Dynamics of Kurdish identity formation in the Kurdistan Region-Iraq between 1991 and 2014

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Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

May 2015

Abstract

This study is built around two core questions. Firstly, what constitutes the formation of Kurdish identity in the Kurdistan Region-Iraq (KRI)? Secondly, what have the inner dynamics of this process been since 1991? Two major theoretical approaches are used to address these questions, namely ethno-symbolism and political discourse theory (PDT).

These theories are utilised to approach the research questions on two levels: the cultural-historical and the political; and result in four major findings regarding the inner dynamics of collective identity formation in the KRI. Firstly, it is found that actors active in the process of collective identity formation are primarily nationalist political parties and intellectuals. Secondly, that Kurdish identity in the region forms around 'Kurdish' ethnic, cultural and historical features. Thirdly, that a large set of cultural and historical tools have been utilised to produce Kurdish identity in the KRI. Fourthly, that different forms of Kurdish identity have been produced in the KRI, meaning that Kurdishness in the region is split, fragmented, relational and crisis-ridden.

This study also argues that the process of Kurdish identity formation in the KRI from 1991 to 2014 can be divided into three

historic phases. The first of these stretched from 1991 to 2003 and saw the ambiguous development of a traditional Kurdish ethno-nationalist identity; the second lasted from 2003 to 2009 and saw the development of an ambiguous Kurdish nationalist identity; whilst the third stretches from 2009 to the present and has seen Kurdish identity acquire a civic character in response to newly emerged political, social and economic conditions in the KRI.

The study also combines the theoretical and methodological approaches of ethno-symbolism's culturist approach and PDT's social constructionism in order to develop an approach suitable for studying the complexities of Kurdish identity formation in the KRI. The resulting argument is that whilst Kurdish cultural and historical features play an essential role in producing the Kurdish identity in the KRI, this identity is produced in the discursive realm by competing social and political actors, each of which seeks to hegemonise their own particular form of Kurdish identity.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Table of Contents

Table of figures

List of tables

Abbreviations

ADP   Assyrian Democratic Party

AKP   Justice and Development Party

BASP   Ba'ath Arab Socialist Party

CM   Movement for Change

ICP   Iraqi communist Party

IDP   Internally Displaced People

IKF   Iraqi Kurdistan Front

IMK   Islamic Movement in Kurdistan

ITF   Iraqi Turkmen Front

KAIP   Kurdistan Action Independent Party (PASOK)

KDP   Kurdistan Democratic Party

KDSP   Kurdistan democratic Solution Party

KFP   Kurdistan Future Party

KIG   Kurdistan Islamic Group

KIU   Kurdistan Islamic Union

KNA   Kurdistan National Assembly (parliament)

KRG   Kurdistan Regional Government

KRI   Kurdistan Region-Iraq

KSDP   Kurdistan Socialist Democratic Party

KTP   Kurdistan Toilers Party

KWCP   Kurdistan Workers Communist party

OFFP   The Oil For Food Program

OPEC   Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries

PKK   Kurdistan Workers Party

PUK   Patriotic Union of Kurdistan

SLC   The State of Law Coalition

TAL   Transitional Administration Law

CHAPTER ONE

1 Introduction

This is a study of the long process of Kurdish collective identity formation in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). According to dominant narratives, Kurds have long been positioned as a key unstable element in the geopolitics of the Middle East. However, developments in Iraq and Syria since 2003 have revealed this understanding to be a fallacy. Iraqi Kurds played a major role in the American led regime change process in Iraq in 2003; and are playing an equally crucial role in standing against the Islamic State ('IS', formerly, ISIS[1]) and other terrorist groups in the Syrian Civil War, which began in 2011. Indeed, at the time of writing, the Kurds are frequently considered key players in the 'war on terrorism' and are playing the role of 'bulwark' in the face of IS and other terrorist forces in the region. Therefore, the Kurds are now considered by many as the key to a stable, free and democratic Middle East. Thus, research into the Kurdistan Region of Iraq is timely and has

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[1] 'The Islamic State in Iraq and Sham', sometimes named 'Islamic State in Iraq and Levant' (ISIL). The corresponding Arabic acronym 'Daesh' is the abriviated form of the organization's Arabic name (i.e. ad-Dawla al-Islamiyah fil-Eraq wash-Sham).

significant importance in aiding understanding of current conditions and the possible futures of the Middle East more broadly.

1.1 The story of identity

On the 5th September 2013 the popular Kurdish website Penusakan.com carried a story headlined 'Two Kurdish Lovers Astonish the World After Three Thousand Years'. The following story was accompanied by a photograph of two 'kissing' skeletons lying in a bin. They had been excavated in the ancient 'Hasanlu' site in Western Azerbaijan province in Iran – an area mostly populated by Kurds, who consider it to be part of Iranian Kurdistan. The ability to narrate this photograph (actually taken by members of the Pennsylvania University Museum's excavation team in 1972) in such a way can be seen as an example of 'crafting a national self' (Houston, 2008, p. 5). The story of 'Kurdish kissing lovers' is indicative of the manipulative power of the nationalist discourse, which is able to invest in the past in order to re-construct the identity of the Kurdish nation in the present. Furthermore, the story also proves the importance of history (whether factual or fictional) in nationalist symbolic design. While there is no substantial scientific evidence regarding the identity of the ancient residents of the area where the skeletons were found – and whilst the area is also highly populated by Iranian Turks – Kurdish nationalists utilized this photograph to help form their identity. Indeed, it is

2

likely that these Iranian Turks would also claim the skeletons. The story, in other words, illustrates the fact that identity is far from objective, but is socially constructed, contested and contingent. The overriding characteristics of peoples' identities are dictated by hegemonic discourses.

The present study can be animated by the above analysis. In what follows, I sketch the theoretical and methodological methods utilized in this research.

1.2 Why Kurdish identity? Why Iraqi Kurds? Why 1991?

A further – and more macro-level – example of the imposition of identity can be seen in the approach taken by the USA and Britain following the invasion of Iraq in 2003. They stated that Iraq should be reconstructed in a manner in which all, 'regardless of their ethnic and sectarian background' submit themselves to the 'unified Iraq', and see themselves as 'just Iraqis' (O'Leary & Salih, 2005, p. 33). The conflict-ridden history of Iraq, stretching back to its foundation in the early 1920s (in which the British were primary actors), was of little significance to them (O'Leary & Salih, 2005, pp. 16-17) The move also ignored the identities of Kurds in northern Iraq (or 'KRI')[2], who saw the land they lived on – which had been beyond

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[2] The preferred term in this study is Kurdistan Region-Iraq (KRI). Kurdistan in its broader sense is the indigenous name, commonly used to refer to a broader geographical area. Today, this includes parts of northern Iraq, north western Iran, south eastern Turkey and northern

3

Iraqi governmental control since Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1991 – as part of Kurdistan. The impact of these twelve years of Kurdish self-rule in shaping the self-perception of the Kurds was not considered to be of significant relevance for the democratization and nation-building processes instigated by British and American policymakers. However, whilst the occupying rulers encountered significant militant resistance in central and southern parts of Iraq, they also faced resistance from their Kurdish allies in the north. This, however, was not of an armed nature. In short, the Kurds' resistance manifested itself through their refusal of the identity imposed on the Iraqi society by the allied victors. American and British officials in Iraq were trying to pool the Iraqi 'nation' together in the best way possible. Arguably, the 'best way possible' at that time meant the re-integration of the semi-autonomous Kurdistan Region-Iraq into the refurbished Iraqi state. However, this was resisted by Iraqi Kurds during the reconstruction projects, which gained momentum before and during the early period of Iraqi invasion (O'Leary and Salih, 2005, p. 32). [3] Thus, American and British officials and analysts were left disappointed: their

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Syria.

[3] The Iraq Study Group report, also known as Baker and Hamilton report (Baker, III & Hamilton, 2006) and the Iraq Commission report' (Ashdown, et al., 2007), Each report produced by two different study groups assigned by American and British governments respectively, may exemplify the dominant discourse within American and British policy-makers in post-2003 Iraq.

misperception and misrepresentation of the identity practices of the Kurds of the KRI resulted in resistance to their project.

These failings can be related to dominant International Relations theories of democratization, nation-building and reconstruction; which fail to consider the role of non-state identities. Thus, International Relations theory can be implicated in the enduring instability in Iraq. This study seeks to contribute to the development of a more sophisticated understanding of Kurdish identity formation in the KRI, with a focus on their development since 1991. This, it is hoped, will contribute to a superior understanding of Iraqi politics more broadly.

1.3 The rationale

As noted above, Kurds in general – and Iraqi Kurds in particular – have commonly been understood as a source of instability in the Middle East.[4] Despite this understanding, the postulation above speaks to contested realities in the Middle East. States in which a large proportion of the population are either identified as or self-identify as Kurds (Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria) experienced enduring and frequently bloody conflicts between Kurds and central

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[4] Examples could include: The Kurds: An Unstable Element in the Gulf by Stephen C. Pelletier (1984); Kurdish Ethonationalism by Nader Entessar (1992); and The Kurdish Revolt: 1961-1970, by Edgar O'Bailance, (1973).

government (normally ruled by the majority ethnic group) throughout the twentieth century. This can partly be linked to the nature of nation-states in the region, which, as Abbas Vali (2006) notes, are products of a 'perverted modernity' resulting from the collapse of the great empires of the region and subsequent processes of nation-building. Those processes spoke the language of modernist state-building but failed to fulfill its goals: the homogenizing dynamics inherent in state-building made them notoriously exclusionist of identities other than their 'core ethnic groups' (O'Leary & Salih, 2005, p. 10; Vali, 2006, p. 56). Yet although this 'perverted modernity' provides important background to the situation in the contemporary KRI, a more detailed study needs to examine the history of the region from 1991.

Whilst 1989 is frequently portrayed as a historic turning point in Eastern European politics, and as the dawning of a new global order; 1991 was an important occasion in the history of Middle East, and the events of that year have also left their mark on global politics. More specifically for the purposes of this study, 1991 saw major changes to the domestic political system in Iraq, culminating in historical reorientations of power relations along ethnic and sectarian lines. For Iraqi Kurds, 1991 thus marked a significant new chapter in their decades-long struggle for national self-assertion through obtaining a *de facto* status of autonomy from Iraq's central

government under Saddam Hussein.

This was achieved after the new global order became more favorably disposed to non-state actors such as the Kurds. Combined with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, an unprecedented opportunity for the Kurds to claim autonomy emerged. This was taken through the emergence of the KRI as a political actor: the region acquired a degree of political-juridical power and came – at times – to be described as a 'de facto state' (Anderson & Stansfield, 2004; Gunter, 1999; Romano, 2004; Stansfield, 2003b).

Despite the KRI's highly unstable and conflicted history (evidenced by its political and legal status internationally); its uneasy coexistence with the neighboring states of Iran, Turkey and Syria, (which, having large Kurdish populations have been historically hostile to Kurdish self-rule); and constant internal divisions, the KRI has provided a new and unique experience of semi-autonomy for the Kurds in general and Iraqi Kurds in particular.

Since 1991 the region of Kurdistan can be viewed and studied from various angles. However, for the reasons noted above, this study focuses on the pivotal issue of collective identity formation in the KRI between 1991 and 2014. In studying collective identity, researchers encounter significant theoretical and methodological

decisions. The wide range of actors and factors active in processes of collective identity formation necessitates decisions regarding methods of data collection and analysis.

Research questions

My core research questions are as follows:

1) What constitutes and determines the Kurdish identity in Kurdistan Region-Iraq?
2) To what extent is Kurdish identity in Kurdistan Region-Iraq determined by cultural and historical factors or political agents?
3) What kind of collective Kurdish identity is formed in Kurdistan Region-Iraq?
4) What are the main trajectories of that identity?

This research also explores 'how' and 'why' Kurdish identity comes to be constructed in the KRI; the determinate actors in constructing Kurdish identity in the KRI; and the nature of Kurdish identity in the KRI.

Theoretical framework

The dominant approach to nations and nationalism holds that contemporary ethnic and nationalist identities are products of modernity. For Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, Elie Kedourie, John Breuilly and others from the modernist school of nations and

nationalism,[5] the social, economic and political transformations brought about by modern industrial 'print-capitalism' paved the way for new ideologically-sanctioned collective identities linked to broader conceptions of nations and nationalism; and which frequently articulated their demands for statehood (Anderson, 2006; Breuilly, 2001; Gellner, 1969; Kedourie, 2000). However, culturalist approaches to nations and nationalism focus primarily on the importance of ethnic roots and symbolism. They argue that whilst national identity formations are modern phenomena, they are nevertheless (re)constructed around pre-existing ethnic roots: they capitalize on ethnic myths, symbols and memories (Smith, 1991; Smith, 1999; Smith, 2009). The constructionist approaches to collective national identity – including -political discourse theory (PDT)—meanwhile, see national identity as a socially constructed, contingent, historical and unsolidified form (Anderson, 2006; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1992; Laclau, 1994; Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). National identities are 'the result…of human action, speech….as a result they can and do change over time.' (Fearon & Laitin, 2000, p. 848)

Following their critical discussion of a number of studies on the relationship between ethnic and nationalist constructions and

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[5] Full discussion on the modernist school vis-à-vis the ethno-symbolic approach is provided in chapter four.

violence, James Fearon and David Laitin (2000) outline three forces driving the construction of ethnic or national identities: social and economic processes; discourse; and individuals. They note that existing approaches frequently adopt these drivers alone or in combination. My intention here is to incorporate the aforementioned approaches especially, the last two by utilizing ethno-symbolism and PDT as theoretical and methodological tools. This is not a straightforward task, yet, as John Breuilly notes:

> I do not think it is possible to have a satisfactory theory or even approach towards nationalism as a whole. Nationalism can refer to arguments of intellectuals, ways people feel and talk political movements and organizations, state policy, and much else. It is difficult to formulate a general and coherent view of any one of these subjects; it is a fantasy to suppose one could develop an argument which covered them all. (2001, p. 49)

As Breuilly notes, however, this should not prevent us from seeking to arrive at a plausible theoretical—methodological approaches that enables a greater, if not total, understanding of nations, nationalism and associated issues. Thus, I approach Kurdish identity formation on two main levels:

1) Cultural-historical: examining the historical development of Kurdish identity formation in the KRI between 1991 and 2014; and exploring the cultural and social tenets constituting the language and discourse of Kurdish nationalism.

10

2) Political: examining the political discourse used by the major Kurdish political parties, the Kurdish Regional Government and non-partisan organizations and individuals within the KRI.

Accordingly, the case in question will be critically assessed through the ethno-symbolic approach, which is commonly associated with Anthony Smith; and the constructionist approach represented by the political discourse theory of Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau. The former highlights the importance of cultural difference and history for understanding identity; whilst the latter focuses on how political discourse shapes and constructs identity. These approaches are not kept separate, however: an attempt is made to combine their theoretical and analytical contours in order to arrive at a satisfactory explanatory theory of the dynamism of Kurdish identity formation in the KRI since 1991. I argue that by combining the two theories we can better understand the interplay of culture and politics in the processes of identity formation in the KRI from 1991-2014; and arrive at a more satisfactory understanding of identity formation more generally.

Combining ethno-symbolism and PDT is particularly useful in studying identity formation in the KRI because of Kurdish political discourse's dependence on cultural elements and historical narratives (both fictional and factual) in constructing Kurdish

identity, which is constructed by excavating historical roots and memorising the modern tragedies; by Newroz[6] celebrations and Halabja[7] and commemorations. Understanding these cultural and historical factors is insufficient for understanding the constitution of Kurdish identity, however; and nor can Kurdish political discourse be explored in a vacuum: it requires cultural and symbolic tools as building blocks. In addition, the cultural and historical elements are not presented as raw materials in nationalist political discourse, but rather are re-appropriated and incorporated into a range of nationalist narratives, which compete for hegemony over Kurdish identity. There are, in other words, competing forms of Kurdish identity in the KRI. Also important to note is that Kurdish identity is animated through antagonistic relations with non-Kurdish identities.

The relational environment of Kurdish identity formation has been well theorized by Abbas Vali. For him, the central point is that national identity is essentially a modern phenomenon, arising at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; and tightly

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[6] Newroz is an annual feast celebrated by Kurds and other people in the Middle East. It also marks the first day of the Kurdish and Iranian calander and falls on 21st of March each year. A detailed discussion of Newroz is provided in the coming sections.

[7] Halabja is a town in the KRI which was attacked by Chemical bombs by the then Iraqi army on 16th March 1988.

linked to processes of modernisation and the political philosophy of popular democracy (Vali, 2003a, p. 13; 2006; 2011, pp. xii-xiii). This resonates with the modernist approach to nationalism and national identity formulated by scholars such Gellner (1983; 1969), Anderson (2006) and Hobsbawm (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1992). Vali argues that Kurdish nationalism should be understood as part of a growing nationalist trend at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; and that it arose from the failure of newly formed modern nation-states in the Middle East, which sought to mimic European nation-states such as France and Britain. He perceives these failures as inevitable given the presence of 'non-sovereign' Kurds in nation-states created by 'sovereign ethnic groups', and which failed to account for this 'non-sovereign difference' (Vali, 2011, p. 137). As these state-building processes were premised on the negation and subversion of non-sovereign Kurds, the Kurdish identity was transformed: moving from a linguistic identity to an ethnic identity, transforming the discourse and practice of Kurdish nationalism in the process. Thus, it follows that Kurdish identity is fundamentally related to other, non-Kurdish identities. While the dispersal of Kurds across a number of nation-states in the Middle East (Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria) may have had serious ramifications for the nature and development of Kurdish identity and associated nationalisms, relationality is essential for the function and development of Kurdish identity in

the region.

Although the preceding discussions are self-explanatory with regards to the theoretical outlook of Vali, it is important to note that he also shows his explicit affinity to the constructionist approach. He makes clear his opposition to the 'positivist obsession' with empiricist epistemology, 'which appeals to the authority of historical fact-evidence as means of validation of historical argument' (2011, p. xv). He argues that adopting such an approach would seriously harm the theoretical arguments in the constructionist conceptualization of key concepts such as 'nation' and 'national identity' by leading scholars such as Gellner, Anderson and Hobsbawm. However, he argues that the positivist epistemological position exposes a serious contradiction in constructionist theory, for while constructionists criticise primordialism and ethnicism for the way they define the origins of the nation; and accuse them of conceptualising the 'historical fact-evidence' in an essentialist and self-explanatory manner, they are also guilty of doing so. Thus, Vali argues that 'the constructivist conception of the national origin entails a notion of the past which is given to the discourse, exists in the present and is capable of animating it.' (2011, p. xv)[8]

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[8] As can be noted, Vali uses the term 'constructivist' interchangeably with the more common term 'constructionist'. Others distinguish between the two, associating 'constructivism' with psychology and 'constructionism'

There are two further points in Vali's approach with serious implications for the present study. As noted above, Vali conceives of national identity as being inevitably related to relations of power in the modern nation-state. The consolidation of official national identity is tightly linked to the negation of the 'non-sovereign' group (or the minority) by the sovereign group (or the majority). In effect, the minority's struggle to reassert itself involves an active political engagement vis-à-vis the majority. In other words, politics becomes a struggle for national identity. This consequently brings nationalism to the forefront in struggles of national identity and leads Vali to argue that 'the nation should also be perceived, analysed and theorised at the level of nationalism' (2011, p. xiv). As he notes, this argument represents 'the constructivist conceptions of the nation in contemporary political and social thought' (2011, p. xiv). The second – and equally important – point in Vali's postulation of Kurdish identity formation is the pivotal position of 'power' in nationalist discourse:

> Power is the soul of national rights, without which they will remain exterior to themselves, a voice that does not speak, a force which does not signify. [...]...power is the agency connecting rights and identity in the nationalist political field, both ethnic and national. (2011, p. 128)

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with sociology and other social sciences (Young & Collin, 2004). In this study the more common 'constructionism' is preferred.

These two arguments have serious implications for this study. Issues of collective identity – whether national or ethnic – are indivisible from the political domain in the KRI. In fact, since 1991 the main political actors in the KRI have been the Kurdish nationalist parties, who have also been the leading architects of Kurdish identity formation. Furthermore, power and its consolidation was central to their efforts at both the local and national level.

Since the 1991 uprising, Kurdish political parties have engaged in a constant power struggle with both rival Kurdish parties and the Iraqi government in Baghdad. These latter struggles began with negotiations in 1991, which sought to reach an agreement on a form of autonomy for the Kurdistan Region, but were doomed to fail over disagreements regarding power. Then, in October 1992, the nascent Kurdish parliament endorsed a federal relationship with the Iraqi state. The importance of these power relations in identity formation is evident in the fact that the most critical point of disagreement between Kurdish parties and Arabs in Baghdad following 2003 centred on issues regarding federalism, Peshmerga forces[9] and natural resources.

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[9] Peshmerga is a term used for the main Kurdish armed forces in the KRI. The terms relates to 'those who face death'. It is a new term, first reported during the short lived Kurdish Republic of Kurdistan in Mahabad, Iran in 1946, where it referred to Kurdish armed forces of the state. The term has since become popular among Kurdish nationalist

1.4 Contributions made by the research

The history of modern states in the Middle East demonstrates the importance of ethnic and nationalist languages, symbols and ideologies play extremely important roles in states' internal and external affairs. Similarly, it has been suggested that ethnic and nationalist languages and ideologies have been among the most important 'cultural tools' utilized by Kurdish nationalist groups (Romano, 2006). It has been argued that this 'is a clear manifestation of the existence of sources of conflict that cannot be dealt with satisfactorily through the application of macro theories of world order.' (Entessar, 1992, p. 1) The very existence of such groups in Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey has also contributed significantly to the domestic and foreign policy-making processes of these states in a number of ways.

Accordingly, the focus on a specific contested region (the KRI) provides a useful case study for work on identity formation and nationalism; and one that should not be ignored by scholars and analysts exploring the social and political aspects of these four states. By examining the dominant ethnic and nationalist discourse(s) in the KRI, this study will contribute to understanding of the enduring ethnic and nationalist conflicts in Iraq in particular

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groups in Iran and Iraq.

and in the wider region of Middle East in general. Furthermore, by explicating the inner dynamics of nationalist discourse(s) of Iraqi Kurds in their relationship with other dominant discourses, this study will further contribute to further understanding of the situation in the KRI; and provide insight into the nature of contemporary ethnic and national relationships in Iraq and the Middle East more generally. Finally, this research provides a new method for exploring identity formation and nationalism through its use of two major social and political theories: ethno-symbolism and political discourse theory. While there are limited attempts to utilize the former in studies of Kurdish identity and nationalism there have been – to my knowledge – no attempts to employ the latter in Kurdish studies. The current study may therefore be regarded a starting point in this regard, paving the way for further studies to utilize similar theoretical and methodological approaches.

1.5 The argument

In this research I argue that the Kurdish identity in the KRI is formed through the dynamics described above. The long history of Kurdish identity formation in Iraq shows that (as for other identity groups), there is no 'essential' Kurdish identity to which particular groups submit themselves. Rather, Kurdish identity has always been relative to the identity of others and is socially constructed (Romano, 2006; Vali, 2006). A one-dimensional analysis of these

processes of identity construction thus runs the risk of ignoring important factors, and is likely to lead to reductionism in one form or another. Accordingly, a key task of this study is to identify the major factors that have contributed to processes of Kurdish identity formation in the KRI. It will be argued that Kurdish identity in the KRI has been constructed and reconstructed in a relational manner vis-à-vis other national identities within and beyond the geographical borders of the Iraqi state (the Arab, Turkish and Iranian national identities in particular). Therefore, the nature and direction of Kurdish identity in Iraq has reflected the nature of these relationships.

Following these lines of argument – and drawing on ethno-symbolism – it can be expected that the dominant Kurdish identity in the KRI is constructed around Kurdish ethnicity. The first task of this study is to explore how this process occurs. It does not necessarily follow from this, however, that Kurdish identity in the KRI is homogenous; and the second major task of this study is to examine the hypothesis that the Kurdish identity is highly contested, reflecting the fragmented nature of Kurdish politics and Kurdish social realities. This second issue, I contend, can best be approached through the theoretical and methodological tools of political discourse theory.

In addition, while sharing features with Kurdish identities in neighbouring states, the Kurdish identity in Iraq has also acquired unique features. This point is illustrated by the hegemonic impact of Kurdish nationalist ideology in the KRI. This ideology is characterized by considerable ambiguity and is affected to a considerable extent by the strategic choices of Kurdish political parties and their often charismatic leaders (active in Iraq since 1946[10]). Another equally important argument to make here is that the process of Kurdish identity formation in the KRI has gone through at least three major phases since 1991. From 1991 to 2003 it can best be described as an inherently ambiguous ethnic-nationalist process; whilst from 2003 to 2009 it was chiefly characterized by increasing Kurdish nationalist traits. Finally, since 2009 a counter-hegemonic discourse has emerged, challenging a traditionally dominant ethnic and revolutionary nationalist identity. This contemporary phase, I contend, generates a new dynamic that could result in a more civic form of Kurdish identity that can be contrasted the traditional ethnic-based identity.

1.6 Methodology

Rogers Smith (2003), developed an account of the 'politics of

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[10] 1946 saw the foundation of the Iraqi version of KDP (Kurdistan Democratic Party), the most modern and popular Kurdish political organization at the time. It also marks the fall of the first and only Kurdish Republic of Mahabad. See David McDowall (1996, pp. 287-391).

identity'; or, as he calls it elsewhere, the 'politics of people-making'. He outlines three 'stories of peoplehood' – the economic, political power and ethically constitutive – which power identity formation (these can be related to the work of Fearon and Laitin discussed above). These relate to different (but overlapping) ways in which narratives help in processes of identity formation. Economic stories utilize material explanations and offer benefits to community members who hold the identity in question; political power stories promise them political power and/or protection; whilst ethically constitutive stories generate group identity through identification with ethically grounded values. Ethnic, racial, cultural, linguistic and religious identities can be understood as utilizing ethically constitutive stories.

Although the three stories are all utilized in processes of identity formation, they may perform different functions across time; and one or two stories may play a more significant role at any given time. This suggests a process in which identities are constructed through contestation among elements of the three types of stories There is a normative element to Smith's work, however: he argues, that the category of 'ethically constitutive' stories is the most 'coherent one…that highlights discourses capable of playing vital roles in human political life that other types of stories cannot play so well' (2003, p. 61). He justifies this preference by arguing that

ethically constitutive categories are 'harder to discredit via empirical evidence than economic and power ones' (2003, p. 62).

Whilst Smith acknowledges that political identities are not autonomous from factors such as economics, demographics, language, ancestry, religion, he nevertheless maintains that political elites play a significant role in 'crafting' identities and presenting them to the masses (2003, p. 60). Interestingly, while calling for general theorizing in the field, he encourages researchers to move beyond taking 'nations' as their primary field of investigation (2003, p. 52). As a result of the unique and peculiar nature of these processes of political identity formation, Smith suggests that 'historically and contextually sensitive' methods are required (2003, p. 53); and while not completely rejecting those derived from rational choice approaches, he argues that 'they cannot….go very far in helping us to comprehend the substantive appeal and normative significant of particular identities' (2003, p. 53).

Given their ontologically significant role in contemporary political life, Smith maintains that processes of political identity formation demand 'high priority' in terms of academic study. Arguing that research in this domain may be more accurately addressed via 'interpretive' methodological tools, he states that:

> Many important aspects of the politics of identity cannot
> be adequately probed without methods that are richly
> 'interpretive,' that involves grasping the consciousness
> and senses of value and meaning that identities involve
> for human beings who possess them' (2003, p. 52-3).

These arguments are of considerable use in analyzing Kurdish identity formation in the KRI. Whether understood as a *de facto* state, a semi-independent region or an autonomous region within the broader politico-juridical borders of Iraq, the KRI is a political and cultural community; and through discourse and practice develops the features of a specific collective identity. Thus, I employ a number of Smith's theoretical insights in the research that follows. It is his interpretive methodology that is particularly useful for this research, however. I now turn to outline and justify the choice of data collection utilized in this research.

1.6.1 Methods of data collection

In their seminal study *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*, (which takes Austria as case study), Wodak et al. (Wodak, et al., 2009, p. 3) incorporate a mixed method of data collection, which includes interviews with political elite and 'ordinary' people. Ordinary people are included in order evaluate the degree to which elite discourse is received by the general public. Wodak et al. maintain that researching national identity necessitates

engagement with a wide range of phenomena, including the languages and interactions of ordinary people.

Drawing on these claims, this research combines qualitative interviews with political elites with a survey of ordinary people. It also utilizes analysis of speech transcripts, political party and government documents; as well as visual and live images produced by key actors. To this end, a set of primary and secondary data has been pooled. This includes semi-structured interviews with a number of Kurdish politicians from major political and governmental bodies in the KRI; publications produced by political parties and government institutions since 1991; publications produced by non-partisan groups and organizations; cultural and intellectual sources in various forms and genres; and an online survey conducted through Facebook (at the time of research, the most-popular form of social media in the KRI), designed to capture the views of ordinary people in the KRI. While the interviews were conducted between 2012 and 2013, the online survey was conducted in November and December 2014. Other sources cover the period from 1991 to 2014. The two major choices of data collection in this study (i.e. in-depth interview and online survey) will be evaluated in the proceeding sections.

1.6.1.1 Personal interviews

Language and other semiotic forms of meaning-making stand at the heart of processes of identity formation. As a primarily qualitative research, this study seeks to explore the dynamic of identity formation through the perception of actors who are involved directly in the process of Kurdish identity formation in the KRI. In this case, that means the political elite.

The method of data collection in this study is based on my understanding that the tools of qualitative methods of enquiry may be utilised in the best way to address the main research question of the study. As Henn et al. note, 'the logic of qualitative research is to explore the meaning that people have of the world around them' (Henn, et al., 2006, p. 179).

The significant role played by political elites in identity-related issues are addressed by Van Dijk's (1993) study on racism in Europe. If they play such a substantial role in the European context then, in a region such as the KRI (with its long history of political conflict, and in which politics penetrates the entire social structure), political elites can be regarded as the main actors in collective identity formation. In addition to qualitative data pertinent to the discourse of the KRI's political elite (such as speech transcripts, formal media interviews, and political party documents), in-depth

face-to-face interviews are regarded as a complementary mode of access (Van Dijk, 1997, p. 18). This is of significant importance given the importance of the party form in Kurdish politics (expanded on below in the discussion of the concept of 'particracy').

The methodology utilized in this study is further informed by its theoretical framework. To this end, a number of face-to-face interviews have been conducted with selected politicians in the KRI. Though it cannot be claimed that the sample units of the personal interviews conducted for this study (the politicians, in other words) represent the entirety of political institutions in the KRI, the selection is justified as interviewees are drawn from the main political parties and the key political institutions in the KRI.

The discourse analysis provided in chapter seven is built around the theoretical framing of PDT. Therefore, the analysis will be formed around a set of themes outlined earlier in the chapter. Further detailed analysis will be provided through the utilization of the relevant methodological tools of PDT, such as the logics of 'equivalent and difference'.

1.6.1.2   The online survey

It has been suggested that surveys are the best available means

to obtain information about peoples' opinion, values and behaviour (Fink, 2013, p. 24; Murphy, et al., 2014, p. 16). However, the online survey model has yet to gain full acceptance in the social sciences. It has been argued, for example, that any sample taking internet users cannot claim generalisation of inference (Fricker, jr., 2008, p. 206). Nevertheless, taking into account the relatively large levels of internet usage in the KRI, the use of online surveys is likely to enhance the coverage size of any survey undertaken. Whilst Iraq as a whole has a very low internet usage level (or 'internet penetration'), standing at only, 9.2% of the total population in 2013 (ITU, 2015), it has been reported that the KRI has the lion's share of overall internet use compared to the rest of Iraq (7% of the 9.2% mentioned above, as of 2014) (Macropolis.net, 2008). Indeed, the KRI is the main source of internet provision to the rest of Iraq (Smith, 2014). This is largely due to the fact that internet (and other developed communication technologies) were introduced to the KRI ahead of the rest of Iraq before the 2003 regime change in Baghdad. Another factor may be the comparably more developed social and economic conditions in the KRI. Facebook was chosen as an appropriate forum to conduct the survey as 77% of internet users in Iraq use Facebook (Arab Advisors Group, 2013), whilst in the KRI around 50% of internet users use Facebook (Invest in Group, 2013). The Facebook survey utilized the 'Convenience' method. This is appropriate given the

nature of the study, which is to explore the perceptions and opinions of the general public in the KRI.

There are, however, drawbacks to the surveying method utilized in this study. As a primarily qualitative study, it is not possible to claim generalizability (Henn, et al., 2006, p. 157). Whilst the primary objective is to enable a better understanding of the social and political process of Kurdish identity formation in KRI, it cannot be said that the Facebook users who responded represent the entire population of KRI. This may result in coverage bias (Fricker, jr., 2008, p. 198). However, every effort has been made to include a balanced number of participants according to a range of categories, including geographical area, gender, education, and possible political support. This has been facilitated by the establishment of a large Facebook friendship network, which was then encourage to share the survey, allowing a 'snowballing' enlargement of reach, albeit one that differs from conventional uses of the term.[11] In addition, the use of snowballing helps to formulate a typical number of cases rather than a representative portion of the general population (Henn, et al., 2006, p. 156). Another common limitation may be the issue of low response rate

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[11] The snowballing method is normally used in studies where the sample consists of rare cases or those who may be difficult to reach (drug users, for example). However, Facebook allows for the expansion of this method beyond its common use (Fricker, jr., 2008, p. 200).

or nonresponse, given the total response number of 410 (considered modest but reasonable). Whilst there are a number of reasons why people may not have responded to a survey on controversial area of political identity in the KRI, the survey frame population (those eligible to participate) was wide, allowing any Facebook user[12] who would came across the survey link to participate.[13] Thus, the degree of nonresponse does not automatically result in 'nonresponse bias'. A further issue here is 'item nonresponse', which sees particular questions skipped or ignored by respondents (Hen et al, 2006, p. 198). In the case of this survey, just over 15% of respondents skipped at least one question. However, this issue has been taken into account in the presentation of survey results through showing the total number of responses to each particular question.

Finally, the choice of questions employed in the survey is grounded in the theories adopted for this study and is designed to test the hypotheses arrived at (Fink, 2013, p. 10). A mixed approach to data analysis is adopted, according to which the quantitative results of the survey are analysed and discussed in line with the overall

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[12] The 'post stratification' process allows for the disregarding of ineligible respondents before the final statistical analysis.

[13] This type of survey is typical of 'unrestricted, self-selected' surveys, in which people respond to open survey invitations. (Couper, 2011, p. 6)

qualitative method of analysis adopted for the study.

1.7 Structure of this study

The structure of this study can be outlined as follows: chapter two is devoted to a detailed review of the relevant literature on the KRI, with a particular focus on studies that engage with Kurdish identity formation in the KRI since 1991. The chapter provides a critical discussion of these studies in order to explore the relevance of these studies to the current research.

Chapter three provides a detailed historical overview of the KRI. It goes beyond common prescriptive historical overviews of the region to provide a preliminary analysis, which connects with more in-depth analysis in proceeding analytical chapters. As national identity is deeply rooted in historical accounts of the nation and people, I open the chapter with a discussion of the main historical accounts of Kurdish identity in general, which demonstrates that the emergence of the KRI in 1991 should not be understood as a historical accident. On the contrary, to better understand the KRI it is important to trace its roots in the development of the Iraqi state prior to 1991 (O'Leary & Salih, 2005, p. 22). To this end, the second stage of my historical overview begins with the end of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of the Iraqi state: the time at which Kurdish nationalism was in its infancy. I also pay attention

to the relatively unstudied period between 1958 and 1991, which saw the first and most popular Kurdish nationalist struggle against the central Iraqi Government (between 1961 and 1975). The final period I engage with forms the focal point for this study, starting in March 1991 and continuing until the end of 2014 analysis of this period demonstrates the suitability of the KRI as a case study, demonstrating the importance of developments in the period for processes of identity formation.

In the first section of chapter four, Anthony Smith's ethno-symbolism approach is critically analysed and brought into dialogue with other approaches to the study of nations and nationalism. The second section assesses its theoretical relevance to the present study. Here, ethno-symbolism's applicability to the Kurdish case will be highlighted with more focus on its merits and limitations in this regard. In chapter five, analysis of the cultural level is undertaken. Utilizing a set of themes derived from ethno-symbolism, processes of Kurdish identity formation are subjected to discussion. The study's primary and secondary data are subjected to a thorough analysis in order to determine the cultural and historical manifestations of Kurdish identity formation from 1991 to the end of 2014.

Political discourse theory is dealt with exclusively in chapter six.

The theory is subjected to a critical assessment by exposing its ontological and methodological structures; and its key concepts are explicated. As with chapter four, the second part of the chapter serves as a preliminary application of the theory to the formation of Kurdish cultural identity in the KRI. In chapter seven, PDT is applied to the primary and secondary data. Working along a set of purposefully selected theoretical themes, Kurdish identity formation in Iraq is discussed through an analysis of the available data.

Finally, in the conclusion, the analytical outcomes derived from the previous two chapters are examined in order to establish a relationship between the two. The final results of the research are compared to the hypotheses noted earlier; and answers to the research questions are offered.

CHAPTER TWO

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The study of Kurdish politics and identity has progressed significantly since 1991. Prior to then, non-state actors were largely excluded from the political sciences (and the study of international politics in particular), which were overwhelmingly state-centric. Thus, as non-state actors, Kurds were studied at the margins of state-oriented studies or were entirely excluded. However, the post-Cold-War period proved to be more accommodating to intra-state issues, with an increasing interest in the 'micro-politics' of peoples as opposed to the 'macro-politics' of states. The 1991 events in the Middle East – in particular those which followed Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent war, the first international intervention of its kind since the Cold War – created a new environment that led to the creation of the *de facto* autonomous Kurdistan Region-Iraq.[1] The political entity that emerged in the

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[1] On October 15th 2005 the new Iraqi constitution was ratified. In it, the name 'the Kurdistan Region' was agreed upon. Prior to that, the region would have been referred to using a wide range of names and descriptions. These shifting terms are reflected in literature on the region as well: in the course of this review, numerous titles will appear, 'Kurdistan Region-Iraq', 'Kurdistan-Iraq', and 'the Kurdistan Region in Iraq'. Descriptive titles used 'de facto autonomous region', 'Quasi-State',

aftermath of Desert Storm – the military operation[2] led by the USA and allied forces – created a unique opportunity for emergence of the Kurdish entity. As Michael Gunter notes, 'the Kurdish problem, that earlier had languished on the back burner of international concerns, has now been internationalised.' (Gunter, 1993, p. 313) Indeed, the KRI has now been analysed by a number of academic studies. The Kurdish case has never before been spelled out in the academic and scholarly circles comparably to the post-1991 period.

In 1991 Iraq attacked Kurds and Shi'ites living in the country in retaliation for an uprising against Iraqi forces in March of that year. In response, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 688, which contains only the second explicit reference to the Kurds in a UN document (the first being the Sévres treaty of 1920). This called on the Iraqi government to halt military operations against civilians

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'semi-state', 'semi-independent', 'autonomous' and so on. My preferred title however, is Kurdistan Region-Iraq, as this is officially correct and distinguishes it from other Kurdish semi-autonomous zones, including 'Iranian Kurdistan',' Turkish Kurdistan', which are less common outside the literature of Kurdish nationalism.

[2] The operation was a significant military operation that formed part of the Gulf War (August 2nd 1990 to 28th February 1991) between the Allied forces (led by the United States of America) against the Iraqi forces, and followed the latter's invasion of Kuwait on 2nd August 1990 under the pretext of annexation of Kuwait as Iraq's nineteenth province. After diplomatic efforts failed to persuade Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to withdraw forces from Kuwait, the Allied forces began Desert Storm on 17th January 1991. It lasted until 28th February 1991 after the defeat of Iraqi forces and their retreat into Iraq (Anderson & Stansfield, 2004, pp. 86-91).

in the north and south of the country. However, it proved insufficient in deterring the threat posed by the Iraqi forces to Kurdish civilians and an unprecedented number of Kurds –around 1.5 million – fled towards the Iranian and Turkish borders. In response, the USA, UK and France (with Turkish assistance) created a no-fly-zone, which was part of 'Operation Provide Comfort'. This was designed to protect Kurdish civilians in the north from further attacks by the Iraqi forces (Frelick, 1993, pp. 231-237; Yildiz, 2004, pp. 34-41).

Prior to 1991, anyone studying Iraqi Kurds would have found it difficult to gather enough literature on the subject. However, since the events detailed in the previous paragraph, scholars, journalists, historians and policy-makers have engaged with the Iraqi Kurdish case from a number of angles and in varying amounts of detail, meaning there is now a considerable amount of writing (including academic work) on the issue. However, it can be argued that academic work on Kurdish issues (what might be referred to as 'Kurdish Studies') still remains underdeveloped, particularly with regard to the KRI. Significant areas of Kurdish political, social and economic life escape analysis. Thus, as part of my research I have selected a number of relevant studies on the political development of the KRI. In line with the overall goal of this research, however, I have chosen works that directly engage with the specific issue of

Kurdish identity formation in the KRI. Specifically, I engage with those that address the issue from 1991 to 2014.

In this chapter I engage in a critical discussion of these works and assess their contribution to the study of Kurdish identity and nationalism in the KRI. Based on their theoretical starting points, I distribute the studies according to their overriding themes. In no particular order, these themes are as follows.

2.2 Ethnic identity

In his book *The Kurds of Iraq: Ethnonationalism and National Identity in Kurdistan Region-Iraq*, the Kurdish scholar Mahir Aziz examines the process of identity formation in the KRI by employing ethno-symbolism as the theoretical basis for his study. After assessing the theoretical conceptions of the approach against the background of competing 'modernist' and 'instrumentalist' theories, he argues that ethno-symbolism is best suited to the topic. Assessing KRI residents' sense of collective identity against six theoretical hypotheses drawn from ethno-symbolism, he argues that the political community of the KRI constitutes an 'ideal ethnic community'. However, he does not consider the issue of nation-ness, as per Smith's work. Smith defines an ethnic community – or 'ethnie' – as:

> A named human community connected to a homeland,
> possessing common myths of ancestry, shared memory,

one or more elements of shared culture, and a measure of solidarity, at least among the elites. (Smith, 2008, p. 13)

For Aziz, Iraqi Kurds constitute an ethnic community: he argues that many of the six criteria laid down in Smith's definition can be found in the KRI. The first of these is the 'collective name', and Aziz shows that the terms 'Kurd' and 'Kurdistan' have been used for around 2,000 years (Aziz, 2011, pp. 33-39). He further argues that 'Kurdistan had a collective name for its ethnic community by which it distinguished itself and continue to distinguish itself from others.' (2011, p. 34)'

The second criterion Aziz believes Kurds meet is common ancestry. He points to the 'memory of Kurdish common history, its golden ages, heroes, myths and symbols'; and further argues that their importance for Kurdish self-awareness as far back as the nineteenth and twentieth centuries should be regarded as clear indicators of a solid ethnic identity among Kurds. Further, Aziz recalls Kurdish association with an ancestral 'golden age' of Kurdish emirates and principalities under Islamic rule in the seventh century; with the Medes; and with the legendary Kawa the Blacksmith, 'Kawey Asinger'.[3]

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[3] Medes were an ancient Iranian people to whom Kurds associate themselves. Kawa the Blacksmith, is a mythical heroic character who fought against the ancient Iranian Tyrant Zahak. In Kurdish nationalist

The third criterion met by the Kurds is 'historical memory'. Here, Aziz relies solely on the Newroz feast, which falls annually on the 21st of March. He considers Newroz 'an essentially Kurdish practice', through which Kurds draw ethnic lines between themselves and others, although caution must be exercised here.[4]

The fourth criterion is 'shared culture'. Here, Aziz points to the role of language and religion. He rightly argues that whilst the Kurdish language is the primary 'differentiating mark' of Kurds, he notes that it is not the sole one. His argument here may well be grounded in the fact that Kurds still lack a universal national language: even in the KRI there is no a universal official language. Religion, however, is even less straightforward. Whilst Aziz notes that Yezidism is an essentially Kurdish religion, only a minority of Kurds are Yezidi (the overwhelming majority are Muslim). Consequently, Aziz argues that religion has not been a distinguishing marker for ethnic Kurds.

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historiography Kawa is considered as a Kurd and his story is incorporated in the myth of Newroz which is also a Kurdish and Iranian feast falls on 21st March each colander year. Further discussions on these two issues are provided in chapters three and five.

[4] Other ethnic and national groups in the Middle East also celebrate Newroz. Nonetheless, since the early twentieth century Newroz has been successfully re-appropriated in the Kurdish nationalist historiography and has been well incorporated into the Kurdish nationalist discourse, increasing its association with Kurdish identity. This issue is explored more fully in chapter five.

Aziz argues that the criterion of 'homeland' or 'territory' has a particular importance for Kurds, whose association with the concept of 'Kurdistan' 'became an essential part of the collective memory and identity of the Kurds' (2011, p. 36). This relates to 'solidarity', the final criterion met by Kurds. Aziz argues that this operates through Kurds' feeling of 'belonging' to Kurdistan. This sense of belonging to a common homeland and sharing its history engenders a sense of 'sameness' among Kurds; and produces solidarity in the sense of sharing a destiny.

Throughout *The Kurds of Iraq*, Aziz places considerable importance on the territorial aspect of 'nation', meaning that he overlooks other important dimensions. He argues that the newly emerged form of collective identity in the KRI after 1991 – and in particular from 1998 to 2008 – revolves around a territorial understanding of Kurdistan. Thus, 'Kurdistani' – or '*Kurdstanyati*'[5] – is the prevailing form of identity post-1998. Taking university students as his research population, he reports that identifying oneself with Kurdistan has replaced other forms of identification, especially that

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[5] These claims are not included in the book but were discussed during presentation of his paper at a conference entitled 'The Kurds and Kurdistan: identity, politics and history', on 2-3 April 2009 at the Centre for Kurdish Studies in Exeter, England. The paper was titled 'The Three Phases of Kurdish Nationalism: Kurdawari, Kurdayeti and Kurdstanyati'.

of 'Iraqi' or 'Iraqi Kurd'. The form Kurdistani in Aziz's study is the latest development from '*Kurdayeti*' or 'working to achieve Kurdish nationalist aspiration' (Hassanpour, 2003). The preceding form '*Kurdayeti*' is arguably more deeply ingrained in ethnic nationalist sentiments, while 'Kurdistani' suggests more territorial and civic traits. Aziz argues that prior to 1991 the more ethnic nationalist form of '*Kurdayeti*' prevailed in the KRI and in Kurdish nationalist discourse, but that this has changed dramatically since 1991, with 'Kurdistani' coming to dominate.

Given that Aziz argues that the term 'Kurdistani' is territorially rather than ethnically grounded, there is an explicit circular argument in his work for, he asserts that the basis for contemporary Kurdish identity in the KRI is primarily ethnic. Thus, there seems to be a tension between the two forms that constitute Anthony Smith's 'dichotomy of nationalisms' (civic and ethnic nationalism). Here, it is worth referring back to the original conceptualizations of these two types of nationalism by engaging with Smith (who himself draws on the work of Hans Kohn [1967]). For Smith, 'civic nationalism' is a rational and associational form, which perceives the nation as 'a rational association of citizens bound by common laws and a shared territory' (Smith, 2001, pp. 39-40). Ethnic nationalism, on the other hand, is characterised as 'organic and mystical' (Smith, 1991, p. 80); and perceives the

nation 'as an organic seamless whole, transcending the individual members, and stamping them from birth with an indelible national character.' (Smith, 2008, p. 40)

Of further importance in Smith's theory is the assignation of each form of nationalism to particular nationalists and peoples. Territorial nationalism is mostly associated with pre-independence, anti-colonial nationalist movements who generally perceive of the nation in a civic and territorial manner; and post-independence movements, which hold a civic and territorial notion of the nation. They seek to create their new nation-state and incorporate all ethnic identities into their new civic nation (Smith, 1991, p. 82).

As a pre-independence national movement it is clear that the KRI belongs to Smith's first formula. However, I very much doubt the claim that contemporary Kurdish nationalism's perception of the nation is fully civic in character. Furthermore, while territorial claims are important for Kurds in the KRI, these claims are secondary to the identity of the Kurdish people and not the other way around. In other words, the territory of Kurdistan only obtains its full meaning when it is associated with ethnic Kurds. Indeed, the etymology of 'Kurdistan' is evidence to this claim, as it refers to 'the land of Kurds'. Therefore, the argument about a territorially defined 'Kurdistani' is a circular argument when weighed against

the very theoretical postulates of ethno-symbolism.

Whilst a civic form of identity has emerged in the KRI since 1991, it was not until the late 2000s that this became evident in political discourse. Furthermore, its emergence has been ingrained in post-2003 counter-discourses of identity; particularly since the 2009 general elections in which the traditional ethnic nationalist discourses of the two dominant Kurdish parties (the KDP and the PUK) were challenged by calls for a notion of citizenship ('*Hawlati'*) to replace more traditional forms of identification.

This counter-discourse of citizenship has been articulated in the work of young, critical Kurdish writers such as Bakhtyar Ali, Mariwan Qanie and Aras Fatah, who wrote sporadically in independent and semi-independent journals such as *Azadi* ('*Freedom'*), *Yekgrtin* ('*Unification'*) and *Rahand* ('*Dimension'*) as far back as the 1990s and early 2000s. These arguments were then popularized in 2001 by the first independent Kurdish newspaper *Hawlati* (unsurprisingly, this translates as *Citizen*). It is worth noting that this counter-discourse initially developed in elite-oriented writings before being manifested in non-partisan or independent media and finally translating to mass political movements.

The difference between the civic form suggested by Aziz and the explanation of the emerging civic form I am outlining here is that, for Aziz, the 'civic' is derived from the notion of 'Kurdistan' as a territory to which people attach themselves (particularly since 1998); as opposed to '*Kurdayeti*', which relates to ethnic origin. On the contrary, my understanding of the emerging civic form of Kurdish identity in the KRI post-2003 is based on the claim that the emerging political and social atmosphere – best described by Gareth Stansfield as the 'institutionalization' of the KRG – and the emergence of a bourgeoning civil society has created space for the emergence of a collective identity with more civic traits than of ethnic ones. In other words, the civic character of the new 'Kurdistani' form does not originate solely from attachment to a territory rather than an ethnic origin. Rather, it has been a constituent feature of the social and political transformations in the KRI since 2003. This character was widely manifested in the 2009 general elections. This argument is expanded upon in chapter seven.

2.3 Political space

Denise Natali's approach to the KRI – outlined in two books – differs significantly from other approaches to the case. The prevailing outlook in her first book *The Kurds and the State: Evolving National Identity in Iraq, Turkey and Iran* (2005), which comes first to her

later book *The Kurdish Quasi-state: Development and Democracy in Post-Gulf war Iraq* (2010) is structuralist. Broadly speaking, Natali seeks to explain the history of Kurdish identity formation and Kurdish nationalism by examining the socioeconomic and political contingencies during three historical periods. This is undertaken through the use of an analytic framework she names 'political space'. Each of these four historical periods, Natali argues, can be characterised by their particular 'political space', which placed limits on how Kurdish identity and nationalist discourse could operate; and dictated the nature of this discourse.

The first historical period she analyses is the late imperial period in which the Ottoman and Qajar Empires (the two multi-ethnic super states which ruled Kurdish inhabited lands at the time) were defined through religious affiliation and loyalty to tribe and Sultan, rather than ethnicity. She argues that Kurdish identity during that time was subject to the political and social structure described above, which lacked affinity with ethnic group or community.

The second period begins with the end the First World War and covers Iraq's development into a colonial state, ending with the collapse of the Iraqi monarchy in a coup d'état in 1958. As a result of the continuing tribal nature of Kurdish society; and the ambivalent relationship between tribal elites and urban

nationalists, Kurdish identity and nationalist discourse during this period suffered from the ambiguity that characterized the Ottoman period. However, there was a gradual change to the political space in which the Kurds operated, which moved toward Sunni Arab ethnic-nationalist tendencies. Kurdish identity and nationalist discourse fluctuated between tribal and primordial loyalties; independence tendencies and patriotic Iraqi tendencies. At times, ethnic affinities were also apparent. However, Natali argues that due to newly emerging intra-Kurdish tensions between tribalists, leftists and nationalists, the Kurdish nationalist discourse failed to crystallize around an ethnic core.

