

**Deconstructing Ethnic Conflict and Sovereignty in
Explanatory International Relations:
The Case of Iraqi Kurdistan and the PKK**

Submitted by Johannes Černý to the University of Exeter
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Signature: _____Johannes Černý_____

Abstract:

This study is essentially a critique of how the three dominant paradigms of explanatory international relations theory – (neo-)realism, liberalism, and systemic constructivism – conceive of, analytically deal with, and explain ethnic conflict and sovereignty. By deconstructing their approaches to ethnic identity formation in general and ethnic conflict in particular it argues that all three paradigms, in their epistemologies, ontologies and methodologies through reification and by analytically equating ethnic groups with states, tend to essentialise and substantialise the ethnic lines of division and strategic essentialisms of ethnic and ethno-nationalist elites they set out to describe, and, all too often, even write them into existence. Particular attention, both at the theoretical and empirical level, will be given to the three explanatory frameworks explanatory IR has contributed to the study of ethnic conflict: the ‘ethnic security dilemma’, the ‘ethnic alliance model’, and, drawing on other disciplines, instrumentalist approaches. The deconstruction of these three frameworks will form the bulk of the theoretical section, and will subsequently be shown in the case study to be ontologically untenable or at least to fail to adequately explain the complex dynamics of ethnic identity formation in ethnic conflict. By making these essentialist presumptions, motives, and practices explicit this study makes a unique contribution not only to the immediate issues it addresses but also to the wider debate on the nature of IR as a discipline. As a final point, drawing on constitutive theory and by conceiving of the behaviour and motives of protagonists of ethnic conflict as expressions of a fluid, open-ended, and situational matrix of identities and interests without sequential hierarchies of dependent and independent variables, the study attempts to offer an alternative, constitutive reading of ethnic and nationalist identity to the discourses of explanatory IR.

These themes that are further developed in the empirical section where, explanatory IR’s narratives of ethnic group solidarity, ethno-nationalism, and national self-determination are examined and deconstructed by way of the case study of the relations between the *Kurdistan Workers’ Party* (PKK) and the Iraqi Kurdish ethno-nationalist parties in the wider context of the political status of the autonomous Kurdistan Region of Iraq. With this ambition this study makes an

original empirical contribution by scrutinising these relations in a depth unique to the literature.

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List of Abbreviations

ADYÖD	Ankara Democratic Higher Education Association (<i>Ankara Demokratik Yüksek Öğretim Derneği</i>)
AKP	Justice and Development Party (<i>Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi</i>)
ARGK	People's Liberation Army of Kurdistan (<i>Arteşa Rizgariya Netewa Kurdistan</i>)
BDP	Peace and Democracy Party (<i>Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi</i>)
BISA	British International Studies Association
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CENTCOM	United States Central Command
CHP	Republican People's Party (<i>Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi</i>)
CJCS	Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority
CUP	Committee for Union and Progress (<i>İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti</i>)
DEP	Democracy Party (<i>Demokrasi Partisi</i>)
DFLP	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
DP	Democratic Party (<i>Demokrat Parti</i>)
DTP	Democratic Society Party (<i>Demokratik Toplum Partisi</i>)
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (<i>Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia</i>)
FRELIMO	Mozambique Liberation Front (<i>Frente de Libertação de Moçambique</i>)
GAP	South-eastern Anatolia Project (<i>Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi</i>)
HADEP	People's Democracy Party (<i>Halkın Demokrasi Partisi</i>)
HEP	People's Labour Party (<i>Halkın Emek Partisi</i>)
HRK	Kurdistan Freedom Unit (<i>Hezen Rizgariya Kurdistan</i>)
ICP	Iraqi Communist Party
ITF	Iraqi Turkmen Front (<i>Irak Türkmen Cephesi</i>)
IKF	Iraqi Kurdistan Front
JİTEM	Gendarmerie Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism

	Organisation (<i>Jandarma İstihbarat ve Terörle Mücadele</i>)
KADEK	Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress (<i>Kongreya Azadî û Demokrasiya Kurdistanê</i>)
KCK	Kurdistan Democratic Confederation (<i>Koma Civaken Kurdistan</i>)
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party (<i>Partîya Demokrata Kurdistan</i>)
KDP-I	Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran
KDP-T	Democratic Party of Turkish Kurdistan
KNC	Kurdish National Council
Kongra-Gel	People's Congress of Kurdistan (<i>Kongra Gelê Kurdistan</i>)
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
MEK	People's Mujahideen of Iran (<i>Mojahedin-e-Khalq</i>)
MERIP	Middle East Research and Information Project
MHP	Nationalist Action Party (<i>Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi</i>)
MIT	National Intelligence Agency (<i>Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı</i>)
NLM	National Liberation Movement
NSC	National Security Council
PAK	Panhellenic Liberation Movement (<i>Πανελλήνιο Απελευθερωτικό Κίνημα</i>)
PAK	Kurdistan Liberation Party (<i>Partiya Azadiya Kurdistan</i>)
PCDK	Kurdistan Democratic Solution Party (<i>Partiya Careseriya Demokratik a Kurdistanê</i>)
PJAK	Kurdistan Free Life Party (<i>Partiya Jiyani Azadi Kurdistan</i>)
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party (<i>Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan</i>)
PNAC	Project for a New American Century
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (<i>Yeketî Niştîmanî Kurdistan</i>)
PWD	Patriotic and Democratic Party of Kurdistan (<i>Partîya Welatparêzên Demokratên Kurdistan</i>)
PYD	Democratic Union Party (<i>Partiya Yekita ya Demokratik</i>)
RCT	Rational Choice Theory
SCIRI	Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq
SHP	Social Democratic Populist Party (<i>Sosyaldemokrat Halkçı Partî</i>)
TAK	Kurdistan Freedom Falcons (<i>Teyrêbazên Azadiya Kurdistan</i>)

TAL	Transitional Administrative Law
TESEV	Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (<i>Türkiye Ekonomik ve Sosyal Etüdler Vakfı</i>)
TKSP	Socialist Party of Turkish Kurdistan (<i>Türkiye Kürdistan Sosyalist Partisi</i>)
TWP	Workers Party of Turkey (<i>Türkiye İşçi Partisi</i>)
WINEP	Washington Institute for Near East Policy

Figures

Map of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq



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Hannes Černý
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Introduction

Research foci and rationale of the study

Back in 1995, when the post-positivist challenge to established theories of IR was in full vogue, Steve Smith wrote:

In my view this is the main meta-theoretical issue facing international theory today. The emerging fundamental division in the discipline is between those theories that seek to offer explanatory accounts of international relations, and those that see theory as constitutive of that reality. At base this boils down to a difference over what the social world is like; is it to be seen as scientists think of the “natural” world, that is to say as something outside of our theories, or is the social world what we make it? Radically different types of theory are needed to deal with each of these cases, and these theories are not combinable so as to form one overarching theory of the social world ... In my judgement this really is a fundamental divide within social theory.¹

Addressing the distinction between explanatory and constitutive theory Smith observes, Colin Wight commented:

But just whom does the “we” refer to here? Setting this distinction in opposition to explanatory theory that attempts to explain international relations, we can presume that Smith means “we” IR theorists, not “we” members of society. But this seems implausible. It seems to suggest that “we” IR theorists make the world of international relations.²

To me Smith’s argument is not implausible. On the contrary it is the key argument of this study that we IR theorists as categorizers and analysts are co-protagonists of the social phenomena and processes we set out to describe; we do not ‘make’ the world of international relations, but, like the actors that are the subject of our analysis, we take part in influencing and shaping it. In clear rejection of the scientific objectivism and rational positivism of explanatory theories, this study commits to a constitutive theory of IR that renders us analysts as much part of social discourse on the issue to be analysed, and therefore subject of analysis as the social groups and actors we categorize and examine. We all are part of the social world we analysts try to understand and explain, and in my opinion, what would be implausible, is to assume that our explanations have no impact on the processes and discourses we study, that

we can remain objective, neutral, and detached to them, while in fact we arguably can be as subjective, involved, biased, prejudiced, and party to them as our subjects of analysis.

The social phenomenon that is the object of analysis of this study is ethnic conflict and its subject of analysis are those ethnic entrepreneurs that engage in an ethnicised discourse, advance and thrive on it, and we IR theorists that seek to understand and explain their actions alike. While it would be implausible to argue that ethnic entrepreneurs, be it, in reference to our case study, Kurdish nationalist leaders or members of the Turkish military-intelligence apparatus have read either Smith or any other IR theorist for that matter to let their highly theoretical deliberations guide their thinking and policies, it would be equally implausible to posit that our thought processes occur in a social vacuum, are not filtered down through the media, the advocacy of think tanks via political decision makers, and the exchange in personnel between the scientific community and public servants, to name just a few, until they reach in a more accessible form politicians and the general public. Ironically, on the contrary, academia in the 21st century is mostly concerned with proving the impact factor of its deliberations to business, philanthropic donors, the ministers holding the purses of the higher education budgets, students expected to pay ever higher tuition fees, and the general public. How can we IR theorists proudly demonstrate these impact factors in every grant proposal we pen, yet at the same time cling to the fallacy of a detached scientific objectivism that posits us outside the social discourse we seek to explain?

As far as IR scholars' impact on the understanding of and policies adopted in response to ethnic conflict by decision makers is concerned one does not have to belabour the prominent example of President Clinton declaring Robert Kaplan's infamous *Balkan Ghosts*³ required reading for members of his administration in dealing with the wars of the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s that cemented the unfortunate and fallacious narrative of 'ancient ethnic hatreds';⁴ what is one of the subjects of this study, the Iraq War and the ethno-sectarian conflicts it triggered, offers an unprecedented plethora of examples of IR scholars trying to influence and shape the positions and policies of regional and international actors – from the 'Six Wise Men', British academics that counselled Tony Blair against invading Iraq in 2003,⁵ to countless neo-

conservative scholars in the US, Francis Fukuyama and Bernard Lewis among them, doing the opposite with the Bush administration, to hardly a week passing in the decade since the invasion of Iraq without academics being questioned on developments in the war-torn country by journalists, in expert testimonials before parliamentary inquiries or, on their own accord, penning another op-ed to gain a wider audience for their take on things.

The prominence of IR in accounts of ethnic conflict, I would argue, stems from the widely held perception of the discipline to be most qualified to explain issues of war and peace in the international arena. 'The study of international relations can tell us much about ethnic conflict,' argue Jesse & Williams in advocating for a primacy of IR and its 'theories and approaches to explain ethnic conflict'.⁶ In another primer on ethnic conflict Cordell & Wolff take the same line when observing, 'theories of international relations offer useful tools and insights in the study of ethnic conflict and conflict settlement'.⁷ More than any other discipline, they continue, 'IR theory is primarily concerned with issues of war and peace' in world politics, and state behaviour has a significant impact on the origins, development and duration of ethnic conflicts – whether causal, escalating or mitigating – as do norms, values, practices, institutions, legislations, and forms of governance at the local, regional and international level.⁸ Although the reasons they offer for IR's primacy in explaining the complex dynamics of ethnic conflict appear compelling, others would argue that IR is not particularly well equipped for the analysis of identity conflicts. IR is a notorious latecomer to debates on questions of identity – the concept did not feature prominently as an eminent category in IR-specific approaches until the so called 'fourth great debate' and the post-positivist challenge of the early 1990s.⁹ One would not have to go so far as John Stack's observations that, 'ethnicity is as alien to the study of international relations as would be Sigmund Freud's musings in *Civilization and Its Discontents*',¹⁰ to ascertain that explanatory IR's theoretical approaches to identity are epistemologically grossly underdeveloped. Zalewski & Enloe sum it up aptly when concluding, 'all three paradigms [neo-realism, neo-liberalism, structuralism] are too restricted ontologically, methodologically, and epistemologically, and in ways which ultimately render them unable to theorize or think adequately about identity.'¹¹

The main argumentative thrust of this study is to take up this critique of the approach to ethnic conflict of the three major explanatory theories of IR – (neo-)realism, (neo-)liberalism, and systemic constructivism – and to provide a detailed critical examination of the epistemologies, ontologies, models, and frameworks they employ in their analysis of ethnic conflict.¹² In fact, it is the ontological, methodological, and epistemological restrictions cursorily identified by Zalewski & Enloe above that are the main focus of this study. In this sense then, the conception of this study as a contribution to a constitutive IR theory of ethnic conflict, first and foremost, is an epistemological and ontological critique of how explanatory theories of IR perceive of, explain, and deal with ethnic conflict. This will be done, after outlining explanatory IR's approach to ethnic identity, ethnic conflict, and nationalism in general terms, by deconstructing the three main frameworks explanatory IR has contributed to or utilizes in the analysis of ethnic conflict: the 'ethnic security dilemma', the 'ethnic alliance model', and, drawing on other disciplines, instrumentalism.

To be clear about this study's ambition, though, not only would it be impossible to show how certain texts of explanatory IR theory shape the world views and actions of individual ethnic entrepreneurs, ethno-nationalist leaders, or decision makers engaging in and advancing an ethnicised discourse, to do so would run counter to the self-perception of this study as constitutive theory which is defined precisely by eschewing and confuting universal claims to causality; it would become guilty of expressly the attempt to harness constitutive theory for causal or explanatory theory Smith criticises in Wendt's work.¹³ On this distinction Lene Hansen elaborates:

Mainstream approaches [i.e. explanatory theories] adopt a positivist epistemology. They strive to find the causal relations that "rule" world politics, working with dependent and independent variables ... [Constitutive theories], by contrast, embrace a post-positivist epistemology as they argue that the social world is so far removed from the hard sciences where causal epistemologies originate that we cannot understand world politics through causal cause-effect relationships ... Constitutive theories are still theories, not just descriptions or stories about the world, because they define theoretical concepts, explain how they hang together, and instruct us on how to use them in analysis of world politics.¹⁴

With that aspiration in mind, what I will limit myself to here, is to demonstrate how closely aligned the ontologies of ethnic conflict of explanatory

IR theories are with the world views and ideologies of difference of ethnic entrepreneurs. For I argue that IR more than any other discipline is prone to what Rogers Brubaker calls 'groupism' and a 'clichéd constructivism' when dealing with identity politics in the social sciences,¹⁵ a constructivism in name only – limited to the introductory section or expressed in customary yet seemingly perfunctory disclaimers – but the main analysis, at large, continues to be done under essentialist and substantialist presumptions of ethnic identities, often bordering a primordialism slipping in through the backdoor. Despite advances to the contrary in sociology and anthropology, and two generations of critical theory scholarship, the three dominant schools of thought in IR still tend to treat ethnic groups as organic, static, substantive, distinct, homogeneous and bounded units and largely equate conflicts between said groups with conflicts between states. The essentialist and substantialist presumptions of groupism in how explanatory IR approaches ethnicity and ethnic conflict, I hypothesise in what is the core argument of this study, manifest themselves on three levels: (1) operationalising ethnicity as either the dependent variable, that is perceiving it as exogenous to the social phenomena studied and reducing it to merely a political tool, or the independent variable and therewith according it with pre-eminent explanatory power; (2) equating ethnic groups with states; and (3), as a consequence thereof, all too often equating ethnic conflict with ethno-nationalist conflict by postulating that a disenfranchised group's desire for the control of territory and in the long run sovereign statehood is the prime cause of the conflict at hand.

To *herausarbeiten* – in the sense of elaborating an argument by teasing out information, by chipping away the surfaces like a carver who reveals the features and contours of a statue cut-by-cut – the workings, effects, and rationale behind such groupism in the discourses on ethnic conflict and sovereignty of explanatory IR is the prime objective of this study. While these are discussed in great depth in theory in the first section, such a debate cannot and should never remain at the theoretical level since the essentialist practices criticised here have very direct and often dramatic implications on the conflicts we analysts set out to study and for the people who are its main protagonists and victims. For this reason, and in order to substantiate and illustrate the arguments made here by way of the example of one of the most widely

analysed ethnic and ethno-nationalist conflicts of our times, ample room is given to the empirical case study. As elaborated below, the case of the relations between the *Kurdistan Workers' Party* (PKK, *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan*) and the Iraqi Kurdish ethno-nationalist parties, the *Kurdistan Democratic Party* (KDP, *Partiya Demokrata Kurdistan*) and the *Patriotic Union of Kurdistan* (PUK, *Yeketî Nîştîmanî Kurdistan*), as well as on the political identity cum current status of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, constitute an ideal case with which to examine the workings and effects of groupism in explanatory IR discourses on ethnic conflict and sovereignty. As a matter of fact, it very well has the potential to serve as the cautionary tale par excellence about the epistemological, ontological, and methodological flaws of such essentialist approaches in explanatory IR scholarship.

The above three contentions of the key argument of this study, put differently, encompass the two main points of critique herein levelled at how explanatory IR perceives and explains ethnicity and ethnic conflict. First, that in its epistemology, ontology, and methodology when dealing with ethnic identity and ethnic conflict, explanatory IR is guilty of reification, and secondly, that its system-immanent normative determinism of state centrism creates a reality that, intentionally or not, accentuates the ethnicised discourse and exacerbates the ethnic lines of division it originally set out to study. Reification, one of the cardinal errors in social research, can be defined as 'the apprehension of human phenomena as if they were things, that is, in non-human or possible supra terms';¹⁶ or in the words of Anthony Giddens, the 'reified discourse refers the "facticity" with which social phenomena confront individual actors in such a way as to ignore how they are produced and reproduced through human agency'.¹⁷ For the tendency to reify ethnic groups in particular, Craig Calhoun remarks:

We habitually refer to ethnic groups, races, tribes, and languages as though they were clearly unities, only occasionally recalling to ourselves the ambiguity of their definitions, the porousness of their boundaries, and the situational dependency of their use in practice. The point is not that such categorical identities are not real, any more than the nations are not real, it is, rather, that they are not fixed but both fluid and manipulable. Cultural and physical differences exist, but their discreteness, their identification, and their invocation are all variable.¹⁸

The primary site of reification in explanatory IR's dealing with ethnic conflict I identify is state-centrism. While explanatory IR's state-centric ontology will be discussed in great detail in the theory section,¹⁹ suffice it to say for now that 'state-centric theories of international relations assume that states are the primary actors in world politics ... the claim is that states ... are sufficiently important actors that any positive theory of international relations must place them at its core'.²⁰ Yet this assumption about the primacy of the state in IR theory comes with considerable epistemological and ontological baggage. First and foremost, state-centrism in mainstream IR 'reduce[s] the essence of international relations to state-centred interpretations'.²¹ As Richard Ashley has famously observed for neo-realism:

For the neorealist, the state is *ontologically prior* to the international system. The system's structure is produced by defining states as individual unities and *then* by noting properties that emerge when several such unities are brought into mutual reference. For the neorealist, it is impossible to describe international structures without first fashioning a concept of the state-as-actor ... The state must be treated as an unproblematic unity: an entity whose existence, boundaries, identifying structures, constituencies, legitimacies, interests, and capacities to make self-regarding decisions can be treated as a given, independent of transnational class and human interests, and undisputed (except, perhaps by other states).²²

State-centrism thus explains international relations almost exclusively – at best it inserts the above mentioned clichéd constructivist caveats – through the prism of the state, a state whose existence ontologically predates the system of which it is part; in other words, 'as an ontologically abstract category, the state, through the state-centric prism, becomes also a static category. International relations is reduced via the state-centric prism to an individualistically conceived collection of its parts – that is states – and thus as a collection of static entities'.²³ I argue in this study that explanatory IR – for reasons that will be elaborated in detail – by equating the ethnic group with the state, has translated from the state onto the ethnic group this static conceptualization of social units as clearly bounded, organic, substantive, distinct, homogeneous, and static categories endowed with social agency, whose properties and genesis are not problematised but treated as given – or to be more precise, by doing so, as with the state, it has contributed to reifying the ethnic group through its narratives. This equation of state with ethnic or ethno-nationalist group that was made

possible, in modernist fashion, by ascribing the nation with the defining objective of becoming a state, brings with it then for the study of ethnic or ethno-nationalist conflict the same epistemological and ontological fallacies of reification as state-centrism does in general for the study of the state and international relations at large.

