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Special Political and Decolonization committee

TOPIC 1 - Kurdistan: solving the issue of the largest nation without a sovereign territory.

Introduction

Kurdistan is a territory in the Middle East, where majority of the population is Kurdish. Kurds (or Kurdish People) are one of the indigenous people of Mesopotamia and whom`s territory spreads through 5 countries - Iraq, Syria, Iran, Turkey and Armenia. In the 20th century Kurds started considering creation of their own sovereign territory referred to as Kurdistan.

Definition of Key terms

Peshmerga = armed military forces of Kurdistan

Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) = political party established by Kurds in northern Syria

Popular Protection Units (YPG) = the armed wing of PYD

General Overview

"The Land of Kurds" is an geographical area that is mostly inhabited by Kurdish people. The population is over 28 million (2014 estimate) and it`s divided into 4 parts - Northern Kurdistan, Western Kurdistan, Southern Kurdistan and Eastern Kurdistan, where the biggest part of their land is in the Republic of Turkey. The problem with Kurdistan is their attempts to form their own sovereign country, which has been suppressed by not only Islamic State (IS), but also by all the other countries involved.

After the defeat of Ottoman Empire and after World War I. the first attempts to form their own country emerged. The victorious Western countries provided for autonomous Kurdistan (1920 - The Treaty of Sevres), however 3 years later the modern boundaries of Turkey were set and completely abolished any provision for Kurds (1923 - Treaty of Lausanne).

Kurds vs. Islamic State (ISIL)
In mid-2013 ISIL focused on the northern part of Syria, where three Kurdish enclaves are located. For over a year ISIL attacked these enclaves and first defense took place in mid-2014 with Peshmerga hitting back. The turning point was an offensive in Iraq in June 2014 that saw IS overrun the northern city of Mosul, routing Iraqi army divisions and seizing weaponry later moved to Syria.
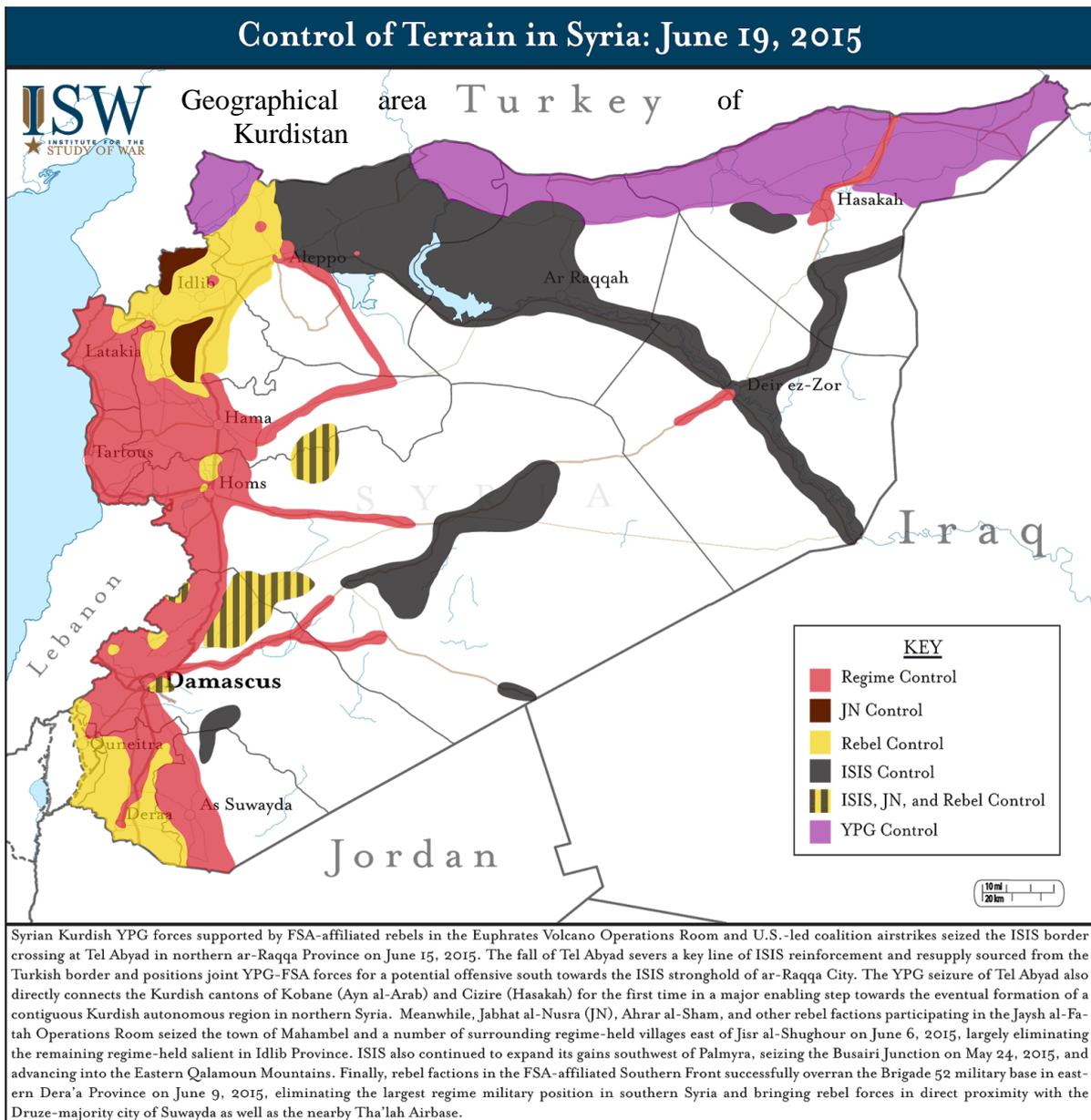
Kurds vs. Republic of Turkey
Kurdish people constitute 15% - 20% of Turkish population. There is a tension between Turks and Kurds in the post-WWI era. Especially in the 1920s and 1930s, when Kurdish names, costumes and tradition were banned and they put restrictions on Kurdish language and denied the existence of Kurdish ethnic group as a whole (they called them "Mountain Turks"). In 1978 the PKK was established - Kurdistan Workers's Party (Partiya Karkeran Kurdistan) and it was led by Abdullah Ocalan. The PKK called for independence of Kurdistan. In 1984 they started an armed struggle, which led to over 40 000 people killed up to now (2016 statistics).