The third historical period of Natali's analysis begins with the 1958 coup d'état mastered by the Sunni Arab Abd al-Karim Qasim and lasts until the Gulf War in 1991. She argues that the political space in this time was initially characterised by an inclusive form of Iraqi patriotism called ('*Wataniya')*. This was a form of Arab nationalism and saw the development of an 'Iraqi first' strategy, which was inclusive of Kurds. However, parallel to the growing of a more ethnically oriented Arab nationalism called ('*Qawmyah')* from the part of the dominant Arab Iraqi government, Kurdish identity and Kurdish nationalist discourse became increasingly focussed on ethnicity. Although this period was marked by considerable conflict, with various Iraqi Arabic forces and ideologies interacting violently,

it offered a seemingly unique opportunity to the Kurds, culminating in the March Accord of 1970. As a result of the gap between Iraqi government discourse and policy the Kurdish nationalist discourse became increasingly ethnic-based. The trend towards ethnicity further increased later, in response to increasingly discriminatory policies adopted by the Ba'athist government, which ruled Iraq following another coup in 1963; and was deepened following the collapse of the Kurdish revolution (begun in 1961 by Mela Mustafa Barzani) in 1975 and continued until the 1980s. Natali also notes that the single party Ba'athist rule from 1975 to 1991 further deepened the gap between Kurds and Arabs. They utilized exclusionist discourse and policies in promoting the 'Arabization'[6] of Iraq; and brutally oppressed Kurds.

However, Natali shows more interest in the economic policies of

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[6] This was a process through which Kurds and other non-Arab residents were forcibly moved either to the central or southern parts of Iraq or deep into the Kurdistan Region and were replaced by Arabs from the south. The process mostly affected the oil-rich city of Kirkuk and mixed areas of Khanaqin and the Mosul and Duhok provinces. The process began in the mid-1960s, continued through the 1970s and 1980s but dramatically intensified after 1991 when a new 'normalization' of nationality was introduced, according to which Kurds and non-Arab residents had to choose between leaving areas or declaring themselves Arabs. According to this 'normalization' procedure, Kurds, Turkmen and other non-Arab residents were forced to sign a (false) statement stating they were originally Arabs but had changed their nationality, and that they wished to reclaim their original Arabic nationality. Article 140 of the 2005 Iraqi constitution was introduced to tackle the issue of Arabization, but the policy had by then had dramatic demographic effects on the regions affected. For more details on the Arabization process see (Anderson & Stansfield, 2004, pp. 144-181).

Ba'athist Iraq, especially in Iraqi Kurdistan where the government was able to co-opt large number of Kurdish tribal leaders and their subjects to join the *Jash*[7] (or Jaş in Latin Kurdish spelling) militia, which fought alongside government forces against their Kurdish brethren in return to attractive regular salaries. The situation was further exacerbated by the Ba'ath Party's deliberate policy to transform Iraqi Kurdistan from a productive society into a consumerist rent-seeking one.[8] Against Natali's economic focus, however, it can be argued that Ba'athist nationalist policies, which introduced demographically altered Kirkuk and other mixed areas; and their Arabization policies in the education and cultural systems in Iraqi Kurdistan were the most significant factors in shifting Kurdish nationalist discourse towards a focus on ethnicity.

The fourth and final period covered in Natali's analysis begins with the Kurdish uprising of March 1991. Like many observers and students of Kurdish studies, Natali argues that the period is unique in a number of ways. To elaborate, she notes that it was the first time since the creation of the Iraqi state that Iraqi Kurds could act autonomously in the sphere of politics. This opportunity was

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[7] Jash literally means 'donkey's foal' and is a derogatory term used by Kurds fpr those who collaborate with the 'enemy', in particular through fighting in an irregular army. (Gurbuz, 2012)

[8] Refers to Ba'ath Socialist Party, the party which was found in 1941 and ruled Iraq exclusively since 1968 until 2003.

facilitated by the structural conditions that emerged in the aftermath of Saddam's expulsion from Kuwait by Allied forces. Despite the numerous upheavals Iraq experienced in the period, it provided a unique political space in which Kurdish identity took on a number of different meanings, whilst Kurdish nationalism underwent enormous transformations, which continue into the present. Natali rightly claims that while this political space prevented independence and hindered the development of pan-Kurdish tendencies, it helped Kurdish identity and nationalism in the KRI to flourish. Further, she claims that whilst Kurdish identity remained welded to the concept of Kurdish uniqueness, it was able to operate within a broader Iraqi context. The ethnic character of the Kurdish identity, however took root after 2003 as a result of increased tensions between the KRG and Baghdad following growing Kurdish territorial demands in Kirkuk and other disputed areas; the nature of the Iraqi constitution; and the sharing of power and revenues.

Through her structuralist account of Kurdish identity formation in relation to the Iraqi state, Natali also explores processes of boundary formation in ethnic and nationalist relations. She argues that the nature of Kurdish identity and the vocabulary of Kurdish nationalism shifted along boundaries drawn by dominant Iraqi Arab rulers. Whenever ethnic lines delineated these boundaries, Kurdish

identity also incorporated ethnic elements in order to distinguish itself from the competing Arab majority in Baghdad. However, when, the Iraqi government utilized more cosmopolitan methods – during the early days of the Iraqi Republic under Qasim, for example – Kurdish ethnic identity was relatively contained (in effect tying itself to Iraqi identity); and Kurds primarily focussed on demanding cultural, economic and social rights equal to those of 'other Iraqis'. Thus, following the rules of Qasim (1963), Abdul Salam Arif (1966) and Abdul Rahman Arif (1968) and the Ba'ath Party's retreat from its promises to the Kurds in 1974 (when it switched to the Qawmyah, pan-Arabic approach), the Kurdish focus on ethnic identity becomes more explicit.

Natali's first study only covers the period up to 2000. Since then, the ethnic-nationalist trajectory of Kurdish identity and discourse has been furthered. Whilst the long continuation of British state-building policies in Iraq from the 1920s – which favoured the minority Sunni Arabs over the majority Shi'ite Arabs and the Iraqi Kurds – meant that both Kurds and Shi'ites were alienated and politically marginalised until 2003 (effectively making them brothers in oppression), events following the war dramatically changed the equation). By 2003 Arab Shi'ites were rulers of the new Iraq, while Kurds (despite their active and dominant role in the initial years after the 2003 Iraqi regime change) and Sunni

Arabs constituted the ruled groups. As the Shi'ite majority was now directing Iraqi nation-building, they found themselves in a situation of competition with both Kurds and Sunnis. Furthermore, active Kurdish involvement in the process of regime change meant that they were perceived by Sunni Arabs to have betrayed them (Gunter, 2008, p. 19). Thus, the new ethnic boundaries that were drawn after 2003 left the Kurds opposed by both Sunni and Shi'ite Arabs alike, further increasing the ethnic gap between the three components. This new 'political space' also influenced Kurdish identity and re-shaped Kurdish nationalist discourse, making ethnicity a more visible trait than ever before.

2.4 The X factor

Political space is not the only relevant concept in Natali's work. In her later book *The Kurdish Quasi-State: Development and Dependency in Post-Gulf War Iraq*, (2010) she focuses on the determining role played by external aid in fostering the Kurdish political identity in Iraq after 1991. For reasons related to the domestic and international position of the KRG, Natali names the KRI a 'quasi-state'. She explains that the key factor in its emergence as such since 1991 is the external aid received by Kurdistan. Following the March 1991 uprising in Iraqi Kurdistan – in which the region freed itself from the hands of the Iraqi regime and established its regional government – one of its main

challenges came from Iraq's damaged economy.

Although the KRI was outside central Iraqi government control, the UN treated it as part of Iraq, meaning that it was – paradoxically – condemned by the economic blockade imposed on the Iraqi government following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. To make things worse, the Iraqi government imposed a further economic blockade on the region. Damaged by this double blockade, lifelines were provided by international NGOs and organizations associated with the UN. From 1991 to 1997, the KRI was almost entirely reliant on goods and services provided by external aid (there was also a small amount of illegal cross-border trading with neighbouring states).

Natali divides the provision of external aid into three phases (1992-1997, 1997-2003, and 2003-present) and notes that it has done much good for Iraqi Kurds with regards to living standards and governance assistance. However, she notes that it has slowed moves toward greater autonomy or independence in two key ways. Firstly, it has created a patron-client relation with the international community, which is generally hostile to the nationalist separatist tendencies of Kurdish nationalist parties. Secondly, it has tied the KRG to the Iraqi central government, as UN bureaucracy is obliged to work through the 'sovereign' Iraqi state. As a landlocked territory, the KRI could not have dispensed with Iraq at this point.

While Natali is correct to note the significance of external aid in maintaining everyday life for the population of the KRI following the twin blockade crisis of March 1991, she overlooks the importance of other factors without which there would have been no social, political and cultural foundations for this aid to build on. While Natali does not deny the role of other variables such as symbolic and cultural and political ones, at the meantime, she gives a very secondary value to these and other factors. Thus, Natali's approach suffers from a deep economic reductionism, characteristic of the neoliberal approaches in political science.

One could argue that as Aziz and Natali examine the KRI from two different angles they come up with two different analyses of and explanations for the nature of Kurdish collective identity in the KRI. Aziz studies the trajectories of Kurdish identity formation from within and observes the shift from a more ethnic-based identity to one grounded in territory. On the contrary, Natali explores the issue from outside – at the level of the wider Iraqi state – and observes a more ethnically-oriented identity in the KRI. Thus, it could be said that the outcomes of the two authors are quite natural, as Kurdish identity formation inside the KRI is largely shaped by internal politics and social and economic realities. In the meantime, the form of Kurdish identity demonstrated in Natali's

study is the product of a context in which Kurds interact with outside 'others' – be they majority Arabs in Baghdad; or neighbouring countries and their respective national groups. However, neither Aziz nor Natali is able to fully appreciate the role of these 'others' in Kurdish identity formation in the KRI. My analysis will hopefully move to fill this gap. The effects of the 'other' variable on the formation of Kurdish identity in the KRI is covered in greater detail in chapter seven through the constructionist approach of PDT.

2.5 Structural factors

Another scholar who has written extensively on the KRI is Gareth Stansfield. He offers a seemingly modernist explanation of identity formation processes that have been taking place in the KRI since 1991. Like Natali, he considers the Oil-for-Food programme, which actively started in March 1997, as a 'catalyst' in the institutionalization of the KRG such that it became, in effect, the sole form of government in the KRI. This in effect, bolstered the newly emerging Kurdish identity. He further argues that this process means that 'Kurds in their 20s now struggle to remember what life was like under the Ba'ath regime and associate the word "government" with Kurdish rather than Iraqi rule.' (Stansfield, 2003a, p. 134; 2003b, pp. 78,82)[9] While he sounded a pessimistic

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[9] Michael Gunter's explicates the same understanding towards the KRI

note about the political future of the KRI in 2003 (Stansfield, 2003a), on the ten year anniversary of the eve of the American invasion he went so far as to forecast the establishment of the 'Republic of Kurdistan' in 2016. The changes that lead to this prediction were triggered by a number of internal and external factors; and have changed the status of Kurds from 'objects' of history to major 'subjects' of history:

> In virtually every conceivable aspect, the Kurdistan Region has become an entity that possesses the necessary domestic attributes (such as a sense of nationhood and cohesiveness of Kurdish society and territory), governmental competence…and regional alliances (most notably the Ankara-Erbil axis) to move from being a region of Iraq to the Republic of Kurdistan. (Stansfield, 2013, p. 268)

While Stansfield seems particularly interested in the economic and structural dimensions of these Kurdish 'subjects', he also acknowledges internal dimensions, paying attention to Kurds' feelings and attitudes towards their 'imagined community of Kurdistan'. However, as noted above, this internal dimension is secondary to external structural factors, as demonstrated by the extent to which regional and international politics remain favourably disposed to the KRI. (2013, p. 278)

Although his analysis of the political and economic development of

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(Gunter, 2008, p. 40).

the KRI is excellent, with in-depth analysis of events and developments, Stansfield's studies do not engage directly with the process of Kurdish identity formation in the KRI. However, engaging with the rich content of his work will enhance any study on processes of identity formation in the region, and so they are important for the current research.

2.6 Identity as cultural variable

Another particularly interesting and relevant study to this research is David Romano's *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement: Opportunity, Modernization and Identity* (2006). In it, Romano analyses Kurdish nationalist movements in Iraq, Iran and Turkey in the twentieth century from a social movement studies perspective. Understanding that a comprehensive study of these movements cannot be achieved using a single theory, Romano opts for a synthesis of three different approaches in order to address the inner dynamics of Kurdish nationalist movements in the states mentioned; addressing structural, rational and cultural dimensions. While the structural dimension engages with the intra-state and inter-state conditions within which the Kurdish nationalist movement operates, the rational dimension is approached by analysing the 'resource mobilisation' strategies adopted by these movements in challenging their respective states. Finally, Romano utilizes identity-based explanations to explain the cultural

dimension of Kurdish nationalist movements. The first two dimensions of Romano's approach resonate with the work of Gareth Stansfield and Denise Natali, as they pay significant attention to structural variables and actors' rational choices. As the cultural dimension ('cultural framing' for Romano) is particularly relevant for this study, it is this part of Romano's work that I engage with here and draw on in my research.

Before I do this, however, it is important to note that Romano does not engage with culture to the same extent as the structural and rational dimensions, a point made clearly in his first elaboration of the approach taken, in which he admits that 'explaining the risks, sacrifices and determination of many ethnic nationalist movement participants and sympathizers requires a consideration of non-material values and identity', before stating that 'identity and culture are not the ideal type variables of social science' (Romano, 2006, p. 17). Despite this, Romano does not entirely omit identity as a variable in his analysis of Kurdish ethnic nationalist movements.

Although Romano's analysis begins with the creation of the Iraqi state following the end of the First World War, to maintain the historical scope of this study, I will engage with his explanations of the Kurdish ethnic nationalist movement in Iraq from 1991. Like

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the majority of scholars who study Kurdish nationalism and politics, Romano acknowledges that Kurds and Kurdish nationalists aspire to the creation of an independent state. However, he links hesitations in pursuing this goal to rational calculations made by Kurdish politicians, compelling nationalists to make the most of the particular structural conditions at any particular point of history. Additionally, Romano argues that the democratic elections in the KRI in May 1992 demonstrated a desire by Iraqi Kurds to gain the moral high-ground in their struggle against the Iraqi government, as well as demonstrating that they were capable of running their own affairs. However, the failure of this democratic experiment – which ended in intra-Kurdish fighting and continuous conflict – was extremely costly, both politically and societally (2006, p. 208).

It is particularly important to recall Romano's claim that the early stages of Iraqi state-building proved important in the development of Kurdish 'cultural tools' in the later history of Kurdish nationalist movement. He argues that the inclusion of Kurdish rights in the 'founding principles' of the Iraqi state helped shape Kurds' awareness of their identity, which was essential for later developments in Kurdish nationalism. However, it is important to note that in creating Iraq as a state the British made efforts to incorporate Kurdish political and cultural demands (having failed to keep their promises regarding Kurdish self-determination). Despite

this, the first Iraqi constitution of 1925 failed to account for Kurds as a main component of Iraq. It was not until 1958 that political space opened up for them, with the new Iraqi constitution explicitly mentioning Kurds as a key 'national group' in Iraq.[10]

Analysing events in Iraq since 2003, Romano successfully demonstrates that despite Kurds' ability to secure unprecedented gains; ongoing disputes between Iraqi Kurds and the central government over federalism; disputed areas and natural resources; along with the failure to symbolically incorporate Kurds into the Iraqi state increased ethnic tensions between Kurds and Iraq's Arab majority.

Expanding on this latter argument, Romano cites the failure to replace the national flag – which was introduced by the Ba'athist regime and was strongly associated with the regime of Saddam Hussein – with one that represents all Iraqi components of Iraqi society. Between 2006 and 2008, the flag, adopted by Saddam Hussein back in 1991 Figure 2.1, was not permitted to be flown from or hung in official KRG buildings, and the space dedicated for the Iraqi flag was empty during public appearances by Masoud Barzani (the regional president of KRI). Nor was the flag used in

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[10] A list of Iraqi constitutions can be found at: http://www.niqash.org/articles/?id=2306

the Kurdish parliament, with the Iraq flag from 1959-1963 used instead as it represented Kurds through a yellow sun with red rays, (Addustour, 2005; al-Sharq al-awsat, 2006), see Figure 2.4. Figure 2.4 also captures the moment at which Masoud Barzani (the president of KRI), defending his decision not to allow the use of the Iraqi flag from the previous Iraqi regime. He also stated that 'if the Kurdish parliament decides on independence we will declare it' (al-Sharq al-awsat, 2006). In the photograph old Iraq flags (1959-1963) can also be seen besides larger Kurdish flags.

Although the flag (that of 1991) was further redesigned in 2004, Figure 2.2, for Kurds it still bore the marks of the Ba'ath. Again, a new flag was adopted in January 2008 after modifications based on Kurdish demands, Figure 2.3, which included the removal of the three red stars representing the Ba'athist slogan of 'unity, freedom and socialism'. However, the Kurdish demand for using yellow colour for the inscription of 'Allahu Akbar' ('God is the greatest') was not met (Mohammed & Moore, 2008).

Figure 2.1 Iraqi flag (1991-2004). Source: (Flags of the world, 2014)

Figure 2.2 Iraqi flag (2004-2008). Source: (Flags of the world, 2014)
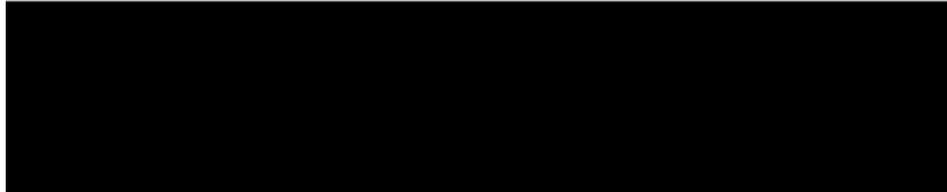
Figure 2.3 Iraqi flag (2008-present). Source: Flags of the world, 2014

Figure 2.4 Inside the Kurdistan parliament (2006)

A further area of symbolic importance discussed by Romano is currency. The Iraqi dinar was supposed to include inscriptions in Kurdish as well as Arabic, yet this never materialized (Romano,

2006, p. 219-220; cf. O'Leary and Salih, 2005, pp. 3-46). Referring to the failure to build a unified Iraq that incorporated the Kurdish identity, Romano notes that:

> While eighty-some years of living under one state may have eventually inculcated an Iraqi national ethic in many Arab Iraqis' the large majority of Iraqi Kurds have never to this day adopted Iraqi nationalism (2006, p. 216).

Romano's study attaches little importance to the issue of collective identity formation in the KRI, though. Therefore, the study does not offer any substantial contribution to the issue of Kurdish identity formation in the KRI *per se*.

However, as noted earlier, its 'cultural framing' approach can help in analysing Kurdish collective identity formation. The crux of his argument may be that processes of identity formation were well incorporated in Kurdish ethnic nationalism in the KRI from the inception of the Iraqi state to the present.

2.7 State-building

In a detailed study of the KRI, Ofra Bengio follows the historical development of what she calls Kurdish state-building. She begins her study *The Kurds of Iraq: Building a State Within a State,* (2012) at an extremely important point in Kurdish history in the KRI: 'Şorişy Eylul' ('The September Revolution'), a revolution that

erupted on 11th September 1961. Although this revolution falls outside the historical limits of my study, its long-lasting effects on Kurdish nationalist politics and identity and the political history of Iraq means that it cannot be ignored.

The September Revolution is of importance here for four main reasons. Firstly, Iraq was governed by the Ba'ath Arab Socialist Party (BASP) from 1968 to 2003 (and for a few months in 1963). BASP was extremely hostile to Kurdish political demands. Secondly, the high level of Kurdish participation in the revolution, which was the first mass action in which individuals and groups from various social groups across the Iraqi Kurdistan participated. It therefore had a significant effect on Kurdish identity in Iraq. Thirdly, external factors meant the revolution functioned very differently to earlier ones, as it was backed by Iran, Israel and the United States.[11] Fourthly, the revolution saw the intensification of divisions between two rival factions in the KDP: one led by its leader Mela Mustafa Barzani, the other by its politburo.

These four factors one can argue, not only determined the initial success and later failure of the September Revolution, but also

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[11] While Iran's support to the revolt was explicit in its material and political terms, the support of the USA and Israel was implicit and limited.

contributed significantly to what Bengio calls the process of 'Kurdish state-building' from 1991 onwards. It is to this period that I now turn.

International political structures after 1991 allowed for limited Kurdish self-rule, but prevented any move that might threaten the Iraqi territorial integrity. However, against significant odds, the Kurds moved beyond their earlier calls for autonomy, instead adopting federalism as the foundation of their relation to the Iraqi state. This, Bengio argues, happened at a time when the main Kurdish parties were still in a position to work together towards national aims. However, when old rivalries resurfaced between the KDP and the PUK in 1994, the division destroyed the social and political life in the KRI; and led to the creation of what Bengio names 'Barzaniland' and 'Talabaniland' (Bengio, 2012, p. 273) (the former named after Masoud Barzani, the leader of the KDP; the latter after Talabani, the leader of PUK). More importantly, Bengio states that this division 'gave rise to a fractured imagining of the [Kurdish] nation' (2012, p. 273), a division whose origins can be traced back to the mid-1960s; and which had previously reached a peak after the collapse of the revolution and the death of Mustafa Barzani in 1979 (in this earlier schism Masoud Barzani led one faction of the KDP, with his brother, Idris while the main rival

faction PUK was run by Jalal Talabani) (2012, p. 162).[12] This is of particular importance for my analysis of inconsistencies in Kurdish nationalist discourse in the KRI in chapters five and seven, below.

The Iraqi state is also an important factor for Bengio. Although the KRI was protected by the no-fly-zone, the Ba'athist regime still posed a serious threat to the nascent and politically fragile KRI. Moreover, on the 31st August 1996 the KDP gained assistance from the Iraqi government in a conflict with the PUK. Here Bengio tries to illustrate the relevance of the Iraqi state factor in the Kurdish state-building process. This further fragmented the imagined Kurdish nation, reducing the credibility of Kurdish nationalist claims and upsetting the political power balance in the KRI.

While Bengio's study is rich and detailed in its historical account of the political development of the KRI, she gives no serious consideration to identity: there is little by the way of analysis of culture and discourse in the KRI. Treating the process as state-building, I suggest, focuses her attention on political processes accompanying the historical development of Kurdistan Region-Iraq

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[12] Following Mustafa Barzani's death in 1979, his two sons (Masoud and Idris) led the party, Idris as the main leader, until his death in 1987 at which point Masoud became the sole leader of the KDP. While the party held four congresses after Masoud took the presidency role, he has been re-elected as the President of the KDP at each of them.

at the expense of an analysis of Kurdish identity formation.

2.8 Nation-building

Another detailed study of the KRI in the period between 1991 and 2012 is Mohammed M.A. Ahmed's book *Iraqi Kurds and Nation-Building* (2012), which offers a highly detailed account of the political and economic development of the KRI during a period in which a number of key developments shaped the nature of the region. These include the approaches taken by the KDP and the PUK; the relationship between the KRI and Arab opposition factions in the 1990s, and with the Iraqi government from 2003; relations with Iran, Turkey and Syria; and links between Kurdish politicians and the US before, during and after the invasion and reconstruction of Iraq. In short, the study is an amalgamation of various historical political and economic analysis of the Kurdistan Region-Iraq all of which dictated the way the Kurdistan Region-Iraq has been building as a 'nation', although, the author provides no theoretical justification for using the term 'nation-building' instead, he takes it for granted. Therefore, despite providing a rich historical overview of this period, Ahmed's book does not offer a theoretical analysis of the kind found in other works reviewed here. Nonetheless, as Robert Olson notes, it presents a reasonably balanced overview throughout (though it cannot, of course, be said to be value free) (Olson, 2012, p. XIV).

2.9 Media discourse

A study closer to the present one is Jaffer Sheyholislami's *Kurdish Identity, Discourse, and New Media,* (2011). Applying an interdisciplinary critical discourse analysis that 'blends social theories with theories of language and discourse' (Sheyholislami, 2011, p. 14), it focuses on the interplay between Kurdish national identity and media discourse. Here, one should bear in mind that the focal point of critical discourse analysis is the claim that identity is socially constructed through discourse, understood as 'a social practice, simultaneously constitutive of and constituted by social structures, relations, and identities' (2011, p.14). Accordingly, Kurdish national identity, is understood as being 'reflected and articulated in the use of language and discourse, and at the same time, [it is] constructed, reproduced and sustained through discursive practices.' (2011, p.14) In other words, there is a mutually constitutive relationship between identity and discourse. Despite this, CDA acknowledges that national identity exists outside of discourse, however, it is continuously communicated through discourse. In addition, the role of agents and ideology in the discursive construction of identity is also acknowledged. Sheyholislami's study demonstrates that these factors can determine the type and content of identity articulated.

Broadly speaking, Sheyholislami's study seeks answers to two

questions:

1- What Kurdish identities are constructed, who constructed them, and why?

2- What might be the sociocultural and political implications of these Kurdish identity formations?

Based on data gathered mainly from the Kurdish satellite TV channel Kurdistan TV (KTV[13]) and a selection of Kurdish internet sites, Sheyholislami employs a set of linguistic and semiotic analytical methods. This occurs at three analytical levels: detailed microanalysis of the linguistic features of texts; a macroanalysis of discourse practices, which includes the 'ways texts are produced and consumed'; and sociocultural practice, which focuses on the socioeconomic, political and historical contexts with which the texts operate. (2011, pp. 14, 41, 42, 45)

To address these issues Sheyholislami works with a set of themes that revolve around the discursive construction of ideas central to nationalist identities: 'a common past and history; a collective and shared present and future; a common language; national symbols and "invented traditions"; a common culture and a common territory' (Sheyholislami, 2011, p. 23). Through detailed

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[13] KTV broadcasts from the KRI and is owned and run by the KDP. It began broadcasting on 1st January 1999.

microanalysis of Kurdish texts he concludes that these have proved successful (in varying degrees) in constructing the 'imagined nation' of Kurdistan through the construction and promotion of a set of ideas. He observed differences in how this was carried out, however: while KTV's 2005 programmes rarely portrayed pan-Kurdish identities, online Kurdish nationalist discourse was frequently overtly pan-Kurdish.[14] Sheyholislami explains this contextually, arguing that KTV utilizes the language of its owner (KDP), which is compelled to avoid upsetting neighbouring states by raising the prospect of a pan-Kurdish state (perceived as a threat to their territorial integrity). The open and free environment provided by the internet, however, allows discourse producers to work relatively free from the constraints of realpolitik.

The issue of pan-Kurdish identity formation plays a central role in Sheyholislami's study, frequently dominating his analysis. However, he also argues that 'there is not one single Kurdish identity' (2011, p. 7), and therefore, that Kurdish identity is essentially fragmented. This argument is informed by a historical analysis of Kurdish identity. Beginning with the Ottoman period, Sheyholislami elaborates a multi-dimensional history of Kurdish

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[14] Pan-Kurdish, (or 'cross-border Kurdish') refers here to '… the collective identity to which most Kurds, regardless of what nation-state they live in, have or could have a sense of belonging.' (Sheyholislami, 2011, p. 47)

identity. He suggests that the geographical spread of the Kurdish population across a large territory in the Middle East is one potential reason for the fractured nature of Kurdish society and identity. This is exacerbated by the fact that – since the First World War – Kurds have inhabited four separate nation states, each of which has subjugated them to practices and policies peculiar to that state. Sheyholislami refers to this as *'territorial fragmentation'* (Ibid, p. 55, italics in original), an issue addressed by a number of scholars working on Kurdish culture and society – among them Martin van Bruinessenand and Abbas Vali, who contend that the situation is largely responsible for the fractured nature of Kurdish nationalism in both practice and discourse (Bruinessen, 2006; 2007; Vali, 2003a; 2006).

For Sheyholislami, this process is exacerbated by *'cultural fragmentation'* (Ibid, p. 56, italics in original). This draws on the work of Martin van Bruinessen, who claims that 'Kurds were (and are) certainly not a culturally homogeneous group' (cited in Sheyholislami, 2011, p. 57), with Sheyholislami commenting that 'when referring to Kurds in general, the appropriate term would be nation or people' (Ibid). This is an interesting suggestion, but there is insufficient elaboration to apply this to the process of Kurdish identity formation more broadly.

The third manner in which Kurdish identity is further fragmented is linguistic (2011, p. 58). Here, Sheyholislami notes that although the Kurdish language is one of the primary markers upon which the ethnic boundaries have been formed between Kurds and others, the existence of a wide number of Kurdish dialects suggests they have contributed to re-enforce existing processes of fragmentation. However, Sheyholislami is at pains to position the various Kurdish linguistic forms as different dialects of the same language, proposing the term 'Kurdish varieties' (2011, p. 114). This seems plausible and is deserves further attention by those working in linguistics and ethnographic studies.

As previously noted, Sheyholislami's study is relatively unique in its approach to Kurdish identity. While other studies have contributed in different ways to readers' understanding of Kurdish identity, none of them has directly engaged in interpreting Kurdish identity from the discourses of the very people who claim that identity. Through its interpretation of Kurdish nationalist discourse(s) from a critical point of view, in which discursive practices and socio-political contexts are considered in addition to the texts themselves, Sheyholislami's work has initiated a new direction in the study of Kurdish identity and politics. His constructionist approach to identity does not take nationalist discourse(s) at face-value but stresses the importance of critically

examining their social, political and economic foundations; and provides a rigorous explanation of Kurdish identity formation of Kurds across their diaspora. The work is also successful in appropriating critical discourse analysis to study the emancipatory efforts of non-dominant actors (such as non-state Kurds): all too often the approach focuses on hegemonic discursive formations. Furthermore, Sheyholislami incorporates cultural considerations into the study of Kurdish identity, the importance of which has already been established. However, the cultural dimension of his work is incomplete and further explanatory treatment is required. Nonetheless, it remains an extremely useful contribution to the study of discourse(s) of Kurdish nationalism at the beginning of the twenty first century. The author, I would like to suggest deserves credit for his efforts in that regard.

However, there are some points that need to be addressed. The nature of the CDA means that Sheyholislami has not been able to directly tackle the political dimension of Kurdish identity as the identity is tremendously penetrated by politics in the full meaning of the notion. Furthermore, the roles of hegemony, the 'other' and antagonism in processes of identity construction are largely overlooked.

2.10 Conclusion

From the above analyses, it can be seen the theoretical and methodological tools of political discourse analysis and ethno-symbolism both have promise for the study of the process of Kurdish identity formation in the KRI. Whilst political discourse theory can successfully examine the political dimension in the dynamism of Kurdish identity formation and reveal its rooted inconsistencies, ethno-symbolism provides methods for exploring the cultural and historical dimensions of the process. A detailed discussion of these approaches, along with arguments in favour of their applicability to the case under study will be provided in chapters four and six. In the next chapter I provide a historical overview of the case study in order to better grasp the analytical contours of the present study.

CHAPTER THREE

3 Historical and socio-economic background

3.1 Introduction

As Leith and Soule note, 'history is important to an understanding of nationalism and national identity in the modern context' (2012, p. 9). Thus, I believe that an analysis of Kurdish history is essential for any temporally or spatially limited study, such as the present analysis of Kurdish identity formation in the KRI since 1991. This chapter provides such a history, offering a review of the political and socio-economic conditions in Iraqi Kurdistan prior to, during, and since the foundation of the Iraqi state. Its primary focus is on the history of Kurds and Kurdistan in general, with a particular focus on the development of the conditions that led to the creation of the KRI as a unique political entity in the Middle East.

This history is divided into three key periods. The first of these is the pre-twentieth century period, in which arguments regarding the historical origins of the Kurds are central. Such an exploration assists in understanding processes of identity formation that operate by capitalising on historical narratives (regardless of their

truthfulness). Ethno-symbolism, in particular, considers these historical elements to be fundamental in processes of collective identity formation. The second period covered is the twentieth century (until 1991), during which time Kurds responded to the rapid growth of nationalist projects both globally and in the Middle East. The final period stems from 1991 until 2014. and holds even greater significance for this research as it represents an historic turning point in the history of Kurds in the Middle East, and in particular for Kurds in the KRI. This section begins with the Iraqi Kurdistan Front's (KF) takeover of local administrations in the three Kurdish governorates of northern Iraq and covers political and administrative processes. Particular attention is paid to the first round of free elections in the KRI in May 1992, which led to the establishment of the Kurdistan National Assembly (KNA) (often referred to as the Kurdistan parliament) and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). An analysis of major political and socio-economic developments following these elections is also undertaken, bringing the study up to the end of 2014.

3.2 Pre-twentieth century: Kurds and their origin

The dominant Kurdish nationalist discourse, as it is the case with all nationalisms, doses not hesitate to offer us a clear-edge definition to what constitutes the Kurds as a nation. Edmonds outlines the Kurdish nationalist claim in a short paragraph as

follows:

> The Kurds constitute a single nation which has occupied its present habitat for at least there thousand years. They have outlived the rise and fall of many imperial races: Assyrian, Persian, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Mongols, and Turks. They have their own history, language and culture. Their country has been unjustly partitioned. But they are the original owners, not strangers to be tolerated as minorities with limited concessions granted at the whim of the usurpers. (Edmond, 1971, p. 88)

Notwithstanding, the above definition reflects Kurdish nationalist imagination of the Kurdish nation, which contains a list of 'natural' and 'artificial' ingredients mixed together to create the desired formula of the nation. However, probably one of the main issues when it comes to exploring the historical origins of Kurds is lack of reliable sources. Besides, even when there are sources most of them are written by non-Kurds, be they historians from other ethnic and national groups who represent the majority in the political apparatus of the countries in question or outsiders, in this case, mostly Europeans. This bitter reality, it has been argued, may be the main reason behind the under-representation of Kurds in the history of the Middle East, and of course consequently, on the international level. So, Kurdish historians and nationalists when they complain about this and link it to deliberate exclusion might be understandable (O'Shea, 2006, p. 113). To that end, Mehrdad Izady (cited in Gunter, 2007, p. 2) admits the difficulty in reconstructing Kurdish history due to the fact that it has largely

been written by power holders. Nonetheless, a small number of sources are available to the historian that can – with appropriate levels of caution – be relied upon.

Michael Gunter notes that there are at least two types of account of Kurdish history, (2007: p. 2-7): 'primordialist' and 'constructionist'. The former which, has mostly been promoted by Kurdish nationalism, holds essentialist world views, and 'constructionist' which is the position that some modern researchers of Kurdish nationalism have taken. I will deal with the primordialist account first in line to the pre-twentieth century Kurdish history. The constructionist one will be discussed through our discussion of twentieth century Kurdish history. I think this is the best way to deal with the two approaches as the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as the birth-time of nationalism in the Middle East, lend themselves more readily to constructionist than to primordialist accounts.

The primordialist account relies heavily on historical roots, whether mythical or established. Many Kurdish nationalist accounts of Kurdish history thus draw on the history of the Medes, an ancient Iranian people who destroyed the Assyrian empire in 612 BC. In addition, the story of *Kawa the Blacksmith* who defeated the oppressive and brutal ancient Iranian ruler, *Zohak* 'who had been

feeding the brains of young men to two giant serpents which were grown on his two shoulders' (Gunter, 2007, p. 2; Edmond, 1971, p. 88), has been incorporated into Kurdish history and methodology especially since the twentieth century in a way that it has become an established myth-symbol of Kurdish nationalism. Although, newer historical accounts treat them as two different events, the story of *Kawa the Blacksmith* is ingrained in the Kurdish annual holiday Newroz, which falls on 21st of March every year (Aydin, 2005). Moreover, Gunter refers to another historical people that Kurdish nationalists perceive as the ancestors of Kurds, Kardouchoi[1] who fought Xenophon (the Greek army commander) while the latter was withdrawing from Persia with his 10,000 warriors in 401 BC (Gunter, 2007, p. 2). Apart from Medes and Kardouchi, reference has also been made to Guti, and Kurti as ancestors of modern Kurds (O'Shea, 2006, p. 113; Yildiz, 2004, p. 7). These major historical perceived links have been well established in the discourse and historiography of Kurdish nationalism. The Medes are well referred to in the Kurdish national anthem '*Ey Reqib*' where it says: 'we are the sons of Medes and Kai Khosrow, our homeland is our faith and religion' (KRG, 2010b)[2].

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[1] 'Kardo' a relatively new Kurdish baby name was probably introduced in the 1960s in the Iraqi Kurdistan which supposedly derived from Kardouchio.

Probably, the primordialist story of Kurds is not limited to the above selected examples. One could argue, the list is open to expansion even in the future.

If the above examples where drawn from the pre-Islamic Kurdish history, the Islamic period likewise makes a turning point in the perceived history of modern Kurds. Although, the attention paid to Islam in Kurdish nationalist histories varies. As for the earliest emergence of Kurds as a proper ethnonym, we notice a near common sense among scholars and historians that it was at the time of the Islamic conquest around the seventh century (Edmond, 1971, p. 87; Gunter, 2007, p. 3; MacDowall, 1996, p. 21; O'Shea, 2006; Yildiz, 2004, p. 7). Izady even goes so far as to argue that the establishment of Islam in the region resulted in the consolidation of Kurdish ethnic identity (cited in Gunter, 2007: p. 3), but caution must be exercised in using 'ethnic' as a category so far back in history given its formulation by Anthony Smith as 'a named human community connected to a homeland, possessing common myths of ancestry, shared memories, one or more elements of shared culture, and a measure of solidarity, at least among the elites.' (Smith, 2008, p. 13) There is no historical evidence to suggest that such a shared culture existed at the time:

as McDowall notes, the tribal nature of Kurds prevented them from forming any sort of a compact ethnic group at that period of history (1996, pp. 22-24). Although, there were Dynasties in the historical Kurdish lands which, ruled by Kurds such as Shaddadis (951-175), the Hasanwayhids (919-195), Marwanids (984-1083) and some others (Gunter, 2007, p. 4), but McDowall argues it is unlikely that they self-identified as such, noting that they were 'based on family ties, ethnic cultural tradition and Islam' (1996, p. 23). Some would hesitate to approve the above date (seventh century) as the exact period where Kurds were known as a proper ethnic group. In fact, Van Bruinessen reports that a substantial number of orientalists agree on exactly who to call Kurds at least by sixteenth century (2007).[3] As for the term Kurdistan, the early uses of the term date back to the twelfth century when a province was established in the Iranian Ottoman land under the same name by the Turkish Seljuk prince Saandjar (Yildiz, 2004, p. 2). A province with the same name is still there in North-Western of Iran, which nationalist Kurds today consider Iranian or Eastern Kurdistan (*Rojhelat*). Furthermore, beyond the province of Kurdistan, there was another all-encompassing term 'Kurdistan' which signified not a geographical

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[3] The two terms in common use in the KRI are Badinan and Soran. These refer to two unofficial geographical areas, the former to the west of the Great Zab River, the latter to the river's east and north-east. These regions also provide two of the main Kurdish language dialects with their names (i.e. Badini/Bahdini and Sorani). Sorani is currently the unofficial lingua franca in the KRI.

area where Kurds have been residing but also 'a system of Kurdish fiefs' – as discussed earlier – as well as a human culture (Ibid). However, Kurdistan, at the present time, still refers to geographical spaces, which cover the mountainous areas that join the borders of Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria, Figure 3.1.

It is worth noting that since their encounter with Islam in the seventh century Kurds have had an active involvement in the political events of the Islamic world. The involvement may vary across a wide range of levels and in different ways. Among the most cited historical figures who are associated to Kurds, one way or another, is *Salahaddin Al-Ayyubi* (better known in the West as 'Saladin') who defeated the Crusaders and took over Jerusalem in the twelfth century and also overthrew the Fatimid
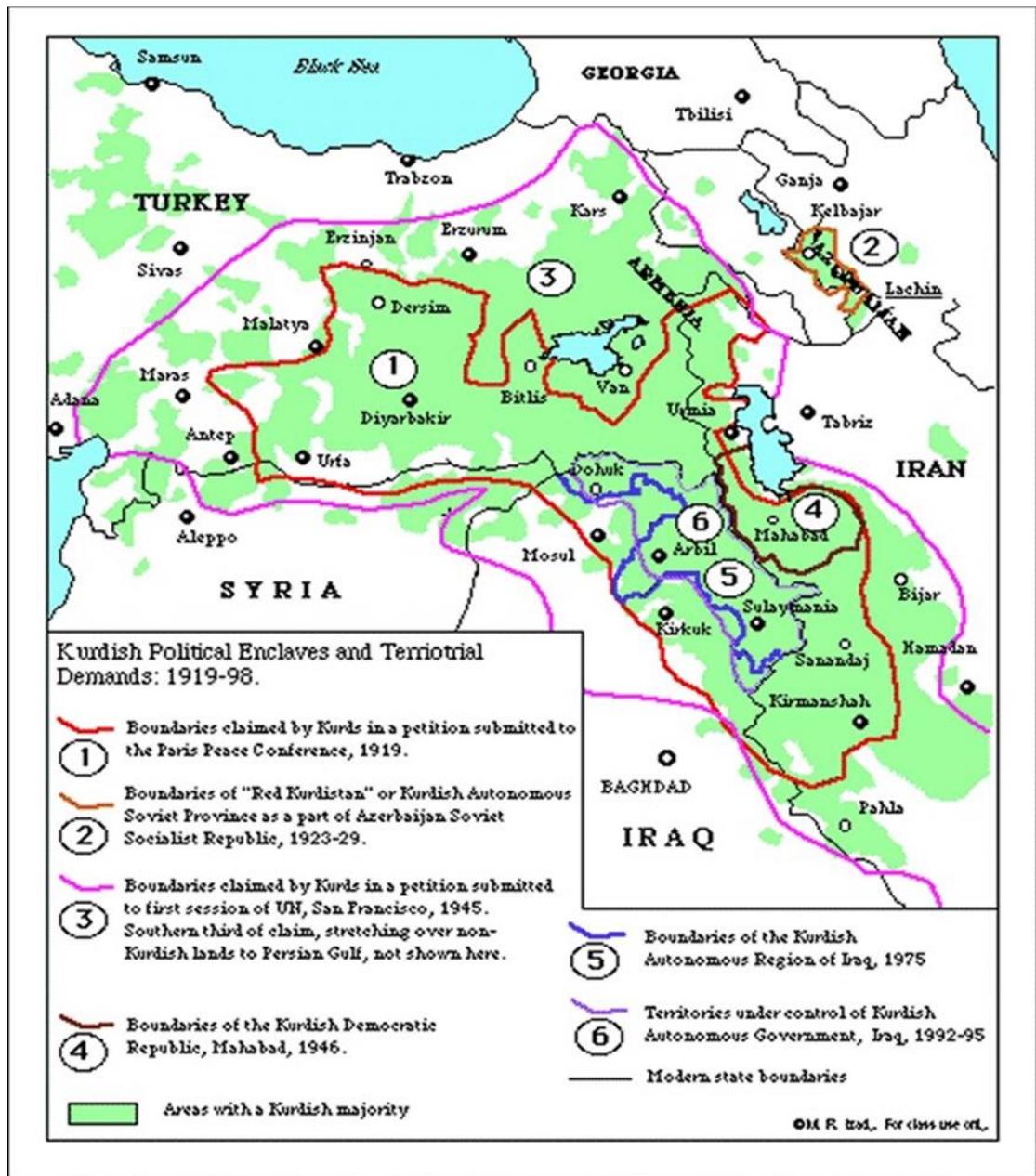
Figure 3.1 Kurdish political enclaves and territorial demands 1918-1998.
Source: (Global security, n.d.)

rule in Egypt in 1171 after which he established the *Ayyubid*

dynasty ruling over Egypt, Syria and large areas of the Islamic

world including Iraq, at the time. However, his dynasty is not

understood as Kurdish in the way in which the Ottoman Empire is

understood as Turkish or the Saffavid Empire is Shi'ite and Persian.

82

Some would understandably explain that by the fact that the era of *Salahaddin* was not the era of nationalism and religion was the major ideological motor behind politics and war (Blau, 2006, p. 103; MacDowall, 1996, pp. 22-23). Furthermore, probably, since its first uses in the twelfth century down to the modern time the term Kurdistan has largely been ambiguous term rather than a straightforward one.

As will be demonstrated in the proceeding sections, the ambiguity of the term is fundamentally a political artefact rather than an objective reality. It is important to note that the Ottoman era represents a major historical turning point for Kurds, as it saw the first uses of the term 'Kurdistan' and periods of significant Kurdish self-rule in specific localities, although these were in a constant state of conflict with each other; as well as with the Ottoman Empire (Edmond, 1971, p. 87). The region also suffered major misfortune during the Battle of Chaldiran in 1514, which was fought between the two major Islamic empires of the Middle East (the Ottoman and Safavid) (MacDowall, 1996, pp. 25-27). The impact of the battle lies not only in that it constituted the 'first division' of Kurdistan (further division did not occur until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the 1920s), but because it left Kurds in the middle of two conflicting powers, a legacy that continues today

(Vali, 2011, p. 8).[4] The political, social and economic effects of the 'first division' also continue today.[5] In the next section I will discuss the historical developments during and after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, events which led to the creation of the Iraqi state encompassing parts of Kurdistan with its mostly Kurdish inhabitants.

3.3 Twentieth century, historical overview: the emergence of Kurdish discourse on identity

The Kurdish nationalist historiography is keen on asserting the historical roots of Kurdish identity formation. While according to the modern approach to nationalism, the issue of 'nation' and its associated ideology of nationalism is a pure modern product probably, starting at the end of eighteen century and flourished from the nineteenth century onwards. The ethno-symbolic approach, on the other side of the camp, while not denying the modern character of nations and nationalism maintains that nations

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[4] In his discussion of the Battle of Chaldiran, David McDowall concentrates primarily on the resultant balance of power in the aftermath of the war, with Kurds given relative independence by the two rival powers in order to keep the area conflict-free. However, this came at a significant cost to the Kurds, who found themselves on either side of the border between Ottoman and Safavid lands. Over the course of the next four centuries this division had a significant negative impact on the Kurds, with severe social, economic and political ramifications (MacDowall, 1996, pp. 25-31)

[5] The polarised nature of politics in the Middle East today (including in Iraq), with one faction supported by Iran and another by Turkey, can be seen as the result of this bipolar system.

do have historical roots marked by *ethnie*s which's Anthony Smith's definition of them we provided earlier. As Gunter (2007, pp. 3-5) points out, the Kurdish nationalist historiography dates the origins of Kurdish nationalism to such Kurdish historical sources as *Sharafnama* of *Sharaf al-Din Bitlisi* (*Șerefname* of Șerefxane *Bitlisi*), the prince of Bitlis (1543-1597), the epic of *Mem u Zin of Ahmadi Khani (Ehmadi Xani*, 1650-1707), and the more modern Kurdish poet *Haji Qadir Koyi* (1817-1897) and others. Each of these three Kurdish individuals are said to have demonstrated a sense of Kurdish identity in a way that they can be considered pioneers of Kurdish nationalists in the modern era. While *Sharafnama* is a history of Kurdish dynasties in the Islamic period; *Mem u Zin* is a tragic love story, elements of which have been re-interpreted as displaying a Kurdish identity and inscribing a Kurdish destiny, sometimes understood as leading to a Kurdish declaration of independence (Strohmeier, 2003, p. 27). Van Bruinessen, for example, unequivocally announces Khani 'the father of Kurdish nationalism' (Bruinessen, 2003), although it is the works of Haji Qadir that perhaps most explicitly advocate Kurdish unity.

On the other side of the debate about the origins of Kurds and also of the emergence of Kurdish nationalism is the constructionist view which relates the inception of Kurdish nationalism to the era in which the nationalism of other people, who once shared the two

major Islamic Empires, emerged and flourished. The era coincided with the major historical turning point in the world history around and immediately after the First World War.

Undoubtedly, the outcomes of the First World War proved to reshape the entire geographical, demographical and political map of the Middle East. The nascent Kurdish nationalists while enthusiastic to benefit from the potential re-mapping of the region failed to guarantee their share from the modern artefact of 'nation-state'. That particular moment has so impacted on the minds of Kurdish nationalists that it created an enduring complex, which can be named 'the complex of statehood'. Ever since, statehood in all its forms and manifestations makes an essential element in the vocabulary and discourse of Kurdish nationalism. The complex is also well represented in Kurdish poetry and literature ever since[6]. Consequently, it can be argued that the complex has a profound effect on the sense of identity among average Kurds as well. In what follows I will elaborate on this point.

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[6] There is hardly a twentieth century Kurdish poet who does not engage with the issue of statehood in their poetry. A brief list of some of those who touch on the issue include the aforementioned Haji Qadir Koyi (1867-1950), Qanie (1898-1965), Cigerxwin (1903-1984), Fayaq Békas (1905-1948), Hajar (1920-1991), Abdullah Goran (1902-1964), Śerko Békas (1940-2013), and Rafiq Sabir (1950), to mention just a few from the twenty century (Books LLC, 2010).

After the First World War with the carving out of new states from the territories of the *Ottoman* Empire Kurdistan was divided and incorporated into new entities (Turkey, Iraq and Syria), in addition to the eastern part of Kurdistan, which was part of Gajar Empire in Iran (Stansfield, 2006, p. 1). Undoubtedly, the partition of Kurdish areas by Allied Forces in 1920s[7] marked a dark moment in the process of nation building and self-determination of the Kurds. Although, promises were made by Britain to the Kurds in the Treaty of Sèvres in August 1920 up to the ultimate right of independence [8]but Britain reneged those promises in the Treaty of Lausanne[9] in

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[7] According to the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 (initially signed by the United Kingdom, Russia and France – Russia later withdrew), Ottoman lands were to be divided between Britain and France, with Britain taking control of Mesopotamia (including most of present day Iraq) under 'the British Mandate' (Gunter, 2003, p. 197).

[8] The Treaty of Sèvres, signed on August 10th 1920, was an agreement between the victorious Allied Forces and representatives of the government of Ottoman Turkey. It abolished the Ottoman Empire and obliged Turkey to renounce all claims over Arab Asia and North Africa. The pact also provided for an independent Armenia, an autonomous Kurdistan, and for a Greek presence in eastern Thrace and on the Anatolian west coast; as well as Greek control over the Aegean islands and the Dardanelles. Rejected by the new Turkish nationalist regime, it was replaced by the Treaty of Lausanne (Britanica, n.d.; Bruinessen, 2007; MacDowall, 1996, pp. 131-137; Yildiz, 2004, pp. 10-11). This was signed on 24th July 1923, and ended the state of war that existed between Turkey on the one side and Britain, Italy, France, Japan, Greece, Romania and the Serb-Croatian-Slovene State on the other. It also defined the land and sea borders of the new state of Turkey with its neighbors: Greece, Bulgaria, Cyprus; and the newly established states of Iraq, Syria, Hejaz (Saudi Arabia), Egypt, Sudan and Yemen. The treaty broke the promises made to Kurds in the Sèvres Treaty, which could have led to the establishment of an independent Kurdish state in Kurdish dominated areas of the Middle East (Britanica; MacDowall, 1996, pp. 137-143; Yildiz, 2004, pp. 11-12).

1923 and did not live to its own promises to Kurds. According to the Treaty of Sèvres, a provision was made for an independent Kurdistan state to be shaped out of areas called Kurdistan within the territories of defeated Ottoman Empire (Treaty of Sèvres, Section III, Articles 62-64).

3.4 From Iraqi Kurdistan to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Given this study's focus on Kurds in Iraq it is important to pay particular attention to political developments in Iraqi Kurdistan since the end of the First World War. With varying degree of their geographical limits, political powers and socio-economic structures, one could divide the history of Kurdistan Region-Iraq after that period in line with the establishment of three major regional governments or self-administrations: the Kingdom of Kurdistan of Sheikh Mahmud Barzinji 'Ṣéx Mehmud' (1878-1956) in Slemany (1920-1924), the Autonomous Kurdistan area (1971-1974) and the last, which is also the longest-lasting one, is Kurdistan Region-Iraq established since 1992.