Given the centrality of the state in explanatory IR's analysis of ethnic and ethno-nationalist conflict, both as the social unit with which explanatory IR equates the ethnic group as a unitary actor and as the ultimate objective to be attained, defines the ethno-nationalist group, it becomes imperative to dedicate ample room to a critical analysis of the concept of sovereign statehood in explanatory IR. This coupling in analysis of ethnic and ethno-nationalist conflict with sovereign statehood constitutes a unique contribution of this study to a critical theory literature that to my knowledge, has only taken on each concept and category separately, but not so far dealt with them in conjuncture. Yet, it is a conjuncture dictated by the representation of both concepts and categories in explanatory IR which establishes this linkage in the first place. Consequently, I argue, any deconstruction of how explanatory IR explains ethnic and ethno-nationalist conflict would be fatally incomplete if not accompanied by a deconstruction of sovereign statehood, which, allegedly, the former is all about.

In sum then, this study can be understood as critical reading and deconstruction of ethnic identity (and consequently ethnic and ethno-nationalist conflict), together with the interrelated concept of the sovereign nation state in explanatory IR. The main thrust of my critique centres on the argument that by portraying ethnic conflict in a groupist and deterministic way – that is by depicting ethnic groups as organic, static, substantive, distinct, homogeneous and bounded units with social agency, as unitary or unitarily acting doers that can be equated with states whose defining objective is to become a state, to acquire exclusive control, i.e. sovereignty over a territory and population – explanatory IR scholars in their state-centrist ontology and through the practice of reification create the very reality they set out to describe. In other words, I argue explicitly here that explanatory IR scholars as co-protagonists of ethnic conflict not only play into the hands of ethnic elites by unquestioningly adopting their 'strategic essentialisms'²⁴ as factual for their analysis, but that they often take part, through their scholarship, in writing into existence in the first place the

ethnic lines of division, the 'us' versus 'them' worldview that constitutes them, on which these ethnic elites thrive. These theoretical deliberations are then taken up in the empirical section of the study where, in order to substantiate them, I will deconstruct the (strategic) essentialisms of ethnic elites by way of the case of relations between the PKK and the Iraqi Kurdish ethno-nationalist parties, the KDP and the PUK, as well as on the political identity cum current status of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, illustrating why the afore deconstructed frameworks of explanatory IR – ethnic security dilemma, ethnic alliance model, instrumentalism – not only fail to explain their relations and ethnic conflict in general but, what is more, substantially misrepresent and distort realities on the ground. Instead, drawing on Fierke,²⁵ I will show why and how a fluid matrix of identities and interests, that acknowledges both as socially constructed and explicitly does not operationalise ethnic identity as either dependent or independent variables, better captures the parties' relations and, I would argue, ethnic identity and conflict in general. The case study then, in its scope and depth, itself a unique contribution to the literature, constitutes the second half of this study.

Methodology and case study

These ambitions necessitate a brief clarification of what is meant here by discourse and deconstruction. Norman Fairclough reminds us that 'discourse is not simply an entity we can define independently: we can only arrive at an understanding of it by analysing sets of relations'.²⁶ He continues:

Discourse is itself a complex set of relations including relations of communication between people who talk, write, and in other ways communicate with each other, but also ... describe relations between concrete communicative events (conversations, newspaper articles etc.) and more abstract and enduring complex discursive "objects" (with their own complex relations) like languages, discourses and genres. But there are also relations between discourse and other such complex "objects" including objects in the physical world, persons, power relations and institutions, which are interconnected elements in social activity or praxis.²⁷

Michel Foucault bases his assessment of knowledge production on how he conceptualises discourse, in particular that 'nothing has any meaning outside discourse',²⁸ that matters in the social world only gain meaning through

discourse, or in the words of Laclau & Mouffe, 'we use discourse to emphasize the fact that every social configuration is *meaningful*'.²⁹ Discourse therefore may be understood as 'a specific series of representations and practices through which meanings are produced, identities constituted, social relations established and political and ethical outcomes made more or less possible'.³⁰ In *Archaeology of Knowledge* Foucault further developed the concept of 'discursive formations' that not only included the objects under discussion but also demarcated how these discussions were structured, who was seen as in a position to discuss these objects authoritatively, and ultimately the value individual statements within the discussion were given.³¹ 'The types of objects in their domains were not already demarcated, but came into existence only contemporaneous with the discursive formations that made it possible to talk about them';³² in fact, discourses 'shape the contours of the taken-for-granted world, naturalizing and universalizing a particular subject formation and view of the world'.³³ Since for Foucault power and knowledge are closely interconnected in all social interactions and relations expressed through discourse, a comprehensive understanding of discourse therefore must not only capture the 'systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, courses of action, beliefs and practices that systematically construct the subjects and the worlds of which they speak'³⁴ but also ought to address questions of structure and agency that form the basis of every discursive relation, formation, and field together with the systems of power and knowledge by which they are constituted.

At this moment an important clarification seems necessary, though. To recognise identities as social constructs and discursive formations is not to say that they are not real. On the contrary, they are very real, but only insofar as they are constituted by discourse; they have no meaning prior and exogenous to discourse as this widely quoted analogy from Laclau & Mouffe illustrates:

The fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has nothing to do with whether there is a world external to thought ... An earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly exists, in the sense that it occurs here and now, independent of my will. But whether their specificity as objects is constructed in terms of natural phenomena or expressions of the wrath of God depends upon the structuring of a discursive field.³⁵

Much has been written on whether deconstruction can be understood as method or not.³⁶ Jaques Derrida himself has described it as '*pas de methode*',³⁷ yet as Martin McQuillan reminds us, "the word *pas* in French means both "not" and "step", so this ambiguous phrase can be translated as either "not a method" or "a methodological step". Thus, deconstruction is simultaneously ... not a method and a step in, or towards, a methodology'.³⁸ If this appears already confusing and if it is already a challenge to consummately capture the essence of discourse, to put deconstruction in a nutshell becomes even more toilsome, all the more since 'one might even say that cracking nutshells is what deconstruction is'.³⁹ Originating in the structuralist theory of linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, the notion that Western philosophy and with it most of our discursive objects is structured along a series of binary opposites in a hierarchical relationship with each other – in which 'the second term in each pair is considered the negative, corrupt, undesirable version of the first'⁴⁰ – such as presence/absence, inside/outside, speech/writing, identity/difference, domestic/foreign, hierarchy/anarchy, order/chaos, is the basis of Jaques Derrida's deconstructive approach.⁴¹ Each element of these dichotomies is co-constitutive of the other; that is, one cannot make sense of what presence means without having an understanding of absence and vice versa. One cannot conceptualise the self of one's identity without reference to the other, from who the self is set apart. Yet, these 'binary opposites are not the way things really are but the way they are represented by Western thought and through the habitualization and sedimentation of this thought are presented as natural'.⁴² In a nutshell then – if it has to be put into one – a 'deconstructive approach' for the purpose of this study means 'critically examining the discursive processes of materialization that produce settlements; such as the idea of pre-given subjects – upon which the criteria for judgement are based'⁴³ or to put into question what is presented in discourses as natural by scrutinizing the binary opposites on which this representation is based. In that then in this study, when analysing the strategic essentialisms of ethnic elites or the writings of explanatory IR scholars on ethnic conflict as texts within a wider discourse 'the question asked is not, "what does [the text] mean?" but "what does it presuppose?"'⁴⁴ By *herausarbeiten* that a representation in a certain text as part of a wider discourse does not reflect natural facts but is based on ideologised presumptions, by showing that it depicts not reality but *one particular* reality,

and by examining the systems of power and knowledge that constitute the wider discourse of which it is part, that text becomes deconstructed. And what explanatory IR presupposes in how it makes sense of ethnic conflict is groupness, for ethnicity to be either exogenous or the pre-eminent, determining variable in relations between and within assumed ethnic groups, and to ontologically equate those presupposed ethnic groups with states in their analyses of ethnic and ethno-nationalist conflicts.

This deconstructive approach highlights why certain key concepts – in this case groupness – are no longer serviceable within the paradigms in which they were originally developed, yet at the same time, somewhat paradoxically, instead of being replaced their use is continued in their now deconstructed form.⁴⁵ ‘By means of this double, stratified, dislodged and dislodging writing,’ in the words of Derrida, ‘we must also mark the interval between inversion, which brings low what was high, and the eruptive emergence of a new “concept”, a concept that can no longer be and never could be, included in the previous regime’.⁴⁶ Consequently, the aim of deconstruction is never to develop new meta-theories, models, or frameworks that replace the ones that have been identified as no longer serviceable, that is ‘the production of [truer] positive knowledge’,⁴⁷ but, after *herausarbeiten* the social context and discourse in which they were generated, to continue operationising them with the caveat of the insights deconstruction has yielded with regard to their production and utilization. In other words, deconstruction should be understood as a moment of passage from one concept to another, in which, in lieu of a ‘better’ concept, the concept is still used ‘under erasure’⁴⁸ until a new one has been developed – which cannot be the task of deconstruction, since to do so would violate its very principles, that is its inherently critical attitude to any kind of meta-theory.

While committed to a constitutive epistemology and applying deconstruction as a ‘step towards a methodology’, and while heeding Fierke’s call for a ‘constitutive discourse analysis’ that requires for us to “look and see” the matrix of identities and interests and the process by which they are gradually transformed through historical interactions’,⁴⁹ this study makes no pretence of comprehensively adopting discourse analysis for its methodology.⁵⁰ To make such a claim I would have had to apply the same degree of textual analysis to the empirical case study as to the theory section. While for the theory section

the objective is to show how closely aligned the narratives of ethnic conflict of explanatory IR and ethnic entrepreneurs are, for which textual analysis and discourse analysis appear appropriate, they would not fit the empirical case study, where I illustrate why a matrix of identities and interests better captures the realities of relations between Kurdish ethno-nationalist parties and to explain ethnic conflict in general than operationalising ethnic identities as dependent or independent variables, and by doing so seek to substantiate the argument made in the theory section.

As far as the role of ethnic elites is concerned, in simplified terms, there are two ways to go about empirically deconstructing an ethnicised discourse of supposed ethnic groups in conflict. One could demonstrate that the binary opposites, the 'us' versus 'them' dichotomies that constitute this discourse are constructed by questioning the fixedness of purportedly impermeable, unalterable, and inveterate ideational boundaries and divides between groups, thus disputing at large the categorization into groups based on these boundaries and divides. This, what is often misleadingly called an 'inter-group' approach, has, for example, been magisterially deconstructed for the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s by Gagnon.⁵¹ Alternately one could focus on the so called 'intra-group' dimension, the supposed coherence of and solidarity among an assumed group in face of an alleged common enemy. It is the latter approach that has been chosen for the empirical section of this study that sets out to analyse the relations between the PKK and the Iraqi Kurdish ethno-nationalist parties, the KDP and the PUK, in particular in light of the sanctuary the former enjoys on the territory of the latter since the early 1980s. At each stage of their relations I show the social constructedness of Kurdish ethno-nationalist identity by *herausarbeiten* that rather than a clear sequence of identities and interests as explanatory IR wants to make us believe, they constitute a complex, ever shifting, and non-sequential matrix of identities and interests. By illustrating the ambiguities and complexities of relations between these three parties that were more often outright antagonistic than they were showing solidarity and that do not fit the simplistic explananda of either instrumentalism or of taking 'common' ethnicity as the independent variable in analysing 'intra-group' relations, I intend to not only draw into question the portrayal of Kurdish groupness in the literature but to challenge at large the

categorization in explanatory IR texts of the Kurds as one ethnic group or nation. This segment of the case study constitutes the as of yet most detailed analysis of relations between KDP/PUK and the PKK available in the extant literature. It goes without saying, though, that the picture would ultimately not be complete without bringing Turkey into the equation, which is why also Turkish-Iraqi Kurdish relations are given ample room for analysis in the case study.

The case study of their relations in the wider context of the status and identity of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq was chosen for three reasons. First, the so called 'Kurdish Question' constitutes the most internationalised ethnic conflict in the Middle East, affecting four nationalising states⁵² – Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria – in one of the world's most strategically and economically important regions. Also, and for the purposes of this study most significantly, the PKK sanctuary in Iraqi Kurdistan is routinely referred to in the literature as a textbook example of common ethnicity determining the conflict behaviour of actors in the internationalization of an ethnic conflict, that is parties or *National Liberation Movements* (NLMs) of supposedly the same ethnic group forming a so called 'ethnic alliance' against a 'common' enemy, or less explicitly, collaborating across borders against the 'mutual' foe with their behaviour and actions being predominantly rooted in group cohesion and solidarity. This prominence in the literature then renders it a case study ideally suited to deconstructing models that take ethnicity as the independent, if not determining variable to explain social agents' behaviour in ethnic conflicts and to empirically illustrate the theoretical flaws in this approach.

Second, the rapidly shifting fortunes of the Iraqi Kurdish NLMs from ragtag guerrilla to presiding over the so called Kurdish de facto state, to governing the freest political entity in Kurdish history as part of federally structured Iraq, to playing the role of kingmaker in inner-Iraqi power struggles during and after the U.S. occupation, all over the course of a mere fifteen years, allows us to study the transformative processes of ethno-nationalism, the fluctuations in the ethnicised discourse and how the gaining of political status affects not only a nation's self-perception but also how these shifts in political identity alter its relations to its supposed ethnic kin during a relatively short and thus more easily observable period of time. Third, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq with its ambiguous political status and contested sovereignty provides a better study

subject than so called 'established' states to examine state sovereignty as a historical process, as socially constructed, situational and never fully completed. By the same token, with its status in permanent flux, one can also better relate to the processual interplay of identities, interests and political status that are co-constitutive of each other than in 'established' and recognized states, where these developments are often wrongly seen as having reached some form of (at least temporary) completion.

At this point readers may interject that a single case study is hardly sufficient to disprove an entire set of established theories. Bearing these limitations in mind, I understand the case study of PKK-KDP/PUK relations together with the political status cum identity of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq as an 'extroverted case study with generic concepts', an approach introduced by Richard Rose, who, referring to Toqueville's *Democracy in America* as a classic example, calls it 'the most frequent form of analysis in comparative politics'.⁵³ The crucial point here is that such a case study 'is not explicitly comparative, but comparable',⁵⁴ if it is intended and possible to come to theoretical or conceptual generalizations from the single case study that can be applied to other cases. Or in the words of Peters, 'the purpose of the extroverted case-study then becomes to explore fully this one case with the existing theory in mind, with the expectation of elaborating or expanding that body of theory with the resulting data'.⁵⁵ What I set out to achieve with this study, though, is to go beyond just expanding a body of theory but, after first having applied a deconstructive reading of the theories in question, to use the extroverted case study to empirically substantiate this deconstruction of the theory in question.

Ultimately, all theory should be a function of the empirical data, though. The data for the empirical part of this study, the extroverted case study on the relations between the PKK and the Iraqi Kurdish nationalist movements from the late 1970s until the present and on the current status cum political identity of the Kurdistan Region, was assembled over the course of five years. In line with the research foci of this study, equal emphasis is given to a critical reading of the actions, declarations, motives, and writings by Kurdish ethno-nationalist elites and scholars analysing the subject alike, both employed as expressions of the ethnicised discourse studied here. This results in a limited applicability of the customary distinction between primary and secondary sources in this study,

since secondary sources by scholars or journalists on Kurdish ethno-nationalism constitute primary sources for this study's purpose of critically examining the role of these scholars as co-protagonists of the ethnicised discourse and conflict under investigation. Thus, in addition to already published material, ranging from monographs to the output of research institutes and think tanks to media coverage in print, radio, and film, including interviews with decision makers, the nucleus of the qualitative, empirical research are interviews conducted in the field between 2010 and 2012. In all I have conducted approximately 40 interviews with former and active decision makers of the three Kurdish NLMs in question, scholars, and journalists across Iraqi Kurdistan, Turkey, Europe, and the United States – due to the rapidly deteriorating human rights situation and for their own safety, I decided not to disclose the identity of those journalists interviewed in Iraqi Kurdistan. The method employed for the selection and recruitment of the interview participants is 'snowball sampling', widely-used in 'sociological studies into hidden populations who may be involved in sensitive issues or illegal activities ... Yet the method is also used in political science and the study of elites, where the most influential political actors are not always those whose identities are publicly known'.⁵⁶ Originally a representative number of 'gatekeepers' were identified, whose accessibility as well as their extensive networks and reputations in the respective organization or among the diaspora showed great promise for making inroads into often particularly occlusive and close-mouthed groups. These 'gatekeepers', after having established a requisite level of trust, suggested a number of interviewees from within the organization they represented who then, upon having been approached and interviewed, indicated a third level of possible participants, and so on.⁵⁷ The problem with this method is that the participants themselves determine the sample and thus have a disproportional influence on the data collected, which in the worst case could lead to an unwholesome bias of the study at large. I tried to counter this tendency by including as many and often as diametrically opposed groups as possible, such as current KDP/PUK members versus former members who had renounced their parties, and by then collating the data from one party with the other as well as secondary sources whenever available. Where applicable this data is enriched by personal ethnographic observations from the field research in Iraqi Kurdistan and Turkey.

