

Is It Even Possible to “Betray” the Kurds?

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Global Research, February 02, 2018

[Oriental Review](#) 1 February 2018

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [History](#)

In-depth Report: [IRAQ REPORT](#)

“Betrayal” implies that there must have been sincere trust in the relationship, which was never the case with any of the Kurds’ extra-regional Great Power partners, nor will there ever be because of pure Neo-Realist considerations that even they themselves should surely be aware of by now.

Every so often one stumbles upon a statement by a Kurdish official alleging that one or another Great Power “betrayed” the Kurds, such as what Russia has [recently been accused](#) of after giving Turkey the green light for “[Operation Olive Branch](#)”, and these claims frequently pop up at a dizzying pace all across social media whenever a [Neo-Marxist](#) supporter of “Kurdistan” is trying to make a point and win sympathy for their “cause”. Never mind that there’s no such thing as “Kurdistan” in the first place and that it’s much more accurate to refer to this ultra-diverse sub-state region as the “[Kurdish Cultural Space](#)” (KCS) instead, but the idea being conveyed is that its people have repeatedly been let down by anyone who they’ve been made to believe ever gave them any hope at achieving their demagogues’ dreams of “independence”.

The First Western “Betrayal”

The origin of the “betrayal” concept stretches back a century to the end of World War I and Woodrow Wilson’s “[Fourteen Points](#)” of geopolitically weaponized “[democracy](#)”, but ironically overlooks the fact that the Kurdish “bashi-bazouk” who [contributed](#) to the Ottomans’ wartime actions against the Armenians were essentially ‘rewarded’ with that group’s newly depopulated territory anyhow, thus making the concept of “Kurdistan” at the very dawn of its inception more like a “[proto-Israel](#)” than the “proto-Palestine” that it’s nowadays popularly and wrongly presented as. Anyhow, the Turkish War of Independence against the European colonial forces quashed any hope that the extra-regional powers would succeed in carving out this proxy state, and the Kurds didn’t give their “nation-building” mission a second shot until immediately after the end of World War II when they received Soviet military assistance in briefly proclaiming the “[Republic of Mahabad](#)” in northwestern Iran.

Soviet “Betrayal”

The USSR’s pragmatic decision to withdraw support for their envisioned communist puppet state was similarly condemned as a “betrayal” by the independence-seeking Kurds because they didn’t understand the larger geopolitics at play. The “[Iran Crisis](#)”, as it has since been referred to, has its roots in Imperial Russia’s desire to incorporate the northern part of the country into its [sphere of influence](#) and potentially even include it as part of the Empire itself [just like they did](#) with what is nowadays the independent Republic of Azerbaijan (itself the northern part of the transnational Azerbaijan region, of which the southern Iranian

component is much more populous). The USSR [invaded the northern half of Iran](#) together with the British in 1941 under the pretext of safeguarding the transit of vital wartime materials from what was publicly presented to the world as a “fascist”-sympathizing Shah.

This was exploited by Stalin right after Hitler’s defeat in order to de-facto revive his country’s historical claims to a regional sphere of influence under the cover of a clandestinely supported “communist revolution” in the Kurdish-populated regions of Iran that Soviet troops had previously occupied. It ultimately failed because he decreed that the USSR should stop supporting the insurgency after coming under intense global pressure in what has in hindsight been regarded as one of the first real episodes of the Cold War, thus dooming the rebellious Kurds to suffer the Shah’s wrath even though some of them did indeed manage to escape to Iraq and the Soviet Union. Russia’s interest in the Kurds has always been geostrategic, just like every other Great Power that understood the powerful utility of playing the “Kurdish Card” in the quadri-national sub-state KCS, though in keeping with “tradition” and the zeitgeist of “comradeship and solidarity”, this was never openly admitted, whether by Moscow or anyone else then or afterwards.

