

# The Kurdish demand for British support to establish an independent state at the Paris Peace Conference

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## Abstract

This attempt made by the Kurdish delegation at the Paris Peace Conference played some part in bringing their question into the international debates. Studying new post-war British policy towards the Ottoman Kurdistan, based on the territorial, local and international perspectives are essential to understand how at 1919's Peace Conference, Britain and the Allies had agreed that self-determination must be the way to determine the Kurd's future; however, they did not have intention on the recognition of Kurdish national state of their own.

The secondary literature has explained important assessments of how British policy was not to ignore the Kurdish demands during the Peace Conference, but to negotiate Kurdistan's future within the Turkish peace treaty. In fact, most of them did not analyze the reasons that were decisive for how British strategic and economic interests conflicted with applying the idea of self-determination. The optimum characteristic of this review is that it primarily concentrates upon analysing original British published and unpublished primary sources to give a more serious understanding of the most significant factor determining the ultimate decision by Britain towards the Kurds at the Peace Conference. Thus, it consults the substantial bulk of documents found in the different British Archives and libraries.

The aim of this study; it covers three sections, which to throughout the first part examines the attendance of the Kurdish representatives at the Peace Conference and their attempt to secure the Allied support. The second one investigates the response of British officials to the Kurdish claim. The last one considers how Britain concluded the fate of Kurds through the peace settlement at the Sevres Treaty of 1920.

## Keywords:

(Paris Peace Conference, Kurdish question, the Armenian question, British policy, Sevres Treaty).

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## پوخته

کۆششی نوێنه رانی کورد له کۆنگره ی ئاشتی پاریس (۱۹۱۹)، له خستنه رووی دۆزی رهوای خۆیان بۆ سه رمیزی گفتووگۆی نیونه ته وه ی؛ کاریه گه ری خۆی هه بووه. دوا ی جهنگی جیهانی یه که م، لیکۆلینه وه له سیاسه تی به ریتانی سه باره ت به کوردستان ی سه ر به ئیمپراتۆریه تی عوسمانی له تیروانینی ناوخۆی و هه ریمی و نیوده وه له تیه وه ده ستپیکتی گرنه بۆ تیگه یشتن له مه به ستی به ریتانی و هاو په یمانانی له و بره وایه دا بوون که مافی چاره ی خۆنووسین بنه مانی بریاردان بێت له ئاینده ی کورد له کۆنفرانسه که دا، له هه مانکاتدا خوازیاری دروست نه کردنی ده وه له تی کوردی بوون. هه رچه نده سه رچاوه دووه میه کان گرنگی خۆیان هه یه له خستنه رو و هه ئاشکرا کردنی ئه و راستیه ک به وه ی که سیاسه تی به ریتانی سه رده می کۆنفرانسی ئاشتی نه ک هه ر داواکاری کوردی پشتگوێنه خستوه، به لکو گرنگی به گفتووگۆکردن له سه رئاینده ی کوردستان داوه له چوارچێوه ی ریککه وتننامه ی ئاشتی تورکیدا. به شی زۆری ئه وه سه رچاوانه ئه وه و کارانه یان را فیه نه کردوه که هۆکاری یه ک لایکه ره وه بوون بۆ خستنه رووی چۆنیه تی هاوته ری ی به رژه وه ندییه ستراتیژی و ئابوورییه کانی به ریتانی له گه ل بېروکته ی مافی چاره ی خۆنووسین.

خالی گرنگی ئه م توێژینه وه یه خۆی له وه دا ده بینێته وه؛ له پشت به ستن و شیکردنه وه ی سه رچاوه ی ئه رشیفی ره سه نی بـلاوکراوه و بـلاونه کراوه ی سه ربه یه که جیاوازه کانی حکومه تی به ریتانی داوه، به مه به ستی خستنه رو و تیگه یشتنی باشترو هه مه لایه نه له و هۆکارانه ی که گاریگه رییان هه بووه له سه رکۆتا بریاری به ریتانی سه باره ت به کورد له کۆنفرانسی ئاشتیدا، مه به ستی توێژینه وه که له سی بـاس پیک دیت، باسی یه که م تایبه ته به ئاماده بوونی نوێنه رانی کورد وه وه له کانیان بۆ ده سه ته به رکردنی پشتیوانی هاو په یمانان له کۆنفرانسی ئاشتی پاریسدا، هه رچی باسی دووه مه؛ گرنگی ده دات به لیکۆلینه وه له بیرو بووچوونی لێرسراوانی حکومه تی به ریتانی که له وه لای یاداشتی نوێنه رانی کورد له نیوکۆنفرانسه که دا خراونه ته روو، کۆتاباسی ئه م توێژینه وه یه بریتیه له لیکۆلینه وه له دیاریکردنی سه رئه نجامی چاره نووسی کورد له ریککه وتننامه ی سیفه ری ۱۹۲۰ له لایه نه به ریتانیاه.