3.4.1 Iraqi Kurdistan since the Kingdom of Kurdistan (1922-1924)

In the aftermath of the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, the Greeks, Armenians, Kurds and Slavs expected to achieve statehood. Under the British administration a Kurdish administration was established

in *Slemany* by *Sheikh Mahmud Barzinji*, in November 1920 after he was appointed as the governor of *Slemany* for the second time – the first which was on 1st December 1918 to 1919. Sheikh Mahmud declared the Kingdom of Kurdistan and himself as the king. The unfortunate Kingdom of Kurdistan lasted only until 1924. However, there are different accounts as to the factors behind the demise of that administration most of which summarised in two: first, the British appointment of Sheikh Mahmud was only ever intended as a tactical measure to keep the Kurds (and Slemany in particular) free from Ottoman influence. However, Mahmud sought to expand his powers to include most parts of Vilaiyet (Al-Mosul) which was largely inhabited by Kurds. Second, he failed to consolidate the Kurds in his government by his failure to embrace Kurdish intellectuals of the time and concentrating on tribal enclaves only (Stansfield, 2006b, pp. 1-2). Taking the situation at the international level at the time, the third factor may be added, which is with the new Lausanne treaty in place by 1923, the existence of a semi-autonomous Kurdistan was not viable for the British mandate in Iraq any more.

To elaborate more, the failure of the Lausanne Treaty to keep to promises regarding Kurdish independence made in the Treaty of Sèvres is, of course, also highly significant here. In 1920 the Allies imposed the treaty of Sèvres on Ottoman Turkey. The treaty

included articles beneficial to Kurds, including the opportunity to establish their own independent state if they wished to do so. However, the Treaty was rejected by new Turkish National Assembly led by Mustafa Kamal Ataturk, who successfully negotiated with the Allies to abolish it. Its replacement, the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne halted Kurdish aspirations for statehood (and any form of self-governance); and entirely ignored their rights. Hopes for an independent state under Sheikh Mahmud finally ended with his arrest by Iraqi forces (with British assistance) in 1924, leaving Iraqi Kurds as second-class citizens under the rule of Iraqi Arabs (MacDowall, 1996, pp. 155-178).

Lausanne recognised three Arab states: Saudi Arabia, Syria and Iraq, but did not mention Kurdistan to be administered by their people. For the final stage, despite the disagreement on the Kurdish side, the destiny of northern Kurds marked to be second nation/citizen under the command of Arabs in Iraq. With the help of Britain, Iraqi forces succeeded to demolish the Kurdish administration and arrest Sheikh Mahmud in 1924 (MacDowall, 1996, pp. 155-178).

Understandably, consolidating the pillars of the newly created Iraqi state has proved to be extremely difficult. Ever since its creation the so-called nation-building has ceased to go beyond being an

Arabic nationalist aspiration. This was probably, largely due to lack of trust between the major two components of Iraq (i.e. Arabs and Kurds) and also the growing gap between Shi'ite and Sunni Arabs. From 1920 until 2003, the Kurds have always lived in both severe uncertainty and constant struggle. As for the Kurds, the resultant effects created an enduring and complicated issue, which is often referred to as 'the Kurdish question in Iraq'. One could argue that there has been no single occasion of history in the modern era of Iraq (and other countries with Kurds population in the Middle East) at which the Kurds felt at peace. They launched several revolts against successive Iraqi governments to enable their voice to be heard, and even when forcefully muted refused to abandon their aims. The resistance continued until 2003 as they did not find themselves as sharing partners along other components in Iraq and their ethno-national identity never been 'practically'considered in Iraqi constitution.

3.4.2 Kurdish fight for national right and Iraqi response

Incorporating one part of the 'greater Kurdistan' into Iraq and controlling it was never going to be an easy task for either Britain or Arab rulers in Iraq. Although Kurdish nationalism failed in its attempts to forge a nation state, a number of leaders explored the concept of 'Kurdayeti' (Kurdishness or Kurdish nationalism) as the key to self-determination. This proved popular – largely among

tribal leaders, although some members of the Kurdish nationalist intelligentsia also explored its potential. *Sheikh Mahmud Barzinji*, once as an appointed governor of *Slemany* and then as a self-announced King of Kurdistan, was the most influential Kurdish leader in the period of the post-First World War. After his Kingdom was abolished he led a series of uprisings between 1923- 1931 against the British Mandate in Iraq. During that period negotiations were held with British commissioners and Iraqi government demanding recognition of the independence of southern Kurdistan or, at least equal rights in the state of Iraq. Seemingly, all peaceful attempts (as well as revolts) failed (MacDowall, 1996, pp. 159-169). The British Colonial Army attacked *Slemany* to destroy the Kurdish Administration that had been set up by *Sheikh*. Finally, the British trained Iraqis were able to capture *Sheikh* and finally crash his revolution. With the help from the British the Iraqi state consolidated its foundations until it achieved its independence from Britain in 1932. Although there were Kurdish revolts and rebellion against the Iraqi government after Iraqi independence however, the period from 1938 to 1958 was relatively calm.

The Iraqi 1958 Revolution, similar to the post First World War political re-alignment, offered promises to the Kurds as far as autonomy or even independence. When *Abd al-Karim Qasim* (1914-1963) seized power in the 1958 *Coup d'état* and ended the

Iraqi monarchy, he first announced that the new government is to be shared among all components of Iraq: Sunni, Shi'ite and Kurds.

For the first time the Iraqi constitution of 1958 declared that Iraq consists of two main nations (Arab and Kurd) and other ethno-religious minorities. But this confirmation never translated into reality and Kurdish rights of sharing in power never put into practice. Instead Iraqi governments responded to Kurds' demands using extreme violent means.

The imposed reality continued the unrest in Iraqi Kurdistan. Another round of rebellion restarted when *Qasim* broke his promises and Kurds gained no place in new Iraqi administration and political map. Mustafa Barzani (1903-1979) a tribal leader from *Barzan* area which falls in the *Badinan* enclave of Kurdistan Region-Iraq and who led a number of revolts against the Iraqi government in the 1930s and early 1940s (Stansfield, 2006b; Yildiz, 2004, pp. 15-16), the then leader of *Kurdistan Democratic Party*[10], led a revolt against *Qasim* in 1961.

The fighting between Kurdish Peshmerga forces under KDP, which

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[10] The Iraqi KDP was founded in 1946 during the short-lived Republic of Kurdistan (*Mahabad*) in Iranian Kurdistan, with Mela Mustafa Barzani as leader (MacDowall, 1996, pp. 231-236; Stansfield, 2003b, p. 66).

broke down on 11 September 1961 hence, the September Revolution 'Şorişy Eylul', despite the fact that it was interrupted by a number of ceasefires, it lasted until 1970. Intra-Kurdish relations during this period were characterised by constant and severe conflicts. The major conflict was that between Mustafa Barzani, the leader of KDP and the politburo of the party and it was mostly between *Barzani* on the one side and *Ibrahim Ahmad* and Jalal Talabani (the current PUK leader and president of Iraq between 2005 and 2014) on the other. Most commentators link the conflict to the differing social background of the two factions. While Barzani was a tribal leader his rivals were considered urban intellectuals with leftist aspirations. The conflict reached a point where the Iraqi government intervened in favour of *Barzani's* rivals and even infightings were occurred in the mid-1960s. The mentioned rivalries continued throughout 60s well into 70s until the collapse of the revolution and the foundation of Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) by *Talabani* and other *Barzani* rivals in June 1975. However, the rivalries did not end at that point but continued throughout 1980s and 1990s (Anderson & Stansfield, 2009; Stansfield, 2003b, pp. 71-73; Stansfield, 2006b).

As for the relationship between Kurds and Iraqi central government, following a sustained period of intense fighting and negotiations, for the first time in the history of Kurds in Iraq, an

official agreement was reached. The March Accord of 1970s (was signed on the 11th March) between Kurds and Baghdad. Its essential articles guaranteed the cultural, political and self-rule rights of Kurds in Iraq (MacDowall, 1996, pp. 327-328; Stansfield, 2003b, pp. 75-77). The accord followed a long and violent clash between Kurdish forces under Barzani and the Iraqi forces. It has been argued that the factors that forced the Iraqi government under Ba'ath to come to that stage were mixed with internal and external dimensions; probably the most salient ones were military loss in the face of the Kurdish Peshmerga and the uneasy relations with the Iranian government of the time (Edmond, 1971, p. 102).

3.4.3 Autonomous Kurdistan Region 1970-1974

The March accord, by far, was the only comprehensive document in which most Kurdish demands were reflected. The agreement was planned to guarantee Iraqi Kurdistan[11] the status of an autonomous region within Iraq with its separate legislative and constitutive bodies that would allow the Kurdish affairs in the region be administered by the people of Kurdistan. The accord also contained detailed measures and policies in areas such as Kurdish share in natural resources, culture, education, welfare and a separate

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[11] 'Iraqi Kurdistan' is used in discussions that historically fall before 1991, as the term 'Kurdistan Region of Iraq' was introduced after the establishment of the first elected government post-May 1992 elections.

development strategy with its own budget. In addition, according to terms of the accord, a four year timescale was set in place for implementation, during which Iraqi Kurdistan would become autonomous. In the period of 1970 to 1974, there were so-called liberated areas under the control of the Kurdish forces, Peshmerga. The provinces of *Erbil, Slemany* and *Duhok* constituted, in effect, a *de facto* autonomous Kurdish region governed by KDP (Bengio, 2012, p. 30). Furthermore, according to the accord, the Kurds were to have an active participation in the Iraqi government. To that end, five Kurds were appointed to the cabinet by Iraqi government in Baghdad (Stansfield, 2006b, p. 4). However, as the two parties could not agree on the terms of the agreement, especially as the Kurdish party insisted on the inclusion of Kirkuk city into the autonomous Kurdistan, a demand which was rejected by the Iraqi government outright, it did not take long for the signs of ill-faith to appear and the relationship between Ba'ath and KDP broken down (MacDowall, 1996, pp. 327-335; Yildiz, 2004, pp. 22-23). The already troubled relationship between the two parties was deteriorated by two assassination attempts against Mustafa Barzani and his son Idris. The Ba'ath party's attitude in the last years of the timescale did not show signs of good-will towards the implementation of the accord and a peaceful solution of the persisting issues, Instead it became apparent that the Ba'ath government was seeking military solutions.

While the Kurdish rebellion was largely dependent on Iran in terms of military and aid logistics and it was clear that Iran's backing was contingent on its relationship with the Iraqi government, consequently, the Kurdish position by then was highly fragile. A historical event, the Algiers Agreement of 6th March 1975 exposed the fragile and vulnerable situation of the Kurds during that time. The agreement which was signed at the OPEC conference in Algiers solved the long-lasting disagreement between Iraqi and Iranian governments on border lands. In the fulfilment of the agreement Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (Shah of Iran) cut all support to the Iraqi Kurds. In return, Iraq gave major concessions to Iran, the major one which was to give away Shat Al-Arab to Iran. Despite massive efforts by Barzani to minimise the effects of the Algiers' agreements on the Kurdish struggle against the Ba'ath Iraq which included convincing the USA in order to intervene in any way possible, but the agreement went ahead and Barzani could not get his plight heard neither by Iran nor by USA. Finally, the inter-state condition created by the implementation of the agreement left Barzani with three options, either surrender to the Iraqi government, withdraw to Iran as refugees or continue fighting without any possible outside help. After assessing the situation, Barzani decided to end the revolution, a decision which was agreed upon by KDP as well (Bengio, 2012, pp. 125-150).

The collapse of the revolution and abandoning the fight not only left Kurdistan with large numbers of human loss and resulted in fleeing most of Peshmerga and the leadership to Iran (MacDowall, 1996, p. 339; Yildiz, 2004, pp. 23-24), but also civilian Kurds have had to pay a heavy price later on. Around 250,000 civilians, fighters, their families and others sought refuge in Iran between 1974 and 1975 probably creating the first biggest Kurdish exodus in the twentieth century, the second which would happen later in 1991 (Bengio, 2012, p. 147; Stansfield, 2003b, p. 79). By 1978 about 1,400 Kurdish villages were razed. Approximately 600,000 people deported to *Mujama'at*, 'collective settlement camps' build around cities to control closely any movement of people, and about 300.000 Kurds displaced to the southwest and centre of Iraq or made homeless. There were real civilian massacres and a long-term process of displacement and extreme social instability.

The collapse of the Kurdish rebellion which started as September Revolution '*Şorişy Eylul*' back in 1961 has had a significant impact on the Kurdish nationalist struggle in Iraq. The collapse, which was since given different labels and names such as N*iskoy 74 (*'1974 failure'), *Heresy Şoriş* ('collapse of the revolution') or the more pejorative Kurdish term *Aşbetal* which if it is translated into English stands as 'stopping of the mill' (Karadaghi, 1993, p. 214), has

undoubtedly has so deeply inscribed in the memory of Iraqi Kurds and its politicians that it still occupies a massive space in the Kurdish political discourse in KRI. The event has also been well engrained into Kurdish poetry and literature ever since[12].

Throughout the Iraq-Iran war in 1980s, Kurds, as civilians inside Iraq, found themselves as the most vulnerable people. Any movement of Kurdish forces, Peshmerga, on borders or inside Iran would affect the situation of Kurds inside Iraq. Both Iraq and Iran supported various factions of Kurdish parties against each other during the war, as a result, at some occasions the Peshmerga would find themselves fighting alongside the forces of Iran. Facing resurgent Iranian/Kurdish activity in the north of Iraq, Saddam adopted severe measures to remove permanently the threat posed by the rebellious Kurds to his regime. In 31 July 1983 and months later, up to 8,000 males of Barzani tribes were removed from their families in Qushtapa and other collective settlement camps around Erbil city. These were taken to Baghdad and months later executed and buried in mass graves in southern Iraq (Middle East Watch, 1991: 41).

The most catastrophic event for Kurds in the 1980s was the al-

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[12] For a detailed and balanced analysis of events in the KRI between 1960 and 1975 see Bengio, 2012.

Anfal (also known as the Kurdish genocide) campaign authorised by Saddam Hussein in 1988 as a plan for systematic depopulation of rural Iraqi Kurdistan in order to remove Kurdish rebellious forces presence from the region, and to cut all facilities needed for resurrecting and maintaining the Peshmerga (Anderson & Stansfield, 2009, p. 169). The campaign was pursued with ruthless brutality by Saddam's cousin *Ali Hassan Al-Majid*, who became known as '*Chemical Ali*' through his infamous atrocities in both Kurdish regions in North and Shi'ite areas in south of Iraq but especially through mastering chemical attack on *Halabja* on 16th of March 1988, destroyed approximately 4,000 Kurdish villages with conventional and chemical weapons (MacDowall, 1996, p. 360).

As for preparation for the *Anfal* campaign, Iraqi government needed to find political reasons and religious justification for the action. In its propaganda, the Iraqi government had portrayed the Kurds rebellions, if not all the Kurds, as 'traitors' and 'collaborators with the enemy', referring to the fact that PDK and PUK had sided with Iran, the 'enemy' of Iraq. The Iraqi regime also justified the *Anfal* campaign as it took on a connotation of religious excommunication (*takfir*). (Rogg and Rimscha, 2007: 828)[13].

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[13] The term is borrowed from the eighth 'Sura', of The Holy Quran and means 'spoils of war'. The underlying message was that as Kurds re unbelievers, it is acceptable to kill the men and to take women and property as spoils of war. This is despite the Ba'ath Party's claim to be a secular socialist party (the Centre of Halabja Against Anfalization and

It was not only villagers that were targeted, the most known catastrophic humanitarian mass killing happened on 16 March 1988 over the city of *Halabja* in the southeast of *Slemany*, which was attacked by chemical weapons and in the matter of hours approximately 5000 civilians died (MacDowall, 1996, pp. 357-358). Another example was displacing the whole town of *Qaladize* and its surrounding area of *Pishder* district in 1989.

Figure 3.2 The Kurdish town of Halabja, March 1988
Air-bombed by chemical weapons by the Iraqi forces on 16th of March 1988. Source: (Kardozi, 2012)

Genocide of the Kurds (CHAK), 2007, pp. 8-9; Gunter, 1993, p. 296).

Figure 3.3 The town of Qaladiza on the Iranian border, 1991.
With an estimated population of 100,000, Qaladiza was razed to the
    ground in June 1989. This photograph was taken in 1991 following the
    return of local people in the aftermath of the March 1991 uprising.
    Photograph by Suzan Miesals (Miesals, 1991)

Undisputedly, what Kurds of Iraq have experienced in the last

century was a full-scale discrimination, fight, constant

displacement, temporary cease-fire, negotiations that always been

breached by mistrust, and extreme oppression that ended with

genocide operations[14]. Undoubtedly, these events have had a

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[14] The mass killings and atrocities of the 1980s are yet to be universally
recognised as genocide; and Kurdish activists inside the KRI and in the
diaspora are struggling to secure international recognition on the
matter. In recent years a number of European parliaments have shown
interest in the subject and some have recognised the actions as
genocide: the UK and Sweden among them. The website of the Centre
of Halabja for Genocide and Anfalization (Chak) contains valuable
information and data on Iraqi actions against Kurds in the 1980s:
http://www.chak.be/pages/Lnaguages/English.htm

profound effect on the state of identity of Iraqi Kurds. Any average Kurd on the streets of KRI has a story to tell in this regard. The stories have also fixed in a fascinating manner in the language and discourse of Kurdish nationalism. The rooted effects of these events have so far proved to be far-reaching for generations to come. I would argue that these experiences have created a line of convergence along various, even conflicting political discourse. They are the grounds upon which a collective memory has been built transcending even the geographical boundaries which divide the Kurds to become a universal memorial property of Kurds wherever they may be.

3.4.4 From 'North of Iraq' to 'Kurdistan Region': Uprising 1991 and the Establishment of Kurdistan Regional Governments

In the aftermath of the first Gulf War the victorious Coalition forces led by the US signalled that Kurds in the north of Iraq (as well as Shi'ites in the country's south) should prepare for the unexpected, and in March 1991 – within two weeks of the war's end – another Kurdish uprising began, resulting in the near total 'liberation' of Kurdish populated areas.[15] The speed with which the liberation was

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[15] Like so many aspects of Kurdish history, the precise start date and initial location of the uprising is disputed (in both Kurdish and non-Kurdish accounts). Official accounts date it to the liberation of Ranya on the 5th of March, but others consider the 4th of March uprising at the Khabat compound near Erbil the beginning of the uprising.

happening was largely due to the fact that the Iraqi forces had suffered massive blows in their confrontation with the allied forces on the Kuwait front. Taking advantage of the vulnerable situation of the Iraqi forces in the north and instigated by enthusiastic Kurdish nationalist calls from main Kurdish parties through their radio broadcasting, the people of Iraqi Kurdistan rose up and marched against Iraqi forces in what called the 1991 uprising ('*Raperin*' in Kurdish) (or the *Intifadha* in Arabic). Not only the clandestine Kurdish party cells and Peshmerga that were in marching, also the whole population rose up including the Kurdish auxiliary Jash forces. The people were still celebrating liberation when it was realised that the USA and its allied forces are not happy to see a fractured Iraqi state. When Saddam Hussein realised the strategy shift of USA then he successfully reconsolidated his army and marched back into Kurdistan. As Kurds had experienced Saddam's vengeance in the past, hundreds of thousands of people left their cities and towns leaving everything behind walking or driving to mountains on Iranian or Turkish borders. In that freezing condition of early spring, hundreds of people lost their lives either in cold or in hanger (Galbraith, 2005, pp. 268-269). In addition to hundreds of those civilians stayed at their homes captured and later on killed by Iraqi forces. The Peshmerga from most Kurdish parties confronted the Iraqi army advancing towards so-called liberated areas, which again caused hundreds of deaths on both sides.

Iraqi forces had the military capability to retake Iraqi Kurdistan, but they retook the big cities while stopping at the edge of other populated areas. What stopped Saddam from advancing further into liberated areas in Kurdistan was the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 688 which, accordingly the Operation Provide Comfort (OPC) implemented on Iraq in order to provide security and humanitarian aid to refugees fled to Turkish and Iranian borders. In this context a safe haven in the north and a no-fly zone in both Kurdish and Shi'ite populated areas were imposed. Through the OPC the USA and its allies persuaded people who fled from Iraqi forces to go back to their homes where they could better be supplied with basic needs. The no-fly zone applied on about half of Iraqi Kurdistan territories which was not under the control of Iraqi government. The zone was secured according to OPC put strict obstructions on Iraqi ground and air forces against moving towards Kurdistan. More than a million Kurdish refugees began returning to their cities and towns in May 1991 (Gunter, 1993). In an unexpected move, the Iraqi army and local administration were ordered to withdraw from re-occupied areas of Kurdistan except in Kirkuk city. This gave the IKF control over three provinces of Kurdistan Region-Iraq: Erbil, Slemany and Duhok (Galbraith, 2005, p. 269).

These new events confirmed the *de facto* of Kurdistan Region as an autonomous region with self-government. Since 1991 Kurdistan Region has taken its own different path in political development from the rest of Iraq. It is no longer seen as simply three integral governorates of Iraq as they used to be since the end of First World War. However the story post-uprising entails different forms of Kurdish self-rule, intra-Kurdish conflict and political developments vis-à-vis the primary concerned state (Iraq) and other concerned neighbouring states (i.e. Iran and Turkey).

3.5 Governing Kurdistan Region

Iraqi-Kurdistan as a term has been used in this research as a geographical area in northern Iraq that consists of the actual areas under the control of Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the 'disputed areas' like the oil-rich city of Kirkuk, Khanaqin, Shngal and Makhmuur, to name just a few. The term KRI is a new formula which started after the establishment of the first KRG in 1992 and does not include the disputed areas. See Figure 3.4
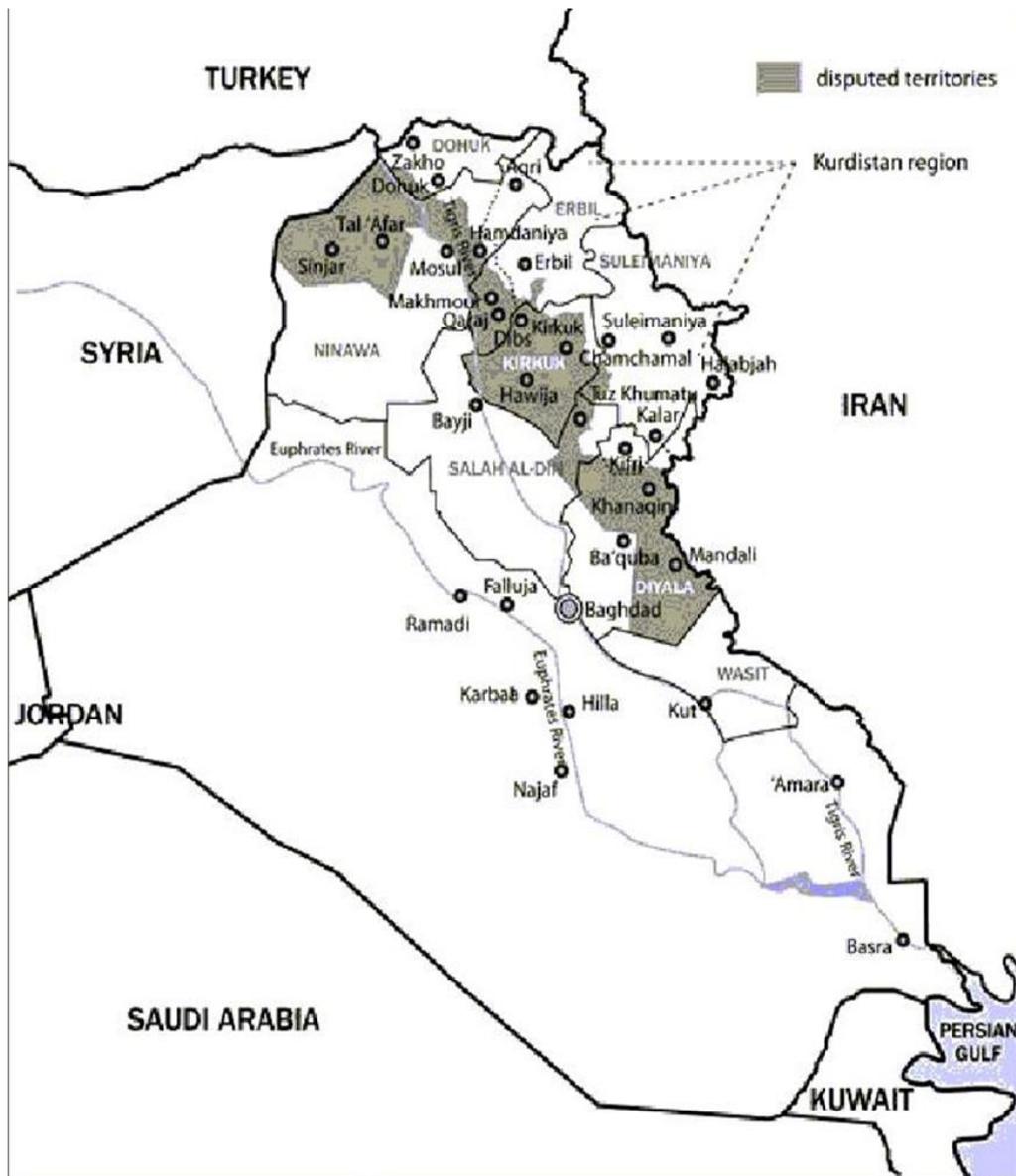
Figure 3.4 Map of Kurdistan Region-Iraq and disputed territories.
Courtesy of International Crisis Group (2003)

After holding its first democratic election on May 19 1992 the IKF's

administration was replaced by a legitimate government of

Kurdistan Region. Only residents of the 'free' part of Kurdistan

Region-Iraq were allowed to vote for the Kurdistan National

Assembly which consisted of 105 seats at the time. The competition

was very tough between KDP and PUK which ended in a near dead-

heat. After negotiations both parties agreed on power-sharing in a council of Ministers appointed by the parliament with 50 MPs from the KDP, 50 MPs from the PUK, and 5 PMs elected from Christian minority list. (Romano, 2004, p. 158; Stansfield, 2003b, p. 96)

Saddam's isolation of the region from the rest of Iraq proved fruitful for Kurds. This led to a form of regional self-government in the Kurdistan Region that the Iraqi government would not otherwise have tolerated. Michael Gunter observed back in 1993 that despite the fact that independence was not an option on the table for the Kurdistan Region-Iraq at that time, however, the very aspiration to independence would not be ruled out by Kurdish leader. He recalls an announcement released at the occasion of unification between two Kurdish political parties back in 1992 declaring 'our Kurdish nation's right to self-determination, including the right to establish its independent state as the last objective' (cited in Gunter, 1993, p. 300). As part of their elections campaign in 1992, the expression of self-determination was one of their main slogans. To be more precise, PUK's election campaign was mostly based on the slogan of 'self-determination' (see Figure 3.5), while KDP would refrain from using such terms opting implicitly to 'autonomy within Iraq', instead.

Unfortunately the power sharing in KRG did not resolve the long-

lasting disagreement between both major parties that had started

since mid-1960s. The disagreement turned into a full-scale civil war

in 1994 and

Figure 3.5 Front page of the PUK's official paper during May 1992 election campaigns in the KRI. A slogan at the top of the page reads 'The right of self-determination, we will write it in our hearts'.

lasted until 1998[16]. This was the most serious intra-Kurd conflict of

the many that occurred during the 1990s. At the meantime, it was

the most devastating fighting during that period, and probably in

the modern history of Iraqi Kurds as well, with destructive effects

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[16] For further detail see McDowall (1996), Anderson and Stansfield (2004) and Galbraith (2005).

and long-lasting legacy. Just one year before the fighting erupted between PUK and KDP, another less destructive fighting occurred between PUK and the Islamic Movement in Kurdistan (IMK) which resulted in the defeat of IMK, capturing of many of their members, including the supreme leader (Sheikh Osman Abdul Aziz) and retreat of the rest to the Iranian borders, later to regroup around Halabja and Qaladize (Bengio, 2012, p. 210). The actual fighting between KDP and PUK lasted from 1994 to 1998, which ended with the Washington Agreement in 1998 (Yildiz, 2004, p. 60). However, the political history of Kurdistan Region in the second half of the 1990s tells the story of mistrust and conflict between KDP and PUK and their leaders. Only after the 2003 invasion when rebuilding Iraqi government in Baghdad attracted their attention they substituted internal conflict with cooperation. Even when the USA involved in their conflict in 1998 (through the Washington Agreement) to cease the fire between both parties, they did not do much to unify the two single-party administrations until later in 2000s.

3.5.1 Instability and Conflict: the intra-Kurdish fighting, 1994 – 1998

As noted earlier, the KDP was founded in 1946 as an uneasy alliance between two different social groupings: a tribally-oriented group under the leadership of Mustafa Barzani; and an urban

intelligentsia guided by Ibrahim Ahmed and his young protégé, Jalal Talabani (President of Iraq from 2005-2014 and current leader of the PUK). Despite the differences in their political views and ideology, both groups gathered around one political party. However the interfusion broke in 1964 and the KDP split into two wings. The first group (known as 'politburo wing') led by Ahmed-Talabani and the second ('the leadership wing') led by *Barzani*. The rivalry ended with the success of *Barzani* in gaining March Accord 1970 (MacDowall, 1996, pp. 315-320). After the collapse of Kurdish revolution in 1975, the division resurfaced again. The KDP reorganized under the leadership of Idris Barzani and then Masoud Barzani (sons of Mustafa Barzani), while Jalal Talabani formed a new party from mostly moderate and left-minded nationalist groups (Stansfield, 2005, p. 197).

The period from the end of 1970s through to 1980s witnessed constant rivalry between KDP, PUK and some other Kurdish political forces. As KDP, under the new leadership, recommenced its armed struggle against the Iraqi government in the late 1970s under a new revolutionary name ('Gulan revolution*)*. The period also witnessed the ever increasing strength of PUK. There is a Kurdish proverb saying 'you can't cook two bull heads in the same pan', the situation in Kurdistan Region-Iraq the post-1975 failure proved to resemble that of the proverb. The two main political parties both

claimed their legitimate right to lead the newly revived Kurdish armed struggle. While KDP would recourse to the historical legacy of Mustafa Barzani who led the September Revolution for years and also led KDP, as the single unifying political front until 1974, PUK would build their claims of legitimacy on the basis of criticizing the failed leadership and backwardness of Barzani, a man who was to be blamed over 1974 historical Kurdish failure (according to the PUK). It is interesting to note that the Kurdish renewed armed struggle against the Iraqi government after 1975 has a different name and content in the PUK's historiography (i.e. 'Şorişy Niwé' in Kurdish which stands for the New Revolution).

In the course of ten to fifteen years until 1991, the two parties seized every opportunity to downgrade the other's credibility and strength. Unfortunately, the period also witnessed some devastating in-fighting between the two parties, sometimes dragging other political parties into their rivalries. Probably the worst of these fighting was the *Hakari* fighting between KDP and PUK Peshmerga forces in which a large number of PUK Peshmerga were killed or captured among a number of high-ranked colleagues of Talabani (MacDowall, 1996, p. 345; Stansfield, 2006b, pp. 87-89). Under severe conditions of 1980s of which all Kurdish political parties and Kurdish civilian had their share, KDP and PUK reconciled under an umbrella Kurdish front called the 'Iraqi Kurdistan Front'

(IKF) in 1988. The IKF brought eight major political parties in Kurdistan Region-Iraq, along with KDP and PUK, Kurdistan Popular Democratic Party (KPDP), Kurdistan Socialist Party (KSP), Kurdistan Action independent Party (PASOK), Iraqi Communist Party (ICP), Kurdistan Toilers Party (KTP) and Assyrian Democratic Party (ADP) (Mistafa, 1988; Stansfield, 2006b, p. 92), and proved to be an ideal coalition for upcoming events. Following the 1991 uprising the KDP and PUK continued as the primary actors in the political life of the KRI. The relation between both major parties has, in a way or another, always been in an unstable state. Their cooperation and opposition have marked the Kurdish nationalist movement after 1975.

When the results of 1992 elections revealed, the PUK with 43.6% 5of the vote did not accept its marginal defeat versus the KDP with 45% of the vote (MacDowall, 1996, p. 381). PUK could not agree to take on the role of opposition either, as proposed by the then deputy-leader of PUK Nawshirwan Mustafa Amin. After tensions and negotiations between major parties, they adopted a plan which satisfied both sides. According to the plan, the KDP and PUK equally divided the 100 seats of KNA (in addition to 5 seats reserved for the Christians) between them. Following tense negotiations between the two parties, they agreed to the aforementioned fifty-fifty power-sharing agreement which, spread throughout the KRG

113

structure. (Stansfield, 2005, p. 200)

The power sharing not only failed to resolve the mistrust and disputes already existed between the two parties but it deepened the rivalry and antipathy between party leaders until the intra civil war known by Kurds as *Birakuji* (Fratricide) in 1994 erupted. The fighting resulted in the long-lasting division of KRI between two enclaves dominated by KDP and PUK.

Since then KRI divided politically and geographically between KDP and PUK regions. Erbil and Duhok make the KDP dominated region, and Slemany and Germyan the PUK strongholds (see Figure 3.6).

Figure 3.6 The PUK and KDP controlled zones of the KRI (1994-2002). Source: Johanna Revera (2011)

The KDP and PUK have had long disputes over leadership and revenue linked to the Khabur border gate. The disputes over revenues generated from the Khabur border gate may have been the main factor behind the actual conflict between the two parties. This aforementioned division created an extreme instability and uncertainty in sociopolitical life of Kurdistan Region. During the civil war people were asked to show their loyalty to either party on both sides and threatened, arrested tortured or even killed when proved that they were loyal to the rival party. No official statistics on all causalities have been published, however it is believed that more than 2,000 Kurds were killed until the half term of the civil war before the USA brokered a peace in 1995 (Plotz, 1996). This division was strictly enforced to the extent that party members were forbidden from visiting areas outside of their party's control. With regard to internal refugees, the KDP estimated that 58,000 of its party members and supporters had been expelled from PUK-controlled region between October 1996 and October 1997, likewise, PUK claimed that 49,000 of its party members and supporters were expelled from the KDP-controlled region between August 1996 and December 1997 (Global security, n.d.)

After several meditations from Iran, Turkey and the USA a process of political understanding and normalization was embraced by the two parties that gained American approval in 1998 under the terms

of the Washington Agreement in 1998, which ended their actual armed conflict (Anderson & Stansfield, 2004, p. 177). However they did not manage to wholly overcome the conflict. It took nearly seven years of normalisation, negotiation and coordination until they managed to merge their two single-party administrations. This intra-Kurd war constrained the formation of a unified military force for the KRI and although agreements in 2006 ostensibly created a unified Ministry of Peshmerga, each party retained control of significant numbers of armed forces under different names and justifications.

3.5.2 Particracy, single-Party Administration of KDP and PUK, and Power Sharing

The fifty-fifty power sharing agreement reflected the manner in which the entire social life of the KRI was divided, with the KDP and PUK exercising a substantial degree of control over political, economic and social life. Until the 2009 elections, there was very little space for independent associational life, or an active public sphere beyond party control. Almost every political party in Kurdistan Region, especially both major dominant parties, act as a little cabinet covering civic organisations within its party structure. This argument is more applicable to the ruling parties, KDP and PUK (Bruinessen, 2005, p. 66), as they are not merely single

organisations, but also embrace student union, women organisation, teacher association and security apparatus within their structures. Although there were KRG offices and Kurdistan Parliament as legislative body but they were acting as party organisations rather than regional government bodies. Natali argues that the KRG and Kurdistan Parliament actually operated by officials play as functionaries for political party leaders (Natali, 2010, pp. 11-12). Politburos and party leaders are the main reference of power rather than Kurdistan parliament as it supposed to be. While decisions are made and laws passed in the parliament but the reality is these have to be first approved by respective politburos. Arguably, the mentioned situation is more apparent with the two main parties.

The legacy of favouritism in recruitment has a long root in Kurdistan Region, which undoubtedly dates back to Iraqi regime. Partisanship has deepened in the Kurdistan Region (as it has in Iraq more broadly). The two parties still retain the power over processes of recruitment and employment, which is strongly tied to party loyalty, kinship ties and favouritism. This is what some call it *particracy* ('Hizbokrasy'[17] in Kurdish), in KRG administration, which means the existence of party power behind every decision made by

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[17] This term, which refers to the power of the parties behind decisions, first emerged during the 2000s in the writings of a growing critical elite.

parliament or government executives. In some cases it is very difficult to clearly distinguish government offices from party ones. For instance, Masoud Barzani when he was first elected as president of the Kurdistan Region in 2005 and re-elected again in 2009 built the presidency office near to his home and his party presidency office in Sari Rash, 40 km (25 miles) north-east of capital Erbil and located approximately 7km (4.5 miles) close to his party politburo. This situation, in other words, shows the lack of institutional policies and bureaucratic procedures in doing politics and administration in KRI.

However, the political instability became more apparent since the KDP and PUK signed their 'Strategic Agreement' on July 27 2007 which, accordingly, Talabani and Barzani agreed to unify the two KRGs in order to help Kurds make the best of changes and developments in post-Saddam Iraq. The fundamental principles of the strategic agreement between KDP and PUK are as follows:

1. Participating in the Iraqi and regional elections with a unified list.

2. All government positions in either Iraq or KRG will be shared by the two parties (KDP-PUK) and both will support each other's members in not only Erbil but also in Baghdad. Moreover, the PUK and KDP will share power in the cabinet for four years, with each party holding the prime ministerial position and controlling the cabinet for two years each. (Semin, 2012)

Although the unified KRG was announced following the strategic agreement between both major parties, but still three sensitive ministries were not unified until mid-2012. Even though there were on-going negotiations between KDP and PUK and constant criticism from opposition parties, three ministries: Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Finance and Economy, and Ministry of Peshmerga had not been completely merged until 5th of April 2012 when Nechirvan Barzani announced his seventh KRG cabinet (KRG, 2012a). Furthermore, although the two ministries of Peshmerga are supposed to be unified, until the writing of these lines each party of the KDP and the PUK retain their own armed units with few Peshmerga units under the full control of the Ministry of Peshmerga.

Having merged the two single-party administrations since June 2006, the power sharing system returned to KRG and continued but this time between more powerful KDP and weak PUK, especially after the crack happened to the PUK and the Change Movement (Gorran) emerged.

Rather than fostering a greater unity, the power-sharing arrangements acted as a catalyst for the intensification of competition between the two main parties, who struggled to work

alongside each other in government (to the point where even slight disagreements could erupt in conflict) (Stansfield, 2005, p. 201). Beside the almost paralysing effects of the new power-sharing system in KRG the manifestation of the rooted rivalries between the two parties is far from over (Stansfield, 2006a). One of the most striking characteristics of this division, then, is the inability of the KRG to act as a unified national government that transcends factional party politics.

Even the untrained observer could identify the presence of party politics by simply observing government offices and directories, as portraits of party leaders and historical Kurdish nationalists decorate their walls. Depending on which area of KRI you visit you will see portraits of different party leaders or historical Kurdish nationalist leaders. While in some areas a joint portrait depicting Jalal Talabani and Masoud Barzani is hung on the walls, in other areas only portraits of Masoud Barzani, Jalal Talabani, Mustafa Barzani, or Nechirvan Barzani grab your attention. At some offices even portraits of Idris Barzani (the deceased older brother of Masoud Barzani), or Masrur Barzani (son of Masoud Barzani), or Kosrat Rasol (PUK's politburo member) appear. In Figure 3.7 an art shop is photographed where portraits of living and dead Kurdish political leaders appear. This reality demonstrates the divided situation in KRI even over symbolic figures, something which is

fundamentally linked to the bitter reality of Kurdish inability to sketch a unified national identity, at least in small geographical areas such as that of KRI.

Figure 3.7 An art shop in Erbil selling portraits of major Kurdish political leaders, both dead and alive. Photograph by author.

3.5.3 A unique opportunity

Several factors played a significant role in the KRI gaining semi-autonomy. Firstly, the process began with UN Security Council Resolution 688, which secured a no-fly zone that allowed Kurds to return to their homes after the mass exodus of 1991. In effect, the people of Iraqi Kurdistan were able to organise their social and political life free from the threat posed by Iraqi government forces. The resolution was the first time that the Kurds were mentioned by

name by a major supranational organisation since the break-up of their lands following the First World War. In 1993 Michael Gunter argued that the success of the KRI would pave the way for future similar international actions and it is likely that international action in Kurdistan – despite its drawbacks – inspired international interventions in Bosnia, Kosovo and East Timor during the 1990s.

Secondly, another major factor in the KRI gaining semi-autonomy was UN Security Council Resolution 986, which introduced the Oil-for-Food Programme (OFFP) and treated Kurdistan separately from the rest of Iraq. It was designed to allow the Iraqi government to export an agreed amount of oil under the supervision of the UN so that the basic needs of its citizens could be met and reserved 13% of oil export revenue for the Kurdistan Region (Natali, 2010). As Ofra Bengio observed, that means KRI would get $130 million dollar from OFFP in every round, which made it much better off than the rest of Iraq (2012, p. 274). In addition, before OFFP commenced the international aid through UN backed organizations, other governmental and none governmental organizations (NGOs) would make one of the main sources that helped KRI to maintain and continue. Denise Natali, in her study on the impact of foreign aid in the political development of KRI argues that international aid has significantly contributed in the maintenance, continuity and growth of KRG administration leading to its current status, which

she refers to as 'Quasi-state' (Natali, 2010).

Thirdly, recognising the KRG as an official Kurdish administration by Transitional Administration Law (TAL) on 8 March 2004 within the framework of adopting federalism as the basis for the system of government in Iraq (Stansfield 2005, 197) was a great gain for Kurds in Iraq.

Fourthly, Kurdistan Region with its current borders was most consolidated in the permanent Iraqi Constitution (backed by 78% of Iraqi voters in a referendum held on 15 October 2005). The new Iraqi Constitution openly confirmed that it 'recognise[s] the region of Kurdistan, along with its existing authorities, as a federal region' (Iraqi Interior Minsitry, General Directorate of Nationality, 2005). Since the adoption of new constitution, the KRG has gained legitimacy as a constituent state in the pluralistic democratic federal Iraq.

The final factor in the politics of Kurdistan Region which contributed in the consolidation and prosperity of KRG was the integration of both Erbil and Slemany administrations and reunification of Kurdistan Regional Government on 7th May 2006 under the premiership of KDP's vice president Nechirvan Barzani.

This combination of factors means that the KRI has been beyond the everyday control of the Iraqi central government for more than two decades. It is arguably becoming more distanced from the rest of Iraq and a sense of 'difference' has been grown. This is evident not only in the discourse of nationalist political parties but also on the streets of the KRI. In a detailed study of ethno-nationalist identity in the KRI, Mahir Aziz (2011) shows that a new generation have grown up in Kurdistan without experiencing the socio-political influence of the central Iraqi government and are unwilling to be labelled Iraqi, instead identifying as 'Kurdistani'. This claim appears to be substantiated by numerical data: in an unofficial referendum carried out alongside the general election in January 2005, Kurds were asked to vote on whether they wanted the KRI to remain part of Iraq or obtain full independence. 98.8% of those who voted supported independence (Olson, 2005: 228).

Analysis addressing the political development of Kurdistan Region evaluate establishment of KRG as the most important event in the history of Kurds. Many argue that the formation of KRG provided a unique opportunity to Iraqi Kurds to consolidate their jurisdiction something which encourages some researchers to label KRG as a 'semi state', 'de facto independent state' or 'de facto state' (Galbraith, 2005; Gunter, 1993). In this regard, Denise Natali described the KRG as a quasi-state where the international aid

124

agencies have played a significant role in its consolidation and development (Natali, 2010).

3.6 The Economy of Kurdistan Region

Before the Gulf war of 1991 and emergence of the semi-autonomous entity of Kurdistan Region which followed, the Iraqi government had intentionally left the Kurdish areas economically behind. Despite the destruction caused to agricultural economy and infrastructural facilities as a result of displacing rural population from nearly 4500 Kurdish villages, industries had rarely been set up by the Iraqi government which could offer good job opportunities for forcibly relocated rural and urban populations. In addition to the repression and destruction to which the Kurdistan Region was subjected, it was just like other parts of Iraq, significantly affected by Gulf war and its aftermath.

At the time of the 2003 regime change in Iraq, Michiel Leezenberg argued that contrary to wavering political conditions since 1991, the Kurdistan Region has experienced moderate economic prosperity. He clearly pointed to some distinctive elements of the Kurdistan Region's economy during the first decade of Kurdish ruling experience 1992-2003 such as: continuing to use the older 'Swiss print' Iraqi Dinar, while in the rest of Iraq the new locally printed banknotes became the official money; foreign aid and

internationally funded NGOs; the revenues of the transit trade in oil, which were an enormous source of wealth; and the OFFP of the UN (Leezenburg, 2003, p. 149; 2005, pp. 631-638). However, needless to say that due to the on-going resistance in Iraqi Kurdistan up to 1991, deliberate ignorance and even destruction of thousands of villages and several larger towns by the Iraqi government badly damaged the infrastructure and left the Kurdish populated areas in a state of enduring underdevelopment.

During the early stages of Kurdish self-rule, it appeared that the KRI's newly semi-autonomous administration was incapable of leading the region's recovery, with international and regional aid organisations playing a greater role in helping it through the extreme scarcity it experienced during the early 1990s. As a result, a major source of income in the KRI during the 1990s was the illegal trade of crude oil from Iraq to Turkey. This was a major point of dispute between the KDP and the KUP in the 1990s; and between the KRG and the Iraqi central government after 2003. The trade saw Iraqi oil illegally smuggled into Turkey through the KDP controlled Ibrahim Khalil border crossing. Under UN sanctions, the exporting of Iraqi oil was illegal, but the trade was encouraged or tolerated by the KRG, the Iraqi Government and Turkey. Other goods including cigarettes, alcohol, food, luxury items and household appliances were routinely smuggled into KRI, often

through the Khabur border crossing and Iranian borders, generating further income through customs duties. However, the wealth created by smuggling was rarely redistributed and became something of a curse on the KRI's citizens. As Leezenberg notes, 'disagreement over the division of these revenues was one of the main causes of Kurdish infighting' (Leezenburge, 2005, p. 638). Initially, it was shared by the KDP, PUK, and KRG; but the latter was excluded when disputes emerged later.

To better understand economic life in the KRI it is important to understand the context created by the economic blockades imposed on the region in the 1990s – the first by the UN Security Council (which covered all of Iraq); and the second by the Iraqi government – which significantly affected social, economic and political life in the KRI. The lack of government spending power meant it was difficult to increase employment, a pressing issue given the small private sector in the region. These factors, combined with the concentration of wealth with the two major political parties, created space for a politics of patronisation and exploitation. Thus, in the mid-90s it was common for the unemployed to be recruited into the KDP and PUK's ever-growing armed units, fuelling on-going fighting and deepening the schism between the two parties (as well as the social milieu more broadly). This drew widespread disapproval, however, and that paved the

way for the emergence of a new oppositional front following the 2003 Iraq War.

The 2003 conflict provided Iraqi Kurds with a golden opportunity to fight alongside the American military, creating opportunities greater even than those that arose during the 1991 war. When the Turkish parliament refused to allow 60,000 American soldiers to enter Iraq from Turkey, the Kurdish leadership seized the opportunity by showing their willingness to provide a safe passage, and offered to send troops to support the American led coalition as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom (Galbraith, 2005, p. 271). The Kurdish Peshmerga thus formed a unified front with US forces in the north of Iraq and participated in the 'liberation' of large parts of the region, including Kirkuk and Mosul.

By allying with the US the Kurds hoped to achieve two objectives. Firstly, they wanted to secure their control over the disputed areas in the northern front; and secondly they wanted to ally with the US, which was to govern Iraq until regime change was secured. Subsequent events showed that they were at least partially successful, although to date no resolution has been made regarding the disputed regions.

Despite this failure, Kurds played a central role in the

reconstruction following the establishment of the Iraqi Governing Council, which had five (out of 25) Kurdish members.[18] In particular, the election of Jalal Talabani as President of Iraq in April 2005 constituted a major political achievement for the Iraqi Kurds. The appointment of Talabani for the president of Iraq proved to have had a tremendous symbolic effect on the Iraqi Kurds. This led the popular Kurdish presenter (Ferhad Sengawi) in a public gathering to deliberate Talabani's appointment to chant 'Now Qandil is Ruling Baghdad' (Sengawi, 2014). Qandil refers to the famous mountainous area on the IKR-Iranian borders which, has always been a sanctuary for Kurdish Peshmerga and civilian. Furthermore, Kurds played an influential role in drafting Iraq's 2005 constitution, managing to incorporate a number of their historical demands. The federal structure of Iraq strengthened the KRG's political and jurisdictional power within Iraq; and the instigation of a 'normalisation process' in Kirkuk – designed to negate the Arabisation process that had operated there throughout Ba'athist rule – was also seen as a major gain for the Kurds.

One should note that the relationship between Baghdad and Erbil has been in a very unsettled state exactly after where Kurds

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[18] The bargaining power of Kurdish members in the council demonstrated in their ability to make the rest of the members accept federalism as the new form of the Iraqi state in March 2004 (AlJazeera.com, 2004).

thought that they have achieved more than they have ever done so. The implementation of the Iraqi constitution and political agreements between the Kurdish parties and Iraqi Shi'ite parties who hold the real power in post-2003 Iraq proved to be difficult. The main areas of disagreement between the two parties were the nature of the federal state, the powers of regions and the centre, the issue of Kirkuk and other disputed areas, the ever-growing conflict over management of natural resources and revenues and also the issue of Peshmerga forces (Stansfield, 2006a). While KRI political leaders have had to work in a very fragile and conflict-ridden context of Iraq since 2003, so far, the new era can best be marked as the golden era of KRI. In fact, a large number of researchers and commentators have argued that KRI is moving towards becoming an active non-state actor on the international stage in a way that some independent states are unable to do. It has also been argued that the blooming economy in the region post-2003 has been both the result and effect of the political status and security conditions that KRI has been enjoying since 2003. While KRG would hardly manage to pay for its employees before 2003, now, thanks to the enormous volume of foreign and national investment through various sectors, Oil, commodity trade, local industry, business and agriculture, KRI is home to tens of thousands of foreign companies, businesses and workers. While the standard of living for an average citizen in KRI may not be

comparatively justified, significant progress has been achieved in terms of people's welfare and public infrastructure. The economic development has had dramatic effects on the foreign relations of KRI with neighbouring countries especially Turkey and Iran. At the moment, hundreds of Turkish and Iranian companies are working in major sectors of economy in KRI[19]. Furthermore, in the last two to three years Turkey has been willing to provide passage for the export of crude oil to major international and European oil markets (Pamuk, 2013).

While we are not in a position to reduce our analysis to pure economic factors, economy has proved to work well in normalising, even improving relations between KRI with its two unwelcoming neighbours namely, Iran and Turkey. The new situation can be better understood if we point back to the conflictual and strained nature which characterised KRI relations with Iran and Turkey in the 1990s and pre-2003.

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[19] The long-lasting dispute over oil and other natural resources between Erbil and Baghdad resulted in the Iraqi government withholding the KRI's 17% share of the Iraqi federal budget from February 2014. This action was taken during Nurial-Maliki's governorship and proved a significant economic constraint on the KRG, with significant knock-on effects for ordinary people in the KRI.

3.7 Reform or change: Emerging Opposition in the politics of Kurdistan Region

The presence of a large number of political parties in Kurdistan Region dates back to the end of the Gulf War and the Uprisings in 1991. Despite the diversity in their social orientation and political ideology from nationalistic to Islamist and from communist to more liberal, there has not been an active political opposition system in Kurdistan Region until the second half of 2000s. The fifty-fifty power-sharing system of early 1990s eliminated any chance for the emergence of an opposition-friendly environment. Consequently, the intra-Kurdish fighting has resulted in a political system which was not hospitable to political differences.

Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU), founded in 1994 in the mid of conflict between KDP and PUK found a highly fertile ground in the civil war period and grew up rapidly (Stansfield, 2005, p. 212), but gradually weakened during first half of 2000s. The party, which has links to the international front of Islamic Brotherhood, had been active for decades as a clandestine organization with no overt public activities until it announced itself in the form of a political party back in February 1994 at the most strained environment of KRI in the 1990s. While not very critical at the beginning, later at the end of 1990s through into 2000s, KIU tried to play the role of an opposition party. However, it suddenly decided to go into

coalition under the Coalition of Kurdistan List with the two major parties during the January 2005 Iraqi elections (Stansfield, 2006a). The KIU's decision to participate in the coalition reduced its popularity as an opposition party. Thus, it decided to withdraw from the coalition due to the latter's 'corrupted profile', this time taking rather an opposition stance and formed an electoral coalition under the name of Service and Reform List with Kurdistan Islamic Group (KIG), Kurdistan Socialist Party and Future Party for the 2009 election. The KIU has been known by its reform-oriented slogan and approach, but the majority of people and its supporters were unconvinced, and mounted more pressure on ruling parties to accomplish real reform in the Kurdistan Regional Government.

The voices of protest against social injustice, corruption and lack of public services formed a new mixed-base movement under the name of 'Gorran' or Change Movement 'CM' (later to become a party). This is the reform party founded by Nawshirwan Mustafa Amin in 2009. Amin, is a prominent Kurdish veteran Peshmerga and educated politician, resigned from his post as the deputy leader of the PUK in December 2006. He initially established a media outlet called 'Wusha' which stands for 'word'. Finding a very fertile social and political environment at the time, Nawshirwan eventually set up his own political movement which soon managed to gather large numbers of frustrated grassroots and critical party members

from other main parties including KDP, PUK and KIU. The new party, which, initially preferred to act as an open movement instead of a 'conventional party' strongly opposed the corruption and nepotism, which KDP and PUK with their respective governments were accused with, for a long period of time since the establishment of the first KRG cabinet in 1992. The Movement advocated transparency in all aspects of public administration, government and party policies. Largely at the expense of the PUK, *Gorran* won almost 24% of the votes and secured 25 seats in the Kurdistan parliamentary elections held on 25 July 2009. Later in September 2013 the CM was able to secure 24 seats in the Kurdistan parliament. Thus, *Gorran* was now the first real opposition party in the Kurdistan Parliament (Gunter, 2011). *Gorran,* instead of reform, set up a real change in the political system in its political manifesto and mobilised the discontented population of Kurdistan around promises of peaceful change of the political setting in KRI, as it believes that no real reform can be expected from the current system. The only way forward believed to be a real change towards democratic and institutional governance. The political manifesto of the CM extends from social and economic to political life.

The entire political performance and strategy of the two ruling parties including their approach to nationally sensitive issues such as the issue of independent, national symbols, the issue of Kirkuk

and other disputed areas, has been under severe criticism by the CM allied with other long-disagreed smaller parties (Movement for Change [Gorran], n.d.). The CM too is questioned over its leaders' part in the current political, administrative and economic conditions as most of its leaders once were active and influential especially, in the PUK controlled zone.

In chapter seven I argue that the emergence of a viable opposition in the KRI has disrupted dominant Kurdish nationalist discourses in the region, with the new opposition utilising a discourse questioning the founding myths of Kurdish nationalism and problematizing the established nationalist ideology whilst offering new perspectives on how politics should be conducted in the KRI.[20]

3.8 The Profile of Kurdistan Region: Essential Facts

3.8.1 Population and area:

The Kurdistan Region comprises of the three governorates of Erbil (the capital), Slemany and Duhok, which all together cover in total

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[20] In addition to the Movement for Change, the KRI has also witnessed the *Hevdey Shubat* (Seventeenth February) protests in Slemany and surrounding towns which started on 17th February 2011 and lasted for almost two months. This was a wave of popular disapproval of the way in which the traditional political parties were behaving. They resulted in 10 casualties among both civilians and police forces and were ultimately crushed by force. The protests contributed to the development of new political discourses (Aragno & Schmidt, 2011).

an area of 40,643 square kilometres. As of 2010, nearly 5.2 million people live in Kurdistan Region (KRG, 2010a).The population is divided amongst 33 cities and districts and 136 towns (Kurdistan Region Statistics Office, 2011).

Despite the fact that the Kurdistan Region has an increasing urban population, the rural areas were re-inhabited and reconstructed gradually in early 1990s, after it had been systematically destroyed by Iraqi governments between 1970s and 1990s.

3.8.2 Political life:

There is a pluralistic political party system in KRI which is implemented by law. According to KRG's ministry of the Interior, as of 2011, 29 political parties licenced in Kurdistan Region. In addition to another 21 parties that still pending for formal license (Rudaw.net, 2011)

In the 2009 general elections, other political parties stepped in to the parliament after removing the threshold of 7% of votes as a minimum to enter. Table 3.1 shows the distribution of the 111 Kurdistan parliament members according to major political parties.

The political map has changed further as the result of the last general elections (September 2013) according to which the CM,

came forward as the second party with 24 seats pushing PUK to the third position with 18 seats. At the meantime, the KDP was able to retain its premier place with 38 seats while KIU Managed to secure 10 seats and the Kurdistan Islamic Group (KIG) secured 6 seats. The interesting point here is the fact that compared to the first elections of 1992 where the parliament seats were exclusively occupied by the two main parties each with 50 seats with the 11 seats going to the minorities, the 2009 elections showed a real shift in the political map in KRI after 17 years. The unconventional parties were able to create a breakthrough for the first time by gaining 41% of parliament seats.

Table 3.1 Distribution of MPs in the Kurdistan Parliament (2009). Political parties and coalitions after the 2009 elections. Adopted from Kurdistan parliament and KRG websites

Name of lists and political parties	MPs/111
Kurdistan List: (Kurdistan Democratic Party and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan)	59
Change List	25
Reform and Services List: (Kurdistan Islamic Union, Kurdistan Islamic Group, Kurdistan Socialist Democratic Party, Future Party)	13
Islamic Movement List	2
Freedom and Social Justice List: (Kurdistan Communist Party, Kurdistan Toilers Party, Kurdistan Independent Work Party, Kurdistan Pro-Democratic Party, Democratic Movement of Kurdistan People)	1
Turkoman Democratic Movement	3
Turkoman Reform List	1
Turkoman Erbil List	1
Chaldean Assyrian Syriac Council (Christian)	3
Al-Rafidain List (Christian)	2
Armenian independent MP: Aram Shahin Dawood	1

3.9 Conclusion:

A history of the KRI since the founding of Iraq shows that 1991 marks a historical turning point for the region. The twentieth century witnessed the deaths of hundreds thousands of Kurds and frequent devastation of the region, with the Iraqi government and intra-Kurdish fighting preventing Kurds from achieving autonomy. Even once semi-autonomy was gained after 1991, the KRI's single-party administration severely hampered the region's socio-political and economic life. Despite decades of suffering, and promising recent developments, Iraqi Kurds are still not free from extreme social and political instability.

The events since the founding of Iraq have had an important influence on processes of identity formation in the KRI since 1991. Particularly important factors in this regard include the neglect the Kurds suffered at the hands of the international community, beginning in the aftermath of the First World War; frequent mistreatment by majority Arabs in Iraq, resulting in an enduring mistrust between Iraq's two main populations; divisions in the Kurdish nationalist movement, which began in the 1960s and continue into the present; and the violent suppression of Kurds by the Iraqi government. In the forthcoming analytical chapters I draw on this history to show that Kurdish identity in the KRI is the product of a long historical and social journey, which needs to

account for the actions of 'other', non-Kurdish actors and significant social and political processes. The ever-changing historical and social context within which Kurds act produces a highly contingent and diverse identity, but one that has proven sufficient to outlast its often brutal suppression.

CHAPTER FOUR

4 The ethno-symbolic approach

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I utilise the ethno-symbolic approach to explore cultural and historic Kurdish identity formation in the KRI. In particular, I draw on Anthony Smith's theory of nations and nationalism to critically discuss the ethno-symbolic approach; and to examine the theoretical implications of ethno-symbolism for understanding the inner dynamics of Kurdish identity formation since 1991. A full application of the theory to Kurdish identity formation is conducted in chapter five.

4.2 The starting questions

Ethno-symbolism begins with two questions: 'when is the nation?' and 'how did it arise'? In other words, what must be accounted for in the genesis and history of any given nation? This problematizes the term 'nation', which is difficult to define. Primordialist approaches claim that nations are 'perennial'; that they have existed in one form or another throughout known history and so are 'timeless' and 'immortal', existing in the 'state of nature'. They consider the state, its bureaucracies and its political power as 'the

public expressions of these pre-existing ethnic cleavages and cultural identities.' (Smith, 1996a, p. 446) Modernist approaches, meanwhile, argue that nations – at least as the term is understood today – are modern phenomena that emerged during the industrial stage of European history at the end of seventeenth century (Gellner, 1969; 1983). Instrumentalists such as Benedict Anderson (2006) contend that state-makers – nationalist by definition – found the concept of the nation to be fertile ground for the mobilisation of the public and thus important in developing the nation-state and its social, economic and civil contours.

For primordialists, nations, nationalism and national identity reflect ancient kinship ties. Pierre Van Den Berghe, for example, contends that '… both ethnicity and "race" (in the social sense) are, in fact, extensions of the idiom of kinship, and that, therefore, ethnic and race sentiments are to be understood as an extended and attenuated form of kin selection' (1994, p. 97). Here, an unequivocal linkage is claimed between current forms of group identification and those from the distant past. Indeed, Berghe goes so far as to argue that 'just as in the smaller kin units, the kinship was real often enough to become the basis of these powerful sentiments we call nationalism, tribalism, racism and ethnocentrism' (1994: p. 98). For Clifford Geertz, another well-known primordialist, kinship ties are so pervasive in our social life

that 'for virtually every person, in every society, at almost all times, some attachments seem to flow more from a sense of natural – some would say spiritual—affinity than from social interaction' (1994, p. 31).

Evident in these quotes are two of the main trends in primordialist thinking: sociobiological and cultural primordialism (Smith, 1998, p. 147). Smith offers two arguments against the former, stating firstly that it proceeds from unfounded generalisations, which fail to account for different types of group attachment; and secondly that it is over reliant on a single factor (i.e. biological) whilst ruling out other factors that affect the ways in which nations evolved or formed (1998, p. 150). Smith notes that Geertz's cultural approach is 'far removed from the genetic socio-biologists' (1998, p. 150): it does not take the primordialist ties as providing insight into an objective reality but rather considers them presumed ones. However, it still turns out to be 'no more than an interesting tautology' (1998, p. 158). It attempts to explain ethnicity and nationalism through 'particular sentiments and attachments, which differ from others and shows how ethnicity and nationality exemplify their characteristics'; but fails to follow the historical formation and development of nationalism and ethnicity (1998, p. 158).

Contrary to the primordialist approach, ethno-symbolism traces the historical roots that underlie these sentiments and attachments. In order to elaborate further, and to explore other aspects of the ethno-symbolic approach, it is important to consider terminology used in the literature. It is to this task that I now turn.

4.3 The ethno-symbolic conception

4.3.1 Ethnie vs. Nation

At the outset, before directly engaging with the ethno-symbolic theory of nations and nationalism, we need to come into terms with definitions of the main concepts which we will inevitably run into on the way of discussing the theory. To start with, the very basic concept and one which rests at the centre of ethno-symbolic theory is *ethnie* or ethnic group (Guibernau, 2004, p. 125). The term is defined by Smith as *'a named human population with a myth of common ancestry, shared memories and cultural elements, a link with an historical territory or homeland and a measure of solidarity'* (Smith, 1993, p. 49, italics in the original). Vested with more complex and developed characters is 'nation', which is in turn described by Smith as ' *a named human population sharing a historical territory, common myths and memories, a mass, public culture, a single economy and common rights and duties for all members'*(Smith 1996,2,3:359, italics in original).

As it can be seen from the two separate definitions of both *ethnie* and nation, while they both share some elements, at the meantime, they differ in other essential ones. To elaborate, while both share the elements of common name, common myths and shared memory/history, nations, can be distinguished from *ethnies* by common culture, physical occupation of homeland, common rights and duties, and a single economy. The difference, Smith argues, is due to the cultural nature of *ethnies* as compared to the political nature of nations. While cultural differentiates are essential for *ethnies,* however, in fully-fledged nations, they are replaced by common public culture. In addition, while a link to a homeland is a characteristic of *ethnies*, it is the physical occupation of the homeland that differentiates nations. Moreover, there might exist some (elite) solidarity within *ethnies*, however, what makes a community a nation is the sharing of common rights and duties among the citizens.

Finally, while a single economy is a characteristic of nations, *ethnies* lack this element. The mentioned lines between *ethnies* and nations corresponded to their respective historical development. In other words, while it was highly possible for *ethnies* to exist in the pre-modern era, in the contrary, it was almost impossible to speak of nations until the modern times. Three of Smith's criteria for nationhood namely, public culture, single economy and equal rights

and duties for all tightly related to modernity, also, the three elements, accompany the formation of the modern nation-state, some way or another. In addition, the very terms 'citizenship' and 'citizen' are artefacts of the modern times. As for the relationship between 'state' and 'nation', Smith differentiates the two when he bluntly remarks 'a nation is not a state and it is not an ethnic community' (2008, p. 12). Furthermore, a nation might be in possession of its own state – in its institutional terms—but they differ in that nations '…..are felt and lived communities whose members share a homeland and a culture' (2008, p. 12).

As noted earlier the core to ethno-symbolic theory is historical *ethnies* and their myths and symbolic properties, upon which today's nations are re-constructed. Accordingly, following Smith's understanding, one way to approach contemporary nations or 'nations-to-be' and to understand the language of their nationalism is to trace their underlying ethnic roots manifested mainly by their ethnic symbols and myths of ancestors. Effectively, this task involves a socio-historical exploration of the modern nations, which may mean going as far back as pre-modernity or even antiquity. Although Smith accepts the basic assumption of the modernist approach to nations and nationalism, mainly formulated by Ernest Gellner (Gellner, 1969, p. Ch7; 1983), which implies that nations and nationalism are wholly modern in nature, products of the long

and extensive processes of modernisation, and industrialism; and fundamentally conditioned by the changes came about in the political, social, and economic spheres including the cognitive transformations associated with modernism. However, Smith argues that the modernist account of nations and nationalisms tells only half of the story (1996b, p. 359); consequently failing to tell why some ethnic groups made it to nations while some others did not. Moreover, the vital point is that the modernist account cannot appreciate the crucial role of myths, symbols and historical ethnic ties in building 'new nations' or 'imagining' them—in Benedict Anderson's terms during the modern era. Smith further suggests that to understand why nationalism as an ideology and sentiment has become so popular and susceptible to elite manipulation, intellectuals and/or intelligentsia, some form of reference to the past and origins of 'the people' has to be established. To further explain this position, Smith (2000, p. 40) offers some elaborations by suggesting that, although, the English nation and the kind of English nationalism which appealed to a polity called 'the English nation', could only be crystallised by the end of eighteenth and the beginning of nineteenth century, nevertheless, it will be an over-simplification to think that the English nation and nationalism suddenly erupted at around nineteenth century. On the contrary, we can find elements of an English identity from around the eleventh century, despite the fact that only in modern times a

distinctive English nation could be found supported by modern state institutions.

Furthermore, another sound argument of Smith can be found in explaining the oft-cited relationship between the past and the present, between today's nation and their ethnic roots, which he maintains, do not, and will not, have to be real. In fact as the famous Ernest Renan has long remarked 'getting its history wrong is part of being a nation' (Renan, 1996). Interestingly, Renan's disposition as regards one's history has also been reiterated by Walker Connor in which he argues that 'since the nation is a self-defined rather than an other-defined grouping, the broadly held conviction concerning the group's singular origin need not and seldom will accord with factual data' (Connor, 1994, p. 4). In fact, for Connor both ethnicity and nationalism are based on subjective 'felt ties' rather than objective criteria. For Smith likewise, (1998, p. 192) it is not the physical kinship between the past and present ethnic communities that matters in defining the structure of ethnic and national communities – a position common to primordialism, but ' [i]t is the sense of cultural affinities…implanted in a *myth* of descent, shared historical memories and ethnic symbolism' (italics in the original). Therefore, for Smith, this is the distinguishing line between his 'historical ethno-symbolism' and the primordialist approach which contends that nations are natural phenomena

based on primordial historical kinship ties, in other words, per primordialism, nations like families are given 'in the state of nature' (Smith, 1999, p. 4; Smith, 2009, p. 3).

To recall, while nations share some basic elements with *ethnies*, they are nevertheless, distinguished by some new elements historically associated with modernity such as a mass public culture, single economy and common legal rights- mentioned through Smith's definition of nation. This will bring us to the third concept directly related to notions of nation and ethnic groups, namely, nationalism.

4.3.2 Nationalism

Firmly tied to the above two concepts is 'nationalism', which in turn, has been defined as *'an ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of self-government and independence on behalf of a group, some of whose members conceive it to constitute an actual or potential 'nation' like others'* (Smith, 1971, p. 17, italics in original). Smith has given a great deal of attention to the concept of nationalism. As a doctrine, nationalism is a language and symbolism on behalf of the nation, a socio-political movement, and an ideology of the nation (2008, p. 6).

As it can be noted from Smith's definition of nationalism, he treats

it as an ideology. The definition of nationalism as an ideology is largely at odds with the common sense understanding of the notion, which portrays nationalism as lacking any form of ideology or philosophical foundation (Smith, 2008, p. 21). However, the crucial and the most controversial question here – one which will have wider implications on our understanding of the two phenomena (i.e. nation and nationalism) – is exactly which comes first, the nation or nationalism? Reading through Smith's works the reader can easily recognise the fact that he has been working hard to counter-argue the prevailing proposition within the modernist approach of nations and nationalism which stands that nations are just products and creations of nationalism and nationalist ideology. This view has been expressed explicitly by the well-known modernist scholar of nations and nationalism, Ernest Gellner, in his often-cited statement:

> "(n)ationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist – but it does need some pre-existing differentiating marks to work on, even if, as indicated, they are purely negative" (Gellner, 1969, p. 168).

While Gellner assigns a secondary value to them, for Smith it is these pre-existing elements that matter most in the nation-formation process, a position, which modernists have ardently dismissed.

As it has been noted, according to Smith, myths, symbols and memories make fundamental components of ethnic communities, nations and nationalism as an ideology. Also, that cultural and political traits coexist in the nation and the ideology which claims to represent the nation, namely nationalism. Therefore, for Smith nationalism is a culture and identity as well as a political quest, hence, he is ruling out the presumed dividing lines between 'political' and 'cultural' nationalism (Smith, 1996a, p. 448). Smith's argument above follows his critical position to the state-centric account which treats nationalism as an overwhelmingly political doctrine with a critical relation to the modern state, a position most notably associated with John Breuilly[1].

Although, Smith appreciates the vital role played by culture, especially ethnic and nationalist culture in nation formation and nationalist ideologies, he seems to be refraining from subscribing to a purely cultural approach to nationalism (Smith, 1996a, pp. 447-448). Following these lines of argument, the 'subjective-objective' binary no longer holds up in Smith's theoretical formulation. To elaborate more on this point '[T]he concepts employed by ethno-symbolism', Smith argues 'are simultaneously 'objective' and 'subjective'. To illustrate this proposition, he goes

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[1] Breuilly argues that 'nationalism is inconceivable without the state and vice versa' (2001, p. 32).

on by saying 'for ethno-symbolism it is culture –and culture in relation to politics—that is central, not subjective attitudes or feelings' (Smith, 2009, p. 26). I would like to make the point here that Smith's emphasise on the political sphere in questions of nation formation brings ethno-symbolism closer to this study's second theoretical approach (i.e. political discourse theory). For, PDT gives a determinate position to the political in its discursive analysis of the social and identity in particular. This trait is mostly characterized by the notion of 'primacy of politics' (Philips & Jorgensen, 2002) I will return to this point in chapter six.

4.4 Ethno-Symbolism in details:

According to ethno-symbolist theory[2], ethnic myths and symbols of the past play a central role in ethnic revival and nation-formation processes and in turn, in the process of collective identity construction. For, nation formation is a process through which the pre-existing ethnic ties are re-constructed in the present context (Smith, 2008). As mentioned earlier, Smith's position here clashes head on with both the primordialist and instrumentalist theories of nations and nationalism. While it is not the actual primordial ties that determine the process of nation formation, nevertheless,

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[2] At more than one occasion Smith has described Ethno-symbolism as an approach rather than theory, see for example (Smith, 1996a, p. 162; Smith, 2009).

nationalism capitalises on pre-existing ethnic roots (real or felt), ethnic myths and symbols, without which one cannot imagine creation of nations out of nothing. Nevertheless, processes of nation formation may take diverse paths arriving, consequently, at distinctive forms of nations. This discussion will then take us straight to another equally important dimension in ethno-symbolism, which is the routes of nation formation. I would like to suggest that the following theorisation is also, equally important to the case under investigation.

4.4.1 Routes of nation formation

Smith observed that there are two main routes through which nations historically have been formed. The two different routes have constituted two forms of nationalisms, ethnic and civic nationalism. Each route, he argues, represented two groups of people from the society respectively, first, '*lateral ethnies*', which constituted the civic nationalism which, in their effort in nation formation took up a 'top down' direction, represented by the upper strata of community (aristocrats), who started their journey of nation formation from within their high-culture community to later incorporate other lower strata, or the mass, through minimising the available class and social boundaries. The process has largely been enforced by industrialism and modernisation, as they changed the very social structure on which the pre-modern societies were

based[3]. According to Smith, French, English and Spanish nationalisms in late seventeenth and eighteenth century which culminated in English, French and Spanish nations were some examples of this type of nationalist development.

Second, *Vernacular ethnie* **(**or demotic**)**, which constituted the ethnic nationalism, this is a different type of nationalism, which derived from the lower strata of society. In other words, it took bottom-up direction, contrary to the Lateral type. Here Smith attributes a central position to the clergy, intellectuals and intelligentsia, in laying down the very foundations of nationalism and the future nations. Through appealing to the mass and perceived rediscovering of the ethnic past of the people a sense of belonging to a particular nation is strengthened. Therefore, intellectuals made the best use of historical myths and symbols of the people.

The distinguishing line between Smith and instrumentalist-modernists like Anderson and Hobsbawm is evident at this particular point. While for the latter, the symbols or traditions, that *invented* by the elite and intellectuals played major role in their manipulation of the mass, conversely, for Smith, the myths and

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[3] For Ernest Gellner, mass produced public culture produced by state institutions replaced structure in the modern era (1969:155).

symbols did exist even before the modern era and some even in the antiquity, and also different kinds of ethnic communities (if not nations) existed without which it would have not been possible for modern nations to emerge *ex nihilo* (Smith, 1996b, p. 574). This route is mainly characteristic of the ethnic type of nationalism or ethnic-nationalism, examples would include, the Quebecois nationalism, some major nationalisms in eastern Europe, Jewish an Armenian nationalism. (Smith, 1998, pp. 93-95; Smith, 1993, pp. 53-58; Smith, 1991, pp. 27-47, 99-120). The process by which nations formed characterised by undertaking major tasks by the constituting agents (nationalists).

Furthermore, Smith outlines the three tasks through which the process of nation formation has gone or would go through as follows:

Firstly, the 'purification of culture', which involves *rediscovering* or redefining the ethnic past of the people in question; the *authentication* of that past in order to produce it as unique to the nation in question; and its *re-appropriation* or regeneration so that it becomes tangible to contemporary generations (Smith, 1999, pp. 194-196; 1994, pp. 449-451). This culminates in 'the people' investing in particular and unique values, until such a point where 'the nation and the people have been fused, and identified with the *ethnie*' (Smith, 1999, p. 194). Obviously this would happen at the

latter stage where the nation has come into being. To put it differently, in order to make the best use of past in the way of nation formation, three key processes needed to be undertaken namely, *rediscovery* of the past and its ethnic contents; *authentication* of that past in order to make it purely 'ours', as it is from 'our' ancestries; *re-appropriation* of that past (ethnic history, symbols, myths and so on) in order to become more tangible to the current generation (Smith, 1996a, pp. 450-451).

Second: the universalization of chosenness: the idea is originally and basically of a religious nature. However, in the modern world the idea of 'chosen' people is intrinsic to most nationalisms, even the most secular ones. The idea of one's ethnic uniqueness or chosenness has been largely universalised through specific doctrines of nationalism, which claims that 'every nation must possess an authentic identity, that to have its own distinctive and original culture' without which any attempt of nation formation will be condemned with failure (Smith, 1994, p. 453).

Probably all processes of nation formation have witnessed universalization of chosenness one way or another. Apparently, the process of Jewish nation-formation may make an ideal example of this idea, as the nationalist Jews found and still do, the most invaluable currency in the idea of the Jews being the 'selected

155

people of God'. The Armenian and Greek nationalism are two other visible examples of this process. Arguably, the Kurdish nationalism has not made itself exceptional in this regard. The common belief among Kurds that Noah's Ark was settled at mount[4] Judi (known as Cûdî in Kurdish language) in today's Turkish Kurdistan may demonstrate the idea of chosenness among Kurds (Bird, 2004, p. 4). Some Kurdish historian and writers would support the above believe with a verse in the holy Quran in which God speaks to Noah saying 'And say: My Lord! Cause me to land at a blessed landing-place, for You are the Best of those who bring to land'[5], 'the blessed land' is often used to describe Kurdistan, as in Figure 4-1 a book written in Arabic (by a Kurdish writer), entitled *Kurdistan: the blessed land*. In addition, the common belief that the prophet Abraham was originally from the ancient Mesopotamian region which encompassed most of todays 'Greater Kurdistan' has been well incorporated not only in the Kurdish religious discourse but even in the secular ideology and historiography of the PKK. Abdulla Ocalan, the leader of the PKK has theorised the above idea well in his book *The History in the Tigris Valley: Orfa, The Symbol of*

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[4] This idea was more clearly evident in the political discourse of the Kurdistan Islamic Movement (KIM), in the 1990s. It was centred on the belief as Salahaddin Al-Ayyubi had once freed the Islamic world from Crusaders, the Islamic Caliphate would be reinstated by Muslim Kurds, appointed by God for this task. I return to this point at a later stage.

[5] English translation of Verse 29 of Sûrah 23, al-Mu'minû in the Islamic Holy Book Quran. (al-Hilali & Khan, 2006)

Blessing and Curse (2008). In the book, Ocalan expands the religious character of the prophet Abraham and his defiance of the Sumerian oppressors which is cast as a pioneering democratic move whose legacy the PKK seeks to preserve and promote.

Figure 4.1 A book titled *Kurdistan: The Blessed Land*. The subtitle recalls a verse in the holy Quran, which says 'My Lord land me on a sacred place'. Source: (Ismael, 2015)

Smith's final stage is the 'territorialisation of memory': the creation of an 'ethnoscape', which sees 'certain kinds of shared memories…attached to particular territories so that the former become ethnic landscapes, or 'ethnoscapes'…and the latter become historic homelands.' (Renan, 1996) Here it is possible to trace

connections to historical processes of nation formation in which the territorialisation of memory played a significant role in the process (Smith, 1999, pp. 149-159; 1996a, p. 454).

The pivotal role played by intelligentsia all the way through the above processes should not be underestimated. In fact, 'at the centre of the self-appointed task of the intelligentsia stood the rediscovery and realisation of the community', as Smith argues (1994, p. 153). The ethnic history and memories capitalised through preserving and reproducing various symbols and these incorporated within the public culture and centralised national education. The above trends represent the process by which nations and nationalisms emerged in general. However, in asserting the enduring relevance of these theoretical postulations, Smith claims that 'these long term processes are still at work across the globe' (ibid: 458).

4.4.2 State institutions

The lines between state and nation formation seem to be too abstruse to distinguish. The situation is better clarified when we think of the notion of 'nation-building'. Arguably, the notion is more often than not used interchangeably with 'state-building'. The implications of this flawed conflation between nation and state has gone beyond mere theoretical fallacy. As Walker Connor has long

maintained, the above misconception has historically produced precarious human consequences, in effect, creating another converse process which he termed 'nation-destroying' (Connor, 1972). Furthermore, the vague boundaries between the two notions of state and nation have largely contributed in making it even more difficult to come up with a consensus among the scholars in the field as to nature of the relationship between the two. Referring to the historical development of the modern western nation states, Smith acknowledges the indispensable role played by the state and its institutions in the formation of national ideals. He even argues that '(i)n the west, the nation and the state emerged together' (Smith, 1999, p. 70). Elsewhere, he further argues that 'the state was the necessary condition and matrix for the gestation of the national loyalties so evident today' (Smith, 1991, p. 59).

The role played by intellectuals, intelligentsia and nationalist elite in forging the first European nations and later other non-European ones is acknowledged by Smith. Through rediscovering of myths, symbols and ethnic history of the 'people', the role assigned to these groups was vital in processes of nation formation in Europe and beyond. Moreover, this point has been given a great deal of attention from the part of ethno-symbolism especially, Smith himself (Smith, 2009, pp. 61-80; 2008, pp. 33-36; 1999, pp. 187-

190). Pertinent to the last point is the major role played by individuals such as poets, novelists, artists (singers, painters, and sculptors), film-makers, and drama players and so on, in processes of nation-formation. The symbolic significations of monuments such as the Statue of Liberty in the USA; the statue of Ataturk in Istanbul, the Egyptian pyramids, the statue of Alfred the Great in Britain and many similar examples all around the world can only be understood when they are re-articulated in the discourse and language of respective nationalisms. As mentioned earlier, it seems that the existence or lack of any real connection between the monument and the current 'nation' who claim them does not make them irrelevant at all. As it will be demonstrated later in this study, the Kurdish nationalist discourse both pre and post 1991 have shown competency to make the best use of the past in its construction of the current identity of the Kurds. Notwithstanding, these efforts encountered with enormous difficulties in this way for, arguably, the modern Kurdish nationalism has done equal harm to itself as the actions of those hostile to it. Arguably, it has contributed significantly in fragmenting the already vulnerable national history and memory of the Kurds. In the proceeding sections the Kurdish case in KRI will be investigated employing elementary analytical tools of ethno-symbolism. The detailed analysis will be provided in the next chapter.

4.5 The Kurds and Kurdistan: nation, identity and nationalism

Is it ever possible that this helical time
Would bring into sight for us a star
Our luck for us would become a yar (lover, supporter)
And just for once would awake from her slumber
Would rise for us someone we can trust in this world
And appear among us a King
The sword of our art would be recognized
The value of our pens would be known
Our ills would find a cure
Our science would be appreciated
Oh, if we could have a dignified leader
Compassionate, generous, well-spoken,
Our coins (words) would be stamped with value (minted)
And would no longer be so suspected and without market
Though our words are pure and excellent
The two metals (gold and silver) are made dear by being minted
If we had a Mîr who would see himself worthy of a crown
And for him a throne would have been identified
Then fortune would have showed its face to us
If for him a crown could be had

Perhaps for us a value would obtain

He would take care of the orphans

Would take us out of the hands of the villains

These Turks would not have had a sway over us

Our land would not have been made ruins under

the owl

Would not have been ruled by the Eliyyis (Safavids)

and thieves

Subjugated and made obedient by the Turks and

Persians.

(Ahmadi Kahni, 1690) (Mirawdeli, 2012)

4.5.1 The problem of definitions

Apparently, Smith is aware of the risk in imposing a Europe-centric definition of nations and nationalism on other non-European cases (Smith, 1971, p. 169). Therefore, care should be taken when employing ethno-symbolism to the KRI. His careful distinction between 'state' and 'nation' stems from this. Smith's attempt is more apparent in his description of the state as 'a legal and political concept, hence it is not a community' (Smith, 1996b, p. 359) while defining the nation as 'a particular kind of social and cultural community, a territorial community of shared history and culture' (1996b, p. 359). Therefore, his definition of the 'nation' mentioned earlier requires more than a 'common history of shared memory and culture', it also demands 'autonomous public institutions of coercion and extraction within a recognised territory' which is contents more pertinent to his own definition of the 'state' (1996b,

p. 359).

In a detailed critique of Smith's ethno-symbolic approach Montserrat Guibernau (2004, pp. 125-141) argues that Smith sets the threshold for nationhood too high. This is especially evident in Smith's classic definition[6] of nation as mentioned above. For her, Smith's definition excludes many existing nations simply because they lack the ascribed characteristics set by Smith among which 'single economy' and 'legal rights' stand out. Therefore, she argues that these features are feature of states rather than nations. Effectively, nations that lack a state of their own are excluded from Smith's typical category of nation. By doing this, she rightly argues that Smith too has fallen into the common mistake of equating nation with state, despite his own warning against doing so, while they are in fact two different things. Accordingly, the fundamental flaw runs through Smith's approach is the conflation of nation and state, which's implication mentioned above. Thus, Guibernau suggests that by doing this Smith excludes from his definition of

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[6] In his 2002 essay 'when is a nation' Smith makes some fundamental changes to his definition of the concept of 'nation'. According to the new definition, nation is defined as 'a named community possessing an historic territory, shared myths and memories, a common public culture and common laws and customs' (Smith, 2002, p. 15). As Montserrat Guibernau made the classification, we now have two definitions of 'nation' by Smith, namely, classical and new. The new one, as I elaborate more latter, brings the Kurdish case closer to Smiths ideal type of nation.

'nation' all those national communities who are stateless or nations without states. She then examines Smith's approach through the Catalan case, a distinctive ethnic group within the state of Spain. By associating citizenship rights and a single economy (per Smith's classical definition of the nation) she argues, the ethnic-symbolic theory fails to aid our understanding of the notion of nation. Noticeably, Guibernau more or less subscribes to Walker Connor's definition of nation as 'a body of people who feel that they are a nation' (Connor, 1994, p. 112). Guibernau's argues that a nation is:

> …a human group conscious of forming a community, sharing a common culture, attached to a clearly demarcated territory, having a common past and a common project for the future and claiming the right to rule itself (Guibernau, 1996, p. 47).

In addition, for Guibernua, Smith's approach is a cultural approach to nations and nationalism in which the political side of it has 'practically been left out', while, a 'fully-fledged theory of nations and nationalism, she argues, ought to examine the political as well as the cultural aspects of nations and national identity' (Guibernau, 2004, p. 126). This is an accusation, which has implicitly been denied by Smith (as we discussed earlier). The indispensability of the political dimension of nation and its associated issues has been reflected on both the theoretical and analytical operations in this research. It is highly acknowledged in this research that neither

ethno-symbolism nor political discourse theory can help us in our understanding of the processes of identity formation on their own, as the former is overwhelmingly cultural the latter over-emphasizes the play of politics in the process. Therefore, both theories are employed in this study in an attempt to bring them together despite some essential differences between the two.

The two points made by Guibranau above are very important in our quest for examining the ethno-symbolic approach's applicability to the Kurdish case. In what follows I am going to elaborate more on this point.

4.5.2 Can Kurds produce a nation?

In this section, I consider Kurdish nationalism 'across Kurdistan' in relation to Smith's approach. Drawing on Guibernau I note that it is difficult for the Kurds to reach nationhood as defined by Smith given the lack of economic unity and common public culture in Kurdish regions (although this varies according to the precise location). Broadly speaking, there are significant populations of Kurds in four states, each of which are dominated by non-Kurdish *ethnies.* With the exception of the KRI, education in these countries is conducted in languages other than Kurdish;[7] and it certainly

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[7] As previously noted, the KRI still lacks a lingua franca.

cannot be said that Kurds have a single economy.

Focussing more specifically on the KRI, however, provides a different picture. From its semi-independent status it has generated a relatively independent economy of its own, even during times of deep internal political divisions and fighting. Thus, since 2003 the KRI has moved towards fully-fledged nationhood by Smith's definition. In particular, the booming economy in the KRI since 2003; and its importance in the region's international status has presented a golden opportunity for Kurds to promote their nation and identity nationally, regionally and internationally (Bengio, 2012; Aziz, 2011; Anderson & Stansfield, 2004).

Citizenship rights seem more distant given the ambiguous nature of the political and administrative status of the region; and the nature of the political system in place in Iraq and in the wider Middle East region. The issue has, however, become more central to the political discourse in the KRI since 2009, with challenges to traditional Kurdish nationalist discourses, which were more focussed ethnicity and narrow definitions of nationalism. Nonetheless, despite its distinct status, this process is not sufficiently well-progressed for the KRI to meet Smith's definition of 'nation'.

Thus, in speaking of the KRI as a nation it is necessary to adopt a definition closer to those of Connor and Guibernau. For the former, nationhood revolves around subjective feelings of belonging rather than 'objective' facts such as legal rights or the economy (as in Smith's definition). Such feelings can clearly be seen in the KRI, and manifest themselves in a number of forms. However, there is widespread identification with 'Kurd' (understood as an ethno-nationalist grouping) and 'Kurdistan' (as a territorial homeland) (Bengio, 2012; Aziz, 2011; Lawrence, 2008; Bruinessen, 2006; Romano, 2004).

Here, it is important to engage with the mass character of Connor's definition of the nation. For him, a nation requires mass feelings of belonging (and so nationalism is a mass feeling). This resonates with major modernist approaches to nations and nationalism, but contrasts sharply with the ethno-symbolic approach, which argues that although nationalism may eventually become a mass phenomenon, the sense of nationhood embedded in nationalist thinking may exist only within a nationalist elite.

The political dimension – which Guibernau asserts is absent in Smith's approach – is also highly relevant for the Kurdish case.[8]

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[8] As noted above, Smith is dismissive of these claims, as for him the cultural and political dimensions work together in nationalism.

Indeed, it is possible to argue that politics is an indivisible and significant factor in Kurdish identity formation. The very fact that Kurds reside in four separate states (i.e. Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Syria) demonstrates the political complexity of the Kurdish case, with the Kurdish question a central issue in both cultural and political terms in each of them (for the states' official discourse as well as for Kurdish nationalists). As Abbas Vali notes, this issue is the primary reason for the fragmented Kurdish identity; and also means that Kurdish identity is produced in relation to other identities (Vali, 2006).[9]

In the KRI, it can be argued that despite challenging conditions, the KRG has successfully laid foundations for forming such an identity by fostering extensive cultural, political, economic and social processes designed to create a Kurdish national identity that draws on historic ethnic and nationalist ideals. This is despite its continued ambiguous legal and political status; and its vulnerability to short-term party interests, the uncertainty stemming from internal divisions and the KRI's difficult relationship with the Iraqi state.

Kurdish nationalism throughout Kurdistan has manifested the

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[9] This point is discussed in greater detail in chapters six and seven.

essential elements of nationalism outlined by Smith: namely, the quest for autonomy, unity and a focus on Kurdish identity. This is also true for the KRI more specifically, both prior to and since 1991. Throughout their history (and particularly since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire), Kurds have striven for autonomy, with this drive sometimes resulting in claims to statehood.[10] Despite the frequency and severity of division in the Kurdish nationalist movement, it has strived for linguistic and discursive unity. To this end, particular importance is given to poems of Ahmadi Khani, with his epic work *Mem u* Zin (dating from the 1690s) held up as an historic example of advocating for Kurdish unity and statehood; although there is debate about its particular relevance for contemporary Kurdish nationalism (Gunter, 2007; Bruinessen, 2003; Vali, 2003a).[11]

Whilst Iraqi Kurds can be seen to have failed in forming the rigid type of nation portrayed in ethno-symbolism and other mainstream approaches, they have persistently sought to discursively construct or imagine the nation. In doing so, they have been faced with a

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[10] For further details on the history of Iraqi Kurds see McDowall (2004), Stansfield (2004).

[11] Fascinated by the seemingly nationalist remarks of Khani in an era normally regarded as pre-nationalist, Kamal Mirawdeli, an academic of a Kurdish origin argues that Khani was a nationalist theorist: a highly controversial claim in contemporary academic work on nationalism. (Mirawdeli, 2012).

number of major obstacles – both internal and external.

4.5.3 Memories and their lack

As noted above, collective memory plays a decisive role in Smith's approach to nation formation. For him, 'states may be established without recourse to memory and remembering, but nations require shared memories to give their often heterogeneous citizenry a common habitat, a source of pride and dignity, and a common destiny.' (Smith, 1996c, p. 384)

Universal Kurdish memory is clearly articulated in Edmond's depiction of Kurdish nationalism. Writing in the early 1970s, he presented what he referred to as 'the historical basis of Kurdish nationalist thinking':

> The Kurds constitute a single nation which has occupied its present habitat for at least three thousand years. They have outlived the rise and fall of many imperial races: Assyrian, Persian, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Mongols, and Turks. They have their own history, language. And culture. Their country has been unjustly portioned. But they are the original owners, not strangers to be tolerated as minorities with limited concessions granted at the whim of the usurpers. (Edmond, 1971, p. 88)

Most of the elements Smith claims produce nations are evident here, with reference to ethnic ties (mythic or real), symbols, culture, territory, and above all, a political claim to 'the right of self-rule', which for Elie Kedourei and Gellner constitute the major

pillars of nationalism (Gellner, 1969, p. Ch7; Kedourie, 2000). These elements can be identified at the inception of Kurdish nationalism at the end of the nineteenth century (largely by young and educated Ottoman Kurds) in, for example, the discourse used in *Kurdistan*, the first Kurdish newspaper, first published in 1898 (Strohmeier, 2003, pp. 21-26).

Despite this, careful analysis of the history of the Kurdish nationalist movement reveals that the failure to maintain a shared memory is one of the characteristic features of the Kurdish nationalist project. Since 1946 it is possible to identify divisions in Kurdish nationalism, particularly within Iraq. In part, these can be traced back to the actions of governments of the four states with substantial Kurdish populations and to the Kurdish parties that emerged following the collapse of the Republic of Kurdistan in Mahabad, Iran, in 1946: the year that also saw the founding of the Iraqi KDP.[12] The divisions between leaders of the KDP in Iraqi Kurdistan from the 1960s to the 1980s can be traced back to this point, for example, with disagreements over their future visions for Kurdish autonomy in addition to their social differences. As noted

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[12] The short-lived Republic of Kurdistan, sometimes called the Republic of Mahabad, was the only Kurdish state in the twentieth century. It was established with the support of Soviet Union in the Iranian Kurdistan; and coincided with the establishment of another short-lived state in Iran, the Azerbaijan People's Government. See McDowall (1996) for more details.

above, these divisions have had a substantial impact on the nature of social, political and economic life in the KRI (cf. Anderson and Stansfield, 2004, pp. 155-184); and profoundly affect identity formation in the region.

These divisions are evident in the role played by the September Revolution. Common sense would suggest it plays an important role in Kurdish historical memory and provides symbolic power for Kurdish nationalist discourses. However, it has always functioned as a source of disagreement, with competing explanations by various sections of the nationalist community – both public and more formally political. It occupies a central role in the KDP's nationalist discourse, but has been considered a catastrophic failure by the PUK since its culmination in March 1975, with Mustafa Barzani blamed for this.[13] According to the PUK's historiography, the September Revolution was an enormous failure for Iraqi Kurds. This disagreement flared up in 2012, when Masoud Barzani suggested 11th September as the 'Peshmerga Day', drawing fierce criticism from major Kurdish political parties in the KRI and beyond. The commentator member of the PUK, Shanaz Ahmed – daughter of Ibrahim Ahmed – strongly criticized Barzani's suggestion,

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[13] It is interesting to note that key founders of the PUK back in 1976 were former members of the KDP at various levels of membership. Jelal Talebani, for instance was once the second man in the KDP while others occupied leading positions in the party.

arguing that the date is inappropriate; and that Peshmerga Day should remain unpartisan (unlike the September Revolution) (Ahmed, 2012).[14] Thus, forty years after the revolt's conclusion, Kurdish nationalist discourse in the KRI struggles to come to terms with its historical relevance. This is just one example among many that demonstrate the inconsistencies and contradictions in mainstream Kurdish nationalist discourse in KRI, simultaneously demonstrating the symbolic crisis in the nationalist discourse of the KRI and the fragmented nature of Kurdish identity. I return to this point in greater detail in chapter five.

4.5.4 Cultural and political nationalisms

As noted earlier, for Smith, there are two forms of nationalism: a 'statist nationalism', which defines the 'nation' as a territorial-political unit and understands 'nationalism' as 'the aspiration of the colonised population for self-government of the new political community whose boundaries were established by the colonies'; and an 'ethnic nationalism', which views the nation 'as a large political ethnic group defined by common culture and alleged descent' and consequently understands nationalism as a 'cultural movement' (1971, p. 176). Although more inclined towards the

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[14] In a rather pragmatic manner Shanaz rejects 11th September on the basis of its coincidence with the events of September 11th 2001 in the USA, which she says would be disrespectful to Americans if Kurds revered that date. Her pragmatic sensitivities also represent the political support that the Iraqi Kurds have received from the United States.

latter, Smith refuses to see nationalism as a cultural rather than political movement. Accordingly, his claim that there is an indivisible relationship between the cultural and political components of national identity is significant for the study of identity formation in the KRI, as 'any attempt to form a national identity is also a political action with political consequences, like the need to redraw the geopolitical map or alter the composition of political regimes and states.' (Smith, 1991, p. 97).

This works the other way as well, and here I suggest that political actions by Kurds on both the national and international levels are intrinsic elements of Kurdish identity formation, and thus their interactions with other actors are essential parts of the process. The history of the KRI since 1991 is marked by fierce political confrontations with many of these 'others', including the governments of Iraq, Turkey, Syria and Iran. The meetings these states held with one another regarding 'the Kurdish question' demonstrates their relevance to issues of Kurdish identity.[15]

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[15] The last meeting between the three states of Iran, Syria and Turkey was held on 14th November 1992 in Ankara, Turkey in which the Kurdish issue was top of the agenda. Michael Gunter reported that 'Iraqi Kurds and the three states' showed concern regarding the situation. The states warned Iraqi Kurds against separation, while Kurdish parties were equally concerned about the meeting and considered it a threat to their nascent entity in the KRI (Gunter, 1993, p. 312).

It is interesting to note that while the official discourse of the Iranian state does not hesitate to mention such terms as 'Kurdistan Region of Iraq', the Turkish government takes a very different approach. Since the 1990s, the terms Kurdistan and Kurdistan Region of Iraq have been considered taboo in official and public discourse in Turkey[16]. Therefore, the Turkish state and press prefer the term *Kuzey Irak* (Northern Iraq), although there are occasional mentions of 'the Kurdish administration in Northern Iraq'[17].

Such sensitivity regarding names is not unique to Turkey. For example, it resembles Greek sensitivity towards the naming of the Republic of Macedonia, as Greeks prefer using Northern Macedonia instead to distinguish it from their own region of Macedonia. However, the Turkish attitude towards 'Kurdistan' is distinctive in that the word is also a forbidden name, even as a baby name. Here Kurdistan signifies a political concept, even in private usage.[18] Therefore, while majority in the Turkish government and Turkish

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[16] Since the establishment of the Modern Turkish state any reference of Kurdistan was officially forbidden and considered a separatist attempt.

[17] The Turkish government under the Justice and Development Party (AKP) has been showing shifting signs in their sensitivity towards 'Kurdistan' as a name. At more than one occasion high ranked Turkish officials spelled the name in major public gathering since 2014.

[18] A Turkish Court of Appeal recently allowed a couple to name their girl Kurdistan. The decision was considered 'historic' by the family's lawyer (Hurriyet Daily News, 2013), demonstrating the power of such symbolism for Kurdish nationalism.

press prefer northern Iraq ('*Kuzey Irak'* in Turkish), the closest a description can go to the actual 'Kurdistan Region of Iraq' or KRG would be 'the Kurdish administration in northern Iraq'. This type of naming sensitivity is not typical to Turkey, it resembles the Greek sensitivity towards naming of the Republic of Macedonia, as Greeks prefer using Northern Macedonia instead to distinguish it from their own region of Macedonia. This is of particular analytic significance for the ethno-symbolist approach, as it demonstrates the importance of symbolism in nationalist politics, particularly where identity is so highly politicized.

The situation changed after 2003, with Iraqi Kurds engaging in a ruthless struggle against other political factions in Iraq and hostile neighbouring countries in an attempt to reshape the political map of Iraq along ethnic lines. Federalism, first adopted in the Kurdish parliament in 1992, was put forth as a precondition of negotiations in major meetings between the main Kurdish parties and other Iraqi opposition groups in the run up to 2003 the Iraq war; a position made possible by Kurds' ability to maintain a position of strength among Iraqi opposition parties through providing a safe haven for the latter from 1991. Furthermore, territorial demands continued to play a vital role in Kurds' relationship with the central Iraqi government. These culminated in the incorporation of an

article[19] in the Iraqi constitution regarding the annexation of Kirkuk and other disputed areas to the KRI.[20]

The preceding analyses show the traditional dichotomy within nationalism typologies; namely, civic nationalism as opposed to ethnic nationalism. The differentiating features are not always so apparent and, as Smith admits, ethnic ties are so common that they penetrate almost all cases of nationalism. These analyses also confirm the enduring power of ethnic ties, symbols and myths upon which ethnic nationalism relies. To delineate the conceptual boundaries of the two, Smith notes that:

> [t]he civic kind of nationalism is a nationalism of order and control, and it suits the existing national states. But it has nothing to offer the many submerged ethnic minorities incorporated into the older empires and their successor states. So they and their intelligentsia turn to ethnic nationalism and try to reconstruct their community as an ethnic nation. (Smith, 1996b, pp. 362-363)

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[19] Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution of 2005 demands the 'normalization' of the demographic situation in the ethnically mixed city of Kirkuk and large areas within provinces of Mosul, Diyala and Salahaddin. The article mandated the Iraqi government to continue with 'normalization' processes through which Arab settlers would be given compensation in return for leaving these areas and returning to their original habitats in the south of Iraq. It is worth noting that the settlers were provided with financial incentives designed to encourage Arab settlement in the areas where the Kurds and Turkmen would otherwise constitute the majority of the population (Iraqi Interior Minsitry, General Directorate of Nationality, 2005).

[20] Following the ISIS advance into Iraq from June 2014, Kurds have managed to take control of much of these disputed areas. However, the action has largely been a unilateral one from the Kurdish side and the disputes over these areas are yet to be settled.

This claim, however, should be a matter of empirical deliberation when applied to Kurdish nationalism in Iraq rather than a prima facie truth. As Abbas Vali notes, the dominant approach to Kurdish nationalist historiography among Kurdish nationalists is both 'primordialist' and 'ethnicist'. For the average Kurdish nationalist '[t]he Kurdish nation is a primordial entity, a natural formation rooted in the nature of every Kurd, defining the identity of people and community through history.' (Vali, 2003a, p. 59)

Expanding on this, Vali suggests that 'notions of Kurdish community and identity are both premised on the common national origin and defined in terms of a uniform Kurdish ethnicity.' (2003a, p. 60-61) However, where the KRI is concerned, a close examination of discourses of identity since 1991 necessitates analysis of the dramatic transformations that have taken place, during which the identity of the political community has also transformed. Prior to 2003, Kurdish identity was characterised largely by ethnic traits, in the following years – and particularly since 2009 – this has lessened considerably. Since then, notions such as 'civil rights democracy', 'nationalisation' and 'coexistence' have risen to the forefront of Kurdish nationalism, challenging formerly popular enthno-nationslist terms such as 'Kurdish-ness' ('*Kurdayeti' in Kurdish*) and 'to care for Kurds' ('*Kurdperweri' in*

Kurdish). Whilst this new discourse shares some fundamental components with the previously dominant ethno-nationalist discourses, its differences are also significant and it incorporates elements that inform the transformations which have taken place since 2003. This 'dislocation' of Kurdish identity in the KRI is analysed in greater details in chapter seven, through the lens of political discourse theory.

This analysis resonates with the modernist claim that social and economic developments significantly affect the formation and transformation of collective identities, an argument that finds a degree of acceptance in ethno-symbolism (Smith, 2009, p. 125). For modernists, these changes are animated through concepts such as popular sovereignty, which holds that the state's sovereignty rests with the 'nation' and justifies the 'nationalist' identity of the state through popular participation via democratic means (Yack, 2001, p. 517; Vali, 2003a, p. 68).