As, alas, with most works in political science this analysis too focuses primarily on elites. This fact is particularly deplorable for the studies of nationalism and ethnic conflict, where pretence dictates for any 'adequate theory of ethnic conflict [to] be able to explain both elite and mass behaviour',⁵⁸ yet execution routinely focuses on the former to the detriment of a thorough analysis of the latter – despite the fact that, in line with what is being said in chapter one, a nation or ethnic group is first of all constituted by the people's belief in it. Yet this study, although well aware of this shortcoming, cannot be the place to comprehensively make up for this deficit, and, as with additional case studies substantiating the findings made here, it remains to be hoped that future research will give a more comprehensive account of all strata of Kurdish society in the present ethnicised discourse in Iraq and Turkey.

Chapter outline

The study is divided into three parts, of which the first (chapters one to three) is a theoretical analysis of how explanatory IR conceptualises ethnic conflict, the motives behind its reifying, state-centric, and essentialising representation of ethnic identity, ethnic conflict, and sovereignty, together with an introduction into alternative modes of representation from critical theory and post-structuralist approaches. The second part (chapters four to seven) is mostly descriptive, while in the third, empirical section (chapters eight to eleven) the themes examined in Part One are again taken up and put in the context of the empirical case study.

Chapter one, drawing on the classics from sociology and anthropology such as Max Weber and Frederick Barth, gives a definition of what is meant in this study by ethnicity and nation, highlight differences between primordialism and modernism, delineates ethnic elites' strategic essentialisms and characterises in greater detail the concept of groupism in order to then demonstrate how it manifests itself in the approaches to ethnic conflict of neo-realism, neo-liberalism, and systemic constructivism. This problematisation of their inherent essentialism and state-centrism is augmented in the second chapter by a comprehensive overview of the concepts, models, and frameworks the three paradigms employ in analysing and explaining ethnic and ethno-nationalist

conflict together with the latter's supposed objective of acquiring and maintaining statehood by critically examining and double-reading explanatory frameworks such as the 'ethnic security dilemma', the 'ethnic alliance model', and instrumentalism as well as the construct of sovereign statehood and debatable categorisations as failed and de facto states. Chapter three summarizes the effects of groupism and offers an alternative reading of ethnic identity as a fluid matrix of identities and interests, introducing the theoretical lens under which the case study will be examined.

The second part commences with critical reflections on the origins, nature, and inherent tendencies to 'pathological homogenisation'⁵⁹ of the two nationalising states in question in this study, Turkey and Iraq, and juxtaposes their nationalist discourses with each other as well as with the genesis of Kurdish ethno-nationalism in both countries up to the 1970s. This admittedly cursory review of the nationalist state discourses and of those supposedly pitted against them in pursuit of national self-determination allows us to re-examine the modernist definitions of ethnic and ethno-nationalist conflict given in chapter one and to dispel some common myths about Kurdish ethno-nationalism that are routinely employed by the nationalising states as well as some scholars directly or indirectly legitimising these misconceptions and prejudices. Chapters six and seven are then dedicated to an introduction of the main social agents discussed in this study, the most prominent Kurdish ethno-nationalist parties in Iraq and Turkey, the KDP, PUK, and PKK.

Part three constitutes the main body of the extroverted case study on the relations between the PKK and KDP/PUK and the status as well as identity of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq with chapter eight focusing on the origins of relations between the three Kurdish ethno-nationalist parties up to the *Anfal* campaign during the Iran-Iraq War. Here it already becomes apparent that the strict hierarchical causality of identity and interests explanatory IR purports in the study of the behaviour and actions of parties in ethnic conflicts is not tenable, and that the relations between the three parties are better conceived of as a complex matrix of identities and interests without a hierarchical sequence or the one generating the other.⁶⁰ The workings and dynamics of this matrix are further illustrated in chapter nine which discusses their relations during the 1990s with the birth hour of the so called Kurdish de facto state in Iraq and the

Kurdish civil war as the most prominent themes under investigation. Chapter ten shifts focus to problematising the origins of the rapprochement between the *Kurdistan Regional Government* (KRG) and the *Justice and Development Party* (AKP, *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) government in Turkey after the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the sea change in the nationalist discourse of the PKK after the capture of Abdullah Öcalan Chapter eleven represents something of a wrap up of the main themes of this study by revisiting the central arguments made in the theory section and putting them in context with today's identity and status of the Kurdistan Region in the triangle of relations between the Iraqi central government, Turkey, and the PKK. The study concludes with deliberations on what this study's portrayal of the Kurdistan Region's status and identity can tell us about sovereign statehood as a socio-political construct at large and about the nature of ethno-nationalist conflict in general and closes with the hope that the contribution to the discussion of these subjects made here will trigger a rethink in our discipline of its epistemologies, ontologies, and methodologies, ideally leading to us categorisers and analysts, while always remaining co-protagonists of the social world we describe, at least refraining from exacerbating its deepest divisions and most violent expressions.

A study this wide in scope and ambition with such complex themes as ethnic identity and conflict and state sovereignty, together with a wide host of sub-themes, will by its very nature always remain incomplete. Some of the sub-themes, while of evident relevance, are touched upon here only cursorily, and references are made to the extensive array of contributions in the literature on topics such as, for example, the nuances of the post-structuralist body of thought in relation to social identities, the legal aspects of national self-determination, strategies and tools of state-building, or on the complexities of the socio-political composition of Iraq beyond the Kurdistan Region. These limitations, like the restriction to a single significant case study, were necessary in order to remain focused on the core arguments of the inquiry, yet, in the spirit of the study as a whole, should be understood as possible points of departure for future research.

Part One

1.) 'Groupism' or How Explanatory International Relations Theory Explains Ethnic and Ethno-nationalist Conflict

Ethnic groups and nations

Since the Gulf War of 1991 sparked global interest in their fate, most writers, scholarly and popular, have denoted the Kurds as the world's largest ethnic group without a state or state-less nation. This designation seems to rest on two presumptions: first, that Kurds from the four parts of what is subjectively or colloquially called Kurdistan are one organic, substantive, distinct, homogeneous, bounded group, identifying themselves and perceived as a social unit; second, it suggests – how implicit or legitimate, whether active or symbolic is debatable – a claim to statehood. Such essentialist presumptions are usually thought to be the preserve of scholars of a primordialist view on ethnic groups and nations which is claimed to be largely demode and obsolete today.⁶¹ Primordialists hold 'that nations [are] around "from the first time" and [are] inherent in the human condition, if not in nature itself ... Nations [are] seen as forms of extended kinship and as such [are] ubiquitous and coeval with the family'.⁶² In the Kurdish case this can be illustrated by one scholar contending that the thousand year span from the 5th century BC until the 6th century AD, 'marks the homogenisation and consolidation of the modern Kurdish national identity, [t]he ethnic designator *Kurd* is established finally, and applied to all segments of the nation'.⁶³ Given such extravagant claims unperturbed by historical facts, it is hardly surprising that Anthony Smith comes to the conclusion, 'primordialism has either a flawed theory or none, and little or no history, being reductionist or largely speculative and ahistorical'.⁶⁴ And yet, despite its obvious ontological flaws, primordialism, contrary to some claims,⁶⁵ has not fallen out of favour in the social sciences. On the contrary, primordialism or, what it is often referred to in contemporary parlance as essentialism,⁶⁶ still enjoys considerable popularity in the social sciences, in particular in the discipline of IR. In addition to the socio-biologist approach,⁶⁷ one of the key texts on ethno-nationalism,⁶⁸ and, with some restrictions, the today most widely referenced work on ethnic conflict, Donald Horowitz' *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*,⁶⁹ either directly advocate or can be associated with an

essentialist understanding of ethnicity and nation. Here, ethnic groups are viewed as organic, static, substantive, distinct, homogeneous and bounded units whose objective characteristics or identity markers that simultaneously define them and set them apart from other groups are observable and, to a certain extent, empirically measurable. Consequently, an essentialist definition of ethnicity ‘embraces groups differentiated by colour, language, and religion; it covers “tribes”, “races”, “nationalities”, and “castes”, and membership within these groups ‘is typically not chosen but given’.⁷⁰ This notion of kinship ‘makes it possible for ethnic groups to think in terms of family resemblances’,⁷¹ and the cohesion of such a group is usually measured through the variable of inner-group solidarity among its members. In addition to its prominence among a wide range of scholars, primordialist/essentialist portrayals of ethnic conflict dominate the popular and political discourse in the media and among policy makers, and, naturally and most significantly, are the preserve of nationalist elites:

For the nationalists, nationality is an inherent attribute of the human condition They believe that humanity is divided into distinct, objectively identifiable nations. Human beings can only fulfil themselves and flourish if they belong to a national community, the membership of which overrides all other forms of belonging. The nation is the sole depository of sovereignty and the only source of political power and legitimacy. This comes with a host of temporal and spatial claims – to a unique history and destiny, and a historic homeland.⁷²

In the Kurdish case such essentialist claims by nationalist elites to the unity, cohesion and destiny of the nation, irrespective of the divisions modern nationalising states have imposed on its members, are illustrated by, for example, the prominent Kurdish politician and human rights activist Leyla Zana claiming the Kurdish nation to be represented by three leaders: Abdullah Öcalan, Massoud Barzani, and Jalal Talabani.⁷³ This triumvirat of nationalist leaders is declared to control the fates of all Kurds, whether they hail from Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria or the diaspora. Those leaders are averred to authoritatively speak on behalf of all Kurds, as, for example, when Masrour Barzani, groomed for one day succeeding his father Massoud as President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, recently declared:

If I tell you that you can find a Kurd that doesn't have a dream of having his own state, I think I wouldn't be telling you the truth. And I think the Kurds deserve to have their own independent state, like any other nation.⁷⁴

Yet, contrary to what we are told in the literature, where in the social sciences we are made to believe that 'we are all', to a greater or lesser extent, 'constructivists now' (Brubaker 2009: 28), primordialist/essentialist understandings of ethnicity, and consequently ethnic and ethno-nationalist conflict, not only survive in the public and political but also in the scholarly discourse. This persistence of essentialism in the study of ethno-nationalist conflict, I argue, can to no small degree, be ascribed to the dominance of explanatory IR in explaining issues of war and peace in the international domain and to its pre-eminence in informing policies in response to ethno-nationalist conflicts. To trace and deconstruct these narratives of ethno-nationalist conflict in explanatory IR is the prime objective of this study.

For presumptions about the unity, social cohesion, solidarity, and ultimately destiny of a nation are not limited to a primordialist view of ethnicity. As will be shown, they also feature prominently in the paradigm that is imputed to be the diametrical opposite of primordialism/essentialism: modernism. Modernism as applied to these questions can be understood as a very loose umbrella term for a variety of quite diverse perspectives on ethnicity and nationalism,⁷⁵ many of which will be discussed in turn. Suffice it to say here, even at risk of gross simplification, that for modernism 'nationalism, in short, is a product of *modernity* ... and so [are] nations, national states, national identities, and the whole "inter-national" community'.⁷⁶ Individual scholars' perspective may differ on nuances, on whether nationalism can be understood as a reaction to the uneven development and class divisions that accompany the novel form of production that is industrial capitalism; whether nationalism is an expression of an increasingly liberal, literate and educated bourgeoisie that oppose the ancient regime of absolutist monarchies, which then makes it inseparably interlinked to the idea of the modern, sovereign and inevitably democratic state based on a constitutional order rather than royal prerogative; whether it can be traced to the Kantian principle of self-determination within the larger context of the European Enlightenment propagating individual and societal freedoms; or whether nations are a product of social engineering of modern elites in an

attempt to homogenize and control the masses, but what they all share is ‘a belief in the inherently national, and nationalist nature of modernity ... in this view, modernity necessarily took the form of nations and just as inevitably produced nationalist ideologies and movements’.⁷⁷ The modern era is therefore inseparably linked to the new ideology of nationalism, to this new form of humans organizing themselves in communities and polities grounded in a new kind of collective identity, and thereby creating a new global order.

The final point made here is of particular importance in the context of how explanatory IR explains identity and state formation: the concomitance, almost equation of modern, sovereign state and nation, where the one is contingent on the other in an almost symbiotic relationship. This view is distinctly expressed in the definition of nationalism of Ernest Gellner, who famously declared, ‘nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent’.⁷⁸ It is even more explicit in the works of Anthony Giddens,⁷⁹ Michael Mann,⁸⁰ and John Breuilly, where the latter stipulated that nationalisms are ‘political movements seeking or exercising state power and justifying such action with nationalist arguments’.⁸¹ For him the principal of these nationalist arguments, that ‘the nation must be as independent as possible, [t]his usually requires at least the attainment of political sovereignty’,⁸² is the defining criterion for a nation.

In the Kurdish case then, the Kurds failure to achieve statehood is seen as a result of their not having progressed far enough on the rocky but supposedly redeeming path of modernity. Authors like Hussein Tahiri who repeatedly stigmatises Kurdish society as ‘too backward’ and ‘not ready yet’ to constitute a nation,⁸³ and Ali Kemal Özcan who identifies “‘treason” as an inseparable element of the Kurdish ethnic personality [sic!],⁸⁴ decry the tribalist segmentarisation of Kurdish society and their political leaders’ petty particularisms that have lead to *birakuji*, the interminable series of ‘fratricidal’ wars in which Kurdish NLMs are often reduced to proxies of external powers, as the root causes for the Kurdish failure to achieve statehood. These scholars, mostly though not exclusively Kurdish graduates of ‘Western’ universities and thus, often part of the diasporic discourse, appear to vent their personal frustrations when they suggest that if only the Kurdish leaders adopt a more universalist outlook and the Kurdish people feel and act more in pan-Kurdish

solidarity, they may eventually be rewarded with the ultimate prize modernity has to offer: statehood. Such normative determinism not only carries forward the Orientalism of which Western authors are usually accused,⁸⁵ denying the Kurdish parties autonomous agency and condemning them to perpetual victimhood – victims of the tribalist structure they are too ‘backward’ to overcome, or pawns of external exploitations and machinations,⁸⁶ in the majority of cases analysed, they are claimed to be a combination of both. What is more, the nation’s sole destiny, one may even say its purpose, is reduced to acquiring and maintaining sovereign statehood. If it fails in this defining objective it is either because of external factors, such as when the forces opposing national self-determination prove overwhelming, or because it is deemed not sufficiently modern, that is it consequentially does not merit the designation as a nation.

It seems then as if the major difference between primordialism and modernism lies in the question, ‘when is a nation?’, and related to that but to a lesser degree, ‘what is a nation?’, but that on the question ‘what is a nation’s *raison d’être*?’ both major paradigms are in accordance: the quest for sovereign statehood defines the nation in our times. This congruence between primordialism and modernism in what the nation ultimately means cannot be emphasised strongly enough; it will form the basis for this study’s critical reading of how explanatory IR explains ethno-nationalist conflict as implicitly a conflict about national self-determination, about an ethnically defined nation acquiring sovereign statehood. Before developing this thought further though, one needs to turn to the other, related sociological concept that forms the theoretical basis of the ethnically defined nation in ethno-nationalist conflicts: the ethnic group.

With a concept as complex as ethnicity that has preoccupied the social sciences for at least the better part of the past century and in order to provide a solid theoretical foundation for the subsequent critical reading of how explanatory IR explains ethnic and ethno-nationalist conflict, it seems prudent to start with the origins of the concept, to go back to the classic theorists who first discussed it. One of the founding fathers of modern sociology, Max Weber, famously defined ethnic groups as ‘those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical

type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonisation and migration; conversely, it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists'.⁸⁷ This definition is an unambiguous rejection of primordialism/essentialism that understands ethnic groups and nations as actual forms of extended kinship, as Weber explicitly states further on when clarifying that 'it differs from the kinship group precisely by being a presumed identity'.⁸⁸ What constitutes the ethnic group then in the truest sense of the word is the *belief* in common descent by the group, and without such belief there can be no ethnic group. Like an ideology,⁸⁹ the group identity is sustained by this shared belief system, a belief in common ancestry and kinship bonds that is constantly reinforced and reconfirmed by collective memories, narratives, symbols, and importantly also political action.⁹⁰ For Weber continues, 'ethnic membership does not constitute a group; it only facilitates group formation of any kind, particularly in the political sphere ... it is primarily the political community, no matter how artificially organised, that inspires the belief in common ethnicity'.⁹¹ Weber seems to suggest here

that the belief in common ancestry is likely to be a *consequence* of collective political action rather than its *cause*; people come to see themselves as *belonging* together ... as a consequence of *acting* together. Collective interests thus do not simply reflect or follow from perceived similarities and differences between people; the active pursuit of collective interests does, however, encourage ethnic identification.⁹²

This debate about causes and consequences will be revisited when discussing the major differences between the main paradigms of explanatory IR and how they conceptualise identity and the social group.

