

Should the United States support the creation of a Kurdish state in the Middle East?

The United States has several reasons to support the creation of a Kurdish nation in the Middle East. First of all, the Kurds have recently been friendly to the United States. During the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, US airborne forces landed in northern Iraq, in order to open up a northern front against Saddam Hussein. American forces managed to seize the cities of Kirkuk and Mosul, with the aid of Kurdish fighters from the Kurdish stronghold of Irbil. Up until very recently, with the worsening sectarian violence all across Iraq, American troops used the Kurdish held north as a rest and refit area in Iraq. An independent Kurdistan would likely be even more helpful to US forces in the region than the Kurds are now. Finally, with the Iraqi situation worsening, the United States needs a stable partner in the region. A Kurdish state could provide for a stable ally and trading partner, particularly in the economic sector of natural resources, oil perhaps being the most notable. Kurdistan could also be used as a staging area for operations in the Middle East and Iraq, if the situation declines even further.

The United States also has several compelling reasons to decline to create a Kurdish state. Any current Kurdish state would most likely be carved out of Iraq, Iran, and Turkey, and all three have opposed steadfastly the creation of Kurdistan. Even if the United States could convince Iraq to let the Kurds have a state carved only out of Iraq,

such a move would most likely encourage Kurdish minorities in Iran and Turkey to press for independence, either by political means, or armed force. Such actions could destabilize Turkey and Iran, as neither would let the Kurdish state be formed without an attempt to suppress them, probably by force of arms. Secondly, a Kurdish state could potentially aggravate the Iraqi situation, probably by encouraging other minorities in Iraq to push for similar concessions, possibly leading to a major regional conflict, with various powers backing sects within Iraq.

In my view, the United States should not push for the creation of a Kurdish state. Creating a Kurdish state carries with it serious dangers of antagonizing regional allies like Turkey, as well as further inflaming Iraq. Considering also that the Kurds span several countries, any disturbance involving them carries a grave risk of becoming a regional conflict. Also, in realistic terms, no country will ever contribute land to form a Kurdish state, as all three countries with major Kurdish populations are hostile to the idea, and because states only give up territory in exchange for another piece of territory, or under extreme duress. It is therefore ill-advised that an independent Kurdish state be formed at this time.

Should the United States support the creation of a democratic Palestinian state?

The United States has several reasons to support the creation of a democratic Palestinian state. First, the United States has consistently been accused of bias in the Israel and Palestinian conflict. These allegations have also included accusations of hypocrisy, since the US has only backed an undemocratic Palestinian state. Backing the creation of a democratic Palestinian state would undercut a key pillar of anti-US

sentiment in the Middle East. Second, a democratic Palestinian state could be more eager to have a peaceful existence with Israel. Historically, democracies do not go to war with one another, and it is likely that a democratic Palestine will follow that model, provided it is truly democratic. Ending the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians could also relieve anti-US sentiment in the Middle East, since American support for Israel has been a contentious issue in the region for decades.

America also has several reasons not to back the creation of a democratic Palestinian state. A democratic Palestine carries extreme risks to it. It is possible, given the most recent election in the Palestinian territories, that a Hamas led government would come to power, or retain power as the case may be. In this case, a democratic Palestine would not remain democratic or peaceful for long, given Hamas' autocratic inclinations, and aggressive stance towards Israel. Such a Palestine would ultimately cause more harm than good to American interests. Also, there is no guarantee that a democratic Palestine will be able to rein in the heavily armed private militias in Palestine, or even rogue elements of their security forces. In this case, it may be advisable for the US to support a Palestinian state, and not worry about the democratic element of such a state.