

Manafy, A. *The Kurdish Political Struggles in Iran, Iraq and Turkey: A Critical Analysis*

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Volume 28, Winter 2008

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/jcs28br08>

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Publisher(s)

The University of New Brunswick

ISSN

1198-8614 (print)

1715-5673 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Romano, D. (2008). Review of [Manafy, A. *The Kurdish Political Struggles in Iran, Iraq and Turkey: A Critical Analysis*]. *Journal of Conflict Studies*, 28, 0–0.

progress (p. 47), how exactly can (and should) policymakers “twist the dynamics of accumulation to more constructive ends”? What, specifically, would he propose to replace the “post-conflict makeover fantasy” (p. 261) that inheres within most liberal approaches to peace-building? Cramer’s rather unoriginal suggestions of regulating violence by means of the United Nations and altering economic policies leave much to be desired, and the author’s discomfort in making concrete suggestions in the area of policy-making, despite the fact that he hinges the solution of the problem upon this. Indeed it is more a confirmation of a book’s value than of its shortcomings to suggest that more could have been done with the material at hand, which is certainly the case here. Perhaps the book’s greatest strength is that it can provide a number of theoretical springboards for those who are interested in formulating new approaches to this persistent challenge.

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Endnotes

1. Johan Galtung, *Peace By Peaceful Means* (London: Sage, 1996); and Louis Kriesberg, *Constructive Conflicts* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998).
2. Galtung, *Peace*, p. 2.
3. Hugh Miall, *Emergent Conflict and Peaceful Change* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave, 2007), p. 3; John Paul Lederach, *Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Peace-Building* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 68-70; Elise Boulding, *Cultures of Peace: The Hidden Side of History* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000), pp. 2-3.

Manafy, A. *The Kurdish Political Struggles in Iran, Iraq and Turkey: A Critical Analysis*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2007.

A. Manafy’s book offers an analysis of twentieth-century Kurdish political struggles in Iran, Iraq, and Turkey. Very well versed in the historical details and complexities of the Kurdish issue in these states, Manafy includes in his book many interesting anecdotes from his personal experiences in the Azeri and Kurdish provinces of Iran over the years. His theoretical approach to the issue comes from Dependency theory, World Systems theory, and similar modes of production, and class-based analytical traditions. He refers to the arguments of Samir Amin, Immanuel Wallerstein, Rosa Luxemburg, Noam Chomsky, Jurgen Habermas, and Antonio Gramsci often and applies them to the Kurdish case. Manafy also brings in important observations from noted scholars of the Kurdish issue, especially Malcolm McDowall (*A Modern History of the Kurds*, 1997) and Martin Van Bruinessen (*Agha, Shaikh and State*, 1992).

Manafy's main question, similar to that of many who have published on the Kurdish issue, examines the failure of Kurdish political movements to achieve national liberation. The principal answer, however, turns out to look somewhat tautological — Kurdish movements did not display the characteristics of true national liberation movements. (pp. 15-17, 147, and 151) For Manafy, true national liberation movements must strive for social justice (p. 15) and be anti-imperialist: "Whereas the Mexican, Russian, Chinese, Cuban, Vietnamese, and Algerian movements were anti-imperialist and led to the development of political and class-consciousness, the Kurdish movements were not. . . . Reliance on the oppressors to liberate the oppressed has simply no empirical or theoretical basis in the history of political movements." (p. 16) Undoubtedly, T.E. Lawrence's Hashemite allies and future rulers of Jordan, Iraq, and Syria, as well as the populations of numerous Gulf Arab states, Maronite Christians, Israeli Jews, and Afghan *Mujahadeen*, were not aware of the empirical and theoretical arguments against relying on "imperialist oppressors" (to use just a few regional examples). Manafy never convinces this reader of why freeing one nation from the yoke of another requires class consciousness and "progressive" allies (given the Chinese example, such allies might include Joseph Stalin's USSR).

In the Kurdish case, several Kurdish movements in existence fulfill Manafy's progressive criteria but receive much less of his attention than the more socially conservative KDP (Kurdistan Democratic Party in Iraq and Iran) and PUK (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan in Iraq). The Komala movements of Iran, particularly the Komala faction known as "Marxist Komala" (often described as the only surviving wing of the Iranian Communist Party today) and the PKK of Turkey (Kurdistan Workers' Party) both eschew "imperialist" allies, fight for class consciousness, and deride capitalism for its myriad injustices. Komala is only mentioned three times in passing in Manafy's book and the PKK failure to achieve national liberation never receives more than an implicit explanation: "The Kurdish national liberation struggle must also be directed against the Kurdish ruling class, but the party [the PKK/DR] has deviated from this ideology. Leadership and the Kurdish people allied themselves with so-called patriotic Aghas [landlords — DR] against the collaborating ones (those forces that side with the colonizers)." (p. 150) While Komala leaders languish in exile and the PKK fights desperately to remain relevant, the Iraqi Kurdish KDP and PUK work with imperialists, gain constitutionally recognized autonomy for Iraqi Kurdistan, use the Kurdish language freely, and witness an economic boom of unprecedented proportions. It also seems as if Manafy holds up the notion of "authentic national liberation movements" as an impossible angelic ideal that has in fact never existed, as even a brief look into the actual history of the Mexican, Russian, Chinese, Cuban, Vietnamese, and Algerian movements he cites would uncover plenty of alliances with "patriotic bourgeoisie."

Examinations of cases like the Chinese, Vietnamese, Russian, and Algerian cases would also show large amounts of internecine bloodletting as each nation-

alist movement destroyed its competitors and placed itself at the forefront of the nation, but for Manafy, each instance of “Kurd killing Kurd” is evidence of undeveloped nationalism, tribalism, and short-sightedness. While there is no short supply of these sins among Kurdish leaders, a comparative examination of national liberation movements would show that they are not the only ones. When judging the internal shortcomings of Kurdish nationalist movements, Manafy also strays into unjustified generalizations and cultural essentialism:

Kurdish political action is divorced from theoretical and ideological guidance. It is not driven by programmatic political knowledge, but by emotionalism and sentimental cultural traditionalism. . . . A realistic analysis of the Kurdish situation would eliminate the politically inhibiting ideals based on mystification, superstition, and parochialism that dominate Kurdish political action. (p. 41)

Hence all the diversity of the different Kurdish populations and political movements, from the PKK to the KDP to Komala and various Kurdish socialist parties, is negated by a homogenous Kurdish culture and mental outlook. If this point were not clear enough, Manafy adds that: “. . . one wonders how the Kurdish socialist movement in a religious Muslim society will succeed. Whereas the Soviet Union was highly secularized, the Kurds are peasant-based and traditional with tribalism, primordial values, traditional cultural norms, and a predominantly illiterate Kurdish population prevailing.” (p. 50) Manafy offers us no statistic on literacy rates, tribal affiliation, or urbanization however much less a comparison of these rates between Kurdistan and other societies, such as Algeria or China at the time of liberation.

In Manafy’s final analysis, however, all the Kurdish political struggles may be moot in any case, since world capitalism is the source of the problem: “Therefore, the solutions to Kurdish, other minorities, or even dominant majority problems cannot be sought under capitalist structures of the prevailing world system, which negate justice, democracy, and peace, offering only control and domination.” This reader is left wondering if it is not better to be controlled and dominated by kin, in one’s own language and culture first and leave revolution for later. This would at least make for a less daunting project.

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