## الملخص

كان لمحاولات التي قامت بها ممثلي الكورد في مؤتمر سلام باريس دور في عرض المسألة الكوردية في مفاوضات الدولية، البحث في سياسة بريطانيا بعد الحرب العالمية الاولى تجاه كوردستان العثماني على اساس التوجهات الاقليمية والمحلية والدولية تعد بداية مهمة لفهم مقاصد البريطانيا وحلفائها حيث كانوا يأمنون بأنه يجب ان يكون منح الكورد حق تقرير المصير اساس لاختذ القرار في مستقبل الكورد في مؤتمر السلام، مع انهم لم يكونوا مع اعتراف بدولة كوردية قومية.

مع ان المصادر الثانوية له اهميته في توضيح تلك الحقيقة وهي ان سياسة الانكليز فترة انعقاد المؤتمر لم تكن سياسة اهمال مطالب الكورد، بل كان سياستها عبارة عن مناقشة وتفاوض حول مستقبل الكورد ستان في اطار اتفاقية باريس التوركية. الا انه اكثرية تلك المصادر لم يحلوا الاسباب الحاسمة التي تاكد محركات المصالح البريطانية مع فكرة تقرير المصير.

الجانب المهم في هذا البحث هو اهتمامه بتحليل المصادر البريطانية الاصلية المنشورة والغير منشورة وذلك بهدف توضيح وفهم تلك الاسباب التي له اثر على القرار نهائي لبريطانيا تجاه الكورد في المؤتمر.

البحث يتكون من ثلاث مباحث .. المبحث الاول يهتم بحضور ممثلي الكورد في المؤتمر ومحاولاتهم لكسب دعم الحلفاء في المؤتمر واما المبحث الثاني يهتم بالبحث عن اراء مسؤولين البريطانيين من خلال اجوبتهم لمذكرة ممثلين الكورد التي عرضت في المؤتمر والمبحث الاخير عبارة عن البحث في تحديد مستقبل الكورد في اتفاقية سيفر ۱۹۲۰ من قبل بريطانيا

## Introduction

On January 18, 1919, the Paris Peace Conference began to address the issues appearing after the World War I, during which discussions over the peace treaties took place between the victors and their associate countries and the defeated powers. After the War, the idealism and optimism promoted by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson strive for a final peace process that promoted by a worldwide framework and fraternity of states. (Mac-Millan, 2010, 111)

Similar to other nations within the Ottoman Empire, Kurds were also cheered by President Wilson's fourteen points, particularly point 12 which stated that the nations in the Ottoman Empire should be guaranteed of having a free right to shape their own political rights and autonomous development. (Los Angeles Times, 13 October 1918). Consequently, in the conference, the ongoing talk of redrawing a new political map for the Middle East gave an opportunity for the Kurds to seek support for their demand to form an independent Kurdish state. The Kurdish delegation at the conference was headed by General Sharif Pasha, an educated Kurdish noble and a member of an important authoritative family in Sulaimaniyah, who had been the Ottoman Ambassador to Sweden from 1898 to 1908 and then became Paris resident. He was the first Kurdish leader who had officially asked to form an independent Kurdish state. In his plan on 3 June 1918, Sir Percy Cox (the Civil Commissioner in Mesopotamia, 1916-1918 and the High Commissioner in Baghdad, 1920-1923), reported his meeting with Sharif Pasha on that day at Marseilles, in which the later asked about the future of southern Kurdistan and demanded guarantees for Kurdish autonomy under British protection, as one way to facilitate the simultaneous of Armenia to the north, since a British-controlled Kurdistan could be a friendly neighbour. Cox also noted that Sharif wished to propose his earlier demand for independence of Kurds of 23 November 1914, which he had addressed to the British Government at different times since then. Sharif also mentioned that he was ready to take responsibility as a chief of an autonomous Kurdistan state.

