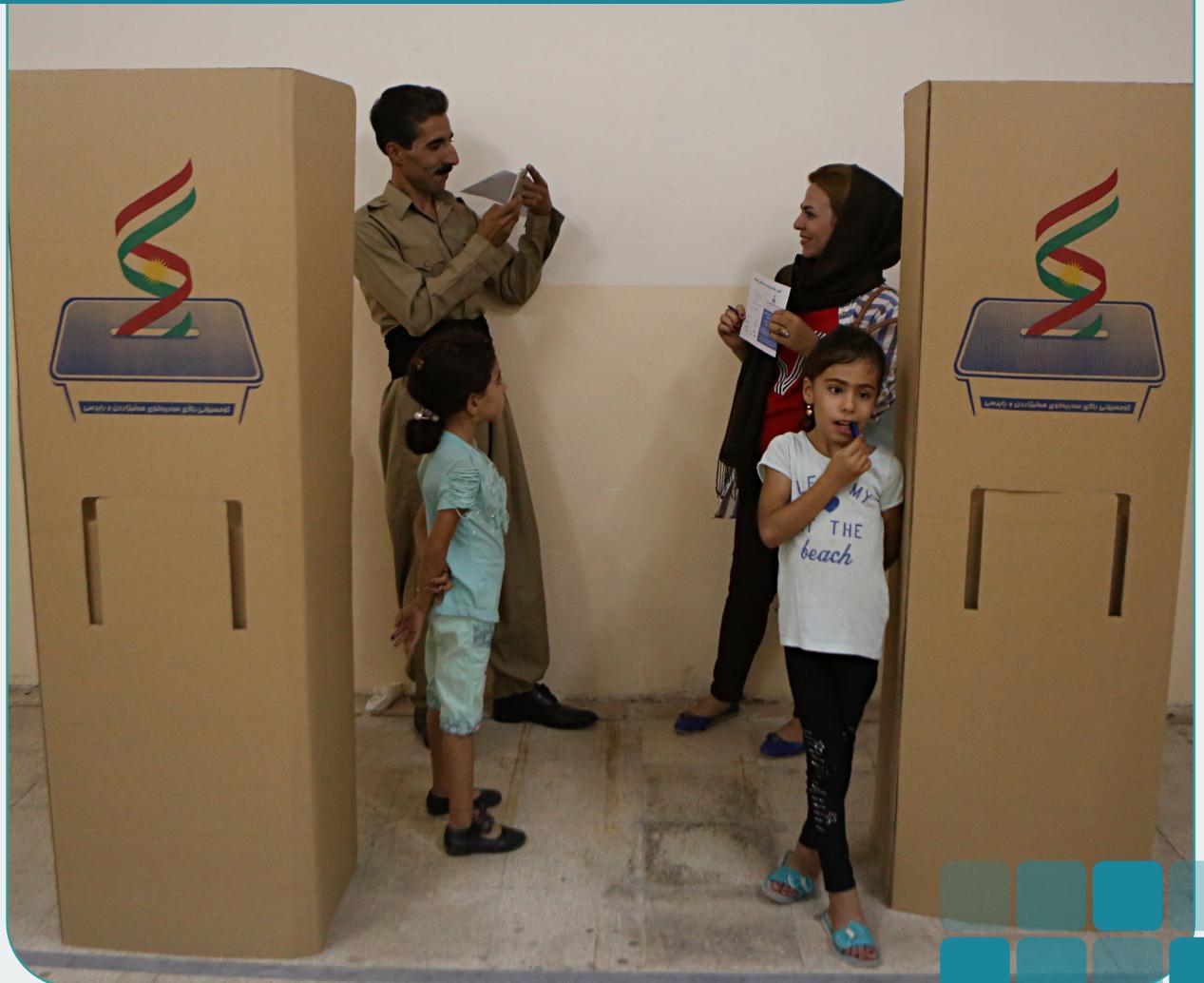
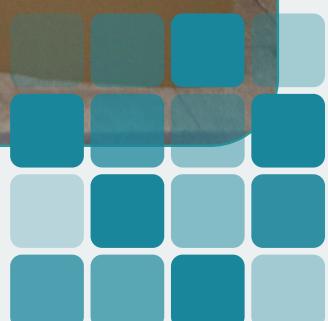