The final point to make here is that ethno-symbolism – whist emphasizing the essential role played in nation formation by historical roots – acknowledges the inevitability of change in the way nations form and transform. Especially, the historical transformations occurred under modernity and the way the changes that affected the process of nation-formation are highly

appreciated by ethno-symbolism (Smith, 2009, pp. 114-131).

4.5.5 Definitional remedies

Having previously excluded non-state ethnic groups, Smith's later work – *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (1999) and 'When is a Nation' (2002) turns to engage with them – perhaps compelled by the number of states that emerged from the formerly multi-ethnic Soviet Union and Yugoslavia after 1991. It is apparent that the failure of a number of ethnic groups to establish independent states during the Cold War affected Smith's understanding of nationalist groups within major ethnic communities that had failed to achieve statehood, leading him to equate nations with states. In these later works Smith seeks to correct this, and classifies the emerging Kurdish nationalism of the early to mid-twentieth century under the rubric of 'demotic ethnonationalism', forms that 'emerged from demotic "vertical" *ethnies*, which are forged by intelligentsias into *ethnic nations* through vernacular mobilisation of the masses.' (Smith, 1991, p. 20; Smith, 1999, p. 187) These ethnic nations (representing distinct ethnic communities at the heart of multi-ethnic colonial nation-states) are mobilised following threats of 'extinction by the forces of modernisation and the bureaucratic state that in turn is often at the service of a dominant *ethnie* and its elite.' (Smith, 1991, p. 20; Smith, 1999, p. 187)

Martin Van Bruinessen (2006, pp. 32-35) offers a different approach to mapping Kurdish nation formation. He suggests a lateral ethnie base for the Kurdish nationalism emerging at the beginning of twentieth century (Ibid, p. 32-6).[21] In 'When is a Nation', Smith incorporated some substantial changes into his definition of 'nation', which are partially connected to the debate between Smith and Walker Connor on the nature of nations and nationalism (Guibernau, 2004, p. 127). Smith's modified definition of 'nation' argues that the term refers to 'a named human community possessing a historical territory, shared myths and memories, a common public culture and common laws and customs.' (Smith, 2002, p. 15) Here, Smith comes closer to accepting 'nations without states' as nations by dropping the criteria of citizenship rights and a single economy from his earlier definition. Although the previously discussed changes to the status of the KRI (and Iraqi Kurds as a social and political community more broadly) may admit it into Smith's earlier definition of the nation, this definitional shift affects the applicability of ethno-symbolism to identity formation in the KRI. This is analysed in the following chapter.

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[21] This point is highly problematic in light of ethno-symbolism and so demands careful consideration.

4.6 Conclusion

An exploration of the ethno-symbolist approach of Anthony Smith demonstrates that there are elements in the theory that are of relevance for understanding the underlying dynamics of Kurdish identity formation in the KRI (from 1991 onwards and more broadly), which has generally been understood as a form of ethno-nationalism. The contingency and inconsistency of collective memory is also important to take into account here; as are the indivisible relationships between Kurdish nationalism's political and cultural components. While historically the states with substantial Kurdish populations have engaged with 'the Kurdish question' as an ethnic issue, Kurdish nationalist movements have sought to present the Kurdish case as one of people and land.

As with other approaches to nations and nationalism, Smith's work has its limitations. In his earlier work he implicitly opposes nations and states, a dichotomy that is often untenable. Kurds, for example, fail to meet the criteria he lays down for nationhood in his early work (in addition to groups such as Catalans, Welsh, Palestinians and Tamils), due to their lack of a single economy and citizenship rights. Here, Walker Connor's critique is pertinent: Smith's criteria are overly rigid and technical; and fail to explain the subjective elements of 'nationhood', which do not necessarily represent the actual facts (Connor, 1994, pp. 210-226). Even in his

later work – which attempts to address these criticisms – Smith does not free the concept of the 'nation' from its ties to the 'state', and so remains unnecessarily Eurocentric.

Despite these concerns, ethno-symbolism can contribute to an understanding of the dynamics of Kurdish identity formation in the KRI since 1991. In particular, it is useful in establishing that culture and history have played an essential role; that various actors have participated in the process, including political parties, civil society organizations, artists, and intellectuals; that there has been significant fragmentation of the Kurdish identity, particularly along ideological grounds; and that the process of identity formation has been deeply affected by interactions with the 'other' ethnic and nationalist groups with which Iraqi Kurds interact.

CHAPTER FIVE

5 Cultural analysis

5.1 Introduction

The analysis of existing literature on the KRI (in chapter two), demonstrates that forms of state-formation have been at work in the region since 1991, as evidenced by the political and territorial claims made by Kurdish political parties during this time. As it was mentioned in the historical background, since 1991 the political parties in KRI have been in a constant struggle primarily, vis-à-vis Iraqi central government and also in relation with other neighbouring states, in order to consolidate their political and administrative hold on the Kurdistan Region.

Parallel processes have occurred on the cultural level. As Smith notes, 'state-making requires, among many other things, a secure base in ethnic core from which elites can be drawn.' (Smith, 1996a, p. 458) For him, the idea of the 'nation' and the associated collective identity create the ground upon which social solidarity and popular participation can be built. Therefore he contends that in attempting to create states nationalists will inevitably seek to capitalise on ethnic, cultural and historical factors. For Smith (and

ethno-symbolists more broadly), this process materializes through three major process (discussed in chapter four): the purification of culture, the universalization of chosenness and the territorialisation of memory (1996a, pp. 549-555). To recall briefly, while the first process may entail practices and discourses attempting to show that the nation and people are unique and endowed with their authentic culture and tradition rooted in history, the second process is working to place the nation and people in its historical position among other nations and peoples. The third process in turn, creates and reconstructs links between the people and their shared memories with the historical homeland and territory that-that nation and those people are associated with (1996a, p. 549-555). The term 'ethnoscape' is used to describe this particular intersection of space and memory (1996a, pp. 453-454). In this chapter I consider Kurdish identity formation in the KRI through this lens.

5.1.1 Hypothesis

In order to undertake an ethno-symbolist analysis of culture and identity formation in the KRI, a range of primary and secondary data is utilized. Before engaging with this, however, it is worth revisiting the hypotheses developed in the previous chapter on ethno-symbolism, which posit that:

1. Cultural and historical tools have been essential to the process of Kurdish identity formation in the KRI since 1991.

2. Various actors have participated in the process of Kurdish identity formation, including political parties, civil society organizations, artists, and intellectuals.

3. Whilst Kurdish identity was characterised by ethnicity between 1991 and 2003, the following period has witnessed the emergence of a new trend in identity discourse, which promises to transcend traditional 'ethnic' lines to incorporate newer 'civic' features.

4. Since 1991 the process of Kurdish identity formation has grappled with the Kurdish memory and symbolism. This threatens the consolidation of Kurdish identity.

5. The Kurdish identity in Iraq suffers greatly from fragmentation, particularly on ideological grounds.

6. The process of identity formation has been shaped by interactions with other ethnic and nationalist groups with which Iraqi Kurds interact socially and politically (namely Iraqi Arabs, Turkmen, Turkish and Iranian nationals).

5.2 Signifying Kurdish identity

Following 1991 a Kurdish song known as *Her Kurd Ebin*, ('We Will Remain Kurds') gained popularity. With lyrics by the legendary Kurdish nationalist leader Ibrahim Ahmed (1914-2000) it has

become one of the most widely played Kurdish nationalist songs, and is particularly common during times of high political tension or military confrontation between Iraqi Kurds and other groups or hostile states.[1] Its lyrics depict dominant Kurdish nationalist ideology, incorporating its main cultural-historical, political and social imaginaries:

> Hate filled invaders
> Savages without conscience
> You can't force us not to be Kurds
> We have always been Kurds and always will be
> Kurds
> Before Islam
> Before Fireworshipping
> In imprisonment and in victory
> We have always been Kurds and always will be
> Kurds
> We Are Kurds, and always have been as such
> I am Not an Arab, not an Iranian and not a
> Mountain Turk
> History will sing with me
> That I am a Kurd, a Kurdistani
> I am not asking for anyone's land
> I am not trespassing on anyone's territory
> For the rights of my land and its People
> Until I am Alive...I will fight

---

[1] A new video version of the anthem was produced by Kurdsat TV (which belongs to the PUK). It contains a number of images pertinent to Kurdish national struggle, including still images of historical Kurdish nationalist leaders; and videos of guerrilla fighting, tragic moments of Kurdish suffering and historical events.

> Even if you flatten Mount Qandeel and Mount Agiri
>
> To the ground
>
> You can't force us not to be Kurds
>
> We have always been Kurds and always will be
>
> Kurds (Ahmed, 2006)

A number of features of contemporary Kurdish nationalism are evident here. There are references to the 'other' as enemy; Kurdish ethnic roots; and 'Kurdistan' as a homeland (and ethnoscape). These elements as they influence Kurdish nationalism more broadly are analysed in proceeding sections in line with the methodology of ethno-symbolism.

As noted above, ethno-symbolism and political discourse theory agree that it is ideology (or nationalist ideology) which bears the burden of collective identity formation. Consequently, in order to understand the dynamics of identity formation we need to examine the ways in which political ideologies portray that identity. Ethno-symbolism argues that the key to understanding contemporary nationalism lies in the relationship between historical ethnic tropes and contemporary nationalism (Smith, 1996a, p. 447), and that this can be undertaken through analysing 'the cultural elements of symbol, myth, memory, value, ritual and traditions' (Smith, 2009, p. 25). In so doing, Smith (1991, pp. 65-66) outlines a number of strategies used in nationalist discourse that account for the

formation and construction of the nation or its identity (Ibid, p.65-66). In what follows, these strategies are utilised to analyse data collected. These analyses engage with common history and culture; Kurdish national mythology; educational programmes and the Kurdish flag.

5.2.1 Common history and culture

For ethno-symbolists the process of nation-formation is dependent on the role of nationalists in linking contemporary communities to their pre-modern and modern 'ethno-histories' such that these pasts 'reconstruct the modern nation and locate it in time and space on firm and authentic foundations.' (Smith, 1995, p.18) Thus, nationalism is understood as 'a form of archaeology' and the nationalist as 'a kind of social and political archaeologist' who attempts to link the past to the present in order to provide 'a symbolic and cognitive basis or foundation for that community' (Smith, 1995, p.18). The nationalist-archaeologist, then, '*reconstructs* the modern community by altering its temporal perspective and self-view.' (Smith, 1995, p. 14, emphasis added). Such 'archaeological nationalism' is manifested in the language and discourse of nationalism. In response to the instrumentalist proposition, which over-emphasizes the manipulative power of nationalism, Smith argues that there are limits to reconstruction. The process, he states, is limited by 'particular ethno-histories' that

are 'determined by scientific, popular-political, and cultural-symbolic criteria.' (1995, p. 17).

Dominant Kurdish forms of identity are grounded in real and fictional historical narratives. The form that has been formulating since 1991 is built on pre-modern and modern foundations. As ethno-symbolism proposes, it is informed by discourses of the golden age, glory, sacrifice and tragedy; and accounts of significant religious and nationalist leaders and events. Here, I analyse the role played by some of these discourses in forming Kurdish identity in the KRI.

5.2.2 The Kurdish nationalist mythology

Perhaps the most famous Kurdish myth is that of Kawa the Blacksmith, (as noted above, this is also celebrated as part of Newroz)[2]. Although the day has been widely celebrated in a nationalist manner since the 1930s, since 1991 it has become an essential annual event in the KRI, playing an important role in

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[2] Traditionally, Newroz has been an outdoor celebration. As it falls on the first day of spring, it is marked by communal picnics that see families heading to the countryside and mountains. On the eve of Newroz (i.e. 20th March) people light fires in public (particularly on higher ground). Fire is an essential part of Newroz celebrations, and was banned by the Iraqi government prior to 1991 (it is still not officially allowed in Iran, Turkey and Syria). Wearing traditional Kurdish clothing is also part of the celebrations, and has particularly become a tradition especially among Kurdish women. Food plays a role too, and so Newroz has similarities to the two major Islamic festivals,(Ed al-Fitr and Ed al-Adha), at which special food is prepared and served.

developing Kurdish nationalist narratives on a public level.[3] Since 1991, the 21st March has been recognised as a public holiday in the KRI, spanning three (or more) days.[4]

As discussed in the historical chapter, no plausible historical correlation between the ethnic Kurds and the mythical Kawa has ever been established. The myth seems to have been incorporated into Kurdish nationalist narratives in the early days of the Kurdish political and intellectual movement in early 1920s and 1930s, with its fusing with Newroz a more recent nationalist move. However, both Newroz and Kawa have now become indisputable elements of the Kurdish nationalist narrative and have since then been employed to influence the public (with significant success) and to mobilise the public by the Kurdish nationalist parties during political confrontations.

The myths of Newroz and Kawa have also been widely utilised in Kurdish literature and arts in the KRI since 1991. As well as the

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[3] The Poet Piramerd (1867-1950) is considered the leading figure in combining Newroz with Kurdish nationalism. A lawyer and intellectual from Slemany, he began to convert Newroz into a nationalist tradition in 1932 (Ashna, 2009, pp. 82-84). He is also the writer of the most famous Kurdish poem on Newroz (*Em rojy saly tazeye*), which I discuss below.

[4] In the KRI – as in the rest of Iraq – public holidays are still not fixed in duration. In most cases details are announced just prior to their occurrence: sometimes just a few hours prior to midnight the day before.

popularity of older songs celebrating the former, a number of new works have been written. The Kurdish media – both partisan and independent – has also invested enormously in the dissemination and publicising of the myth. In short, Newroz has become a universally accepted and respected national holiday in the KRI.[5] Its symbolic importance can be identified in various ways. In addition to providing a symbolic link with Kawa, Newroz also conjures up notions of Kurdish freedom and self-determination. The most popular Newroz song is by the legendary Kurdish singer Hassan Zirak and contains lyrics written by the poet Piramerd. A mythical combination of historical description and symbolic representation, it connects Kurds with historic struggles against enemies and fosters remembrance of past sacrifices for Kurdistan:

> The New Year's Day is today. Newroz is back.
>
> An ancient Kurdish festival, with joy and verdure.
>
> For many years, the flower of our hopes was downtrodden
>
> The fresh rose of spring was the blood of the youth
>
> It was that red colour on the high horizon of Kurd
>
> Which was carrying the happy tidings of dawn to remote and near nations
>
> It was Newroz which imbued the hearts with such a

---

[5] Newroz is also officially celebrated in Iran on the 21st March, as it also marks the Iranian New Year. It is celebrated by Kurdish populations in Turkey and Syria but is not officially recognised by either state.

fire

That made the youth receive death with devoted love

Hooray! The sun is shining from the high mountains of homeland

It is the blood of our martyrs which the horizon reflects

It has never happened in the history of any nation

To have the chests of girls as shields against bullets

Nay. It is not worth crying and mourning for the martyrs of homeland

They die not. They live on in the heart of the nation.[6]

Furthermore, it is now traditional for political parties and politicians to issue celebratory messages to the people of Kurdistan on the first day of Newroz. It thus offers a unique opportunity for nationalist narrators to revitalise nationalist spirit and appeal Kurds collectively. The 2012 Newroz message by President Masoud Barzani is a striking example of how the day has become imbued with a profound nationalism:

> 2500 years ago Kurds rose up and rejected dictatorship. Ever since, Kurds have existed in struggle and fight for the sake of their freedom and liberty…this means we are a living people that will not accept subordination and oppression from nobody. We are a people who must live

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[6] Translation by Kamal Mirawdeli (2002).

freely. This is a lesson for us and other people. (Xebat.net, 2012a, author's translation)

This shows how nationalists use Newroz to develop a uniquely Kurdish identity based on culture and history; in particular during times of tension between the KRG and the central Iraqi government, most notably between Barzani and al-Maliki, the Iraqi Prime Minister. (A detailed reading of this speech using political discourse theory is undertaken in chapter seven.)

In recent years the KRG government has invested significantly in Newroz celebrations, turning the day into a fully-fledged national holiday in the KRI, with large concerts held in urban and rural areas where famous Kurdish artists sing nationalist songs to thousands of people who gather and wave the Kurdish flag, Figure 5.1. In addition to casting the popular Kawa the Blacksmith play in public venues during Newroz celebrations, a number of statutes have been placed in public areas depicting Kawa with his touch and hammer. Figure 5.2 shows a statutes of Kawa on a busy street in the KRI city of Slemany.

5.2.3 Educational programs

The relationship between power and education has been widely noted in the social sciences (Apple, 1993 and 2000; Crawford, 2000; Hickman and Porfilio, 2012; Kirmanj, 2014). John Fiske argues that power functions in two key ways to shape discourse:

194

firstly, it constructs reality in a desired way; secondly, it circulates

Figure 5.1: Newroz celebrations on the ancient Delal Bridge, over the River Euphrates in Zakho, near the Turkish border. Photo: KurdekIBenav

Figure 5.2 Statute of Kawa the Blacksmith in the KRI city of Slemany. Source: Kurdipedia.com

this reality 'as widely and smoothly as possible' through education (cited in Apple, 2000, p. 43). In a similar vein, Michael Apple maintains that 'education is deeply implicated in the politics of culture' (1993, p. 222). Ethno-symbolism also notes the role played by public culture and educational systems in disseminating the nationalist image of the nation (or 'imagining' it, to use Benedict Anderson's term). One way it does this is through incorporating nationalist narratives into educational textbooks and practices. Craig Calhoun notes this, stating that '[n]ations are produced mostly by social institutions like schools and media and communication, transportation and infra-structure, by all the things that connect.' (Eliassi, 2014, p. 64).

This can take a number of forms. History can be framed in accordance with nationalist narratives, with a focus on, for example, (supposed) golden ages, ancestral sacrifices, notable achievements and tragedies. This process of narrating the past 'enables subjects to become political actors of particular hue in the present.' (Houston, 2008, p. 5) In addition, a set of symbolic references can be employed within educational settings and other public contexts. School textbooks thus function as a key terrain on which political, cultural, and economic battles are fought (Crawford, 2000, p. 1). The waving of flags and singing of national anthems or nationalist songs in schools and public institutions is also

common. These practices have been utilised by nationalists in the KRI since 1991: the following sections provide analysis of examples.

5.2.4 Flying the Kurdish flag

> My friends, you must know very well
>
> My enemies, you must know very well
>
> As much as I believe in Zoroaster, Avesta and God[7]
>
> I believe in raising the flag a thousand times as
>
> (Abdullah Peshew, 1970; quoted in Muhammed, 2012)

National flags play an important symbolic role in nationalism. For ethno-symbolists, they are distinguished from other national symbols as people are prepared to engage in 'fighting and dying for the flag' (Smith, 2009, p. 102). As with all nationalist discourses, the flag occupies a pivotal place in the Kurdish nationalist discourse. Geisler maintains that this is because the flag 'represents the authority invested in it by or on behalf of, the nation

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[7] Zoroaster refers to the ancient Iranian philosopher and the religious founder of Zoroastrianism, which some Kurdish nationalists consider a purely Kurdish religion (Leezenberg, n.d., p. 26; Meho, 1997, p. 43). Avesta is the holy book of Zoroastrianism. Zoroastrianism still has followers among Kurds in Iran and in the Kurdish diaspora more broadly. Studies also link Zoroastrianism to Yezidism, another religion with followers in Kurdish inhabited areas of Iraq, Turkey, Syria, Armenia and Georgia (Mamkak, n.d., p. 1). There is less debate about Yezidism's association with Kurdishness.

as a collective to people as individuals or subgroups' (2005, p. XXII). For ethno-symbolism, the flag offers both immediate symbolic significance and historical links to the nation's past.

Nationalist narratives locate the origin of Kurdistan's national flag in ancient Medes and the flag is utilised in a variety of ways and places. The official flag of the KRI was approved by the Kurdistan National Assembly in 1998 and is a modification of the 1946 Kurdish Republic of Kurdistan's flag. It is commonly seen across the region and is widely liked: approximately 88% of respondents to the survey undertaken for this study would accept it either as the flag for all Kurds or for the KRI (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 Response to the question about the Kurdish flag

Answer choices	responses	percentage
It is the flag of all Kurds and I accept it as the flag of Kurdistan Region	220	61.62%
It is the flag of Kurdistan Region only and I accept it	95	26.61%
It does not represent all components in the Kurdistan Region and I do not accept	12	3.36%
It is the flag of Kurdistan Region only and I do not accept it	6	1.68%
Other answers	24	6.72%
	357	

This popularity means that the flag has been widely incorporated into Kurdish nationalist discourse. A striking example here is its

representation in *Ey Reqib,* the Kurdish national anthem (which is also the national anthem of KRI), which contains the following lines:

> Let no one say the Kurds are dead,
>
> The Kurds are alive
>
> The Kurds are alive and their flag will never fall.
> (KRG, 2012b)

Whilst the Kurdish flag replaced the Iraqi flag in the KRI immediately after the 1991 uprising, it did not play a particularly visible role in the KRI until the end of the 90s. It was flown by few private individuals or businesses (on homes, vehicles, shops, etc.) and was rarely used by political parties. This was to avoid provoking neighbouring states, which were hostile to Kurdish nationalist symbolism; and resulted from the time required for Kurdish nationalist parties to come to terms with relative stability following years of guerrilla warfare. Furthermore, continued disagreement between Kurdish nationalist parties meant that rather than fostering a unified nationalist culture around the flag there was a 'war of the colours' or *Şerre perro* ('rag fight') (Laizer, 1996, p. 123), with people commonly displaying the flag of their favoured party. This continued into the 2000s.

Since 1991 attempts have been made to incorporate the Kurdish flag into public life in the KRI, increasing its visibility to citizens. It

is flown on public buildings (as well as an increased number of private businesses); and particular attempts have been made to incorporate it into schooling. Textbooks from primary level onwards contain the Kurdish flag (rather than the Iraqi flag); the school week begins with a flag-raising ceremony while pupils chant the *Ey Reqib* anthem; and the flag is drawn in art lessons and incorporated into other subjects, Figure 5.3. Nationalist songs and poems also feature on the curriculum.

Figure 5.3 pupils at a primary school in Kurdistan Region-Iraq
They are holding the Kurdish flag during a lesson. Photo: Kurdiu.org

The current Kurdish national flag is a re-design of a version that dates from 1998 and was legally approved by the Kurdistan parliament in 2002 (Izady, 2008). The flag has been further

institutionalised in parliament by the 2009 designation of 17th of December as 'flag day', on which people are urged to show their respect of and veneration for the Kurdish flag in any way possible. Apart from numerous public exhibition of the Kurdish flag, be it at national days (Newroz, *Raperin* 'uprising', *Halabaja* and *Anfal* remembrance and so on), or at public rallies, concerts, sport events, national and international cultural events and festivals, the Kurdish flag has been inscribed onto many other public and private domains.

Use of the flag is not confined to the public sphere; nor to flying or waving it. As Geisler notes, incorporating the colours of a flag into public and private life is a nationalist tactic (2005, p. xxix), and this has been commonplace in the KRI for a number of years. Figure 5.4 shows a *kilaw* (a traditional Kurdish hat) knitted in the colours of the Kurdish flag, Figure 5.4 shows how a furniture company incorporates the colours of the flag into its identity and Figure 5.5 shows a stamp used to promote Erbil's status as Arab Tourism Capital 2014.[8]

Although there is no official explanation for the use of red, green, yellow and white in the flag, most Kurds in the KRI are aware of

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[8] This status was highly controversial, with many arguing that Erbil is a Kurdish, rather than Arabic, city.

these colours' connotations; and an article on the government affiliated website 'Sheqlawe Educational Directorate'[9] outlines their importance in a highly nationalistic manner:

Figure 5.4 A traditional Kurdish *kilaw* (hat) in the colours of the Kurdish flag. Photo by author

> Red, is a revolutionary sign of the blood of martyrs of our people for the sake of our rights; white, is a sign of peace and security, as the Kurdish people have always been peaceful; green, has come from the nature of Kurdistan and is a sign of revival; yellow, the twenty one stripe sun is a sign of the future of Kurdish people. Yellow colour was a sacred colour in the ancient Kurdish religions and the number twenty one was one of the sacred numbers among Zoroastrian Kurds' (Sheqlawe Educational Directorate, n.d.), (author's translation).

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[9] *Sheqlawe* is popular resort town in the Erbil Governorate of the KRI.

Figure 5.5 A furniture store advert using the colours of the Kurdish flag

Source: Awene.com

Figure 5.6 A postage stamp promoting Erbil's status as the 2014 Arab tourism capital. Source: Mohammed, 2013

The use of these colours throughout the KRI, then, shows the

popularity of Kurdish nationalism both publicly and privately.

5.3 Contested and fragmented identity

Nation states are produced by and reproduce 'official knowledge' (Apple, 1993; 2000) – widely prevalent and accepted understandings that do not reflect all components of their society. The process of constructing this is 'always part of a *selective tradition*' by particular group or groups of people (Apple, 1993, p. 222 italics by author); and constitutes what political discourse theorists refer to as 'hegemonisation' or 'universalisation'. It ensures that only particular forms of knowledge are understood as 'real' and 'right' knowledge and are disseminated throughout society in a number of forms, including education (Crawford, 2000, p. 2). Whilst the KRI is not a nation-state as such, this process can be observed in the region.

The historical overview provided above articulates the political and ideological divisions in the KRI. In the absence of a centralised state apparatus, the process of identity formation would naturally be expected to reflect existing societal and political divisions. Ethno-symbolism shares the modernist view on the role of state institutions in the process of nationalist discourse hegemonisation. Despite the fact that the KRG unification process was apparently completed in 2012, signs of the dual-administration model remain,

meaning that identity formation is penetrated by party divisions and reflects their competing historiographies, divisions which penetrate deeply into society. Describing such a situation, Smith states:

> Where such memories, myths, symbols, and traditions are either lacking or negative—conflictual, ambiguous, and disintegrative—the attempt to create new communities and cultural identities is likely to prove painfully slow and arduous, especially where the new identities lack clear boundaries and must compete with well-established and deep-rooted identities and communities. (Smith, 1999, p. 19)

Although the task in the KRI is not to create a community anew – but rather the transformation of an existing cultural community into a political community that can expand its autonomy – Smith's analysis is still relevant given the difficulties in establishing identity as a result of competing interpretations of history from different social and political groups. Although this is exacerbated by the ability of other national communities in Iraq and beyond such as Iraqi Arabs and other national communities in neighbouring states to coalesce around a solid identity (in large part thanks to the state apparatuses they have access to), applying Smith's approach would likely lead to an exaggeration of this factor due to its bias towards external influences. Three internal dimensions are particularly pertinent when analysing the fragmentation of Kurdish identity since 1991: the ideological, the political and the regional. I will now deal with each of these in turn.

The ideological dimension of the Kurdish identity fragmentation stems from the division of Kurdish political parties along ideological lines, as illustrated in Table 5.1. These divisions can be expected to produce competing historiographies that have a bearing on the symbolic domain of nationalism in the KRI, and this is illustrated by Figure 5.7 which, shows the polarised society in the KRI (this is discussed further in chapter seven, below). Whilst the previously discussed division between the KDP and the PUK is relevant here, a further ideological division is relevant here with the Islamic parties (the KIU and the KIG) promoting an explicitly Islamic historiography in contrast to existing nationalist accounts.

Islamic Kurdish nationalisms have their own definitions of Kurdishness, which do not draw on pre-Islamic Kurdish histories (this is further analysed in chapter seven, below). Tensions with secular nationalisms have thus emerged, and in part play out on the symbolic level, with *Ey Reqib* subjected to critique. Kurdish Islamic groups have long refused to fully accept the anthem as a result of the line 'our religious faith is the homeland', a concept they consider *kufir* ('heretical').

Table 5.2 List of political parties in the Kurdistan Parliament.

Political party	Founding ideology	MPS /111
Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)	Nationalist	38
Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)	Nationalist (social democratic)	18
The Change Movement (Gorran)	Centrist, liberal, reformist	24
Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU)	Islamic	10
Kurdistan Islamic Group (KIG)	Islamic	6
Islamic Movement in Kurdistan (IMK)	Islamic	1
Kurdistan Communist Party (KCP)	Left nationalist	1
Kurdistan Democratic Solution Party (KDSP)	Pan-Kurdish nationalist	0
Kurdistan Workers Communist Party (KWCP)	Communist	0

Figure 5.7 Flags of political parties are sold on streets of the Kurdistan Region. Photo: Jenna Krajeski

In interview, Ali Bapir, *emir* (leader) of KIG recounted discussing

the anthem with a nationalist opponent. Articulating his rejection of the anthem, he stated 'It says "our religion is our homeland." I said "the land cannot make religion, the land is prayed on. We have to save the land to practice religion on, we cannot make religion out of it."' (AB1) One KIG MP has rejected the anthem outright, stating a TV interview that 'the *Ey Reqib* anthem is heresy'. (Rudaw, 2013). He can be seen in Figure 5.8, refusing to stand for the anthem in the Kurdish parliament (which is against the law).

Islamic hostility to *Ey Reqib* can be found in society more broadly. While around 75% of survey respondents stated that they would accept it as the anthem for all Kurds or for the KRI region, just over 9% of respondents would reject it on the basis of its anti-religious nature (see Table 5.3). Such hostility is met, however, with public support for the anthem. This can be seen in Figure 5.9, which depicts a publicly displayed slogan from supporters of *Ey Reqib*.

The political division in Kurdish identity in the KRI stems from the differing regional, national and international alignments of political parties. Many of these have changed since 1991, meaning that former political allies are now enemies and vice versa. The need for these alignments stems from the relative power that other regional actors held over Kurds, which, as Andreas Wimmer (2002) has noted, means that Kurds were frequently 'objects' rather than

'subjects' of history.

Figure 5.8 The playing of *Ey Reqib* at the Kurdish parliament, for which MPs should stand by law.A member of the KIG is refusing to stand. Source: xeber24.net

Figure 5.9 A publicly displayed banner stating 'so long as there is an enemy, the Ey Reqib will remain'.**Source**: Kurdipedia.com

Table 5.3 Response to the question about the Ey Reqib anthem

Answer choice	responses	percentage
It's the anthem for all Kurds and I accept it	180	50.42%
It is the national anthem of Kurdistan Region and I accept it	88	24.64%
It is the Kurdish nationalist anthem but I do not accept it as it contains anti-religious expressions	34	9.52%
It is the Kurdish nationalist anthem but I do not accept it as it lacks reference to other components in the Kurdistan Region	33	9.24%
Other responses	22	6.16%
	357	

Since 2003, however, Kurds have begun to shape history more actively (Stansfield, 2013). As it should be noted throughout the discussions in this study, post-2003 KRI can be regarded as the golden age for consolidating pillars of Kurdish identity. The implication of the ideological and political dimensions on the identity formation in KRI has been discussed in more details in chapter seven.

A division between the regions of Soran and Bahdinan has also left its mark on Kurdish identity. This has historical roots but has been reinforced since 1991 by the political divisions between the KDP and PUK; and manifests itself most clearly in the problematic issue of unified official language. The Sorani dialect (sometimes known as 'Middle Kirmanji') is the current *de facto* official language in the KRI in both government and educational programs in Erbil,

Slemany and Germyan; whilst Bahdini (sometimes called 'Northern Kirmanji') is used for teaching and official communications in areas of Duhok province and the KRG run areas of Mosul. The debate is divided on two or three orientations, on the one side there is supporters of *Sorani* dialect for the formal language, on the other, the imposition of Sorani is rejected, instead either Badini is preferred or an alternative way is suggested where in each area the dialect of the majority to become the official language. Another parallel orientation can be found which backs a dual-standardised language of both *Sorani* and *Bahdini*[10]. This has been a key area of debate in the KRI since 1991 (Ghazi, 2009) and is an extremely sensitive issue.[11]

In the survey conducted for this research, just over 46% of respondents stated they would prefer Sorani to be adopted as the official Kurdish dialect in the KRI, with 11% preferring Badini. 40% of respondents said they would prefer each dialect to be officially adopted in their respective regions (Table 5.4). In an attempt to resolve this issue, a number of academic and intellectual conferences were held after 2003 to discuss the issue. However,

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[10] The suggested language name in this choice sometimes called 'Sormanji' which is a combination of Sorani and Kirman/Badini.

[11] A proposed law 'for a formal language in the Kurdistan Region-Iraq' was presented to the Kurdistan Parliament in May 2014. It has not yet been discussed by parliament.

no substantial proposals to overcome the difficulties have been formulated. I consider the issue further through the lens of PDT in chapter seven. This is useful, as PDT understands identity as an inherently contested concept.

Table 5.4 Response to the question on preferred Kurdish dialect for the official language in the KRI

Answer choice	responses	percentage
Kurdish Sorani/Middle Kirmanji	167	46.91%
Kurdish Bahdini/Northern Kirmanji	40	11.23%
The dominant dialect in each area made the official language for that area	107	30.05%
Other answers	42	11.79%
	356	

5.4 Ethnic or civic identity?

In chapter four I analysed the difference between ethnic and civic nationalism and argued that there has been a shift towards civic nationalism in the KRI (as defined by Smith, 1999, p, 190-196). This can most clearly be seen in discourse, but is not yet so clearly manifested in practice. The KRI's draft constitution, which was approved in June 2009, portrays a multicultural region, stating that '[t]he people of the Kurdistan Region are composed of Kurds, Arabs, Chaldean-Assyrian-Syriacs, Armenians and others who are

citizens of Kurdistan.' (Kurdistan Parliament, 2009, p. 3). There is a quota of eleven parliamentary seats for Chaldean-Assyrian and Turkmen groups in addition to Armenians, which can be understood as an attempt to portray the civic character of the KRI. Other attempts have been made to demonstrate the multi-ethnic character of the KRI. Figure 5.10 shows the two guards stationed at the main gate of the Kurdistan Parliament, with one dressed in traditional Kurdish uniform and the other in traditional Assyrian uniform.

Figure 5.10 Guards at the main gate of the Kurdistan parliament in Erbil. The guard on the right is in traditional Kurdish dress and the guard on the left is in traditional Assyrian dress. Photo: twitter.com/freekurdistan

Despite these political and symbolic attempts to portray a

multicultural region – which are significantly greater than in neighbouring states – the dominance of Kurdish identity at the political, administrative and symbolic levels should not be discounted; and there are limits to the representation of minority identities in the KRI. This is partly due to the ambivalent nature of the KRI in the first place, as a post-conflict region and a nascent democracy.

The identity of the political community of the KRI is largely symbolised through characters understood as ethnic Kurds, and who are deeply engrained in Kurdish nationalist ideology. Elements of Kurdish culture and history are utilised to develop nationalism, which then expands to encompass the collective identity of the KRI as a geopolitical entity. This is manifested in the symbolic foundations of the KRI: its flag, anthem, semi-official language, public culture and educational system have been built around Kurdish ethnic tropes, myths and symbols.

A number of academic and intellectual debates have engaged with this issue since 2003. It is observed that the *Ey Reqib* anthem has been among the most debated subjects in this regard (Alsumaria, 2013). Although, this was not officially adopted as the anthem of the KRI until 2006, it was chanted at every official opening of parliament prior to this. Attempts to regulate the anthem were

initiated in 2006 and finalised in 2011 with a parliamentary law (Kurdi, 2006; Kurdistan Parliament, 2011).

Islamic criticism of the anthem has been noted, and it has also proven controversial with non-Kurdish inhabitants of the KRI as a result of the line *'Oh foe, the Kurdish speaking people is still alive'*. Both Ali Bapir an (of the KIG) and Abu-Bakr Ali (of the KIU) criticized the anthem on these grounds as well. Just over 9% of survey respondents reject the anthem for its lack of reference to other ethnic and national components in the KRI (see Table 5.3). This has repeatedly been raised at parliament, with the Islamic parliamentary faction proposing new lyrics to replace *Ey Reqib*, which have been strongly resisted by other parliamentary factions.

Education has also been used to promote Kurdish identity (in addition to the incorporation of the flag, as discussed above). This began as early as 1992 but intensified post-2003 to include school textbooks from primary school up to university level (Kirmanj, 2014). Figure 5.11 shows a poem titled 'Kurdistan' printed in a class three primary school (which targets 8-9 year old children) book from 2012. It reads:

> This beautiful Kurdistan
>
> Is our blood, heart and eyes
>
> I love it with all my heart

And will safeguard it like a rose (carefully)

I am the soldier of land and people

The vigilant and active child

I will safeguard Kurdistan

With all my force and ability

To safeguard the homeland

I will turn my chest into a shield

(General Directorate of Curriculum and Publications,
2012, translation by author)
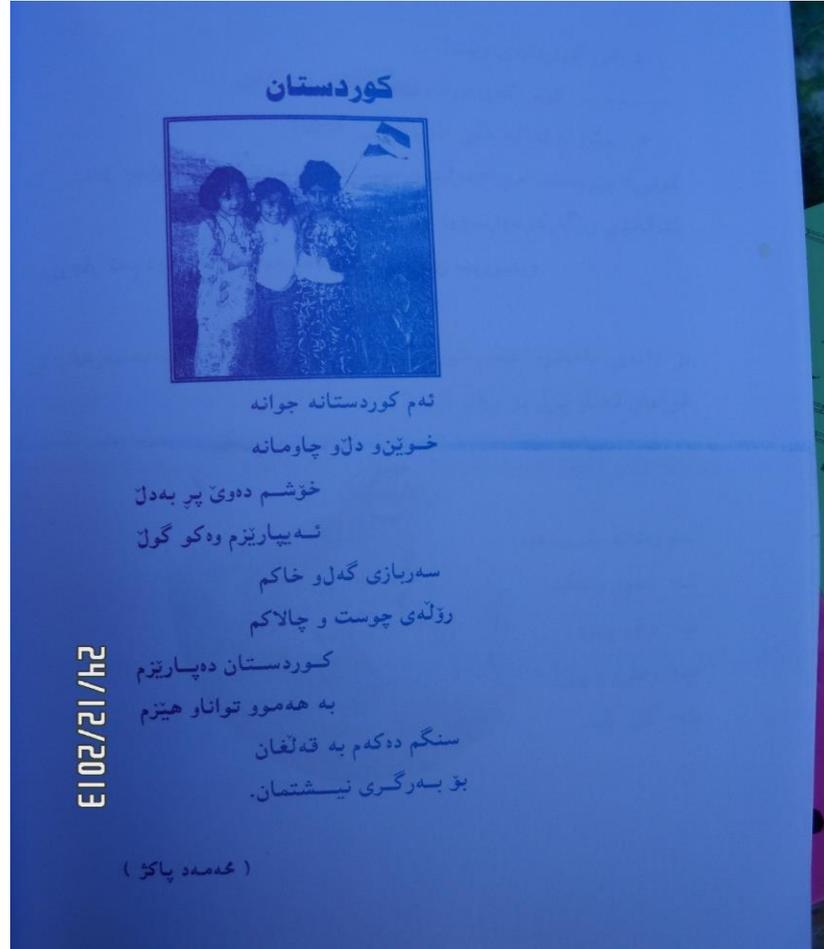
Figure 5.11 'Kurdistan', a poem included in a textbook titled *Kurdish Reading*, aimed at 8-9 year old students.

The name Kurdistan referred only to a geographical area in school books published during Ba'athist rule, but here it is portrayed to as a homeland, a country and as a place to be revered and defended with blood. Figure 5.12 demonstrates the shifting use and centrality of 'Kurdistan' in education. It shows a recently published class twelve history textbook entitled *Modern and Contemporary History*, with a map of greater Kurdistan on its cover. The book details the modern history of Kurds in the Middle East and replaced *The History of the Arab Homeland*, published during Ba'athist rule.

Figure 5.12 The cover of *Modern and Contemporary History* (2012), a history textbook for 17-18 year olds.

5.5 Memories, heroism and victimhood

Ethno-symbolists consider identity 'a necessary element of the very concept of a nation' (Smith, 1994, p. 2), with 'memory' playing a key role in forming this identity: Smith notes that 'there can be no identity without memory (albeit selective), no collective purpose without myth.' (1994, p.2) This is perhaps the central proposition in ethno-symbolism, which shows that the past – with its myths, glories and failures – is fundamental in processes of identity formation in the present.

The bracketed 'albeit selective' reveals Smith's partial agreement with social constructionist approaches regarding the manipulative potential of nationalist ideology. However, it also needs to be noted that not all memories are relevant to or conducive for nationalist narratives. Thus, while some memories are re-presented to produce nationalist identity, others are ignored or forgotten (Renan, 1996).

An example of the pivotal role played by memory in identity construction can be drawn from the post-2003 Iraq. Whilst most Kurds are Sunni Muslims, the Kurdish struggle against the Sunni-dominated Ba'athist regime prior to 2003 meant that Kurds aligned themselves with Arab Shi'ites rather than Sunnis. To a degree, this has continued since 2003, exacerbated by Sunni Arab nationalism

re-presenting Ba'athist rule as a 'golden age' for Iraq. It has, however, been weakened by the Shi'ite rule of Iraq; and has come close to sectarian fighting between forces belonging to the two camps, including – at times – the Peshmerga and the Iraqi military.[12]

National memory is strongly tied to past glories and sufferings. While past glories create heroes and heroines for contemporary generations, national suffering is memorialised to boost the moral standing of those people who currently constitute the nation. As Smith notes, every nationalism 'requires a touchstone of virtue and heroism, to guide and give meaning to the tasks of regeneration' (Smith, 1999, p. 65).

Interestingly, Smith seems to have no issue with the modernist view on the role of mass education in modern nationalism and national identity formation. For him, this is a processes adopted by modern nation-states in order to strengthen pre-existing collective sentiment. Running parallel to this, he notes, is 'the inculcation of a spirit of self-sacrifice' (1999, pp: 153-154). Much of this work occurs through education: primarily through the subjects of literature, history and geography (1999, pp. 153-154).

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[12] The Kurdish/Shi'ite tension is discussed in greater detail in chapter three.

Both of these trends can be identified in the KRI to varying degrees at numerous times in the KRI since 1991. The Kurdish scholar Sherko Kirmanj (2014) has undertaken a valuable research assessing official efforts to construct Kurdish nationalism through education between 1991 and 2014. He examines history and social studies textbooks published by the KRG government since 1991, with a particular focus on those published since 2005, and demonstrates their Kurdish nationalist orientation. Thus, despite the deep-rooted political divisions in the KRI since 1991, a semi-unified politics of national identity-formation has occurred through education.

As Smith's theory predicts, it is history, geography and literature that have been primarily utilised to construct identity in the KRI. In the preceding section, examples from history and literature were shown. Here, I draw on examples from geography, further informed by Kirmanj's claim that 'geography is utilized as a tool to provide visibility to their [Kurds] homeland and demonstrate the boundaries of Kurdistan through cartography.' (Kirmanj, 2014, p. 274) This can be seen in Figure 5.12, which shows the front cover of a history textbook for class twelve, in which a Kurdish nationalist map of greater Kurdistan is drown. Figure 5.13 shows a map of the KRI in the geography section of a social studies textbook for class

nine foundation year (targeting 14-15 year olds).
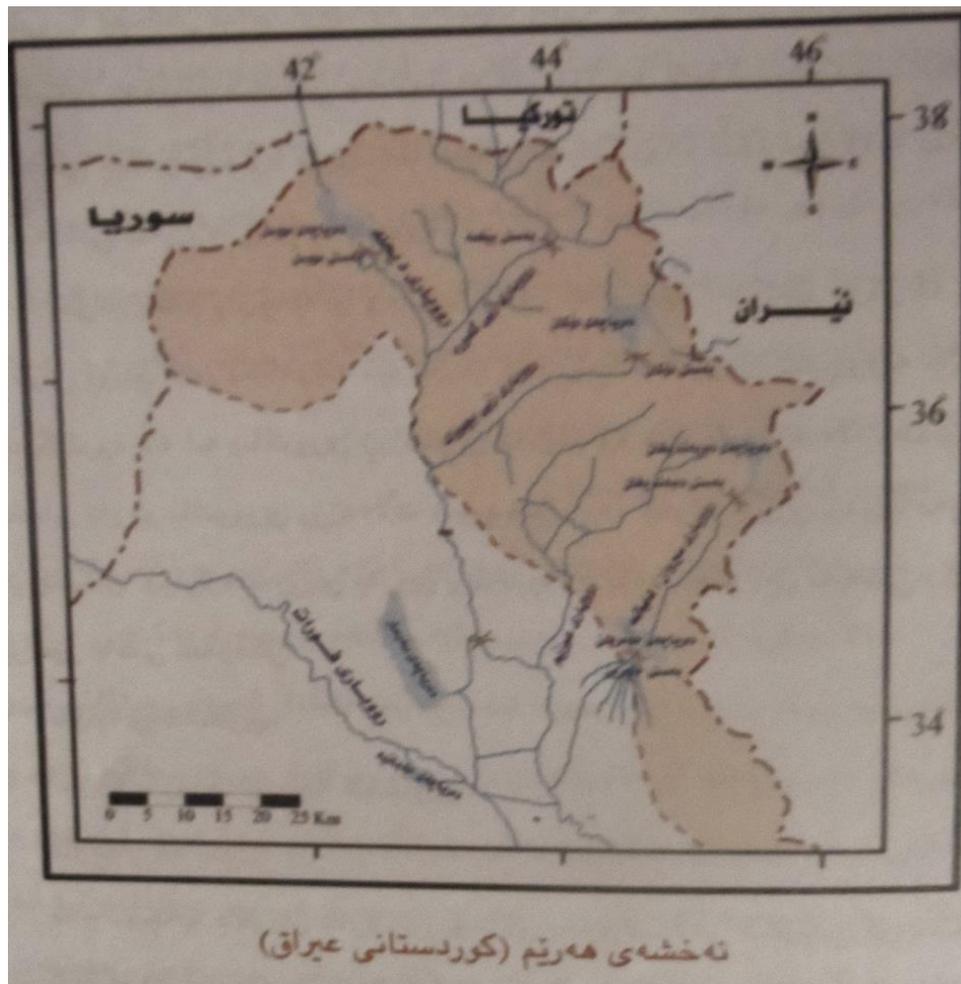
Figure 5.13 Map of the KRI in a social studies school textbook, for 14-15 year olds.

Memorisation of the nation's past glories and sufferings is not confined to the educational system. It also takes the form of statutes of national heroes and heroines (including artists and literary figures); historical leaders (and their tombs); memorial places; the tomb of the unknown soldier; and places preserved as a result of their historical importance (battlefields, for example). Figure 5.14 shows the statute of Sheikh Mehmud Hafid (the self-declared King of Slemany, 1920-1924), in the middle of a busy

221

street in Erbil; whilst Figure 5.15 shows the statute of Mir Mohammed in Rawanduz near Erbil. Born in the town, he was known as 'the blind king' and reigned the Kurdish Soran Emirate between 1825 and 1986 (McDowall, 2007, pp. 42-45).

Figure 5.14 Statute of Sheikh Mehmud Hafid (Self-declared King of Kurdistan) in Erbil. Photo: author

A number of tombs of classic and modern Kurdish poets and artists can also be found in the KRI, among the most well-known of which is the tomb of the poet Dildar (1918-1948), the author of the words of *Ey Reqib* (figure 5.16)*.*

Figure 5.15 Statute of Mir Mohammed of Rawanduzi.

 Photo: author

Shortly after the March 1991 uprising a wave of symbolic nationalism began in the KRI. Large portraits and statutes of martyrs (*Shahid* in Kurdish) were displayed in public spaces, streets and public buildings. Figure 5.17 shows

Figure 5.16 Tomb of the well-known Kurdish poet *Dildar* (1918-1948) In Koye, near Erbil. Photo: Rebin Photography

a front page of the Erbil local paper *Hewler* from January 1993, in which a prominent article announces a possible statue of 'Kurdistan martyrs'. Construction of this was, however, halted by political divisions between the PDK and PUK, with each party favouring particular heroes and historical symbols. The statue has still not been constructed.

Two further examples demonstrate the extent of symbolic disagreement between the DKP and the PUK. The latter tends to

Figure 5.17 A front page of the Erbil paper *Hewler*, 1993. The main headline reads 'Millions of Bunches of Flowers and the Capital of the Kurdistan Region are Waiting for the Statue of the Kurdistan Martyrs', 31st January 1993.

pay more tribute to Ibrahim Ahmed: they organised the construction of his tomb in Slemany and named an area after him;

whilst the KDP venerates Mustafa Barzani: there is a large portrait of him hanging in the Kurdistan parliament and a number of urban areas, stadia and streets carry his name. These divisions were further intensified after the famous events of 31st August 1996, and penetrated into all areas of administration and public sphere from street naming to naming of public buildings and venues through of urban areas and sporting spaces. However, following KRG government unification in 2003 an attempt was made to nationalise these symbolic acts. Indeed, since 2009 one of the Change Movement's main slogans related to expanding events of symbolic importance to the whole nation.

The symbolisation of collective memory is, however, far more unified – and is perhaps the most universal element of Kurdish nationalism. Whilst political parties celebrate separate figures, people in the KRI are united by the abundant tragedies that have befallen them, across the present-day KRI. Thus, there is an abundance of memorials, monuments, tombs and statues of martyrs distributed across the country. Among the most well-known of these are the monument to the Halabja martyrs in the city of Halabja, which memorialises the March 16th 1988 chemical attack on the town Figure 5.18; and the monument in Chamchamal near Kirkuk, which memorises the mass killing of Iraqi Kurds between 1987 and 1988, Figure 5.19.

Figure 5.18 Halabja memorial in Halabja. It depicts the father Omeri Xawer who died holding his baby as the result of the chemical attack in March 1988. Source: Kurdistani Niwe

Figure 5.19 The monument of *Anfal* in Chamchamal, **Germyan,** near Kirkuk. Photo: Genocide Kurd (2014)

5.6 Conclusions

In this chapter processes of Kurdish identity formation have been explored through the lens of ethno-symbolism in order to reveal their inner dynamics. It has demonstrated that the nationalism of Kurdish intellectuals and government institutions has played a key role in the process of identity formation. They utilise Kurdish ethnic culture and history as a foundation from which to form identity. Despite the unstable and deeply divided nature of this process, it has managed to capitalise on Kurdish ethnic and historical roots, including myths of origin, tales of past glories and tragic events in Kurdish history. These cultural and historical repertoires are re-appropriated and presented according the needs of contemporary nationalist discourse.

This process has been helped by the political space opened by the KRI becoming a self-governing quasi-state. Despite its instability, government institutions have been widely involved in the process of identity formation through their attempts to create a public culture peculiar to the KRI. These attempts are especially evident in the educational and cultural domains. The incorporation of Kurdish nationalist historiography into the education system has been discussed along with attempts to introduce it public and private spheres.

The process has not been without problems, however, and the main engineers of collective national identity in KRI (the Kurdish nationalist parties and large public institutions) have also been obstacles to the transformation of Kurdish identity in the region as a result of the unstable nature of politics in the KRI since 1991. This has resulted in an ambiguous and fragmented identity.

The final point to note is that from 1991 to 2003 the identity of the KRI could be defined as largely ethno-nationalist, but since 2003 it has shifted towards nationalism; and, since 2009, towards civic-nationalism. This latest stage is a response to the newly emerged political, social and economic conditions and continues at the time of writing.

CHAPTER SIX

6 Political Discourse Theory

6.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the second theoretical approach used to study Kurdish identity formation in the KRI: political discourse theory (PDT), mainly associated with the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985).[1] It is devoted to a detailed discussion of the theoretical foundations of PDT and ends with a preliminary application of the approach to the issue of identity formation in the KRI in question at the end of the chapter. A comprehensive analysis using PDT follows in the proceeding chapter.

As its name makes clear, PDT focuses on political discourse, although this is not limited to language. Nonetheless, language is considered important and is held to provide the only access to social reality (Jorgensen & Philips, 2002, p. 8), and an important feature in determining individual and group identity (Omoniyi,

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[1] At least three different terms have been used to describe the approach: 'discourse theory' (Torfing 1999; Jorgensen and Philips 2002; Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000), 'the Essex School of discourse analysis' (Townshend, 2003) and 'political discourse theory' (Glynose et al, 2009). As the most recent, I use the latter.

