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Non-State Nations in International Relations: The Kurdish Question Revisited

RESEARCH MASTERS WITH TRAINING – THESIS SUBMISSION

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Statement of Declaration:

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

Abstract

This thesis explores the fundamental research puzzle of why non-state nations struggle to achieve independent sovereign statehood through secession. It explores why non-state nations like the Kurds desire sovereign statehood, and why they fail to achieve it.

This thesis argues two main points. Firstly, non-state nations such as the Kurds seek sovereign statehood because of two main reasons: the essence of nationhood and national self-determination is sovereign statehood; and that non-state nations are usually treated unfairly and unjustly by their host state and thus develop a strong moral case for secession and sovereign statehood.

Secondly, non-state nations like the Kurds fail to achieve sovereign statehood mainly because of key endogenous and exogenous factors. The endogenous factors comprise internal divisions which result in failure to achieve a unified secessionist challenge, due to differences in factions which result in divergent objectives and perspectives, and the high chances of regime co-optation of dissident factions. Exogenous factors include the international normative regime which is unsupportive of secession, hence non-state nations like the Kurds do not receive support from the UN and other global bodies in their quest for sovereign statehood; and that non-state nations also seldom receive the backing from Major Powers, both democratic and non-democratic, in their efforts to secede from their host state and set up their own sovereign state.

This thesis explores secession theory and the problem of non-state nations in international relations, Kurdish history, nationhood and desire for Kurdistan, the Kurdish struggles for an independent Kurdistan in recent history and concludes that whilst the current conflict in the Middle East provides the Kurds with yet another 'window' of opportunity, the historical exogenous and endogenous factors remain extant.

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Introduction:

The "Kurdish Question", which originally derives from a mistranslation of the Turkish phrase "Kurt Sorunu" or "Kurdish problem", is a term used to describe the social, economic, political and ideological situation of the Kurdish people who lack sovereign statehood. The Kurdish question has increasing regional and international significance, as the Kurds are a key stakeholder within the Middle East and are critical to international security strategy and conflict resolution in Syria-Iraq.

The Kurds are the fourth largest ethnic nation in the Middle East after the Arabs, Persians and Turks (Alliance for Kurdish Rights, 2016), yet Kurdish nationalism has not yet succeeded in achieving independent statehood thus making the Kurds one of the largest non-state nations in world politics (Hassanpour, 2015, p. 1). The Kurds have an approximate global population of over 30 million, with a homeland, called Kurdistan, divided between Iraq, Syria, Iran, Turkey (Stratfor, 2016) and to a smaller extent Azerbaijan and Armenia. Despite this regional presence and many opportunities to secure independence throughout the 20th century (Alliance for Kurdish Rights, 2016), the Kurds have failed to form their own national state.

In recent years, however, the Kurds have achieved international prominence once again. The contemporary conflict in the Middle East has put the persistently unresolved Kurdish question back into the spotlight as it is inextricably linked to the stability of the region. Three possible future flashpoints could influence the trajectory of Kurdish opportunity in the Middle East. Firstly, Iraqi Kurdish independence would trigger conflict with Baghdad, and intensify the sectarian conflict between the Sunni and Shia Arabs in Iraq. Secondly, Kurdish gains against the Islamic State in Syria-Iraq might increase international support for the Kurds and potentially instigate backlash from neighbouring Turkey, which is concerned by the empowerment of Kurdish groups across its borders. Lastly, Turkey-PKK relations could be provoked and lead to the resumption of conflict and the reversal of the rights of Turkey's Kurdish population. These new political realities in the Middle East have transformed the region and have possibly provided a catalyst for changing and re-mapping national borders. The key puzzle is whether the establishment of a Kurdish state is possible, despite internal and external obstacles, and whether the instability in the Middle East could be exploited by the Kurds to redefine boundaries and establish a sustainable nation-state.

Fundamentally, a resolution to the conflict in Syria-Iraq cannot be effectively determined without a resolution for the Kurds. Hence, the 'Kurdish question' has resurfaced because of contemporary events and may prove to be the central issue ascertaining the stability of Iraq, Syria, and even Turkey. In coalition with the United States, the Kurds (in Syria mainly but also in Iraq) have played a key role in combatting the Islamic State, which has claimed substantial territory in Iraq and Syria (Laub, 2015) along with establishing significant presence in places like Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Pakistan and Afghanistan (The Daily Telegraph, 2015). The Kurdish Peshmerga forces have halted Islamic State expansion into the Kurdish autonomous region in Iraq, have taken control over the oil rich region of Kirkuk, and have filled in control of territory where Syrian and Iraqi forces have retreated (Council for Foreign Relations, 2015). Washington sees the abolishment of the Islamic State as a requisite for maintaining Iraq; however, many Kurds see this goal as a chance for independence as the last remaining functional government in the region (Preysner, 2015). Salih Muslim, the co-leader of the Democratic Union Party (PYD) in Syria highlighted the impact that the Islamic State has had on Kurdish factions, saying that whilst "some sensitive issues had arisen between these groups earlier, ISIL [Islamic State] now pushes Kurds to come together, which is very good" (Council for Foreign Relations, 2015). This mutual enemy has diffused intra-Kurdish conflict and united Kurdish factions towards the common goal of combatting the Islamic State. The success of Kurdish forces in combatting the Islamic State could also attract further international support, which would increase Kurdish state building power and further bolster the opportunity for Kurdish autonomy and independence.

Research Puzzle:

The main research puzzle that this thesis will explore is why non-state nations such as the Kurds find it extremely difficult to achieve independent statehood through secession (indeed, successful secessions are extremely rare in international politics)? A historical analysis of Kurdish attempts to secede will provide insight into this puzzle and may also offer suggestions regarding the future political fate of the Kurds in the context of political turmoil, civil war and possible state break-up and reorganization in the Middle East.

Following on from the main research puzzle, the central research question that this thesis will address is why, despite decades of struggle, have the Kurds been unsuccessful in attaining

sovereign statehood, and whether in the context of the current wars in Iraq and Syria they stand a realistic chance of achieving their long-cherished goal of an independent Kurdistan state? To answer this central research question, the thesis will address several sub-questions:

- What are non-state nations and why do they desire sovereign statehood?
- Why is secession the most common way of or means for non-state nations to achieve sovereign statehood? What is the international normative regime on secession and what factors usually determine whether a secessionist movement would be successful or unsuccessful?
- How did the Kurds come to become a non-state nation? When and why did a sovereign Kurdistan State become the central objective of Kurdish politics?
- In recent times the Kurds made several unsuccessful attempts to secede and create a sovereign Kurdistan State. Why did these secessionist attempts fail?
- In the context of the current wars in the Middle East, do the Kurds stand a realistic chance to secede from Iraq and Syria and create a sovereign Kurdistan State? What major obstacles or roadblocks stand in their way of achieving this long-cherished goal? Can these obstacles be overcome?

Chapter one will cover the background theory of the research and will explore the problem of non-state nations in international relations and the factors that drive non-state nations to strive for secession and sovereign statehood. It will explore the fundamental concepts of nationhood, statehood and evaluate how and why non-state nations attempt secession, and what internal and obstacles exist that challenge this goal. The chapter will also provide an analysis of the requisite conditions for successful secession movements. This will include an analysis of the international normative regime on secession, perspectives of host states, Major Powers and the international community on secession, and the problem of internal politics and cohesion within the secessionist group. As secession is exceptionally hard to attain, especially for non-state nations, the availability of international support particularly from Major Powers and IGOs is critical for success. This chapter will discuss 'endogenous' and 'exogenous' factors that determine the success or failure of secessionist movements. These conditions are exceptionally tough to meet, which is why most non-state nations fail to

secede. The Kurdish quest for secession in the 20th century provides an excellent example of how non-state nations can become pawns of Major Powers, and inevitably get stuck in futile cycles of struggle for independence. This chapter will establish the analytical framework which this thesis will utilise to address and understand the Kurdish situation and future of non-state nation secession.

Chapter two will provide an overview of the Kurds. This chapter will explain who the Kurds are, how they came to be a divided non-state nation and the reasons for their quest for an independent Kurdistan. The chapter will also explain how being divided into several countries have affected Kurdish identity and politics, and whether this has adversely impacted or diluted their collective goal for an independent Kurdistan.

Chapter three will explain the various secessionist attempts made by the Kurds in the 20th century to achieve Kurdistan and the reasons why these attempts failed. The chapter will argue that there were three main reasons for Kurdish failure to secede and achieve an independent Kurdistan: significant internal divisions within the Kurds that prevented a unified secessionist political movement for an independent Kurdistan from emerging and being sustained over a period of time; inability of the Kurds to militarily overpower the forces of the host states that were opposed to Kurdish secession and independent statehood; and lack of support (instrumental and affective) from the Major Powers and key international organizations for Kurdish independence and the establishment of an independent Kurdistan state. The chapter will also argue that repeated failures, generational changes, host state crackdowns and outmigration of Kurds from the region also contributed to the gradual weakening of the desire and movement for an independent Kurdistan state.

Chapter four will analyse the current situation in the Middle East in terms of territory, conflict, the internal situation for each Kurdish contingent, Major Power strategy and interests, geopolitical stakeholders and the international normative regime and stance of influencing IGO's and non-state actors. This chapter will contrast the previous Kurdish struggles for independent statehood with the current situation in Iraq, Syria and to a lesser extent Turkey, and will aim to comment on the chances of contemporary Kurdish secession.

Testing Strategy:

This thesis will put forward the key argument that while endogenous factors are important, secession by non-state nations is almost impossible without international recognition and support, especially from the Great Powers and leading IGO's; since such support is exceptionally hard to obtain, successful secession by non-state nations is rare in international politics.

This thesis will argue two main points. Firstly, that non-state nations like the Kurds seek sovereign statehood because the essence of nationhood and national self-determination is sovereign statehood; and that non-state nations are usually treated unfairly and unjustly by their host state and thus develop a strong moral case for secession and sovereign statehood.

Secondly, non-state nations like the Kurds fail to achieve sovereign statehood mainly because of endogenous and exogenous reasons: (endogenous) groups like the Kurds that are internally divided often fail to launch an unified secessionist challenge; different factions/platforms pull in different directions; and chances of regime co-optation of dissident factions remains high; (exogenous) the international normative regime is unsupportive of secession, hence non-state nations like the Kurds do not receive support from the UN and other global bodies in their quest for sovereign statehood; and that non-state nations also seldom receive the backing from Major Powers (both democratic and non-democratic) in their efforts to secede from their host state and set up their own sovereign and independent state.

The Kurdish situation is ideal for testing this argument. Through historical analysis of Kurdish efforts to secede and create an independent Kurdistan his thesis will contend that spikes in Kurdish secessionist behaviour were the direct result of promises of assistance by the Major Powers and the international community, which when not honoured led to failures. Whilst it cannot be denied that there are other issues that inhibit secession for the Kurds, whether it is internal divergence and discord and geopolitical interference, this thesis will contend that the international normative regime acts as the strongest inhibitor of Kurdish independent statehood. A key criterion of endogenous and exogenous factors will be utilised to substantiate this contention. This thesis will also argue that the current situation in the Middle East is providing perhaps the best opportunity for secession and independent statehood that the Kurds (particularly in Iraq and Syria) have seen to date; however, for

secession and independence to happen, the Iraqi and Syrian Kurds will require sustained and steadfast support from the Major Powers (particularly the United States and Russia) and the United Nations, which appears to be unlikely to happen. The best outcome then that Iraqi and Syrian Kurds can hope for is to successfully bargain for an 'autonomous status' with a post-war Iraq and Syria.

Research notes:

This thesis will depend primarily on qualitative research that has been sourced from reputable secondary sources and will be bolstered by select primary sources such as governmental and media reports. These reference materials have been acquired from numerous library and online journal searches, to provide a comprehensive analysis that utilises only the most reliable sources. There are no sensitivities surrounding the research of non-state nation and secession theory, and this information is easily accessible. The historical analysis will be approached using a broad range of academic journals, books and news reports. These sources are easily accessible, and do not have any ethical constraints or considerations. The literature that has been reviewed has been sourced from a variety of academic and media libraries. The Australian National University library, University of New South Wales library and the Murdoch University library provided valuable access to textbooks and journals, whilst online geopolitical reporting media sites and Google Scholar provided literature for reviewing the contemporary situation for the Kurds.

Chapter 1: Secession Theory and the Problem of Non-State Nations

Chapter Summary

This chapter will explore the concept of nations, states, non-state nations and nationalism. It will explore the reasons that drive non-state nations towards self-determination and secession from their host states. It will further explore what factors hinder or support secession, including restrictions imposed by the international normative regime on secession, moral arguments in favour of secession, state responses to demands for self-determination, and various accommodative approaches as alternatives to secession. This will provide a fundamental theoretical basis for the analysis of subsequent chapters and details of the framework of endogenous and exogenous factors that are critical for the successful secession of non-state nations.

The Problem of Non-State Nations in International Relations:

The issue of non-state nations has been a major problem in international relations, particularly since the beginning of the 20th century. Nationalism drives non-state nations towards self-determination for succession. The achievement of sovereign statehood is the only way that nations can fulfil their goal of development, autonomy and independence.

Nationalism as a driver for Self-Determination

The concepts of a nation, and nationalism are inextricably linked, where "nationalism is normally conceived as an ideology or movement aiming at attaining and maintaining political autonomy, mainly in the form of state sovereignty, for a group of people called nation" (Podoksik, 2017, p. 303). The concept of nationalism is a critical factor that determines why minority nations strive to secede from their host states. Nationalism can be defined as encompassing two phenomena, which includes "the attitude that the members of a nation have when they care about their national identity" and "the actions that the members of a nation take when seeking to achieve (or sustain) self-determination" (Miscevic, 2014). The first part of this definition highlights the importance of social and cultural identity, which form national identity. This often based on ethnicity, language and commonality. This is also generally the determining factor of whether citizenship is voluntary or involuntary and is what sets apart minority nations within a host state. The second part of this definition identifies the importance of self-determination for minority nations that have a collective

identity, that wish to be autonomous from other nations that do not share this common distinctiveness. Nationalism is based on the shared identity, through historical, cultural, language or religions bonds (Huysseune, 2012, p. 2). Nationalism joins the ethno-cultural domain with the political organisation domain and links the concept of a nation with the concept of a state. Non-state nations are therefore simply minority nations with nationalism that strive for autonomy and statehood to fulfil their goals of self-determination. Nationalism plays an intrinsic part in the international system and is a fundamental element of statehood. Nationalism is fundamental to self-determination. Achieving a sovereign state of their own is the only way that nations can truly fulfil their development. Nationalism therefore drives non-state nations towards self-determination, and to sovereign statehood.

This drive for self-determination is underpinned by ethnonationalism. This can be defined as "advocacy of or support for the political interests of a particular ethnic group, especially its national independence or self-determination" (Oxford, 2018). It is usually referred to as a form of nationalism, where the nation is defined by ethnicity. This is often defined by shared heritage, language, culture, faith and ethnic ancestry. Ethno-nationalism can be explained by constructivist, instrumentalist and primordialist approaches. Constructivism deems ethno-nationalism as a construct of modern, elite society, which changes based on power structures. Instrumentalist perspectives see ethnicity and nationalism as concepts propagated by elite society to further political and economic power agendas. The primordialist approach defines ethnicity as "an objective entity with inherent features such as race, territory, language and kinship" (Yavus, 2007, p. 10), which is supported by Kurdish Nationalists that seek to bolster Kurdish identity with historical roots.

Nationalism is a movement aimed at establishing a nation-state, and that nation-state is a fundamental political unit in the world order (Keating, 2000, p. 1463). The concept of a state has a very long history; however, the term "nation-state" is a newer phenomenon. Early scholar Hans Kohn (1961, p. 16) described a nation-state as a will, and described that

> Nationalism is a state of mind permeating the large majority of the people and
> claiming to permeate all its members; it recognises the nation-State as the ideal form
> of political organization and the nationality as the source of all creative cultural

energy and economic well-being. The supreme loyalty of man is therefore due to his nationality, as his own life is supposedly rooted in and made possible by its welfare.

An alternative definition details that a nation-state is "a form of political organization in which a group of people who share the same history, traditions, or language live in a particular area under one government" (Merriam Webster , 2016).