THE ROLE OF TRIBES IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS OF KRG



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&
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The Role of Tribes in the Political Process of Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government

Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) is a political entity in the Federal Republic of Iraq that's why in order to understand the political, economic, and social issues of the region, it is of great significance to have an understanding of its political process; especially in the case of Iraq, which doesn't have a long history as a state, let alone as a federal state. If we want to understand any basic subject of Iraq, we need to refer back to the beginning of the creation of the state, and later we can have a better understanding of the region in this context. In most of the Middle Eastern societies the tribes have a crucial role in the politics, especially in those societies where there is significant tribal traits. The continuation of such societies on this route has created such a situation, which makes it too hard to get rid of, especially when these tribes have been involved and influential upon the institutional establishments of the state, especially in the post-colonial Middle East and therefore they have become a part of these institutions. Hence, it's often difficult to separate the institutions of the state from the tribal structures, but in order to separate them it needs a solution which may start from the roots, if such solution could not be achieved then even the political entities are very likely to become a tribal state. It's obvious that the societies that have tribal traits, the political process cannot take a right route, as a result new challenges and problems face the political process on constant basis; all these problems give more chance to the tribes to play even greater role. That's why it is very important to ask: where do the roots of tribal entities come from in the KRG. How these tribes playing their role in political process and what's their impact. And what roles do the tribes have in the development of political process in the region.

The Tribes and the Creation of Iraq

After the formation of the Iraqi State by the colonial powers, there was a huge opposition by the community in the region toward such a formation of a state. It is vital to mention the international community or in other words the colonial powers were not very interested in listening to their demands. Arguably, this is due to the fact that the community itself and the political entities of that time were not united, and they were composed of many armed small tribes, and they were having very deep conflicts. For instance mezory, sherdany, and dolamary and others were against of such a formation of state. On the other hand other tribes such as Barznji were against of such a formation in different ways, and different places. This was very obviously showing the tribes even within themselves were in conflict. Moreover, that time so many revolutions and uprising had occurred, but all these revolutions had more tribal traits and characteristics, and consequently these small armed tribes forced to be a part in the formation of establishing Iraq. Besides, the colonial Britain and France were not planning to leave Middle East and therefore they tackled any resistance from any side that might have had jeopardized their imperial rule. Oil was just being found and there was little resistance from other central and southern areas. Notwithstanding, the tribes were used much earlier by the Ottoman and Safavid Empires and then even by the colonial powers to gain ground or use them against each other. Moreover, in general Kurds and the Kurdish tribes were also a speed bump on the track of the European imperialism.

The Uprisings and the Formation of KRG

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the international community fell under a very drastic change, in this context Iraq faced very huge international wars and was very much

close to collapse. During these events the community living in the region upraised against state of Iraq and the military, after that Iraq decided to take out of all the institutional, administrative, and political entities in the region. So in this case a very huge vacuum could be noticed, in fulfilling this space all the political entities of KRG tried to take all the administrative and institutional establishments, and to carry out all the issues of the region. This is briefly saying is the formation of the KRG, but what is important here to be mentioned is that to what extend these uprisings had tribal traits. Or to what extend the tribes participated in such uprisings. In reality, these uprisings occurred very randomly without any organizational arrangements, the tribes did not participate as social entities, but they participated as associates of the tribes, and as individuals of the community. But as mentioned earlier due to the huge administrative

vacuum, they created a social justice, in other words we can say a social court which was particularly expressing them. The social justice expressing the tribes started to play greater roles, and their roles had expanded in a very noticeable way, which in case of most of the social problems; people were seeing this tribal justice as a better alternative for finding a solution. That's why in most of the events and cases people first preferred to see tribal justice for achieving a solution then state's justice, this is the reason which the state's justice had lost its position and role in the society. In most of the cases it could be seen that even the state's justice motivating people in using the social justice (social court) instead to find solutions for their problems.

All these reasons above lead the tribes to gain power more, and take part in political, and administrative entities, and the state's administration started to look very weaker com-

“Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the international community fell under a very drastic change, in this context Iraq faced very huge international wars and was very much close to collapse.”

vacuum, the security and police administrations had collapsed, and the tribes were armed, that is why they could fill these vacuums. So for a long time they could gain political authorities and be a part of political process in the region.