Although Cox did not promise to support Sharif's demand, as he indicated that he was not in a position to do so, but he inclined to accept the memorandum as it concerned the pro-Kurdish areas in southern Kurdistan and did not include the Northern Kurdistan and Armenian areas. (TNA/FO/371/3398, 1918) The British government was happy with Sharif's earlier proposal to consider only southern Kurdistan, but they believed that the political situation had been considerably changed. The response by the Secretary of State for India to the Civil Commissioner on 28 October 1918 stated that 'Hatred between Kurds and Armenians due to political not religious or racial intrigues [was] fostered by Turks'. (TNA/FO/371/3398, 28 October 1918) To reconcile the problem between the Kurds and Armenians, the Civil Commissioner recommended establishing the guardianship of British authority in Mesopotamia and then in Southern Kurdistan. (TNA/AIR/20/512, 30 October 1918)

### The Kurdish delegation at Paris

In January 1919, the Committee of Kurdish Independence which formed in Egypt, headed by Sharif Pasha, addressed the Paris Peace Conference. Sharif's big network and links among Kurdish intellectuals and his great skill were the reasons why he was trusted by Kurdish leaders from all parts of Kurdistan as the most suitable man to lead the delegation in Paris. He was nominated by the Kurdish nationalists who had established the Kurdish Council of State in Istanbul, also known as the Kurdistan Committee, headed by Sheikh Abdul Qadir, Chieftain of the well-known Shamdinan family, and with the involvement of the Badir Khan family members in Egypt who were influential in the northern part of the Mosul vilayet. Sharif was also supported by Simko Shikak, a famous Kurdish leader in Persian Kurdistan. In southern Kurdistan, people who had trusted the leadership of Sharif hoped that as a different race they would gain British support. (TNA/FO/608/95, 5 January 1919 & TNA/FO/371/4193, 28 March 1919 or Busch, 1976, 184), Therefore, in March 1919, Mahmud sent to Sharif two representatives who took a memorandum signed by people in Sulaimaniyah in the presence of Major Edward Noel, the principle British Officer in Kurdistan and a sympathiser with Kurdish nationalism, which asked for the establishment of a Kurdish state. However, as the British government did not allow them to come to Paris, these representatives were not able to give the memorandum to Sharif. (Hilmi, 2003, 53-54).

In his letter of 6 February 1919 to the Paris Conference, Sharif explained the reasons why forming a Kurdish emirate should be supported. He mentioned that Kurdistan would be a barrier against the dangerous Bolshevik ideology that already dominated Armenia. He also marked the existence of geopolitical conditions for increasing trade and economic development in Kurdistan. (TNA/FO/608/95, 6 February 1919), In fact, the idea of using the Kurds as a buffer state against Russian Communist threats referred back to 1915. It is important to note that, to large extent, the Armenian issue and their claim for self-determination contributed to the Kurdish attendance at the conference. Therefore, Kurdish aspirations were considered by the British officials at the conference as an important matter affecting the settlement of the Kurdish-Armenian populations in the districts where they were mixed. The Armenians had already claimed compensation and were proposed a map for building a great Armenia, including the areas called the six Kurdish-Armenian vilayets of Bitlis, Erzerum, Diarbekir, Kharput, Sivas, and Van in eastern Turkey where Armenians were to be found. The Armenian question would significantly affect the extent of British support for the Kurds. While there was a broad feeling of support to demand the creation of an independent Armenian state by European countries, British policy-makers saw this as the most difficult question, as the Armenians and the Kurds were two different nations who had different religions but equal rights to the same land. (TNA/FO/141/806, June 1919) In fact, the issue of the Armenian massacres both prior and at the course of the First World War by the Ottoman authorities resulted in an evident humanitarian remoteness. This had led an inclusive ethical response by the public opinion around the United States and Europe to support the ambition of Armenian nationalist (Eskander, 2014, 112).