Since political action does not occur in a social vacuum, this emphasis on collective political action, directed inward and outward, as a defining criterion for an ethnic group leads to the second classic theoretical contribution to understanding ethnicity. In one of the key texts of modern anthropology Frederick Barth observes, 'the critical focus of investigation from this point of view becomes the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff it encloses ... If a group maintains its identity when members interact with others, this entails criteria for determining membership and ways of signalling

membership and exclusion'.⁹³ Siniša Malešević highlights the importance and novelty of Barth's approach:

Before Barth, cultural difference was traditionally explained from the inside out – social groups possess different cultural characteristics which make them unique and distinct ... Culture was perceived as something relatively or firmly stable, persistent and exact. Cultural difference was understood in terms of a group's property ... Barth turned the traditional understanding of cultural difference on its head. He defined and explained ethnicity from the outside in: it is not the "possession" of cultural characteristics that makes social groups distinct but rather it is the social interaction with other groups that makes that difference possible, visible, and socially meaningful.⁹⁴

Barth thus directs attention away from what he calls 'cultural stuff' as constitutive of an ethnic group to – drawing on Weber's collective political action – the group setting itself apart from others through interaction with them, through interactive processes of differentiation that not only give meaning to the others but also to the group itself. 'Cultural difference per se does not create ethnic collectives: it is the social contact with others that leads to definition and categorization of an "us" and a "them"'.⁹⁵ Thus ethnic groups are 'in a sense *created* through that very contact [with other groups]. Group identities must always be defined in relation to that which they are not – in other words to non-members of the group'.⁹⁶ In this vein, ethnic identity is contextual and circumstantial. What is more constitutive for the process of ethnic identification is not the social and cultural features of a perceived group but external influences.⁹⁷ They determine whether a certain form of identity matters, that is becomes activated, or remains dormant. These questions of identity formation will be further elaborated throughout this first part of the study, but for the moment, in order to analyse how explanatory IR operationalises these concepts, one may summarise these classic definitions of ethnicity as follows: when taking the ethnic group as the unit of analysis in explanations of ethnic and ethno-nationalist conflict, what scholars are supposedly actually studying are belief systems constituted through inter-ethnic processes of differentiation with others. In this instance the classic texts on ethnicity resonate in Benedict Anderson's conceptualization of the nation as an 'imagined community'. For Anderson, the nation is

imagined because [its] members will never know most of their fellow-members ... yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion ...; it is *limited* because even the largest ... has finite, if elastic, boundaries beyond which lie other nations ...; it is imagined as *sovereign* because the concept was born in an age [of] Enlightenment and Revolution ... nations dream of being free, and ... directly so. The gage and emblem of this freedom is the sovereign state; finally, it is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.⁹⁸

Given these similarities it must have become apparent by now that the ethnic group and the nation are two quite closely related social concepts. As has been detailed, both ethnic group and nation are social groups defined by a shared belief system or ideology and political action directed inward as well as outward. However, from a modernist perspective they fundamentally differ in the nature of that political action. As Steve Fenton puts it, “‘ethnie’ shares much with ‘nation’ but lacks the sense of self governing entity; if an ethnic group (ethnie) wishes to rule itself it needs to start calling itself a *nation*’.⁹⁹ A similar distinction is made by Barrington who states, ‘a nation is more than an ethnic group, differing from such a group because of a nation’s belief in its right to territorial control’.¹⁰⁰ The two main paradigms, primordialism/essentialism and modernism, but the latter in particular, in our contemporary world consider the desire for self-government, for national self determination as constitutive for a nation, and in the state centric system of modernity, it is argued, such self-government can only ultimately mean sovereign statehood. The distinguishing criterion of the aims of conflict, central to the subsequent reading of how IR explains ethnic and ethno-nationalist conflict is summed up aptly by Varshney, ‘ethnic groups ... can live without a state of their own, making do with some cultural rights (e.g. use of mother tongue in schools) or affirmative action, but the nation means bringing ethnicity and statehood together’.¹⁰¹ From a modernist perspective then, an ethno-nationalist conflict can therefore be understood as a violent conflict between two (or more) ethnically defined nations about acquiring sovereign statehood; an ethnic conflict, on the other hand, is a political conflict turned violent between two ethnic groups about a certain issue, usually political status, that does not necessarily feature acquiring statehood as the objective of one party. According to this reading of

ethnic and nationalist identities the two categories are not the same, and they should not be used interchangeably.

And yet, although on the whole embracing a modernist understanding of nationalism, explanatory IR habitually uses the concepts of ethnic and ethno-nationalist conflict interchangeably. This is evident in the Kurdish case when for example, and in addition to other studies discussed below, Nader Entessar entitles his standard work on Kurdish nationalist movements in Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*.¹⁰² As will be detailed in Part Two, though, of all Kurdish nationalist movements throughout history and in all four respective countries only one party, the PKK, pursued a strictly ethno-nationalist – that is an irredentist and secessionist – agenda with the declared objective of creating an independent Kurdish state; all other so called ethno-nationalist movements sought an accommodation on cultural and political rights with the respective central government and within the existing state structure. From a strictly modernist perspective then, they should not be called ethno-nationalist since their objective was not ‘to bring ethnicity and statehood together’;¹⁰³ sovereign, that is exclusive, territorial control was not part of their political program.

Such inaccuracies of definition mean explanatory IR’s categorizations of ethnic and ethno-nationalist conflict appear more grounded in ideologically based presumptions and normative value judgements than in clearly designated criteria; some ethnic groups, often based on their geo-strategic importance, are termed a nation, while others are not, long before their empowered incumbents have even voiced the desire to become one. Yet by doing so, by letting their presumptions about their object of analysis guide their categorization, by anticipating ethnic elites’ future demands, these scholars of explanatory IR not only reify those demands, they actually write them into existence and thus directly intervene in the ethnic conflict they set out to study.

Having highlighted this ontological flaw in explanatory IR’s categorization of ethnic and ethno-nationalist conflict, whose far-reaching consequences will be detailed in depth below, I would argue, though, that the exacting modernist distinction between ethnic group and nation is analytically untenable in any event. In most cases it would be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to

precisely determine the moment when demands for statehood are made for the first time – a watershed that, in my opinion, can often only be identified ex post – and whether the actor making these demands could claim to speak on behalf of the entire community, that is when an ethnic group becomes a nation or an ethnic conflict turns ethno-nationalist. If, on the other hand, instead of such rigid parameters, ethnic identity and nationhood are understood as socio-political constructs and therefore by their very nature as dynamic, fluctuant, contextual, as ‘points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us’,¹⁰⁴ that are ‘never a final or settled matter’,¹⁰⁵ are ‘decentred, fragmented by contradictory discourses and by the pull of other identities’,¹⁰⁶ there would be no need for such artificial and, as suggested, highly normative settings of debatable benchmarks. Ethno-nationalist demands for statehood or demands for cultural and political rights based on an ethnic definition of the community would both be understood as expressions of an overall ethnicised discourse, a dynamic discourse that is accentuated or attenuated according to context, that can wax and wane between maximalist and moderate positions, that changes back and forth with circumstance; a discourse that, contrary to the rigid but inconsistently applied distinction used in explanatory IR, can ultimately be understood to be ethnic as well as ethno-nationalist precisely because these terms do not denote invariant points on a linear trajectory from ethnic group to nation, to statehood – as the modernist paradigm would want it to be – but intermittent moments of an forever dynamic and never completed discourse. For this reason, in explicit refutation of the normative equation of ethnic group with nation and a la longue with the state common in explanatory IR discourses, this study has deliberately adopted the term ethnic/ethno-nationalist conflict with the caveat of emphasising its discursive, instead of clearly demarcated and linearly progressing, nature. In doing so it adheres to what has been said in the Introduction, that the goal of a deconstructive approach is not to invent a novel terminology or new concepts but to continue using those discussed in their now deconstructed form.

A key question that remains after these introductory deliberations is why, when the above discussed classic texts of sociology and anthropology offer so clearly a rejection to essentialist understandings of ethnicity, they feature so

prominently in common-sense views as well as political and scholarly discourses on ethnic/ethno-nationalist conflict, in particular in the discipline of IR.

Groupism

This question, fundamental to how ethnic conflict is understood and explained in IR, can be rephrased to make the inherent problem scholars are struggling with more explicit: since the basis of these social groups, ethnic group or nation, is a belief system, a form of identity or an ideology, to what extent can they then be treated as real, as substantial, and ultimately as actors in ethnic conflicts? This question has been problematised extensively over the past decade by Rogers Brubaker who uses the term 'groupism' to describe the tendency in the social sciences to treat social groups as real and substantial. Since the groupist challenge to how explanatory IR explains ethnic and ethno-nationalist conflict informs one of the major points of critique of this study, Brubaker's considerations will be given sufficiently large room here to subsequently raise some important caveats to his argument. By groupism he means:

[T]he tendency to take discrete, bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis ... to treat ethnic groups, nations, and races as substantial entities to which interests and agency can be attributed ... to reify such groups , speaking of Serbs, Croats, Muslims, Albanians in the former Yugoslavia, of Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, of Jews and Palestinians in Israel and the occupied territories, of Turks and Kurds in Turkey, or of Blacks, Whites, Asians, Hispanics and Native Americans in the United States as if they were internally homogeneous, externally bounded groups, even unitary collective actors with common purpose.¹⁰⁷

But of course we do, one may interject here, since we have just established that the common purpose of acquiring sovereign statehood defines a nation, as equally do cultural markers such as language, religion, myths, symbols, and narratives established as constructed boundaries in interaction with others define the ethnic group. But since belief systems are never universally held, what then of those members of the group who do not share these markers, who do not believe in this common purpose of acquiring sovereign statehood;

are they then by definition not members of the group or nation? What about those Palestinian Israelis who feel allegiance to the Israeli state instead of a potential future Palestinian? What about mixed marriages and their children in the United States? What of those Kurds who do not feel that Abdullah Öcalan, Massoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani can speak with authority on their behalf, and what about Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the biggest Kurdish guerrilla movement, who himself until late in his life only spoke a very broken Kurdish? Are they by definition then not Palestinian, Black, White, Hispanics, or Kurds, because they do not share these cultural markers or beliefs? In his critique of groupism Brubaker then not only highlights the fact that identities in the real social world are never as clear cut as some theories would have them to be – that in itself should be considered common sense in the twenty-first century, but unfortunately all too often is not, and will be discussed in great detail in chapter four – but rises the equally important question of representation. For what he criticises is not how these individuals are seen by other members of the group and how they are categorised within that ethnic group or nation, but how we supposedly detached social scientists deal with them.

To be sure, for ethnic elites homogeneity, group cohesion and solidarity and the undivided allegiance of its members to the ethnic principle is as much a defining criterion as the polarizing principles of identity formation based on ‘us’ versus ‘them’ dichotomies. As a matter of fact they not only complement but constitute each other, based on the principle ‘amity inside, enmity outside’.¹⁰⁸ A similar point was already made by Sampson, when ‘any increase in group cohesion seems to be gained at the price of heightened hostility towards outgroups’.¹⁰⁹ Kecmanovic elaborates:

The fact is that the identification of the group enemy smoothes, buffers, or completely neutralises intragroup antagonisms. Discriminative aggressiveness against strangers and the strengthening of bonds among group members go hand in hand and mutually reinforce each other. One might even say that there is no closeness within the group without an enemy from without the group.¹¹⁰

To be sure, this understanding of identity based on difference, even enmity, made most explicit in Julia Kristeva’s famous assertion that the exclusion of others ‘binds the identity of a clan, a sect, a party, or a nation’, being both at the same time, ‘the source of the pleasure of identification (“this is what we are,

therefore this is what I am”), and of barbaric persecution (“that is foreign to me, therefore I throw it out, hunt it down, or massacre it”),¹¹¹ is not without controversy or disagreement and will be taken up again in chapter four. For the moment it is important to record that such ‘strategic essentialisms’ in the terminology of Gayatri Spivak,¹¹² are understandable, even normal in an ethnicised discourse. The use of an essentialised version of oneself – individual or group – for the sake of self-representation in order to achieve political gains, while not without internal and external controversy, is part of their job description. In the eyes of ethno-nationalist elites, unity, or at least maintaining the pretence of it, is the single most important goal and interest that constitutes and defines a nation or ethnic community. Yet strategic essentialism should not be understood as fake, as theatrical performance, as nothing but a show put on to mend internal fences, as I often encountered in discussions. Since those ethnic elites often have grown up within an already heavily ethnicised discourse and among cultural markers such as myths of origin or narratives of ancient hatreds between groups in which they genuinely believe, a phenomenon Anthony Smith calls the ‘participants’ primordialism’,¹¹³ these essentialisms, while strategically employed, may appear thoroughly normal to them, as the natural way things are and are meant to be. And even if they did not share all of these notions, it is not difficult to see how the role they perform every day, propagating these beliefs of unity, cohesion, solidarity, and common purpose, can readily translate into a habitus. While such preconditions and transformations are easily traceable, ‘for Spivak the concomitant risk is that the essentialist use of master [concepts] such as woman, worker or nationalist to mobilize the disempowered groups may ossify into a fixed identity’.¹¹⁴ If ethnic group formation is based on an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ dichotomy, on politics of differentiation, and on maintaining and reconstituting cultural boundaries in an ethnicised discourse, these politics typically involve acts of exclusion, not only against the easily identifiable other, but also against those within the group that do not fully share the group’s essentialised beliefs, a process of segregation that ultimately has them becoming part of the other. Such acts of separation, one may say, are the lamentable but nonetheless commonplace product of identity politics or an ethnicised discourse.

Yet, for us social scientists, our requirements like our aims, should be different.

Ethnic common sense – the tendency to partition the social world into putatively deeply constituted, quasi-natural intrinsic kinds ... is a key part of what we want to explain, not what we want to explain things with; it belongs to our empirical data, not to our analytical toolkit ... We obviously cannot ignore such commonsense primordialism. But that does not mean we should simply replicate it in our scholarly analysis or policy assessments.¹¹⁵

When we scholars uncritically accept the rhetoric of ethno-nationalist elites, we run the risk of becoming complicit in their attempts to ethnicise the discourse. If we scholars, rather than calling it into question, adopt the ethnic or nationalists elites' strategic essentialism as the basis of our enquiries or take on '*categories of ethnopolitical practice as our categories of social analysis*',¹¹⁶ we contribute to the reification and substantialisation of the those elites' primordialism and to the reproduction of its logic.¹¹⁷ To be sure,

as analysts we should certainly try to account for the ways in which – and the conditions under which this practice of reification, this powerful crystallization of group feeling, can work. But we should avoid unintentionally doubling or reinforcing the reification of ethnic groups in ethnopolitical practice with a reification of such groups in social analysis.¹¹⁸

In sum, and to put not too fine a point on it, one may conclude, while ethnic elites, by essentialising the group they claim to represent, are acting within the confines of their supposed social roles, we as scholars and analysts, by subscribing to their claims without challenging these strategic essentialisms fail, I would argue, in our duty to critically analyse them; and it is this failure that is the main point of critique of this study.

The neo-realist and neo-liberal paradigms

I would further argue that explanatory IR is particularly prone to such groupist practice. In explanatory IR's approaches to ethnicity the essentialist and substantialist presumptions of groupism manifest themselves on three levels: (1) operationalising ethnicity as the dependent or independent variable and therewith according it with limited or pre-eminent explanatory power, (2)

equating ethnic groups with states, and (3), as a consequence thereof, all too often equating ethnic conflict with ethno-nationalist conflict by postulating that a desire for sovereign statehood of a disenfranchised group is the cause of the conflict at hand and the disenfranchised group's aspiration. As will be shown throughout this study these levels and the inherent presumptions that inform them lead to the reification of ethnicised discourses, politicised ethnicity, ethnic divisions, and the 'us' versus 'them' dichotomies that often form the basis of ethnicised discourses. The practice of groupism in explanatory IR on these three levels will be discussed at great length in the following chapter, but for the moment it seems imperative to offer a broad overview of the main arguments and points of critique made in this study.

Concurrent with or instigated by Brubaker's critique, scholars have problematised the quantification of ethnicity in large n-studies on intra- and/or inter-state conflicts – usually based on record sets such as Ted Robert Gurr's *Minorities at Risk* (MAR) project or the *Ethno-Linguistic Fractionalization* (ELF) dataset – that operationalise the ethnic group as their unit of analysis as if it were a substantial entity and not a socio-political construct, and in consequence explain its actions as derivative of the fact that ethnicity is the element defining and cohering the group.¹¹⁹ In such studies, the action of the respective parties, antagonistic or collaborative – the dependent variable – is a function of their being part of an ethnic group – the independent variable – and follows and reifies the same ethnicised logic: a logic of presupposed internal homogeneity, cohesion, solidarity, unity, and common purpose in opposition to the constructed other, that is groups of the same qualities yet of a different ethnic ascription. What is particularly conspicuous here is that these simplistic and essentialist approaches that operationalise ethnicity as the independent variable in explaining ethnic conflicts and by implication accept the conversion of ethnicity as the independent into the determining variable; that is ultimately, if groupist-think is brought to its tautological conclusion, ethnic and ethno-nationalist conflicts are explained with ethnicity. An illustration of such flawed and potentially harmful reasoning would be the infamous 'ancient hatreds' Robert Kaplan claims to have identified as the root cause for conflicts of the 1990s in the Balkans.¹²⁰

The second dimension of groupism and the selection of the ethnic group as unit of analysis in the study of ethnic and ethno-nationalist conflict is the belief in the unitary actor. 'Although participants' rhetoric and commonsense accounts treat ethnic groups as the protagonists of ethnic conflict, in fact the chief protagonists of most ethnic conflict ... are not ethnic groups as such but various kinds of organizations ... and their empowered and authorized incumbents'.¹²¹ These organizations, in the broadest sense, can be states and autonomous polities that can be further subdivided into branches of government, ministries, political parties law enforcement and intelligence agencies, the armed forces, etc.; they can be insurgencies, paramilitary groups, terrorist organizations, armed bands and gangs, etc.; they can also include social movement organizations, NGOs, churches and other religious communities, unions and advocacy groups, various branches of the media, in the widest sense even loosely structured Facebook groups. But these organizations

cannot be equated with ethnic groups. It is because and insofar as they are organizations, and possess certain material and organizational resources, that they (or more precisely their incumbents) are capable of organized action, and thereby of acting as more or less coherent protagonists in ethnic conflict. Although common sense and participants' rhetoric attribute discrete existence, boundedness, coherence, identity, interest, and agency to ethnic groups, these attributes are in fact characteristic of organizations.¹²²

In sum, Brubaker holds that the actors in ethnic conflict are not ethnic groups but individuals and organizations who ethnicise the political discourse. For, echoing Weber and Barth, ethnicity is a belief system, a way of seeing the world, a point of view of these individuals and organizations but not substantially real, or only real as part of a discourse and for as long as they are imagined, believed in. 'In this sense identity does not, and cannot, make people do anything; it is, rather, people who make and do identity, for their own reasons and purposes'.¹²³ Consequently, social groups 'do not have the same ontological status as individuals. Human individuals are actual entities; groups are not. They cannot behave or act, and they do not have a definitive, bounded, material existence in time and space'.¹²⁴

The fallacy of essentialist simplifications of treating ethnic groups as unitary actors, of according them a definitive, bounded, and material existence, may be

better illustrated with a short analogy from IR's second image, the state, with which explanatory IR notoriously equates ethnic groups. Take, for example, the statement, 'in 2003 the United Kingdom went to war with Iraq' which could appear superficially speaking correct. Given the fact, though, that in the crucial House of Commons debate on 18 March, 149 MPs opposed the government motion to go to war – the largest parliamentary opposition to a government motion in almost two hundred years – that three ministers of PM Blair's cabinet resigned in protest over it, that in London alone one million protestors went into the streets on 15 February to demonstrate against the war – the biggest public rally in the city's history – and how the decision to go to war has troubled and divided British society ever since,¹²⁵ it would certainly be more accurate to couch these events in terms along the lines of, 'in 2003 the British government under Prime Minister Tony Blair succeeded, amidst sizeable opposition, in effectively using its dominance of the political and public discourse to push through a motion in parliament to commit British troops to toppling the Ba'athist regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq'. If it is already problematic, as the example illustrates, to speak of a state as a unitary actor, it is even less tenable to do so with an ethnic group that usually lacks the democratic decision making bodies of a state and where often an insurgency with a questionable and autocratic *Führerkult*, such as the PKK, claims to exclusively represent the group.