The Tribes and Social Justice (Social Court)

As mentioned in the above explanations; the tribes could gain a huge political and militaristic power from the beginning of the formation of KRG even till the present time, this power lead them to gain more responsibilities, in such a way who could be a very crucial part of the political and social life. Besides all of these, they could get very crucial role in so many administrative and institutional establishments. In this context beside the State's Justice Administra-

tion, they created a social justice, in other words we can say a social court which was particularly expressing them. The social justice expressing the tribes started to play greater roles, and their roles had expanded in a very noticeable way, which in case of most of the social problems; people were seeing this tribal justice as a better alternative for finding a solution. That's why in most of the events and cases people first preferred to see tribal justice for achieving a solution then state's justice, this is the reason which the state's justice had lost its position and role in the society. In most of the cases it could be seen that even the state's justice motivating people in using the social justice (social court) instead to find solutions for their problems.

The Tribes in the Structure of Political Parties

In modern political systems, the political parties are the dynamos of political process; it has role in all parts of the political system and its very initiative in the whole political, economic and social life of the society, especially

in those societies which could not see an obvious development. In such societies the political parties can take a huge space in intervening to both general and private spheres.

The communities in KRG in all the stages of political life, the political parties have always been effective and playing their roles, for that reason the political parties could never modernize, and mostly have tried to adapt the society instead, that's why they got more tribal traits. Here we can categorize for both political parties and the tribes in most of the obvious political stages;

- In 1946 once when Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) has been established, Kurdish revolutions had took place, and they were mostly having tribal traits and having tribal powers, that's why at the beginning their structure mostly seen as a tribal power, this was more obvious once they announced for all the tribes to participate to the revolution and enter to the political party. It's important to mention during that time it was single – party system, that's why this lead the tribes to have more

effectiveness and play their roles.

- In 1976 when the Kurdish revolutions were living kind of disappearances, another party named Patriotic Union Party (PUK) has established. It's important to highlight that this new established political party they were seeing their roles in two points; one of them was to start the Kurdish revolutions, secondly was to challenge the other mentioned party (KDP) above. In order to apply this two aims, they had to attract the tribes mostly emotionally in order to gain more power against the counter party. This made the new established party to take the same tribal traits similar to the other party, that's true from single – party transformed to two parties, but the tribes also have been divided among these two parties.

- After 1991 uprisings, once when the KRG has established as an independent political entity, a new stage has started and the society under went to new changes and new developments, one of those obvious one was to go under elections. As men-



tioned above, there were only these two political parties, but new political parties started to be formed which they were small parties and could not make very great impacts on the society, and the political process, the reasons behind these ineffectiveness were firstly; these new formed political parties were not armed and they didn't own any armed forces compared to the other two large political parties, secondly these political parties were not having any support from any tribes, and no any tribes were in the formation of them.

- After the liberation process of Iraq, media started to play crucial roles in this stage, this is because the free media has established and they were wholly criticizing these political party systems and this

same time the tribes also have been structured inside the parties and they have their own status and positions. With no doubt the size and their effectiveness differing from one political party to another, in general to say, this structured relationship between the tribes and political parties could be briefed out as follows;

- Most of the parties having social organizations, but under differing names. The main roles of these organizations are collecting the tribes under political parties' authority. Most of the times these social organizations solving problems and conflicts within the tribes.
- The parties, particularly those are dominant and having authority, created armed forces inside the tribes, these tribal groups have been supported both financially and

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gave such an opportunity for new political parties to be formed but with new and reformed ideas. Consequently, so many political parties and entities have been formed to stand against both the dominant political parties mentioned above. But as highlighted because the community of these region with all the components having tribal traits very deeply inserted to the society makes very impossible for even the new formed political entities to be effective and to have their roles and positions in the society.

Recently, the political parties and the tribes have been mixed up so essentially and very eventually among each other, in such a way which the political parties having structures within powerful and dominant tribes, at the

in terms of arming them.