It could be argued that this sympathy feeling by Britain and other Europe powers toward the Armenians would

cause a major conflict between the two races in the areas where the residents were predominantly Kurds, and they had no intention of submitting to Armenian domination. Noel had been sent by his government on a mission of inquiry of certain areas largely inhabited by the Kurds. He made a visit to the most of the question area, argued that the Armenians had misrepresented data, and he stated that 'the vilayets of Bitlis, Van, Diarbekir and Mamourt el Aziz (Kharput) comprise roughly 80% of the lands predominantly Kurdish' (St. Antony College, July 1919, 14-15). To be clear, the Kurdish inhabitants were stretched from Kars and Tiflis to Adana and from Trebizond and Malaita to Rawanduz, and they accounted for 90% to 95% of the populations in these vilayets. (TNA/FO/371/4191, 20 June 1919) Therefore, the Kurds argued that they had a priority for compensation, as they were an older race in the region and Kurdistan had existed long before Armenia. On this basis, the Kurds asked Britain not only to let them to be free from the Turkish authorities but also to help them to rebuild their country. (TNA/FO/608/95, 16 December 1918)

At the Paris Conference, Sharif proposed a memorandum on 22 March 1919 which included a map of Kurdistan. Contrary to previous British expectations, Sharif demanded the establishment of a Kurdish emirate that included the Persian and Turkish portions of Kurdistan. He also warned about the danger of forcing the Kurdish districts to be included in Armenia, and he also called on the Allies to support Kurdish independence:

I would ask your permission to point out emphatically, that if those districts where Kurds are in majority are to be included in the new Armenia, regardless of their warlike spirit and jealousy of independence, there cannot be the slightest doubt that a chronic state of disorder will reign in Armenia, unless the Allies are prepared to occupy the country indefinitely with a strong army, and even then they would be subject to all the attacks of guerrilla warfare ... Finally we demand, that independence which is our birthright, and which alone will permit us to fight our way along the road of progress and civilization, to turn to account the resources of our country and to live in peace with our neighbours. (TNA/FO/371/4191, 22 March 1919)

Sharif's claim was expected to raise more disputes not only between Kurds and Armenians, but also between the Allied powers. The latter manipulated this issue as a political card to secure their interests. Simultaneously, Kurdish resistance continued in south and east of Kurdistan against the British authorities and the Iranian government, which caused more difficulties in the front of the settlement of the question. Regarding the French concern, on 27 January 1919 the British Director of Military Intelligence in Paris had been informed of the anxiety of Georges Picot, a French delegate to the Peace Conference, about the intention of Mark Sykes to establish a Kurdish emirate including Mosul. Picot believed that such an intention would sacrifice the minority groups, such as Nestorians and Chaldeans, who historically had been protected by France, and so this plan would be against the interests of the French government. (TNA/FO/608/95, 27 January 1919) This was an obvious indication that despite the previous Anglo-French renegotiation over Sykes-Picot agreement in 1918, France did not yet practically renounced the Mosul vilayet. It has to be mentioned that as far as France was concerned about the oil concession in Mesopotamia, especially in the Mosul vilayet and its rich oilfield in the Kurdish districts,

the French demanded a share in the oil that would be produced when the region's oilfields were developed in return for agreeing to British control over the Mosul Vilayet. This deal was eventually secured in April 1920 at the San Remo Conference. The French industrial need for coal and iron and its lack of petroleum at home, a concern since the Paris Peace Conference in September 1919, was assumed a fundamental factor in deciding the form of the Anglo-French oil agreement at San Remo. PA: Lloyd George MSS, F/206/4, 12 December 1919) As a matter of fact, the general British tendency at the Paris Peace Conference was to support the Armenians rather than the Kurds. Accordingly, in order to counter the Kurdish opposition to the formation of an Armenian state, possible political and military alternatives were suggested by the British government. As regards the military option, it considered the necessity of occupying Kurdistan in order to control the Kurds. Alternatively, the government proposed the possibility of examined those tribes who had good relations against the Kurdish nationalist elite with Britain in southern Kurdistan. (TNA/FO/141/806, June 1919)

