

Syrian Kurds and Regional Strategy of P. K. K

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ABSTRACT:

The Kurdistan Workers' Party of Turkey was founded in 1978, centered on the ideology of Marxism-Leninism and with the aim of autonomy and independence for the Kurds in the south and southeast of Turkey. Abdullah Ocalan, the leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party of Turkey, has always been working to resolve the Kurdish Question in the Middle East. In this study, which uses a descriptive method based on data collection using library and documentary methods, we have examined the regional Impacts in the field of Syrian Kurds and the strategy of the Kurdistan Workers' Party of Turkey, which is known as the model of democratic self-management of communities. In the past, by reviewing the political events of the Kurdistan Workers' Party of Turkey, we have come to the conclusion that the impasse and the heavy financial and weapons costs of armed struggle for the Kurdistan Workers' Party of Turkey have led to a solution of peace, ceasefire, and peaceful talks. The independent variable of this study is the regional strategy of the Kurdistan Workers' Party of Turkey or the model of self-management of democratic communities for the regions of northern and eastern Syria, and the dependent variable of this study is the Syrian Kurds and other communities in northern and eastern Syria, which is based on the ethnic and cultural geography of the Kurds, Arabs, and Assyrians. The main question of the following research is: What impact has the regional strategy of the Kurdistan Workers' Party of Turkey, which is defined as a paradigm in the ethnic geography of the Middle East, had on the northern and northeastern regions of Syria? In response to My Question, it is My Hypothesis that one of the most important Impact of the arrest of Abdullah Ocalan, as the main leader of the Kurds in Turkey and Syria, was the theorization of a regional strategy called democratic confederalism of societies, which culminates in the democratic self-management of societies in northern Syria, and that the regional theoretical and ideological foundations of the Syrian canton system in the north and east of this country were influenced by this paradigm of Abdullah Ocalan.

Keywords: *Confederalism - Democratic - Syrian Kurdistan – Rojava.*

INTRODUCTION:

A) Literature and research background:

There is no book in Persian regarding the issue of the Syrian Kurds and their cultural, social, and economic situation, especially their role and position in the recent developments on the ground in Syria. However, scattered articles have raised marginal discussions about the Syrian Kurds.

In his book, titled "The Kurds of Syria: The Forgotten People," Karim Yildiz describes the lack of written sources about the Kurds, especially the Syrian Kurds, as the reason for writing this book. Yildiz has well connected the various parts of the contemporary political history of the Syrian Kurds from the time of the Sykes-Picot Agreement to 2005, and in this book, the Kurds' mutual relations with the central government and regional issues are discussed.

In his book "Kurds in Syria: History, Politics and Society," Jordi Tegel examines the formation of the political and social consciousness of the Kurds in Syria through the historical developments of this country to the present day. In addition to having a theoretical dimension in analyzing the Syrian Kurdish movement, this book presents ethnographic

backgrounds on the existential realities of the Syrian Kurds in order to gain an understanding of the situation of the Kurds in contemporary Syria, especially after the 2011 crisis (Tezel, 2016). In addition, Tezel, as a chronicler, has taken a sociological view of the developments of the Kurds in Syria.

Michael Gunter, in his book "The Kurds in Syria: War and Peace 2014," discusses the Syrian Kurds in the civil war and the role of the People's Defense Units against radical and Salafi Islamist groups.

Kurds are the largest ethnic minority in Syria. The Kurdish population is estimated by various sources to be between 8.5 and 10 percent of the total Syrian population, or about 1.7 to 2.5 million people, as of 2019. (www.cia.gov) Most Syrian Kurds speak Kurmanji Kurdish and are Sunni Muslims, with Yazidi and Christian Kurds also living among them. One of the most important consequences of these changes has been the formation of autonomous cantons in Kurdish-populated areas. With the start of the internal crisis in Syria, Syrian society was divided into two main parts, with forces opposing the central government on one side and forces supporting the central government on

the other. The Kurds are apparently one of the most important and major groups that have won the Syrian crisis, because with the withdrawal of military forces affiliated with the central government from Kurdish-populated areas and areas near the Turkish borders in mid-2012, the central government effectively handed control of these areas to the Kurds. Following the developments after the Syrian crisis, Syrian Kurds have found an important opportunity to highlight the Kurdish issue and their efforts to achieve a higher level of privileges and autonomy in the northern regions of Syria (Kazemi, 2017: 10).