Whilst a state is a framework for internal and external security, economic relationships and boundaries, a nation represents social and economic organization, through collective identity, culture and solidarity. The concept of minority nations originated in 1648 as a result of the Treaty of Westphalia between France and the Roman Empire, which acknowledged the "territorial unity and sovereignty of nation-states as well as the capability of choosing their 'own' religion", for the first time (Ibraimi, 2013, p. 672). From the 16th and 17th centuries, religion was the main defining factor for differentiating minority nations. The 18th century brought the shift from religion through to nationalism; encompassing secular and language identification. William Bloom (1993) defined this emerging concept of the nation-state, as "as a kind of 'polity' including four major determinants, namely territoriality-within a demarcated territory-, sovereignty-granting the 'arbitrator' status to the state-, centrality-centralized authority that does not need intermediaries and nationality-to achieve a 'uniformed society'". The 19th and 20th centuries have developed the concept of nationalism within a state further, to link it with culture, identity, common language and a desire to live together.

The contemporary definition of a nation-state is comprehensive, however inherently complicated, and has arguably resurrected the concept of nationalism in state-building theory. 'State-building' and 'nation-building' are often confused terms; however, nation-building is most frequently referred to as the creation of a cultural identity, whilst state-building is the formation of an autonomous, independent state system (Scott, 2007, p. 3). International relations, security and peacekeeping, political science, and economic literature all have different perspectives and theories on state-building and nation-building. Whilst there is extensive literature on both concepts, they can be summarised with key criteria. Nation-building theory can be summarised as "a process of socio-political development, which ideally – usually over a longer historical time span – allows initially loosely linked communities to become a common society with a nation-state corresponding to it" (Bennett,

2014). Dobbins (2006, p. 32) identifies the key responsibilities of a legitimate and successful state as ensuring security, humanitarian and relief efforts, governance, economic stability, democratisation and development and stability. Whilst the transformation of the state has encouraged the re-emergence of nationalism within state borders, if states are willing to move away from the "state-centred tradition of much historical and political science research" and foster an "appreciation of the importance of other frameworks of identity and collective action" (2001, p. 56), they will be able to effectively find a way to accommodate nationalist demands that fit within the emerging international regime.

These minority nations that live within a nation-state generally have their own nationalism and cultural identity. A non-state nation is defined by Bertelsen (1979, p. 123) as "any entity that operates in a manner normally associated with the nation-state i.e. organised violence, international collaborative effort such as terrorist activity, however the entity is not recognised as a nation". The United Nations Declaration on Human Rights defines a minority nation as "a group of citizens of a State, constituting a numerical minority and in a non-dominant position in that State, endowed with ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics which differ from those of the majority of the population, having a sense of solidarity with one another, motivated, if only implicitly, by a collective will to survive and whose aim is to achieve equality with the majority in fact and in law" (United Nations Human Rights Committee , 2012, p. 7).

Nation-states often seek self-determination through sovereignty over their homeland to be permanent, exclusive, inalienable, exclusive, absolute and unified. This sovereignty must be over what the nation defines as their "homeland", based on history and cultural ties. Radan (2007, p. 9) defines sovereignty as "a political and legal right to control or to rule over all inhabitants on a particular territory which overrides all other rights to exercise power and control". The concept of sovereignty has two levels; internal and external. Internal sovereignty means that the state has supremacy over internal affairs such as people and resources, without external interference (Makinda, 1996, p. 150). External sovereignty, or juridical sovereignty, guarantees the territory of the state. All sovereign states have people, territory and a government (Fowler & Munck, 1996, p. 381); however, it is the comprehensive position in the international community, recognition and power that truly gives a nation its statehood. It ensures supreme authority over a territory, without

compromise. Non-state nations assert sovereignty; however, they lack the recognition, power and sole control which comes with official statehood and autonomy. Attaining statehood and sovereignty is the ultimate aim of most non-state nations, usually through secession.

Non-state nations have been a cause for concern in international relations for three key reasons. Most states attempt to govern their minority population, through various degrees of control measures. States treat their minority nations in a variety of different ways ranging from assimilation, acculturation, accommodation through primitive autonomy, co-optation, divide and rule, discrimination, repression, expulsion, and extermination. If minority nations are unhappy with their treatment, they often rebel and attempt to secede from the host state. These secession attempts spark conflict and civil war, human rights issues, refugees, and the possibility of state breakdown. Lastly, the conflict and humanitarian issues usually attract international attention, involvement and intervention and can therefore lead to further complications.

Nations, States and Non-State Nations:

The concept of a nation is fundamental, as is the distinction between a nation and a nation-state. A nation is defined by Walker (1978, p. 379) as:

> A social group which shares a common ideology, common institutions and customs, and a sense of homogeneity. 'Nation' is difficult to define so precisely as to differentiate the term from such other groups as religious sects, which exhibit some of the same characteristics. In the nation, however, there is also present a strong group sense of belonging associated with a particular territory considered to be peculiarly its own.

This definition highlights that the key elements of a nation comprise identity, rather than sovereignty or statehood. This is a critical distinction, as it separates ethnonationalism, identity, culture from sovereignty, statehood and autonomy.

The concepts of nations, states and multinational states are often confused. Most existing states are not actually nation-states but multinational states as they comprise more than one nation. It is argued that if a single nation accounts for the majority of the population, the sovereign state is then therefore a nation state. A nation-state refers to the overlap of the nation, and the state. It would not be possible to define a nation purely by cultural and ethnic

homogeneity. It is however possible to define a nation in terms of civic lines. All nations and states comprise ethnic groups. According to Coakley, (2012, p. 6) ethnic groups are "fundamental units of social organisation which consist of members who define themselves, or are defined, by a sense of common historical origins that may also include religious beliefs, a similar language, or a shared culture". The concept of a nation emerges when an ethnic group develops from a homeland society or diaspora community, to an ethnic group through the development of political and statist ideas (Taras & Ganguly, 2006, p. 2). An early definition of a nation is:

> A body of [people] inhabiting a definite territory, who normally are drawn from different races, but possess a common stock of thoughts and feelings acquired and transmitted during the course of a common history; who on the whole and in the main though more in a past than in the present, include in that common stock a common religious belief; who general and as a rule use a common language as the vehicle of their thoughts and feelings; and who, besides common thoughts and feelings, also cherish a common will, and accordingly form, or tend to *form a separate state for the expression and realisation of that will*" (Barker, 1927).

The crux of this definition is the mobilisation of its members towards self-determination, to achieve statehood. When located within another state, these groups can be defined as non-state nations.

The primary formal characteristics of the modern state are as follows: it possesses an administrative and legal order subject to change by legislation, to which the organised activities of the administrative staff, which are also controlled by regulations, are oriented. This system of order claims binding authority, not only over the members of the state, the citizens, most of whom have obtained membership by birth, but also to a very large extent over all action taking place in the area of its jurisdiction. It is thus a compulsory organisation with a territorial basis. Furthermore, the use of force is regarded as legitimate only so far as it is either permitted by the state or prescribed by it…The claim of the modern state to monopolise the use of force is as essential to it as its character of compulsory jurisdiction and of continuous operation" (Weber, 1978, p. 56)

These definitions confirm the contention that most States comprise more than one nation, including non-state nations. Here lies the inherent issue of non-state nations that have their own nationalism and nationalist ambitions which often leads to the quest for self-determination.

Non-State Nations and Secession:

Secession is an increasingly prevalent phenomenon in contemporary politics and is still widely disputed.[1] Autonomy is often a fundamental demand for ethnic groups or nations, which therefore makes secession an enduring feature of international politics. It is estimated that there are over eight thousand "ethno-national groups" in the world, however there are fewer than 200 internationally recognized states (Bennett, 2014, p. 2). Most states are therefore categorised as "multinational states" (Norman, 2003, p. 3566) and encompass numerous national groups. Badie and Berg-Schlosser (2011) stated that "given the countless unresolved cultural and territorial disputes and the many unsatisfied aspirations of nations in Africa, Asia and even in the West, for example, Quebec, Catalonia, the Basques, Flanders, Scotland, and Wales - secession continues to be a force to be reckoned with in international politics".

There is no scholarly consensus surrounding the definition of secession. A working definition of secession is that it is "a process of withdrawal of a territory and its population from an existing state and the creation of a new state on that territory" (Radan & Pavkovic, 2011, p. 1). Heraclides (1991, p. 241) defines secession as "an abrupt unilateral move to independence on the part of a certain region from within the metropolitan territory of a sovereign independent state. It is set forth by an act of declaration of independence, which is manifestly opposed by the state in question." Heraclides further differentiates between abrupt secession, which is usually accompanied by a declared intention to secede, and incremental succession, which involves a clear process of "political activity that may or may not be violent and which is aimed at independence and short of this at a formula of self-

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[1] There are three broad perspectives on secession: anti-secessionists who oppose the right to secession with the exception of certain conditions, the pro-secessionists who support it, again subject to certain conditions; and those who support or oppose secession depending on certain considerations (Lehning, et al., 1998, p. 13). These perspectives are underpinned by liberal political theory, and communitarian disciplines (Lehning, et al., 1998, p. 149). The considerations are generally framed by the social, economic and political characteristics of the situation of the secessionist group, and therefore differ on a case by case basis.

government". Hülsmann (2003, p. 372) states that the ultimate purpose of secession is "to break the compulsory ties between the secessionists and a government which they no longer accept". Secession is therefore a strategy that is used by ethnic nations, to exercise their right of self-determination, with the intent of attaining autonomy and independent statehood.

Toft (2012, p. 583) explores conceptual issues associated with secession, and evaluates primordialist and constructivist theory to contend that ethnic identity is at the core of self-determination. As self-determination is driven by ethnic identity and nationalism, secession is one of the most prevalent forms through which non-state nations seek to achieve sovereign statehood and its recognition from the host state and the international community.

Many scholarly definitions conflict on points surrounding whether host state opposition is required, whether the secession movement must utilise threat of force and whether state formation through decolonisation is included (Radan & Pavkovic, 2011, p. 3). Heraclides (1991, p. 2) aptly identifies that "pure" secessionist movements are "secessionist-irredentist movements", including direct self-determination such as Bangladesh and Katanga, along with incremental movements such as the Kurds, the Eritreans, the Southern Sudanese and the Moros. This argument identifies that secession can either be an abrupt declaration of sovereignty, which was the case with Bangladesh and Katanga. Alternatively, it can be an incremental process which is the case most of the time. These non-state nations "orphans of the universe" as described by Barzani, a Kurdish leader (Heraclides, 1991, p. 2). Secession is the aim of these non-state nations who have autonomous nationalism, culture and identity, however are yet to attain independent statehood. Members of a secessionist movement must share a common identity, along with the common political goal for independence. Members of the group can encompass a wide network of various social statuses, classes and political orientation (Radan & Pavkovic, 2013, p. 45), as long as their fundamental goals for independence align

Secession movements have key characteristics that underpin their self-determination efforts. Radan and Pavkovic (2013) contend that secession movements have four basic attributes. The movement must be a "bounded territory within an existing state", have a "population within that territory", and a political drive targeting the surrounding population that "has proclaimed the independence of a new state based on that territory" and "has attempted to gain recognition of that independence by other states and international

organisations" (Radan & Pavkovic, 2011, p. 33). In addition to these characteristics, there are certain conditions that flag as features for successful secession attempts. In a comprehensive analysis of historical secession, Heraclides (1991) evaluates the commonalities of non-state nation self-determination. Heraclides's model of secession deems that territory and a territorial base for collectivity, the existence of a sizeable human grouping that defines itself as distinct and a relationship between this collectivity and the host state are mandatory elements for secession (Heraclides, The Self-determination of Minorities in International Politics, 1991, p. 13). These three elements must be interrelated, and the group seeking autonomy should pose a threat to the host nation. Knoblett (2016, p. 23) furthers this model, through identifying that the "existence of a segment state, justification for self-determination, and working within the international community are crucial to the actual establishment of a state". Knoblett also cites natural resources, great power support, and a catalyst for change (2016, p. 24) as critical elements for secession. Roeder (2008, p. 11) supports this point about a catalyst for change, by stating that a "crisis" leads to minority groups to want an "upgrade". This links in with segment state theory, which contends that a segment state "upgrades into a sovereign state when there is some crisis or failure of the previous central government" (Knoblett, 2016, p. 17). Not only can a crisis provide motivation for non-state nation secession, it can also provide the means. Change and conflict can be a means to which movements can gain momentum, support and resources.

Secession is an international issue, as "self-determination movements tend to be defensive, territorially confined, and limited in scope, the dynamics of bargaining and the nature of stakes compel patron states and outside actors to get involved" (Toft, 2012, p. 582) and therefore frequently develops into civil war. The international community also plays a critical role in the prospective success of secessionist movements, as the stance of other states can fundamentally support or block secession. Radan and Pavkovic (2013, p. 36) formulated three interrelated ways in which a non-state nation may achieve international recognition of its independence. The first way is through "the official recognition of its independence by other independent states and international organisations such as the European Union" (Radan & Pavkovic, 2013, p. 36). The second step is the formal recognition of the former host state or successor. Then thirdly, the admission of the new state to the membership of the United Nations (Radan & Pavkovic, 2013, p. 36). In the case of non-state nation secession,

international involvement and recognition is paramount to not only attaining autonomy and statehood, but ongoing viability and sustainment.

International Normative Regime on Secession:

International activity, in the context of self-determination can be defined as a "plea for world concern, or a plea for involvement on the part of a third-party (state, IGO, NGO or sub-units of these three) by the secessionist front or secessionist movement" (Heraclides, 1991, p. 241). Heraclides also defines partisan international activity as an

> "activity by a government, IGO, NGO or their sub-units which results in enhancing the position of the secessionist (even if it is not deliberate), or which is aimed at enhancing the secessionist position. Partisan international involvement is of two general types: (a) tangible involvement which is divided into material (or utilitarian) aid, aid by way of access, and assistance by way of services rendered; and (b) political-diplomatic and moral support. Partisan international involvement can be based on instrumental motives and/or on affective motives, there can thus be "instrumental involvement" and "affective involvement"" (Heraclides, 1991, p. 241).

The international normative regime on state intervention and involvement in non-state nation self-determination, is most often to stay at arm's length. The reasons that other states don't get involved are twofold. Firstly, due to the inherent disinclination of the international community towards secession and secondly, due to lack of instrumental motivation. Heraclides further contends that "The most common single reason for state support is instrumental in nature. It is international political gain" (Heraclides, 1991, p. 245). Partisan supporters are more inclined to provide "cheap" intangible support, in the form of moral and political support rather than tangible forms of support such as diplomatic recognition or ground assistance (Heraclides, 1991, p. 245).

Scholars of international relations commonly argue that the transnational legal policies on self-determination fail to explain the situational reality; that secession is not supported by the international community. Sterio (2013, p. 3) contends that whilst "secessionist groups like the East Timorese, the Kosovar Albanians and the South Sudanese have been successful in their quests for independent statehood, other similarly situated groups have been relegated to an at times violent existence within their mother states." Many non-

state nations remain stagnant in their battle for self-determination. Among these are the Chechens in Russia, the South Ossetians and Abkhaz that are monopolized by the geopolitical power balance in the Caucuses region, and the Kurds that remain in fractured contingents throughout the Middle East including Turkey, Syria and Iraq. Sterio (2013, p. 52) asserts that "the Rule of the Great Powers" means that self-determination movements will only attain secession if they have the support of most powerful states. These "Great Powers" are the political, economic and military leaders of the world and include the United States, China, Russia, the United Kingdom, Japan, France, German and Italy (USILD, 2015).

Out of the Great Powers, the Russia and China appear to have minimal concern about supporting secessionist movements. Russia did however oppose Biafra 2. The United States is in principle against secession and has opposed Bangladesh and Katanga (Heraclides, The Self-determination of Minorities in International Politics, 1991, p. 204). It has provided arms to groups such as the Kurds, however this was hardly an endorsement of secession. America's support of the Kurds is aimed to assist their fight against Islamic State, and to further U.S interests in the Middle East. The United Kingdom has some minor involvement in the Nigerian secessionist war yet provided resources for Lagos to beat Biafra (Atofarati, 1992). Italy has demonstrated a general nonchalance for secession, and whilst it was empathetic towards the Eritrean independence in the 1940's, it avoided any real involvement (Heraclides, The Self-determination of Minorities in International Politics, 1991, p. 204). Generally, the Great Powers don't get involved in secession movements unless the success of the movement furthers their state interests.

