



From An Economic Perspective, Lessons the Kurdistan Region Can Learn from South Korea?

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the lessons that the Kurdistan region can learn from South Korea from an economic perspective. The Kurdistan region of Iraq had gone through numerous economic obstacles and is still going through. The region like the rest of Iraq largely depends on oil revenues. It is yet to effectively take the advantage of other economic resources such as industrialization, agriculture and tourism. It has plans to utilize industrial and agricultural sources but not real steps have been taken. There are still tens of thousands of unemployed young graduates, lack of sounding administrative structure, and promotion of employees have stopped for few years. This article reveals the steps South Korea had taken to improve its economy from Education, Industrial and Agricultural points of view. Compare and contrasts are shown in the literature review part between the Kurdistan region and South Korea. Findings in the article include the Kurdistan region to boost its human capital, take the advantage of technology, avoid having oil as a single economic resource, and utilize its agricultural sector as well as industrialization. It is recommended for researchers interested in the area to conduct inquiry on what type of industrialization should the Kurdistan region engage in, and what agricultural products its territory is ready for.

1. Introduction

South Korea, a country located in the Asian continent with its small territory, but has been immensely been demonstrated and researched for its efficient and active economic growth. Much has been said about South Korea in terms of politics, its war,



Japanese occupation, and most importantly its economy and the steps that other developing countries can learn from South Korea. This Country was occupied by Japan between 1911-1945, and was left economically poor and industrially inactive after the Japanese evacuation from the country. As a matter of fact, back in the 1950s and early 1960s, South Korea was ranked as one of the poorest countries in the world with its \$64 per capita income.(Emily Rauhala, 2012). However, South Korea today is a “donor nation which provides aids and loans to many developing countries.”(Yearn Hong Choi). It is furthermore the world’s 9th largest importer and the world’s 8th largest importer. (Yearn Hong Choi, 2011, 132). Some American and scholars sometimes named it as the new Japan due to its fast economic growth. “The World Bank describes Korea as one of the fastest-growing major economies of the next generation along with BRIC and Indonesia.” (Strachan, 2017). - Kurdistan region on the other hand that is an autonomous region annexed to the north part of Iraq in the Middle East is an oil-rich region that in the recent years attracted many global and large corporations so as to invest in the region. However, Kurdistan is mainly an oil dependent region that relies on oil as its main economic source. There are in fact many lessons that Kurdistan can learn from South Korea such as the steps that South Korea has taken in order to build its economic foundations, the role of the government and the people in cooperating to achieve a successful economy that can be a model for other developing countries in the region. Thus, the purpose of this research paper is to discuss the lessons that the Kurdistan region can learn from South Korea in from an economic perspective. I will in addition, highlight the significant steps that South Korea undertook and will then discuss taking implementing these steps in Kurdistan.

1.1 Methodology:

The data for the study was gathered in multiple stages, utilizing a range of qualitative data collection methods. The sources taken to write this paper are academic articles, TV portals, and websites. Due to the lack of time and availability of handbooks, the data’s taken are secondary sources but all the sources are cited and academically reference. Indisputably, the topic is wide, and incredibly significant that research methods introducing interviews, statistical analysis, and field work should have been

utilized, but lack of time and such costly methods did not allow using these data collection methods.

2. Literature Review:

This part of the paper discusses the topic from multiple and various perspectives such as the steps South Korea had taken and Kurdistan can take as well, how self reliant South Korea and the Kurdistan region are, the leading economic approaches South Korea had taken, The World Bank's statements to the economic success of the East Asian countries, and The strong economic reforms of the former Korean Government, Land reforms, and foreign debts. The reason why I thought on such a topic should be written is because of the fact that not enough has been written on the lessons that the Kurdistan region can learn from South Korea. Indeed I have not seen any very relevant paper on the topic. Therefore, it will absolutely contribute to the Scientific literature.