- As mentioned earlier, the new formed political parties do not own any armed forces and they haven't been participated in the governing process and owning any authority, but they have a different relationship with the tribes. For instance they try to reach the younger member of the tribes and organize them in a different way, which in this stage they can only play roles in social media, and having very limited effectiveness.

The Tribes and the Process of Elections

Despite of all the social developments of

KRG till now the tribes having very powerful organizations and having the ability to control their participants and members, in such a way which they can order the community in the grassroots, in any issues which they want to carry on. This ordinary relationship has created such a situation to be in the interest of both sides, and get benefited from each other; both the political parties could be benefited from the tribes, and the tribes from the political parties. It could be briefly mentioned as follows;

- The political parties could be benefited from the organizations of the tribes, especially in the process of elections, that's why we can see very obviously most of the candidates for the elections are belonging to the tribes, and the political parties especially aiming to choose such candidates in order to get votes, and with no doubt they were very successful in carrying out such

an aim. If we refer back to the last election outcomes, it could be noticed very clearly, those who have won and got enough votes were belonging to tribes and supported by them. For instance the winners (PDK) in the capital city of Erbil and Dohuk, PUK's winners in Sulaymaniyah and Kirkuk, those mentioned are the ones who supported by the tribes.

- At the same time the tribes also have been benefited from such a kind of the process of elections, and they could level the society's consciousness in such a situation. The tribes have been benefited also to keep and protect their status, and to always have a say in the political process. That's why a particular tribe by dividing their votes they can have for instance at least a two winner in the parliament, that's why in every formation of the govern-



ment they can be very advantageous, and make the parties to listen their demands.

The Direct Impact of the Tribes on the Political Process

It is very obvious the political process is very complex and having so many dimensions. In each of these dimensions the tribes having both direct and indirect impacts. Their indirect impact which is also explained above is having their position in the community and owning a background and history. On the other hand, their direct impact is their existence in so many main official and governmental entities. In order to understand and analyze this direct impact, we need to categorize this impact according to the political process dimensions; The tribes in KRG in return for their support to the political parties in the political process, they demand for some positions both in the government and within the parties, that is why the parties for full filling this demand, they provide some political positions within the party and governmental institutions, for instance;

- In the political office of the parties, which is one of the highest positions and consists of the decision makers of the parties, they are having some tribal personalities and appoint them in such a position regardless of having regular congress, and this is applied to any of the parties with no exception. As mentioned, this is the highest position of the party and contains the decision makers, so they can have a direct impact on the party, and the decisions. These impacts directly to the political process in the region.
- As mentioned earlier, besides having positions within the parties, they can get the official governmental positions. For instance, so many district governor and the governors are belonging to some tribes. It's

obvious these positions having administrative entities and authorities and they can play their roles and impact directly on the process of administrating the provinces, and the districts of the region. It's important to mention, is not only limited to these positions, but the tribes having power on most of the official administrative such as the ministries, and even the rectors of the universities and so many other positions.

- One of the other points which prove the direct impact of the tribes on the political process is their existence in the military administration. Especially in KRG the armed groups and the militia having crucial roles in the political process, each of these tribes having their own armed groups and militia. It's important to mention, each city differs from each other in the level of their impact in this aspect.
- The relation between the political parties and the tribes has created such a reality which in many cases makes too hard to separate the tribes from the political parties and it can be assumed as a very crucial part of the parties. What we can derive from this, most of the structural part of the party having a tribal structure. On the other hand, as mentioned earlier the tribes have been decided on their directions and their support to particular political parties, and they support the political party in each step of the political process. This differs from a city to another city, which in Duhok the tribes are mostly having the empathy for KDP, that's why in the last elections they could gain more than 90 percent of the votes, in Erbil the capital city each tribe having different empathy toward each party also, but mostly to KDP. The tribes of the other cities such as Sulaymaniyah are divided on PUK, Gorran and the others.

In brief, the tribes both in general of Iraq and especially in KRG having roles in the shaping

of the political process and impacted in every single political, economic, and social issue. It's important to highlight that, as mentioned earlier because tribal traits have been instilled very deeply of the community, and having a long his-

tory since the creation of the country, it makes too hard to see the disappearance of these traits in the near future, and they will continue to play their roles and impact their effectiveness in every single development.

Notes



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