2011, p. 260). The relationship between language and discourse is neatly demonstrated by Michael Billig in his well-known book *Banal Nationalism*:

> An identity is to be found in the embodiment habits of social life. Such habits include those of thinking and using language. To have a national identity is to possess ways of talking about nationhood. [Therefore it has been concluded that] the study of identity should involve the detailed study of discourse. (Billig, 1995, p. 8)

PDT extends beyond this focus on the linguistic, however: discourse is not limited to language even in its broader terms (i.e. spoken, written, visual), but is understood to include action, cognition and even institutions, a point elaborated upon below.

There are five reasons for utilising PDT in this study, and it is important to consider each of these. Firstly, Kurdish identity formation across Kurdistan is produced through an array of social and political relationships involving other ethnic and national groups (including Arabs, Persians, Turks, Turkmen and Chaldean-Assyrians). It has long proven to be one of the most complicated social and political issues in the Middle East. Most existing research on the issue is premised on essentialist understandings of identity that utilise a positivist ontology. They also take the underlying political institutions and norms for granted, with no interrogation of concepts such as 'the nation-state', 'the nation', 'ethnic identity' and 'national identity'; nor of the contexts in which they are

deployed.

Accordingly, these studies adopt problem-solving approaches to Kurdish identity; and fail to produce substantive questions that explore the dynamics upon which the very notion of identity operates.[2] Moreover, they frequently mistake political rhetoric with reality, understanding – for example – the rhetoric of Kurdish nationalists as the only medium through which to study the Kurdish politics[3].

A small number of studies have employed a robustly critical approach to exploring competing political discourses both within and outside Kurdish society.[4] In brief, the problem-driven and critical approach of PDT speaks to the nature of the problem in question (i.e. the Kurdish identity construction).

Secondly, political identity manifests itself primarily in the language

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[2] See Entessar's *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, for example (1992).

[3] Brendan O'Leary, for example, spends the entire five pages of his introduction to Kirmanj's *Identity and Nation in Iraq* appraising deceased KDP politicians. He makes no effort to assess their rhetoric against historical facts, nor to the reality he experienced as an advisor to key Kurdish leaders in the KRI after 2003.

[4] In this regard, Jaffer Sheyholislami's book Kurdish Identity discourse and new media (2011), and Karen Culcasi's article 'cartographically constructing Kurdistan within geopolitical and orientalist discourses (2006), stand out. Especially, both these studies use discourse analysis as their method of study.

and practices of political actors. What justifies the selection of PDT here is the central role it gives to politics in its analysis of social and political phenomena: it stresses 'the primacy of politics' (Glynose, et al., August 2009, p. 5; Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 13); and identity plays a fundamental role in this (Laclau, 1994, p. 3). PDT also stresses that context is essential when addressing political discourse.

Thirdly, PDT's rejection of essentialism allows a move beyond the primordialist approaches discussed in chapter four. PDT argues that individual and collective identities are not pre-given, but 'are the result of contingent, discursive processes and, as such, are part of the discursive struggle.' (Jorgensen & Philips, 2002, p. 34)

The fourth benefit of PDT is that it stresses the importance of hegemonic practice in processes of identity formation (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 5). 'Hegemony' in this context refers to a particular social and political actor's ability to impose a certain form of identity by presenting it as universal and objective. As it is empirically substantiated below, hegemonic practices in discourses of identity formation are common in the KRI. Indeed, it can be argued that the recent history of Kurdish nationalism has been produced through a struggle for hegemony over 'Kurdishness' between conflicting nationalist forces.

Finally, PDT acknowledges that the relationships integral to identity formation are primarily antagonistic, in that two or more forms of identity negate each other by asserting their own version of identity while denying others (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 14). This antagonistic character is clearly present in the KRI, where it operates on two levels: Kurds resisting Arabic nationalism on the Iraqi national level; and intra-Kurdish struggles over Kurdish identity.

These five justifications outline the primary theoretical foundations of PDT (Howarth, 2005, p. 17) while, at the meantime, they represent the research objectives set out for PDT as a research programme (Howarth, 2005, p. 321). They demonstrate its suitability for researching the political aspects of identity formation in the KRI, with five essential elements: contingency, the primacy of politics, the relational character of identity, hegemony and antagonism, which constitute the theoretical working tools deployed in this chapter. In what follows I outline the ontological and methodological foundations of these four elements. Drawing from some elementary data, I later examine identity formation in the KRI using this theoretical framework.

6.2 Political Discourse Theory

Political discourse theory mainly built upon the ground-breaking work *Hegemony and socialist strategy*, (1985) co-written by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. The resultant theoretical framework of the book, which 'comprises a fusion of recent developments in Marxism, post-structuralism, post-analytical and psychoanalytical theory' (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 1), has been described by David Howarth, a leading discourse theorist, (2000, p. 317) not merely as 'an empirical theory' rather as 'a research programme or paradigm'. For Howarth, Political discourse theory possesses 'a system of ontological assumptions, theoretical concepts and methodological precepts (2000, p. 137). Therefore, the first task of this chapter should be to become familiar with the ontological, theoretical and methodological contours of PDT.

The crux of political discourse theory, Howarth states, 'centres on the idea that all objects and practices are meaningful and that social meanings are contextual, relational and contingent' (2000, p. 137). Therefore, to put this in context, *contingency*, *historicity*, *relationalty* and power with politics are the four main components of social relations according to PDT (Laclau, 1990, p. 31-6 cited in Howarth, 2004, p. 317). While *contingency* stands against deterministic views to social reality characteristic of major grand theories in social and political sciences(historical materialism as an

example), *historicity* rejects the essentialist approach to social and political relations and identities instead asserting that social relations and identities are products of historical creation rather than having perennial qualities. Furthermore, social relations and identities are subject to limits of existing forms of power relations and all have an essential political character which dictates the way social reality is constructed. In the coming sections I will try to elaborate on these components more along other key elements of PDT. These fundamental features of social reality also represent the research objectives PDT, as a research programme, promises to address. David Howarth, reformulates some of these objectives as follows:

> The constitution of political identities; the practice of hegemonic articulation among particular discourses and subjectivities; the construction of social antagonisms and the establishment of political frontiers; the ways subjects 'gripped' by certain discourses and not others; and the social fantasies which sustain such identifications... (2004:321)

6.3 Social constructionism

The question which may timely arise at this very moment it is: where we can locate PDT in the wider social science enterprise? Political discourse theory considered one among a range of discourse analytical approaches which all share the 'concern of meaning and the centrality attributed to subjects in the

construction and apprehension of meaning' (Glynose, et al., August 2009, p. 6; Jorgensen & Philips, 2002, p. 4). According to this claim, they all come under an umbrella approach called 'social constructionist theories of culture and society'.[5] In order to enter the field of PDT then, we need to provide some elaborations on what constitutes social constructionism.

In a very powerful statement, Kenneth Gergen, one of the most well-known advocates of social constructionism draws a portrait of the approach helping to reveal its ontological and epistemological foundations. He states:

> …constructionist enquiry has demonstrated how claims to true and the good are born of historical traditions, fortified by social networks, sewn together by literary tropes, legitimated through rhetorical devices and operate in the service of particular ideologies to fashion structures of power and privilege. For the sophisticated constructionist, there are not invulnerable or unassailable positions, not foundational warrants, no transcendent rationalities or obdurate facts in themselves. (Gergen, 2011, p. 170)

In their effort to outline the main tenets of social constructionism, of which all laid down in the statement above, four main premises have been outlined by Jorgenson and Philips (1995, p. 2-5, cited in Jorgenson and Philips, 2002, p. 5-6), and Vivien Burr (2003) based

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[5] In their review paper, Glynos et al. (2009) identify and outline the contours of six approaches to discourse study: political discourse theory, rhetorical political analysis, discourse historical analysis, interpretive policy analysis, discourse psychology and the Q methodology.

on Kenneth Gergen's (1985, p. 266-275) seminal work *The social constructionist movement in modern psychology* as the ontological underpinnings of social constructionism in general. They are listed as follows:

First: A critical approach to taken-for-granted knowledge. Implying that the knowledge we gain is not objective, as those on the positivist and empiricist front maintain, but it is a 'product[s] of our ways of categorising the world…products of discourse' (Burr 1995, p. 3; Gergen, 1986, p. 266-7 cited in Burr, 2003, p. 2 and Jorgensen and Philips, 2002, p. 5). According to this disposition, many taken-for-granted believes, categories and concepts are not too obvious and unproblematic as they may seem. They become so because people have come into terms with them and internalised them. Burr (2003, p. 3), brings an example from classifications of music to 'classic', 'pop' and other forms. He argues that the conventional division of music today does not mean that music itself is necessarily divided in this way. In fact, it is through a historical and social process of classification and categorisation that music has come to be divided in this way. It can be added to this point that this kind of music classification is not universal either. For example, the division either does not exist at all, as in Kurdish music, or when it does exist it is culturally specific. However, this epistemological premise of PDT has made it vulnerable to fierce criticism from the part of opponents of social constructionism by

accusing it of being relativist in its approach to knowledge. The criticism maintains that if truth is relative then there will be no grounds upon which to base moral values and universal norms. Nevertheless, scholars of social constructionism including PDT scholars have had their response against this type of accusation. Responding to such criticism, Torfing, pushes a point maintaining that there is not a single all-encompassing truth claim out there which is able to prove its rightness. There exist competing claims of truth, each possessing their self-respected 'values, standards and criteria' for assessing truth and falseness (2005, p. 18-19). Accordingly, we do live in a world where the best we can obtain as knowledge falls short of providing a universal truth. Therefore, the absoluteness of knowledge is that what is rejected by social constructionism (Jorgensen & Philips, 2002, p. 175). More in the face of criticism, It has been argued that the above social constructionist disposition in relation to knowledge is far from being unpractical, as some critics of PDT may claim, it in fact, opens up the way for democratic deliberations in society (Jorgensen & Philips, 2002, p. 196). Likewise, the claim of absolute truth may leave no room for any type of difference and, ultimately excludes the differences from the field followed by discrimination and oppression based on various forms of identity or social categories.

Second: Historical and cultural specificity (Burr 1995:3, cited in

Jorgensen and Philips, 2002, p. 5-6) this represents both the anti-foundationalist and anti-essentialist disposition of social constructionism. Along the lines of social constructionism, the social world, including discourse, is socially constructed and it is historically and culturally specific (Jorgensen and Philips, 2002, p. 4). The way we see and understand the world, Burr (2003, p. 3) argues, is bound to the social and historical condition in which we live. To bring an example as a way of explaining this position, Burr (Burr, 1995, p. 3 cited in Jorgensen & Philips, 2002, p. 506) takes childhood as a notion. The notion of childhood has undergone massive changes even within the last 200 years. Children in Charles Dickens's time, she argues, were not the same to that of today or earlier times. People's expectations from a child and parental responsibilities towards children have enormously changed since then. To elaborate more on this point, a cultural specificity element can be added here, which is too may determine people's understanding and views towards childhood. In many Muslim and may be non-Muslim cultures girls can get married or forced into marriage at the age of 14 or even 11, as it is common in Yemen until today (Mansouri, 2013). However, girls and boys at that age are considered children in the West and many other countries around the world.

As with the previous point this premise has subjected PDT – as part

of the wider social constructionist approach—to even stronger criticism than the previous one. The critics conclude from this philosophical standing of PDT that it is an idealist perspective which is shared by social constructionism. This line of criticism may have sprung from the assertion from the part of PDT on the discursive character of all social and political events and existence. The critics arrived at a point claiming that, as discourse is the horizon through which PDT sees and analyses the social and political worlds then this consequently leads us to reduce everything to discourse leaving nothing for the real existence of things. Against the backdrop of this line of argument PDT theorists like Laclau and Mouffe and Torfing counter-argue that the physical and real existence of things—be they material, social or political—is by no means denied by PDT. They maintain that it is undeniable these things do have physical occurrence outside any discourse. However, they do not hold any real meanings and values outside human and social interaction and language. It is through the horizon of particular discourses that each particular set of objects take on different meanings and values. Laclau and Mouffe bring the example of an earthquake explaining that it does exist in the real world. However, the very same geological event may take up various—even competing—meanings according to different discursive formations. An earthquake could be seen as a sign of God's curse on humanity through a religious discourse. While the

same earthquake would be explained in a scientific manner according to a scientific discourse. The mere happening of the earthquake, in this case, will not have any social meaning. (Torfing, 2005, p. 18; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 108). When translated into PDT terms, this premise of social constructivism has contributed in the PDT's view of the social as 'contingent'. We will come back to this point later.

Third: Link between knowledge and social processes (Burr, 1995, p. 2-5 cited Jorgensen and Philips, p. 5-6). This perspective stands against the foundationalist approach to knowledge. According to the foundationalist epistemology, our knowledge about the world can correspond to the very actual things in reality (Jorgensen & Philips, 2002, p. 175). In a sharp contrast to foundationalism, social constructionism, treats knowledge as something that does not necessarily reflect 'reality out there', it rather reflects the social world and the interactions happening in that world. Human knowledge is not transferred onto human mind directly without human intervention. Instead, the knowledge we gain passes through social interaction via the medium of language and in discourse. For that reason, social interaction and language play great roles in knowledge production. As Burr puts it 'what we regard as truth, which is of course varies historically and cross-culturally, may be thought of as our current accepted ways of

242

understanding the world' (Burr, 2003, pp. 4-5).

Four: Link between knowledge and social action, According to social constructionism, particular social actions reflect specific world views and constituted by them. (Burr, 2003, pp. 4-5) This relationship between Knowledge and practice is essential to Foucault's definition of discourse. While not underestimating the linguistic component of discourse, he postulates discourse as the product of knowledge through the medium of language (Hall, 2003, p. 72). To apply this on the relationship between discourse and practice, Hall (1972, p. 29 cited in Hall, 2003, p.72) suggests that 'all practice has a discursive aspect'. This characteristic reaches its peak in the ontology of PDT leaving no room between knowledge and the social. Reasserting Laclau and Mouffe's ontological disposition, Torfing argues '...discourse is co-extensive with the social' (1999, p. 94). It also implies that within specific discursive contexts certain actions are allowed while others may not have the same opportunity. To make this position a bit clearer Burr recalls the example of drunkenness (apparently in Europe), in older times drunkenness was considered a crime and the drunk person seen as a criminal and blamed or, ultimately put in prison for drinking. While today the very drunkenness *per se* (precisely alcoholism) is not considered a crime but an illness worthy of treatment. The same issue of drunkenness produced two different types of

response from the part of the government, imprisonment and/or treatment. This is fundamentally linked to the two different discourses on drunkenness at two historical periods of time. Interestingly, the same issue of drunkenness and drug-use are still considered crimes in certain cultural settings today, as in Iran and Saudi Arabia, leading to particular responses from the part of the society or the government in question.

6.4 Framing PDT

Now, after giving a general idea about social constructionism to which PDT has established ontological and epistemological links, it is time to locate the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of PDT. Drawing from Howarth's earlier statement, one can imagine a picture drawn by PDT of social reality the picture offers the main themes of which in part represent the ontological basis of PDT. These themes will be explored here in order to pave the way for later operationalization of PDT on the ground. The themes can be listed in no particular order as follows*: discursive, contingency, political primacy, antagonism, hegemony, relationalty and subject positions* among the main pillars of PDT that need to be explored before engaging in any kind of analysis based on PDT. In the next section the conceptual components of PDT will be explained and critically examined along the lines of these themes.

6.4.1 Discourse and discursive

The concept of discourse that takes centre-stage in PDT requires mapping conceptually. First we need to identify the very term 'discourse' and outline the way it is going to be used in this study. Jorgenson and Phillips (2002, p. 1) define discourse as 'a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)'. However, discourse is not limited to conversation and understanding *per se*. For PDT, discourse widens its boundaries to include practice as well as the language in use and cognitive aspects of human life. Laclau and Mouffe (1985) along with Torfing (2005, p. 9) match discourse with the social as they state 'discourse is co-extensive with the social'. Earlier Heidegger had taken discourse further away by widening its horizon by suggesting that 'human beings are "thrown into" a world of meaningful discourses and practices, and it is this world that enables them to identify and engage with the objects they encounter' (1985, p. 246 cited in Howarth 2000, p. 9). In the same vein (Graesser *et al)* go as far as saying that 'discourse is what makes us human*'* (1997, P. 165, cited in Wodak and Krzyzanowski 2008, p. 1). For Howard and Stavrakakis discourse is seen as 'systems of meaningful [*practice*] that form the identities of subjects and objects' (2000, p. 5 emphasize added). To get closer to the main point, and, as it makes the major theoretical element of PDT, it is timely to bring in a definition of discourse provided by Michel Foucault. Jorgenson and

Philips summarise Foucault's definition of discourse as follows:

> We shall call discourse a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation [....Discourse] is made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined. Discourse in this sense is not an ideal, timeless form [....] it is, from beginning to end, historical- a fragment of history [....] posing its own limits, its divisions, its transformations, the specific modes of its temporality. (Foucault 1972:117 cited in Jorgensen and Philips, 2002, p. 12)

The above definition by Foucault fleshes out the main characteristics of discourse as a term. Discourse accordingly represents a framework operating according to specific rules (conditions) through which it produces particular meanings while excluding others. 'The historical rules of the particular discourse delimit[ing] what is possible to say' (Jorgensen & Philips, 2002, p. 13), while what is not possible to say rendered obsolete in discursive terms. This point will be discussed further in the next section.

Working on the same lines, for PDT discourse is an attempt in the way of meaning-fixing within a particular domain; but it is a partial fixation through articulation anyway (Jorgensen, 2002, p. 26). Any attempt to close the social and declare totality of its identity and meaning is a self-defeating practice as it goes against the nature of the social understood by PDT (which is the space of impossibilities) (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 111). Therefore,

discourse is seen as 'a reduction of possibilities' (Jorgensen and Philips 2002, p. 27). in this process of meaning-fixation other possibilities are always excluded and pushed to a place called '*the field of discursivity*' (2002, p.27 italics in the original). The field of discursivity is the sum of 'the surplus of meaning' [out of all acceptable and possible meanings] left out in the process of discourse formation (Torfing, 1999, p. 92). So, discourse is always an attempt to close the social and fix meanings of the subject and objects. To make this idea a little bit more concrete, we can say that a particular discourse of identity attempts to fix the meaning of that identity around certain values and features. However, the very field of discursivity is a condition which helps in 'the articulation of a multiplicity of competing meanings' (Torfing, 1999, p. 92). The impossibility of 'social closure' made possible by the very existence of other possibilities, meanings and identities. Competing definitions of 'Kurdish', 'English' or 'Arab' mean that it is not possible to arrive at a final, once-and-for-all definition of these identities. The nature of discourse in PDT, then, is of considerable relevance for the study of identity. This disposition takes us straight to the nature of identity in PDT terms.

6.4.2 Contingency

Contingency and historicity represent the keystones of PDT. The approach shares these two notions with the wider social

constructionist tradition in social sciences. The foundationalist approach to social science maintains that knowledge possesses concrete foundations which transcend history and social conduct (Burr, 2003, pp. 2-3; Jorgensen & Philips, 2002, p. 5). This implies that the researcher can discover the truth about the world merely by observing the world out there and the knowledge she gains represents the exact reality out there. In the contrary, social constructionism -including –PDT- invalidate this foundationalist epistemology by arguing that our knowledge is not a direct reflection of reality but it is rather socially constructed and historically contingent. In postulating the social constructionist outlook as regards the nature of knowledge and the social reality, Gergen states:

> The terms in which the world is understood are social artefacts, products of historically situated interaction among people. From the constructionist position the process of understanding is not automatically driven by the forces of nature, but is the result of an active, cooperative enterprise of persons in relationship. (1985, p. 267)

In the above statement both the ontological and epistemological dispositions of social constructionism can be identified, with which PDT shares most of its theoretical foundations. The epistemological disposition was discussed in the previous lines as it stood in opposition to the foundationalist disposition in the realm of epistemology.   As for the ontological outlook of social

constructionism, the above statement by Gergen entails the key terms of that outlook. As it has been argued, the claim that 'social world is constructed socially and discursively implies that its character is not pre-given or determined by external conditions' and more importantly, it implies 'that people do not possess a set of fixed and authentic characteristics or essences' (Jorgensen & Philips, 2002, p. 5).

Perhaps, a point which may hold more importance to this study is the social constructionist/ PDT's position as regards the nature of identity. According to foundationalism, as mentioned earlier, people's identity is fixed and compact hence, the researcher can trace their historical journey by mere observation. In the contrary, social constructionism treats the social reality, including identity and categories, as historically and culturally contingent. To put these terms in a more concrete form, the following example may illustrates the social constructionist position better: the study of 'madness' in western societies may give a very good example to that end. Michael Foucault (2001) in his work *Madness and civilization: a study of insanity in the age of reason*, argued that 'madness', as a category, has undergone several changes through various historical phases. Since the renaissance up to the modern era, Foucault claimed, madness has gone through fundamental changes as to its essence and nature. Consequently, at each stage

249

of development of the notion of madness, people's attitudes and institutional policies have also undergone dramatic changes. While during the Renaissance mad men were seen as possessing a kind of wisdom, in the classical age the condition was regarded as wrong and bad choice by people just like prostitution and vanguard, something which led to their confinement to keep them away from society. In the later stage of development of the notion of madness Foucault argued, madness was regarded as an illness worthy of treatment.

Thus, contingency is of great importance to PDT. As political discourse theory takes identity as contingent thus socially, historically and discursively constructed through social interaction. It maintains that there can never be fixed and compact identities. It also implies that Identities are always in flux due to the ongoing social interaction. The fluidity and contingency of identity results in the impossibility of having a society with fixed and compact characters. In other words, it implies the impossibility of the society to reach its final formulation and closure. There is always different claims of identity from competing social agents and institutions. The competition is conducted, according to PDT, through discursive struggles. At the heart of the struggle stands politics. Therefore, the role of politics is considered paramount in the discursive struggles in society. Now it is time to turn to another important

theme of PDT which is the status of politics.

6.4.3 Primacy of politics

While in historical materialism it is economy (the 'base') that determines the social and political structure (the 'superstructure'), PDT gives politics the determining status instead. This reorganization of the roles by PDT was first initiated by Gramsci. For Gramsci although the base has priority and it is the base that determines the superstructure, at the meantime, the superstructure can also have influence on the base (Jorgensen & Philips, 2002, p. 3). To transfer this equation into their discourse-based explanation of the social reality, Laclau and Mouffe maintain that every particular discourse tries to construct the social life in a particular way attempting, at the meantime, to exclude other possible ways. This kind of action is what politics imply in PDT (Jorgensen & Philips, 2002, p. 6). The very process of articulation, which produces the whole social life is, according to PDT, a political action. (Jorgensen & Philips, 2002, p. 6) Here politics is not to be taken in its narrow conception as for instance, party politics, but it rather should be understood in the very broad meaning of politics (2002, p. 36). In other words, politics to be considered 'as a first order principle for the ordering of the social' (Torfing, 1999, p. 121). However, that order is re-appropriated in Laclau and Mouffe's

conceptions as 'the organization of society in a particular way that excludes all other possible ways' (Jorgensen & Philips, 2002, p. 36).

The exclusionist nature of politics is very important to our understanding of PDT, as the hegemony means to impose one's own way of organization of society and meaning on the other/s. The hegemonic struggle always creates antagonism among competing agents. If we take the struggle to the realm of competing identities we can explain the situation as such: for each identity to fully realise its own potential it requires the negation of other identities. From this, Torfing (1999, p. 121) concludes that 'politics is inextricably linked to antagonism'. (Italics in the original) in other words, politics according to PDT is always characterised by the existence of two antagonistic forces (us vs. enemy). Moreover, the full realization of one social, ethnic, political agent requires the exclusion of the other/s. However, this does not mean that by excluding other meanings and forms of identity the hegemonic discourse can close society over its own portrayal of it. In the contrary, any meaning fixing is temporary and it is always subject to dislocation by the 'constituted outside' or other excluded discourses.

Another important point to make clear is when PDT uses discourse as a substitute to agents or forces, this should not imply it is the

reduction of everything to discourse or language. PDT has a strong position in this regard implying that although the agents do exist in both social and physical forms 'but our access to them is always mediated by systems of meaning in the form of discourse' (Jorgensen & Philips, 2002, p. 35).

6.4.4 Identity as relational

As it has been discussed earlier, against the essentialist view to identity (as a form of social), which views identity in solid and finished terms, PDT offers an alternative approach to identity characterised by being contingent and fluid and instead of seeing it as pre-given, it is taken as one that is socially constructed (Glynose, et al., August 2009, p. 7). In the same vein, PDT challenges the rationalist view which implies that individuals possess objective identities and are always self-interested (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 9). The starting point for postulating identity in this manner may be implied in Laclau's distinction between 'identity' and 'identification' (the latter normally associated with psychoanalyst approaches). To elaborate on this distinction, Laclau explains 'if agents were to have an always already defined location in the social structure, the problem of their identity...would not arise or, at most would be seen in a matter of *discovery* or *recognizing* their identity, not of *constructing* it' (1994, p. 2 Italics in the original). This understanding derived from the

ontological standing of PDT based on impossibility of social phenomena reaching a finishing form or totality or for meaning to be fixed (Jorgensen & Philips, 2002, p. 24). Another statement by Laclau may make this disposition slightly clearer, where he states:

> No identity is closed in itself but it submitted to constant displacements in terms of chains of combinations and substitutions, they are constituted through essentially tropological processes which do not refer to any ultimate transcendental foundation. (Laclau, no date)

As Jorgenson and Philips (2002, p. 24) suggest 'this opens up the way for constant social struggle about definitions of society and identity, with resulting social effects'. Therefore, the theoretical viability of PDT in studying questions of identity in general and collective or national identity sounds very promising. Normally, collective or national identity formation as processes, entail more than one actor, and more often, rival actors in a state of competition or conflict.

The discourse theoretical postulation of terms such as 'nation' informs the mentioned ontological outlook above. Unlike mainstream theories of nations and nationalism which each has a compact, ready-made and concrete definitions in hand for terms such as 'nation', associating an objective character to it (Smith, 2008; Connor, 1994; Gellner, 1983), for political discourse theory in general the term 'nation' contains a rather fluid meaning. In this

regard, Torfing (1999, p. 202) defines the term as '....empty signifier symbolizing an absent fullness, i.e. a cultural and political community that is imagined precisely because it is not fully realized'. This definition could equally be applied to state and non-state communities. Nationalism, as a doctrine, reflects the very nature of 'nation'—in its discourse theoretical formulation – so it has been defined in the same vein as 'a myth that provides the empty signifier of "the nation" and "the people" with a particular substantial embodiment' (Torfing, 1999, p. 193). Furthermore, the presentation of 'nation' is almost always conducted in a relational manner in its relation to an 'outside other' (Torfing, 1999, p.193). The hegemonic articulation of the nation is dictated by the nature of available antagonistic relations, this follows that the form and substance of 'nation' is a product and outcome of the on-going competition over meaning fixation among various competing social and political actors. In other words, the identity of the nation is decided by the hegemonic discourse which prevails in the struggle among competing actors and/or discourses. It is now time to turn to another more important theme in PDT which is the notion of hegemony.

6.4.5 Hegemonic practice in processes of identity construction

At any particular period and in any particular context there may

exist a number of competing claims of identity. However, more often than not, a particular identity manages to prevail over others and occupy a hegemonic position within the wider society. Hegemonic practices in social and political spheres gain great attention from the part of PDT. As Glynos and Howarth put it 'discourse theorists have developed- and are continuing to develop and refine- the conceptual grammars with which to account for the way certain political projects or social practices remain or become hegemonic' (2007, p. 5).

The medium through which hegemonic practice processed is called *articulation*. Articulation is the mechanism with which agents within particular discourses try to push to the forefront particular desired identities, meanings and values while undermining and subverting undesired ones (Torfing, 1999, p. 101). In turn, articulation is defined by Laclau and Mouffe (1985, p. 105) as a 'practice establishing relations between elements such that their identity is modified as the result of the articulatory practice'. Furthermore, PDT, through employing some theoretical tools as the 'logic of equivalence' and the 'logic of difference' endeavours to explain the way particular hegemonic practices operate. (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, in Torfing, 1999, p. 120-31). To give a brief outline as to the content of these two logics I shall recall a rather short explanation of them provided by David Howarth (2000, p. 107). Howarth

outlines these two logics as follows:

> whereas a project principally employing the logic of equivalence seeks to divide social space by condensing meanings around two antagonistic poles, a project mainly employing a logic of difference attempts to displace and weaken antagonism, while endeavouring to relegate division to the margins of society.

To elaborate more on this explanation by Howarth, the logic of equivalence entails attempts to group those on the 'other' side of 'us' at a single pole, no matter their differences. At the meantime, the logic of difference attempts to eradicate the internal differences available in the 'us' side and present it as a single, undisputed entity. In this way the process of hegemony made easier as the frontiers of the self and the other, 'us' and 'other' or the friend and enemy are clear. This may explain the drive behind attempts by rival states and groups to expose to their public or members the picture of the enemy or the adversary.

As for a definition of 'hegemony' in discourse theoretical terms, which also, as mentioned, makes one of the fundamental components of the theory, it has been defined by Torfing (1999, p. 101) as 'the expansion of a discourse, or set of discourses, into a dominant horizon of social orientation and action by means of articulating unfixed elements into partially fixed moments in a context crisscrossed by antagonistic forces'. To put this abstract description of hegemony into more concrete terms it can be said

that among a number of identified discourses within a context a particular one or more may reach to a prevalent position by means of fixing, otherwise, unfixed identities, values and features into a fixed totality, the outcome which may be a dominant form of identity, social or political practice, or institution. To put it bluntly, among many competing forms of a particular national identity, a discourse adopted and disseminated by a particular group may dominate the social and political context and become 'hegemonic' while pushing other less powerful forms of identity to the margins of society. For example, arguably, in the context of the Arab part of Iraq post-2003, the religious form of Iraqi identity has maintained the dominant status among all other competing forms such as ethnic, nationalist or class forms. While in the context of Kurdistan Region-Iraq the ethnic or the nationalist form of identity still prevails over other forms.

To conclude this section, it is time to point out that the struggle for hegemony is always engrained with negation attitudes among conflicting actors creating an atmosphere of antagonism.

6.4.6 Antagonism

Antagonism makes another pole upon which PDT builds its ontological structure. Jorgenson and Philips maintain that 'the starting point for political discourse theory is that no discourse can

be fully established, It is always in conflict with other discourses that define reality differently' (2002, p. 47).

Conflict is a legacy of the Marxist roots of PDT. Accordingly, PDT portrays the social as a domain where the relationship between the actors runs through antagonistic moments. Competing discourses produce and being produced by antagonistic practices. However, unlike the orthodox Marxist paradigm, according to PDT, antagonism is not necessarily based on class and economic grounds, instead other forms of difference also make up for the antagonistic relations and practices in society (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 8). These forms may range from social, class to ethnic, national, gender and other possible forms (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, pp. ix-x). As it has been mentioned in the previous discussion of hegemony, social antagonism (in its wider sense), results from hegemonic practices by particular discourses. In turn, hegemonic practices involve 'negation of identity' among competing actors, therefor, each social actor struggles to negate the subject and the object of the identity of their rivals (Torfing, 1999, p. 120). Subsequently, each actor finds the existence of others as a threat to fulfilment of its own identity. Thus, the process of self-assertion is always accompanied by negating others. In other words, the process of hegemonization always produces antagonism among competing agents and discourses. We should

remember this happens through discursive practices.

Political actors may employ various mechanisms in order to oppose or maintain their hegemonic version of identity. To put this theoretical portrayal into solid practical terms, a preliminary example from the case in question is presented here. A strategy has been used by the dominant political parties in the KRI to establish an antagonistic relationship between the Arab part of Iraq on the one side and the West on the other, while presenting Kurds as a true ally of the west by associating democracy and secularism to the Kurdistan Region, they were depicting the rest of Iraq as religious and non-democratic, the dominant Kurdish political parties have been struggling to establish or maintain their hegemonic political identity discourse in Iraq in the post-2003 era. Expressions like 'the other Iraq', 'safe heaven', 'the beacon of democracy' and the like, which used to describe Kurdistan Region-Iraq inform this kind of strategy.[6] At the other side of the conflict, some Arab forces and political parties, especially, after 2003, have been in a constant effort to portray the Kurds and expose it to the outside world, especially to the Arab and Muslim world as not being true Iraqis or true Muslims but allies of the occupying forces (i.e.

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[6] These expressions have been widely used by some in the West and then resonated in the Kurdish media and political discourse (Fifield, 2008; Mackinnon, 2014; Schorn, 2007; The Other Iraq, n.d.).

USA and British in particular). This attempt has arguably, hit the highest spot with the emergence and advancement of ISIS in the region. The depiction of Kurds, or at least all secular Kurdish political parties and the Peshmerga as infidels ('*Kuffar*' in Arabic) or least, apostates ('*Murtad*' in Arabic) and collaborators with the Crusaders. Torfing (1999, p. 199) points to a similar strategy adopted by the Slovenians just after the independence of Slovenia where Slovenians were constructing an antagonistic relationship between Balkans and Europe associating communism to Balkan and democracy to Slovenia.

It is now time to deal with a notion which, should be considered the core of PDT as regards the question of identity, namely 'subject positions'.

6.4.7 Subject positions

For PDT theorists, then, the identity of subjects – their 'subject position', to use Laclau and Mouffe's term—is neither determined by the structure (as per structuralist perspectives), nor by rational subjects (as per rationalist perspectives) (Benton & Craib, 2011, p. 164), Rather, it is constructed in discourse, which itself is created through social interaction in a relational manner to other agents in conditions characterised by antagonism. Laclau and Mouffe has shown a firm position as regards the question of the subject by

261

arguing:

> Whenever we use the category of 'subject' in this text, we will do so in the sense of '*subject positions*' in a discursive structure. Subjects cannot, therefore, be the origin of social relations – not even in the limited sense of being endowed with powers that render an experience possible – as all experience depends on precise discursive conditions of possibility. (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 115)

The picture of 'subject' provided in the above statement resembles that of 'signs' in the structuralist model of language developed by Ferdinand de Saussure. For Saussure, the 'structure of language consists of signs and the rules which govern the combination of signs' (Benton & Craib, 2011, p. 165). We must remember that, the structure of signs in Saussure's model was consisted of 'signifiers', the material component, visual and sound elements of language (Benton & Craib, 2011, p. 164) and 'signified', the related concept. As for the meaning of individual sings, it is determined by their relation to other sings. (2011, p. 164)

This model was developed further by Jacques Lacan, who argued that the unconscious – increasingly considered essential for understanding the subject – resembles language. He argued, however, that it is the signifier that is indispensable, rather than structure (Benton and Craib, 2011, p. 165). This shift from structure to the signifier, Benton and Craib argue, was the moment at which structuralism became post-structuralism (2011, p. 167).

The intellectual development of linguistics, pioneered by Saussure, was transformed by Michel Foucault, who substituted the centrality of the signifier for 'discourse'. This made discourse and discursive formations central to identity, and necessitated a focus on 'fragmentation', which argues that the identity of a subject cannot be seen from a single angle, but is fragmented along 'discourse horizons' (Jorgensen & Philips, 2002, p. 41).

In an attempt to finalise the fundamentals of PDT's understanding of identity, Philips and Jorgenson produce the following list, which provides the theoretical and methodological foundations for PDT research into identity:

- The subject is fundamentally *split,* it never quite becomes 'itself'.

- It acquires its identity by being *represented* discursively.

- Identity is thus *identification* with a subject position in a discursive structure.

- Identity is discursively constituted through *chains of equivalence* in which signs are sorted and linked. These stand in opposition to other chains; and define how the subject is and how it is not.

- Identity is always *relationally* organised; the subject is something because it is contrasted with something that is

not.

- Identity is *changeable*, just as discourses are.

- The subject is *fragmented* or *decentred*; it has different identities according to those discourses which it forms part.

- The subject is *overdetermined*; in principle, it always has the possibility to identify differently in specific situations. Therefore, a given identity is contingent – that is possible but not necessary. (2002, pp. 43, italics in the original)

6.5 Kurdish identity construction in discourse theoretical terms

The practical starting point for the application of PDT – as for critical discourse analysis and discursive psychology – is that 'our ways of talking do not neutrally reflect our world, identities and social relations but rather, play an active role in creating and changing them.' (Jorgensen & Philips, 2002, p. 1) Howarth and Stavrakakis outline the practice as that of 'analysing empirical raw material and information in discursive forms'. This would include, they state 'a wide range of linguistic and non-linguistic data-speech, reports, manifestos, historical events, interviews, policies, ideas……as texts' (2000, p. 6).

The manner in which 'text' is perceived in PDT owes largely to the

often-cited supposition by Jacque Derrida 'there is nothing outside text' (1974, p. 158 cited in Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 6). Probably, the 'discursive formation' in Foucault's terms is what widens the scope of empirical data available for the researcher. For Foucault, discourse should not be confined to a single text, statement, practice or source, rather 'the same discourse…will appear across a range of texts, and as forms of conduct, at a number of different institutional sites within society' (Hall, 2003, p. 73). Research in this programme would have a wide range of available data from which the researcher can draw, responding to and informing the theoretical tools in operation.

The analysis of Kurdish identity formation in the KRI since 1991 can be undertaken through the methods of PDT, as described above. Arguably, the objectives set for this research, which implied in the dynamics of Kurdish identity formation within a particular historical period, can be effectively channelled through employing the methods set to address the above objects of PDT. As the targeted research question at this stage of my research revolves around the political dimension of Kurdish identity formation, (i.e. how Kurdish identity manifest itself on the political level?), examining the political discourse of various political agents in the region is imperative and it will guide us to the right direction towards identifying the dynamics of Kurdish identity formation on

its political level. This by no means should imply that politics is ruled out or downgraded in the assessment of the other level of analysis (i.e. cultural-historical level). In the contrary, it is safe to argue that politics play a determining role in both fields, this is proven by the manipulative power of political parties in the cultural sphere as well. The extent of the play of politics in each field has been dealt with in related chapters.

To start with, the story of Kurdish identity construction is part and parcel of the major story of Iraqi politics since 2003, a story which has been defined as 'a story of identity conflict' (Al-Qarawee, 2010, p. 34). This process of identity construction, I would argue, has been operating upon articulating particular discourses each running through and around a number of signifiers or 'nodal points' in discourse theoretical terms. For example the signifier of federalism which has been at work since 1992 (when the Kurdish parliament adapted federalism)[7] through to Iraqi opposition conference in Salahaddin, Kurdistan Region in 1992 and in London in 2002, then around the 2003 Coalition invasion of Iraq and lastly in its constitutional approval in 2005 to what has followed then up until the present day (Al-Qarawee, 2010; Brancati, 2004) but it had not

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[7] The then newly created Kurdistan Parliament unilaterally adopted federalism as an accepted form for the relationship between the KRI and the central government in Baghdad in 1992 (O'Leary, 2002).

been as salient as it has been since 2003, this, still-active discourse, makes an ideal example here.[8]

While the signifier of federalism has been articulated on particular grounds from the part of Kurds, for example, the ethnic and geographical identity of Kurds, democratic rights and historical claims backed by historical facts, at the beginning, and still, this signifier has been confronted by counter-discourses pertinent to the sharp opposition from the part of Arab majority represented mostly but not solely by both Sunni Arab political parties and figures and some major sections of majority Shi'ite Arabs.[9] However, for reasons to do with the superior hand which Kurds political parties managed to maintain in Iraqi politics just before and after 2003 events, the Kurds were able to incorporate federalism in the new Iraqi constitution approved in 2005 in a referendum. Since the approval of the new Iraqi constitution the signifier of federalism gained a new momentum by adding to its

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[8] This is due to the uncertain and unstable situation inside the KRI, exhibited in the political instability that spans from 1994 to the 1998 Washington pact between the KDP and the PUK (Anderson & Stansfield, 2004, pp. 155-184). Following this – and subsequent events including the founding of the KRG and the 2003 invasion – the discourse of federalism takes a new shape and comes to the forefront of Kurdish political party discourse.

[9] Al-Qarawee argues that Arab opposition to federalism in Iraq stems from a belief among Muslims (Sunnis in particular) that 'federalism means partition, an implicit betrayal of the "imagined" Iraqi community.' (Al-Qarawee, 2010, p. 37)

constituting elements the element of 'constitution'. Since then whenever disputes arise between the central Iraqi government and KRG, the Kurdish political parties stress on the constitutional rights of federalism.

However, as the case with almost all signifiers in discourses of identity (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 12) the signifier of 'constitution' exists because of its very absence. Although, the constitution gained the majority of Iraqi people's votes, however, due to the counter-federalism discourse of the Arab part in Iraq, the constitution has never wholeheartedly embraced by the Arab political factions in Baghdad. There have been calls for amendments in the constitution as recent as the year 2008 and 2009 by the then Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, some major Sunni fronts and political parties and figures claiming to represent the Turkmen minority in Iraq (Malazada, 2008; Voice of Iraq, 2009).

To account for the two logics used in discourse theoretical analysis of identity (i.e. the logic of equivalence and the logic of difference), in the Kurdish discourse on federalism and constitution, a logic used to make equivalent all none-Kurdish others (Shi'ite Arabs, Sunni Arabs, Turkmen, with their various strands) and putting them in an opposite side to the Kurds. While, despite the already

visible polarities in the Kurdish social and political life, the Kurdish identity which portrayed (articulated) in the federalist discourse was that of a common and compact identity, in PDT terms, pushing all internal differences to the margins of Kurdish society. In other words, this process included making hegemonic the particular political identity of the Iraqi Kurds (needed for that particular context), of course, among other 'possible' ones. While this process accompanied by creating antagonism between the Kurds and their 'others', it at the same time suppressed some other internal antagonisms which may otherwise have surged to the surface in different political and social circumstances.

The signifier of federalism is by no means the only and a self-standing signifier at work in the context of KRI. A closer examination of the situation may lead to identifying various other signifiers floating around. At this point, for the sake of argument we can mention the signifier of '*independence, the homeland and the people*, Kirkuk'[10], and so on. Along these signifiers and nodal

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[10] Kirkuk an oil-rich city in North of Iraq, it is a demographically diverse city where Kurds, Turkmen and Arabs reside. Historically, it has been a centre of conflict between Kurdish political parties and the Iraqi government. While Kurds claim it as their own, Arabs (supported by Turkmen) reject this. The city has seen dramatic demographic changes since the Ba'ath party came to power in 1963, when a large number of Kurdish and Turkmen residents of the city were forcefully relocated or expelled from the city to be replaced by Arab families (most of whom came from the south and centre of Iraq). Since 2003 the city has once more come to the forefront of political debates and experienced ethnic tension. For further details see Astarjian (2007); Anderson and

269

points there exists a number of other signifiers such as 'Peshmerga' and '*four part or greater Kurdistan*'. The content and meaning of each of these signifier is in a constant state of articulation by competing political discourses in KRI.

6.6 Conclusion

According to PDT, identity is socially constructed through interaction between various actors. The social relationship is intrinsically political, with various forces competing over the articulation of meaning; and producing conflicting discourses around identity, values and institutions. Discourse refers not only to what is said or performed through language or text. It constitutes social life by allowing particular manifestations of our being in the world, particular values, particular meanings and identities; and is itself constituted by social life.

This social life is understood as a 'field of impossibility', meaning that there is not a fixed, closed and total social world: competing discourses constantly attempt to fix meaning and produce solid identities. Through the process of 'articulation', various elements combine to produce specific moments, which become 'compact

Stansfield (2004).

270

discourses' through hegemonisation. This converts particularities into universalities, a process naturally accompanied by force and coercion (Torfing, 1999, p. 120). Through it, elements which cannot be entered into a particular discursive field are excluded, as the very process of discourse is said to be 'a reduction of possibilities' (Jorgensen & Philips, 2002, p. 27).

The process of hegemonisation is conflict-ridden; meaning that it creates antagonism between the hegemonic power and actors whose identities do not reflect the dominant identity. Building on Laclau and Mouffe, Torfing argues that 'a discourse or discursive formation, establishes its limits by means of excluding a radical otherness that has no common measures with the differential system from which it is excluded' (1999, p: 124). Any claim of fullness, then, whether by of a particular identity claiming universality – or by a society claiming to have reached a fixed state of being is false – as other possibilities, meanings and identities always exist.

The concept of the 'empty signifier' is used to denote the state of emptiness in taken-for-granted notions. A 'nation', for example, exhibits the characteristics of an empty signifier or, what is named a 'nodal point' by Laclau and Mouffe (1985): it exists simply because it does not exist; its presence proved by its absence. This

can be evidenced in the definitional difficulties facing those who study nations: the term is 'notoriously difficult to define' (Ozkirimli, 2000); and where definitions are offered they relate to socially constructed, rather than objective, characteristics. PDT is useful here then, as it reminds us that we should not conflate the subjective with the material: 'nations' have geographical boundaries, flags, currencies and national anthems. Yet beyond these material properties what remains is that which can be constructed through imagination (Anderson, 2006). It is only through the discourse that the notion of 'nation' acquires meaning. Thus, while PDT does not deny the existence of some objective traits from which any given nation is formed, such as historic ethnic roots, physical objects and 'cultural tools', it acknowledges that the identity of this nation is ultimately constructed through social processes that are subject to contemporary historical and political conditions. This means that its identity is never closed: there will always be competing articulations of the nation.

In the next chapter, I build on this reading of PDT and the preliminary analysis conducted above by drawing on the primary and secondary data that have been gathered in the KRI in order to further analyse identity formation in the KRI.

CHAPTER SEVEN

7 Political discourse analysis

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I apply the theoretical and methodological foundations of political discourse theory to provide a detailed analysis of the major hypotheses which I arrived at-at the end of the first section in the previous chapter. In so doing, I outline the analytic themes upon which my data analysis is undertaken. These are drawn from the theoretical assumptions of PDT and directly related to the hypotheses below:

1- Identity is a human creation that is socially constructed and contingent.

This hypothesis draws on the social constructionist elements of PDT. It does not rule out the existence of objective features in the real world, but examines the manipulative power of political actors in subjectively and discursively constructing group or collective identity.[1]

2- In constructing Kurdish identity, particular 'signifiers' are

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[1] As discussed in chapter six.

of relevance.

Actors in the KRI use particular signifiers that function as 'nodal points', 'master signifiers' and 'myths' (Philips & Jorgensen, 2002, p. 50). These are discursively organised around particular social contexts and are designed to provide meaning to the process of Kurdish identity formation. Signifiers of relevance here include 'the Kurdish nation', 'independence', 'Kurdistan as homeland' (Greater Kurdistan and Iraqi Kurdistan)', 'Kirkuk', 'enemy', various national symbols and the myth of Kawa the Blacksmith.

3- The Kurdish nationalist discourse clearly portrays the boundary between Kurds and 'others', whilst the internal differences of Kurds are paid insufficient attention.

Whilst Kurds use the 'logic of equivalence' to name a single enemy, they simultaneously use the 'logic of difference' to subvert internal differences in their own camp. However, there is no a single Kurdish essence, but a number of contested claims regarding what it means to be Kurdish. These claims revolve around ethnicity, religion, country, nationalism and pan-nationalism. Terms such as 'Kurd', 'Kurdish Muslim', 'Muslim Kurd', 'Iraqi, Kurdistani' and 'Greater Kurdistani' are utilised by different approaches.

4- There is no single uncontested claim to Kurdish identity, but there are efforts to 'hegemonise' specific forms of Kurdish identity.

Processes of hegemonisation can be identified in Kurdish

nationalism. These seek to universally impose a particular articulation of Kurdish nationalism. Pre-existing power relations are essential in this process, as the actors in positions of relative power stand a better chance of achieving such a hegemony.

5- Kurdish identity is constructed relationally.

Kurdish identity is constructed in relation to non-Kurdish 'others' (mainly Iraqi Arabs, Turks, and Persians). Drawing on PDT, it can be hypothesized that Kurdish identity functions in opposition to these non-Kurds; and in particular to those who form majorities in states neighbouring the KRI. The failure to realise Kurdish identity can be linked to the attempts by these non-Kurds to establish their own identity while denying Kurdish identity.[2]

6- The creation or evocation of antagonisms is utilised in the construction of Kurdish identity.

To assert Kurdish identity, Kurdish political actors will sometimes seek to create antagonism between the Kurds and their 'others'.

Two further hypotheses connect PDT with ethno-symbolism:

1- Collective symbols play an important role in the process of identity formation regardless of their historical

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[2] For Abbas Vali this situation, characterised by denial and resistance 'defines the political form of Kurdish national identity' (2006: p. 49). Furthermore, as Kurds reside in different geographical and political jurisdictions where they share the country with other groups, a fragmented Kurdish identity is to be expected.

accuracy.

2- The role played by these symbols is socially and historically constructed, and varies depending on the political, cultural and historic context.

The second of these hypotheses in particular develops the overlaps between PDT and ethno-symbolism, which states that there will always be different versions of the nation and its past, as the nation is produced through and by various actors and peoples (Smith, 2009, p. 33).

In the following sections I utilise primary and secondary data to analyse these hypotheses. These includes spoken, written and visual forms; personal interviews with politicians from major political parties in the KRI; and the online survey.

7.2 Personal interviews

The main sources of data in this chapter are the personal interviews conducted with a number of politicians in the KRI, and the online survey.[3] The interview format used for personal interviews is based on the semi-structured interview method. I asked fixed questions to interviewees, with some specific questions for particular interviewees. For the online survey, a range of qualitative questions

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[3] The interviews were conducted between June 2012 and December 2013.

was used in order to identify respondents' views on issues pertinent to collective identity in the KRI. Interview and survey questions are provided in the appendices.

7.3 The online survey

As part of the data collection process, an online survey was conducted in November and December 2014. The survey was conducted in both Kurdish and Arabic and consisted of 24 questions (see appendix 4). The respondents were reached through Facebook via a link generated by the well-known Survey Monkey programme. Just over 400 Facebook users responded: their demographic details are shown in Tables 10.1-10.6.

7.4 Themes in operation

In light of the above hypotheses I have chosen a number of themes through which to carry out the analytical work. Drawing from the personal interviews, the online survey and other data collected for the purpose of this research, below I address the main themes selected for the data analysis.

7.4.1 Identity crisis

According to PDT, a crisis of identity occurs when a dominant discourse fails to become hegemonic. When this occurs, it attempts to impose its articulation of identity through its constitutive properties and symbolic characters and boundaries. Such attempts

are almost always faced with counter-discourses seeking to establish alternative meanings and possibilities, creating a situation of 'undecidability', in which antagonistic forces of discourse formation come face-to-face. These other possible meanings are normally excluded and subsequently marginalised by the dominant discourse (Norval, 1994, p. 117).

Thus, I would argue that although Kurdish identity is largely taken for granted by all political parties and ordinary Kurds (this is evident in political party manifestos as well as in the discourse of ordinary people in the KRI), the exact nature of that identity is highly ambiguous. In PDT terms, Kurdish identity represents an absence in the reality of the KRI. Every politician interviewed in this study strongly asserted an indisputable Kurdish identity, regardless of their ideological affiliation. They also argued that Kurds should be free to assert their right to statehood and independence.[4] Although they made every effort to articulate Kurdish identity – in some cases supporting their claims with historical references – it is easy to identify differences between these understandings of Kurdish identity.

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[4] This belief is frequently expressed in Kurdish nationalist politics. It can be found, in various forms, in the manifestos of all Kurdish parties across Greater Kurdistan. Every Kurdish politician interviewed for this research expressed similar sentiments.

Attempts to hegemonise a particular form of Kurdish identity can be identified in the discourse of all Kurdish political parties, but are particularly visible in the discourse and practice of the KDP, which has been able to take advantage of power relations in the KRI since KDP forces took control of Erbil on the 31st August 1996.[5] This is evidenced by the fact that the KDP's discursive hegemony immediately became more active in imposing its official political vision on KDP controlled areas (i.e. most parts of Erbil and Duhok provinces). In other words, its control of Erbil not only changed the military balance of power, but allowed it to redraw the political map in the KRI. Erbil was the most highly populated city in the KRI and the site of its main legislative and executive institutions (i.e. the parliament, the KRG's Council of Ministers).[6] Almost immediately, the PUK established a version of the KRG in Slemany – the second largest city in the KRI which, they controlled – but this was secondary compared to Erbil's institutional status, political power, strategic location and economic strength.