2.1 What steps South Korea undertook and can Kurdistan perform them?

First of all, in my points of view the situation that South Korea had back in the 1940-50s is very much alike to the situation that the Kurdistan region have such as education, economy, being occupied, etc. One of the most important cornerstones that the South Korean people had and very lacks in Kurdistan was education. In fact, the circumstance with which South Korea began building It's economy was already suitable in terms of education for example. South Korean people were well educated, and very adaptable and hardworking.(Press, 1966). Nelson Mandela articulated that education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. So, of course having educated people will make a successful economy in any country. This is referred to Human resource. It has been demonstrated by Balaji Viswanathan That one of the stages that moved the South Korean economy forward was education.(Viswanathan, 2015). "By 1940s, South Korea already had a fairly literate population by Asian standards of that time." ((Viswanathan, 2015). However, it is also crucial to point out that in the post Korean war period, the South Korean government took important steps to achieve 100% level of literacy for all the people. What about Kurdistan? Do we have such educated people? To what extent does our government encourage educating the people. To the contrary, education level in Kurdistan is low.



We really do not have effective educated economic experts that can help develop the Kurdistan economy. We are neither a hard-working society, nor have the willing to be. It has been demonstrated in Kurdistan Tribune that our education system needs to be reformed so as to give proper education to our youth. (Tribune, 2014) Therefore, the first step in learning from the South Korea's economy is to develop our education and education system as well as reduce the illiteracy in Kurdistan as soon and as much as possible.

Additionally, it is education that can guarantee prosperity in terms of politics, economics, science, etc. Looking back on the Korean people, it can be claimed that the people had the willing to move forward and get educated. In an article that has been written in the 1960s, it was demonstrated that the South Korean people since that era wanted to go to engineering, science, business, etc, so as to be more acquainted with various sectors of science and to get abundantly experienced. (Press, 1966) Thus, the people in Kurdistan as well should have willing to learn and get educated. They should be taught how to create innovation and invention so as to begin building the economic foundations of the region.

2.2 Industrialization:

Second, the most important lesson that we need to learn is that the South Korean economy developed through industrialization. South Korea is a developed country with its leading role in exporting electronic and technological goods. Its exporting products include "Electrical Machinery, Motor Vehicles & Parts, and Industrial Machinery, Electronics; Telecommunications; Automobile Production; Chemicals." (South Korea: Economy, 2020). To the contrary and unfortunately Kurdistan is not industrialized which makes the country dependent on other states and get most of its products imported. Obviously, there are efforts by the current KRG administration to have multiple economic resources and promote industrialization but practical results are yet to be seen.

Coming back to human resources power. Efforts such as training the South Korean people to get the necessary skills of scientific manpower to accomplish economic growth was really unique in the economic growth of South Korea. (Strategy, 2016). Consequently, economic growth raised to \$4830 per capita in 1989 to \$20, 000



milestone in 2007. (Strategy, 2016). The reason why such data are being demonstrated that are relevant to the South Korean economy is to emphasize how effective those steps and efforts are and that we can have and conduct such plans so as to develop the economy of our region as well. It is important to also highlight what Charlesm Kim, and Westphal in an article in 1976 claim on the South Korean economy and the important role of the military government of Park Chung-hee. They mentioned that the South Korean government had a series of plans beginning from the 1960s. Most of the plans included how to expand and develop the industrialization in the country.(Frank, Kim and Westphal, 1975). Although the plans are known as five plans that were conducted by a military government that time, but the plans were very effective and have impacts up to today's economy of the country. The journalists also state that between 1967-1971 the main plan of the government was "to promote the modernization of the industrial structure and to build the foundations for a self-supporting economy."(Frank, Kim and Westphal, 1975).