And yet for neo-realists in IR, not unlike ethnic elites, one may say in admittedly simplified terms, national cohesion is supposed to be a pre-given not further questioned. Not only do domestic politics rarely matter, and sovereign nation states are perceived and treated like a 'black box',¹²⁶ as unitary, rational actors in an anarchic international system. This focus on the 'third image' of realism in IR, the structure of the international system, at the expense of the other two, the individual and the state, has not always been the case. On the contrary, they feature prominently in the writings of such classic realist thinkers as Machiavelli and Hobbes and are still given ample room in Kenneth Waltz' *Man, the State, and War*.¹²⁷ This changed, though, with his *Theory of International Politics*,¹²⁸ which, together with Hedley Bull's *The Anarchical Society*,¹²⁹ is widely considered to be the founding text of structural or neo-realism. In it Waltz posits that differences between states 'are of capability, not function',¹³⁰ and that 'international politics consists of like units duplicating one

another's activities'.¹³¹ What matters from this perspective are no longer the different characters of actors in the international system – they are seen as quintessentially the same, as 'like units', and egoistic maximizers of material interests – but the anarchic nature of the international system, and what forms of behaviour this anarchic structure induces. With this narrow lens on international relations becoming salient in the 1970s questions of identity, that is the character of actors in the international system, have become neglected in explanatory IR to our discipline's detriment.¹³² In sum, with domestic factors and the identity of actors considered irrelevant, neo-realism perceives of the state as a unitary, substantive, distinct, homogeneous, bounded actor in the international system, thus, when equating them with states, reifying the politics of ethnic division of ethno-nationalist elites,¹³³ echoing what has been identified earlier as groupism. One of the most eminent critics of neo-realism, Richard Ashley, wrote about neo-realism's tendency for reification:

The state must be treated as an unproblematic unity: an entity whose existence, boundaries, identifying structures, constituencies, legitimacies, interests, and capacities to make self-regarding decisions can be treated as a given, independent of transnational class and human interests, and undisputed (except, perhaps by other states).¹³⁴

I argue that the same tendency for reification, and therewith groupism, also characterises neo-realism's approach to ethnic and ethno-nationalist conflict. In one classic reader on IR theory, groupism is even declared to be one of the 'three core assumptions' on which the (neo-)realist school of thought is based:

Groupism: Humans face one another mainly as members of groups ... people need the cohesion provided by group solidarity, yet that very same in-group cohesion generates the potential for conflict with other groups. Today the most important human groups are nation states, and the most important source of in-group cohesion is nationalism.¹³⁵

Neo-realism and neo-liberalism still enjoy considerable influence in explanatory IR. Interestingly, neo-liberalism originated from a pluralist critique of structural or neo-realism that took issue with its conceptualization of states as unitary and rational actors and strove to give the role of transnational and non-state actors greater room in analysis.¹³⁶ These pluralistic traditions were relegated to the background, though, in Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye's

*Power and Interdependence*¹³⁷ that tried to play neo-realism at its own game by on the one hand adopting the neo-realist tenet of the state as the unitary actor, yet on the other to demonstrate via 'regime theory' that cooperation between states in an anarchic international structure not only is possible but, drawing on the theory of Kant's 'liberal zones of peace', actually quite common – an intellectual thrust that was further fleshed out in Stephen Krasner's *International Regimes*¹³⁸ and Robert Keohane's *After Hegemony*.¹³⁹ 'Neoliberalism', then,

is a variant of liberal IR theory that focuses on the role international institutions play in obtaining international collective outcomes ... In order to examine international cooperation, neo-liberalism subscribes to a state-centric perspective which, like structural realism, considers states to be unitary, rational, utility-maximizing actors ... that is, states are treated as unified entities with particular, specific goals rather than composites of many different domestic actors and competing interests.¹⁴⁰

That means, like for neo-realists, that the sovereign nation state in the anarchic international system is the main unit of analysis for scholars in the neo-liberal paradigm, yet unlike neo-realists and echoing somewhat the classic liberal/pluralist tradition, the importance of the domestic decision making process is at least acknowledged. As has been pointed out though, this acknowledgement amounts to very little since domestic pluralism is confined to a homogenizing corset of hierarchical decision making that, in the end, has the state speaking with one voice in the international arena in the rational pursuit of its national self-interest; the state may not be a unitary actor but its policies are ultimately unitary. 'Despite their willingness to rely on domestic level explanations and a more inclusive set of actor types than realists do, most neoliberals also tacitly adhere to a reified approach to agency'.¹⁴¹ Indeed, the so called 'neo-neo debate' between neo-realism and neo-liberalism in the 1980s, more than their differences, highlighted the similarities between both paradigms, in particular their state-centrism and rigorous empiricist positivism.¹⁴² In the words of Lacher, 'no aspect, of the neorealist/neoliberal mainstream of International Relations scholarship, apart perhaps from its positivist orientation, has provoked its critics more than the commitment to the analytical centrality of the state in the study of world politics'.¹⁴³ Given the attempts from scholars of both paradigms in the 1980s to explicitly generate a common epistemological and ontological ground,¹⁴⁴ I concur with Wæver who rather than a 'neo-neo debate' identifies a 'neo-neo synthesis' with state-centrism and the

conceptualization of the state as a unitary actor among the defining commonalities.¹⁴⁵ In sum,

what is clear is that neoliberals and neorealists are much closer together than their neo-neo forebears [classic realism and liberalism] ... the “neos” both rest their position on what are taken to be the facts of anarchy and the rational egoism of states ... certainly the two positions are close enough to be seen as offering different understandings of what is essentially the same (rational choice) research programme.¹⁴⁶

In conclusion, whether states or ethnic groups at the unit of analysis level, neo-realism and neo-liberalism in IR treat both as rational, unitary – or unitarily acting – agents in pursuit of self-interests in a predominantly hostile international system.¹⁴⁷ In the case of ethnic groups, ethnic conflict is explained through the lens of groupism, that is group cohesion, group solidarity and the portrayal of the ethnic group, like a state, as a unitary actor. Kenneth Bush observes:

Communal groups are *represented* as the functional equivalent of states: unitary, power-seeking (...) actors in a Hobbesian world. In other words, communal groups are viewed as being analogous to the state epistemologically and ontologically. Like states, such groups are seen to constitute stable and unified entities, and to act as coherent and separate totalities.¹⁴⁸

Drawing on the famous billiard ball analogy, originally coined by Arnold Wolfers,¹⁴⁹ that illustrates how explanatory IR theory has focused exclusively at the ‘third image’, the international system’, at the expense of the ‘second image’, the domestic composition of states – in a billiard game what matters are not the individual properties of the balls, which essentially are the same, but their external dimension, their interaction with each other – Bush argues that explanatory IR theory in its analysis of ethnic conflict has simply made the new unit of analysis fit its already existing epistemological and ontological framework.¹⁵⁰

Thus, the billiard ball model, which is based on relations between separate states as unified entities, now includes interethnic group relations, each of which constitutes a unified and separate totality – that is, self-contained and self-propelling entities. In effect, realism simply adds the notion of ethnic identity to its basic assumption that the position of a collectivity, whether it be a state or a group, in an anarchical system is the primary causal variable in the area of security.¹⁵¹

As will be discussed at great length in the following chapter, the examples of the two main explanatory frameworks neo-realism and neo-liberalism in IR have contributed to the study of ethnic conflict – Barry Posen’s ethnic security dilemma and David Davis and Will Moore’s ethnic alliance model – attest to this presumption. Davis and Moore, for example, state ‘we contend that it is useful to conceptualise ethnic linkages among people across state boundaries as functionally equivalent to alliances between states’,¹⁵² and ‘these alliances should behave much as alliances between states have been hypothesized to behave in international relations’.¹⁵³

As for the third level of groupism in explanatory IR, the equation of ethnic conflict with ethno-nationalist conflict and postulating a pursuit of national self-determination, understood as gaining independence and sovereign statehood, here neo-realism and neo-liberalism share the essentialist determinism of modernism elaborated above. Again, for two paradigms so inseparably wed to a normative and deterministic state centrism as neo-realism and neo-liberalism that routinely equate ethnic groups with states in their analysis, it is not at all surprising that they often erroneously reduce ethnic conflict to a mere pursuit of sovereign statehood. Before elaborating this thought further when discussing sovereignty and state centrism in IR in greater detail it is imperative to turn our attention to the third major paradigm of explanatory IR: constructivism and its approach to ethnic and ethno-nationalist conflict.

The pitfalls of too narrow a constructivism

All that has been discussed here so far could easily be interpreted as making a case for a constructivist understanding of identity. Unquestionably there are profound merits to a constructivist reading of ethnic conflict, primarily because constructivism, in contrast to the materialist rationalism of neo-realism and neo-liberalism, puts the identity of the subject at the centre of its analysis. Constructivism was first and foremost born out of a critique of materialist rationalism,¹⁵⁴ replacing its above detailed ‘logic of consequences’, that is a group’s rational pursuit of a goal for the maximization of an, in the widest sense, materialistically defined interest, with a ‘logic of appropriateness’, that is the pursuit of interests that are seen as a function of the subject’s identity shaped

by beliefs, shared values, norms, and through practices and interaction with others. While neo-realism and neo-liberalism assume the identity of the subject of their analysis at large as resulting from those interests, as a pre-given not worth much further reflection since, in simplified terms, 'we are who we are because of what we want', constructivists advocate the exact opposite: 'we want what we want because of who we are', or in the words of Alexander Wendt, the pioneer of constructivism in IR, 'interests presuppose identities because an actor cannot know what it wants until it knows who it is, and since identities have varying degrees of cultural content so will interests'.¹⁵⁵ And who we are, is 'shaped by the cultural, social, and political – as well as material – circumstances in which [we] are embedded',¹⁵⁶ that is, first and foremost through our interaction with others in a social relationship, and how we give meaning to things, and implicitly ourselves, through dialogue, through 'collective interpretations, practices, and institutions'¹⁵⁷ that result in norms and become institutionalised. 'A fundamental principle of constructivist social theory is that people act toward objects, including other actors, on the basis of the meanings that the objects have for them',¹⁵⁸ yet these meanings or ideas, and the practices that follow from them, are not only contextual and situational, that is they can change over time and space; they are also 'not so much mental as symbolic and organizational, they are embedded not only in human brains but also in the "collective memories", government procedures, educational systems, and the rhetoric of statecraft'.¹⁵⁹ They are, in sum, 'social facts, rather than purely material ones, that exist because of the meaning and value attributed to them'.¹⁶⁰ And if ideas and meanings are socially constructed, so are identities and consequently also interests, which they inform; an insight that corresponds with the classics on ethnic identity of Weber and Barth discussed earlier.

The role of identity is key to the constructivist approach to society, and its pioneer in IR, Alexander Wendt conceptualized four forms of identity.¹⁶¹ The first, *role identity*, has no intrinsic properties but derives its meaning from interaction with others, as elaborated above, and in accord with Barth. 'Only through recognition can people acquire and maintain a distinct identity. One becomes a Self, in short, via the Other'.¹⁶² This mutual recognition co-constitutive of self and other leads to generalizations of self and other and to the second form of identity Wendt calls *collective identity*, where the meanings and

properties of 'a generalized Other [form] part of their understanding of [a generalized] Self'.¹⁶³ Again, the process of identification occurs through differentiation, but on this second level on a wider basis that extends beyond the original group to similar selves via different others; for example the perception of NATO as a military alliance of democratic states within a certain region in juxtaposition to non-democratic states that do not adhere to the principles of human rights, etc..¹⁶⁴ This example is particularly applicable in light of the importance constructivists give to norms in processes of identity formation, what has been above called a 'logic of appropriateness', where 'what is rational is a function of legitimacy, defined by shared values and norms within institutions or other social structures'.¹⁶⁵ The third and fourth level, *type identity* and *corporate identity*, are grounded in Wendt's distinction between 'social terms of individuality' and 'individuality per se',¹⁶⁶ where he identifies certain properties of identity that are claimed to be pre-social. Those are called *corporate identities* with intrinsic values and 'self-organizing, homeostatic structures that make actors distinct entities',¹⁶⁷ an essence or core of identities that these entities 'in all times and places have in common',¹⁶⁸ yet that only derive a wider meaning in the social context through interaction and intersubjective understanding, and as such are contingent. 'The former [social terms of identity] refers to the features of the Self that depend on recognition by the Other ... The latter connotes to the self-organizing properties of the entity, existing independent of and prior to the social system'.¹⁶⁹ It is the last forms of identity that turn out most problematic in Wendt's framework since they evidently contradict the first three levels and, to a certain extent, the entire constructivist concept of identities as social constructs.¹⁷⁰

On the surface, though, the constructivist challenge to the essentialist and materialist rationalism of neo-realism and neo-liberalism is formidable and its key tenets are claimed today to be 'largely internalized in the discipline of IR'.¹⁷¹ In recapitulation, they are: (1) the social constructiveness of ideas, meanings, norms, identities, and interests; (2) a sound rejection of rationalism and positivism, since, if the above are social facts, they are difficult to measure empirically and it is impossible to clearly distinguish between facts and values; (3) an adjustment of the structure-bias of neo-realism and neo-liberalism towards a more balanced understanding of the interplay between agency and

structure in the analysis of the social world. In his groundbreaking critique of neo-realist and neo-liberal conceptualizations of the inherently anarchic international system, *Anarchy Is What States Make of It*, Wendt declares:

Self-help and power politics do not follow either logically or causally from anarchy and that if today we find ourselves in a self-help world, this is due to process, not structure. There is no “logic” of anarchy apart from the practices that create and instantiate one structure of identities and interests rather than another; structure has no existence or causal powers apart from process. Self-help and power politics are institutions, not essential features of anarchy. Anarchy is what states make of it.¹⁷²

Here and in an earlier essay¹⁷³ Wendt, drawing on Giddens’s theory of structuration,¹⁷⁴ takes great pains to ‘make the actual behaviour and properties of states “problematic” rather than simply accepting them as a given’¹⁷⁵ and to demonstrate how ‘a social structure leaves more space for agency, that is for the individual or state to influence their environment, as well as to be influenced by it’.¹⁷⁶ This is to say that in refutation of the Waltzian neo-realist dictum of ‘the structure as an independent force external to the acting unit’,¹⁷⁷ of the structure determining the actors, Wendt portrays them as mutually constitutive, as the product of the inter-subjective interaction between actors on a structural level. In sum, agents and structures have ‘equal ontological status’.¹⁷⁸ It therefore seems patently reasonable when Lars-Erik Cederman claims that, in contrast to neo-realism and neo-liberalism, ‘to find exceptions from reified actors [in IR], one has to turn to ... constructivist theory’ and in particular the writings of Alexander Wendt.¹⁷⁹

Alas, the very opposite is the case. In fact, what is often called a ‘systemic’,¹⁸⁰ ‘thin’,¹⁸¹ after its key theorist, Wendtian, or in this study, narrow constructivism arguably may become as guilty of essentialising and of reifying the actor as its neo-realist and neo-liberal counterparts. The reason for this tendency lies in the above mentioned fourth level of Wendt’s conceptualization of identity that openly contradicts the previous three. This contradiction stems from Wendt’s attempts to charter a ‘media via’¹⁸² through the debate between what is commonly referred to in IR as ‘rationalists’ and ‘reflectivist’, to carve out for constructivism a ‘true middle ground’ between these two approaches,¹⁸³ ‘to bridge the still vast divide separating the majority of IR theorists from

postmodernists',¹⁸⁴ by combining a positivist epistemology with a post-positivist ontology – an experiment in having it both ways that inevitably has to fail, leading Maja Zehfuss to conclude, 'Wendt's constructivism does not work'.¹⁸⁵ The crux of the problem with Wendt's balancing act on identity is that he conceives of state identity as at the same time constructed and changeable, as an expression of role, collective, and type identity, but also as a pre-social, pre-given stable corporate identity, and after having spent literally hundreds of pages in *Social Theory of International Politics* elaborating that identities resulting from social interaction are more basic than interests, he declares that he is less interested in 'state identity formation' than in the workings of the state system, 'the structure and effects of states (or "international") systems',¹⁸⁶ where states have essential properties 'prior to and independent from social context', thus not 'considering the constitution of states in the first place'.¹⁸⁷

From this perspective, it is impossible to explain how fundamental changes occur, either in the nature of international society or in the nature of state identity. By bracketing everything domestic, Wendt excludes by theoretical fiat most of the normative and ideational forces that might prompt such change.¹⁸⁸

Ultimately, in effect then, Wendt's narrow constructivism does not differ much in its rationalist positivist and state-centric meta-narrative on identity from neo-realism and neo-liberalism.