In 2011, with the start of the internal crisis in Syria, a new page in history was written for the Syrian Kurds. In mid-July 2012, with the withdrawal of military forces affiliated with the central government from the Kurdish areas and near the Turkish borders, the Syrian government effectively handed over de facto control of these areas to the Kurds. The weakness of the central government as a result of the internal crisis at the country level has paved the way for the Kurds to gain power. After the Kurds took control of the “cities of Afrin, Kobani, Serekani, Dirak”, they formed their own local administration, based on which the Kurds manage the affairs of the areas they control through a special association. One of the most important factors in strengthening the position of the Kurds in Syria after the 2011 crisis has been the competition and emergence of conflicting groups against the central government and the emergence of ISIS. In a situation where the central government of Syria is engaged in a civil war with opposition forces, the Syrian Kurds, who had independent positions regarding the opposition and events in Syria, have taken advantage of this situation and taken control of the affairs of their regions. These developments have created a new situation for this country, in which, in addition to demanding recognition, they have demanded the right to political and administrative control over Kurdish regions (Nasiri, 2014: 4).

The Syrian government's relationship with the Kurds:

The settlement of Kurds in present-day Syria dates back to before the Crusades in the 11th century and the feudal era. ((poskok.info) Then in the 12th century, during the Ayyubid era and the Crusades, many Kurds were brought to Damascus from other parts of West Asia with Saladin as a fighting force. In the early 20th century, with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the signing of the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Treaties of Sur and Lausanne, which were based on granting the right to autonomy to the Kurdish lands of Anatolia, the modern history of the Kurds in West Asia took shape. In 1917, the Bolsheviks revealed the details of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, which was the result of negotiations between representatives of Britain and France. The Treaty of Sur, citing Articles 62-64, which dealt with the issue of Kurdish autonomy and

The drawing of this map is mentioned in detail (cf. Yildiz, 2005). Later, this issue was eliminated in the Treaty of Lausanne, in fact, the Treaty of Lausanne denied the Kurds the right to have an autonomous region. Many Kurds fled from Turkey to Syria in order to escape the oppression and injustice of Ataturk's forces in the 1920s and 1930s and settled in Hasakah province and the Jazeera region. For this reason, the Syrian government claims that all Syrian Kurds are Turkish and have immigrated to this country.

After the declaration of the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 and the coming to power of Ataturk and the revelation of false promises to the Kurds regarding the right to an autonomous Kurdish region, uprisings and subsequent waves of migration from Anatolia to Syria began. The Syrian government uses this fact to argue that all Syrian Kurds are immigrants from other countries. Today, Syrian Kurds can be divided into indigenous and non-indigenous Kurds in terms of cultural geography and population.

Syrian government positions:

Bashar al-Assad says northeastern Syria should gradually come under Damascus' control; the Syrian president says his government's ultimate goal is to reassert control over the mainly Kurdish-controlled areas in the northeast of the country. However, Bashar al-Assad has stressed that this is a gradual process. The creation of a buffer zone known as a "security belt" is a step that could help Damascus return to the northeast of the country. In general, it should be noted that the Syrian Kurds had different positions on the developments in the country. The first natural reaction of the Syrian Kurds to the protests and clashes that began in southern Syria was a kind of declaration of support for other Syrians, which was expressed in a few limited street demonstrations in some Kurdish regions and cities. Cooperation with the Bashar al-Assad government in the military confrontation with ISIS forces is an example of the closeness of the Syrian Kurds and the central government. In the wake of the Syrian crisis, the country's Kurds have found an important opportunity to highlight the Kurdish issue and their efforts to achieve a higher level of privileges and autonomy in the region.