This reminds us another crucial and necessary point related to what was earlier discussed and that is having a self-supporting economy. As a matter of fact being economically self-sufficient highly depends on industrialization. There is no doubt that South Korea has a self-supporting economy in comparison to Kurdistan which is neither industrialized nor self-sufficient. If the Kurdistan region tends to be economically developed, it needs to take the exact step that the South Korean government took which was expanding and developing industrialization. It can be certainly argued that the more industrialized we are, the more independent and self-sufficient we can be. Unfortunately, we are not an industrialized nation. Rather, we are an oil dependent nation that made us lazy to an extent not to think about the alternatives that we can have for Oil as our main economic sources. There are many steps KRG can take so as to start reforming its economy. Having Economic institutions can be the first of those. Such institutions train the employees on how well they should their job, they advise leaders of the country on what economic model should be taken that will reform the economy and bring about more revenues. Transparency is another and a must that successful economies of France, Germany, Sweden and Denmark have which is why they are having a sounding and stable economy. Iraq and the Kurdistan region are criticized heavily for not having persuasive data and



information for oil revenues are spent and gained. The third step in economic reform in Kurdistan should be employee promotion and salary raise as a motivation, so that employees do their job well and based on standards. While salary raise is essential, accountability can be even more. Everyone must be held accountable for how good and quality based, he/she did the job no matter who.

2.3. How self-reliant South Korea and the Kurdistan region are?

South Korea is a country that from over 40 years ago has taken a self-reliance and self-sufficient policy so as to develop its economy. Princeton lyman argues that “The initial impetus of the present trend was the Government's determination in 1962 to increase Korea's low export earnings.”(Press, 1966). In addition, Having a self-supporting economy is considered as the main factor behind the economic growth of South Korea. The self-reliance economic policy of South Korea introduced it to the international standards. (Press, 1966). Moreover, Due to the economic policy, in four years, the export of the goods raised to 300%.(Press, 1966).

It is not the case in the Kurdistan region. Indeed, Kurdistan has not until now taken an economic policy such as of South Korea so as to be self-reliance and economically dependent. Again, this argument also takes us back to what I was earlier discussing regarding having industrialization. The lack of being an industrial nation has made us to import most of our day to day products from other neighboring countries. The head of business chamber in Sulaimanyya in March announced that foreign Turkish and Iranian companies are controlling our food markets in a ratio of 70%.(Gkurdistan *Video report*, 2016). The Kurdistan regional government is supposed to think of other ways as substitutions for oil such as making industrialization, agriculture, tourism, transportation, etc. Although Kurdistan has an appropriate land for agriculture, but until now no benefit has been taken from it. As a result, we do not even export our agricultural products to other neighboring countries. Of course, this way we can not have a self-reliance economic policy and develop our economy just like South Korea did. Recently, Kurdistan farmers suggested the KRG to support them in developing agriculture so as to make it an alternative for oil. United Arab Emirates for example recently took this policy to emphasize on agricultural products rather than oil. (Gkurdistan *Video report*, 2016).

Christopher Adams in Financial times website indicated that “85% of our economy comes from Oil and gas.”(Adams, Kavanagh and Solomon, 2015). In a speech to Gali Kurdistan, the deputy president of agricultural section in Kurdistan delivered that we are required to develop our agricultural sector and export the products and this way we can even have foreign money in our Banks.(Gkurdistan Economic section report, 2016). However, until now no such policy has been conducted. Remarkably, our fault of having alternatives for oil as our main economic source has made an outrageous economic crisis in Kurdistan with the decline of Oil prices. Another problem with our oil dependent policy is that we sell our oil in a low price to the international markets. Economic experts stated that Kurdistan has sold its oil by %9.3 less than the world oil markets. (Gkurdistan Economic section report, 2016). Finally, two major steps that Kurdistan can learn from South Korea are the following: first, the KRG should try making industrialization through training workers to get scientific skills since being industrial makes us a self-reliance economy. Second, it should as soon as possible attempt to find other ways to depend as economic sources rather than oil such as agriculture, tourism, manufacturing, etc.

2.4. Two leading approaches contributed to the success of South Korea that can be of economic usefulness for Kurdistan:

Theory of neo-liberal approach. This approach incorporates and implies free-trade, capitalism, lasaize faire, globalization, free market, etc. For clarity, East Asian countries including South Korea had pursued market conforming economic strategies and that markets rather than government policies had determined the path of development. In fact this is a very crucial point because today we are living in a globalizing world where free-trade and capitalism can help developing a state’s economy which is the same case for the Kurdistan region as well. Besides, steps have to be taken forward so as to allow markets and the private sector play their role in our economy. Although, we have many private companies that seem to be working in a form of a free-trade economy, but in fact these companies are mostly political party companies and work for their self-interest and the interests of their favorite political parties. Based on the neo-liberal approach the East Asian countries gave a less role to the state and allowed the market to achieve export-led growth strategies.



