidis) lived 100 thousand people. [3] At the same time, the Kurds served in the Russian Imperial Army, participated on its side in the Russo-Turkish wars.

The Kurdish community provides Moscow with instruments of influence in the Middle East that were renewed by the Kremlin in the 1990s and necessitated the acquisition of instruments of pressure on Ankara. With the onset of the Arab Spring, Russia's political elites are increasingly focusing on protecting Kurdish and Christian minorities in the Middle East. From Moscow's point of view, the Kurds are a moderate force that is playing an increasing role in the fight against ISIS, which poses a threat to Russia's security interests.

In the context of the Syrian crisis, unlike France, Britain, the United States, and Germany, which supply arms to the Kurds, [4] Moscow does not provide military support to them, but provides humanitarian assistance. The Kremlin's restraint and caution in providing military assistance to the Kurds is at first glance at odds with Moscow's stated goals in the fight against terrorism and extremism in the Middle East, but is primarily associated with minimizing risks to Iraq's territorial integrity by providing weapons to

weapons - escalation of tensions in relations with Turkish and Iranian partners.

In general, since 2007, when the Russian Consulate General opened in Erbil, relations between Russia and the PKK have improved. [5] A series of official visits led to Masoud Barzani's arrival in Moscow in 2013, where he signed agreements to grant Gazprom Neft oil concessions. [6] The economic component of cooperation between Russia and the Kurdish Workers' Party is crucial at the current stage of development of bilateral relations.

Thus, Russia and the Kurdish community have been important players in Middle East policy in recent years. A dynamic partnership is developing between them, and the historical aspect gives it additional strength in the relationship. Over the past decade, the Kurdish map has become one of the levers of Russian influence in the Middle East. Today's partnership between Moscow and the Kurds is based mainly on energy cooperation and the fight against ISIS. The Kurdish direction is one of the elements of Russia's strategy to establish and maintain a dialogue with all participants in the Middle East process, which allows Moscow to diversify its channels of influence in the region. This strategy is part of the Kremlin's active policy to prevent the negative consequences of the "Arab Spring" for Russia. In addition, Russia is acting as a stakeholder in the escalation of the Kurdish movement in order to weaken Turkey and keep Syria in its sphere of influence. The creation of autonomous Kurdish entities in Turkey and Syria in the medium term could lead to promising prospects for a Russian-Kurdish partnership. Of particular interest in this regard is the process of granting the Kurds greater autonomy to the Republic of Rojava in resolving the Syrian crisis. Although, on the other hand, Syrian President Assad can also use the Kurdish movement to destabilize Turkey.

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