### **The British Response to the Kurdish Demand at the Conference**

The British reaction had given some prominence to Sharif's claim, and various proposals were made amongst British policy-makers, through which there was a considerable talk of defining the British stance toward the future status of the Mosul Vilayet and Kurdistan. Sir Arnold Wilson (the Civil Commissioner in Mesopotamia from 1918 to 1920), proposed two alternatives to the inter-departmental conference on 17 April 1919. First, the creation of an Independent Kurdish state with Mosul as its capital. Second, and his most favoured alternative, which was generally accepted by the conference and which Wilson was authorised to implement, was to include the Mosul vilayet in Mesopotamia, but as an autonomous Kurdish area. Noel supported this alternative, but Major Ely Soane (A British political Official in Mesopotamia and Kurdistan) did not, as he believed that if this happened the powerful chieftains of Kurdistan would make it difficult for the Baghdad administration to obtain the 150,000 pounds of annual dues which came from the collection of tobacco in Kurdistan. (TNA/FO/371/4149, 27 August 1919) Despite the conference's recommendation, Wilson seemed to be continuing the policy of the inclusion of southern Kurdistan in Mesopotamia. In this regard, on 21 May, he urged the necessity of dealing with all Kurdish affairs from one centre, and recommended himself to take responsibility for this. (TNA/FO/371/4191, 12 May 1919) Wilson's aspiration to control the larger areas in Iraq may have been a reason to continue his policy rather than the government's recommendation. Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, mentioned that this could be deemed as Wilson's effort to extend his influence in the area. (TNA/FO/371/4191, 22 May 1919) .

In fact, keeping Kurdistan under British mandatory supervision was one of the Kurds' main demands at the Paris conference, but British official views were divided over this. In this respect, despite of Sharif Pasha's constantly demand for not placed the Kurds under the state of Armenian, Louis Mallet, a member of the British delegation at the peace conference, pointed out that the Kurdish settlement would be based on the allocation



of a mandate, but he also indicated the impossibility of including the Persian Kurds in this, whilst the Kurds in the Mosul vilayet were already living under British administration. (TNA/FO/608/95, 21 April 1921; & TNA/FO/371/4191, 27 May 1919) On 13th June, Wilson supported the previous expectation that the United States would accept the mandate for the two predominately-Armenian vilayets and Britain would accept the remaining four overwhelmingly-Kurdish vilayets. (TNA/AIR/20/741, 22 October 1919; & TNA/FO/608/95, 21 March 1919) Noel, who supported the drawing of ethnic boundaries between Mesopotamia and Kurdistan, advised the government to exclude Kurdistan from Turkish sovereignty and not to partition it. He believed that it would be a great advantage to Britain if the Kurds were left to themselves; otherwise, they would turn against Britain if they were forced to be under Turkish rule. Noel also considered that awarding local autonomy to Kurdish districts under the guardianship of mandatory countries would prevent Turkish control over them. Moreover, he suggested that the administrative districts should be formed only after the complete examination of the local situation by the mandatory powers. (TNA/AIR/20/741, 22 October 1919) Noel's suggestion was a more logical basis for British policy towards Kurdistan; however, the military and political aspects had to be carefully considered in order to make any decision regarding the future of Kurdistan. On 22 November 1919, a telegram from the India Office to the Acting High Commissioner in Baghdad including that the British government favoured the short frontier for Mesopotamia, as they believed that they could not consider taking military action across the Turkish frontier. Under no circumstance would the government take mandatory responsibility for Kurdistan, but they would prevent the restoration of the Turkish rule over Kurdistan. The British government had concluded that running Kurdistan would be left to the Kurds themselves, and Noel's advice therefore would be the basis to implement this. The British government considered this as the best political and military way to prevent Turkish influence over Kurdistan, and to return the Assyrian refugees, that they would be lived with the Kurds in a friendly manner. (TNA/FO/371/4193, 22 November 1919; & TNA/FO/371/4193, 10 January 1920) This direction of this view was supported by the chief decision-makers. On 20 December 1920, Montagu supported creating a small autonomous Kurdish state in southern Kurdistan, which would be under the British sphere but politically and economically separate from Mesopotamia. Montagu argued that such a state should not be subordinate to the British government, but it should be assisted by British advisers assigned by the British High Commissioner in Baghdad. (IOR/L/PS/10/782, 20 December 1919; & TNA/FO/371/4193, 20 December 1919) On 22 December 1919, at the Anglo-French Conference on the Turkish settlement, Curzon proposed six suggestions to Berthelot, the Chief Secretary for Political and Commercial Affairs in the French, that he supported the general British intention and Noel's view in preventing the Turkish authorities over Kurdistan and to reject any mandate for Kurdistan, a part from southern Kurdistan which would go under the British mandate. Berthelot was generally agreed with this; (PA/F/206/4, 22 December 1919) however, in a note handed to Curzon a day later, he supported the partition of Kurdistan between French and British zones, but he agreed that no final decision would be made as regards Kurdistan until the situation in Mesopotamia and Armenia was