The majority of political science scholars contend that international norms are predisposed towards maintaining the current international system and order. Heraclides's study (1991, p. 46) aimed to "establish patterns of interaction between the international system and secessionist minorities" and concluded that the international normative regime is generally opposed to the emergence of new states, and that neighbouring, and host states historically fail to remain neutral. In "Foreign Interventions and Secessionist Movements: The Democratic Factor", Bélanger, Duhesne, & Paquin (2005, p. 32) demonstrated that democratic states are very unlikely to support secessionist movements in other democracies.

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2 A secessionist western African state that unilaterally declared its independence from Nigeria in May 1967.

This follows Democratic Peace theory. It was also identified that Autocratic countries are significantly more likely to intervene in secessionist movements in other Autocratic states, than they are to interfere in Democratic states. As most of the Great Powers are democratic, this shows that due to their political nature, they are less inclined to get involved in secessionist movements.

Non-democratic Great Powers including China and Russia are not likely to back secessionist demands from non-state nations. China has a long history of repressing uprisings from its ethnic minorities. In China, the indigenous ethnic Uighur population has been repressed by the Chinese state. Activists argue that the Chinese state curtail the commercial and cultural activities of the Uighur, including restrictions on Islamic schools and mosques (BBC, 2014). The Uighurs carried out numerous protests in 2009, with violent riots breaking out in Urumqi, the capital city of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in North-western China. Whilst Chinese state propaganda describes its 55 minority groups as living in harmony, "the reality stands in stark contrast to the image of national unity conjured by the state" Mackerras 2006, p.168). Grievances are said to stem from political, economic and social imbalances in the country. Uighur nationalism has been repressed by Chinese state authorities, as "any nationalist or independence movements are considered illegitimate because China does not recognize the right of national self-determination and adheres strictly to a policy of assimilation" (Hyer & Eric, 2006, p. 75).

In contrast, Russia has a more positive history of ethnic minority protests for independence (Gorenburg D. P., 2003, p. 7). Russia has over 130 minority groups[3]. Russian President, Vladimir Putin describes this heterogeneity as a positive, saying "every person and every ethnic group has been adding the colors of their own discovered, energy and talent to the palette of common culture" (Hays, 2016). Russia had sixteen autonomous republics prior to the breakdown of the Soviet Union, including Chechnya which declared independence in November 1992 (Storobin, 2004, p. 7). After the formation of the Russian Federation , the Russian constitution of 1993 recognised twenty-one "nationality based republics" comprising Adygea, Bashkortostan, Buryatia, Chechnya, Chuvashia, Dagestan, Gorno-Altay, Ingushetia,

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[3] A rough breakdown of ethnic groups in Russia is: Russian 77.7 percent, Tatar 3.7 percent, Ukrainian 1.4 percent, Bashkir 1.1 percent, Chuvash 1 percent, Chechen 1 percent, other 10.2 percent, unspecified 3.9 percent (CIA, 2010).

Kabardino-Balkaria, Kalmykia, Karachayevo-Cherkessia, Karelia, Khakassia, Komi, Mari El, Mordovia, North Ossetia, Sakha (Yakutia), Tatarstan, Tyva (Tuva), and Udmurtia (Hays, 2016). In addition to these autonomous republics, the Russian constitution also recognises ten autonomous regions belonging to ethnic groups. These comprise the Aga Buryat, Chukchi, Evenk, Khanty-Mansi, Koryak, Nenets, Permyak, Taymyr, Ust'-Orda Buryat, and Yamalo-Nenets autonomous regions (Hays, 2016).

In contrast to China, where ethnic conflict revolves around minorities wanting autonomy, ethnic conflicts in Russia arise from these groups trying to gain more power. Unlike most states, Russia provides its minorities with autonomy in territory, and recognition of their distinct nationalism (Treisman, 1997, p. 212). Putin's tactic for governing these minorities is to use State control, to stop them from fighting each other and threatening fundamental Russian state rule (Hays, 2016). Russia has selected the minority leaders since 2000, as a tactic to maintain control. Most of Russia's autonomous republics also rely heavily on the broader state for economic viability, therefore, Hays (2016) argues that the "threat of secession has now been established as a bargaining chip in the struggle with the central government for political and economic advantage, but it is a threat of limited practical value".

Whilst Russia and China differ in their approach to managing their ethnic minorities, neither of them has voluntarily offered and recognised true autonomy and sovereign statehood to these groups. It is therefore unlikely that either democratic and non-democratic Great Powers will support the secession of non-state nations.

The international normative regime on secession has changed throughout history. In past decades, there have been numerous successful secession attempts, however very few have occurred prior to 1990. Since 1990, Eritrea seceded from Ethiopia, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia broke down into numerous sovereign states that have international recognition, East Timor gained independence from Indonesia and South Sudan has separated from Sudan (Bennett, 2014, p. 4). Secession was viewed as a "negative right" between 1810 and 1950. The international community recognised a state only after it had declared itself as independent (Fabry, 2008, p. 52). Balkan states such as Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania attained secession in this way. The formation of the United Nations after the Second World War, however, changed secession to be a "positive right", where the question was based on whether "an entity had a prior right to independence, rather than whether it is

independent" (Fabry, 2008, p. 57). At this point in history, Frabry (2008, p. 29) argues that "candidates for recognition (of a right to secession) have been restricted to colonial territories whose right to independence was blocked, violated, or not yet realised, to constituent units of dissolved states, and to seceding entities that received the consent of their parent states". Unilateral secession, and de facto statehood became illegitimate, and nothing in the United Nations Charter provided authorisation for intervention to change this.

As previously stated, the 1990's saw an increase in secession attempts, due to a slight shift in the international normative regime on secession. Kosovo's declaration of unilateral independence from Serbia in 2008 was an example of this. This secession was and has been recognized by numerous western nations, including the United Kingdom, Germany, the United States, France and Canada (White R. , 2010). Krauthhammer (1990-1991, p. 23) highlights that the unipolarity of the post-Cold War international system that followed the end of the 1991 Gulf War led to "a more robust and interventionist US foreign policy". The realist perspective that international norms "serve only an instrumental purpose and are likely to be enforced or enforceable only by a hegemon" describes this recent shift (Slaughter, 2006, p. 507). This highlights the increased influence of the Great Powers in recent decades and re-iterates the importance of Great Power backing as a critical requirement for secession.

The United Nations (UN) Charter along with numerous subsequent documents and international institutional frameworks highlight the ideal treatment of minority nations. Chapter 1 of the UN Charter was created with the aim in part to "develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples", and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states that "all peoples have the right to self-determination", and "by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development" (United Nations, 2018) (Moltchanova, 2009, p. 2). The Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (Minorities Declaration) that was adopted by the United Nations in 1992 discusses the importance of protecting the rights of minority nations, and the importance of these minority groups in international relations and state affairs. This document recognises the way in which minority nations "contribute to the political and social stability of States in which they live" and, in turn, "contribute to the strengthening of friendship and cooperation among peoples and States". It

also notes that "states shall protect the existence and the national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories and shall encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity", and that "persons belonging to minorities have the right to participate effectively in decisions on the national and, where appropriate, regional level concerning the minority to which they belong or the regions in which they live, in a manner not incompatible with national legislation" (United Nations, 1992). Article four identifies the host state's obligations, in noting that "states shall take measures to create favourable conditions to enable persons belonging to minorities to express their characteristics and to develop their culture, language, religion, traditions and customs, except where specific practices are in violation of national law and contrary to international standards" (United Nations, 1992).

Whilst all these provisions sound ideal in theory and highlight the importance of minority autonomy, the international community does not frequently practice this attitude. Keating (2001, p. 19) argues that there is a requirement for a "new model of the state that provides a formula for the recognition of nationality and self-government in diverse forms". The way that states respond to their minority groups is diverse and usually not successful in managing the self-determination of minority nations.

The Charter of the United Nations (Chapter 1, Article 1) declares that one of the purposes and principles of the UN is to "develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples" (United Nations, 1975). In 1970, the UN General Assembly passed a Declaration on Principles of International law, which states that "alien subjugation, domination and exploitation to be violations of the principle of self-determination and that people denied the right to self-determination may exercise the right by choosing independence, integration of free association" (Watson, 2008, p. 276). This declaration also notes that all peoples have the right to self-determination "without external interference", and that "every State has the duty to respect this right in accordance with the provisions of the Charter" (United Nations, 1970). Whilst this provides a generalized and idealized perspective, none of these statements are legally enforceable, nor is this an accurate reflection of the United Nation's attitude towards secession in practice.

Consequential to the international normative regime, it can be argued that secessionist groups are more likely to attain independence if they work with the international community

to slowly and peacefully attain statehood, rather than boldly declaring themselves as a sovereign nation and disturbing the international system and stability of their region (Knoblett, 2016, p. 12). Hadji (2009, p. 528) supports this notion through his theory of "earned sovereignty", which is the "conditional and progressive devolution of sovereign powers and authority from a state to a sub state entity under international supervision". This contention has, however, been proven inaccurate, in the case of the Kurds and the Kashmiri Muslims. Mund (2013) contends that "concerns for international stability by working within the international system provides the greater explanatory leverage". Montenegro, Kosovo and Northern Ireland are examples of states working with the international system (Mund, 2013) for earned sovereignty, and achieving statehood diplomatically, democratically, and under approval of the international community. The counter argument to this perspective is that most non-state nation groups do not have the diplomatic relationships with the international community. Most scholars agree that "external support for separatist groups is often financial, military, or humanitarian aid, but rarely diplomatic in nature" (Knoblett, 2016, p. 14). As a result of this, secession movements resort to violent uprising to achieve their goal of attaining statehood and therefore have no choice but to impact the international and geopolitical environment.

There is no international legal framework on handling the self-determination of non-state nations, nor is there an international legal framework on secession. Whilst the UN has guidelines for the treatment of minorities, UN intervention is still manipulated by the international arena and the international normative regime is arguably against secession and change. Most political science scholars contend that international norms are predisposed towards maintaining the current international system and order. Heraclides's study (1991, p. 46) aimed to "establish patterns of interaction between the international system and secessionist minorities" and concluded that the international normative regime is generally opposed to the emergence of new states, and that neighbouring, and host states historically fail to remain neutral.

The UN has historically intervened in state matters without permission (Makinda, 1996, p. 149), when enforcement operations are necessary for conflict resolution and security, however this is quite rare. The United Nations Security Council is not an appropriate means for adjudicating intra-state conflict or secession movements, as it is still limited by the

opinions of its members and is therefore inherently biased towards states. Palermo and Sabanadze (2011, p. 130) establish the importance of state diversity management as a solution that states should adopt for dealing with their minorities, and contend that

> the development and implementation of successful concepts, models, strategies, policies and programmes/activities of diversity management should be considered as an ongoing process that requires the close, all-encompassing and continuous involvement of all relevant social and political as well as economic actors, supported by research, education and the media in order to comprehend , consider and reflect on the immense complexity and multidimensionality of contemporary societies and the interdependence of the relevant actors, factors and processes.

This diversity management should account for the specific environmental requirements and circumstances and be adjusted accordingly. It should consider the general goals and long-term goals, short term and pointed goals, institutional and organizational frameworks and the relevant actors potentially involved. Social, political and economic inclusion is cited to be the key element for successful conflict management in plural, multinational societies (Palermo & Sabanadze, 2011, p. 139).

Moral Arguments that Justify Secession by Non-State Nations:

There is a significant amount of scholarly analysis on the moral implications of secessionist movements, and the requirements for a defensible right to secede. These approaches consider international and institutional policies and norms, human rights and ethics. Buchanan (1997, p. 32) identifies the necessary considerations that should justify the right to secede, through two normative questions. The first question is "under what conditions does a group have a moral right to secede?" (p. 32). This explores secession rights independently to institutional morality, whereas the second question, "under what conditions should a nation be recognized as having a right to secede as a matter of international institutional morality, including a morally defensible system of international law?" (p. 32). In practicality, secessionist movements are bound by international norms and institutional morality, so the second question is truly the most pertinent when evaluating the self-determination of non-state nations from a moral and ethical perspective. The theoretical analysis of moral justifications of secession includes Primary Right theory and Remedial Right theory.

Primary Right theory contends that any specific nation has a general right to secede unilaterally at will. Harry Beran and Daniel Philpott support this theory. They promulgate choice (associative theory) and self-determination (ascriptive theory) to argue that if a non-state nation has the desire to secede, then it has a moral right to secession. Simplistically, this is an extension of the democratic principle that "government requires actual consent of its peoples, and that actual consent simply cannot exist where a group wishes to secede" (Bennett, 2014, p. 13). Primary Right theory has gained minimal support within academic and political circles. It has been criticized due to its lack of recognition surrounding nations' right to territory, along with the lack of consideration given to how the minority nations have been treated by the state. If a nation has no justified rights to the territory it demands, and has not been treated unjustly, the counter argument is that there is no true claim to secession.

Remedial Right theory can be utilized to develop an international and institutionally comprehensive response to secession justification based on ethical norms and standards (Costa, 2003, p. 35). Remedial Right theory contends that secessionist non-sate nations have the unilateral right to secede, following: "(a) large-scale and persistent violations of basic human rights, (b) the unjust taking of the territory of a legitimate state (where secession is simply the taking back of wrongly taken territory, as with the secession of the Baltic Republics from the Soviet Union in 1991), and (c) in certain cases, the state's persisting violation of agreements to accord a minority group limited self-government within the state" (Buchanan A. , Secession, 2013). In the most austere cases, Remedial Right theory would state that secession is justified in the event of: "(a), persistent, large-scale violations of basic human rights (in the most extreme case, genocide or other mass killings)" (Buchanan A. , Secession, 2013). This theory contends that people should have the right to unilateral secession from an existing state, if their rights to self-determination are being denied and secession is the only remaining option (Vezbergaite, 2011, p. 2). Costa (2003, p. 63) furthers this argument by stating that if a minority nation fails to establish a successful multinational arrangement, then the non-state nation has a valid right to appeal to secessionist nationalism, choice and remedial rights.

Most political science commentators agree that non-state nations should have an internationally recognized and institutionally enforceable right to secede if they meet certain conditions. Whilst there is debate around the details of these conditions, it is generally

recognised that economic grievance surrounding development, relative deprivation and poverty, political factors such as institutions and elites, and geographical factors are all critical influences in emerging secessionist claims (Toft, 2012, p. 586). Bennett (2014) further argues that there are five fundamental factors that should be analysed in order to determine whether a minority group has a justified right to secession; these factors include: (1) nationhood and claim to territory; (2) self-determination and autonomy; (3) treatment at the hands of the state; (4) viability of the proposed state; and the (5) position of the existing state (Bennett, 2014, p. 2).

In his article "International Law and Morality in the Theory or Secession", Copp (1998, p. 220) highlights the criticality of recognition and legitimacy for secession and seeks to map out domestic constitution and international law that ought to be adopted to consolidate this. Copp (1998) identifies the requirement for an international legal right of secession and concludes that "territorial" and "political" societies have a moral right to secession, which should be supported by the international community (219). Copp also contends that political and territorial societies should have a recognized right to call a plebiscite on secession, and if successful, create a state without international opposition. Whilst numerous scholars (Luke, 2012) (Copp, 1998) (Radan & Pavkovic, 2013) detail the benefits of an international law framework on secession, it is unclear how this would be adopted in practice. These attempts fail to address the lack of international viability, as it goes against the international normative regime on secession and the general interests of the Great Powers to adopt such a framework.

As summarized by Heraclides (1991, p. 28), there are six noteworthy arguments against the provision of a unilateral right to secession. The first of these arguments is the possible onset of Balkanization, domino theory or the phenomenon of a Pandora's box. Second is the fear of indefinite divisibility, as very few states are truly ethically and socially homogenous. Third is the impact that such a right could have on democracy as a whole, when a minority would have the right to blackmail a state into conformity with its demands through the threat of secession. Fourthly, there is a significant danger that such a right would give birth to small and non-viable states that would then have to rely intensely on international support and resources for survival. The fifth problem is that within a small seceding state, there could be further trapped or stranded minorities that would lose their ability to secede in turn. Lastly, these stranded minorities could be strategically vital to the original state.