Here in Kurdistan, the government is insufficient and is not even obeyed by the companies and that is due to the monopoly of the political parties over the markets and economy in Kurdistan. An example can be the decision of the minister of transportation and announcement when he obliged all the internet companies to reduce the price of internet cards, but most of the companies ignored the minister's decision due to the fact that these companies are political party companies. The second approach is the theory of the developmental state. This approach states that the success of the East Asian countries was due to the importance of the state and its industrial policies in the economic development process. This implies that the government of South Korea took actions that were in the interest of rapid industrialization. In other terms, the government did not want to monopoly the economy but rather it worked to develop the economy by making industrialization and guiding the economic development. In contrast, in Kurdistan we have the economy that is in the hands of the political parties and a few business men that are having relations with politicians. Unfortunately here in Kurdistan, the government is paralyzed on the hands of the politicians. The government is mostly run by the policies of the burue of the political parties rather than the parliament that is supposed to be the people's representative. In order to learn from the economic developments of South Korea, we need to correct those mistakes that we have in Kurdistan. The government should be given more power and be independent from the political parties. The government should play its role in guiding economic development and to also not to allow Privatization in the region by the businessmen. So basically both of the roles of the government and the market should be empowered and these two must be working towards moving the economy of the Kurdistan region forward.

2.5. Some lessons from the economic success of the East Asian countries:

In an article written by Joseph Stiglitz, views and suggestions regarding the success of the East Asian countries and the way that a developing country can be economically successful are delivered. I am sure such report regarding the success of the East Asian countries can be of use to the economy of the Kurdistan region since we can find out what procedures we need to take. The article stated that the success of the East Asian countries was due to performing economic policies such as education, high rate of



savings/investment, and prudent macroeconomic policies.(Stiglitz, 1996). It is again taking us back to what was earlier discussed which was education. It can be observed that education in the views of Joseph was what caused the economic success of these countries who somehow had economic problems we have in our economy. I say it again and again we need an academic and westernized education according to high standards if we want to economically and even politically be successful. The report in addition mentions that such states had more skilled and harder working workers which contributed to the economic growth.(Stiglitz, 1996) Of course in Kurdistan, we do not possess skilled workers. In fact in Kurdistan, those will be workers who have no education at all. In my point of view, we can learn from the economy of such states if we can train our workers and provide them with working skills and make them harder working workers. Export-led growth is another point mentioned by the article behind the success and as it is earlier demonstrated that the Kurdistan region is an oil-dependent region. The oil dependency made us not to think about other alternatives instead of oil such as making industrialization, invention, agricultural products and then export them to the other countries. In fact, we have a region that mostly imports and has almost no export except oil. The article finally suggested two approaches that the developing countries can use so as to be economically successful. I am exposing those approaches as they can be useful to the growth of the economy of the Kurdistan region as well. The article concluded that a developing country can have economic growth if the country must devise a strategy for rapidly amassing assets such as human capital and capital investments. .(Stiglitz, 1996). Second, if the country also had to achieve rapid productivity growth by catching up technologically with advanced country. it can be definitely argued that performing those two approaches in the Kurdistan region can make economic growth and make us economically successful since we have the lack of human capital and technological advancements.