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[5] After more than two years of fighting the PUK, KDP forces took control of Erbil as a result of significant support from the Iraqi military – for a short time pushing PUK forces back to the Iranian borders. PUK forces later managed to expel the KDP from Slemany and a number of towns and areas, but the KDP retained control of Erbil, giving it an upper hand in political and administrative negotiations with the PUK ever since (Stansfield, 2003a, p. 133). The events following that crucial day have fed into the 'double administration' of the KRI, discussed above.

[6] PUK MPs refused to attend meetings but the parliament continued to function through the attendance of the KDP MPs and 11 MPs affiliated to the minorities.

The relationship between political and discursive power has been well studied by Teun Van Dijk, who distinguishes between two major power holders in society: the 'political elite' and the 'symbolic elite' (1989, p. 22), who co-ordinate to maintain existing power structures. This can be seen throughout the short history of the KRI, where the KDP's attempt to impose its version of Kurdish identity was evident in the cultural and symbolic domains. Although the KDP and PUK had their own historiographies of the KRI and Iraqi Kurds in general prior to 1996, neither was in a position to impose them nationally.

The political and administrative division between the KDP and the PUK was paralleled by antagonisms on the cultural and symbolic levels. One of the KDP's main symbolic actions in this regard was to hang pictures of Mustafa Barzani – the iconic Kurdish leader, former KDP leader and father of the current KDP leader and current KRI President Masoud Barzani – in all government offices and directorates.[7] This was controversial, as Mustafa Barzani does not hold an equal nationalist value and respect by all Kurdish political

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[7] Masoud Barzani's term in office as the President of the KRI was due to end on the 20th of August 2013. However, in an apparently hurried move, The KDP and the PUK blocks in parliament introduced and passed a law granting him a further two years in office on the 30th of June 2013. This was described as unlawful by other parties, who strongly opposed the move – leading to physical confrontations in the parliament building between rival MPs (Awene.com, 2013b).

parties. In fact, for some political parties outside the influence of the KDP, Barzani was at best a failed Kurdish leader who failed to gain the respect of all Kurds and, at best, he was merely a failed leader of the KDP: a belief that can partly be explained with reference to the political history of the KRI from the early 1960s (this was discussed in details in chapter three). Whilst this conflict is over, its impact remains and is detectable on a number of levels and in different forms. In the survey, respondents were asked which three figures they would most like to see as national leader: Mustafa Barzani was the third most popular choice on 30%, behind the jailed PKK leader Abdulla Ocalan on 34% and Ghazi Muhammed (president of the short-lived Republic of Kurdistan in 1946) on 48% (Table 7.1).
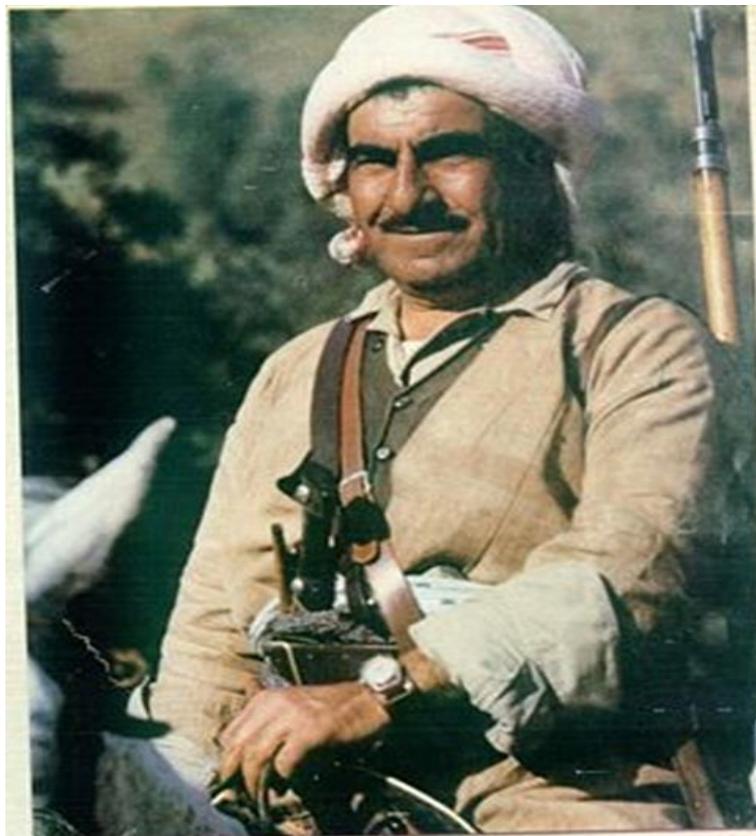
Figure 7.1 Image of Mala Mustafa Barzani. Source: (Ghzlji, n.d.) Table

7.1 Reponses to the question about preferred historical leaders

Answer choice	Responses	Percentage
Salahaddin Ayyubi	55	15.36%
Sheikh Abdullah Nahri	60	16.75%
Sheikh Said Piran	79	21.50%
Sheikh Mahmud Hafid	81	22.62%
Ghazi Mohammed	171	47.76%
Mustafa Barzani	106	29.60%
Jalal Talabani	61	17.03%
Abdulla Ocalan	120	33.51%
Masoud Barzani	68	18.99%
All	56	15.64%
None of them	41	11.45%
	358	

As noted earlier, shared glories and suffering are important aspects of nation-formation. Disagreements over these can thus be taken as an indication of antagonism in the process. To ascertain the level of agreement in this regard, the survey asked respondents to select the three most unpleasant events in the history of the KRI (Table 7.2). The results of this indicate that – contrary to the outward projections of dominant nationalists – there are significant social and political divisions in the KRI, with a number of different events featuring in respondents' answers. The frequency with which 'Kurdish fratricide' featured in responses (at almost 60%) is evidence to this regard. Additionally, there is an unequal amount of importance placed on different events.

282

Table 7.2 Respondents' three most unpleasant historical events.

Historical incident	Responses	Percentage
Collapse of Eylul revolution in 1974	25	7.83%
Anfal of the Barzanis in 1983	30	9.40%
Death of Mala Mustafa Barzani in 1979	13	4.07%
Chemical bombardment of Halabja in 1988	207	64.89%
The Kurdish fratricide	191	59.87%
The tragic massacre in Shingal and Yazidis in 2014	127	39.81%
The arrest of Abdulla Ocalan in 1999	40	12.53%
The campaigns after 1986	141	44.20%
Other incidents	5	1.56%
	319	

In response to the survey question asking respondents to list the three most 'pleasant' historical events in Iraqi Kurdistan, the historic March 11th accord (9%) and the 'resurgent of armed struggle in 1976' (11%), featured significantly less than the March 1991 uprising (70%), the end of the Kurdish fratricide (55%) and the collapse of the Ba'athist regime in 2003 (50%) (Table 7.3). The picture becomes clearer if we remember that the former two events are largely associated with the KDP and PUK, while the latter two are celebrated more universally.[8] To look at this division on the symbolic level, it is necessary to analyse more recent historical

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[8] While the March 11th accord is largely associated with the history of KDP, the post-1976 resurgent of Kurdish armed struggle is primarily associated with the PUK, as it was founded in 1975 and was the first party to resume armed struggle following the collapse of the Eylul Revollution.

events.

Table 7.3 Respondents' three most pleasant historical events.

Historical incident	Responses	Percentage
The 11th March 1970 accord	29	9.11%
Resubmission of Kurdish armed struggle after 1976	37	11.63%
The 1991 uprising	223	70.12%
The end of fratricide in 1998	174	54.71%
Collapse of the Ba'athist regime in 2003	158	49.68%
The execution of former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein	47	14.77%
First parliamentary elections in Kurdistan Region in 1992	51	16.03%
Other incidents	3	0.98%

Whilst Kamal Kirkuki, the former KDP head of the Kurdish parliament, hung a portrait of Mustafa Barzani in his office (Figure 7.2), his replacement – the PUK's Arsalan Baiyz – removed this immediately upon taking office in February 2012 (PUK leadership Council, no date) (Figure 7.3). This move was seen as provocative by the KDP, who expressed their anger publicly and privately – accusing the new head of parliament of disrespecting a national Kurdish symbol and 'spiritual father of Kurds' (Awene.com, 2012). This view of Barzani is offered by KDP politburo member Mahmud Muhammad, who argued that:

> Barzani is a personality of our country; he is also an Iraqi personality. If some people prefer not to hear that-that would not reduce from this person's charisma. Barzani as a symbol in Kurdistan who was able to lead the Kurdish liberation movement for decades is something undeniable. Therefore, if we don't politicise and partisanise everything, we can decide more calmly on these issues… if we or anybody else, do not pull Mala Mustafa Barzani into KDP slot; if you see him as a leader

of Kurdish liberation movement as at a point of history; we cannot erase history because this or that party is not happy with it. (MM.8)

Figure 7.2 Office of president of Kurdistan parliament. Kamal Kirkuki, then KDP President of the Kurdistan Parliament, with guest in the Presidential Office (2012). Photo: KurdPress.com

Figure 7.3 Office of president of Kurdistan parliament. The same office during the Presidency of Arsalan Bayiz. The portrait of Mustafa Barzani has been replaced by a joint portrait of Jalal Talabani and Masoud Barzani. Source: Awene.com

In addition to demonstrating the identity crisis in the KRI, this

285

shows the logic of difference in action, with internal differences marginalised in the face of a 'constitutive outside' (in Iraq and beyond). The logic of equivalence can also be seen here: while there are major political and social divisions in the 'others' camp (Iraqi Arabs with various Sunni and Shi'ite factions and possibly Turkmen), nationalist discourse attempts to group all these differences into a single 'non-Kurd' other, often figured as 'enemies of the Kurdish people' or 'the enemies of our people'.[9] It is to these depictions of the enemy that I now turn.

7.5 Depiction of the enemy

Jawad Mella
16 hours ago ·

ان كوردستان وطن الشعب الكوردي منذ الازل وسيبقى وطن الشعب الكوردي الى الابد، ولا بد من رفع شعار استقلال وطننا كوردستان وبناء الدولة الكوردية ان عاجلا ام أجلا ولو كره الكارهون... اما الذي يعتقد ان كوردستان كلمة لتزيين بيانات منظمته بها او الذي يعتقد ان كوردستان نادي اجتماعي او شركة تجارية او فريق رياضي لتسلق الجبال فليرفع الشعار الذي يريده...

See Translation

Like · Comment · Share   3

👍   and 67 others like this.

Figure 7.4 A Facebook post by Jawad Mella, a well-known Syrian Kurdish politician, writer and activist. Source: Facebook.com/jawad.mella

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[9] This term is largely used by (although is not exclusive to) the two major parties in the KRI, and is widely used among the public in the KRI. Very few statements by the major political parties fail to include it.

Figure 7.4 shows a post from the official account of the Syrian Kurdish politician Jawad Mala. The Post reads as follows:

> *Kurdistan* has been the *homeland* of the *Kurdish people* since the *beginning of time* and it will remain the *homeland* of the *Kurdish people*. For ever. It is ought to raise the slogan for the *independent* of *our homeland Kurdistan* and to build *the Kurdish state* soon or later despite the hatred of *haters*. […]. Facbook.com/jawad.mella

The post contains signifiers typical to the Kurdish nationalist discourse whether in the KRI or beyond. The signifiers are emphasized to show their relevance to the current discussions. The signifier of enemy stands out though, as it is evidenced by expression 'hatred of haters'.

As discussed earlier, theorists of relationality consider the depiction of enemies as a common method of identity construction. It is also at the heart of the political domain of social life and – as we have seen – the 'primacy of the political' is of fundamental importance for PDT. Intrinsic to the political is the friend/enemy dichotomy, as noted in the work of Carl Schmitt, to which PDT is highly indebted. For him, dichotomies are central to social life: in the moral realm we talk of 'good' and 'evil'; in the aesthetic realm of 'beauty' and 'ugliness'. The main point to make here is that the identity 'us' is always constructed and reconstructed in relation to an 'other', which PDT labels the 'constituted outside'. This relationship is charged with antagonism, with identity potentially negated by its

other and the very realisation of one's identity necessitating the negation of that 'other's identity. This relationship with the other is essential to the discursive construction of identity and complements self-representation (Gard & Rojo, 2008, p. 6). More importantly, the process of identity construction through discourse operates mainly through the logics of equivalence and difference.

These two logics can be identified in a speech made by Masoud Barzani. Speaking at a gathering in memory of the *Anfal* campaigns in Bahidnan on the 2nd of September 2012, he stated:[10]

> The *enemy* has not differentiated between Kurds from Zaxo to Khanaqin[11], therefore, we should not be different; only being a Kurd was a crime for the *enemy*. To that end we need further alignment and unity. (*Xebat*, 2012: 1, emphasis added)

Here, Barzani seeks to delineate the boundaries between the Kurdish people and their enemy. The Kurds are seen as one,

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[10] Bahdinan or Badinan, in Kurdish (بادينان) is the second geographical and dialectical area of Kurdistan Region-Iraq at the northern part, which is dialect also called (Badini/ Bahdini or more formally, Northern Kirmanji) (Gunter, 2003, p. 28). It contains large areas including the city and province of Duhok and parts of Mosul province. The area is the birth place and inner constituency of KDP. The other geographical and dialectical area is Soran which, consists of areas belonging to Erbil, Slemany and large areas within and around Kirkuk, Salahaddin and Diyala provinces (Bruinessen, 2007).

[11] Zaxo is a border town in the northern KRI near Turkey. Khanaqin is a Kurdish dominated town near Baghdad. While Zaxo falls within the administration of Kurdistan Regional Government, Khanaqin is in a disputed area (areas which are ethnically mixed and whose governance is disputed by the Iraqi government and the KRG).

regardless of their internal differences. This is only possible because the 'other' or the enemy is present. This is, I would argue, a clear manifestation of the logics of equivalence and difference.

To elaborate further, the logic of difference is premised on antagonisms where there is the possibility of creating unity. The elements of a system may be different to each other, but as their relation to the outside is equally negative they can form a unity against that outside (a 'system', in the language of PDT) (Laclau, 1996, pp. 40-41). Thus, although Kurds might be 'different' from each other at various levels and on diverse grounds, the very fact that they are all equally subject to oppression by the enemy (in the case of the above message by Barzani, the previous Ba'ath regime and its current counterparts) unites them. Thus, the very thing that divides them, paradoxically, is that which also unites them. In effect it results in the subversion of differences.

The signifier 'enemy' has been articulated in various ways by Kurdish nationalists in the KRI. It is sometimes utilised in an abstract and universal manner, functioning as a ready-made label, as in an interview response by Arsalan Baiyz, who stated that '[i]t is the enemies who principally do not believe in Kurds rights' (ABZ.4). On other occasions, it is used to refer to specific groups or parties, as in an interview response by Najiba Ahmad (from the

289

KDSP):

> In principle, both *Sunni* and *Shi'ite* have the same
> viewpoint on the Kurdish issue. Each in its own part has
> a chauvinist [nation-worship] rational and do not account
> for the willing of Kurdish people. (NA.5, emphasis added)

Here, the signifier 'enemy' refers to two other national or ethnic groups.

Additionally, there is always ample room in the 'enemy' signifier for inclusion. In another statement by Najiba Ahmad, the role of 'enemy' is ascribed to global superpowers, regional and neighbouring states:

> A shared policy of the dominant states and at the
> meantime, the dominant global superpower states who
> are not with annexation of what has been cut off from
> Kurdistan or 'those disputed places' as it has been
> written so in the constitution. (NA.1)

Laclau maintains that in any system of signification the full representation of that system is possible only if the logic of difference is secondary to the logic of equivalence. Accordingly, if we take the signifier of 'enemy' as a system of signification we find the logics of differential and equivalence operating simultaneously. However, to enable the full representation of the system and to give 'enemy' its full meaning, the logic of equivalence should dominate.

Since 1991, a small number of occasions when 'enemy' was fully

(or near fully) constituted can be identified. When the Kurdish uprising erupted in March 1991, Kurdish parties and people were, at least for a short period of time, able to forget their differences and unite in the face of a common enemy. From then on, almost all Kurdish political parties (who had Peshmerga forces in the mountains) and also Jash auxiliary forces did participate in the fight against the Iraqi government in the KRI. Iraqi forces then retaliated, regaining control over areas in the majority of liberated towns and cities, leading to an exodus of Kurds (Lawrence, 2008, pp. 51-52). Here again, fear overrode internal differences and united Kurds in the face of the enemy. During Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, fear of the Iraqi government produced a similar atmosphere. This was soon replaced by the desire for revenge, uniting almost all Kurdish political parties against a 'common enemy' (ABC News, 2003).

Another juncture at which the signifier 'enemy' was fully manifested occurred at another moment at which the 'enemy' was back in 2003 when the Turkish government decided to intervene in Iraqi affairs through the northern borders. The move was understandably conceived by Kurds as threatening and was considered an excuse by Turkey in order to intervene in KRI and prevent any undesired moves towards independence by Kurdish political parties. The situation united Iraqi Kurds around a common

'enemy'. It has been suggested that this reaction resulted in the Turkish government abandoning their plan (International Crisis Group, 2003, p. 8). The event was another rare historical moment at which the logic of difference was undermined in Kurdish political discourse and the signifier of enemy was filled by the signified (Turkey).

The rapid advance of ISIS and its confrontations with Peshmerga forces in Iraq since June 2014 provides another example, with ISIS functioning as the 'enemy' for Kurds. This is evident in the public and private discourse of Kurdish political parties and in the discourses of KRI residents more broadly. Although signs of political division remain, ISIS is understood as an undisputed enemy of all Kurds and has worked as a unifying factor for almost all Kurdish political and social factions.

It is worth noting that in the crisis of 2012 (resulting from disagreements between the KRG and the central Iraqi government), the signification functions of 'enemy' were not fully realised. This failure, I contend, was mainly due to dominance of the logic of difference over the logic of equivalence in Kurdish political discourse: the differences between Kurdish political parties were strong enough to undermine their commonality. The situation resulted from the conflicting attitudes of Kurdish political parties

towards Iraqi President al-Malik. Masoud Barzani sought to depict al-Malik as a dictator, opening his Newroz speech on the 20th of March 2012 by stating that:

> 2500 years ago *Kurds* rose up and rejected *dictatorship*. Ever since then, Kurds have struggled and fought for the sake of their freedom and liberty...this means we are a living *people* who will not accept subordination and oppression from anybody. We are a people who must be free and live freely. This is a lesson for *us* and *other* people. (Xebat.net, 2012a, translation by author)

Portrayals of al-Malik as an enemy of Kurds and Kurdistan were common in the PDK's political and media discourse, but many other parties – including the PUK and the Change Movement – were less forthright in their criticisms (although the KIG and KIU supported Barzani) (Joel, 2012). Even Jalal Talabani, himself a Kurd, did not support Barzani's move to topple al-Malik: when Barzani intensified his efforts to unseat al-Malik, *Assabah* (a newspaper widely considered to be al-Malik's official organ) carried the headline 'Talabani: the alternative to al-Malik is al-Malik' (*Assabah*, 2011, p.1). This issue has once again revealed the divided nature of Kurdish political discourse.

In sharp contrast to the critical language used by the KDP when referring to al-Malik, the language of prominent PUK members was neutral at best. Interviewed by the newspaper *Asharq Al-Awsat*, Adel Murad – a member of the PUK's politburo – dismissed

Barzani's attempts to obtain a no-confidence vote against al-Malik, even going so far as to suggest that 'the current reality requires us to stand against any attempts to replace al-Malik, who is one of our closest allies.' (Sheikhani, 2012)

Nawshirwan Mustafa, of the Change Movement, responded to this issue by stating that:

> We don't know what the fight is about…one day the President of the Region got angry… he did not come to us, he did not ask us saying let's fight over Kirkuk; let's go fight over Oil and Gas law. We still don't know… how much gain the foreign companies get from the oil and gas deals, what is the share of Kurdistan, where does its revenue go, how the money is spent. A fight which is not mine, I will not go to take it. (NM.1)

Prominent members of the PUK and KDP displayed contrasting attitudes when asked about their opposing positions on al-Malik. Mahmud Muhammad of the KDP downplayed the seriousness of this political division, stating that 'what is important is that while there might be different views we should not have different positions' (MM.1). More realistically, Arsalan Baiyz of the PUK admitted the existence of a division in Kurdish political discourse, stating 'it is true, there is not a unified Kurdish discourse on this case' (ABZ.2).

Interestingly, al-Maliki and his allies also sought to depict the 'other' negatively. Here, there was a particular focus on Barzani, but this was implicitly directed against Kurds in general. For

example, in 2011 the Kurdish newspaper *Hawlati* reported that al-Malik had said that 'the Kurdish politicians are guests in Baghdad; it is time to cut the hands of some of them' (*Hawlati*, 2011). Speaking to the Kurdish TV channel NRT in May 2012, al-Malik accused Barzani of trying to strengthen Kurdistan while weakening Iraq. He also accused Barzani of breaching the Iraqi constitution in various ways, and in particular through illegal oil exports (NRT-TV, 2012).[12]

To reiterate, the division of policy and attitude in the KRI towards the depicted enemy 'al-Maliki' and The State of Law Coalition (SLC) was most felt in the failure of Masoud Barzani and his allies from smaller Shi'ite and Sunni parties in withdrawing confidence from al-Maliki's government and forcing him to step down. (Dodge, 2012)

The signifier 'enemy', then, acquires a particular meaning at certain historic junctures, but is essentially empty of substance. In other words, it can mean many things whilst providing no meaning itself. The very emptiness of 'enemy' is the condition of its existence. By using the term along with other signifiers, dominant Kurdish

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[12] Oil and gas have been among the most troubling areas of disagreement between the Iraqi government and the KRG since the establishment of the new Iraqi government after the 2003 invasion.

nationalist discourse is able to enact the logic of equivalence such that all non-Kurdish others are presented as a single front. Kurds can then be positioned as the opposite of this front, creating a complete opposition between the two sides. The depiction of an enemy in this way is essential for discourses of political nationalism, and Kurdish nationalist discourse is no exception.

The identity of the 'enemy' for Kurds in the KRI varies through time. At times the Iraqi government which, represents the majority group has functioned as the enemy; at other times the majority group (national or/and ethnic group) has functioned as the enemy. Neighbouring states could well represent the enemy at a wider level, particularly given their hostility towards Kurds and their political ambitions. In addition, other minority groups may function as the 'enemy', as when the Iraqi Turkmen Front opposed Kurdish claims to Kirkuk.[13] Most consistently, however, it is Arabs who function as the 'enemy' for Kurds: something supported by the survey results. When asked about which group was closest to them, Sunni and Shi'ite Arabs received the fewest votes – just 3% and 2% respectively (Table 7.4).

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[13] Since their foundation in 1995 the ITF – made up of Turkmen in Erbil and Kirkuk – have largely supported Turkish foreign policy in Iraq. They do not use terms such as 'Kurdistan' and 'Kurdistan Region', instead using 'Northern Iraq' (a term disliked by Kurds). The tension between the ITF and Kurdish political parties (in particular the KDP and the PUK) furthered heightened after 2003 when Kurds came to dominate city administration. (Anderson & Stansfield, 2009)

The groups that have functioned as 'enemy' over time can be grouped into 'external enemies' and 'internal enemies' (or 'the enemy within'). The latter has, at different times, included opposition parties or people who fall outside the hegemonic discourse. In the various texts analysed in this research, 'enemy' is utilised in a number of ways and to describe different groups. In

Table 7.4 Respondents' preferred ethnic and national groups

Ethnic or national group	responses	percentage
Sunni Arabs	10	3.01%
Shi'ite Arabs	7	2.10%
Chaldea-Assyrian/Christians	67	20.18%
Muslim Kurds	191	57.53%
Kurdish Yazidis	136	40.96%
Kurdish Kakaiy	153	46.08%
Turkmen	22	6.62%
All of the above	47	14.15%
None of them	32	9.63%
	332	

In the next section I analyse this phenomenon further.

7.5.1 Enemy at the symbolic level

Ey Reqib – the national anthem of Kurdistan and the KRI – is interesting to explore for its symbolic depiction of the 'enemy', not least as its title means 'oh foe' and features in the first line of the

anthem:

> Oh foe who watch us, the nation whose
>
> Language is Kurdish is alive
>
> It cannot be defeated by makers of weapons
>
> Of any time (KRG, 2010b)

The term 'foe', then, is central to this particularly public discourse. In these lines the existence of the Kurds is positioned against the signifier 'enemy' ('foe'), operating at its highest, abstract form (no reference is made regarding the identity of the enemy and, as before, the signifier itself is empty of meaning). 'Enemy', here, is a 'floating signifier' that can be filled with a specific meaning drawn from a variety of discourses.[14]

The meaning of 'enemy', then, is entirely dependent on the scope and limits of the discourse being articulated. Since 1991 a variety of historically produced discourses have articulated different enemies. The Iraqi government was considered the major enemy of Kurds immediately after 1991, and was referred to using a

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[14] Following de Saussure's structural linguistic approach, a 'sign' is a fundamental unit of linguistic analysis composed of the 'signifier' (steam of sounds) and the 'signified' (the concept) (Laclau, no date). Laclau and Mouffe make use of the term 'floating or empty signifiers', defined by Laclau as 'signifier[s] without a signified' (Laclau, 1996, p. 36). However, they are not empty in a strict manner but rather 'are the signs that different discourses struggle to invest with meaning in their own particular way' (Philips & Jorgensen, 2002, p. 28). In other words, the empty signifiers are discourse specific.

variety of terms, including 'the Ba'ath regime', 'the fascist regime', 'the Baghdad dictatorial regime' and 'the Ba'athist government'.[15] This lasted until the establishment of the first Kurdish regional government in May 1992, when an internal 'fifth column' also functioned as 'the enemy'.[16]

During the intra-Kurdish conflicts between 1993 and 1997 the nature of the 'enemy' varied depending on the party discourse. For instance, when fighting broke out between the PUK and the Kurdistan Islamic Movement (KIM) in December 1993, Islamists came to function as the 'enemy' in PUK discourse, which portrayed them as collaborating with Iran (Stansfield, 2003b, p. 97). When fighting between the PUK and KDP occurred in May 1994, each party depicted the other as the enemy of the Kurds and Kurdistan (Stansfield, 2003b, p. 97), often using the term '*Jash'* or referring to them as 'those who sold themselves to the enemy'. Also important to note here are the struggles between the KDP, the PUK and the Kurdistan Workers Party in early and late 1990, which saw the PKK and its leader Abdullah Ocalan declared 'the enemy', particularly by the KDP (Bird, 2004, p. 99).

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[15] Figure 7.5 is a depiction of Saddam Hussein, the then Iraqi President, as the enemy of Kurds.

Figure 7.5 A cartoon mimicking former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, *Kurdistani Niwe* 24th April 1992. The speech bubble reads 'Kurds, I am asking you in a fully democratic manner: which one do you want?'

In the 2000s, the rhetoric of the 'global war on terror', impacted on 'enemy' construction in the KRI, with 'terrorists' functioning as a powerful manifestation of 'the enemy'. Two key incidents in 2001 also contributed to this: the assassination of Franso Hariri – a veteran Christian Assyrian KDP politician and the Governor of Erbil Province – by the Islamist terrorist group Jund al-Islam in February (Gunter, 2003, p.63; 2011, p. 114); and the murder of 42 Peshmerga fighters belonging to the PUK in the village of Kheli Hama by the same group in September (Muir, 2003).

The events of 2003 that brought the end to the Ba'ath party regime in Baghdad contributed largely in the enduring picture of the enemy which has always been there with varying intensity to that of the

Ba'ath party regime.

Following the Strategic Agreement between the KDP and the PUK in 2007, the manner in which internal 'enemies' had been constructed in the language and discourse of these two major parties has changed. The popular Change Movement now occupied a less intense form of internal 'enemy'. Indeed, the term 'enemy' was not used alone to depict the Change Movement: this would be inappropriate given that many of its prominent figures were formerly members of the PUK. Rather, terms such as 'enemies of our experiment', 'opponents of our people' and 'failed leaders' were employed.

'The enemy', then, is a signifier that floats in circles of articulation. It is given content through particular discourses at particular historic moments. Since June 2014 the term has been used to depict ISIS. Despite the floating nature of 'the enemy', its presence has been of significant importance for the Kurdish nation and its people.

7.5.2 Articulation of symbols

PDT and ethno-symbolism both note that the symbolic power of national and ethnic symbols is important to consider when analysing processes of identity formation. Those whose discourses

produce the 'nation' are also aware of their importance. In particular, depicting national leaders in symbolic forms is of paramount importance (Conversi, 1995, p. 74; Smith, 2009, p. 33). In order to analyse this, PDT focuses primarily on the instrumental character of symbols and the 'power of articulation', which theorises how discourses are endowed with symbolic power. PDT also acknowledges the inevitable – and potentially constructive – role played by myths in grounding action, even though they are often historically inaccurate. Ethno-symbolism, meanwhile, acknowledges the productive power of symbols in processes of collective identity formation. By utilising these two approaches alongside each other, it is possible to provide an in-depth analysis of the importance of symbolism in process of national identity construction.

It is important to note that the symbols used by nationalists may not be historically accurate (Smith, 2009; 1999, pp. 63-65). This does not necessarily affect their influence, however. Rather, symbols are re-constructed by specific actors in particular contexts. There is no universal concept of Newroz, for example; nor is it exclusively celebrated by Kurds. Since the early 1930s, however, it has played an important role in Kurdish nationalist politics (Aydin, 2005, pp. 45-56). Historically, it simply marked the Kurdish and Iranian New Year and the end of winter, but Kurdish nationalists

re-articulated it after the First World War. Since then, Newroz day (March 21st) has served as a day to celebrate (potential) Kurdish freedom. Due to its long historical roots, it has been widely accepted by major Kurdish political and social groups as the Kurdish day of freedom, achieving a level of approval that has evaded national figures such as Mustafa Barzani: 88% of survey respondents accepted Newroz either as a Kurdish national feast or as the national feast of the KRI (Table 7.5).

Table 7.5 Respondents' view on Newroz

Answer	Responses	Percentage
It is a Kurdish national feast and I consider it my own feast	225	63.02%
It is a Kurdish national feast but I do not consider it my own feast	20	5.60%
It is a national feast in the Kurdistan Region and I consider it my own feast	53	14.84%
It is the beginning of spring but I do not consider it my own feast	47	13.16%
Other responses	12	3.36%
	357	

Mustafa Barzani's relative unpopularity can partly be explained by the aforementioned conflicts between the KDP and the PUK. Also of importance is the fact that his historical legacy is much more recent (it is less than a half century old). Indeed, a large number of current Kurdish politicians were personally involved in the intra-Kurdish conflicts of the 1960s or experienced them in one way or another. This results in what I call the 'fragmentation of memory',

which has two main consequences: collective symbols can play a great role in the process of identity formation regardless of their historical accuracy; and the place and role of these symbols is socially and historically determined.

For PDT, then, the symbols utilised by Kurdish nationalists are floating signifiers that can be filled with contested meanings and contents. In analysing the role currently played by the symbol Mustafa Barzani, for example, it is important to explore Islamic Kurdish political discourse. Since this emerged in the mid-1980s and especially, since the establishment of the Kurdistan Islamic Movement (KIM) back in 1986, a number of historic Kurdish leaders (including Mustafa Barzani, Sheikh Mahmoud and Qazi Muhammad) have been appropriated to construct a specifically Islamic Kurdish history, which claims that almost all historic Kurdish nationalist leaders had an Islamic background and were 'educated from the mosque'.

As noted above, the contested depictions of Newroz (a historical event) and Mustafa Barzani (a political leader) are best analysed through linking ethno-symbolism and PDT. Although both of these symbols have historic roots, their contemporary symbolic power is contingent upon the social, political and historic context of the KRI. Each particular discourse – whether nationalist, religious or neither

– fills these 'signifiers' with different (and often conflicting) meanings.

7.5.3 The complex issue of independence

Independence has been a goal for Kurds since the creation of the first Kurdish political movement in the modern period. However, in the KRI the issue has increased in importance since the Iraqi general election in January 2005, when the 'Kurdish Referendum Movement' – consisting of activists from Kurdistan and across the Kurdish diaspora – conducted an unofficial referendum, which asked Kurdish voters in Iraq 'whether they favour being part of Iraq or an independent Kurdish state'. In a press release issued from London on the 8th February that year they claimed that 98% of voters favoured an independent Kurdish state, and announced that they had handed a 1.7 million signature petition demanding a referendum on independence for the KRI to the United Nations (Aliraqi.org, 2010; UNPO, 2004). In recent years, Masoud Barzani has occasionally referred to the right of Kurdish statehood: he has asserted the right of Kurds to an independent state on more than one occasion and in 2012 stated that if 'Iraq [is] plunged back into dictatorship we will return to our own people to decide its fate.' (Kurdistan Region Presidency, 2012b) In the same year, he also framed Kurdish independence as:

> a decisive issue. It is a *natural* right for us, it is a
> *legitimate* right for us, but it depends on how and when

> we are able to practice it. It should be at a time that will be stable and suitable. It cannot happen through emotions. Nor is it a sin to talk about. If we don't make a decision about it, nobody will. The world is changing fast. Nobody knows what will happen in the next 2-3 years. We have to step carefully. (Malpress, 2012: emphasis added, translation modified)[17]

He reiterated his position on Kurdish independence at a conference of Kurdish youth From the Four Parts of Kurdistan' 15th in 2012, stating that:

> The whole world should know that it is a normal right, a lawful right, a Godly right that he has given to us. I am not with saying that a certain state or government can give us our right. (Kurdistan Region Presidency, 2012a, translation by author).

An overwhelming majority of survey respondents (85%) stated that they are in favour of independence for the KRI (Table 7.6). Similarly, all political party leaders and high-ranking party members interviewed clearly articulated the Kurdish right to independence (see table 7.7). However, some of them spoke of the importance of paying attention to contemporary political realities and current possibilities. For instance, Arsalan Baiyz stated that 'it is the right of every Kurd to aspire to a state for their nation and work for it, however, we should know that to have a state we need to get prepared for it.' (AB.1)

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[17] The articulation of 'natural' and 'legitimate' rights are frequently used in Kurdish nationalist discourse across the political spectrum. Indeed, every politician interviewed for this research uses at least one of these terms (Table 7.1).

Table 7.6 Responses to the question on independence for KRI

Answer choice	Responses	Percentage
Yes	302	84.59%
No	26	7.28%
Don't know	29	8.12%
	357	

Table 7.7 Kurdish politicians on independence.

Politician	Statement on independence
Mr. Abu-Bakr Ali (KIU)	'In terms of principles, self-determination is the right of every nation and we consider the people of Kurdistan a nation therefore, self-determination is their right.' (AA.1)
Mr.Ali Bapir (KIG)	'According to Islam, Kurdish people have the right to statehood.'(AB.1)
Mr.Arsalan Bayiz (PUK)	'It is the right of Kurds to dream about a Kurdish state and work for it.' (ABZ.1)
Mr.Balen Abdulla (KTP)	'The only way is the way that has also been paved for by the universal declaration of human rights. This has given Kurds the right to decide whether they want to stay within Iraq or not.' (BA.1)
Mr. Dana Said Sofy (PUK)	'...but it does not mean that there is not such an intention, desire and dream from the side of the political forces.'(DS.1)
Mr.Mahmud Muhammad (KDP)	'Talking about the creation of a Kurdish state is neither haram nor a shame, it's not something out of the international norms and law.' (MM.2)
Miss.Najiba Ahmed (KDSP)	'The Kurdish people like all other nations it is their right to become independent and live independently.' (NA.1)
Mr. Nawsherwan Mustafa (CM)	'It is a natural right for the Kurds for their aim to be the establishment of a state.'(NM.1)
Mr. Osman haji Marif (KWCP)	'Not an independent Kurdish state but an independent state in Kurdistan.' (OM.1)
Mr.Samir Saleem (KIU)	'It is the right of Kurds, like any other nation to have its own state and its own independence. It is true in the legal and human rights terms as it is true in the religious terms.' (SS.1)

In his short 2012 Newroz message the CM leader Nawshirwan Mustafa outlined his party's vision for independence (the topic took up more than half of his speech), articulating a unique identity discourse in the process. Notably, like other Kurdish politicians, he defended the KRI's right to statehood, but implicitly questioned its ability to realise this in the contemporary climate. This gave voice to the concerns of other major Iraqi Kurdish opposition parties and independent Kurdish intellectuals. This tension can be illustrated in the following extract:

> My second message is about our wholesome vision for our *highest national aspiration*, which is the *independent* Kurdistan and the establishment of the State of Kurdistan. It is for this aim that many generations have risen, an aim that *tens of thousands of our citizens have bequeathed their lives to*, and for which the *whole nation* and country have endured *mass destruction and genocide. But the independent Kurdistan is not something that can be achieved by rhetoric.* It is an establishment, the pillars of which have to be laid on the ground. The Independent Kurdistan should be built as a political establishment, with *a written national accord* in the format of a constitution and a set of laws, that enjoys the support of the citizens, with the objective of organising the political process and *the competition between the different political groups*, under the auspices of a set of national institutions, such as *national administration, national army, national security* and *national high courts*, all of which *should belong to the people collectively* and not to the ruling elites only. In addition to the political establishment, the Independent Kurdistan should also be a social and an economic establishment, that requires strong economic infrastructure and necessitate the prevalence of the *social harmony* between the different sections, classes and regionalised, in order that every single citizen of Kurdistan Region feels content with the dominance of at least minimum levels of *social justice*, to be enjoying access to *equal and appropriate opportunities* to better themselves, and to benefit from the *national treasures* and the over and underground riches of the country.

> The Independent Kurdistan should also be a civic and cultural establishment that harnesses a formal language, national press and national universities. It requires the emancipation of the civic society by liberating the individuals from the narrow tribal and regionalised allegiances and adopts a comprehensive allegiance to the Nation and the Homeland. (Kurdishmedia.com, 2012, emphasis added)

The counter-discourse evident here emerged after the strengthening of Kurdish opposition following the emergence of the CM in 2009. Prior to this, the nationalist discourses of the PUK and KDP had dominated the political field, with occasional dissent from the two major Islamic parties and smaller parties (including the Iraqi Workers Communist party); and from some prominent Kurdish intellectuals both home and abroad. This dissent arose from ideological and historical differences, but given the limited support or reach of these actors it was unable to make a significant impact on the political map and remained at the margins of political life. This changed with the emergence of the CM, whose dissenting discourse posed a serious threat to hegemonic discourses of independence in the KRI[18].

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[18] The CM's participation in the KRG government following the September 2013 elections has subjected the party to fierce criticism from both within and outside the party. The party has, at some points, been accused of compromising over some of its own political and administrative principles, values and promises. The criticism may be seen as an indication of the existence of some form of civic society in KRI which is capable of transcending the dominant Particracy discussed earlier in this study.

This division on independence is not confined to the former opposition parties, however. The PUK's Jalal Talabani – the closest ally of Barzani – has, in recent years, repeatedly dubbed independence for the KRI as 'a poetic dream' and 'impossible' (Reuters, 2009). He is also associated with the well-known claim that 'a Kurdish state is a poetic imagination'. This has been fiercely criticised by other parties and by grassroots actors. A Facebook page has been set up called 'Kurdish State is Not Impossible', for

Figure 7.6 The Facebook page 'Kurdish state is not impossible'.

Example (Figure 7.6).[19] The self-description statement of the page says:

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[19] This page was created in 2010. Many different groups and pages were created later, some belonging to Kurdish political parties and others claiming to be independent. They serve as major public forums to disseminate political views from competing political and social fronts in the KRI (and beyond). At times, they become 'virtual battlefields', with arguments between members or supporters of rival parties; and between ideological, cultural, ethnic and national rivals.

> The purpose of this page is to protest against some remarks by Jalal Talabani (the current Iraqi president and secretary general of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan-Iraq), especially remarks expressed during his latest interview with TRT Arabic (a Turkish state channel) in which he stated 'the Kurdish state is impossible'. We would like to express our disapproval of his remarks and stand against any similar political standing which denies Kurds the very basic right of deciding their fate like any other nation in the world. (Kurdish State is Not Impossible, 2010)

At the time of writing, the hegemonic nationalist discourse in the KRI has been threatened with dislocation by alternative political discourses that seek to fill the signifiers 'nation', 'independence', 'homeland', 'Peshmerga' and others, with new content. This counter-discourse was clearly evident in the poems of Sherko Bekas especially, around and after the 2009 national elections in the KRI. Regarded as one of the prominent poets of Kurdish nationalism, he unequivocally supported this new current in Kurdish political discourse. His poem 'Now a Girl is My Homeland' contains the lines:

> We will strip this history totally down
>
> We will review its words from the beginning
>
> We will ask the mountain anew
>
> Who says you are a hero?
>
> We will say to snow, who says you are pure?
>
> We will tell the songs, who says you are sacred? (Bekas, 2013)

This narrative presents a clear challenge to hegemonic Kurdish

nationalist discourse, demystifying a number of its 'taken-for-granted' political myths. It also problematizes dominant nationalist narrative, which has long been considered to be 'objective'; and touches on the founding ideological signifiers of the nationalist discourse, which can be traced back to the 1961 September Revolution: history, military struggle, political leaders and historical symbols. The mountains of the poem ostensibly, represent military struggle (mountains have provided shelter to the Peshmerga and fleeing Kurds); whilst political leaders are represented by snow and historical leaders are invoked through the reference to songs.

This dislocating discourse is – like the dominant one – divided along political and ideological lines. Along with the ambiguous ideological stance of the Change Movement,[20] there exist a number of competing ideologies, with Islamism featuring prominently. The survey results support this: whilst independence is widely accepted as a desirable goal by the public and political parties, more 'everyday' concerns are also deemed of significant importance.

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[20] The Change Movement has been widely criticised for its ideological ambiguity. Its members are largely drawn from former members of other parties who had grown discontented and so far it has been reluctant to formulate a clear ideology. Many of its members are former members of the two main Islamic parties (the KIU and KIG): critics maintain that they have shifted the ideological balance of the Change Movement in favour of Islamic religious principles.

When asked which statements they most closely associated with, 47% of survey respondents chose 'I am with democracy, freedom and social justice before anything else'; whilst 40% chose 'I am with the independent Kurdistan state before anything else' (Table 7.8).

Table 7.8 Response to preferred expression of support

Expression	Response	Percentag
I am with the independent Kurdistan state before anything else	136	40.10%
I am with freedom, democracy and justice before anything else	152	47.05%
I am with the establishment of Shari 'a law before anything else	34	10.52%
None of the above	1	0.30%
	323	

7.5.4 Political Islam and Kurdishness

We have seen, then, how the dominant Kurdish nationalist discourse in the KRI has struggled to hegemonise its discourse of Kurdish identity, and has been in near-constant conflict with competing discourses. As Philips and Jorgensen note, to understand 'a particular discursive construction of the social', it is necessary to analyse its counter-discourses (2002, p.38). To this end, it is necessary to undertake a detailed analysis of Islamic parties' religious discourses, which have developed dramatically since 1991 and differ – sometimes fundamentally – from those

produced by nationalist and secular Kurdish political parties. These differences have recently been foregrounded by the Arab Spring.[21]

Islamic parties draw on the Islamic elements of Kurdish identity whilst disregarding its pre-Islamic elements. This is apparent in the discourse used by the Islamic parties; and is manifested in the forms of culture they promote and in their political and religious discourse. Ali Bapir, the leader of the KIG occasionally emphasises on the Islamic characteristics of Kurdish identity whilst criticising mainstream nationalist and 'secularist' trends in the KRI. He, along with party members, have also acted provocatively on the symbolic level. On more than one occasion he has refused to stand for the *Ey Reqib* anthem (as is customary in the KRI) and he has expressed his disapproval of the anthem, labelling it *haram* as a result of the (supposed) inappropriate expression in the line 'our religion and faith is the homeland only' (Salim, 2014).[22] When interviewed, he further explained this by recalling a discussion he held with a Kurdish nationalist: 'It says "our religion is our homeland." I said

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[21] Islamic parties use the term *A'elmanyekan* ('the seculars') to describe non-Islamic political parties and individuals in the KRI. This term is mostly used in a derogatory manner equally to 'unreligious' in a mostly traditional Kurdish society in KRI.

[22] Bapir also offered a more secular reason for refusing to rise for *Ey Reqib,* stating that it addresses the Kurds rather than the nation or the country; and so ignores non-Kurdish members of the KRI such as Turkmen and Assyrians. He suggested that a national anthem should be inclusive to all people who live in the KRI. (AB.6)

"the land cannot make religion, the land is prayed on. We have to save the land to practice religion on, we cannot make religion out of it."' (AB.6).

The more popular Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU) adopts a more moderate understanding of Islam, holding to an understanding of Kurdish identity that derives from their interpretation of Islam as both a religion and a political ideology. In their party constitution, they include the following among their main principles:

> The Kurdish people in terms of nationality, is *unique*, while in terms of religion is part of the *Islamic Ummah*, and it has an *equal right* with all other nations to include the right of *self-determination. Islam, Kurdish-ness and Kurdistani-ness* are the three main elements of the identity of Kurdish people.' (Kurdistan Islamic Union, n.d., emphasis added).

Here, Kurdish Islamic discourse shares some elements with mainstream Kurdish nationalist discourse: Kurds constitute a unique nation and have the right of self-determination, for example. However, it differs fundamentally in its cultural and ideological outlook, with the idea of *Ummah* – a pan-Islamic nation – central. This resonates with contemporary Islamic political discourse and particularly resembles the Muslim Brotherhood, to which the KIU is affiliated.

This link is made clear by a post on a KIU linked Facebook page

entitled 'Shaqam شەقام' ('The Street'), which details a rally held in Erbil by supporters of the KIU and KIG to condemn violence against supporters of the ousted Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi (of the Egyptian Islamic Brotherhood). The post reads 'Today Erbil said: I am part of the body which called Islamic *Ummah*, anyone who will not accept that is not from me and is a bastard Kurd.' (Figure 7.10) This is similar to the portrayal of Kurds as 'the orphans of the Islamic Ummah', which was common in the official discourse of the KIU during the mid-90s, and constituted an attempt to connect Kurds to global Islamism (Mine, 1994).

Figure 7.7. A 2013 post on the Facebook page 'Shaqam/شەقام, associated with the KIU. Source: facebook.com/Shaqam

By linking the Kurdish nation to the Islamic nation, the KIU seeks to counter attempts by secular nationalist discourses to dissociate Kurdish identity from characteristics perceived as Islamic; and from

attempts to 'modernise' Kurdish identity. Such attempts by secular Kurdish nationalist parties have so far failed in practice. Phrases such as 'Kurdistan: the centre of coexistence', rhetoric that positions Kurdistan as 'the haven or beacon of democracy' (Bruinessen, 2005, p. 19; Stansfield, 2003b, p. 184) and the framing of Kurdistan as 'an American and the West ally' are widely used in mainstream nationalist discourse in the KRI; and are accompanied by references to Kurds' pre-Islamic roots. This clearly demonstrates the areas of contestation between the mainstream nationalist discourse and Islamic nationalist discourse in the KRI.

It is also important to note that the discourse of the Islamic political parties retains a number of phrases associated with secular nationalist discourse, however. The current politburo member of the KIU, Abu-Bakr Ali, is considered among the more moderate leaders in the party's history. When asked whether he considered himself a Kurdish Muslim or a Muslim Kurd he responded:

> I am a Kurdish Muslim... this because it is a fact, before Islam came to this country Kurds existed. My Kurdish-ness is a fact. I was a Kurd then took the Islamic religion up. Kurdish-ness and Muslimness are two dimensions of my identity. They are not mutually exclusive. They are in fact complementary. (AK.1)

This question of self-definition was incorporated into the survey for those who identified as Kurdish and Muslim. Only 12% of respondents identified as 'Muslim Kurdish', whilst just over 40%

identified as 'Kurdish Muslim'. A further 19% believed there was no difference between these labels (see Table 7.9). This can be better understood if the results are compared with language and discourse

Table 7.9: Self-descriptors used by those who identify as both Kurdish and Muslim.

Answer	Responses	Percentage
Kurdish Muslim	127	41.50%
Muslim Kurd	38	12.41%
Kurdish	82	26.79%
There is not a difference between	59	19.28%
	306	

of other fundamentalist Kurdish Islamic figures. In one of his popular public speeches in 2013 the Erbil mosque preacher Mala Mazhar triggered a public outcry by stating that '[o]ur land and country, the governor and administrator and the police all may sacrifice to Hazrat Omar's shoes .'[23] (MalmoKurd, no date) Thus, while Islamic political discourses on Kurdish identity bear some resemblance to nationalist discourse, there are fundamental differences in that camp as well. There are visible attempts to bring the Islamic and Kurdish national characters together. Figure 7.8 demonstrates a striking example of such attempts.

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[23] This refers to Omar Ibn Al-Khattab (579-644), the second Caliph in Islamic history who accompanied Muhammed.

Figure 7.8: Kurdish pilgrims in the holy city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

7.6 Concluding remarks

Following the methodological guidelines of PDT, this chapter has analysed primary and secondary data regarding Kurdish identity formation in the KRI. As discussed in the previous chapter, 'crisis' is the master variable in PDA. In the case of Kurdish political discourse in the KRI, an 'identity crisis' explains the processes of articulation utilised by political actors. The Kurdish nation – like any other – lacks an 'objective' reality outside the social relations of competing political actors. It can, in other words, only function as an empty signifier, allowing the main political actors in the KRI to spend considerable effort (re)constructing their own articulation of

319

Kurdish identity, and attempting to hegemonies it. Utilising what PDT refers to as 'the logic of equivalence' and the 'logic of difference', they group 'others' together to create a 'constitutive outsider'; whilst simultaneously supressing internal differences in favour of their construction of Kurdish identity.

Thus, there is a paradox at the heart of Kurdish identity in the KRI: whilst political actors are central to its creation, they are also the source of the identity crisis. Having failed to create a physical Kurdish nation they transfer struggle to the realm of discourse, where they seek to give meaning to a series of empty signifiers, including 'nation', 'independence', 'enemy' and various national symbols. How they do this varies according to their ideological and religious persuasion. These issues are distributed across the various political factions in the KRI. They are relevant for the main secular parties (the KDP and the PUK) as well as for religious and (somehow) liberal parties such as the Change Movement.

Whilst Kurdish identity construction draws on a set of pre-existing tools (as per ethno-symbolism), then, its precise manifestation differs according to the historic, political and religious context. This resonates with the social constructionist claims of PDT, which sees identity as something that simultaneously operates through continuity (there are objective substances which underpin the

process of identity such as ethnic characteristics, cultural tools and materials) and change (which gives shape to identity through the political re-articulation of signifiers of identity). The relevant cultural tools in the KRI include Kurdistan as a geographical homeland, Newroz as a mythical tool, the Kurdish language and various national symbols. However, Kurdish identity has never been fully realised and is largely ambiguous and fragmented. Its precise manifestations – particularly since 1991 – are contingent upon the historic and social context in which it operates.

CHAPTER EIGHT

8 Conclusions

8.1 Structure

This thesis has utilised two major theoretical approaches to examine processes of Kurdish identity formation in the Kurdistan Region-Iraq between 1991 and 2014. In this chapter I present the concluding remarks in order to answer the core questions of this research:

1) What constitutes and determines Kurdish identity in the Kurdistan Region-Iraq?
2) To what extent is Kurdish identity in the Kurdistan Region-Iraq determined by cultural and historical factors or political agents?
3) What kind of collective Kurdish identity is formed in the Kurdistan Region-Iraq?
4) What are the main trajectories of that identity?

Additionally, the converging points between ethno-symbolism and political discourse theory will be identified; and the relevance of this research to the understanding of Kurdish identity formation in the KRI and the Middle East more broadly will be demonstrated.

8.2 Cultural and historical analysis of Kurdish identity formation

In chapters three and four, I showed how ethno-symbolism considers history and culture to be central to the production of collective identity (whether ethnic or national). For ethno-symbolists, collective identity formation draws on the historical ethnic roots of the identity in question, which are (re)presented through a series of cultural mechanisms. National identity is, therefore, largely dependent on the nature of the links between the 'nation' and its historical ancestors (whether factual or mythical); and their glories, sufferings, achievements and setbacks.