settled. As regards north Kurdistan, Curzon indicated the necessity of providing political, financial and military support to the Badir Khan family to establish themselves in Bohtan, with their capital city at Jazeera. (BL/IOR/L/PS/10/782, 19 April 1920; & TNA/FO/371/4193, 10 January 1920) As far as Persian Kurdistan was concerned, according to the Article One of the Anglo-Persian agreement signed on 9 August 1919, it would be impossible for Britain to support the inclusion of the Persian controlled areas of Kurdistan in a united Kurdistan. (TNA/FO/608/95, 27 August 1919) .

Despite the fact that there was strong support for forming a Kurdish state in south as the main line for British policy, an agreed proposal for settling the Kurdish question still did not yet exist. It was obvious that the British government had difficulty in settling this question due to its complex political nature. Although throughout the consideration of the Mesopotamian question some British officials supported the establishment of the Kurdish state in the northern country. This was contradictory to the opinions of other officials who considered the affairs of southern Kurdistan from the perspective of the de facto position in the Mosul vilayet that was to allocate into the British Mandate. From this premise, the policy to be adopted towards the Kurdish question by British officials was based on some assumptions. These were firstly, the fate of the Armenian question and European sympathy with it; secondly, the question of maintaining or not maintaining future Turkish authority in Kurdistan, and finally the allocation of the mandate and the Anglo-French dispute over the Mosul vilayet. The Turkish nationalist movement in Anatolia was assumed to be the greater danger to Britain. Therefore, British officers were considering encouraging Kurdish and Armenian ambitions against the return of Turkish authority, and this resulted in the signing of an agreement of solidarity between Sharif Pasha and Boghos Nubar Pasha, the leader of the Armenian delegation. As a result of this, they made a declaration on 20 November 1919, in which they agreed to seek the establishment of an independent Kurdish-Armenian state, based on the national principle, with the assistance of the allied countries. (TNA/FO/371/4193, 28 November 1919) The agreement was achieved on the highest effort by the Kurdish leaders to take a turn for the better relations amongst the Kurds and Christians. Erasing the long-standing negative envision of the Kurds in the eyes of the Christians and getting more European sympathy stances toward the Kurdish national ambitions, were the main goals of the Kurdish leaders. Significantly, they attempt to stop Turkish nationalists from using the religious factor as a tool to drive the Kurds anger against the Allies powers and inhabited Christians. (Eskander, 2014, 126) Although the Kurdish-Armenian declaration created a friendly political atmosphere which would reduce the recently created tensions between the both nations and would stand against the Turks, British policy in this stage aimed to use the influence of the Kurdish leaders in northern Kurdistan to counter the Kemalist Movement. This was suggested by Noel, especially the appointing of Badir Khan as governor of the Diyarbakir vilayet. For the same reason, Badir Khan had been chosen by the British government to accompany Noel in his mission in Kurdistan. (TNA/FO/371/4193, 29 September 1919; & TNA/FO/371/4193, November 1919) This can be seen as a British counter action for the Kemalist instigation of Kurds in north Kurdistan against Britain. It also meant to



stop the Russian influence in Kurdistan. Since the Armistice of Mudros, the prominent Kemalist leaders were continually visiting the Kurdish areas and making promises to Kurds by providing them the war equipment's and money to fight Britain. (St. Antony College, 8 march 1920) In fact, the influence of Mustafa Kemal, was becoming increasingly dangerous, not only to Britain but to Turkey and France as well. A telegram from the British High Commissioner in Constantinople to the Foreign Office on 28 July 1920 quoted the position of the Turkish Grand Visier as follows:

