

The current wrong narrative of Kurds wanting a  
single state-nation:  
a media distraction iconography from the socio-political  
practice and proposal in Rojava?  
FABRIZIO EVA<sup>37</sup>

The IWW set up the final victory of the nation-state as the main way to politically organize a territory. From the Sévres Treaty (1920) to the Losanne one Armenians and Kurds got and only Kurds lost the perspective of a specific state.

Between 2005-2011 the Kurdish leader of PKK Abdullah Öcalan took inspiration from the anarchist Murray Bookchin municipal confederalism and ecological approach, so from the prison he launched a new political proposal: Democratic Confederalism having as idealistic points of reference: bottom-up democracy, ecology, feminism. Those points are an impressive break with many elements of the Kurdish cultural heritage, as well as the (patriarchal) ones of the Arabs, Turks etc. What is perhaps more relevant is the geopolitical aspect of the proposal: to be not “national”, explicitly against nationalism and supra-border.

The ambiguity of the concept of nation-state is challenged by the Kurdish Democratic Confederalism proposal and by the concrete experience of Rojava. In comparison with the ideological and/or conceptual challenges of the past the current Kurdish proposal affirms not to want to change the existing

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<sup>37</sup> University Cà Foscari in Venice (Italy).

borders, but to self-organize the society and the economy with a bottom-up approach and through a flexible institutional structure which starts from the municipalities and from the neighborhoods/districts of the cities. The aim is to change the society in the daily life in order that any kind of “political border” could be only functional and loses its iconographic meaning along the time.

What is practicing AANES, the Autonomous Administration of North-Eastern Syria, known also as Rojava (West, in Kurdish) is a political and socio-economic model which the West should observe with favour, even glorify as the best democratic hope in a Middle East context represented by authoritarian regimes which repress any opposition and even kill leaders and protesters. A model which works since years and during a situation of war; a model with a specific bottom-up political and administrative organization, with political opinion and religious freedom, having ecology and feminism as iconographic and symbolic ideological frame.

Perhaps the Rojava experience is so “Western”, so “illuminist”, to be a danger for the very same Western parliamentary democracies which didn’t yet solve the contradictions and the ambiguities of the nation-state concept. The nation is not the state and the state can have many internal nations, as it is the reality of all the states of the globe. The iconographies and the narratives about “democracy” are related only to the model of periodical multi-party elections with a (pacific) government turnover.

So mass media, IR experts, political leaders of the few powerful states which “orient” the world represent Kurds only as nationalists aiming for an independent nation-state and/or as valid fighters against enemies of the West. Enemies like daesh, but also the Bashar Assad regime, Iran, Russia which “we” cannot fight directly with the “boots on the ground” because this would underline the functional fiction of the asserted

iconography to preserve the territorial integrity of all nation-states.

Not by chance the Iraqi Kurdistan is the more quoted political Kurd issue in the mass media system, the Iranian Kurds are substantially ignored, the Kurds in Turkey are mainly quoted as associated to PKK issue and the Syrian Kurds are represented only as fighters supported by the USA and almost never as an example of a new, democratic model and practice.

The nation-state concept heritage, the traditional patriarchal cultural heritage of the Middle East are defied by the Rojava practice; its experience should be analyzed within this context, but also debated within the current geopolitical dynamics and situation.