State responses to Self-Determination, and Alternatives to Secession:

The treatment of minority nations by their host states varies significantly from assimilation, acculturation, accommodation through primitive autonomy, co-optation, divide and rule, discrimination, repression, expulsion, and extermination. Whilst inequality and repression are often the key motivations behind why a minority nation strives for autonomy, the dominant factor that determines whether a state can assimilate, accommodate or acculturate a minority nation is the minority nation's sense and strength of ethno-nationalism. Heraclides (1991, p. 8) contends that ethno-nationalist consciousness is the "independent variable that leads to political assertiveness and militant separatism", regardless of what other factors may have led to a minority nation's self-determination goals. It is this sense and consciousness of ethno-nationalism that pushes minority nations to aspire for autonomy and independence; however, in certain cases these feelings can be curbed, and the minority nation can be integrated into the state and wider society through assimilation and acculturation policies. This can be seen in Australia, through the way in which the indigenous population had a separate identity and culture yet have largely conformed and assimilated with the wider Australian community. Assimilation can also be forced through means of co-optation. Small sized minority nations can be particularly susceptible to co-optation, as they are vulnerable to selective incentives in return for political support (Stone, Whelan, & Murin, 1986, p. 45). The French co-optation of the Berbers in Morocco (Byman, 2002, p. 87), despite eventually failing, shows how a state can manipulate the allegiance of a minority.

The approach of "divide and rule" in state politics is a means to manipulate, segregate and isolate minority groups to stop them from unifying and challenging state rule. The Canadian government segregated its aboriginal population into separate legal definitions, to turn the groups into each other so they could be better managed and assimilated (Barth, 2008, p. 110). This tactic can also be seen through the way in which Turkey manages its Kurdish population. Whilst Turkey did not originally divide the Kurdish minority groups into their five geographical locations, it actively prevents its Kurdish population from uniting with other Kurdish groups to mitigate a secessionist uprising within its borders.

Accommodation through primitive autonomy is another means of managing a minority nation and is usually conducted through the provision of limited measures of cultural autonomy. Cultural autonomy is a way to preserve the positive and substantive rights

and entitlements of a minority group. To manage this, a council is usually set up to assume responsibility for the educational and cultural affairs of the minority (Reynolds, 2002, p. 163). These councils are designed to preserve the identity of the group, whilst managing the community. An example of this was the case of the Bodo people in India. Cultural autonomy was granted through the formation of the Bodo Territorial Council in 2000, "to fulfil economic, educational and linguistic aspirations and the preservation of land-rights, socio-cultural and ethnic identity of the Bodos" (SATP, 2003). Cultural autonomy is a limited solution when minority nations are involved, as they usually have high expectations regarding the level of autonomy they require.

Forms of federalism provide a slightly more comprehensive solution to autonomy and are often adopted by states to manage the demands of minority groups. Lehning et al (1998, p. 110) explores federalism as the most commonly cited mechanism for accommodating ethno-cultural pluralism, as it allows ethnic groups to remain autonomous and keep their cultural identity whilst recognizing the fact that there are economic and political interdependencies. For national minorities that have concentration within a specific area or territory, federal sub-unit boundaries can be drawn to allow self-government (Lehning, et al., 1998, p. 119). This allows the group to make key decisions without being outvoted by the greater society of the host state. An example of this is the Canadian federal division of Quebec, which has an eighty per cent population of Francophone people (Statistics Canada, 2015). This separate jurisdiction allows control over language, culture, education and immigration policy. Whilst federalism is usually the best hope for keeping countries together, not all state federal systems are designed for this to be a feasible option long term. It also has considerable limitations associated with accommodating national minorities, as there are complexities involved in drawing boundaries and sharing power (Lehning, et al., 1998, p. 120). Federalism is inherently complicated and requires a balance of power and expectation. In a lot of cases where the host states attempt federalism, they are not willing to accommodate certain aspirations of minority groups, which inevitably end in violent secession attempts.

States that attempt to manage their minority groups through discrimination, repression, expulsion, and extermination usually stimulate violent expressions of self-determination. Whilst this is not exclusive to States that discriminate or repress their minority

populations, it is still a frequent response. Extreme examples of state extermination of minorities include Nazi Germany's efforts to exterminate the Jews in the early 1940s and the attempt by Rwanda's Hutu-controlled government to exterminate the rival Tutsis in 1994. The Turkish state's treatment of its Kurdish minority is an example of state oppression. In the first fifty years of the Turkish Republic, the Kurds violently protested 29 times just to get basic rights such as education in their language, and the authority to give their children Kurdish names (Alliance for Kurdish Rights, 2016). The South-Eastern part of Turkey, which homes most of the Kurdish population, was consistently deprived of investment and economic aid (MIT, 2000). Hannum (2011, p. 458) contends that the key factors that agitate non-state nations towards attaining autonomy include language, education, access to governmental civil service including police and security forces, social services, land and natural resources and representative local government structures. Further to this, Pavkovic and Radan (2007, p. 47) contend that the grievances that lead non-state nations towards goals of secession are based on three issues. The first of these is the unequal distribution of power and resources within the different parts of the host state that is perceived to disadvantage the non-state nation. The second is grievances based on harm that is intentionally inflicted by the host state against the non-state nation. Lastly, grievances are also based on alien rule or domination over the target group. Government repression and exclusion is the primary catalyst that propagates the self-determination of minority non-state nations. States that repress and actively try to exterminate their minority populations are most often countered with violent secession movements, such as the Tamils, the Kosovo Albanian movement and the Kurds. Minority groups resort to violence when faced with repression as a last resort to achieve autonomy, recognition and secession. Groups that are violently repressed, ignored, and actively exterminated generally believe that violence is the only way that can provoke change and recognition (Pavkovic & Radan, 2007, p. 59). This is when non-state nations truly become a problem within international politics, as these violent uprisings develop into secessionist movements that have severe international ramifications.

Non-state nations that are not managed successfully by their host state usually try to secede. Some secession attempts can be peaceful and consensual through a negotiated agreement. This occurred when Norway peacefully seceded from Sweden in 1905 (Singapore from Malaysia in the 1960s; Slovakia's velvet divorce from Czechoslovakia). Secession can

also be settled mutually through constitutional processes, such as the Supreme Court of Canada's recent decision to support the secession of Quebec (Buchanan A. , 2015). Peaceful and consensual secession is however rare, and most cases involve violent revolt. This conflict is a serious inter-state, intra-state and international, as "self-determination movements tend to be defensive, territorially confined, and limited in scope, the dynamics of bargaining and the nature of stakes compel patron states and outside actors to get involved" (Toft, 2012, p. 582) and therefore frequently develops into civil war. Violent secessionist movements damage the host state through the loss of trade, investment and work, and attract international involvement through military aid or outright intervention (Pavkovic & Radan, 2007, p. 58). The violence, depending on the scale, usually results in human rights violations, refugees, international concern and intervention. In terms of cost to the host state, violent secessionist movements are second only to a war or prolonged conflict with another state entity. Siroky (2009, p. 276) finds that even if a non-state nation achieves secession, there is an 87 percent chance of further violence and ethnic conflict, which backs his contention that secession is not an adequate solution to ethnic conflict and the problem of non-state nations in international relations.

Non-state nations have been an inherent problem in international relations and will continue to be a cause of conflict within the international system. In the world of multi-national states, there are numerous minority groups with collective identities that are classified as non-state nations. In the past few decades, numerous ethno-separatist movements have attempted to challenge the pre-existing world order of nation-states in order to redefine national boundaries for the creation of new, independent states. These national minority groups will continue to strive for self-determination and autonomy, especially if their rights are being limited or repressed by their host states. It has been established that states often fail to manage the diversity of their people, which then leads to secession movements and conflict that has severe ramifications for human rights, geopolitics and international relations.

Summary

There are key endogenous and exogenous factors that usually determine the success and/or failure for non-state nations in secessionist conflicts. Firstly, the non-state nation must have a claim to territory and a territorial base for collectivity, often underpinned by a sense of

nationalism. Secondly, the non-state nation must have autonomous nationalism, culture and a common identity, along with the common political goal for independence. This requires internal cohesion and organisation to ensure the collective goal of self-determination and autonomy. Thirdly, the non-state nation must have attempted to gain recognition of that independence by other states and international organisations, as international support and recognition of autonomy and sovereign statehood is a critical factor for secession. This support includes the official recognition of its independence by other independent states and international organisations such as the European Union. Fundamentally, as the international normative regime on secession is heavily biased in favour of the State, it is imperative that non-state nations attain international support to back their claim for autonomy.

Conclusion

This Chapter has explored the concept of nationalism, and how it underpins the identity and self-determination of non-state nations. It has also discussed the organisation of nations, states, and multinational states and the place of non-state nations within these constructs. The issues that arise from the existence of non-state nations within international relations have been identified, including the way in which host States manage their minority populations. This in turn often drives minority nations towards violent forms of self-determination, in an attempt to secede. This chapter has explored the international normative regime on secession and how this has historically shaped the outcome of minority secession movements. It has also touched on moral and theoretical perspectives on secession, and alternative means for autonomy. Lastly, this chapter has framed key endogenous and exogenous factors that usually determine the success and/or failure for non-state nations in secessionist conflicts, which will be used as a theoretical baseline for discussion throughout this thesis. The subsequent chapter will explore Kurdish history, nationhood and the desire for Kurdistan which will develop a consolidated understanding of the Kurds as a non-state nation and their perspectives on self-determination.

Chapter 2: The Kurds: History, Nationhood and the Desire for Kurdistan

Introduction:

This chapter provides a summary of Kurdish history, to detail how they have arrived at their current divided state due to centuries of internal schisms and misalignments in leadership, direction and self-determination goals.

This analysis will empirically demonstrate the central hypothesis of this thesis, that non-state nations such as the Kurds find it very hard to establish a sovereign national state through secession because of endogenous and exogenous factors. The main endogenous factor is the lack of unity among the group (exacerbated by the fact that they are divided across several states), which leads to the creation of separate cultural and historical narratives, political and ideological divisions and competing and conflicting objectives.

This chapter will explore who the Kurdish people are, and the history behind how they came to be divided across several countries in the modern Middle East. The history of each of these Kurdish contingents will be explored, including Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. Whilst all Kurdish communities have experienced forced assimilation and repression from their host states, the severity and outcomes of this experience has varied across the various states. Each of these contingents have their own unique history which has formed key differences in culture and perspectives on nationalism. This chapter will explore what these differences are, and how they may have prevented the emergence of a homogeneous and cohesive Kurdish nationalist movement based on a monolithic culture. It will also demonstrate why some Kurdish contingents are fighting hard for self-determination and autonomy, whilst others are relatively passive in comparison.

Kurdish History:

The Kurds are an indigenous people from the Mesopotamian plains and highlands, which now form north-eastern Syria, northern Iraq, north-eastern Iran, south-eastern Turkey and south-western Armenia (BBC, 2016). The *World Directory of Minorities* (Minority Rights Group, 1997) cites a Kurdish population within Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Germany, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Sweden, Syria, Turkey and the U.S.A; however, some of these population concentrations are negligible. For thousands of years, the Kurds have been

concentrated in the mountainous region, colloquially named as "Kurdistan". This area comprises Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Azerbaijan and Armenia (Nezan, 2017, p. 56). With a total population of 35 million, approximately 12 million reside in Turkey, with a further 6 million in Iraq, 6 million in Iran, 2 million in Syria and the remaining located in near regions (CIA, 2014).

The Kurdish people are believed to be derived from the Indo-European race, from prehistoric kingdoms called the Mitanni, Kassites and Hourites that lived in the mountains between the Euphrates and the Iranian plateau (Nezan, 2017). This community later reigned over Assyria and Iran from 612 BC, which is cited as "the first Kurdish year" by nationalists (Nezan, 2017). The Kurdish region of Iran was recognised since ancient times. Most of 'Kurdistan' was part of the Iranian Empire until this was divided during the Ottoman Empire conflicts to form modern day Turkey, Syria and Iraq (Hale, 2014). For centuries, the Kurds had a nomadic existence, until the seventeenth century which saw the division of Kurdistan between the Persian and Ottoman empires, and agreed borders defined in 1639 (Hassanpour, 2015). This struggle began in 1508 when the rulers of Persia and the Ottoman Empire first started to contest control over Kurdistan. The Persians wanted control over the region's agricultural wealth, and wished to "marginalize the Kurdish Sunni Muslim decision-makers who were objecting to the expansion of the Persian Shia'ism to control the Shia holy cities of Najaf and Karbala in the Mesopotamian plain; present-day Iraq" (Kakeyi, 2010). The Ottomans too wanted access to Kurdistan for economic gain; however, in contrast they supported the Sunni population within Kurdistan in order to counter the Persian Shia expansion.

Decades of struggle and violence finally amounted to both the Turkish and the Persians admitting defeat and agreeing borders through the Treaty of Zuhab in 1639 (White B. T., 2011, p. 42). This border split the Kurds into two groups, one under the Ottoman Empire and the other under the Persian Empire. These two Kurdish groups were not without conflict for long. Kurdish leaders led numerous revolts against both the Ottoman and Persian empires. When the Persian empire began to decline, Karim Khani Zand who was the founder of the Kurdish Zand Dynasty in Persia, attacked and occupied the Vilayet of Basra in 1775. This was to disrupt the Ottoman Empire's access to the Persian Gulf and to interrupt their economic growth (Kakeyi, 2010). This occupation ceased in 1821 when another war in

Northeastern Kurdistan erupted between the two empires. This conflict finally resulted in the Treaty of Erzurum in 1823, which dictated:

> From this period, on the side of Baghdad and Kurdistan no interference is to take place, nor with any Districts of the Divisions of Kurdistan within the boundaries, is the Persian government to intermeddle, or authorize any acts of molestation, or to assume any authority over the present or former possessors of those countries" (Bahadori, 2005, p. 7).

Despite this provision, both empires continued their involvement in each other's Kurdish affairs. International mediation from Britain, Turkish and Russian diplomats tried to diffuse the situation. Whilst these international stakeholders assisted in resolving this conflict to further their own economic goals within the region, their resolution strategies maintained Kurdish division and repression.

The late 1940s and 1950s brought political upheaval to the Middle East, which caused significant changes to Kurdish society as a result of land reforms and civil war. This was initiated in 1948 by a revolt in the Arbat village which was "the first uprising of its kind in the Iraqi countryside -- an uprising against the landed sheikh instead of under his leadership -- and in this sense set the tone for the fervid, if intermittent, agrarian unrest of the 1950s" (Batatu, 1982). This conflict introduced a new social strata and Kurdish working class, which increased skills, education and encouraged the Kurdish population to be further integrated within the wider community (Hassanpour, 2015). Instead of integrating into the community, this newfound education and awareness motivated an increase in Kurdish consciousness. This dramatically transformed Kurdish nationalism, and arguably marks the beginning of the Kurdish struggle for autonomy and recognition.

Whilst the Kurds existed as an identifiable group for more than two thousand years, the Kurdish people only truly attained a sense of community in the twentieth century (McDowall, 2007, p. 1). There are various arguments surrounding what constitutes nationhood, community and collectivity. Some scholars contend that the "essence of a nation is intangible" and that it is a psychological bond that differentiates a nation from others (Walker, 1978, p. 379). Walker (1978, p. 379) cites the dictionary of International Relations which defines a nation as "a social group which shares a common ideology, common

institutions and customs and a sense of homogeneity". As this definition alone does not clearly differentiate a religious sect from a nation, it is argued that nations also have a sense of belonging or connection to territory (Geertz, 1997, p. 236). Other scholars and definitions argue that essential characteristics of a nation include institutions, rights, language, mutual culture and a civic ideology within a common homeland (McDowall, 2007, p. 2). Kurdish ancestry, language, religion and culture is dissimilar between different Kurdish contingents.

As a people, the Kurds did not derive from an ethnically coherent background of common ancestry (McDowall, 2007, p. 8). Each Kurdish contingent has differing historical roots, and therefore "the difficulty of resolving the Kurdish ethno-nationalism reflects the complex nature of the multiple identities of the Kurds with regard to language, regionalism, and tribal ties." (Yavus, 2007, p. 16). The Kurds descended from various tribal groups over time. Investigations into the physiognomy of the Kurds contend that some of their most significant physical features bear a strong similarity with neighbouring non-Kurdish communities (McDowall, 2007, p. 9). Language is also an indicator of their diverse origins. Kurdish language belongs to the Irano-Aryan of the Indo-European language family and has developed through the assimilation of tribal dialects (Blau, 2016). There are two major contemporary dialects of Kurdish language; Kurmanji and Surani which are "standardised versions" of a variety of tribal dialects. Kurmanji is spoken by Northern Kurdish contingents in Turkey, Syria and some in Iraq and Iran whilst Surani is spoken by Kurds in Southern regions in Iraq and Iran (McDowall, 2007, p. 9). The third Kurdish language is one spoken by the Kurdish "intellectual elite", who are literate in Arabic, Turkish and Persian (Blau, 2016). These languages influenced the Kurdish dialect.