2.6. The strong economic reforms of the former Korean Government, Land reforms, and foreign debts:

Much has been said about the economic plans of the former military government of South Korea under the leadership of Park Chung-Hee (1961-1979). One of the most



significant steps that he did was the five year plans so as to make a strong economy for South Korea. (Heywood, 2013). A few of the plans were earlier demonstrated such as industrializing South Korea, making technological and scientific advancements, etc. This is partially a reason why the pro-developmental state theories think that the economic success of South Korea belongs to the intervention of the state. However, land reforms in South Korea is also regarded as another very distinctive step in making the prosperous South Korean economy. The reforms included that “Tenant farming was prohibited and ownership of land was restricted to a maximum of three hectares per person.” (Heywood, 2013). As a matter fact, until now land reforms have not been seen in Kurdistan while it has been said that “Land reforms makes or breaks a nation.” (Viswanathan, 2015). In South Korea, the government supported its farmers to grow economically but here the farmers are not scientifically and industrially assisted. Therefore, Kurdistan needs to do land reforms and the government needs to make more equality between the lands owned by the bosses and the farmers and the lands that the Kurdish farmers have. We also observe that due to the lack of the assistance by government, farmers in Kurdistan abandon villages which is point that the government has to take into consideration otherwise, it will immensely harm our agriculture sector which we suggested to be an alternative for oil. Another point that should be discussed is that South Korea strengthened its economy by the foreign aids it took from the US, but here in Kurdistan after all the government asked a number of countries to aid the Kurdish government including the USA but non responded positively. (Viswanathan, 2015). So we require having a more recognized and distinct government so as to give us aids just like they did to South Korea. Finally, it is crucial to point out that South Korea also took a demographic shift strategy in which they reduced the number of children for the reason that more kids will make the people slow down and less active. (Viswanathan, 2015). As for Kurdistan, there is no concentration on how many children a family should have and what is the relation between the number of children and economy.

3. Conclusion:

This paper discussed the lessons that the Kurdistan region can learn from South Korea from an economic perspective. The economic growth of South Korea had been



immensely discussed and numerous resources were used so as to explain the factors that contributed to the success of their economy and that the KRG can utilize here. Education, human capital, agriculture and industrialization were some of the findings that article revealed. We have no choice than relying ourselves and promote a self dependent economy, we should absolutely have plans for our future, those dozens of thousands of graduates who are currently unemployed. Apart from the suggestions and facts revealed, I recommend researchers and academics on the following:

What agricultural product is our territory good for so as to work on it, thereby increasing our agricultural sector in general?

I recommend KRG authorities consider having an open style and free trade economy, in which everyone will be able to invest given resources allocated.

3.1: Findings and discussion

There is much that the Kurdistan region from an economic perspective can learn from South Korea. Whether we like it or not, we do not have a successful economy and there must be economic reforms in the Kurdistan region. The Kurdistan region has to move forward economically and take the lessons from the South Korean economy. Based on the research made to this paper, there are a few urgent steps that the Kurdistan region needs to undertake that South Korea had already done. These include developing our education system, making industrialization by training our workers and provide them with necessary skills, finding alternative ways for oil that can be reforming our agriculture sector. According to the findings, Kurdistan can learn from South Korea by having more skilled workers, higher savings, and hard workers. A developing country could economically develop if the country attempts to have more human capital with technological advancements in line with other advanced countries. Land reforms is also another necessary lesson that Kurdistan needs to learn from South Korea by putting a limit to the tribal leaders and bosses that have increasingly controlled so much lands. Other mechanisms KRG can utilize in doing economic reform are having economic institutions which is the first step of having a substantial economic infrastructure. These institutions help employees do their job well, be active, promote invention, and be less corruptive. Transparency in economy, something KRG and Iraq lack is also another huge and important mechanism we need

if we wish to have economic models of France, Germany and Denmark. Accountability on how well, transparent and quality based people do their job is really essential for economic reform. Last but not least mechanism and finding was salary raise of employees so that employees would be financially motivated, do their job well and based on international standards. Finally, I would like to demonstrate that, there is so much more than can be said on this topic, and that the research could have been written in other ways as well, but everyone has his/her own style. The way I wrote the piece was that I mentioned the ways that South Korea took to its economic growth which Kurdistan can use them by taking advantage of the , mechanisms and steps indicated as well as cooperation of world economic experts it is in my hopes that the Kurdistan region can take the lessons I have demonstrated from South Korea and could then have economic growth and prosperity.