In 1990s the PKK has forsaken their hope for independence and instead tried to negotiate bigger political and cultural autonomy, but didn't stop to fight. In 2012 they started peace talks with the Turkish government and ceasefire was agreed, even though the clashes continued. In June 2015 suicide bombing, that killed 33 people, took place in the mostly Kurdish city of Suran, which sparked the launch "synchronised war on terror" by the Turkish government against ISIL and Kurds (which started attacking Turkish soldier after the bombing).

Countries involved

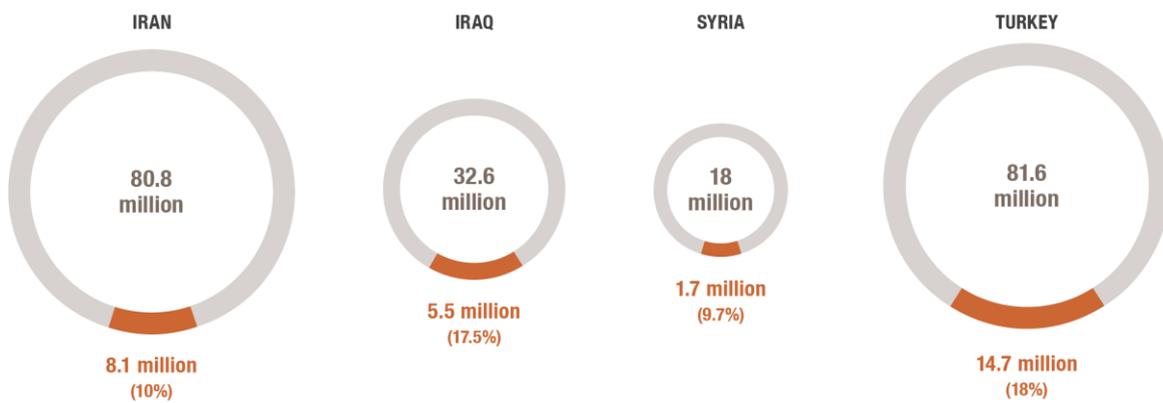1) Syria (Kurdish forces in violet color, ISIL in grey color)