The dominance of Kurdish tribal leadership has been a key downfall for Kurdish aspirations of statehood. It is an undemocratic, authoritarian style of leadership which has caused significant conflict within the Kurdish population. Dawoody (2006, p. 487) highlights how a simple analysis of "Kurdish leadership and the actions of their main political parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), reveals how they seek to advance their agendas with undemocratic methods", through the control of "Kurdish media, political dynamics, elections, and appointments to administrative positions within the Kurdish region". This form of leadership bans the formation of other Kurdish political parties and restricts political freedoms. It has been a dominant cause of internal

conflict for the Kurds throughout history. Many leaders have also been seen to be corrupt and focused on pursuing their interests over those of the Kurdish people. Many believe that Kurdish disunity is promulgated by their corrupt leadership (Abdul-Qahar, 2017), which has caused intra-Kurdish conflict and violence for centuries. This corruption and lack of inspirational leadership has also suppressed the chances of Kurdish unity, which is important for them to fight in accord for autonomy.

Kurdish nationalism propagates the concept of Kurdish unity and cohesion. According to Amir Hassanpour, "nationalists in Kurdistan as elsewhere in the world envision their people as a linguistically, culturally, ideologically and politically united entity" (Hassanpour, 2015); however, each Kurdish contingent maintains different cultural, religious, political and ideological principles. Whilst the Kurds are divided geographically, each contingent remains to fight for the same goal of autonomy and recognition. They are broadly united by two goals. The first is to rise above the violence and oppression that is imposed on them by their host states, and the second is to achieve sovereign statehood (Ozsoy, 2013, p. 104).

Kurdish nationalism has emerged and developed as a by-product of the political environment of each host state. A host state's policies strongly influence Kurdish identity and ethno-nationalism, and it can therefore be argued that Turkey's statehood and structure has influenced the Kurdish evolution as a non-state nation. Yavus (2001) contends that "the major reason for the politicization of Kurdish cultural identity is the shift from multi-ethnic, multi-cultural realities of the Ottoman empire to the nation-state model." Turkey has provided the Kurds with an urban and centralised community and education facilities which in turn has strengthened Kurdish identity. Natali (2005, p. 2) describes this combination as a "highly ethnicized, illegal, diversified, urban-based nationalist movement whereby tribal leaders played no significant role as the nationalist elite". The political arena in Iraq has strengthened Kurdish tribal communities, which has developed a strong Kurdish ethnic nationalist movement which is arguably fractured between the neighbouring Arab-Iraqi identities. The ambiguous political arena of Iran has strengthened the inclusivity for Kurdish and Shi'a groups, which has resulted in a "secular, left-leaning Sunni Kurdish community" which is characterised by violence and compromise (Natali, The Kurds And the State: Evolving National Identity in Iraq, Turkey, And Iran, 2005, p. 2).

A history of Kurdish divide

Whilst once united by territory and culture, the breakdown of the Ottoman Empire has divided the Kurds in a way that extends further than just geographical location. The history of the Kurdish people after the early 1920s has been one of fractured homeland, political repression, and the emergence of diverse cultural, religious, political and ideological principles. These form the endogenous divisions which fundamentally hamper Kurdish unity and direction for self-determination goals.

Turkey, and the Kurds:

Turkey is the home of the largest Kurdish population in the world, with an estimated population of 10 to 20 million Kurds. Despite this significant presence, the Kurds have historically been forced to assimilate, and have not been provided the recognition and autonomy that they so desperately seek. In Turkey, Kurdish nationalism is still deemed synonymous with separatism, and is a punishable offense (FAS, 2017). In 1979, the US Central Intelligence Agency published a statement that highlighted the prevalence of Kurdish separatism in Turkey, stating:

> The Kurds' sense of separate identity has not been significantly reduced by the [Turkish] government's attempts to co-opt or supress them. The Kurdish language has flourished, and clandestinely published Kurdish literatures is surreptitiously obtainable in Kurdish areas .… In the past several year, several overt "cultural associations" and covert liberation groups have formed to promote the idea of Kurdish autonomy and independence (CIA, 1979).

Up until the early 1990's, it was illegal in Turkey to use the word "Kurd" to describe an ethnic group (Dixon & Ergin, 2010, p. 1330), and the Turkish constitution defined all citizens as Turkish, with no recognition of minority groups. The Kurdish language and any forms of Kurdish nationalist expression were strictly banned. The Turkish strategy for managing its Kurdish population therefore centred on strategic denial and suppression while ignoring the existence of the Kurds and hoping to 'sweep them under the carpet' through

assimilation policies. Despite this, a community of nationalist Kurdish elite maintained an underground presence, which started to surface in the form of political protest.

The 1960s marked another key milestone of Kurdish self-determination, when the Kurdish population attempted to raise their concerns through the democratic system (Gunes, 2012, p. 1). These demands were repressed by the Turkish government, which led to the Kurds pursuing more extreme avenues of demonstrating their discontent. One of the main forms of protest was the formation of the Kurdistan Worker's Party. The Kurdistan Worker's Party, often known by the acronym of its Kurdish name *Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan* (PKK), is a political party that was established in the 1970s mainly to advocate for Kurdish autonomy through violent military means in the face of state repression of the Kurds (Bruno, 2007). Gradually, it established a firm foothold in southern and eastern Turkey and across the border in northern Iraq. The PKK has been termed as a terrorist organization by most Western States since it frequently uses violent tactics such as suicide bombings, attacks on civilians and vandalism of public property (Bruno, 2007). The PKK is motivated by rising discontent within the Kurdish communities, especially in Turkey, in their ongoing battle for recognition and autonomy. Honneth (1995, p. 169) attributes this violent response to repression, stating that "the denial of recognition provides the motivational and justificatory basis for social struggles". The PKK is arguably one of the core driving forces of Kurdish nationalism and identity. Yavus (2007, p. 11) highlights that the PKK was influential in furthering Kurdish nationalist identity, through "establishing a web of networks in and outside Turkey to recruit militants, undermining the religio-tribal structure of the region by presenting new opportunities for the middle class and urbanized Kurdish youth, and unexpectedly popularizing and consolidating Turkish nationalism in Turkey". The PKK has deepened Kurdish politicisation, legitimised and strengthened Kurdish identity and bolstered internal cohesion which are fundamental requirements for independence.

Kurdish identity politics and recognition gained further traction from 2002 (Kazu, 2016, p. 123). Turkey's possible inclusion in the European Union (EU) catalysed this momentum, as in order to meet the Copenhagen criteria which mandated the respectful treatment of minority groups, Turkey was pressured to increase the civil liberties of its Kurdish population (Dixon & Ergin, 2010, p. 1329). From 2001 to 2004, Turkey passed some reforms that loosened the bans on Kurdish linguistic and cultural expression and abolished

the 'state of emergency rule' in Kurdish provinces (Ozsoy, 2013, p. 107). These changes made headway for recognising the individual rights of the Kurdish people; however, the state maintained the uncompromising and strict laws surrounding collective rights and political sovereignty which remains the central issue for the Turkish Kurds.

In recent years, political and violent resistance has increased between the Kurds and the Turkish government. The Kurds legal and political strategy has evolved with the formation of the People's Labour Party (HEP) and many other autonomous professional organisations, NGO's, institutions and unions. This has diversified the Kurdish national movement, from the guerrilla warfare and violence of the PKK through to strategic political ventures and activism. Although radio and television broadcasting in the Kurdish language was legalised in 2009 and in 2012 the Kurdish language was finally approved to be taught in public schools, these freedoms have been inconsistent. According to Ozsoy (2013, p. 108), since 2008 over "8000 Kurdish politicians and activists have been put in jail, including parliamentarians, mayors, journalists, lawyers, intellectuals, trade unionists, teachers, students, children, and many others". In December 2016, Turkey instigated a significant crackdown on Kurdish news and media outlets, politicians and schools which shutdown hundreds of businesses and jailed thousands with minimal cause (Nordland, 2016).

The emerging "Kurdish reality", through regional developments in the Middle East is reframing the way the Turkish government sees the Kurds. In recent years, Turkey has fostered a relationship with the Iraqi Kurds through the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), the Peshmerga forces and the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) which is the main Iraqi Kurdish Party led by Massoud Barzani. But Turkey remains hostile towards the Syrian Kurds, particularly the Democratic Unity Party (PYD) and People's Protection Units (YPG), which is a Syrian armed force that supports the PYD. Turkey also continues to actively fight its own Turkish Kurds, with frequent armed conflicts against the PKK. Despite Turkey's stance on each of these Kurdish factions, the Kurds are a key regional stakeholder, especially in Syria, Iraq and Iran, attracting international attention and support for the fight against Islamic extremist groups such as Islamic State. Turkey has condemned terrorist organisations including Islamic State and Al-Qaeda, and formed alliances aimed at fostering peace in the Middle East. Despite this, many Turkish airstrikes in the Middle East have resulted in

Kurdish casualties. The Kurds have frequently accused the Turkish government of using the US-led coalition against the Islamic State as a cover to attack the PKK in Turkey and Iraq as well as the YPG in northern Syria (BBC, 2016). It could be argued that Turkey is concerned about its Kurdish population gaining momentum and power considering the developments in the Middle East, which could strengthen the Turkish Kurds' desire and capability to secede from Turkey. Despite Turkey's concerns that its Kurdish contingent might attempt to secede and set up their own independent state within Turkey, the PKK's leader Cemil Bayik stated that their aim is not to separate from Turkey and attain statehood. Rather Bavik confirmed that "we want to live within the borders of Turkey on our own land freely... The struggle will continue until the Kurds' innate rights are accepted" (BBC, 2016).

Iraq, and the Kurds:

The Kurdish people have had a presence in the territory of modern-day Iraq for centuries. Since the establishment of the contemporary state of Iraq in October 1932 (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2018), the Kurdish presence has been characterised by genocide, violence, repression and underdevelopment. The genocidal attacks on the "Kurdistan region" of Norther Iraq intensified in the 1970's, when the Iraqi state tried to suppress and undermine the establishment of Kurdish autonomy. One of these attacks, code named 'Al-Anfal', was led by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's cousin, Ali Hasan Al-Majid, in 1988. This campaign used chemical and biological weapons in an effort to rid Iraq of Kurdish males of fighting ages; the attack also resulted in the destruction of over 4,000 Kurdish villages and deaths of 300,000 Kurdish civilians (O'Leary, 2002, p. 18).

In 1991, the Kurds led an uprising against the Iraqi state. The uprising led to an international military intervention, which pushed out Iraqi forces from northern Iraq and created an autonomous enclave under Kurdish control. This territory came to be governed by the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) and was recognized as an autonomous region by the Iraqi constitution in 2005 (CNN, 2017). Approximately 3.7 million Kurdish people live in the Kurdish autonomous region in Northern Iraq (O'Leary, 2002, p. 18); another 2 million Kurds are spread across the rest of Iraq with a concentration in Baghdad.

The U.S led coalition and fight against terrorist forces assisted the Iraqi Kurds in achieving partial autonomy. The post-Saddam Hussein era allowed the Kurds to emerge equal with the Iraqi Arabs and provided an opportunity to establish their Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and build their Peshmerga forces (Katzmann, 2009, p. 2). The Iraqi Government has progressed in the past two decades and has established federalism and a constitution that recognises three Kurdish provinces; Dohuk, Irbil and Sulaymaniyah. From the KRG, two main political parties have risen to lead the new generation of Kurds in Iraq and to establish a de-facto quasi-independent Kurdish 'state' (Aziz, 2011, p. 3). These parties are the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). From 2005, the Iraqi Kurds have voted in Iraqi elections; however, despite U.S. mediation in 2009, strong tensions exist between the Iraqi Arabs and the Iraqi Kurds. These tensions are fuelled by the enduring issue of Kurdish independence, which is a concern for Baghdad as well as for neighbouring states such as Turkey with a significant Kurdish minority. From 2007 onwards, the Turkish government has launched several military operations against the Iraqi Kurds, including air strikes, bombings and even ground attacks (Sanchez, 2017).

The violence and confusion in recent years that has ensued from the rise of Islamic State has both divided and united the Iraqi Arabs and the Iraqi Kurdish people. In 2014, the KRG and the Iraqi government signed an agreement to share oil revenues and military supplies (BBC, 2016). In a united effort to fight the Islamic State, the Iraqi government agreed to pay the salaries of Kurdish Peshmerga fighters and deliver weaponry to the Kurds from the United States. In return, the Kurds agreed to deliver oil to the Iraqi government and to share the oil revenues. However, the implementation of these agreements have generated considerable friction between the Iraqi Kurds and the Iraqi government. Matters came to a head in 2014 when the Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki blocked the transfer of funds that were due to the KRG, which meant that the KRG could not pay the salaries of government officials and the Peshmerga fighters. This sparked a backlash from the Kurds. The KRG stopped the shipments of oil to the Iraqi government and instead started selling oil directly in the international market (Demirtaş, 2014). Baghdad retaliated militarily by re-exerting control over the northern oil-rich town of Kirkuk, which many Iraqi Kurds regard as the

capital of a future Kurdish state. Despite these issues, however, fighting the Islamic State has been the enduring priority of the Iraqi government and the Iraqi Kurds in recent years.

Most scholars argue that the Iraqi Kurds are political realists and do not wish to secede from Iraq and gain sovereign statehood. Rather, "their goal is to share in the establishment of a viable regional government for Iraqi Kurdistan in a unified Iraq under a federal system, with a governing document that provides written principles concerning structures and rules for governance and appropriation of federal funds" (O'Leary, 2002, p. 24). This sentiment has been publicly shared by leaders of the KRG; however, the sentiment may not be supported by the wider Iraqi Kurdish population.

In recent years, many Kurds have begun to challenge the PUK-KDP coalition government in the KRG. For instance, the newly formed (in 2009 by Peshmerga veterans) Gorran Movement (meaning movement for "change" in Kurdish), (The Kurdish Project, 2015) has accused the PUK-KDP coalition government of corruption and criticised the leaders of the KDP and the PUK of "mixing policies with business in the interest of their own families, relatives and cronies rather than their constituencies" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 110). The Gorran Movement has further accused the coalition government of misappropriating public funds and mismanaging government resources.

The Gorran Movement has become the second most popular party in Iraqi Kurdistan, gaining the support of disenfranchised and disillusioned PUK supporters. Its rise has led to tensions and conflict with the more established Kurdish political parties such as the PUK and the KDP. For instance, in (give the year) over 3,000 Gorran Movement demonstrators protested in the streets of Sulaimaniya against the KDP. These protestors demanded an end to corruption and threw rocks at KDP buildings. In response, the KDP supporters set fire to the headquarters of the Gorran Movement, furthering internal tensions between the Kurdish political groups (Ahmed, 2012, p. 31).

Syria, and the Kurds:

It is estimated that the Kurds (around 1.7 million) account for approximately ten percent of the population in Syria (CIA, 2017). The Kurdish region in Syria, known as Rojava, has three provinces: Afrin Canton (West), Kobane Canton (middle) and Cizre Canton (East) (The Kurdish Project, 2015). Like the Iraqi Kurds, the Syrian Kurds have been met with cultural, political and economic repression due to fears that their nationalism and quest for autonomy might undermine the Syrian state (Lowe, 2006, p. 2). Attacks aimed at limiting the Syrian Kurds began in the 1930's. These attacks increased in intensity through the mid-1950s, when "Kurdish customs and symbols were attacked, the Kurmanji language was banned from public use and Kurdish music and publications were forbidden. Any opposition activity in Syria has always been extremely difficult and the nascent Kurdish political movement was shattered very quickly as Kurdish parties were banned and its leaders and members arrested and imprisoned" (Lowe, 2006, p. 14). The Syrian Arab population was encouraged to relocate to Kurdish areas, to force assimilation of Syrian Kurds into Syrian Arab culture and to lessen the potential threat of Kurdish independence (Fragiskatos, 2007, p. 110).

The Democratic Union Party (PYD), an associate of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) in Turkey, is the leading political movement in the Kurdish region of Syria. It has over 80,000 members and leads the fight against both the Syrian government and the Islamic State (The Kurdish Project, 2015). Second to the PYD is the Kurdish National Council (KNC), which governs a coalition of over 15 Kurdish political movements that are fighting for Kurdish autonomy in Syria. The KNC emerged in the late 1980's, supported by Massoud Barzani, the leader of the KRG in Iraq (Pike, 2016). The KNC have often clashed with the PYG, especially concerning strategy for combatting the Islamic State.