This research has found that Kurdish identity formation utilises a range of cultural and historical mechanisms described by ethno-symbolism. The major actors in producing Kurdish identity utilise as many historical and cultural tools as possible. Since 1991, this process has largely been ethno-nationalist, being grounded in Kurdish ethnic culture and history. The use of ethno-symbolist methods in chapters six and seven supports this, and shows that this has occurred on both the political and symbolic or cultural level. The primary political actors have been the Kurdish nationalist parties and Kurdish nationalist intellectuals. The result is an almost exclusively Kurdish political culture and public realm: the national flag and education, for example, are entirely Kurdish.

323

8.3 The three phases of Kurdish identity formation

The process of Kurdish identity formation in the KRI has gone through at least three major historical phases. The first of these lasted from 1991 to 2003 and it was largely characterised by an ambiguous form of Kurdish ethno-nationalism. The second was between 2003 and 2009, and saw Kurdish nationalism prevail; whilst the third covers the period up until the end of 2014 and sees new civic forms of Kurdish identity challenge previously hegemonic forms.

These shifts were largely determined by changes to the political and cultural conditions in the KRI, although these cannot be considered in isolation from the KRI's external relations. In the first period these were characterised by political instability, internal rivalry and economic constrains; resulting in an ambiguous ethnic-nationalist identity and discourse. However, the political, cultural and economic conditions created following the collapse of the Ba'athist regime in 2003 gave rise to a new form of Kurdish identity. This was characterised by a broader nationalist discourse, which responded to newly emerging political conditions in Baghdad which, focussed on political, cultural and economic reconstruction.

During this period, Kurdish nationalism was faced with renewed 'Iraqi Arab' nationalist discourses from the Iraqi government, which

was actively involved in a nation-building process (I note the importance of such external factors below). The final phase results from the emergence of issues such as nationalisation, human rights, social justice, democracy, freedom of speech and transparency within the KRI. These have been demanded by a new political generation and have left their mark on the process of identity formation. The Change Movement has been central here, and has presented a fundamental challenge to previously dominant and hegemonic discourses of Kurdish identity, offering a much more civically-minded counter-hegemonic discourse.

As noted above, the politics of the KRI cannot be isolated from its relationships with external actors; and these have also been important in determining the nature of Kurdish identity formation in the KRI. This is particularly relevant for the second phase, when the KRI's relationship with the Iraqi government was a dominant factor. Prior to 2003 and since 2009, however, external factors have been less influential on the political, cultural and economic conditions in the KRI.

8.4 The political construction of Kurdish national identity

The political and cultural realms are closely related, sometimes so much so that it is impossible to draw a clear boundary between them. At the theoretical level, both ethno-symbolism and PDT

argue that processes of identity formation are simultaneously political and cultural processes, with different contexts determining which factors are key.

At the political level, five main conclusions can be drawn from this research. Firstly, the process of identity formation in the KRI has suffered from an enduring crisis. Terms that form the foundations of nationalism might ordinarily be taken for granted, but they lack concrete meanings and so are open to contestation and ambiguity. This includes terms such as 'Kurdish nation', 'homeland', 'Kurdish state', 'Greater Kurdistan', 'Kirkuk', and 'the enemy', all of which have different meanings for different groups or individuals throughout the KRI. In PDT terms, they are 'floating signifiers', over which contesting discourses constantly struggle, with each trying to 'fill' these with their own particular meanings. For instance, 'Kurdish nation' can be understood in secular, ethnic or civic terms within the domain of secular Kurdish nationalist discourse. Meanwhile, there is a constant struggle between local or autonomous forms of nationalist discourse propagated by the KDP and the PUK and the pan-nationalist variant proposed by the PKK and its affiliated parties in the KRI, which rejects the creation of small Kurdistans within existing state boundaries and instead argues for the creation of a Greater Kurdistan. Kurdish Islamic discourse, meanwhile, views the 'Kurdish nation' as part of a

greater Islamic *Ummah*. In addition, 'Kurdish nation' is also discursively produced through its relationship with political values such as democracy, human rights and freedom. The later form has been presented by the newly emerged social, cultural and political conditioned mainly associated with the Change Movement, other opposition forces and the civil society in the KRI. Each discourse competing to provide meaning associates it with different concepts and produces it through pre-existing contexts. In short, there are multiple Kurdish identities in the KRI. This should not be understood as an anomaly, however: according to PDT all collective and national identities are constituted by crisis and ambiguity, albeit with varying degrees of intensity.

The second conclusion regarding the political dimensions of Kurdish identity formation in the KRI is that it is extremely fragmented, with splits along at least three major fault lines: ideology, politics and culture. The former is the result of different worldviews: it is upon these splits that political and social life in the region has fragmented. The main ideological trends involved in processes of identity construction in the KRI are Iraqi Kurdish nationalism, pan-Kurdish nationalism, Islamism, liberalism and communism. The fact that there are more than thirty political parties in a region of around five million population is a significant indication of the level of this ideological split.

Political polarisation may be demonstrated through the differing – and frequently opposed – political allegiances of Kurdish political parties. Various political orientations can be detected in the region, including the Iranian-Shi'ite orientation the Turkish-Sunni orientation, the Islamic *Ummah* orientation, the pan-Kurdish orientation and so on. This political polarisation has been a feature of the KRI since the early days of the March uprising in 1991 and has continues into the year 2014, showing no signs of stopping at the time of writing.

Cultural splits are also of great significance and can be seen in the lingual and regional divide that is paralleled by the enduring political divide between the KDP and the PUK. This divide has been framed by some as 'Barzanistan vs. Talabanistan' (Cordesman, 2003).

Thirdly, although the Kurdish nationalist narrative is hegemonic, since 2009 a counter-hegemonic narrative has emerged through popular protests and political movements, largely – but not exclusively – represented by the Change Movement. Whilst the traditional, nationalist narrative is characterised by Kurdish ethnic-nationalist features, this counter-hegemonic narrative is grounded in more civic and nationalist issues. Since its first election

328

campaign, one of the Change Movement's most frequently used phrases is 'the nationalisation of issues' (this has particularly been the case since the campaign for regional elections in September 2013). These 'issues' include the nationalisation of Peshmerga forces, external relations and symbolic events. The widely-used term 'Kurdistani' can also be related to shifting nationalist discourses post-2009 and is partly associated with the Change Movement's emerging counter-hegemonic discourse.

Fourthly, the main political actors in the KRI utilise a number of strategies to enhance their articulation of a particular form of Kurdish identity. Chief among these strategies are the logic of difference and the logic of equivalence. Through the former, they seek to suppress internal differences in Kurdish society in order to present Kurds and the Kurdish identity as a single, undisputed identity. Utilised parallel to this, the latter is used to construct those who oppose the 'Kurdish people' (or 'the people of Kurdistan', as they are sometimes framed) as a homogenous, undifferentiated ('equivalent') mass.

Finally, Kurdish identity construction is characterised by antagonism. The full realisation of Kurdish identity is conditioned by suppression of and enmity with non-Kurdish 'others', including Iraqi Arabs, Turks, Persians and other Arab national groups,

although the particular object of 'othering' varies according to the historical context. In order to construct a sense of Kurdishness, actors utilise various cultural tools to encourage hostility towards these groups. During the 1990s, for example, the Ba'athist government of Iraq came to fully represent the 'other' or the 'enemy'. Since terrorist killings in the KRI in 2001, the figure of 'the terrorist' and 'terrorist groups' have been constructed as 'others'. Yet in the absence of the Ba'athist regime, this 'other' required supplementation by the newly empowered Shi'ite Arabs and less powerful Sunni Arab groups in Iraq. However, since the advancement of ISIS into the KRI in August 2014, they have become Kurds' main 'enemy' and serve as an 'other' against which Kurds can identify.

8.5 Civic vs. ethnic identity

It would be an overestimation to argue that collective identity in the KRI has acquired a fully civic character in the sense defined by ethno-symbolists such as Anthony Smith, in which members of the community associate with the identity purely for civic or legal reasons, rather than because they perceive affiliation to a particular ethnic or national group. Kurdish ethnic and cultural traits still play a central role in the formation of Kurdish identity in the KRI. However, since 2009 new forms of Kurdish identity have emerged. These are more inclusive and accommodating of the ethnic and

national differences among citizens in the KRI.

In other words, it can be said that collective identity formation in the KRI has recently developed features that could potentially transform the Kurdish identity into a civic identity. This would be a substantial change from its history as an ethnically dominated identity. The shift can partly be related to the emerging counter-hegemonic Kurdish nationalist political discourse and partly to new cultural and economic developments in the KRI.

To expand on this last point, it is important to note that since 2003 the KRI has experienced an enormous economic boom, accompanied by visible changes in the cultural sphere. Furthermore, deteriorating security conditions in other parts of Iraq mean that the KRI is an area of relative safety: it houses hundreds of thousands of domestic refugees ('Internally Displaced People') from central and southern Iraq, who mostly belong to other non-Kurd ethnic groups; whilst rapid economic development has transformed the region into an affordable tourist destination for Iraqi nationals and citizens of other countries. These economic developments have been accompanied by social and cultural transformations, resulting in a more open and tolerant society for non-Kurdish 'others' when compared to other parts of Iraq.

8.6 The interaction of political and cultural dynamics: concluding remarks

The entirety of this research has been developed around two core analytical spheres: the cultural and the political. The tools utilised to analyse these were primarily formulated from the theoretical approaches of ethno-symbolism and political discourse theory. These two approaches have proven complementary, and have combined well to enable a detailed analysis of the core research questions of this study.

In short, this analysis has shown that the Kurdish identity in the KRI has been formed and constructed through a set of dynamisms utilising both cultural-historical and political tools. It draws heavily on historic ethnic Kurdish symbolism; with Kurdish national culture and history, symbols, myths, glories and tragedies utilised, appropriated and re-constructed. However, this process has been supported by the equally important dimension of political discourse generation. Given that the meaning of these historical symbols is neither fixed nor undisputed, there are struggles over their meaning once they enter the realm of political discourse. There, the hegemonic powers will seek to present dominant discourses of Kurdish identity as fixed and unproblematic, but this very attempt to fix identity is a sign of a crisis of identity.

This research has analysed a constant process of collective identity formation throughout the short history of the KRI (beginning in 1991 and continuing to the year 2014). Whilst the main trajectories of that identity have been possible to detect, analyse and group into three separate stages, the inner dynamics of the process are embedded with an ongoing crisis that is produced by and reproduces competing political discourses. These are able to transform identity, and have moved it away from an ambiguous ethnic-nationalist identity towards an equally ambiguous and deeply split nationalist identity. They have not, however, been able to fix Kurdish identity. In other words, the traditional revolutionary ethnic Kurdish identity, with its origins prior to 1991, has been transformed into an ambiguous Kurdish nationalist one, but Kurdish identity remains a battlefield for fiercely competing ideological, cultural and political discourses. There may be Kurds who speak, sing, dance, eat and socialise in Kurdish; but there is still no single answer as to what constitutes Kurdishness

This understanding of the process of identity formation in the KRI should aid our understanding of the wider picture at both the Iraqi and the Middle Eastern level. The extremely troublesome political and social environments of the region at this moment of history may best be animated as grappling with an enduring crisis of identity among its main components. The international handling of

the crisis in Iraq has so far failed to fully appreciate the above reality. The success or failure of any future attempt towards containing the current crisis is most probably tied to the extent to which processes of identity formation are understood and fully appreciated.

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10APPENDICES

10.1 Appendix 1.

Survey statistics

Demographic information of survey respondents

Table 10.1: Gender distribution of respondents

Gender	Responses	percentage
Male	342	84.65%
female	62	15.34%
	404	

Table 10.2: Respondents' age groups

Age group	Respondents	percentage
13-35 years old	267	65.12%
36-50 years old	113	27.56%
51 and above	30	7.31%
	410	

Table 10.3: Respondents' place of residency

Place of resident	responses	percentage
Erbil and surrounding areas	142	34.63%
Slemany and surrounding areas	112	27.31%
Duhok and surrounding areas	45	10.97%
Halabja and its surrounding areas	7	1.70%
Kirkuk and disputed areas	19	4.63%
Kurdish from other parts of Kurdistan living in the Kurdistan Region	1	0.24%

From Kurdistan Region but living	79	19.28%
Other areas	5	1.21%
	410	

Table 10.4: Education level of respondents

Education level	responses	percentage
Primary school	10	2.43%
Secondary and preparatory school	52	12.68%
College and University	246	60%
Masters and PhD	101	24.63%
Religious education	1	0.24%
	410	

Table 10.5: Ethnic and national belonging of the respondents

Ethnic and national group	responses	percentage
Arab	3	0.73%
Kurd	397	96.82%
Chaldean-Assyrian	4	0.97%
Turkmen	2	0.48%
Other ethnic and national groups	4	0.97%
	410	

Table 10.6: Religious affiliation of respondents

Religion	responses	percentage
Muslim	308	75.12%
Christian	6	1.46%
Yazidi	6	1.46%
Kakaiy	11	2.68%
Zoroastrian	2	0.48%
No religion	77	18.78%
	410	

10.2 Appendix.2

Personal interview questions

1- At more than one occasion in the last two years the president of Kurdistan Region (Masoud Barzani) hinted to the issue of independent for Kurdistan Region. What is your opinion on that issue? Do you think Kurdistan Region is ready for independent? Don't you think that the form of federalism which is in place now in Iraq is enough for Kurds in Iraq?

2- Mr Arsalan Baiyz, the current president of Kurdistan parliament, when he first took over the presidency from his (KDP) predecessor the first thing he did was to remove the image of Mela Mustafa Barzani. Did you agree with that action at the time? Should Barzani be considered as a legendary Kurdish leader by all Kurds? If not Barzani's image, who else's do you think should be there in such public place like parliament?

This question asked to Mr Arsalan Baiyz himself in this form: "This question has a personal association with you, the issue of removal of Barzani's picture in your office…"[1]

3- Who do you think is closer to Kurds in Iraq, Sunnis or Shiite people? And why?

4- Is it OK for Kurds to align themselves to a neighbouring country over the other? As majority Sunnis, Kurds may be closer to Turkey than to Iran, do you agree with this view?

5- In case article number 140 'regarding the status of Kirkuk' is not applied what other options do you have in mind for the status of Kirkuk? …would a separate region for Kirkuk be an

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[1] Mr Baiyz refused to answer this question. As I had indicated to him before asking the question that it was going to be the last question, he practically ended the interview and said "I will not answer this question".

acceptable option?

6- In your opinion why Kurdish parties failed to create a unified Kurdish front in Baghdad?

7- Recently, after the Al-Ta'akhy list (a Kurdish representative group in the governorate of Mosul) returned to meetings of the Mosul governorate assembly some Yazidi and Shabak (two none-Muslim groups who ethnically, considered to be Kurdish) decided to boycott the assembly meetings. What impact do you think this move will have on the status of Kurds in Mosul? Why some Yazidis and Shabaks align themselves to Arabs rather than to Kurds?

8- Recently some Turkmen groups (a minority ethnic group in the Kurdistan Region) complained for being marginalised by Kurds, how justified their claims do you think? Does the same thing apply to the Christians or not?

9- How would you describe the people of KRI, Muslim Kurds or Kurdish Muslims? (a question to Ali Bapir, the leader of the Islamic Group of Kurdistan and Samir Salim and Abu-Bakr Ali politburo members of Kurdistan Islamic Union).

10- The main political parties ruling in Baghdad are religious Arab parties, will that make Iraq a typical Muslim country? Can Kurds live peacefully in a stronger Muslim country like Iraq rather than a weak Kurdish state? (a question to non-Islamic party leaders)

11- There have been disputed on some symbolic and historical aspects of Kurds like in the last six months or so, President Barzani at a conference held for the purpose of appointing a national day under (*Peshmerga* day) suggested 11th September for that purpose. However, this suggestions created a controversy among political parties here and other Kurdish parties in (Iran, Turkey and Syria), what is your opinion in this regard?

10.3 Appendix 3.

Cited personal interview transcripts

1- Mr Nawsherwan Mustafa, leader of the CM

Q1. The issue of independence, recently, you are aware that the president of The Region (Kurdistan Region in Iraq) addressed the issue of independence. You too delivered a message for Newroz (the Kurdish New Year) where you talked about the issue of independence and Kurdistan's movement towards independence. Can you tell me your opinion about this? I wonder, whether The Region is ready to become independent? I wonder, is there a need for such a demand, isn't federalism enough for Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan?

NM.1. Me, my opinion may be different to that of many people on the issue of Kurdistan's independence. I think that the independence of Kurdistan is an aim. It is neither an ambition nor a hope not a dream or an imagination that all people have especially those people that have been under prosecution and have been in a situation where their national identity have not been recognised from the part of those states and their aim is to express themselves in one way or another, the best way to express is the establishment of a state. Therefore, it is a natural right for the

Kurds for their aim to be the establishment of a state.

Q.5. your party and other opposition parties criticised for not going with the main stream like the issue of Nouri al-Maliki in which you did not support Masoud Barzani in his fight against al-Almalik…

NM.5. We don't know what the fight is over… one day the president of the Region got angry… he did not come to us, he did not ask us saying lets fight over Kirkuk; let's go fight over Oil and Gas law. We still don't know… how much gain the foreign companies get from the oil and gas deals, what is the share of Kurdistan, where does its revenue go, how the money is spent. A fight which is not mine, I will not go to take it.

2- Mr Mahmud Mohammed, member of politburo (KDP)

Q.1. on the background of 'No confidence' attempts against Nouri al-Malik, it has been said the Kurdish voice is not united. What is your response to this?

MM.1. Such problems are expected in Iraq, a multi-national, multi view, multi religion and multi sect country…there would be different views and positions as to the way we perceive these problems and their solution in accordance to political, national and religious interests. Changes happen to the views while the solutions differ. In the country of Iraq, as I have always said and would say which was created by English by mistake, the complications to political

processes emerge very often. This is because all those people live in Iraq they are neither a single nation nor a single religion nor a single sect and each of them wish a way of life which is different from each other. The wishes of none of them is realised completely. For these reasons that is why often disruptions happen in Iraq and these complications are not solved easily. This has also resulted in other countries to get involved with their interests in these issues and make them even more complicated or take up other dimensions. What is there in Iraq, of course, has positive and negative reflections in Kurdistan as well. In Kurdistan as well, sometimes the same divisions emerge over difference in view. .. what is important is that while there might be different views we should not have different positions, especially over national issues… there have been different views as to solution of the problems, however, at the end, the large majority of Kurdistan people and those who represent the people of Kurdistan within the frame of the available parties a kind of union was seen in the positions. Although, it is not the hundred present of Kurdistan because some of them have not established their position but both main parties and both Islamic parties who are on the opposition… the position is that the time has come to withdraw confidence from al-Malik. However, Goran has not determined their position. So the gap that is there it may that Goran has not determined their position. Because we do not have a single party in Kurdistan we should

expect that we will have different views.

Q.2. About the issue of independence of Kurdistan. In the last two years the president of IK hinted to the issue, the possibility of announcing independence of IK. However, KDP's very ally, PUK, there is a widely known statement by the head of PUK considering the independence of Kurdistan as something which more of a poetic dream. Or other opposition parties have different views on the same issue. Some of these parties say that we should look inwards before looking outwards to the issue of independence; we need to talk about the establishment of that state inside Kurdistan first. Or creating the Kurdish citizen, they think the Kurdish citizen is yet to be created. What is your opinion?

MM.2. What the president Barzani has done was to tear off the barrier which considered talking about the Kurdish independence as something prohibited. He established that, yes, talking about the creation of a Kurdish state neither haram nor a shame, it's not something out of the international norms and law. Many new states were created in the last few years which may not have the requirements of statehood as much as Kurds have. But the circumstances, either political or international were suitable for them to announce statehood. The announcement of the Kurdish state needs some foundations. These foundations must be created in terms of social, economy and political, before we announce the Kurdish state. When we say social we mean the reediness of our

people to face the difficulties of announcing independence. Economic readiness as to how these people live, it is about how to secure food security, employment and income for this country. In terms of the political, a kind of agreement and feeling should be reached among all political parties to feel that the state belongs to all. In terms of the social side, there lives in Kurdistan other people a part from Kurds, they should be reassured where they will be in that state and how much happy they will be.

Q.8. about the move by Mr Arsalan Baiyz in Kurdistan parliament by removing the picture of Mustafa Barzani and replacing it with another one. How do you assess that move?

MM.8. Barzani is a personality of our country; he is also an Iraqi personality. If some people prefer not to hear that-that would not reduce from this person's charisma. Barzani as symbol in Kurdistan who was able to lead the Kurdish liberation movement for decades is something undeniable. Therefore, if we don't politicise and partisanise everything , we can decide more calmly on these issues… if we or anybody else, do not pull Mala Mustafa into KDP slot; if you see him as a leader of Kurdish liberation movement as at a point of history; we cannot erase history because this or that party is not happy with it…

3- Mr Arsalan Baiyz, member of PUK politburo, president of

the Kurdistan parliament (2012-2014)

Q.1. on Kurdistan Region independence

ABZ.1. There are few people like Kurds in the Middle East and in the world who have a large population and sizeable land but have no state. That is why now all around the world Kurds mentioned as an example for not having their own state. Therefore, it is the right of Kurds to dream about a Kurdish state and work for it because to take just the Iraqi people, they have as much population as Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar combined and has a larger size land to that of these countries. However, these four states have their own flags at UN but Kurds have nothing. But everything needs preparation. However, so far neither from the psychological side nor in terms of requirement of a Kurdish state, Kurds do not have such readiness…one of these pillars is the union of Kurds. Unfortunately so far Kurds do not have that union; for all to have a high committee to study the situation and plan for it collectively. There is now a strategic relation between PUK and KDP. But this strategic relation sometimes cracks over relations with the Iraqi government or with neighbouring countries. On the other hand there is a major gap between today's authority in Kurdistan (KRG) and the opposition. So far we have not been able to find a shared language to solve the problems between the Kurdish authority and opposition in Iraqi Kurdistan. Therefore, if a people have not been able to create a union within and to have psychological preparation as an

essential pillar, how it can establish a state? The second point is that having a state requires a strong economic foundation. So far, our economy is bound to the Iraqi government's budget. If the Iraqi budget cut from Kurdistan the Kurdish administration may not be able to give salaries to the people of Kurdistan… it is not the old times when the Iraqi government withdrew its administration form Kurdistan, when the Peshmerga had just descended from the mountains, where people had a lot of enthusiasm for the Kurdish cause and towards Peshmerga. Now people are looking after their personal things. Now people go after finding fortunes and their needs. I don't think we still have the old spirit of people of that time as to accept not being paid by the Kurdish authority or for their daily life needs not be met. If Kurds want to announce independence they have to secure a strong independent economic base without relying on the budget of Iraqi government.

The third point is we need to have friendship with the Arab nation so that they agree through a referendum like the one took place for South Sudan or we need to negotiate with the Iraqi government; to agree with Arabs to have a referendum to see how Iraqi government backs this move or not. The other point is to create such relationship with the neighbours, because parts of Kurdistan, parts of Kurdish people are in Iraq, Turkey and Syria. Because, if there is a Kurdish state it may affect them positively and negatively and these states may not stand idle. They are all

states with power and capacity. On the international level Kurds have not earned international backing like those counties of Europe and America. Therefore, I believe that it is Kurds right to dream about a Kurdish state and work for it. If it is the intention of the people of Kurdistan to establish its own state – which is its right— it has to pave the way for it from now. The Kurds have to secure the internal, economic and regional basis. In terms of military, if Kurds want to settle announce the issues militarily, and if they want to defy the Iraqi army and the regional states which is very difficult in practical terms, for that, I prefer that Kurds first of all try to ensure the unity at home; to establish their economic infrastructure; to keep good relations with the neighbours; we can take advantage of oil and gas to attract some economic interests to Kurdistan so that they defend Kurdistan in case of declaration of independence.

Q.4. about article 140, Some Arabs say it's dead while some opposition Kurdish parties criticise you for doing nothing. In case the article is not is not fulfilled, would you accept another option for Kirkuk a part from its annexation to Kurdistan Region?

ABZ. 4. As for article 140, it is a constitutional article. It is the enemies who principally do not believe in Kurds rights; those who don't believe in referendum and constitution it is them who say the article is dead…

4- Mr Ali Bapir, leader (Ameer) of KIG

Q.1. the issue of independence

AB.1. in Islamic terms, no human being prioritised over others. All nations are equal and no one is favoured over the other. If one nation has the right to have a sate so do the others; from Shari 'a terms, that is how peoples and nations seen. The right of self-determination which is approved by UN had been there in Islam more than 1400 years ago. In terms of reality, how much we can do and achieve? It is a different story. According to Islam, Kurdish people have the right to statehood. However, how much is achievable on the ground? Here in IK, managed federalism. They may be satisfied with less than that in Kurdistan of Turkey. The same to Kurdistan of Syria; in Kurdistan of Iran, they will accept less than that but they have been given less.

Q. 6. The Peshmerga day

AB.6. For these things the president of The Region should before making such decisions, they should consult people. This and other things like national anthem, the flag and all these things, Peshmerga day and Martyrs' day. We all need to get to agree on them so that it is not stamped with a particular party. On the other side, in the institution and in parliament, there should not only be guards from KDP and PUK. Is it how we want to become a state? Then for Peshmerga day we have to invite writers, historians and artists… as for Ey Reqib anthem, it is a nationalistic anthem not a

patriotic one. It is mentioned in Kurdistan constitution that the anthem should be patriotic. I told one of the officials, I said it is not plausible to say 'Oh enemy, the Kurds are still alive'. I said you should say I want a state. Then, it says' 'we are sons of Meds and Kaykhusraw'. I asked the guy was not Kaykhusraw a Persian king? It says 'our religion is our homeland'. I said the land cannot made religion, the land is prayed on. We have to save the land to practice religion on, it cannot made religion of…

5- Mr Abu-Bakir Ali, member of politburo (KIU)

Q.1. the issue of independence of Iraqi Kurdistan

AA.1. We have to talk about this in two ways: in terms of principles and in terms of reality. In terms of principles, self-determination is the right of every nation and we consider the people of Kurdistan a nation therefore, self-determination is their right.

6- Miss Najiba Omar Ahmed, co-president (KDSP)

Q1: we are basically talking about this part of Kurdistan. The question is about the issue of independence. In the last two years especially, the president of Kurdistan Region has for several times talked about the issue of Kurdistan independence and the issue has become a question among others. What is your opinion on the question of Kurdistan's independence? Would it be possible for that part of Kurdistan to become independent? Or, isn't federalism

enough for this part of Kurdistan? What is your opinion on this issue?

NA.1. undoubtedly the Kurdish question is an important one. Undoubtedly, the Kurdish people as an essential nation in the Middle East it was as a result of a wider plot from the upper-handed states in the Middle east and also on the hands of global upper-handed states, meaning, in the west, the Kurdistan has been partitioned. Especially more after the Lausanne agreement that the borders of all parts of Kurdistan have been marked. I can say that with the ever deepening the rational of nation-state, especially with the ideas of (I can say) the upper-handed western states who put the rational of nation-state forward. Therefore those borders were further intensified to partition Kurdistan within this framework the Kurdish people in all parts of Kurdistan have been facing denial and destruction. In this part of Kurdistan, it may be that along the history of the struggle Kurdish people in this part of Kurdistan that which has been there, it may be for that reason that a policy of denial has not been undertaken. However in this part of Kurdistan the policy of destruction has been undergoing in an overt manner. In other parts of Kurdistan, especially in the North part, we can say that the policy of denial has also been undergoing which continues so far. Undoubtedly, it is the right of the Kurdish people to strive for and achieve all the rights that have been taken away from them, both national rights and democratic rights and the Kurdish people

376

like all other nations it is its right to become independent and live independent. However, as we have always been saying, just like the Kurdish people was first split into two then into four parts, this is a strategy and the policy of dominant states in all parts of Kurdistan is, more or less the same and they are in favour of Kurds neither getting united nor to achieve its legitimate rights. Therefore, a shared policy is undergoing. For that we say that the destiny of Kurdish people in parts of Kurdistan is tied together. Meaning, when in a part of Kurdistan where a level of independence and the right of freedom is achieved, unless, a comprehensive solution is achieved in all parts of Kurdistan the rights of no part of Kurdistan can be properly guaranteed. From this point we say that the Kurdish question requires a national union. Based on this, just like no matter how much rivalries may be there among the dominant states in Kurdistan are in agreement on the Kurdish question and on their enmity towards the Kurdish people. Even the dominant states in the world do the politics as such. Therefore the Kurdish people need to have a national union. In this part of Kurdistan, as the result of the struggle of Kurdish people since 1991 there is, to some level a kind of federalism, meaning there is a kind of federalism, meaning a region with a level of freedom or national independence. Undoubtedly this is tied to…we can also say what is there it was there in 1971 one way or another in the Autonomy or what they called autonomy for the Kurdistan Region it had been

established. It is approximately the same borders that was delineated which is being worked with so far. This is important, for example…or… it has its importance for all Kurds in other parts of Kurdistan. However, if we look geographically, so far 42 percent of southern Kurdistan's geography does not fall into the Kurdistan Region because Kurdistan Region is only the three provinces of Erbil, Sulaymanya and Duhok. But Kirkuk, Khanaqin, Mandali, Shangal and also until Zummar and others one can say are its 42 percent. This, we believe that, once again, this issue…the settling of this issue is tied to other parts of Kurdistan; this is once again a shared policy of the dominant states an at the meantime the dominant global superpower states who are not with annexation of what has been cut off from Kurdistan or 'those disputed places' as it has been written so in the constitution. The Kurdish people in all parts…not only in the southern Kurdistan, in all parts of Kurdistan, it is their right to become independent and to have an independent administration to run its own affairs by themselves. We as KDSP not only are with the independence of Kurdistan and we believe that the central authority be reduced to the end and the regional authority be increased. Because in democracy, when we are talking about democracy we need to know that the much local authority is there the much democracy will be established. From this view, we are in favour that all parts of Kurdistan be independent. However, an independence that you internally have….

Q.5. if we look at the Kurdish forces, there is an enemy and a friend in the point of view of each of them. For example, in Kurdistan Region between the two main forces they are split between two, some of them consider Sunnis closer some others consider Shi'ites closer. What is your opinion on this issue?

NA.5. we, I myself has made speeches and also the KDSP has also stated that. In principle, both Sunni and Shi'ite have the same viewpoint on the Kurdish issue. Each in its own part has a chauvinist {nation-worship} rational and do not account for the willing of Kurdish people.

6- Osman Haji Marouf, secretary of central committee (KCWP)

Q.1. it has been like two years that the issue of the Kurdish state or independence of Kurdistan making a hot topic. You as KCWP what is your view on the issue of independence? Are you with independence? Or is the federalism in place in Iraq and Kurdistan is enough and it is still not the time for independence?

OM.1. let me first distinguish between two different things, first Kurdish state, that which the Kurdish nationalist parties advocate for and the second one 'independent state in Kurdistan', it was an issue that was forwarded by the Iraqi Communist Workers Party or rather by the Communists and the question was not that the Kurds should have a state or Kurds need a state.

7- Mr Dana Said Sofy, Kurdistan parliament MP

Q.1. a couple of years ago Masoud Barzani triggered the Issue of independence. In your opinion is the Kurdish state and the independence of Kurdistan Region a necessity or not? Isn't federalism enough for the region?

DS.1. officially, on the political level, I can say that Kurds have not overtly demanded a state. But it does not mean that there is not such an intention, desire and dream from the side of the political forces.

8- Mr Balen Abdulla, the secretary of central committee, KTP

Q.2. isn't federalism enough for the region?

BA.2. the federalism in Iraq proved to be a failure. You can't have only one federal region in Iraq which is Kurdistan. They didn't let other parts of Iraq to establish their other similar federal regions. They in Baghdad are against federalism of Kurdistan they don't want us to stand on our feet. There have been a number of issues that would prove that like the issue of oil and gas which they don't give us the right to exploit our own natural resources. After all those years the people of Kurdistan should have come to understand that this framework of Iraq doesn't contain us anymore, we should look for other windows. The only way is the way that has also been paved for by the universal declaration of

human rights. This has given Kurds the right to decide whether they want to stay within Iraq or not.

9- Mr Samir Saleem, member of politburo, KIU

Q.1. the president has stimulated the issue of independence of Kurdistan Region. What is your opinion first on the issue of independence and then whether federalism is not enough for the region?

SS.1. it is the right of Kurds, like any other nation to have its own state and its own independence. It is true in the legal and human rights terms as it is true in the religious terms. I think the Kurdish people did desire independence from the beginning but the circumstances were not suitable. Kurds after 2003 were among the first people who worked on rebuilding the Iraqi state but on different new basis where their own demands are accommodated as you cannot remove a nationalist state to replace it with another nationalist state. It is Kurds natural right to have a state of their own. I think now the opportunity has come up more than ever before for the issue of independence especially after the Arab spring. The conditions for independence are there and there are fewer obstacles before it.

10.4 Appendix 4.

Supervisor's support letter to potential interviews

8ᴰ June, 2012

The University of Nottingham

UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

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Head of School:
Professor Vivien Lowndes B.Sc (Econ), MPhil, PhD
Professor of Public Policy

Re: Research Fieldwork, Dilshad Khdhir

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to confirm that Mr. Dilshad Khdhir is currently registered for a PhD programme of research in the School of Politics and International Relations at the University of Nottingham, United Kingdom. Mr. Khdhir has been registered with us since 2008 and I am his supervisor.

Dr. Tony Burns, B.A., P.G.C.E., Ph.D.
School of Politics & International Relations,
University of Nottingham,
United Kingdom.

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10.5 Appendix 5.

The online survey questions

Q1: what is your gender?

- Male
- Female

Q2: what is your age group?

- 13-35 years old
- 36-50 years old
- 50 and above years old

Q3: where are you from?

- Erbil province and surroundings
- Duhok province and surroundings
- Slemany province and surroundings
- Halabja and surroundings
- Kirkuk and other disputed areas
- From KRI but residing abroad
- Kurd from other parts of Kurdistan residing in KRI

Q4: what is your education level?

- Primary school
- Secondary and preparatory school
- College and university
- Masters and PhD
- Religious education

Q5: which ethnic and national group do you belong to?

- Kurd
- Arab
- Chaldean-Assyrian
- Turkmen

Q6: what is your religion?

- Islam
- Christianity (skips Q7)
- Kakaiy (skips Q7)
- Zoroastrian (skips Q7)
- Yezidism (skips Q7)
- Other religions (please specify bellow) (skips Q7)
- I have no religious belief (skips Q7)

Q7: if you consider yourself a Kurd and Muslim, how would you describe yourself?

- Kurdish Muslim
- Muslim Kurdish
- Kurd
- No difference between the above

Q8: what of the following describes you best?

- Iraqi Kurd
- Iraqi
- Kurd
- Kurdistani

Q9: How would you consider the *Ey Reqib* anthem?

- I consider it the national anthem of all Kurds and accept it
- I consider it the national anthem of KRI and accept it
- I consider it the national anthem of Kurds but I do not accept it as it contains nonreligious expressions
- I consider it the national anthem of Kurds but I do not accept it as it does not represent me

Q10: Which of the following Kurdish dialects or languages would you prefer as the official language in KRI?

- Kurdish Sorani (Middle Kirmanji)
- Kurdish Badini (Northern Kirmanji)

- The prevalent dialect or language in any area.
- Arabic
- Other answers (please write bellow)

Q11: How would you see this flag?

- It is the flag of all Kurds and I accept it as the national flag of KRI
- It is the national flag of KRI and I accept it
- It is the Kurdish national flag bit I do not consider it my national flag
- Other answers (please write bellow)

Q12: what is your view on Newroz feast?

- It is a national feast for all Kurds and I accept as my national feast
- It's the national feast in KRI and I accept it as my national feast
- It is the national feast of Kurds but I do not consider it my national feast
- It is the beginning of Spring but I don't consider it my own feast
- Other answers (write bellow)

Q13: which of the following ethnic or national groups in Iraq would you consider close to you?

- Sunni Arab

- Shi'ite Arab

- Muslim Kurds

- Chaldean-Assyrian

- Kakaiy Kurds

- Yezidi Kurds

- Turkmen

- All of them

- None of the above

Q14: do you support the independence of KRI?7

- Yes

- No

- I do not know yet

- Other answers (please write bellow)

Q15: Which of the following expressions would you prefer?

- I am with the independence of Kurdistan prior to anything else

- I am with freedom, social justice and democracy prior of anything else

- I am with the establishment of Shari 'a law prior to anything else

Q16: which of the following historical events do you consider the

most unpleasant? Choose three

- Death of Mela Mustafa Barzani in 1979

- The collapse of September Revolution in 1975

- The chemical attack on Halabja in 1988

- The of Barzanis in 1983

- The Kurdish fratricide

- The major campaigns of 1987

- The arrest of Abdulla Ocalan in 1999

Q17: which of the following historical events do you consider the

most pleasant? Choose three

- March 11th 1970 accord
- Resumption of armed struggle in 1976
- Uprising of March 1991
- The end of Kurdish fratricide in 1998
- Execution of former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein in 2006
- The toppling of the Iraqi regime in 2003

Q18: which of the following historical leaders do you consider your

national leader? Choose three

- Salahaddin Ayyubu
- Sheikh Ubaudulla
- Sheikh Said Piran
- Sheikh Mahmoud Barzinji
- Ghazi Muhammed
- Mela Mustafa Barzani
- Abdulla Ocalan
- Jalal Talabani
- Masoud Barzani

Q19: How would you consider the September revolution of 1961?

- It was the revolution of all Kurds in all parts of Kurdistan
- It was the revolution of all Kurds in Iraq
- It was the revolution of Kurds and all other components in Iraqi Kurdistan
- It was the revolution of a particular Kurdish political party

Q20: Which ethnic or national group yoi belong to?

- Kurdish
- Chaldean-Assyrian (skips Q21)
- Turkmen (skips Q21)
- Arab(skips Q21)

Q21: would you accept if a Turkman, Chaldean-Assyrian or an Arab

citizen of KRI takes a high ranked post in KRG like the post of president of the Prime Minister?

- Yes
- No
- I do not know yet

Q22: Which of the following countries do you consider closer to the national interest of KRI?

- The USA and Western countries
- Iran
- Turkey
- Syria
- None of them
- Al of them

Q23: Which of the following resolutions would you prefer for the condition of Kirkuk?

- To annex the city to KRI without returning to Article 140
- To try to implement Article 140
- To stay as part of the central Iraq
- To become a separate region
- Other answers (please write)

Q24: Which of the following political parties do you support?

- Assyrian Democratic Party
- Movement for Change
- Iraqi communist Party
- Iraqi Turkmen Front
- Islamic Movement in Kurdistan
- Kurdistan Democratic Party
- Kurdistan democratic Solution Party
- Kurdistan Future Party
- Kurdistan Islamic Group

- Kurdistan Islamic Union
- Kurdistan Socialist Democratic Party
- Kurdistan Toilers Party
- Kurdistan Workers Communist party
- Kurdistan Workers Party
- Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
- I support no political party
- Other political parties of fronts

10.6 Appendix 6.

Survey questionnaire in Kurdish

پ۱ : گروپی تەمەنت کامەیە؟

- ۳۵-۱٦
- ٥۰-۳٦
- ٥۱ بۆ سەرەوە

پ۲ : ڕەگەزت چییە؟

- نێر
- مێ

پ۳ : ئاستی خوێندەواریت چییە؟

- سەرەتایی
- ناوەندی و دواناوەندی
- پەیمانگاو زانکۆ
- ماستەر و دکتۆرا

پ٤ : دانیشتووی کام ناوچەی؟

- هەولێرو دەوروبەری
- دهۆک و دەوروبەری

389

- سلێمانی و دەوروبەری

- کەرکوک و دەوروبەری

- هەڵەبجەو دەوروبەری

- خەڵکی هەرێمی کوردستان بەڵام دانیشتووی دەرەوەی هەرێم

- خەڵکی پارچەکانی تری کوردستان بەڵام دانیشتووی هەرێمی کوردستان

- دانیشتووی موسڵ و ناوچە جێناکۆکەکانی تر

- شوێنی تر..................

پ٥ : سەر بەکام گرووپی نەتەوەیی (قەومی)

- کوردی موسوڵمان

- کوردی یەزیدی

- کوردی کاکەیی

- کلدو ئاشووری (مەسیحی)

- تورکمان

پ٦ : سەر بەچ ئاینێکی؟

- موسوڵمان

- مەسیحی (پرسیاری هەشتەم تێدەپەڕێنێ)

- یەزیدی(پرسیاری هەشتەم تێدەپەڕێنێ)

- کاکەیی(پرسیاری هەشتەم تێدەپەڕێنێ)

- زەردەشتی(پرسیاری هەشتەم تێدەپەڕێنێ)

- شوێنکەوتەی هیچ ئاینێک نیم(پرسیاری هەشتەم تێدەپەڕێنێ)

- وەڵامی تر(پرسیاری هەشتەم تێدەپەڕێنێ)

پ٧: چۆن پێناسەی خۆت دەکەی؟

- عێراقی

- کوردی عێراقی

- کورد

- وەڵامی تر (تکایە لەخوارەوە بینووسە)

- زیاتر بنووسه..............

پ۸: ئەگەر سەر بەنەتەوەی کوردی و شوێنکەوتەی ئایینی ئیسلامی کام لەمانەی خوارەوە وەسفی تەواوی تۆیه؟

کوردی موسوڵمان

موسوڵمانی کورد

جیاوازی لەنێوان ئەم دووانەدا نییه

کورد

وەڵامی تر (تکایه لەخوارەوه بینووسه)

زیاتر بنووسه.....................

پ۹ : ئایا چۆن له سرودی 'ئەی رەقیب' دەڕوانی؟

سرودێکی نەتەوەیی کوردیەو قبوڵمه

سرودی نیشتیمانی هەرێمی کوردستانەو قبوڵمه

سرودێکی نەتەوەیی کوردیەو قبوڵم نییه

وەڵامی تر (تکایه لەخوارەوه بینووسه)

زیاتر بنووسه.............

پ۱۰ : چۆن دەڕوانیه رۆژی نەورۆز؟

- جەژنی نەتەوەیی هەموو کوردەو به جەژنی نەتەوەیی خۆمی دەزانم

- جەژمی نەتەوەیی/نیشتیمانی هەرێمی کوردستانەو به جەژنی خۆمی دەزانم

- جەژنی نەتەوەیی کوردەو به ژەجنی خۆمی نازانم

- سەرەتای بەهاره بەڵام بەجەژنی نەتەوەیی خۆمی نازانم

- وەڵامی تر (تکایه لەخوارەوه بینووسه)

- وەڵامی تر ....

پ۱۱ : چۆن دەڕوانیه ئەم ئاڵایه؟

- ئاڵای هەموو کوردەو وەکوو ئاڵای هەرێمی کوردستان وبقڵمە

- تەنها ئاڵای هەرێمی کوردستانەو قبووڵمە

- تەعبیر لە هەموو پێکهاتەکانی هەرێمی کوردستان ناکات و وەکوو ئاڵای نەتەوەیی خۆم قبوڵی

  ناکەم

- وەڵامی تر (تکایە لەخوارەوە بینووسە)

- وەڵامی تر...

پ۱۲ :

خۆت لەکام لەم گروپانە بە نزیکتر دەزانی؟

- کوردی موسوڵمان

- کوردی یەزیدی

- کوردی کاکەیی

- عەرەبی سوننی

- عەرەبی شیعە

- مەسیحی

- تورکمان

- هەموویان

- هیچیان

پ۱۳ : ئایا لەگەڵ سەربەخۆیی هەرێمی کوردستانی یان نا؟

- بەڵێ

- نەخێر

زیاتر بنووسە.....................

پ۱٤ : کام لەم دیالێکتە کوردیانە بەباش دەزانی بکرێت بە زمانی فەرمی هەرێمی کوردستان؟

- کوردی سۆرانی/کرمانجی ناوەراست

392

- کوردی بادینی/کرمانجی سەروو

- لەهەر ناوچەیەک دیالیکتی سەرەکی ناوچەکە بکریت بە زمانی فەرمی

- عەرەبی

- وەڵامی تر

وەڵامی تر..

پ۱۵ : سەر بەکام گروپی ئیتنی یان نەتەوەیی؟

- کلدوناشووری (پرسیاری شازده تیدەپەرینی)

- تورکمان (پرسیاری شازده تیدەپەرینی)

- کورد

- وەڵامی تر (تکایە لەخوارەوه بینووسە) (پرسیاری شازده تیدەپەرینی)

وەڵامی زیاتر...

پ۱۶ : ئایا لەگەڵ ئەوەدای کە هاوڵاتیەکی مەسیحی یان تورکمانی هەرێمی کوردستان پۆستیکی گەورەی

پێبدرێ؟بۆ نموونە پۆستی سەرۆکی هەرێم یان سەرۆکی حکومەت

- بەڵی

- نەخیر

زیاتر بنووسە...........

پ۱۷ : کام لەم ریگەچارانەی خوارەوەت پیناشە بۆ دۆخی کەرکوک؟

- بەبێ گەڕانەوە بۆ ماددەی ١٤٠ بگەڕینریتەوە سەر هەرێمی کوردستان

- هەوڵبدریت ماددەی ١٤٠ جیبەجێ بکریت

- بکریت بە هەرێمیکی سەربەخۆ

- هەر سەر بە عیراق بیت

- وەڵامی تر (تکایە لەخوارەوه بینووسە)

- وەڵامی تر................................

پ۱۸ : کام لەم وڵاتانە بە نزیکتر دەزانی لە بەرژوەندی هەرێمی کوردستان؟

- ئیران

- تورکیا

- ئەمریکاو رۆژاوا

393

- هیچیان

- هەموویان

- وەڵامی تر (تکایە لەخوارەوە بینووسە)

- وەڵامی تر................

پ۱۹ : کام لەم سەرکردە مێژووییانە بە رەمزی نەتەوەیی خۆت دەزانی؟

- سەلاحەدینی ئەییوبی
- شێخ عوبەیدوڵای نەهری
- شێخ سەعیدی پیران
- شێخ مەحمود
- قازی محمد
- مەلا موستەفای بارزانی
- جەلال تاڵەبانی
- مەسعود بارزانی
- هەموویان
- هیچیان

زیاتر بنووسە................

پ۲۰ـ کام لەم رووداوانە لە پەنجا ساڵی رابردودا بەلای تۆوە ناخۆشترینە؟تەنها سێ هەڵبژێرە

- هەرەەسی شۆرشی ئەیلول لەساڵی ١٩٧٤دا
- ئەنفالی بارزانیەکان لە ساڵی ١٩٨٢
- شەری براکوژی
- هێرشەکانی ئەنفال لەدوای ساڵی ١٩٨٦ـەوە
- کیمیابارانکردنی هەڵەبجە
- کارەساتی شەنگال و قەتڵ و عامی یەزیدیەکان
- دەستگیرکردنی عەبدوڵلا ئۆجەلان لەساڵی ١٩٩٩ـدا

پ۲۱ـکام لەم رواداوانە لەپەنجا ساڵی رابردودا خۆشترینە بەلای تۆوە؟ تەنها سێ دانە هەڵبژێرە

- بەیانی یازدەی ئازاری ١٩٧٠
- دەستپێکردنەوەی شۆرش لەدوای ساڵی ١٩٧٦ـەوە
- راپەرینی ١٩٩١

- رووخاندنی ڕژێمی بەعس لەسالّی ٢٠٠٣ـدا
- لەسێدارەدانی سەرۆکی پێشووی عێراق سەدام حوسێن لەسالّی ٢٠٠٦دا
- یەکەم هەلّبژادن لە هەرێمی کوردستان-دا لەسالّی ١٩٩٢
- یەکگرتنەوەی هەردوو ئیدارەی حکومەتی هەرێمی کوردستان

پ٢٢. چۆن دەڕوانیە شۆڕشی ئەیلولی ١٩٦١؟

- شۆڕشی هەموو کورد بوو لە هەرچوارپارچەی کوردستان

- شۆڕشی کوردو هەموو پێکهاتەکانی تری کەردستانی عێراق بوو

- شۆڕشێ هەموو کورد بوو لە کوردستانی عێراقدا

- تەنها شۆڕسی پارتێکی سیاسی دیاریکراو بوو

- وەلّامی تر (تکایە لەخوارەوە بینووسە)

- وەلّامی تر..............................

پ٢٣. یەکێک لەم دەربڕینانەی خوارەوە هەلّبژێرە

- من لەگەلّ دەولّەتی سەربەخۆی کوردستان-دام بەر لە هەر شتێکی تر

- من لەگەلّ دیموکراسیەت و دادی کۆمەلّایەتی و ئازادی ڕادەربڕیندام بەر لەهەر شتێکی تر

- من لەگەلّ جێبەجێکردنی شەریعەتی ئیسلام-دام بەر لەهەر شتێکی تر

پ٢٤ : لایەنگر یان هەواداری کام لەم پارت و حیزبانەی خوارەوەی؟

- پارتی دیمکراتی کوردستان

- یەکێتی نیشتیمانی کوردستان

- یەککگرتووی ئیسلامی کوردستان

- حیزبی زەحمەتکێشانی کوردستان

- حیزبی ئایندەی کوردستان

- بزوتنەوەی گۆڕان

- پارتی چارەسەری دیمکراتی کوردستان

- حیزبی شیوعی کوردستان

- حیزبی کۆمۆنیستی کرێکاری عێراق

- پارتی دیمکراتی ئاشووری

- کۆمەلّی ئیسلامی کوردستان

395

- بزوتنەوەی ئیسلامی لە کوردستان

- حیزبی سۆشیالیستی دیموکراتی کوردستان

- بەرەی تورکمانی عێراقی

- حیزبی شیوعی عێراقی

- لایەنی تر (لەخوارەوە بینووسە)

- لایەنگری هیچ پارتیکی سیاسی نیم

10.7 Appendix7.

First page of the online survey

راپرسی لەسەر پرسی ناسنامەی نەتەوەیی لە هەرێمی کوردستان(باشووری کوردستان)دا

لاپەرەی یەکەم:پێشەکی

سڵاو بەرێزان

ئەم راپرسیە بۆ ماوەستی لێکۆڵینەوەی ئەکادیمی لەسەر پرسی ناسنامەی نەتەوەیی لە هەرێمی کوردستان (باشووری کوردستان)دا ئەنجام دەدرێت. ئەم راپرسیە بۆ دۆزینەوەی ڕەهەندەکانی ناسنامەی دەستەجەمعیە لە هەرێمی کوردستان و سیماو نیشانە سەرەکیەکانی ناو ناسنامەیە. لێرەدا چەند پرسیارێکی تایبەتی و گشتی دەکرێت کە پەیوەستن بە خودی بابەتی لێکۆڵینەوەکەوە. تۆ بەرێز باکرتەکردن لەسەر وەڵامی گونجاوی خۆت یاک باکەک وەڵامی پرسیاردەکان دەدیەوەو بەهۆی دوگکەی خوارەوە لاپەرەکان دەتوانی لاپەرەکان پاش و پێش پێنیکەی. لەهەندێک شوێندا دەتوانی زیاد لە وەڵامیک هەڵبژێری. لە کۆتایی راپرسیەکەدا بە کرتەکردن لەسەر دوگکەی (تەواو) دەتوانی کۆتایی بە راپرسیاکە بهێنی. ئەگەر بەشداریەکەت سەرکەوتووو بێت لاپەرەیەکی تازە دەردەکەوێنت کە سیستەمەکە سوپاس بەشداریوونت دەکات بەو شێوەی لەوێنەکەی خوارەوە هاتووە ئەگەرنا دەتوانی جارێکی تر دەست پێنیکەیەوە. کلیک سوپاس بۆ بەشداریکردنتان لەم راپرسیە کە نیشتوانیە پشتیوانیە لە هەوڵێکی ئەکادیمی و زانستی لەم بوارەدا. بۆ دەستپێنیکردن کرتنە بکە لەسەر دوگکەی (لاپەرەی دواتر). دووبارە سوپاس.

لاپەرەی دواتر

396