Kurdish leaders hate Mustafa because he wants to bring Bolshevism in to support him. I hate Mustafa Kemal because he wants to ruin the country. You hate Mustafa Kemal because he does not want your treaty, let us therefore together use Kurds against him. (TNA/FO/371/5069, 28 July 1920)

### **The Treaty of Sevres on 10 August 1920.**

The peace settlement with Turkey resulted in the Treaty of Sevres on 10 August 1920. A few weeks before this Treaty was signed in July 1920, a memorandum signed by 62 Kurdish notables and chieftains from the Sulaimaniyah, Arbil and Mosul districts, was despatched to the British authorities in Baghdad, demanded the creation of an independent state of Kurds under direct British control. (TNA/FO/371/5069, 3 July 1920) In fact, the formation of a national state for the Kurds was considered by the Allies in the Articles 62, 63 and 64 in the treaty. Article 62 proposed that within six months to the day of the Treaty taken effect, the existing Committee, consisting of the British, French and Italian representatives, should prepare the scheme of an autonomous Kurdish state in the predominately Kurdish areas 'east of the Euphrates, south of the southern boundary of Armenia, north of the northern frontiers of Syria and Mesopotamia'. (BL/IOR/L/PS/10/782, 30 April 1920) In order to obligate the Turks to accept this state, the commission made two stipulations in Article 63; that if the majority of Kurdish inhabitants in the defined areas showed their desire for independence and if the Council of the League of Nations 'considers that these peoples are capable of such independence', then Turkey must accept this, and 'cede all rights and titles over this area'. (DBFP, series 1, 8, 19 April 1920, p.45; & BL/IOR/L/PS/10/782, 30 April 1920) As the political situation in southern Kurdistan was affected by the situation in Northern Kurdistan, the affairs in southern Kurdistan were also highly concerned to be addressed through the consideration of northern Kurdistan. According to Article 64, if the Kurds in southern Kurdistan, who until now had been in the Mosul vilayet, could if they wished join this state without any prevention 'by the principal Allied Power', and this autonomy was to be transferred into independence after a year. (TNA/FO/371/6342, January 1921; & BL/IOR/L/PS/10/782, 30 April 1920)

As a result of the general activities of the Kurds and the weakness of the Turkish regime, the Paris Peace Conference made a great basis for the Kurdish demand for self-determination to be confirmed at the Sevres. It can be said that Articles 62, 63 and 64 were the first international recognition of the possibility of a Kurdish state, and it was the significant opportunity for southern Kurdistan to be part of a great Kurdish state rather than

being attached to Iraq. However, although theoretically according to Article 62 and 64 of the Treaty of Sevres, the Kurds were ostensibly very close to have their independence, the treaty never took effect due to the fact that the British government itself did not believe that this concept is reasonable and it did not willing to commit itself to protect such a state in the area outside its control. In other words, the last paragraph of Article 64 was clearly against British political and economic influences in its-controlled southern Kurdistan. During the course of the negotiations by the Allied 'Curzon was emphatic in his view that the Southern Kurds did not want to be removed from the Mosul vilayet'. (Eskander, 2014, 149) Growing strength of nationalists Turkish that resulted in the newly-founded Kemalist regime under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal (Kemal Ataturk), a former army commander, was also a major factor contributing the Commission of Allied, especially Britain and France, during the discussion at both the Sevres treaty and post-Sevres time, for Kurds to not achieve independence. Ataturk used the Anglo-Russian conflict for his benefit. After the Turkish National Movement's victory over Greece in the west of Anatolia in 1921 -22, the British government found him to be a new ally in the Middle East, whilst previously he had been supported by the Bolsheviks.