Syrian Kurdish forces have maintained control of the areas they have occupied since the Syrian government troops retreated from these areas in 2015 (The Kurdish Project, 2015). In March 2016, the Syrian Kurds declared a region of North-Eastern Syria (Rojava) to be fully autonomous, which raised concerns from the Turkish and Syrian governments. The Syrian Kurds, however, pointed out that the declaration of autonomy in Rojava was not intended to divide Syria but to restore balance. A Syrian Kurdish spokesperson articulated this objective succinctly: "the creation of a federal and democratic system shall take place within a sovereign Syria...we don't support the partition of Syria. ... At the same time, we

don't accept centralization," but wish to achieve "a democratic Syria that protects the autonomy and freedom of every community" (Sheppard, 2016). The 'foreign minister' of Rojava further confirmed that the Syrian Kurds only wished to strengthen federalism in Syria and hoped that " that in the future Syria can declare [a] confederation with other countries because in our project we want to open borders to all the world, not create new borders" (Sheppard, 2016). He also noted that "we think our system of democratic self-administration would be a good model for all of Syria. We think this is the solution." Whilst there is talk of the U.S and even Russia potentially supporting this autonomy, the response from neighbouring states such as Turkey, Iran and Iraq would be swift in repressing this, to ensure it doesn't inspire revolt from their Kurdish minorities.

Iran, and the Kurds:

There has been a Kurdish presence in North-West Iran dating back to the 7th Century. . This region is often referred to as *Rojhelat*, and includes the West Azerbaijan Province, the Kordestan Province, and the Kermanshah Province. This region shares its borders with Turkey and Iraqi 'Kurdistan'. The region is home to approximately 8 million Kurds, which make up 15 percent of Iran's population (Yildiz & Taysi, 2007, p. 2).

The Iranian government has refused to accommodate the Kurds as a minority group. Since as early as the sixteenth century, the government of Iran has suppressed Kurdish tribal groups to ensure they did not attain power or autonomy. Under the 1979 Iranian Constitution that grants minority rights, the Kurds in Iran are still a repressed minority, with negligible recognition. The Iranian government maintains that Iranian Kurds have equal rights; however, the Kurds are banned from leadership roles, Kurdish organisations are restricted, the Kurdish language is not allowed to be taught in schools and Kurdish people are regularly imprisoned and killed for voicing separatist opinions (Yildiz & Taysi, 2007, p. 32).

The most prominent political and nationalist group in Rojhelat is the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI), which was formed in early 1945 and has been fighting for Kurdish rights in Iran for over 70 years. Other Iranian Kurdish political organisations include the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK), the Kurdistan Freedom Party (PAK) and Komala. The PDKI describe the life of Kurds in Iran as one of "militarization" with "oppressive,

suppressive, marginalizing, exclusionary policies and practices along with state-sponsored and state-sanctioned discrimination, denial and violence" (Frantzman, 2017).

In recent years, however, the tensions between Iran and Rojhelat have simmered in the back burner, distracted by the common goal of fighting the Islamic State. The Iranian government have assisted their Kurdish population, by providing weapons and training to the Peshmerga. While this support will most likely eventuate in strengthening the Kurds as a minority, the Iranian government is fostering their alliance with the Kurds to mitigate the expansion of Islamic State power within the region. It is yet to be seen as to whether the Iranian-Kurdish alliance will endure past combatting the Islamic State. If it did, it could potentially have far reaching influence within Iraq, Syria and Turkey.

Azerbaijan, and the Kurds

There is a very small Kurdish population that reside in the republic of Azerbaijan, estimated to be between 13,000 and 20,000 people (The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2012). A small population of Kurds were said to have immigrated to Azerbaijan in 1589, after the Ottoman-Safavid War (Kreyenbroek & Sperl, 2005, p. 163). Most of this population either assimilated or moved to Armenia in the 1920s. Most of the Kurds lived in an area between Nagorno Karabakh and the Azeri-Armenian border, which was briefly a Kurdish Autonomous province between 1923 and 1929 called 'Red Kurdistan' however this was short-lived, and that community was soon dispersed in the broader Azerbaijan population.

Azerbaijan has a close alliance with Turkey. This has had an overall negative impact on the Kurdish minority. Whilst they haven't been violently oppressed, like other Kurdish communities in other states, up to recently in 2001, 32 Kurds were arrested in Azerbaijan (Minority Rights Group, 2018). This was because the government was supporting Turkey in its suspicions that these individuals were a member of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) (Minority Rights Group, 2018). Furth to this, the Azerbaijani government supported Turkey in condemning the Iraqi Kurdish referendum in September 2017, demonstrating their continued alliance.

Armenia, and the Kurds

The Kurds are the largest ethnic minority group in Armenia, with a population of approximately 40,000. This figure was almost double during the Soviet Era and comprises predominantly Yezidi Kurds which are culturally distinct as they practice their own religion. This religion has elements from Islamic, Zoroastrian and Christian religious and is based on a 'Peacock God' deity, Melek Taus (Minority Rights, 2018).

The Yezidi Kurds have historically expressed unfair treatment under the Armenian government. Grievances include concerns about 'inadequate representation of the Kurdish minority at national and local levels', 'lower levels of education than other communities' and receiving 'disproportionate hazing during military service compared to other ethnic groups in Armenia' (Minority Rights, 2018). Many Yezidi Kurds have since migrated to Russia and Germany, seeking better treatment (Maisel, 2018, p. 45). The population which remains in Armenia are relatively submissive, and live nomadic lifestyles free of violence and protest.

Conclusion

Whilst each Kurdish community has experienced violence and repression from their host states, their experiences and resultant diversity in culture, ideology and political views have been distinct. The degree of repression by the host state, on their Kurdish community has also shaped each contingent and catalysed the degree of desperation for self-determination. Host states such as Iraq, Iran and Syria have consistently broken human rights standards, and violently repressed their Kurdish minorities. In contrast however, Kurdish communities in Azerbaijan and Armenia were not met with violence and were merely assimilated by the host states.

Kurdish leadership maintains a tribal nature and has been often corrupt; promulgating the interests of select few rather than the populace as a whole. This leadership type is not conducive to true unity, or legitimate secession. Great Powers such as the U.S, U.K, Germany etc have traditionally only supported and rewarded democratic approaches to self-determination and have condemned groups that use violence and coercion. While Great Powers such as China and Russia have a history of condoning authoritarian type leadership styles, as it can be argued that they display these characteristics themselves, it is unlikely that they will support the plight of the Kurds unless it serves a larger purpose for them. Kurdish

leadership has therefore consistently fractured cohesion with the community and has hindered chances at achieving international support.

This chapter has discussed the history of the Kurdish people and provided detailed historical understanding of who they are and how they have come to be the non-state nation vying for independence that they are today. Each major Kurdish geographical population has been explored to highlight key historical events and to explain the recent state of affairs. This historical detail provides the backdrop for Chapter 3 and 4, and critically explains the idiosyncrasies and internal factions between the Kurdish populace.

Chapter 3: Kurdish Struggles for an Independent Kurdistan in the 20th Century

Introduction

This chapter will explore the secessionist attempts made by the Kurds to achieve a Kurdish state throughout the 20th Century. These 'episodes' have all been opportunities or 'windows', where the Kurds had a chance at secession, and achieving sovereign statehood. The key reasons for failure will be explored. These include the significant internal divisions within the Kurds that prevented a unified secessionist political movement for an independent Kurdistan from emerging and being sustained over a period of time; inability of the Kurds to militarily overpower the forces of the host states that were opposed to Kurdish secession and independent statehood; and lack of support from the Major Powers and key international organizations for Kurdish independence and the establishment of an independent Kurdistan state. These repeat failures have gradually weakened Kurdish nationalism and resolve for independent statehood. This chapter will also discuss these reasons for failure, in context of the theory detailed in chapter one.

The First Attempt

The first significant opportunity for Kurdish statehood emerged after the break down of the Ottoman Empire during 1918 to 1920, when the British attempted to establish a Kurdish state in the area of Northern Iraq and South-East Turkey (The Kurdish Project, 2016). The post-World War I break down of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires resulted in the redrawing of Middle Eastern boundaries; redefined by the breakdown of empires, and the formation of nation-states (Arıkanlı, 2016, p. 3). The rise of Kurdish nationalism was a direct result of the fall of the Ottoman Empire and provided a distinct threat to the existing nation state order both in the Middle East region and internationally. Arikanli (2016, p. 4) contends "Kurdish nationalism constituted a serious challenge both against mandatory powers (i.e. France and Great Britain) which had to adapt their policies to the new international order stamped by self-determination, and the newly-founded states (i.e. Turkey, French mandate of Syria and British mandates of Palestine and Iraq)".

The British recognised the Kurds as their own ethnonational entity and supported their expressions of nationalism in a strategic ploy to gain Kurdish support on the ground against

the Ottomans. This was a quid-pro-quo type deal, where the Kurds agreed to assist the British in defeating the Ottoman Empire in return for British support in the creation of an independent and sovereign Kurdistan. The British "promised the Kurds they would act as guarantors for Kurdish freedom" (Alliance for Kurdish Rights, 2016). One form of this support was the publication of a newspaper in the Kurdish language with the logo detailing the mission statement "to serve the Kurdish unity and freedom" (Bengio, Kurdish Awakening: Nation Building in a Fragmented Homeland, 2014, p. 94). A Kurdish state was promised to Mahmood Al-Hafeed, a Kurdish diplomat, in 1919 by the British Empire, as the Kurds agreed to fight against the Ottomans. This situation was summarised by the Office of the Civil Commission at the time, detailing:

> Military occupation of [southern Kurdistan] was quite out of the question, for, even after the defeat of the Turks, supply and other difficulties combined to make it impossible even to occupy with a garrison a point so near at hand and so important politically to us as [Suleymaniyya]. The alternative of adopting purely political methods had, therefore, to be adopted, and it was [realized] that the best means to that end was the exploiting of the perfectly legitimate feeling of Kurdish nationality which had long been making itself evident amongst the Southern Kurdish tribes (Office of The Civil Commission, 1919)

The British exploited Kurdish nationalism so they could manoeuvre Kurdish forces to fight their battles, as they lacked their own ground troops. This also demonstrated that despite promising the Kurds autonomous territory, the British would not have the military backing to enforce this decision which would have inevitably been required in response to Turkish disparagement.

In the 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement, France and Britain agreed to divide the Ottoman Empire (Morris, 2016), which was officially signed as the Treaty of Sevres in 1920. This agreement had a provision that guaranteed Kurdish territory in part of Turkey, as promised by the British. This treaty was signed by the Ottoman Government on 10 August 1920, and contained a clear provision for Kurdish autonomy under Section 3, Article 62-64 which decreed:

A Commission sitting at Constantinople and composed of three members appointed by the British, French and Italian Governments respectively shall draft within six months from the coming into force of the present Treaty a scheme of local autonomy for the predominantly Kurdish areas lying east of the Euphrates, south of the southern boundary of Armenia as it may be hereafter determined, and north of the frontier of Turkey with Syria and Mesopotamia, as defined in Article 27, II (2) and (3).

If unanimity cannot be secured on any question, it will be referred by the members of the Commission to their respective Governments. The scheme shall contain full safeguards for the protection of the Assyro-Chaldeans and other racial or religious minorities within these areas, and with this object a Commission composed of British, French, Italian, Persian and Kurdish representatives shall visit the spot to examine and decide what rectifications, if any, should be made in the Turkish frontier where, under the provisions of the present Treaty, that frontier coincides with that of Persia.

The Turkish Government hereby agrees to accept and execute the decisions of both the Commissions mentioned in Article 62 within three months from their communication to the said Government.

If within one year from the coming into force of the present Treaty the Kurdish peoples within the areas defined in Article 62 shall address themselves to the Council of the League of Nations in such a manner as to show that a majority of the population of these areas desires independence from Turkey, and if the Council then considers that these peoples are capable of such independence and recommends that it should be granted to them, Turkey hereby agrees to execute such a recommendation, and to renounce all rights and title over these areas.

The detailed provisions for such renunciation will form the subject of a separate agreement between the Principal Allied Powers and Turkey.

If and when such renunciation takes place, no objection will be raised by the Principal Allied Powers to the voluntary adhesion to such an independent Kurdish State of the

Kurds inhabiting that part of Kurdistan which has hitherto been included in the Mosul vilayet. (WW1 Document Archive, 2009)

The terms of this agreement were violently opposed by Turkish nationalists. They redispersed the Kurdish population within Turkish borders to ensure they remained divided and alienated. Whilst this treaty provided the first true opportunity for the Kurds to unite and "bolstered Kurdish nationalists' aspirations by providing for a referendum to decide the issue of the Kurdistan homeland" (The Kurdish Project, 2016), this opportunity was squandered by Kurdish disunity.

The Kurdish contingents of modern-day Iraq, Syria and Turkey were divided, which impeded a united Kurdish nationalist voice from emerging. This was critical if the Kurds were to push the quest for Kurdish autonomy over the line. General Sherif Pasha was one of the few Kurdish diplomats of the time and represented the Kurds to the British ambassador in Paris. As a result of internal Kurdish conflicts, two Kurdish clubs in Istanbul "disowned" him, which led to his resignation, and the loss of a significant political voice for the Kurdish region (The Kurdish Project, 2016). When the Kurds finally grouped together to request a state through British High Commissioner in Egypt (Henry McMahon) and the Sherif of Mecca (Hussein bin Ali), the British had already promised the land to the Arabs and appointed a King of Iraq.

In 1923, the British Empire, France, Japan, Italy, Greece, Romania and Turkey executed the Lausanne Treaty (Martin, 2016), which amended the Treaty of Sevres and detailed political sanctions and territorial definitions. This was the outcome of the Conference of Lausanne, held in Switzerland during 1922 and 1923. It was attended by representatives from Great Britain, France, Italy and Turkey (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2016).

This treaty failed to contain a provision for Kurdistan (Misra, 2015), destroying the chance of a consolidated Kurdish homeland. With these agreements, the Ottoman Empire was divided, with Turkish nationalists claiming Anatolia (modern day Turkey), the British claiming Mesopotamia and the French occupying the area of modern-day Syria. As the British reneged on their promises of a guaranteed Kurdistan, the Kurdish people remained divided as repressed minorities located in what was to be modern day Turkey, Iraq and Syria.

The Iranian Kurds formed part of the Persian Empire and were therefore untouched by these events.

There was significant debate over the Mosul region during the Lausanne Conference. After a clear deadlock between Turkey and Great Britain, the dispute was deferred from the conference agenda. Eventually, British Foreign secretary Lord Curzon, brought the dispute before the League of Nations[4] which ruled that neither Britain or Turkey had any right to occupy or control the area. Instead, the Kurdish population was divided between Turkey, Syria and Iraq (Hanioglu, 2008, p. 69). The original members comprised 24 nations, of note were China, France, United Kingdom, Japan and Canada. As this league comprised Great Powers, it is evident that they were not intent on supporting Kurdish secession.

Even provided the Lausanne Conference discussion, the British, as victorious Great Powers still did nothing to follow through on their promise to the Kurds. The exact reason as to why the British failed to follow through on this promise is debated, however Waisy (2017) argues that the "extent of opposition within the British Government to incorporating predominantly Kurdish-inhabited territory into the new state of Iraq is scarcely recognised now, but it was significant". It has also been argued that the United Kingdom changed their mind in supporting a Kurdish state to "appease Kemalist Turkey"[5] (Ali, 1997, p. 521).

Following the acceptance of this treaty, The Turkish government updated their constitution to reflect their intolerance for minorities. Article 88 of the Turkish Constitution defined in 1924 stated that 'We are frankly Nationalist....and Nationalism is our only factor of cohesion. Before the Turkish majority other elements have no kind of influence. At any price, we must turkify the inhabitants of our land, and we will annihilate those who oppose Turks or 'le turquisme'", highlight Turkey's citizenship approach that "everyone in Turkey is a Turk" (Keles, 2015, p. 26).

The Second Attempt

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[4] The League of Nations was an intergovernmental organisation founded on 10 January 1920 as a result of the Paris Peace Conference that ended the First World War.
[5] Kemalism, was the founding ideology of Turkey defined by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk aimed at defining social, political, cultural and religious reforms to establish a unique Turkish State from the Ottoman Empire (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2018).