2)

Control of Terrain in Syria: June 19, 2015

Syrian Kurdish YPG forces supported by FSA-affiliated rebels in the Euphrates Volcano Operations Room and U.S.-led coalition airstrikes seized the ISIS border crossing at Tel Abyad in northern ar-Raqqa Province on June 15, 2015. The fall of Tel Abyad severs a key line of ISIS reinforcement and resupply sourced from the Turkish border and positions joint YPG-FSA forces for a potential offensive south towards the ISIS stronghold of ar-Raqqa City. The YPG seizure of Tel Abyad also directly connects the Kurdish cantons of Kobane (Ayn al-Arab) and Cizire (Hasakah) for the first time in a major enabling step towards the eventual formation of a contiguous Kurdish autonomous region in northern Syria. Meanwhile, Jabhat al-Nusra (JN), Ahrar al-Sham, and other rebel factions participating in the Jaysh al-Fatah Operations Room seized the town of Mahambel and a number of surrounding regime-held villages east of Jisr al-Shughour on June 6, 2015, largely eliminating the remaining regime-held salient in Idlib Province. ISIS also continued to expand its gains southwest of Palmyra, seizing the Busairi Junction on May 24, 2015, and advancing into the Eastern Qalamoun Mountains. Finally, rebel factions in the FSA-affiliated Southern Front successfully overran the Brigade 52 military base in eastern Dera'a Province on June 9, 2015, eliminating the largest regime military position in southern Syria and bringing rebel forces in direct proximity with the Druze-majority city of Suwayda as well as the nearby Tha'lah Airbase.

3) Distribution of Kurds in each country involved.

30 MILLION KURDS

IRAN	IRAQ	SYRIA	TURKEY
80.8 million	32.6 million	18 million	81.6 million
8.1 million (10%)	5.5 million (17.5%)	1.7 million (9.7%)	14.7 million (18%)

Source: CIA World Factbook, July 2014

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RELATIONS

UN's approach to the issue

On 5 April 1991 Resolution 688 was adopted by Security Council due to receiving letters from France, Turkey and Iran, which expressed concern over the political oppression of Iraqi people, including Iraqi Kurds. It called for end of oppression and protecting their citizen`s human rights by Iraqi`s government.

Un`s Human Rights Commissioner Al Hussein said, that they continue to receive complaints and accusations of violation of human rights by Turkey toward Kurds. And has formed a monitoring team, which resides in Geneva and it's focus is on the Kurdish area in Republic of Turkey.

Key Events

• 1978 - PKK established
• 2005 - Iraqi Kurdistan gained autonomy in Iraq

Useful sources

1.   *Who are the Kurds? - BBC News - BBC.com* [online].c2016 [cit. 2017-01-16].
< *http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29702440*>.
2. *Who are the Kurds? - Institut Kurde de Paris* [online].c2016 [cit. 2017-01-16].
<http://www.institutkurde.org/en/institute/who_are_the_kurds.php>
3. *Iraqi Kurdistan - State-in-the-making?* [online].c2016 [cit. 2017-01-16].
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24708736>
4. Syria calls on UN to condemn Turkish attacks on Kurds [online].c2016 [cit. 2017-01-16].
<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/02/syria-calls-condemn-turkish-attacks-kurds-160215042458989.html>

TOPIC 2 - The future of refugees: the question of assimilation versus repatriation.

Introduction

With the number of migrants around the world surpassing 244 million in 2015 and considering the fact that this amount is increasing faster than the world's population this reality is yet to be appropriately recognized and addressed. There are many controversies surrounding the topic of migration in general, however with the trend getting even stronger over the past years and the EU's struggles to adequately address the incoming flow of refugees from Africa and the Middle-East, this topic is among those that define today's world. With the current trend of migration and the increasing amount of "homeless" refugees greatly concentrated in some areas the world has to deal with several aspects of this issue.

Two key approaches must be recognized when addressing this topic – *Assimilation* and *Repatriation*. One suggests assimilating refugees into new countries and therefore hopefully making them become a normal and valid part of society where as repatriation is an approach, where refugees would temporarily be accepted until the situation in the area they were escaping from became suitable for their return again.