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پوخته:

ئەم توێژینە وەهەیه باس لە وارانە دەکات کە هەریمی کوردستان دەتوانێت لە پرووی ئابووریە وەهە کۆریای باشوورە وەهە فیرییت. هەریمی کوردستانی عێراق بە چەندین بەرەستی ئابووریدا تیپەرپو و تا ئیستا پێیدا تیپەر دەبیت. هەریمە کە وەک بەشەکانی تری عێراق تا رادەیهکی زۆر پشت بەداهاتی نەوت دەبەستیت. هیشتا بە شیوهیهکی کاریگەرانه نەیتوانیوه سوود لە سەرچاوه ئابوورییهکانی تر وەک پیشەسازی و کشتوکال و گەشتوگوزار وەرگرییت. پلانی هەیه بۆ سوودوهرگرتن لە سەرچاوه پیشەسازی و کشتوکالییهکان بەلام هەنگاوی راستهقینه نەراوه. تا ئیستا دەیان هەزار دەرچووی گەنجی بیکار هەیه، گەندەلی ئیداری هەیه، و بەرزکردنەوهی پلهی فەرمانبەران بۆ ماوهی چەند سالیکه

وهستاون. بۆیه ئەم توێژینهیهوه ئەو ههنگاوانه دهردهخات كه كۆریای باشوور بۆ باشتزرکردنی ئابووری خۆی له پوانگهی پهروهرده و پیشهسازی و كشتوكالییهوه ههلیگرتووه. بهراورد و جیاوازی له بهشی پیداجوونهوهی ئەدهبی نیوان ههریمی كوردستان و كۆریای باشووردا پيشان دهرییت. ههندیك لهم فاكتهانهی ئەم لیکۆلینهوهیه پهی گهیشتوووه ئەوهیه كه كه پێویسته ههریمی كوردستان لار بکات بۆ بههیزکردنی سهرمایهی مرۆیی، سوود له تهکنه لۆجیا وهربگریت، دوور بکهوئتهوه له بوونی نهوت وهك تاكه سهرچاوهی ئابووری و سوود وهربگریت له كهرتی كشتوكالی و پیشهسازی وهكو جیگرهوه. پيشنیاڕ دهكهم توێژهڕانی ئارهزوومهند له ناوچهكه لیکۆلینهوه بکن لهسهر ئەوهی كه پێویسته ههریمی كوردستان چ جۆره پیشهسازییهکی تیدا بکریت و زهوبهكهی بۆ چ جۆره بهرهههمیکی كشتوكالی گونجاوه؟

المخلص:

یناقش هذا القال الدروس التي يمكن أن يتعلمها إقليم كردستان من كوريا الجنوبية من منظور اقتصادي. لقد مر إقليم كردستان العراق بالعديد من العقبات الاقتصادية وما زال يمر به. تعتمد المنطقة مثل بقية العراق إلى حد كبير على عائدات النفط. ولا يزال يتعين عليها الاستفادة بشكل فعال من الموارد الاقتصادية الأخرى مثل التصنيع والزراعة والسياحة. لديها خطط لاستخدام المصادر الصناعية والزراعية ولكن لم يتم اتخاذ خطوات حقيقية. لا يزال هناك عشرات الآلاف من الخريجين الشباب العاطلين عن العمل، والافتقار إلى الهيكل الإداري للأصوات، وتوقف ترقية الموظفين لعدة سنوات. يكشف هذا المقال عن الخطوات التي اتخذتها كوريا الجنوبية لتحسين اقتصادها من التعليم والصناعة والزراعة. المقارنة والتباينات موضحة في جزء مراجعة الأدبيات بين إقليم كردستان وكوريا الجنوبية. تشمل النتائج الواردة في المقال إقليم كردستان لتعزيز رأس ماله البشري، والاستفادة من التكنولوجيا، وتجنب امتلاك النفط كمورد اقتصادي واحد، والاستفادة من قطاعه الزراعي وكذلك التصنيع. يوصى للباحثين المهتمين بالمنطقة بإجراء استفسار حول نوع التصنيع الذي يجب أن يخطط فيه إقليم كردستان، وما هي المنتجات الزراعية التي تكون أراضيها جاهزة لها.