A second opportunity for a Kurdish state emerged during the Iran-Iraq war of 1980-1988. For the Iraqi and Iranian Kurds, the Iran-Iraq war was a catalyst to renew their revolt for independence. The Iraqi government under Saddam Husain leveraged Iraq's Kurdish population and the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) in its fight against Iran. This was a strategic move for the Iraqi Kurds, who aimed to define autonomous areas by exploiting their access to weapons through Iraq's channels (Entessar, 2009). The KDPI militia and the Iraqi forces were however rapidly weakened by 1981, after heavy casualties inflicted by Iran.

In 1983, Iran emulated Baghdad's strategy of harnessing the support of Iraq's Kurdish population by securing the backing of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) led by Jalal Talabani and the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iraq (KDP) led by Mazzoud Barzani. The Iraqi Kurds once again saw this as an opportunity to take control of territory, weapons and resources that were provided by Iran to bolster the Kurdish war effort. At one point in time, Kurdish fighters and Shia rebels controlled 14 out of 18 Iraqi provinces in the north and south; however, as U.S. aid as not forthcoming, they were conquered by Iraqi forces (Sibilla, 2017).

In 1984, the PUK agreed to a ceasefire with Iraq in return for the initiation of secret negotiations surrounding Kurdish autonomy. These negotiations fell through as Baghdad was unwilling to concede to Kurdish demands. The West also bolstered its support to Iraq, out of concern that Iran might emerge victorious. Turkey also threatened to cut off the Iraqi oil pipeline in case Iraq were to make a deal with the Kurds (Kreyenbroek & Sperl, 2005, p. 22). These two international bearings meant that Iraq no longer needed the Kurds as much as they first thought and deserted the negotiations. This outcome further divided Iraqi Kurdish groups, as hostilities increased between the PUK and the KDP (Lea, 2005). While some Iraqi Kurdish groups managed to regain control over parts of the semi-autonomous Iraqi Kurdish areas, the war ended in catastrophic loss of life for the Iraqi Kurds.

The Third Attempt

The third opportunity for Kurdish autonomy in Iraq emerged in the 1990s as a consequence of Saddam Hussein's diabolical decision to use chemical weapons against the Iraqi Kurds and to invade and occupy Kuwait. Both these events led to international outrage, the formation of an UN-led multinational force to evict Iraq from Kuwait and "the establishment of the internationally protected safe haven in northern Iraq" (Hirst , 2013). In 1979 Saddam Hussein had come to power, torturing and killing thousands of Kurdish people including civilians mainly as retaliation for Kurdish attempts to expand their influence internationally and to overthrow the Iraqi Government. This included the multi-stage Anfal campaign, which was a was assisted by the Iraqi government attempting to commit genocide against the Kurdish people. In 1988 the Iraqi army used chemical bombs to attack the town of Halabja, which killed over 200,000 Kurdish people (Zeidel, 2013). After Saddam Hussein launched this chemical attack, millions of Kurds fled north into the mountainous region of southern Turkey and northern Iraq. Facing harsh weather conditions, this soon became a humanitarian disaster.

This suffering attracted international attention. In the early 1990's, Kurdish refugees caught the attention of the United Nations Security Council, which passed Resolution 688 (Nader, Hanauer, Allen, & Scotten, 2016, p. 19). This resolution condemned "the repression of the Iraqi civilian population in many parts of Iraq, including most recently in Kurdish-populated areas, the consequences of which threaten international peace and security in the region", and demanded that Iraq cease this repression, and allow immediate access by "international humanitarian organizations to all those in need of assistance in all parts of Iraq and make available all necessary facilities for their operations" (UNSCR, 1991) . It also called on all member states to aid humanitarian efforts. Most importantly for the Kurds, this resolution stated that it:

> Requests the Secretary-General to pursue his humanitarian efforts in Iraq and to report forthwith, if appropriate on the basis of a further mission to the region, on the plight of the Iraqi civilian population, and in particular the Kurdish population, suffering from the repression in all its forms inflicted by the Iraqi authorities (UNSCR, 1991).

Soon after this resolution was passed, the United States conducted "Operation Provide Comfort", which provisioned the Kurds with food, water, clothing and supplies (Human Rights Watch, 2003). The U.S. sectioned off Northern Iraq as a "safe haven" in April 1991, where the refugees were "to be protected from further attack while receiving aid to meet their humanitarian needs" (Human Rights Watch, 2003). This initiative was supported by an international coalition comprising England, France, Italy, Spain, Turkey and the Netherlands (Ricks, 2017). This area had a "no fly zone" enforced by coalition bases in Turkey, and a "no go zone" established on the ground for the Iraqi army.

This save haven provided the first true semi-autonomous Kurdish territory and allowed the Iraqi Kurdish people to re-forge their identity. The Iraqi Kurds' struggle under Saddam Hussein's regime consolidated their "victim" status. Authors Nader et al (2016, p. 18) have argued that this persecution "brought the plight of the Kurdish people to the forefront of international attention; and— by highlighting the Kurds' seeming inability to live in peace in an Arab-majority country—inspired efforts to gain independence from Baghdad". These years of conflict arguably created a common bond between the Kurds and furthered their drive for self-determination.

The international protection forced the Iraqi army to withdraw from Kurdish areas between 1990 and 2003 and catalysed the formation of the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) (Bengio, Autonomy in Kurdistan Historical Perspective, 2005, p. 175). Kurdish nationalism bloomed; the language became public and the media freely expressed Kurdish art and culture.

The KRG led a drive to build socioeconomic infrastructure, which had been destroyed as a result of conflicts and wars. Whilst the Kurds managed to rebuild this infrastructure without international support, their development was still constrained due to their geographical location and dependence on the U.S. and Turkey. Hiltermann (2008) described this economic reliance as a "straitjacket that derived from being landlocked and utterly dependent on those very same states for their access to the outside world". The U.S allowed Kurdish reconstructive economic development, however Turkey made sure to restrain anything that would potentially equate to independence. Once again, Kurdish opportunity for autonomy was reliant on international support which did not eventuate.

The Fourth Attempt

The fourth major opportunity for Kurdish autonomy happened as a result of the 2003 United States invasion of Iraq, which led to the collapse of Suddam Hussein's regime. The PUK and KDP fighters in the newly established Kurdish safe-haven exploited the benefits of U.S. intervention in the region and made the most of U.S. resources (Romano, 2006, p. 212). The Kurdish Pershmerga forces trained side by side with U.S. troops, giving them access to top tier training and weaponry. This significantly improved their position again in the region and allowed them to consolidate their armies.

In 2004, soon after the U.S. led invasion of Iraq, the Kurds re-established themselves in the Kurdistan region of Suleimaniya and Erbil. The constitution of Iraq was amended to state that any referendum required an absolute majority to succeed, which meant that any constitution would need Kurdish approval to be passed. Hiltermann (2008) called this ""Kurdifying" Iraqi politics to the extent that no decision could be taken without Kurdish input or, more, without the threat of a Kurdish veto". In 2004, the US Coalition Provision Authority oversaw the establishment of a governing council, which became the Iraq Interim Government under The Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period (TAL). This was effectively the first post-Saddam provisional government for Iraq, which included 35 Kurdish members including Rowsch Shaways from the KDP as the Vice-President, Barham Salih from the PUK as the Deputy Prime Minister for National Security and Hoshyar Zebari from the KDP as the Foreign Minister (Samii, 2012).

In 2005 the Kurds won a majority of the Kikuk Provincial Council seats in the Iraqi elections which consolidated their power and influence in the region and allowed them to dominate politics and policy in the region. 2005 to 2010 saw five years of Kurdish supremacy, which was arguably the prime opportunity for secession. In January 2005, an unofficial referendum reported that 98 percent of Kurds in Iraq wanted autonomy and statehood; however despite this "political opportunity structures within which the Kurdistan Referendum Movement operates were closed to the formation of a mass-based social movement" (Berwari & Ambrioso, 2008, p. 891). The Kurds failed to unite and by 2010 when they lost their majority seats the opportunity was squandered. Kurdish parties refused to unite as one political group, and instead found dissident platforms including the Gorran Party

and The Kurdistan Islamic Union. This undermined and weakened Iraqi Kurdish political power and confirmed the divergent agendas within the Kurdish population regarding their future within Iraq.

Over time, the Kurds have made progress in consolidating their autonomy with legislative power, armed forces and authority over the "mainstay of the Iraqi economy: oil" (Hirst , 2013). Zebari (2013) reported that "Kurdish officials confirm that oil has long been a curse, given that former Iraqi regimes used it to acquire weapons and quell the Kurds", yet the aftermath of the U.S. invasion meant that oil became a fundamental resource for strengthening relationships between the Kurds and their host governments. Despite gaining quasi-autonomy in the recent decade, the Iraqi Kurds still rely heavily on the international community. Whilst this dependency has shifted over time, the Kurds currently rely on Baghdad for 95 percent of their economic backing (Natali, Barkey, & Ottaway, Iraqi Kurdistan Today: Between Autonomy and Dependency, 2010).

Iraqi Kurdish leaders are also inherently aware of the backlash that would come from the international community, specifically Turkey if they declared themselves a State. Contemporary Kurdish leadership in Iraq have re-iterated their goals to be part of the new Iraq, rather than separating from it. This is however contracted by their referendum efforts and the pleas from the Iraqi Government and Western powers requesting they don't go through with it. The central authority of Baghdad is however weak, and decentralising over time which in turn consolidates the autonomy of the Iraqi Kurds. Samii (2012) argues that Iraqi Kurdistan is effectively functioning as "a sovereign state from nearly all perspectives: as it has its own elected government and army to exert absolute authority over Kurdistan's internal affairs; a defining border which the Iraqi army is not allowed to cross; and an independent department of foreign relations to deal with international affairs". Formalising this autonomy however is the primary challenge that the Kurds face, especially in the ever-changing environment.

Discussion and Analysis

Bengio (2005, p. 185) highlights three 'paradoxes' that haunt Kurdish statehood. The first paradox is that "only if the Kurds are united can they face internal and external challenges, but it is exactly the possibility of such unity that frightens the surrounding states and invites

their intervention". The international normative regime is inherently biased against non-state nation secession, which makes external support hard to attain. Additionally, neighbouring and host states have demonstrated fierce resistance to Kurdish autonomy. If the Kurds were to achieve autonomy in Iraq (the expansion of Iraqi Kurdistan), the Iraqi central government would lose power and spark intervention from Turkey, the most outspoken state opposed to Kurdish autonomy. Neighbouring states such as Syria, Turkey and Iran would be concerned that an independent Iraqi Kurdistan or any Kurdish secessionist movement might inspire a political movement within their own borders. As such, it has been reported that the Saudi Arabian Government "reportedly offered the Iraqi Kurdish leaders $2 billion in exchange for delaying the process 10 years" (Samii, 2012).

The second paradox is that "to mobilise the Kurdish population, the leadership has to set clear-cut goals, but once such a goal is declared – as was the case with the federation – it immediately unites the Kurd's enemies against them" (Bengio, 2005, p. 185). A key endogenous factor for secession as discussed in Chapter 1 is the requirement for the non-state nation to have autonomous nationalism, culture and a common identity, along with the common political goal for independence. This requires internal cohesion and organisation to ensure the collective goal of self-determination and autonomy. Whilst the Kurds were provided with an opportune window for secession after the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, their internal divergences have prohibited them from consolidating their stance as a political party and push their agenda of autonomy.

The third and final paradox discussed by Bengio (2005, p. 185) is that "the Kurds need the U.S., and other Great Powers to guarantee their autonomy, but this dependence on a superpower might turn them back into a disposable card in the game of great and regional powers". Chapter 1 highlighted that in order to achieve secession, a non-state nation must have attempted to gain recognition of that independence by other states and international organisations, as international support and recognition of autonomy and sovereign statehood is a critical factor for secession. This support requires the official recognition of independence from other states, including neighbouring states along with international organisations such as the European Union. In 2008, Martin Indyk, director of the Saban Center stated that Obama (as a then Presidential candidate) was willing to support the Kurds if they "condemned the PKK attacks on Turkey and refrained from declaring independence".

This comment has proved true, as while the U.S. has provided material support to the Iraqi Kurds, Washington has not followed through with promises to support the Kurds in attaining statehood. This was demonstrated in 2001 through the U.S. led "Operation Provide Comfort", which provisioned the Kurds with food, water, clothing and supplies but failed to provide consolidated diplomatic support for independence or autonomy.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored four key Kurdish self-determination attempts for secession throughout the 20th century. These "windows of opportunity" have been analysed, to determine the reasons for failure. Through these opportunities, it can be concluded that Kurdish internal disunity, lack of international support and recognition, and the inevitable backlash from neighbouring and host states are the three key endogenous and exogenous factors that have historically inhibited Kurdish autonomy. These four attempts and prohibiting factors will be discussed in comparison to the contemporary situation, to determine whether the current state of affairs in the Middle East could provide the long-awaited catalyst and platform for Kurdish autonomy.

Chapter 4: The Contemporary Situation

The Middle East has been a region of conflicts for hundreds of years, providing a tumultuous backdrop to Kurdish nationalist history. As explored in previous chapters, Kurdish nationalism emerged in greater strength following World War 1. This fuelled numerous revolts which were all unsuccessful in achieving autonomy or statehood due to a mix of exogenous and endogenous factors. The key endogenous factor that has historically blocked Kurdish chances of seceding is the lack of internal unity and cohesion within the Kurdish contingents. This has repeatedly precluded the Kurds from forming a united front and fighting for autonomy and independence as they have been distracted by internal divergences and a lack of consolidated direction and leadership. This was exemplified by the way the Kurds squandered the opportunity for secession provided by the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, as their internal differences undermined their ability to form a cohesive political agenda.

The key exogenous factors that have historically inhibited the Kurdish quest for autonomy and independence include the lack of support from the UN and the Great Powers. Not only is the international normative regime strongly against non-state nation secession, neighbouring states such as Syria, Turkey, Iran and Iraq are fiercely opposed to Kurdish autonomy and Statehood. The Kurds have also failed to receive consolidated international support in the form of both material and political backing. The U.S. and other great powers have occasionally provided the Kurds with material support and limited political backing, such as the provisioning of a no-fly zone in 2001. However, they have not truly followed through with promises to support the Kurds towards their goal of full autonomy, recognition and statehood. The Kurdish situation has not changed, and these exogenous and endogenous factors remain extant.

This chapter will analyse the current situation, being that of the last decade, in the Middle East in terms of territory, conflict, the internal situation for each Kurdish non-state nation contingent, Major Power strategy and interests, geopolitical stakeholders and the international normative regime and stance of influencing IGO's and non-state actors. It will contrast the previous Kurdish struggles for independent statehood with the contemporary situation in Iraq, Syria and to a lesser extent Turkey, and comment on the chances of contemporary Kurdish secession. In the context of the current wars in the Middle East, do the Kurds stand a realistic chance of seceding from Iraq and Syria? Can they bury their

differences and create a sovereign Kurdistan State? What major obstacles stand in their way of achieving this long-cherished goal?

Contemporary Conflict

From 2013, the Kurds have capitalised on the regional conflict and diaspora that was brought about during the chaos of the fight against terrorist organisations, including Al Qaeda and Islamic State. This conflict has resulted in the re-drawing of borders, and a re-shuffle of territorial holdings. Islamic State's Caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi highlighted its goal to redraw the borders in the Middle East, stating: "this blessed advance will not stop until we hit the last nail in the coffin of the Sykes-Picot conspiracy." (Wright, 2016). This provided a key opportunity for the Kurds to expand their territory. They gained control over the majority of the area to which they had always held ancestral claims. The conflict against Islamic State allowed the Kurds to consolidate the Kurdish Regional Government area in Northern Iraq which is also referred to as Iraqi Kurdistan or Southern Kurdistan. This expansion of territory gave the Kurds the largest semi-autonomous area that they had inhabited for decades and gained them control over oil-rich areas which provided economic leverage within the region (Pecanha, 2017). These key territorial and economic gains provided a backdrop of prosperity for the Kurds to finally pursue their goal of self-determination.

Kurdish Independence Referendum

A Kurdish referendum was originally intended to be held in 2014, however, it was delayed due to the significant pressure imposed by Islamic State's expansion, along with significant financial and political pressure on the Kurdish people from reduced oil prices and regional instability (Klain & Hintz, 2017). For years, the Kurdish state employees were unpaid. This resulted in the gradual deterioration of the KRG's unity, and heightened frustrations. The political standing of the Kurds was fractured from the outset, with opposition groups, such as the Movement for Change or Gorran and Kurdistan Islamic Group (Komal), reiterating their disagreement with the referendum plans; a stance that they revoked only days before the referendum date. The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) also strongly opposed the plans, and further divided the Kurdish sentiment. Despite a divided community, Kurdish leader Masoud Barzani decided to take advantage of the retreating Islamic State and call the referendum in late 2017.