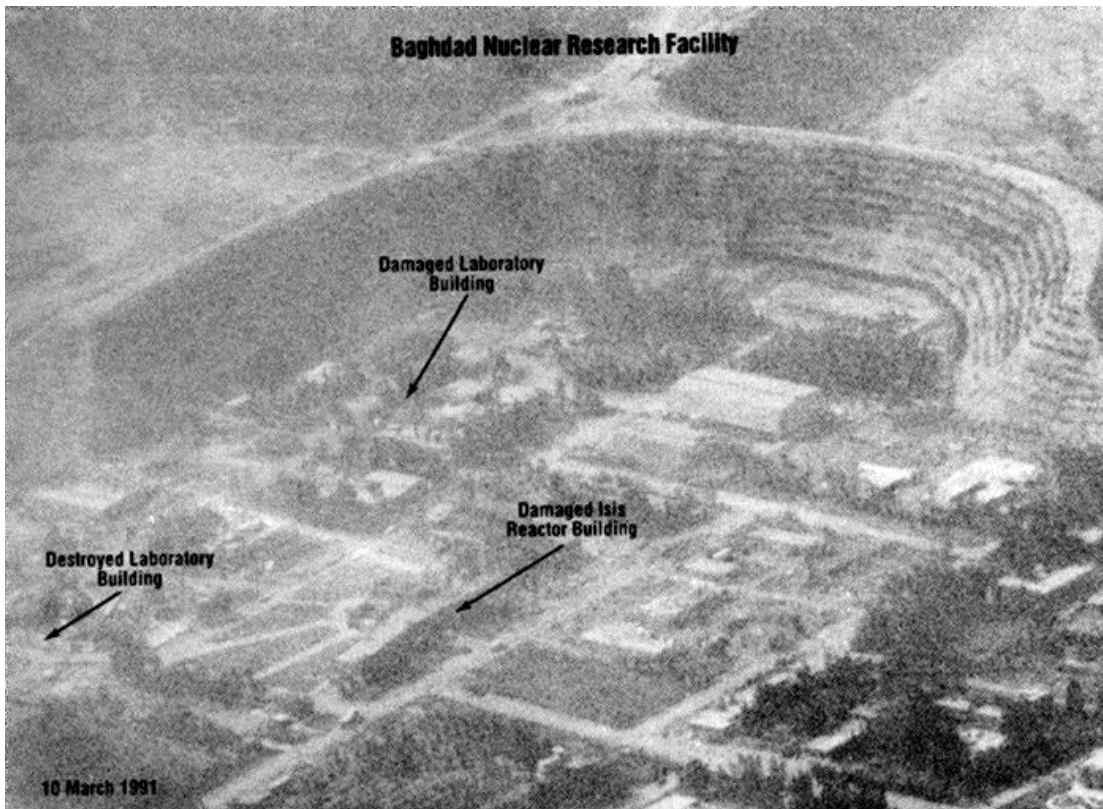
Psychological Predispositions And Neo-Realist Rationale

It’s because of the “convincing” soft power assertions by the Soviet Union and later on Western-based states and activists that the myth of “sincere external support for the Kurds” arose, both within the KCS and abroad, though nobody should have been fooled, not least of all the Kurds themselves. The entire world was duped for decades to a degree in speculating about the scenarios that could have arisen had Wilson’s geopolitical weaponization of “democracy” through the “Fourteen Points” been completely fulfilled in neo-colonially dividing and ruling the entire Eastern Hemisphere via a checkerboard of America’s identity-centric “states”, and this curiosity was driven of course by the natural human inclination to wonder “what if?” especially after the horrors of World War I and II.

Had anyone conducted a sober reading of enduring International Relations thought, however, then it would have been revealed that the Kurds have always been seen as Neo-Realist tools of whichever patron was courting them at the time.

There’s an innate tendency in every person to disillusion themselves with the more “comforting” idea that morals, ethics, and principles have a place in global politics, but the ‘inconvenient’ truth is that such arguments are almost always used as tools for cultivating support for Neo-Realist agendas such as the ones that were described above in reference to the extra-regional Great Powers of the US, Europe, and the USSR. The diverse and [\(sometimes violently\)](#) divided Kurdish people are more susceptible to being deceived than anyone else because the KCS’ demagogues abuse the concept of “Kurdistan” in order to rally the public’s support for their political and/or militant quest to become what de-facto amounts to local “warlords”, and emotional pitches playing to people’s fantasies are much more appealing than rational ones that temper or outright debunk them.

Backstabbing One’s Brothers



Baghdad Nuclear Research Facility - 10 March 1991. The Tuwaythah Nuclear Research Facility, Baghdad, Post-strike. (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

The only true partners that the Kurds ever had and could hope to have are the national governments of which they're legally a part and those states' constituent peoples that are technically their fellow compatriots, though the problem has continuously arisen where Kurdish demagogues are cajoled by the Great Powers (and sometimes even the neighboring states) with the promise of "independence" into launching insurgencies against the only forces realistically capable of genuinely allying with them and assisting with their development. This doesn't justify the excessive and inhumane response by Saddam Hussein when he used Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) against them, but is intended to explain how and why the Kurds always "go wrong" and are repeatedly exploited as geopolitical instruments of others despite the drastically low odds that they'll ever succeed in their campaign, let alone have their foreign patron of the moment fully honor their previous pledge to recognize their "independence" in the unlikely event that they do.