At the Conference in London from 21 February to 14 March 1921, the Kemalist regime denied the application of the Sevres principle of Kurdish independence, and they indicated that the Kurds did not wish to be separate from the Turks. The Kemalist delegation claimed that they also represented the Kurds, which the latter denied. The absence of Kurdish representatives from the London conference might have been a problem for the Kurds, while an Armenian delegation was present. The conference awarded the opportunity to the Kemalist regime to override the Ottoman regime and begin a new stage of good political relations with the Allied powers. This was also another major factor that caused the British government to alter its vision about the Kurdish situation, which would withdraw the promises were had been given to the Kurds at Sevres, and so support the autonomy system for Kurdistan instead of the Independent state. (McDowall, 2007, 138)

Therefore, at the Cairo Conference of 1921, Article 62 was no longer effective and southern Kurdistan was considered part of the wider question of Iraqi administration. It was settled in the way that would secure a general British arrangement and also obtain a reduction of expenditure. (TNA: CO 732/4, March 1921; & TNA: CO 372/5, 24 March 1921) Thus, the fate of united Kurdistan and the Mosul province remained unsettled and would be discussed in the following conferences.

It could be argued that along with the international factors there were also local factors that prevented the Kurds from achieving their national aspirations at the peace conference. In particular, the Kurdish leaders' disagreement about nominating a national leader might have been one not all reason behind failing to achieve British support for establishing a Kurdish state. Mahmud had been recognised as one of the foremost leaders, but he had been exiled to India. In regards to Sharif Pasha, Curzon noted that 'Sharif-Pasha posed as a representative of the Kurds, but was not acknowledged as such'. (DBFP, series 1, 8, 19 April 1920, p.43) Similarly, a telegram from the Secretary of State for India to the Political Office in Baghdad on 31 August 1919 mentioned

that Sharif had suggested himself as president of the Kurdish state, but the Kurdish delegates did not support him. The British government also considered that due to his age and his residence for a long period in Paris he was not a possible candidate for this role. (TNA/AIR/20/741, '31 August 1919; & TNA/FO/371/4193, January 1919) In response to this telegram, the Political officer in Baghdad stated on 1 September 1919 that I 'agree that Sharif Pasha is wholly unsuited for role, which I believe no one man to be capable of dealing'. (TNA/AIR/20/741, 1 September 1919) The British government's objection to him came mainly from fear of his close relationship with the French government, especially as it was known that he asked for help from the French government during the Paris Peace Conference.

The tribal influence were also observed amongst some Kurdish leaders, who could not represent their national interests in preference to the clan or their local interests. Although Sharif was supported by Kurds from all part of Kurdistan at the time of his attendance of the Paris Peace Conference, the Kurdish leaders did not accept Sharif as their leader, due to their believed that they were more deserving than him. Especially Badir Khan in the north; Simko in the east; Said Taha, who could influence the area from above Arbil to the district of Van, and his rival Abdul Qadir. (TNA/FO/608/95, 27August 1919) This may have been the cause of the British government's untrusted them to be the head of a united Kurdistan, the British government considered instead that they should be appointed as rulers of small Kurdish units or districts, whilst providing them enough financial support and with political advisors, so that their influence could be used to maintain 'law and order'. (TNA/FO/141/806, June 1919)

## Conclusion

The new movement of the Kurdish nationalists in greater Kurdistan in general, and particularly in Turkey, played a considerable role in persuading the British government to support an independent state for the Kurds at the Paris Peace Conference. Although the general British policy at the conference was to leave the Kurdish question to the Kurds themselves and to prevent the return of Turkish rule, Kurdish aspirations were considered through the settlement of the Armenian question, with the general support of the great powers for the establishment of an Armenian state including some areas of northern Kurdistan. Thus, although forming a Kurdish state in northern Kurdistan was decided at the conference, the French interest in the Mosul vilayet and the allocation of the mandate were still made an obstacle for Britain to settle the question. The failure of Kurdish diplomacy at the Paris Peace conference could also be recognised as a problem, as some Kurdish leaders had local and individual ambitions rather than national ones. Their division between support of the Turkish regime, British protection or a Kurdish national independence movement was another problem.

The considerable change in political conditions after the Treaty of Sevres led British policy-makers to consider southern Kurdistan only in relation to the Mesopotamian question and to maintaining law and order in its strategic areas, and to accept de facto the new Turkish domination of northern Kurdistan. The rise of Turkish

nationalism and its propaganda in the northern districts of the Mosul vilayet were the major factors in this..

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CO	Colonial Office at National Archives
DBFP	Documents on British Foreign Policy
FO	Foreign Office at National Archives
IOR	India Office Records (Asia, Africa and Pacific department) at British Library
TNA	the National Archives

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