Therefore, the new developments in Syria have created a special space for the activities and role of Syrian Kurdish groups, as well as the influence of foreign actors in Kurdish areas. With the beginning of the internal crisis in Syria and the withdrawal of military forces affiliated with the central government from Kurdish areas and areas near the Turkish borders in mid-July 2012, the central government effectively handed control of these areas to the Kurds. With the beginning of the internal developments in Syria, the Kurds, in the form of the political force of the Democratic Union Party and its military arm, the People's Defense Units, began their political and military preparations and in 2012 succeeded in establishing an autonomous region in northern Syria

under their control. The areas that the Kurds intend to establish an autonomous region begin from the city of Dirak or Al-Malikiyah in Hasakah province and end westward near the Turkish borders near Iskenderun. (Article The Rise of ISIS and the Transformation of Kurdish Behavior) These areas were established within the framework of three separate cantons of Jazira, Euphrates, and Afrin under the democratic confederal governance model and became known as Rojava. As the crisis escalated, the civil war in Syria intensified, and eventually the emergence of ISIS, the Damascus government, which found itself facing several opposing forces, decided in the summer of 2012 to withdraw its forces from Kurdish areas in order to consolidate its position in other strategic strongholds. This gave the Kurds the opportunity to prepare for Kurdish demands, to consolidate their position, and at the same time provided the ground for thinking about their long-standing aspiration, namely the attempt to connect the three cantons together.

In 2013, the Kurdish areas of Syria became one of the main battlefields of violence and radicalism after 2010, which presented the Kurds with the first critical test of their ability to defend their territories. As the Kurds' movement to consolidate their position accelerated, ISIS forces launched their military attacks against the Syrian Kurds. A major part of these clashes took place in the canton of Kobani, which was besieged by Islamic State forces for four months. The Kurds gradually managed to push ISIS back and push this force back from important parts of Syria. After breaking the siege of Kobani and starting the Kurdish advances, they prepared the ground for an alliance between themselves and other military forces to gain international support and increase their legitimacy. This alliance became known as the Syrian Democratic Forces. The Syrian Democratic Forces were formed in October 2015 and are the result of an alliance between Kurds and Sunni Arabs, Assyrians, Turkmen and Armenians, which is essentially a Kurdish-controlled vanguard force in the developments in Syria. With the support of the international coalition against ISIS, this force was able to make successful advances in Syria and, by pushing back ISIS, liberated the strategic city of Manbij in August 2016. It is trying to eventually connect the two cantons of Afrin and Jazira and unite Syrian Kurdistan in a federal form consisting of three cantons. (Article: The Rise of ISIS and its Transformation) With Turkey's direct entry into the Syrian crisis, with the attack of forces supported by this country on Jarablus, the Kurds' wish to connect these three cantons has faced a serious threat. With the rise of ISIS and in 2013, the Kurds took several fundamental steps, first, preparing the political space to implement the plan of democratic confederalism in the Kurdish areas of Syria. Second, the defeat of ISIS in Kobani despite the siege of this city by these forces and attracting international and regional support for themselves. Third, the Syrian Democratic Forces became an effective force in Syria.

Geopolitics of the Kurds of Northern Syria:

The remoteness and isolation of the Kurdish regions have made it very difficult for the Syrian Kurdish political factions to create a united and united society. In addition to the establishment of Arab-populated areas, the existence of small Armenian, Circassian, Assyrian, Turkmen, Yazidi and Christian populations in the Kurdish regions are other difficulties that the Syrian Kurds will face in the future. In addition to internal difficulties, the Syrian Kurds are also facing a series of regional obstacles. The most important of these obstacles is Turkey's political-military hegemony in the region. This means that the start of the civil war in Syria and the subsequent dominance of the Kurds over the Kurdish regions and control over the security and administrative apparatuses of these regions has caused concern for the Turkish government. Meanwhile, Ankara is extremely afraid of the control of the Democratic Union Party, as a branch affiliated with the Kurdistan Workers' Party, over the Kurdish regions, because this party's control over the Kurdish regions near the Turkish borders could provide the grounds for the Kurdistan Workers' Party to establish itself in these regions, and as a result, a new front and base could be opened for the PKK's wider attacks on Turkey. In other words, the presence of the Democratic Union Party in these regions could provide a suitable base for the Kurdish forces opposing the Turkish government, so that they could, on the one hand, advance the war front against the Turkish army on a larger scale, and on the other hand, mobilize the public opinion of the Kurds in Turkey to achieve a situation similar to that of the Kurds in Syria, and become the basis for a broad uprising of the Kurds in Turkey. In the international arena, the emergence of a new autonomous region or the disintegration of a country depends on a large number of objective conditions and human rights. The most important principle in this regard is the interests of the dominant international powers. Only Israel and the Kurdistan Region support the disintegration of Syria. The US government has also expressed its concern about the control of Kurdish areas by forces affiliated with the Kurdistan Workers' Party and has warned that Kurdish groups in Syria should not cooperate with this party. We are also cooperating with Turkey to ensure that this area does not become a place for the PKK to establish itself. In the meantime, democratic integration with the preservation of special rights is the most important scenario for the Syrian Kurds (Nasri, 2014: 31). Without a doubt, one of the most important difficulties facing the Kurds in the future developments in Syria is the demographic and geographical dispersion of the Kurdish areas. "The geographical dispersion of the Kurdish areas in Syria has prevented them from forming a centralized cultural community and political force" (Yildiz, 2005; 23). More precisely, the Kurdish areas are separated by several Arab areas between

them, but all the cities where Kurds live border the Kurdish areas of Iraq and Turkey.

The difference between Rojava and the Iraqi Kurdistan Region in terms of governance model:

Rojava or Syrian Kurdistan, which is a different region from Iraqi Kurdistan, has a type of governance system based on administrative self-government, but in the system or governance model of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, local power is distributed based on ethnic federalism. In Rojava or Western Kurdistan, self-management is in three separate cantons that merged under the name of Rojava, which can be called a kind of convergence for the Kurds of northern Syria. In the ethnic federalism model of Iraqi Kurds, a local government of autonomy has emerged based on the principle of an ethnic Kurdish state in Iraq, which differs from the current system in northern and eastern Syria in this respect.

In terms of government and the way these two models of local and ethnic power distribution are identified, they also have differences, but both have a common view based on the principle of decentralized administration and local government separate from the central government, where Rojava relies on the principle of autonomous and decentralized community-oriented management, while the Iraqi Kurdistan Region relies on the principle of a Kurdish ethnic and autonomous nationalism that has tried to gain independence from the central government.

The role of the leadership of the Turkish Kurdistan Workers' Party and its impact on the Middle East strategy;

In short, the expression of political and cultural views and opinions related to the Kurds of Syria, Iraq and Turkey by ethnic leaders and elites is called a strategy that determines the intellectual basis of Kurdish communities and parties. One of the most important Kurdish leaders is Abdullah Öcalan or Saruk Apu, who has a great influence on the regional strategy of the Kurds scattered in various societies of the Middle East. Theorizing the manifesto of democratic self-management or a model based on a kind of confederalism of democratic societies has led to consequences in northern and eastern Syria for the Kurds of these regions, which covers the geography of the Middle East.

In general, any approach and issues related to the political or cultural rights of the Kurds in the Middle East can be considered a regional strategy for the Kurdish issue.

The Union of Kurdistan Communities or KCK is a senior and organized institution that supports the activities of all Kurdish movements in the Middle East and has chosen the PKK as the main pillar of this larger organization to lead in the Kurdish regions.

Abdullah Öcalan:

Effectively, Öcalan's thoughts and ideology for the PKK and the Syrian Kurds shape the struggle policy

and approach that is undeniable. Many researchers believe that Öcalan changed his views on the Kurdish issue and the former structure of the PKK after his arrest and imprisonment, and showed no affiliation with classical leftist schools such as Marxism-Leninism or Maoism and state socialism, ultimately calling them primitive and regressive.