Wendt's flip-flopping on identity has confused scholars and students of IR ever since then, but Christian Reus-Smit errs when he critically remarks that 'Wendt's writings represent the only true form of this rarefied example of constructivism'.¹⁸⁹ On the contrary, voicing a commitment to the constructed nature of identity but then proceeding to treat identities as relatively stable pre-givens, thus refusing to incorporate in their ontologies what the social constructedness of identities actually means, that they are the product of social discourses and that there cannot be identities prior to these discourses, is a tendency strikingly common in the social sciences. This 'clichéd constructivism',¹⁹⁰ a constructivism in name only – limited to the introductory section of texts or expressed in customary yet seemingly perfunctory disclaimers – but where the main analysis, at large, continues to be done under essentialist and substantialist presumptions of ethnic identities, often bordering a primordialism slipping in through the backdoor, is particularly pervasive in

explanatory IR's writings on ethnic conflict. This becomes for example evident in a series of recent prominent large n-studies based on the *Ethnic Power Relations* data set at the University of California, Los Angeles, and the related *Ethnic Armed Conflict* data set at Harvard University.¹⁹¹ Not only is it telling that the *GeoSim* agent-based models developed by Lars-Erik Cederman that form the core of his team's survey of ethnic conflicts was first developed to simulate interstate relations, similar presumptions about unitarily acting ethnic groups that form the basis of neo-realist/neo-liberal readings of ethnic conflict and group solidarity also characterise these n-studies' narrow constructivist understanding of ethnic identity. On the one hand the authors want ethnicity to be understood as 'a subjectively experienced sense of commonality based on a belief in common ancestry and shared culture', that is socially constructed, but then proceed to caution, 'we do not distinguish between degrees of representativity of political actors who claim to speak for an ethnic group, nor do we code the heterogeneity of political positions of leaders claiming to represent the same community';¹⁹² thus the authors, like Wendt, not only bracket the 'domestic component', i.e. the social discourse that brought about these ethnic identities, but further their studies, like neo-realist and neo-liberal approaches, treat ethnic groups as unitary actors and indirectly equate them ontologically with states. In a nutshell, they share the same meta-narrative.¹⁹³

Such 'clichéd constructivism' becomes also distinctly manifest in a school of thought commonly referred to as instrumentalism that I locate at the transition from (neo-)realism to constructivism.¹⁹⁴ Here, the image of the nation as an 'imagined community' and of identity as a social construct is taken a step further towards an 'invented tradition' in the Hobsbawmian sense,¹⁹⁵ of identity having ultimately no intrinsic and little explanatory value. In the instrumentalist understanding of ethnicity, ethnic identities,

are creations of elites who draw upon, distort, and sometimes fabricate materials from the cultures of the groups they wish to represent, in order to protect their well being or existence, or to gain political and economic advantage for their groups and for themselves.¹⁹⁶

Analogous to Alexander Wendt's narrow constructivism, subsumed under the catchphrase 'anarchy is what states make of it', one may characterize instrumentalism as subscribing to the slogan 'ethnicity is what ethnic elites

make of it'. They exploit 'national traditions' they have 'invented' for their own avails and to rally the masses to their leadership.¹⁹⁷ In sum, in the eyes of instrumentalists, culture is reduced to a means to consolidate and homogenise societies; ethnic communities are merely 'informally organised interest groups';¹⁹⁸ and ethnicity is nothing but a replaceable political tool, a resource; there is nothing particular, nothing fundamental about it as any 'old shred and patch would have served as well'.¹⁹⁹ This modernism, carried to extremes, is grounded in the classic elite theories of Robert Michels,²⁰⁰ Gaetano Mosca,²⁰¹ and Vilfredo Pareto.²⁰² Here, a view of society determined by a strict hierarchical order of a minority, disproportionately drawn 'from upper-status occupations and privileged family backgrounds',²⁰³ dominating a largely apathetic majority that subordinates to authority, is presented; an order that in its essence remains stable through time as it constitutes the most basic principle of society and is neither fundamentally altered by social change nor form of government. According to Pareto, the ruling minority, the oligarchy or elite, is distinguished by having the 'highest indices in their branch of activity', that is they rise well above the average in their education, accomplishments, wealth, and organisational ability that allows them to transform their common will into action; a cohesive, bureaucratic organisation that first established with the purpose of attaining a certain objective, becomes an end in itself and persists and governs to justify and maintain its own existence.²⁰⁴

Instrumentalism therefore exhibits a tendency to also presume of the ethnic group as a static, substantive, distinct, homogeneous and bounded unit and as a unitary actor, and like neo-realism, concedes to ethnicity no explanatory value in itself since it is merely seen as a political tool of elite manipulation for elites to justify political actions ex post. These ethnic or ethno-national elites are egoistic interest and profit maximizers who base their actions on tactical and strategic considerations and cost-benefit analyses – the most important for an elite obviously being to stay in power; they determine their policies 'first based on tactical dictates, and then look to their identity repertoire for characteristics ... that would allow for the construction of justifying narratives.' Yet, echoing Gellner, 'when power considerations call for it, these [well-worn narratives], communities and traditions will be cast aside and new ones imagined in their

place',²⁰⁵ rendering identities always subordinate to material interests and easily replaceable.

The problems with such a simplistic understanding of how identity works are obvious. First, instrumentalism's logic is not only circulatory and tautological, it also fails to explain why and how these 'invented traditions' and constructed narratives ethnic and ethno-national elites employ to justify their policies would resonate with the masses, how the feelings of communality and solidarity that constitute them as a group came about in the first place or, echoing Benedict Anderson, to capture 'the fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings'.²⁰⁶ In instrumentalism, the masses are treated as 'passive creatures prone to easy manipulation ... they are largely viewed as homogeneous, ignorant, dependent conglomerates, with child-like qualities'.²⁰⁷ At best then, the social reductionism of instrumentalism, by simply presupposing Wendt's *corporate identity* or the like as a pre-given order of things elites then exploit for their own ends, can be understood as neo-realism with a small constructivist caveat: ideational factors and identities only matter in the egoistic pursuit of material interests as far as identity and culture are reduced to politics and how they can be studied as such. Consequently, many instrumentalists, like neo-realists, founder with their ontological explanations as to how it is tenable to treat ethnic groups as their unit of analysis and their theories 'are epistemologically and conceptually too thin, ... incomplete, and as such unable to provide a more comprehensive theory of ethnic relations'.²⁰⁸ What is more, if ethnicity and ethnic groups are only what ethnic and ethno-nationalist elites make of them, such narrow constructivism, as has been pointed out in IR,²⁰⁹ runs risk of again indirectly reifying the structure via the agent. A narrow constructivism 'fails to deliver on its promise to take us beyond reification, because in order to escape the reified logic of anarchy, it reifies the state'.²¹⁰ Applied to ethnic identities this sort of constructivism and related approaches such as too narrow an instrumentalism, in order to escape the logic of essentialised groups, reify the ethnic elites and thus indirectly their strategic essentialisms by making them omnipotent, by, paraphrasing the title of Nicholas Onuf's famous constructivist work,²¹¹ rendering ethnic identity discourses a world exclusively of their making. Thus, the outcome of the challenge of such

narrow constructivism to the essentialisms of the neo-neo synthesis ironically all too often runs risk of repeating the mistakes of neo-liberalism: the importance and plurality of internal actors, such as elites, is acknowledged, yet by declaring these actors omnipotent in shaping the ethnicised discourse, by reifying them and conceding to them an exclusivity of representation, those actors are portrayed again as if acting unitarily. In essence, in its 'clichéd constructivism' and by making similar presumptions about unitarily acting ethnic groups that form the basis of neo-realist and neo-liberal readings of ethnic conflict and group solidarity too narrow a constructivism and instrumentalism, again purport a very similar meta-narrative to neo-realism and neo-liberalism, one it originally set out to challenge.

A more nuanced approach to ethnic identity and what is essentially still an instrumentalist reading thereof is offered by Daniel Posner, whose team studied electoral systems, voting patterns, and ethnic diversity in relation to economic growth and public goods provision in several Central African countries.²¹² The main merits of Posner's findings in relation to this study is that he puts equal weight on analysing the motives behind political action of the masses as of elites playing the ethnic card. In his approach, the constituents of elites are no longer passive victims of elite manipulation; instead he shows them to be as instrumentalist as the elites in their utilization of ethnicity as a political tool to attain an improvement of their position. Second, he portrays identities as contextual, putting emphasis on 'ethnicity as fluid and situation bound', as 'rather than being hard wired with a single ethnic identity, individuals possess repertoires of identities whose relevance wax and wane with changes in context'.²¹³ In his conceptualization of identity ethnicity is but one of a variety of identities elites and their constituents can draw on, operationalise, and instrumentalise in pursuit of their material or ideational interests, although Posner clearly has more to say on the former than the latter. Yet, in sharp contrast to Christia's deterministic instrumentalism, where, 'when power considerations call for it, these [well-worn narratives], communities and traditions will be cast aside and new ones imagined in their place',²¹⁴ Posner highlights the limits to how easily elites can 'imagine' new forms of identity by reminding us that they can only resort to an already pre-existing repertoire of identities and not simply 'imagine new ones'.

By juxtaposing Christia's approach with Posner's it becomes evident why I have localized instrumentalism at the transition from realism to constructivism. In Christia's case, an individual or group's identity clearly is a function of their interests, and identity itself is reduced to a political tool, whereas for Posner, for whom ethnic identity is 'an admission card for membership to a coalition of particular size and a source of information about the political coalitions to which others belong',²¹⁵ one's interests also determine what form of identity is employed in a given context, yet the repertoire of identities at one's disposal, although fluid and alternating, is limited, which puts 'his' instrumentalism closer to the constructivist tenet of identities shaping interests. He contends that, 'when I assert that individuals are able to change their identities strategically in response to situational incentives, I am not claiming that people can choose any identity they want. Their choices are limited to the identities that are in their repertoire',²¹⁶ which suggests identities pre-existent to interests. A similar point is made by Susan Olzak who reminds us of the limits to identity claims since 'ethnic mobilization expressed through ethnic conflict and protest requires commitment to a particular identity over some extended time period (and costs may rise with levels of commitment)'.²¹⁷ Again, this indicates that, contrary to the belief that new forms of identity can simply be imagined when politically expedient for elites, that ethnicity can be easily replaced with an alternative form of identity when the situation calls for it, since in the above quoted words of Gellner, any 'old shred and patch would have served as well', but that committing to one expression of identity is a long term process that can come with considerable costs and personal investments and thus is not easily discarded. These qualifications to instrumentalism made by Posner and Olzak are crucial because, while shifting our attention from the structure to the agency of elites and their constituents in ethnic politics, they insert the crucial caveat that in their agency these elites are not omnipotent but have to act within the confines of pre-existing identity structures not only in relation to their roles but also their constituents', whose identities they seek to instrumentalise to gain power and who instrumentalise their identities to align themselves with the powerful. Posner and Olzak's instrumentalism therefore can be described as more genuinely constructivist than the 'cliched constructivisms' identified by Brubaker; with their more nuanced approach to agency in identity formation they make a critical point whose relevance will become evident when discussing

the limitations to KRG politicians' freedom of choice in post-2003 Iraqi Kurdistan.

Having said that, though, despite their constructivist disclaimers, ultimately, for Posner, as for instrumentalists in general, 'ethnic identity is simply a means to an end'. For them,

'ethnic identities will not be chosen because of the psychological attachment that actors have toward them or because of the success of some crafty political entrepreneur in convincing voters that a particular identity is more important than others. They will be chosen because the identity gains them entry into a more [beneficial] coalition than the other identities that they might have drawn upon.'²¹⁸

As elaborated above, I do not believe matters to be that simple, that ethnicity can be reduced to merely a means to a political end. Conceiving of identities and sets of beliefs as nothing but an 'admission card' to a 'minimum winning coalition', to a group sizeable enough to affect political change in pursuit of at the end mostly material interests,²¹⁹ fails to explain votes for the Green Party outside Brighton in the upcoming British election, nor does it shed light on the motives of dozens of Kurds self-immolating in the aftermath of Abdullah Öcalan's arrest, nor, I would argue, can it account for the formation of the PKK in the first place, who in the late 1970s can certainly not be described as a sizeable group or part of any 'minimum winning coalition'.

The discussion so far of the groupist pitfalls of too narrow a constructivism has already called attention to the conjuncture that their deficiencies are not limited to the ontological realm but also extend to its epistemology. By reducing identity to a pre-given and static *corporate identity* that due to its exogenous character has little explanatory value to account for variations in actors' behaviour, state or group conduct is again, as in the neo-realist and neo-liberal paradigms, explained through rational and material interests, where questions of identity are relegated to the repertoire of political rhetoric of elites – as demonstrated in the instrumentalist approach. By 'bracketing out' the other three dimensions of identity, this form of constructivism hardly differs from neo-realism and neo-liberalism, and via Wendt's 'scientific realism' ironically adopts their positivist and empiricist methodology constructivism originally set out to refute. With positivism comes the belief in scientific objectivism, the myth of the

detached analyst empirically studying, recording, and explaining social conduct without having a stake or taking part in it,²²⁰ which forms my main point of critique in the approach of Brubaker discussed earlier.²²¹ Brubaker correctly cautions against the process of reification in the social sciences when taking social – in this context ethnic – groups as units of analysis. Yet, when trying to draw clear lines between identity and process of identification, not only does he struggle to impose a theoretical, and I would argue with Jenkins fictitious order on a ‘human world in which indeterminacy, ambiguity, and paradox are part of the normal pattern of everyday life’,²²² running risk of superseding the ‘reality of the model’ with a ‘model of reality’,²²³ he also appears to worship the false idol of scientific objectivism. When warning that essentialist reifications of identity groups in the scholarly discourse ‘reflects the duals orientation of many academic identitarians as both *analysts* and *protagonists* of identity politics’,²²⁴ he seems to imply that by not taking ‘*categories of ethno-political practice as our categories of social analysis*’,²²⁵ we can remain neutral, detached and objective observers of identity politics who stay clear of taking any part in it. He clearly and correctly distinguishes between groups – how members of a collective identify themselves – and categories²²⁶ – how they are defined by others – but then seems to overlook the fact that, as has been established earlier,

categorisation is as much part of identity as self-identification ... categorization makes a powerful contribution to the everyday reality – the realization ... of groups. Attributions of group membership feature routinely in how we categorize others, and the categorization of out-groups is intrinsic to in-group identification. Who we think we are, is intimately related to who we think others are, and vice versa.²²⁷

This process of categorization as co-constitutive of the process of self-identification, however, is not limited to the social groups from which a certain group sets itself apart, the direct, as it has been called here, constitutive other. If group identification goes hand in hand with group categorization, it would be evidently illogical to assume that the way we as scholars, together with international politics and the media, categorize a collective would have no impact on how this collective sees itself, on its process of self-identification. Yet this is precisely what the myth of positivism and scientific objectivism wants us to believe, that a clear line can be drawn between the scholarly categorizer and the categorized, that they are two social spheres apart, where the one engages in identity politics and the other discretely and dispassionately records, analyses

and explains those identity politics – an artificial segmentation of the social world that is not only demonstrably fallacious but also patently absurd.

In this study, on the other hand, inclined to a post-positivist tradition that clearly rejects the notion of scientific objectivism, knowledge production, which includes processes of categorization, is always seen as inseparably interlinked with modes of power and politics of representation.²²⁸ From this perspective, we scholars as categorizers, whether we engage in reification or not, inherently matter to the categorized, we inevitably are protagonists of identity politics. It is the very nature of identity and identity discourses, as defined above, that renders us categorizers and explainers part of it, makes us subjects of the identity discourse we seek to describe, irrespective of our intellectual or ideological position, political or scholarly agenda, or adherence to imaginary principles of scientific objectivism. To believe anything else would be a failure to recognize our nature as human beings in interaction with others and our role in the social world of which we are part. Consequently, to critically examine the role of explanatory IR scholars as protagonists of ethnic conflict is one of the aspirations central to this study.

2.) Concepts, Models, and Frameworks

Ethnic security dilemmas

Symptomatic of the ways in which explanatory IR approaches, makes sense of, and explains ethnic conflict that have been discussed in theory in the previous chapter are the two main explanatory frameworks explanatory IR has contributed to capture the dynamics of the onset and development of ethnic conflicts. In both, the 'ethnic security dilemma' and the 'ethnic alliance framework', supposed patterns of state behaviour are extrapolated to ethnic groups. In both ethnic groups are equated with states as relatively substantive, distinct, homogeneous, bounded and unitary actors or unitarily acting agents. In doing so they display at least two of the key characteristics of groupism this study has identified earlier and subsequently sets out to challenge.

.In the late 1980s and early 1990s IR scholars found themselves confronted with the fact that conflicts in world politics were no longer predominantly between states and that the Cold War lens, through which intra-state conflict had been explained for the better part of fifty years, namely as proxy wars of two competing power blocks, no longer held any purchase. What is more, these 'new wars'²²⁹ appeared mostly rooted in ideational factors, were largely understood as conflicts of identity, primarily religious or ethnic, and/or emanating from the implosion of multi-ethnic, multi-religious states such as the Soviet Union or Yugoslavia.²³⁰ This posed an ontological challenge to neo-realism which held that domestic factors and ideational values of actors in world politics mattered little to explain their behaviour in the international arena. Instead of intellectually packing up and going home though, neo-realist scholars responded to that challenge by approaching and explaining these 'new wars' in the same way they had already approached and explained the Cold War and every international conflict since 1815: by propounding that, when studying international conflict in the *longue durée*, ideational factors, whether nationalism, liberalism, religion, or ethnicity, were of secondary importance, what determined the behaviour, conflictual or cooperative, of actors in world politics, whether states, nations, ethnic groups, or religious communities, was

the egoistic pursuit of material interests. And, like individual human beings, the most fundamental material interest of any organized collective, superior to all other motives, is supposedly the interest to survive, the drive to self-preservation. On this premise, Barry Posen set out to explain the collapse of multi-ethnic and multi-religious states of the late 1980s and early 1990s when he transferred the classic neo-realist explanatory model of the 'security dilemma' from the level of states to the level of ethnic groups, treating them, as far as their behaviour and structure are concerned as unitary actors, as ontologically convertible into states, with few epistemological and ontological reservations. Confronted with a situation of anarchy ensuing from state collapse, Posen argued, 'a group suddenly compelled to provide its own protection must ask the following questions about any neighbouring group: Is it a threat? How much of a threat? Will the threat grow or diminish over time? ... The answers to these questions strongly influence the chances for war?'.²³¹ The classic security dilemma, as developed for explaining rational state behaviour,²³² then stipulates that any action one state/group engages in to increase its own security in an unpredictable and hostile environment of anarchy could be interpreted by a neighbouring state/group as a threat to its own security, as compromising its chance of survival by placing it in a weaker position via the first group. According to neo-realism, this climate of fear almost inevitably leads to a race for ever more security and makes conflict between both states/groups more likely.²³³ Posen saw no reason why what is good for states, would not also be good for ethnic groups, why these patterns of state behaviour would not also apply to ethnic groups, why the explanatory framework of the security dilemma would not also explain the behaviour of ethnic groups in a system of anarchy, and consequently expanded the model and its implications – from arms races, to political mobilization in order to reinforce group cohesion, to windows of vulnerability and opportunity that make pre-emptive war more likely, to incentives for 'defensive expansion', a euphemism for politics of ethnic homogenization by force – to ethnic groups in conflict.²³⁴

Notwithstanding the fact that the entire construct of the security dilemma revolves around the pre-condition of anarchy by presupposing a rationality of fear as the determining variable in explaining actors' behaviour, for which neo-

realism has been criticised by generations of scholars in general²³⁵ and Posen's 'ethnic security dilemma' in particular²³⁶ – despite these general shortcomings, Posen's model features prominently in leading neo-realist accounts of ethnic conflict,²³⁷ has been utilized and adapted by a myriad of scholars from quite diverse intellectual backgrounds,²³⁸ and, at large, can be considered the standard device with which neo-realism makes sense of ethnic conflict. Yet, what concerns this study more is another presumption the ethnic security dilemma makes: that ethnic groups can be equated with states as substantive, distinct, homogeneous, bounded and unitary actors or unitarily acting agents in international relations. Not once does Posen seem to be troubled by ontological questions as to whether it is tenable to apply a model developed to explain state behaviour to ethnic groups, and whether it is ontologically sound to analytically treat ethnic groups in the same manner as states, as unitary actors (regardless of whether states should be treated as such in the first place). These questions have concerned scholars like Paul Roe, who advocate substituting the unit of analysis in studies of state security with 'societal security', in particular in the context of ethnic conflict.²³⁹ The approach of settling for society, rather than the state, as the unit of analysis in security discourses originates from the wider context of securitization theory associated with what is colloquially often referred to as the 'Copenhagen School'.²⁴⁰ As it pertains to reflections on the security dilemma what can be registered here is that the concept of 'societal security' first shifts the analytical interest from discussing merely material interests as security issues to ideational factors, for examples acknowledging threats to one's identity as a security threat, and therefore directly addresses issues neo-realism deliberately brackets out from its analysis. Secondly, like neo-liberalism whose models for explaining ethnic conflict will be taken up shortly, it acknowledges a plurality of views, interests, and identities, and even actors to constitute its unit of analysis.

