Kurdish political fortunes continue to fluctuate. Living across the mountainous border regions of Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria, the Kurds were rendered stateless at the end of WWI.

Through the 20th century Kurds endured a range of coercive measures from state regimes, prompting diverse political responses and giving rise to the ‘Kurdish question’.

From the 1990s, however, the ground began to shift. Kurdish political actors in Turkey gained traction and a Kurdish autonomous region germinated in northern Iraq. During the struggle against ISIS, Kurdish groups in Syria and Iraq won international legitimacy and gained territory.

The pendulum now appears to have swung back against Kurdish interests. An increasingly authoritarian regime in Turkey clamps down on Kurdish political activity. In northern Syria, a Kurdish-led administration remains cornered between Assad’s army and neighbouring Turkey, and the Iraqi Kurdish regime is beset by internal and external challenges. Despite being generally seen as allies of the West, Kurds remain at the mercy of powerful regional interests.

AIIA Victoria welcomes William Gourlay to examine the plight(s) and prospects of Kurds in Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq and to explore where the solution(s) to the long-running ‘Kurdish question’ might lie.

William Gourlay teaches Politics and International Relations at Monash University and is a Research Associate in the Middle East Studies Forum at Deakin University. In 2016, he completed his PhD at Monash, an examination of Kurdish identity in Turkey. His research interests include the clash of ‘resistance politics’ and authoritarianism, and issues of ethnicity, nationalism and majority-minority relationships in the Middle East. His monograph The Kurds in Erdoğan’s Turkey was published by Edinburgh University Press in 2020. He has published research in The British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, Ethnopolitics and Third World Quarterly, among others. His commentary and analysis appears in a number of outlets including The Australian Financial Review, The Conversation, EurasiaNet and OpenDemocracy. He has previously worked as an editor, journalist and teacher in London, İzmir (Turkey) and his native Melbourne.

This event is online only. Registrations close on Tuesday 13 October at 3pm, after which you will receive a follow-up email containing details of how to join the Zoom webinar. The webinar will commence at 5.30pm AEDT (Melbourne time, UTC+11).

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