In fact, Öcalan, who in the mid-1980s and 1990s was looking for a Kurdish ethnic nationalism based on the ideology of Marxism-Leninism, today opposes any ethnic or racial superiority and calls classical Marxism primitive, which has been the basis of his later views under the theory of democratic confederalism of societies in the northern regions of Syria.

This theory reached the testing stage in the Kurdish region of Jazera, the Euphrates Canton and Afrin and took the form of a democratic governance system.

Undoubtedly, the issue of capturing and theorizing this model of democratic governance centered on society in The Syrian Kurds have been the focus of Abdullah Öcalan's views and ideas.

The geography of PKK influence among the Kurds of the Middle East

The long years of struggle and the history of the PKK's struggle have led the PKK to be considered one of the most influential levers and a mainstream movement for the Kurds in Turkey and especially in Syria. The geography of PKK influence extends from the Sinjar Mountains and the Kurdish Yazidis to the cantons of Afrin and Kobani in northern Syria.

The creation and expansion of the great project of self-management of democratic Kurdish or Arab communities and other ethnicities and minorities has been in such a way that rural and urban administrators play a role such as municipalities and the connection between associations and other democratic institutions, and it has been carried out from the bottom up, based on democratic principles, in a hierarchical model and vice versa, that is, starting from small peasant and rural councils and connecting to large urban assemblies and finally to the great congress in the canton.

The Syrian Democratic Union Party and its military branch in the geography of northern and eastern Syria

After the formation of the Turkish Kurdistan Workers' Party organization, a large number of pro-PKK Kurds in Syria were encouraged to occupy areas alongside other Syrian Kurds after the Syrian crises in 2011 and have military forces connected to semi-independent cantons influenced by the PKK ideology, which later formed the Democratic Union Party in Rojava, an organization modeled after the PKK and its military branch or the People's Defense Units. Great attention was paid to the thoughts and ideas and The ideology of the founder of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, was in northern Syria and used the theory of self-management or democratic confederalism within the framework of the ethnic geography of northern Syria to form a new system based on Abdullah Öcalan's new theories, which indicates the serious attention of the PYD leader Salih Muslim to Öcalan's ideology under the system of

democratic confederalism. On the other hand, other independent Kurdish proxies and representatives became active with the support of the United States in the areas north of the Euphrates River after the 2011 crisis and the Syrian civil war, and forces under the name of Democratic Syria, consisting of Arabs, Kurds, Assyrians, Syrians and Turkmens, were formed in these areas from the Syrian Democratic Union Party. These forces are known as the SDF or SDF under the support of the Americans in the northern and eastern regions of the Euphrates River, and they have an active presence in the provinces of Hasakah, Deir ez-Zor, Raqqah and Aleppo.

In general, among the Syrian Kurds and their socialist branch led by Shahoz Hasan and Mazloun Abdi, there has been a greater tendency towards the ideas of the Turkish Kurdistan Workers' Party, while the nationalist branch of the Kurds in Syria is today on the fringes of the PKK.

On the sidelines of the PKK and its regional strategy in Syria, we can mention the Peoples' Democratic Party or HDP and its leader Selahattin Demirtaş, who plays a role in the political and legal policy in the Turkish parliament in Turkey.

This party has been indirectly influenced by the PKK and its leaders.

During the various wars that took place in the northern regions of Syria, the PKK was a supporting force for the military wing of the Syrian Kurds, and even the SDF forces under the leadership of the PKK fought against the central government or ISIS.

The influence of the PKK in the civil wars and after the Syrian civil war was great, which has influenced the political and social relations of the Kurds in Turkey and Syria.

From the 1980s to 2023, these relations between the Syrian Kurds and the PKK continued to be strong. Previously, the central government of Syria allowed the PKK to operate on its territory and provide military training, which ultimately led to the PKK guerrilla operations against Turkey, which indicates the favorable relations between the central government of Syria and in some cases the Lebanese government allowed this organization to operate. It would have given the armed group the upper hand in the Bekaa Valley, which would have marked the most influential period of PKK activities.

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