Echoing McSweeney²⁴¹ and Peaples & Vaughan-Williams,²⁴² I argue that the concept of 'societal security' of the Copenhagen School, of society as the referent object of security discourses, operationalises too static a concept of identity, failing to take sufficiently into account the constructed nature and inherent transience and fluidity of identity, and consequently is not only guilty of groupism but also, like the framework of the ethnic security dilemma at large, of

reifying ethnic lines of division of 'us' versus 'them' constructed in an ethnicised discourse. Like neo-liberalism then, it mirrors too closely for comfort neo-realism's groupist presumptions – after conceding agency to it in the first place – about its unit of analysis, state or society, as an ultimately unitarily acting agent and therefore replicates many of neo-realism and neo-liberalism's ontological and epistemological fallacies.

Roe's attempts to apply the ethnic security dilemma to the concept of societal security by allowing ideational factors such as identity greater room for analysis, in fact for them to be understood as security issues and independent variables themselves, reminds one of another variation of neo-realist/narrow constructivist approaches to ethnic conflict that has already been mentioned: instrumentalism. Now, when discussing concepts and models of explanatory IR to explain ethnic conflict, I would like to revisit it by way of a recent study on *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars*, in which Fotini Christia investigates patterns of alliance formation and factionalization between and within ethnic groups in Bosnia and Afghanistan, and subsequently endeavours a generalization of her findings to civil wars dating back as far as the nationalist revolutions of 1848.²⁴³ While I have situated instrumentalism at the transition from neo-realism to narrow constructivism, Christia sees hers solidly grounded in neo-realism, presenting it as 'essentially a neorealist account of group behaviour in multiparty civil wars. Like neorealists, I posit that alliance choices are [primarily] driven by relative power considerations'.²⁴⁴ With the egoistic pursuit of relative power and material interests as the main explanatory variables for alliance formation between ethnic groups in civil wars and postulating that the rationale and motives for factionalization within groups are ultimately the same as for alliance formation between groups,²⁴⁵ she deploys the full arsenal of neo-realist, narrow constructivist, and instrumentalist models to substantiate her conjecture: from the ethnic security dilemma, to a 'minimum winning coalition logic'²⁴⁶ – groups or factions not necessarily siding with the strongest alliance, but the one sufficiently powerful enough to win, yet at the same of manageable size to guarantee a share in the division of power and sinecures after the war – to 'bandwagoning'²⁴⁷ where a weaker party to a conflict realizing that the costs of opposing its adversary outweigh the benefits and succumbing to an alliance

dictated by necessity where future spoils of joined conquest are shared proportionally (Waltz 1979; Walt 1990; Mearsheimer 2001).²⁴⁸

Like neo-realists, Christia also 'suppose[s] that substate actors in civil wars behave like sovereign states in the anarchic international system',²⁴⁹ and the 'ethnic, linguistic, regional, religious, and ... ideological identities [that form the bases of these groups] are presumed to stay relatively fixed',²⁵⁰ without further elaborating why such presuppositions can be ontologically made. Not once in her study does the question arise as to what extent it is ontologically tenable, despite decades of shifting alliances and internal factionalization, to still treat those ethnic groups in Bosnia and Afghanistan as 'relatively fixed' political entities, to attribute them with agency, and operationalise them as the main unit of analysis. Their existence and continuity is simply considered a primordialist pre-given, as a Wendtian constructivist corporate identity. Likewise, ideational factors only feature in her analysis as elements shaping the course of conflicts as political tools employed by elites to justify their actions – alliance formation or factionalization – ex post to an apparently apathetic and docile constituency, whose agency Christia seems not to think worth consideration. 'Notions of shared identity ... prove endogenous [only to some extent] to alliance preferences: Elites pick their allies first based on tactical dictates, and then look to their identity repertoire for characteristics they share with their [new] friends ... that would allow for the construction of justifying narratives'.²⁵¹ This bracketing of ideational factors, relegating them to the political sphere only, denying them any explanatory value, begs the question, why bother at all? Why not limit one's analysis to studying purely material interests? The answer, one may hypothesize, is, that if neo-realism wants to treat ethnic groups as units of analysis and to equate them with states, then primordialist and narrow constructivist narratives of identity as a pre-given value such as the Wendtian corporate identity, provide them with the ontological coherence necessary to do so. I further posit that in this approach the unit of analysis is made to fit the paradigm, a cardinal error to any scientific enquiry..

Similar to Christia's Afghan warlords and ethnic elites in Bosnia, the behaviour of the leaders of Kurdish political parties, at first sight, seem to fit the pattern of material interests, pre-eminently to secure power, superseding ideational factors and those only being utilized to justify their actions ex post.

One way to look at the genesis of Kurdish ethno-nationalism in the twentieth century is to portray it as a seemingly endless sequence of shifting alliances and group factionalizations, in which Kurdish parties who felt disenfranchised or expected greater returns from switching sides struck alliances with their ideational antagonists, the nationalising states set on quelling their struggles for self-determination. From the 1950s on, Iraqi Kurdish parties repeatedly sided with the Shah's government in suppressing Kurdish groups in Iran and the Assad regime in brutalizing Syria's Kurds in exchange for support against Saddam Hussein; during the Iran-Iraq War the KDP teamed up with Tehran in fighting the Iranian KDP and the PUK, who initially sought its fortunes with Baghdad; while Saddam Hussein's regime perpetrated chemical warfare and genocide against its own Kurdish population, the PKK intensified its contacts with the Ba'athist dictator; and in the 1990s the KDP relied on Saddam Hussein's troops to re-take Erbil for them from a PUK-PKK-Iranian alliance, just four years after fighting the central government's troops to the death in collaboration with the PUK. On the face of it, one may have to agree with Michael Gunter's assessment that 'the Kurdish people have been the victim of leaders guilty of selfish partisanship and greed,'²⁵² as well as with Christia's postulate that material interests supersede ideational factors in the behaviour of ethnic elites, and sympathise with those Kurdish scholars quoted earlier who see Kurdish aspirations for independence betrayed by the petty particularisms, power and profit seeking greed, and selfish materialism of their leaders. As the analysis of Kurdish ethno-nationalism and the relations between Kurdish political parties in this study will reveal, though, matters are not that simple, and the essentialist generalizations of instrumentalism, RCT, neo-realism, and too narrow a constructivism do not suffice to explain the rather complex social dynamics at work here that, drawing on Fierke and as mentioned in the Introduction as well as being elaborated in more detail shortly, should rather be conceptualised as a complex matrix of identities and interests.²⁵³

Ethnic alliances

Diametrically opposed to those models that treat ethnicity first and foremost as a function of conflict behaviour of ethnic groups and relegate ideational

factors to the mere political sphere and elites' rhetoric, is the 'ethnic alliance' model. This rather neo-liberal and narrow constructivist concept operationalises shared ethnicity as the independent and determining variable to explain the behaviour of ethnic groups in conflict; that is, picking up an earlier observation on groupism, it tautologically explains ethnic conflict through ethnicity.

Like neo-realism and Christia's instrumentalism, though, the 'ethnic alliance' model first equates ethnic groups with states as relatively fixed, substantive and distinct actors invested with social agency in the international system. Davis & Moore, in two articles on dyads, or a pair of states with transnational ethnic ties, of which the first was pointedly titled *Ethnicity Matters*,²⁵⁴ contend that 'transnational ethnic alliances serve as a conduit for conflict behaviour'.²⁵⁵ They hold that 'it is useful to conceptualise ethnic linkages among people across state boundaries as functionally equivalent to alliances between two states', and second, purport that 'conflict between a state and an ethnic group will escalate to the international level when other elite members of that same ethnic group play a role in policy making in another state and that state finds the first state to be politically relevant'.²⁵⁶ In other words, the likelihood of violent conflict between two neighbouring states increases, if in one state (A) – say, in the case study, Turkey – a disenfranchised ethnic minority fights state oppression, while in the other state (B) – in the case study Iraq, then the Iraqi Kurdish 'de facto state', and after 2003 the Kurdish Autonomous Region in Iraq – a co-ethnic group of said minority holds considerable power or dominates the political structure. The policies of A via its minority then not only constitute part of B's 'Politically Relevant International Environment'²⁵⁷ but they determine its actions via A. As a consequence, Davis and Moore claim that B and the oppressed minority in A will form an ethnic alliance against state A, and the internal conflict within state A will diffuse to the point where the likelihood of it escalating to the international level rises. The authors test this hypothesis by contrasting three dependent weighted variables – conflict, cooperation, and net interaction between the dyadic states – from the *Conflict and Peace Databank* of Edward Azar²⁵⁸ that measures levels of interaction between states with data from the *Minorities at Risk* set of Ted Robert Gurr with individual ethno-political groups as its unit of analysis.²⁵⁹ Notably, they at first caution that 'we do not believe that the ethnic composition of the dyads is the most critical determinate of such

[cooperative or conflictual] behaviour',²⁶⁰ and come themselves to the conclusion that the ethnic composition of dyads matters only 'at the margins'.²⁶¹ Then, however, in a rather difficult to comprehend attempt at creative reinterpretation, and trusting that future quantitative research with more extensive data will prove their hypotheses, they maintain that 'the impact of ethnic alliances is not spurious'.²⁶²

There are many ways one could methodologically challenge the 'ethnic alliance' model. First, as has already been discussed in the context of constructivism in the previous chapter, one may wonder whether the rather generalizing instrument of pure quantitative analyses is best suited to decode such highly complex, contextual, circumstantial, fluctuating, and ultimately often constructed relations between and within presumed ethnic groups and in consequence thereof ethnically framed conflicts. Furthermore, like the large n-studies and datasets criticised in the previous chapter, the source of data for Davis & Moore's model, Ted Robert Gurr's *Minorities at Risk* set, operationalises ethnic groups as substantive, distinct, homogeneous, bounded units of analysis. Then one may cite that Davis & Moore themselves admit what limited generalisations one could make from their findings as their entire set of data originates from a *single year* [sic] of reference, 1978 [sic] – more extensive and recent findings seem to at least superficially confirm them, though.²⁶³ Third, as the authors themselves recognise, the ethnic composition of their dyads mattered only *marginally* for the measurable political behaviour and foreign policy of analysed states.

Karen Petersen re-examined Davis & Moore's model and, after modifying some variables with an improved measure of the foreign policy behaviour of the original dyads and adjusting control variables, discovered a slightly stronger amplitude towards conflict and decreased net interaction between dyads of states with one ethnic group in common, which leads her to allege that 'ethnic alliances do in fact matter' and 'may not operate at the margins'.²⁶⁴ Her findings concur with Saideman's, whose more nuanced utilisation of the *Minorities at Risk* dataset and actual application of his hypotheses to three empirical case studies show that 'a group with kin dominating a nearby state is at least 10 percent more likely to receive support'.²⁶⁵ He, too, admits, though, that generally speaking 'we cannot say with confidence that the particular identity of a group

causes it to get more or less support'.²⁶⁶ And yet, despite only marginal empirical evidence for such presumptions, explanatory IR scholars seem to never tire of working the bogey man of ethnic alliances forming against the status quo and ethnic minorities with irredentist aspirations acting as 'fifth columns' for the territorial ambitions of neighbouring states. Although not specifically called an ethnic alliance, group solidarity based on shared ethnicity is also the independent variable and main explanatory factor in other key texts on the internationalisation of ethnic conflicts.²⁶⁷ They all to some degree share the ontological and epistemological fallacies of groupism, mainly to equate ethnic groups with states and to attribute them with agency as unitarily acting protagonists in conflict, then proceeding to tautologically explain this ethnic conflict with ethnicity, that is assuming the actions of these actors are dictated by the principles of group solidarity based on shared ethnicity. Here a picture is presented in which 'ethnically intermixed areas are magnets for kin state interventions',²⁶⁸ and 'potential rescuers' will be tempted 'to jump through any windows of opportunity that may arise (...) to rescue [their kin] now by force'.²⁶⁹ In the case of the PKK presence in Iraqi Kurdistan for example – which Salehyan²⁷⁰ lists as an archetype of common ethnicity determining the conflict behaviour of actors in the internationalization of an ethnic conflict – the myth of the PKK as a 'fifth column' without legitimate cause and controlled by foreign elements in pursuit of a region-wide pan-Kurdish secessionism was used for decades prior to 2007 by the Turkish nationalising state to justify addressing the so called 'Kurdish Question' in Turkey by violent means and for countless military interventions into Iraq.²⁷¹ Like other groupist explanatory models in its attempts to make sense of ethnic conflict then, the ethnic alliance framework reifies the politics of ethnic division that are the primary root cause of the conflict they set out to interpret, thus either legitimizing the supposedly irredentist agenda of the secessionist ethnic elites or the totalitarian politics of the assimilationist nationalising states or, as happens frequently, both.

An interesting qualitative counter-argument to the ethnic alliance model is made in Rajat Ganguly's *Kin State Intervention in Ethnic Conflicts*. Ganguly – drawing on case studies from Pakistan's role in Kashmiri secession attempts, India's support for Bangladesh's secession, Afghanistan and Iran's interventions on behalf of Baluch separatism in Pakistan, Afghanistan's role in a wider so

called 'Pashtunistan', and finally India's ambivalent stance towards Tamil secessionism in Sri Lanka – categorises the reaction of a 'kin state' to a co-ethnic insurgency in a neighbouring country in four patterns: diffusion and encouragement, isolation and suppression, reconciliation, and diffusion or isolation through inaction and non-intervention.²⁷² Diffusion and encouragement, which Ganguly holds to be the most common practice of a kin state reacting to a co-ethnic insurgency in a neighbouring state, he sub-divides between direct support – through military or material means, supplying technical, logistic, and financial assistance, and in the most extreme form, granting sanctuary on its territory – and indirect support, i.e. politico-diplomatic assistance. While to him affective motives for diffusion and encouragement are easily explainable by group solidarity across borders, instrumental reasons he lists as pre-existing rivalries between the two states, in which the ethnic conflict is used as a pretext and the insurgency often as a proxy – a similar point being made by Salehyan, who terms this 'security delegation'.²⁷³ Other instrumental reasons are the dynamics of domestic politics – public opinion, popular demand or 'ethnic outbidding' – as well as the context of international relations. Most interestingly, and contrary to the majority of the literature, Ganguly argues that external support from an ethnic kin state on a long term perspective is to the disadvantage of the insurgency as the target state will respond to the enhanced challenge and elevated international attention by intensifying persecution and upping its repressive apparatus as a zero-sum mentality to the conflict takes over politico-strategic considerations. The normative international system also, as will be discussed shortly, is system-immanently hostile to any attempts at secession and has a wide arsenal of coercive measures at its disposal to exert pressure on the kin state. This pressure renders the kin state a notoriously fickle patron who hardly ever provides support in the scope required to defeat the target state.²⁷⁴ Ganguly's more nuanced analysis of the dynamics between presumed sub-groups in ethnic conflict, in particular their cooperation and even 'intra-group' conflict across international borders is however impaired by his unadulterated primordialism that perceives of ethnicity as a 'given', a 'natural phenomenon', and 'cultural attributes' shared by people as 'objective'.²⁷⁵ Consequently, due to these primordial kinship ties, and despite the variety of expressions to which relations between subgroups within an ethnic group can amount, for Ganguly, common ethnicity does not allow for a kin state's neutrality

in an ethnic conflict. Even 'doing nothing' on the side of the kin state will always be seen as partisan, and keeping its cool 'usually strengthens the hand of the central government against the secessionists',²⁷⁶ i.e. the kin state is perceived to indirectly support the target state and to give it carte blanche to 'resolve' the conflict by 'methods of eliminating differences', as McGarry & O'Leary have somewhat euphemistically termed them.²⁷⁷ Ganguly's deterministic portrayal of the dynamics of ethnic conflict then, despite the interesting qualifications made in some places, amounts to the same logic and narrative as the 'ethnic alliance' model: ethnicity as a primordial pre-given that not only is not further questioned but whose stringency is subscribed to without further questioning, thus resulting in a reification of the 'strategic essentialism' and the politics of ethnic division and group solidarity of the ethnic elites as well as their 'participants' primordialism'.

