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KURDISH REFERENDUM: A WARNING SIGN FOR FEDERALISM

In a speech delivered on 11th June 1788 by William Grayson, one of the founding fathers of America, he addresses the crowd against the evil ploy of the federalist, who are trying to persuade the 13 colonies of America to join together to form an Union. Grayson says "*we are now being told by the honourable gentleman that we shall have wars and rumours of wars, that every calamity is to attend us and that we shall be ruined and disunited forever, unless we adopt this constitution*" (Excerpts from Anti-Federalist paper no.2, We have been told about the Phantom) now being a rational creature compare this speech with a statement delivered by Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi on Kurdish referendum "our outmost priority is to preserve citizens' security" and to "defend Kurdish citizens inside or outside" the Kurdistan Region"¹ if analysed closely the scenario of 200-odd years ago and presently in the Iraq are quite the same and still the Union and the States are fighting for their independent existence. The Kurdish referendum is nothing short of an eye opener, that demands of a State for adequate representation cannot be denied for long.

Quite similar to this is the case of Catalonia, who for long has been asking for a separate State, as they feel that their interest in with the Spain is not being addressed adequately. Catalonia for long has claimed that the amount of revenue generated alone by it is far from what it gets back from the Union, which creates a depressing fiscal relation between the Union and the State.

THREAT TO REFERENDUM

However, funny thing to notice here is that both the Unions of Iraq and Spain have, unequivocally, denounced the referendum taken out by the people of Kurds and Catalonia and held it unconstitutional and have even deployed heavy artillery to suppress the movement in their respective regions. Additionally, the Kurds are not only feeling pressure from the Iraqi forces, but due to its geographical advantage of holding "Kinkurk" one of the major oil

¹ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-41419633>

reserves in Iraq, the Kurds are also feeling the brunt of the Turkey forces, who share borders with them and who are threatening to put sanctions against the Kurds region if they go ahead with the creation of Kurdistan. Additionally, the volatile situation of the Arab region, especially due to the ISIS, many of the Western Countries are not supporting the Kurds in their referendum due to its untimely occasion, namely France and Russia have shown dismay at it as they feel that any dissonance with Iraq at this situation will only undo the hard work of last couple of years in ISIS. However, it will be interesting to see what future holds for the Kurds and Catalonia.

HOW FEDERALISM WORKS AND HOW IT IS GOING TO BE AFFECTED

It is the compelling nature of federalism which necessitates devolution of power between the States and the Union, in the absence of which the State is quite happy to leave the veil of the Union and search for its separate existence. What Kurds are trying to do or what Telagana was able to do is quite the same story. See, the basic idea behind federalism is to provide for a form of government where all the diversity living within the Union have adequate representation and are able to take part in the policy-making process, but if any part of the diversity (in the case of Iraq, the Kurds) feels that their interest is not being represented adequately in the policy-making process, then the only solution that is left for them is to seek for a separate existence and work for its own betterment.

Under federalism, it is the compact between the State and the Union and therefore it becomes necessary that adequate powers are left with the State otherwise why would a State which is self-sufficient would stay in a non-lucrative contract with the Union. And if Kurds and Catalonia are able to create their own functional state, what sort of precedent it will leave behind for the world, the very idea of an Integrated World will come to an end as most of the State, even cities who will find their interest unrepresented will soon start demanding for a separate existence.

ECONOMIC INTEREST

One of the basic reasons that a Union doesn't like a state separating away from it; is basically the economic interest of the Union, the revenue generated by the Union from the Taxes from the State, additionally the material resources of the state are great lucrative factors. In case of

Iraq, it is Kirkuk, which is the biggest oil resource for the Iraq and which lies within the alleged territories of Kurdistan. In 2014, when the ISIS attacked the boundaries of Iraq, it was Iraqi army who fled the scene but Kurdi Peshamgar forces stood to their ground and fought ISIS till the end and now when they are thinking of creating a separate Country of their own, the Iraqi Prime Minister is planning to send Iraqi forces to secure 'Kirkuk' which will be a huge economic loss to them if Kurdistan is formed.

WHAT HAS TO BE LEARNT

The idea of federalism is based on the tenets on compromise and negotiation and not on fighting sword with sword, what is happening in Iraq is a classic example of using a sword for conducting a surgery. Matters like this require surgical precision and compromising attitude, as both the Iraq and Kurds have to understand that a sudden civil war between the two on the issue of Kirkuk will aggravate the situation and will not help each other case and with ISIS still alive across the plains it will be highly flammable situation for the world at large who will lose out on all the good work so far carried out in suppressing the Islamic extremist. Additionally, the Iraq government needs to understand and comprehend the demands of the Kurdish people who for long have their voice un-heard, suppressed previously under the Saddam Regime, with the dictator almost killing 5000 Kurds by mustard gas at Halabja in 1988 and de-recognized by the Turkey government and the International organization. It has left a bitter feeling in the hearts of the Kurds. However, they constitute a major ethnic-cultural group of the Iraqi and Turkey region so maybe this referendum can be a good opportunity for mapping out a new compact for a long term harmonious relation between the Iraqi natives and give the people of Kurdistan a better opportunity at life.