Varying approaches

Migration naturally evokes a reaction from countries that are target destinations for fleeing refugees and they find themselves forced to approach this issue. The past few years have shown a wide variety of reactions of these countries and this problem has shown to be strongly controversial and has evoked a debate across the whole world. Some have opened their arms to the incoming refugees and have shown genuine efforts not only to accept but also to work on the assimilation of refugees by attempting to address all its aspects. Others, however, don't have such a welcoming approach and rather than focusing on accepting and assimilating refugees they try to avoid the crisis. Instead of cooperating with other countries and sharing the burden of the incoming waves of refugees they close their borders and seek for other solutions for this crisis. Therefore on one side we have the approach of accepting and assimilating incoming refugees and the other opens up the option of potential repatriation of refugees, both approaches require a deeper description and are to be further discussed.

Taking in consideration the recent change of stance that is being held in the United States concerning the question of accepting migrants in general following the presidential elections and the more and more common trend of nationalism and populism across Europe there is a strong need to build a status of cooperation with a clear and effective way of addressing the refugee crisis and the matter of accepting refugees in general.

The world is divided and is failing to undertake a unified stance. Due to the controversy of this topic and the diversity of approaches the future remains covered by a shroud of uncertainty.

Economical impact

Taking in and integrating refugees naturally has an economical impact on the receiving country. The existence of refugees may bring a potential positive economic factor but a certain risk is present as the process of integration must be correctly handled. Accepting and integrating refugees into society is a potentially a part of a solution for countries dealing with an ageing population and a shrinking workforce, the in-flow of refugees can alter the age distribution.

On the other side, large amounts of refugees entering a country may lead to a high unemployment rate among the refugees themselves in the short term, therefore being counterproductive when it comes to the process of assimilation, the situation of labour differs from country to country and the potential consequences for refugees' origin countries are also an utmost relevant factor.

Cultural integration

An often discussed and highly relevant aspect of potential assimilation of refugees is their socio-cultural integration. With varying languages, habits, religion and style of life in general, many remain skeptic about the idea of a successful integration of refugees into new societies. This might prove to be a two-sided problem as refugees may not be able to adapt to an entirely different culture and on the other side the "receiving" society doesn't have to be accepting towards the refugees, therefore leading to a cultural gap between the society and the refugees. This could be further enhanced by anti-refugee propaganda and the recent "phenomenon" of "fake news" and hoaxes concerning refugees in media.

Previous attempts to resolve the issue

On **17 December 2015** a resolution submitted by the UNHCR was adopted by the General Assembly. This resolution stressed, among others - the need for international cooperation, the importance of protection of and assistance to displaced persons, prevention and reduction of statelessness and others. This resolution was highly relevant, unfortunately even though it seemed to be a positive force that would help drive international cooperation towards the resolving of issues mentioned in it, the situation hasn't changed too much since and the relevant issues are still waiting to be addressed adequately by Member States.

A year later on **13 September 2016** the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the **New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants**, this detailed document broke down the issue into small, detailed parts and attempted to address each appropriately. Even though this declaration was well-constructed and targeted each aspect of several issues, its application in reality staggered as various Member States still have various stances and approaches and an organized, precise and effective international cooperation is yet to be reached.

Voluntary repatriation

One potential solution could be introducing "Voluntary repatriation" which would give the refugees opportunity either to undergo the process of assimilation and become a member of a new society or to return to their origin state when the issues leading to them escaping their origin country had been resolved. The unpredictability of some conflicts eg. In the Middle-East could prove to be an insurmountable problem when considering voluntary repatriation, on the other hand though, the opposite of repatriation - integration sometimes does not seem a realistic option in some areas, leaving a highly complicated situation with no apparent "right" solution.

Useful sources

UNHCR resolution adopted by the GA on 17 December 2015:
http://www.unhcr.org/excom/bgares/5729c3aa9/resolution-adopted-general-assembly-17-december-2015.html

New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, Sept 13, 2016:
http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/71/L.1

UNHCR:
http://www.unhcr.org/

Economic impact of refugees in Europe:

https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/11/economic-impact-european-refugee-crisis/414364/

More on refugee repatriation:

http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNACD092.pdf