In September 2017, the Kurdish people finally held the referendum in which 93% of Iraqi Kurds voted for independence from Baghdad (McKernan, 2017). The question posed to the Kurds was "do you want the Kurdistan Region and the Kurdistani areas outside the administration of the region to become an independent state?" (Park, Jongerden, Owtram, & Yoshioka, 2017, p. 2). The Iraqi government opposed the referendum from early planning stages, with the Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declaring it as unconstitutional and calling for the Iraqi Supreme Court to forcibly suspend it (Rasheed & Jalabi, 2017). Turkey and Syria also strongly opposed the referendum as they were concerned it might spark separatist action within their own borders from their Kurdish minority populations.

The international community strongly opposed the referendum for fear that it would further destabilise the region. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) issued a statement that supported the extant territorial integrity of Iraq, noting "concern over the potentially destabilizing impact of the Kurdistan Regional Government's plans to unilaterally hold a referendum". The UNSC also noted that the referendum could potentially interrupt key efforts in countering Islamic State. This was because critical operations were scheduled during that time that required Kurdish support. The UNSC stated that it "could detract from efforts to ensure the safe, voluntary return of over three million refugees and internally displaced persons" (United Nations Security Council, 2017). The United States, United Kingdom, Germany, France and Russia issued formal statements opposing the referendum (Cockburn, 2017), making specific comments that the efforts in the region should focus on the fight against Islamic State. Former U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Stuart Jones, argued that "There is no ambiguity on what the U.S. position was on this issue. The United States has been telling the Kurds and telling [Kurdish President] Masoud [Barzani], and telling Masrour [Barzani, his heir apparent] since last spring not to proceed with this because this would be not good for Kurdistan, not good for Iraq, and would play into the hands of the hardliners and the hands of the Iranians" (Calamur, 2017). The United States, United Kingdom and United Nations suggested a results-orientated alternative to discuss territorial disputes, with a resolution timeline of three years (Park, Jongerden, Owtram, & Yoshioka, 2017). Barzani rejected this suggestion and refused any proposed support and mediation offers from the international community (Rasheed & Jalabi, 2017).

The international community took measures to deter the Kurdish leaders from proceeding further. An international flight ban was instigated by the U.S. on the Kurdish airports, and a series of suppression measures were implemented including the call for arrest warrants for those whom organised the referendum and a ban on U.S. Dollars being sold to Kurdish regional banks. The Iraqi Parliament authorised the use of force to reclaim Kurdish territory, including Kirkuk (BasNews, 2017). This move was tacitly supported by the UN and Great Powers. Only days after the referendum, Iraqi government forces reclaimed the majority of this territory, including Kirkuk, nearby towns and oil fields. This was a direct military assault, carried out to curb Kurdish independence and stop the possibility of a Kurdish nation being developed in northern Iraq. Zucchino (2017) argues that "despite the resounding success of the referendum, Iraqi forces were able to take Kirkuk in a single day and with little fight, partly because it is a multiethnic city of Kurds, Turkmens and Arabs, and partly because the Kurds themselves were divided". The Iraqi Government had an agreement with one of the Kurdish factions that controlled key parts of their territory, including Kirkuk which allowed Baghdad access into the city, to remove the Kurdish flag and to leave an Iraqi flag in its place. This therefore evidence of defection and co-optation. This was received overwhelming well from the other Iraqi, Arab and Turkish occupants of Kirkuk who formed cheering crowds around Iraqi forces and fired gunshots into the air in celebration (Zucchino, 2017) The U.S. refused to be involved in the conflict, with a Pentagon spokeswoman stating that they were simply "monitoring the situation closely and strongly urge all sides to avoid additional escalatory actions" and that they "oppose violence from any party, and urge against destabilizing actions that distract from the fight against ISIS and further undermine Iraq's stability" (Al Jazeera, 2017).

Whilst the 93% support rate showed overwhelming backing from those who voted, this statistic did not have the support to drive change. It was purely a statement of intent, rather than a strategic plan for secession. The results were never intended to be binding, and it was clear that the ramifications would be political rather than legal (Dalay, 2017). It was reported that whilst Kurdish Leader Massoud Barzani led the referendum under the guise of achieving a historic milestone towards Kurdish independence and homeland, it could have also been a distraction from the worsening economic situation under his authoritarian rule. The referendum was described as a strong expression of aspiration for Kurdish regional

autonomy, however "in practical tactics the factions have shown themselves divided and the limitations of a polity organised around family-dominated politics and militias have been cruelly exposed" (Park, Jongerden, Owtram, & Yoshioka, 2017, p. 214). Whilst the referendum should have united the Kurdish people and consolidated the political factions within the Kurdish Region of Iraq, it instead further exposed these divisions and invited regional and international backlash. It further divided the Kurdish people and left them even more powerless to counter the moves of their opposition. The Kurdish referendum lost the Kurds their strong hold over territory and critical oil revenue, which provided them critical political leverage. It also sparked further tensions with neighbouring countries including Turkey and angered the United States. According to Hiltermann (2017) from the International Crisis Group, the Kurdish decision to hold a referendum was a "miscalculation of historic proportions by proceeding with the referendum over the objections of just about everyone who counts". This decision further inflamed relationships with all key regional stakeholders and resulted in irreparable backlash. As summarised by Hintz and Klain (2017), "with little possibility for any shift in regional support, acquiescence from Baghdad, or unity among Kurdish groups anytime in the near future, Iraqi Kurds' independence aspirations now seem more distant than ever".

The U.S. and the Kurds

Whilst the U.S.-Kurdish relationship dates back to World War I when the American government supported, in principle, the establishment of a Kurdish state after the breakdown of the Ottoman Empire, the U.S. Government has provided inconsistent and conditional support, which has not been comprehensive enough to truly back Kurdish autonomy. Most of the U.S. support to the Kurds has been material, rather than political. This support includes the provision of weapons, training, advice and assistance (Specia, 2018). A prime example of this has been demonstrated in the last few years when the U.S. pledged arms, ammunition and aid to the Kurdish Regional Government in return for their military assistance in the fight against the Islamic State. The U.S. led coalition also pledged that it "continues to provide material support, training, advice and assistance to the Syrian Democratic Forces in their ongoing effort to defeat ISIS in Syria" (Frantzman, 2017), which comprises Kurdish fighters.

Supporting the Kurds has always been secondary to U.S. regional interests. In recent years, it has been clear that the U.S. has been chasing the establishment of stability in Iraq

more than they need leverage with the Kurds. Former U.S. ambassador summarised the reasons why the U.S. refused to support the Kurds in their referendum, or to form a Kurdish state:

> A: The KRG is not economically viable. B: The political conditions were simply not prepared. There's a very sharp reaction from Iran. There's a sharp reaction from Turkey. A sharp reaction from Baghdad. So, the neighbours weren't prepared for this. They weren't willing to go along. There were a lot of issues that were not resolved. (Calamur, 2017)

The Kurds themselves accept that even if they did declare independence, without international support, including economic partnerships and military alliances, they would not survive. Talabani (Calamur, 2017) argued the hypothetical, saying

> let us imagine that Iraqi Kurdistan declared independence, and Iran, Syria, Turkey, and Iraq didn't fight it but just closed their borders. How could we live? Let us say, we've got our oil—how could we export it? And you can be sure that if Kurdistan declares independence Iran will attack, Turkey will attack, Syria will attack—and Iraq will not accept it. We cannot resist all these countries.

The recent Kurdish referendum succeeded in frustrating the United States and further prevented the Kurds from achieving support for their quest for autonomy.

The decision to proceed with the referendum, despite the litany of warnings from neighbouring states and international community was arguably a smoke screen orchestrated by Barzani to hide the internal political chaos and financial situation of the KRG. This disunity has been a key endogenous factor that has consistently inhibited Kurdish political cohesion. The KRG Washington representative Abdul Rahim reinforced this, stating that "Disunity is definitely our Achilles heel. Kurdish disunity is our worst enemy. Whatever we think of our opponents and detractors, our disunity is our worst enemy" (Calamur, 2017). The Kurds have consistently been hindered by their inability to form a cohesive front. The recent referendum provides an additional contemporary example of this. Despite multiple opportunities in recent decades, the Kurds have remained internally fractured, with inconsistent political goals and conflicting leadership.

Regional Backlash

The Iraqi Government is intent on establishing democracy, but it has been repressing Kurdish independence out of concern that such a development might reduce its power and revenue. It viewed the Kurdish referendum as unconstitutional and was concerned it "could lead to ethnic divisions, exposing (the Iraqis) to disastrous dangers that only God knows" (Chmaytelli & Butler, 2017). Despite the overwhelming "yes" vote for Kurdish independence, Iraq refused to negotiate and instead responded with military force and took back Kurdish territory and oil fields and isolated the KRG (Cockburn, 2017). This has set back negotiations between Baghdad and Kurdish leaders and fuelled political skirmishes. A recent example of this is the Iraqi Government's slashing of the 2018 Kurdish budget allocation (Middle East Eye, 2018). The Iraqi Government's priority is regional stability and democracy. If Kurdish secession inhibits this goal, Baghdad can be expected to intervene. Therefore, this provides another exogenous factor of host state repression and violence.

Turkey also has a long history of resentment towards the Kurds, which has escalated in recent years. It regards the Kurds as terrorists and a threat to its territorial sovereignty (Gall, 2018). Turkey has repressed its Kurdish population for decades, resulting in numerous rebel insurgencies against the state (Hatem & Dohrmann, 2013, p. 49). Most of these uprisings have been led by the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), and have been inflamed by Turkey's attacks on Kurdish positions in Iraq and Syria (Chan, 2018). Whilst Turkey has a vested interest in annihilating the presence of Islamic State, it also has a strong interest in ensuring the Kurds do not progress their goals for self-determination. This concern is mirrored by Iran, which is also worried about its Kurdish minority attempting to secede. Turkey has conducted a myriad of attacks on Kurdish forces, under the guise of fighting Islamic State. This has all been a targeted effort to subdue Kurdish autonomy and regional power and influence. Turkey is concerned that Kurdish autonomy would support the PKK and motivate a secession attempt from the Kurdish minority in Turkey. The Turkish Prime Minister declared that Kurdish independence would be a direct security threat to Turkey (Hacaoglu & Ant, 2017). If the Kurds were to declare independence and form a state, Turkey would respond with considerable political power and violence. This remains a considerable exogenous factor opposed to Kurdish self-determination and autonomy.

The recent conflict in the Middle East has additionally inflamed tensions between the U.S. and Turkey, thereby further complicating U.S. support for the Kurds. Turkey considers Syria's YPG and Iraq's KRG as being too close to the PKK rebel group. They resent the U.S. armament of the KRG and are concerned that any Kurdish autonomy could spark an uprising of their own repressed Kurdish minority (Feldman, 2017). This has sparked tension between the U.S. and Turkey, as the U.S. walks a fine line between fighting in partnership with Turkey against the Islamic State and supporting Kurdish contingents. The U.S recently announced a plan to establish a 30,000-person border security force in partnership with the PYD to secure Syria's borders with Iraq and Turkey (Torode & Wen, 2018). This has naturally sparked Turkey's concern about the potential of Kurdish autonomous regions along the border. Turkey has a history of antagonising their relationship with the U.S. In 2017 and 2018, Turkish forces attacked Kurdish troops in Syria that were involved in an offensive against Islamic State with US backing (Gall, 2018). This directly undermined U.S. goals and skyrocketed tensions between the two NATO allies. Fundamentally, the U.S. has more to gain from its relationship with Turkey than what it does from supporting the Kurds (Chan, 2018). This fact will arguably transcend current tensions.

Russia is also a key player in recent conflict, due to its regional proximity and economic interests within the region. In February of 2017, media leaked that during a Kurdish conference in Moscow, Russia was said to be in "favor of a new constitution in Syria that would be open to Kurdish autonomy" (Yetkin, 2017). There has been evidence of Russia's support for Kurdish autonomy in both Syria and Iraq.

Moscow's position has been recently articulated in a statement by the Russian Foreign ministry in September 2017, which stated that Russia maintains their "unwavering commitment to the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the friendly Iraq and other Middle Eastern states" and that "Moscow respects the national aspirations of the Kurds" (Yetkin, 2017). Further to this, the statement claimed that "we believe that all disputes that may exist between the Iraqi federal government and the government of the Autonomous Kurdish Region can and should be solved through constructive and respectful dialogue, with a view to devising a mutually acceptable formula of coexistence within a single Iraqi state" (Yetkin, 2017). Russia was the only Great Power that did not call on the Iraqi Kurds to cancel their referendum for independence in September 2017. It is also one of the top funders of

Kurdish oil and gas deals, according to Reuters (2017), pledging over $4 billion in less than a year. Russia also recently engaged in a trade agreement with Erbil, which make Russia surpass the United States as the largest oil trader in Northern Iraq (Fenton-Harvey, 2017). It is therefore in its interests to facilitate peace within the region, in order to maintain its economic prosperity. A statement made by Vladimir Putin at an energy forum in October 2017 highlighted that he is "exercising a policy of non-interference and using cautious rhetoric after the independence referendum in Iraq's Kurdistan in order not to explode the situation in the region" (Shikara, 2017). Russia's stance is relatively clear; that it respects the wishes of the Kurds however will aim to do so in a way that meets its own desires. Russia's involvement could also influence Turkey and Iran to reconsider their hostile policies against the KRG, under fear of attracting Russia's wrath.

Fundamentally, the Kurds are still internally divided. Barzani and Talabani still lead decision making, and don't necessarily represent the fair and true interests of their people. Proceeding with the referendum despite imminent domestic and international repercussions provided a prime example of this corrupted leadership. After the recent backlash from the referendum, the Kurds would be hoping to take some steps forward again in the Iraqi election schedules for May 2018 (Al-Marashi, 2018). They would be hoping for the lifting of economic sanctions imposed by Baghdad, clarifications surrounding oil exports, payment of public wages, a share of the Iraqi Government budget and the resumption of the processes concerning Article 140 of the constitution. It is also likely that the three Kurdish provinces of Dohuk, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah will vote for the Kurdish parties in the upcoming elections. It is also likely that the KDP will control Dohuk and Erbil, whilst the PUK's support of Sulamaniyah is more uncertain due to the challenge imposed by the opposition parties. These divisions could cause a litany of negative outcomes and will continue to hinder the Kurdish goal of autonomy for the near future.

Conclusion

The recent decade following the U.S. invasion of Iraq has seen considerable conflict in the Middle East. This conflict has re-drawn borders and provided a critical window of opportunity for Kurdish secession. It has provided the Kurds with a chance to leverage off the international backing provided to them to fight Islamic State which has afforded them semi-

autonomous territory, economic relationships through oil trading and influence through their political representation in Iraq.

This chapter has analysed the current Kurdish situation in the Middle East, and focused commentary on the Kurdish goal of secession in Iraq. The key exogenous and endogenous factors have been discussed, to frame the argument that the Kurds are not in a position to achieve secession. Once again, this is the result of internal divergences, lack of international recognition and support, and lastly the imminent backlash that would occur from the host and neighbouring states including Iraq and Syria. Until these factors are resolved, the Kurdish people will remain stateless and fighting.

Conclusion

This thesis has argued that while endogenous factors are important, secession by non-state nations is almost impossible without international recognition and support, especially from the Great Powers and leading IGO's; since such support is exceptionally hard to obtain, successful secession by non-state nations is rare in international politics.

This thesis has put forward two fundamental arguments, to prove this hypothesis. Firstly, this thesis has contended that non-state nations like the Kurds seek sovereign statehood because the essence of nationhood and national self-determination is sovereign statehood; and that non-state nations are usually treated unfairly and unjustly by their host state and thus develop a strong moral case for secession and sovereign statehood.

Secondly, this thesis has demonstrated that non-state nations like the Kurds fail to achieve sovereign statehood mainly because of endogenous and exogenous reasons: (endogenous) groups like the Kurds that are internally divided often fail to launch an unified secessionist challenge; different factions/platforms pull in different directions; and chances of regime co-optation of dissident factions remains high; (exogenous) the international normative regime is unsupportive of secession, hence non-state nations like the Kurds do not receive support from the UN and other global bodies in their quest for sovereign statehood; and that non-state nations also seldom receive the backing from Major Powers (both democratic and non-democratic) in their efforts to secede from their host state and set up their own sovereign and independent state.

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