The American And Russian "Betrayals"

Over the past couple of years, much has been said about the [US' geostrategic plans for the Kurds](#) in the New Cold War, which don't differ whatsoever from what the USSR intended for them during the Old Cold War. Back then, Moscow wanted to utilize the Kurds and their transnational KCS as a powerful pivot for exerting influence in the four countries that they reside in, some of which had at times been American allies such as NATO-member Turkey. The communist-era "revolutionary" crusade to "break and then rebuild" has a certain 'logic' to it, but Russia and the US' roles switched after 1991 when Washington realized that it could [weaponize chaos theory](#) to indefinitely prolong, geographically expand, and ultimately further entrench its global unipolar influence. This explains why it "poached" the USSR's former [Kurdish](#) allies as well as its [Baloch](#) and [Uighur](#) ones too, as these sub-state groups are nowadays collectively much more useful in coordinating American-backed "[Lead From](#)

[Behind” Hybrid Wars](#) against the New Silk Roads than they are in spreading the now-defunct ideology of Soviet communism.

At the same time and returning back to the Kurdish focus of this analysis, however, the US shrewdly understands that it doesn't have to dogmatically cling to whatever words it promises this landlocked people if its grand strategic interests could be better served by [renegeing on its earlier implied or secretly agreed commitments](#) in cutting deals with the four targeted national governments involved and/or dramatically downscaling the level of “sovereignty” that it supports for the Kurds in an effort to cynically implement a “strategy of tension” in the region that it can continuously manage to its advantage. Russia, which is also playing by the rules of the “[19th-Century Great Power Chessboard](#)”, does the same thing as the US but is less capricious and actually seems to have a “[balanced](#)” long-term [vision](#) of “[decentralization](#)” in [mind](#) that might present the only realistic “solution” to countering the regional instability that Washington has masterminded.

Kurd Betrays Kurd (And This Time It's A Real Betrayal)

Regardless of how their geopolitical future unfolds, it can be certain that the Kurds have already wised up to their ultra-strategic role in the world vis-à-vis the Great Powers and neighboring states, and it's condescending to imply that their people and especially their demagogic decision makers have yet to recognize this enduring century-long mainstay of International Relations. It's certainly the case that the Kurds' leaders regularly mislead their people and abuse their “messianic” dream of “Kurdistan” within the highly diverse transnational KCS, but this also provides them with a backup “insurance plan” to rely on whenever it fails by “playing the victim” of a conspiratorial “betrayal” by a “trusted ally” for soft power purposes and to consequently prompt an outpouring of sympathy from their domestic and international supporters. It's also an expedient means to deflect any responsibility for the disasters that they cause in pursuit of this goal, but nowadays that trend might be changing as the Kurdish people figure out that they're being manipulated by their own leaders more than by any foreign power.



Masoud Barzani (Source: [The Kurdish Project](#))

To the credit of the Kurds in Northern Iraq, they [brought their chieftain Barzani to account](#) and compelled him to [finally step down](#) after the trilateral blockade of their autonomous region following the “independence” referendum that they themselves took part in. Overcome by what they were misled into believing was ‘irreversible’ historic inertia, they were guided like sheep by their “president” into voting to secede from Iraq, only to

immediately suffer the crushing economic consequences and the impending threat of a military one as well. The real “betrayal”, as they soon came to understand, was that of their top Kurdish demagogue against his own people when he deceived them into voting for an outcome that he never had any intention of implementing. The principled example set by the Iraqi Kurds in [rebellling against their leadership](#) might one day be [replicated in “Rojava”](#) if the Syrian Kurds realize that President Erdogan is [punishing](#) their warlords for implementing the [Yinon Plan](#) and dangerously trying to [play Damascus like a fiddle](#) to this end.

Only when the people of the KCS come to grips with the reality that the only betrayal that they’ve ever truly experienced is that of Kurd against Kurd can the never-ending cycle of their peoples’ instrumentalization by foreign powers come to an end and their transnational region begin to serve as the pivotal center of Mideast stability that it’s more than capable of being in the emerging [Multipolar World Order](#).

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