Another explanatory model that explains ethnic conflict with ethnicity is the already mentioned concept of 'ethnic outbidding'.²⁷⁸

Ethnic outbidding is a situation in which competing elites try to position themselves as the best supporters of a group's interests, each accusing the others of being too weak on ethnic nationalist issues. When conditions foster ethnic outbidding, the exit of ethnically defined supporters can change the balance of power domestically; most, if not all, politicians are compelled to take extreme stands favouring the ethnic group's interests.²⁷⁹

These dynamics of 'outbidding' each other with ever more extreme and radical positions among ethnically defined parties and elites, according to the literature, can easily lead to the ethnicised discourse and with it the political situation spiralling out of control and gaining a momentum of its own that makes violent conflict between those presumed groups more likely. In the context of the case study, the concept of ethnic outbidding is explicitly applied to the PKK by Adamson.²⁸⁰ However, aside from its demonstrated limited applicability,²⁸¹ ethnic outbidding is merely an expression and manifestations of the conflict that must not be mistaken as its causes; it builds on, exacerbates, and escalates an already existing ethnicised discourse within a deeply divided society along ethnic lines, and therefore can be understood as another expression of afore discussed strategic essentialisms of ethnic elites. In addition to being distinctly tautological by explaining ethnic conflict with ethnicity, it is of very finite

explanatory value since it does not address how the ethnicised discourse that constitutes it came about in the first place. As Donald Horowitz remarks himself,

intragroup party proliferation usually awaits the emergence of an ethnic issue that spurs party formation and assures the new party some following. Such an issue generally relates to intergroup relations. Unless party formation is practically ordained by the existence of sharp subethnic divisions, the pivotal event at the point of intraethnic party formation is usually an accusation that the existing ethnic party has sold out group interests by its excessive moderation toward other ethnic groups.²⁸²

Again, at first sight the 'Kurdish case', one of the most prominent examples of an internationalized ethnicised conflict, and in particular the PKK sanctuary in Iraqi Kurdistan, seem to fit the pattern of ethnic alliance formation as if taken from a textbook and is consequently routinely cited as a model case for these dynamics.²⁸³ Of the countless instances of banditry, pillaging raids, minor insurrections, insurgencies, and rebellions the one or the other self-proclaimed Kurdish insurgency has been involved in along the border regions of Iran, Turkey, Iraq, and Syria since World War One, hardly any has not had an international dimension or has not escalated to the international level; that is sought shelter across the border, shared intelligence, received logistical support and armaments, and joined forces on a temporary basis. All major Kurdish rebellions have been supported and sustained by affiliated or temporarily allied Kurdish insurgencies from the bordering state and many of these rebellions have escalated to regional conflagrations that not only dragged in local but also great powers such as the USSR, Israel, and the USA during the Cold War.²⁸⁴

Consequently and to counter these supposedly secessionist insurgencies a 'balance of threat'²⁸⁵ was formed by the nationalising states. Stephen Walt's 'balance of threat' can be understood as an adaptation of the neo-realist 'balance of power' concept.²⁸⁶ In this instance, states form a defensive pact or alliance to counter, not a rising hegemon that could upset an existing 'balance of power', but a mutual threat to the status quo and their common interests, for example the threat of supposedly pan-Kurdish ethno-nationalism undermining the existent state structure and borders in the region. As early as 1937 then, Turkey signed the Treaty of Sa'dbad with Iraq and Iran 'to coordinate their defence policy' against Kurdish uprisings that could spill over from one state

into the others' territories;²⁸⁷ a coordination and collaboration among the three countries that was extended in the Baghdad Pact of 1955 and led to occasional joint military operations against Kurdish insurgencies.²⁸⁸ The latter, in particular, can be understood as an actual alliance in the political sense of the term, as it established a 'mutual military assistance' clause against 'internal revolts liable to threaten common security'.²⁸⁹ After Turkish-Iraqi relations had degenerated in the aftermath of the 1958 revolution, in 1983, the practice of Turkey securing from Iraq the right to pursue Kurdish insurgents onto its territory was revived under Saddam Hussein – then too weakened by the Iran-Iraq War to effectively control the Kurdish north – and, after Saddam Hussein's downfall, was one of the first concessions the Turkish government called for from the post-2003 Iraqi government.²⁹⁰ Given the sum of these cross-border counter-insurgency operations over the past 60 years with the single goal of keeping Kurdish separatism at bay, it might seem the balance of threat of the status quo preserving nationalising states against presupposed irredentist Kurdish claims and activities, and in converse argument, the Kurdish ethnic alliance, has been a factual reality. As I have already demonstrated elsewhere though,²⁹¹ closer scrutiny of the Kurdish case study will show that the ethnic alliance model, like its neo-realist and instrumentalist counterparts, is either ontologically untenable or falls short of comprehensively explaining the complex dynamics and processes of (self-) identification as well as protagonists' behaviour in ethnic conflict.

The sovereign nation state

As has been elaborated in the Introduction and in the previous chapter, the concept of the sovereign nation state as the main unit of analysis and constitutive element of the modern, anarchic, that is non-hierarchical, international system is central to the three paradigms of explanatory IR: neo-realism, neo-liberalism, and a narrow constructivism. Extrapolating from one of its key thinkers, Hedley Bull,²⁹² one might even say, 'IR is a discipline founded on the existence of state sovereignty at both a normative and a factual level'.²⁹³ In a similar vein one of the most prominent critics of explanatory IR's state-centrism, Richard Ashley, notes:

For the neorealist, the state is *ontologically prior* to the international system. The system's structure is produced by defining states as individual unities and *then* by noting properties that emerge when several such unities are brought into mutual reference. For the neorealist, it is impossible to describe international structures without first fashioning a concept of the state-as-actor.²⁹⁴

And the essential quality of explanatory IR's conceptualization of the state-as-actor is sovereignty, or in the words of Gillian Youngs, 'what matters is that the state is an identifiable entity, thus clearly bounded. In order to act, it has to be considered sovereign, that is, possessing the power to act'.²⁹⁵ Sovereign nation states are seen as the logical consequence, the product of the ideology of nationalism; as has also been shown in the previous chapter, the modernist understanding of nationalism can essentially be defined as the doctrine about acquiring statehood for the nation, statehood as the objective constituting the defining criterion for a nation. The essential qualities of this sovereign statehood are for it to be absolute and exclusive, expressed in Max Weber's famous definition of the state 'as a human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory'.²⁹⁶ This understanding of sovereignty as 'Janus-faced',²⁹⁷ as having an internal and at the same time external component that are mutually constitutive is summarized by Hinsley:

[Internal and external sovereignty] are complementary. They are the inward and outward expressions, the obverse and reverse sides of the same idea ... the idea that there is a final and absolute political authority in the political community ... and no final and absolute authority exists elsewhere.²⁹⁸

In other words, state sovereignty not only connotes the presence of absolute authority at the domestic level and its absence at the international level, it is defined by this very corollary. In the anarchic international system all states are seen as equal in international law, not in the degree of power they can exert but in the inviolability of their sovereignty over the territory they claim, or as Frankel puts it, 'irrespective of their power and size, in legal theory all states enjoy sovereignty in equal measure'.²⁹⁹ If a state chooses to share its sovereignty with another international body or evolve aspects of it in, for example, the supra-national European Union, it does so of its own vocation and can withdraw from this legal arrangement if and when it pleases. Yet, any divisibility of sovereignty over its territory against the state's will is understood to

be illegitimate; in the end, in Morgenthau's words, 'if sovereignty means supreme authority, it stands to reason that two or more entities ... cannot be sovereign within the same time and space'.³⁰⁰ This view, at the core of the classic canon of explanatory IR, summarized in the dictum, 'the state, as a subject of international law, possesses sovereign power',³⁰¹ endorses the absoluteness and exclusivity of sovereign statehood in the Weberian sense. It then is a community's monopoly on the legitimate use of force, read jurisdiction, over the territory it controls, from which the right to non-interference is deduced:

If a state has a right to sovereignty, this implies that other states have a duty to respect that right by, among other things, refraining from intervention in its domestic affairs ... The function of the principle of nonintervention in international relations might be said, then, to be one of protecting the principle of state sovereignty.³⁰²

Concomitant with its dual dimensionality, sovereignty is also a principal of international law, where it is conceived as an institution constituted by two sides of the same coin, 'sovereignty as an organizational rule to regulate the international traffic between states ...; and its role in the identification of political entities as actors on the international plane'.³⁰³ Much has been written in IR on the differentiation of sovereignty as a political and as a legal principle,³⁰⁴ a somewhat artificial distinction, I would argue with Simpson,³⁰⁵ since all law is man-made and therefore inherently political, a point already made by Morgenthau when he observed, 'there is a profound and neglected truth hidden in Hobbes' extreme dictum that the state creates morality as well as law, and there is neither morality nor law outside the state'.³⁰⁶ Consequently, '[the state's] privileged status and power as international legal persons is defined by the legal order, while sovereign states as its main subjects can define the contours of that very order'.³⁰⁷ This perspective, in which sovereignty can simply be ascertained to factually exist or not,³⁰⁸ and in which states constitute the main subjects of international law, also determines the exclusivist norms of international law to justify and ensure the continuation of their existence. In other words, international law and the international system which it is supposed to regulate, is made by states for states.

Explanatory IR acknowledges that this modern state system and the sovereign nation state that constitutes it are the product of historical change; it

goes to great length in tracing its development from Medieval feudalism to the early modern Treaties of Westphalia, to the Congress of Vienna, to how the doctrine of self-determination spawned decolonization,³⁰⁹ and it recognizes the process of state-formation and nationalism. As has been outlined, incorporating modernist theory, explanatory IR understands acquiring statehood and attaining sovereignty to be the defining objective of the nation, its main purpose. This processual character of the state is evident when Alexander Wendt, for example, describes the state as ‘an ongoing political program designed to produce and reproduce a monopoly on the potential for organized violence’,³¹⁰ yet on the same page he declares, ‘since states are the dominant form of subjectivity in contemporary world politics this means that they should be the primary unit of analysis for thinking about the global regulation of violence’.³¹¹ Like neo-realism and neo-liberalism, despite acknowledging its historical genesis, which should give reason to conceive of differing historical trajectories, Wendtian constructivism conceptualizes all states as essentially the same in the contemporary international system.³¹² Not unlike Francis Fukuyama in *The End of History*, who portrayed Western liberal democracy as ‘the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government’,³¹³ the modern sovereign nation state is seen as the culmination, the end-product of a linear historical process of state-formation that today, in essentially the same form, spans the entire globe and whose evident perfect nature renders it conceptually everlasting. In this sense then, Biersteker identifies this generalizing and essentialising principle, ‘the tendency to treat states as fundamentally similar units across time and place’,³¹⁴ as one of the key characteristics the three paradigms of explanatory IR have in common, expressed in, for example, Kenneth Waltz’s notorious claim that the state of anarchy in the international system renders any differentiation between states unnecessary. He declares, ‘anarchy entails relations of coordination among a system’s units, and that implies their sameness ... so long as anarchy endures, states remain like units’,³¹⁵ that is ‘autonomous political units’³¹⁶ with the same objectives. This presumption of the sameness of all states in the contemporary international system as a result of the system’s anarchic structure obscures the processual, evolving character of the state; put differently, ‘it would appear that the sovereignty principle has served to reify the state and abstract it from reality,

thereby obscuring its role as both agent and product of a dynamic and still unfolding historical process'.³¹⁷

To be sure, IR again acknowledges historical changes to sovereignty,³¹⁸ as for example the sprawling literature on globalization³¹⁹ and (humanitarian) intervention³²⁰ attests, and Stephen Krasner goes so far as to declare the sovereignty principle an 'organized hypocrisy',³²¹ demonstrating that intervention in another state's internal affairs has always been a quintessential part of international politics. Yet again, indicative of explanatory IR's generalizing and essentialising approach to the international system of sovereign nation states,³²² Krasner's conceptualization of sovereignty remains static:

It does not help us comprehend the possibility of change in the operational meaning of sovereignty, and it does not suggest (or allow for) any typology for the different forms of sovereignty over time and across place. Like the tendency to treat states as fundamentally like units, Krasner's conceptualization of sovereignty is essentially fixed and unchanging. It does not help us understand the significance of challenges to sovereignty or the possibility of its transformation.³²³

In fact, IR's 'fascination'³²⁴ with state sovereignty as a universal and consistent principle of international order is so deeply ingrained that even a post-structuralist like R.B.J. Walker, whose work is dedicated to the deconstruction of sovereignty, finds it difficult to 'envisag[e] alternative political identities'.³²⁵

A minority view in IR, on the other hand, holds that sovereignty is a socio-political construct:

We agree with other scholars ... that territory, population, and authority – in addition to recognition – are important aspects of state sovereignty. Unlike most scholars, however, we contend that each of these components of state sovereignty is also socially constructed, as is the modern state system. The modern state system is not based on some timeless principle of sovereignty, but on the production of a normative conception that links authority, territory, population (society, nation), and recognition in a unique way, and in a particular place.³²⁶

If one conceives of the nation as an ideological basis for the state as a socio-political construct, an ideational factor, a way of seeing the world, as discussed in the previous chapter, it leads one to ponder on whether the

objective of that socio-political construct, its realization is not a construct in itself, whether Biersteker and Weber are not justified in understanding it as the product 'of a normative conception' rather than a fixed and pre-given political entity.

The claim to sameness and universality of the sovereign nation state rests mainly on two epistemologies: 1) the presupposed anarchical structure of the international system that, as has been shown, renders states essentially the same as far as their function, objective, and value-maximizing nature within the international system is concerned, and 2) an extrapolation and generalization of the European experience of nationalist state-formation to the universal level. The latter presumption, drawing on the classics on state formation and nationalism,³²⁷ is rooted in the previously discussed modernist view of nationalism that seeks to carve out universal tendencies and generalizable patterns from the formation of nation states in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe – mainly processes of industrialization and modernization, the advent of mass literacy in the local vernacular, mass mobilization of the armed forces, the spread of demands of democratic representation, bureaucratic centralization, and the refinement of systems of taxation – and to then identify the proliferation of similar tendencies and patterns across the non-European world.³²⁸ These generalizing and essentialising presumptions have been criticized for the selectivity with which empirical cases in their support are chosen,³²⁹ and on a more general level by the rich post-colonial literature which holds that, due to the colonial experience, processes of state formation in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe are not comparable with the trajectories of de-colonized states in the twentieth century.³³⁰ Yet, 'the tendency within the field of state theory is to focus mainly on the Western capitalist state without attempting to even understand the specificity of the post-colonial state'.³³¹ In explanatory IR this tendency to extrapolate from the European experience in state-formation to generalizable patterns in the rest of the world is particularly striking in the works of Cohen, Buzan and Huntington,³³² where, for example, Buzan draws parallels between the violent formation of states in early modern Europe with today's conflicts in the developing world.

Even a moment's reflection, though, should make plain that the narratives of state formation of Huntington, Buzan, Tilly, Mann, Anderson, Gellner, and

others of the modernist provenance – save European settler colonies such as the U.S., Canada, and Australia, etc. – are not applicable to the majority world.³³³ While in Europe modern statehood was the result of centuries of violent struggles, statehood in the majority world came in the form of the rather sudden bang of decolonization when the colonial powers realized that cost-benefit analysis of colonial rule was no longer economical and devised cheaper means of indirect rule.³³⁴ Consequently, borders were drawn and imposed on the new states by the colonial powers, industrialization and modernization was limited to a few export-oriented industries and cash crops that at large remained in the hands of investors from the former colonial powers, literacy in the vernacular – if codified at all – was the prerogative of a narrow elite, and as far as systems of bureaucratic centralization and taxation existed, they had been set up and reflected the needs of the former colonial power. What is more, the very nature and objective of the nation differed from the European experience to the majority world. While liberal secularism and increasing demands for popular representation were integral parts of European nationalism and to some extent were realized in universal suffrage, ‘state sovereignty for post-colonial states, with few exceptions, has been a token expression of self-rule. The integral link between contemporary [neo-]imperialism and Western capitalist development has deepened and cemented the North-South divide and has promoted uneven development within and between post-colonial states’,³³⁵ or in the more flowery language of Crawford Young, ‘a genetic code for the new states of Africa was already imprinted on its embryo within the womb of the African colonial state’.³³⁶ Perhaps the most significant feature of this ‘genetic code’ of the post-colonial state is the role of the local elites that championed decolonization, the same elites that earlier collaborated with the colonial power in the exploitation of local resources and the indigenous population, and that continued to do so, serving and profiteering from what Amin-Khan calls the ‘capitalism-imperialism nexus’.³³⁷ From this perspective, coined the ‘excentric view’ of decolonization by Robinson,³³⁸ colonialism prospered for as long as the colonial power was able to recruit local collaborators, and these local collaborators benefitted from the colonial structure; once these mutual benefits started to subside and material returns in terms of status, power and economic sinecures abated, the system proved no longer sustainable for both sides and was replaced with a more cost-

efficient one, yet the structures of division, exploitation and dependence at the domestic and the international level persisted.³³⁹ In sum,

in most post-colonial societies, the ruling elite (composed of landholders, indigenous capitalists, and civil and military bureaucrats) were successors-in-interest of colonial rulers. The post-colonial elite ... were former collaborators with colonial rulers ... this had afforded them privilege during their years of collaboration ... so the post-colonial elites were unwilling to abandon their tried and tested colonial state structures for fear of losing their power ... by transplanting these colonial structures into the new post-colonial state, it has entrenched the capitalism-imperialism nexus ... [and led to the post-colonial elites] hav[ing] become mired in even deeper collaboration with Western capital and [neo-]imperialist Western states.³⁴⁰

Irrespective of whether one subscribes to this neo-Marxist reading of post-colonial elites continuing to serve Western capitalist interests or rather sees them as integral parts of a global capitalist Empire,³⁴¹ two more features constitutive of the post-colonial state can be identified: a system-immanent authoritarianism and the nationalities question in most post-colonial states remaining unresolved which in turn leads to a proliferation of violent ethno-nationalist conflicts in the developing world. A wide host of post-colonial theorists have problematised how authoritarian regimes in the developing world can be seen as a concomitance of the authoritarian colonial legacy and the structural context of global capitalism and strategic expediencies of the Cold War, in which the West 'relied' on complicit elites that combined the modes of production, control of resources, government, and military power.³⁴² Complementary to authoritarianism is the colonial legacy of systems of 'divide and rule', in which the former colonial powers had privileged certain ethnic groups over others in order to assure compliance, collaboration, and exploitation. The colonial restraints had not allowed questions of identity and difference to be addressed in a non-violent discourse at the indigenous level, which is why these questions erupted with the sudden bang of decolonization, often in violent conflict, when the local inequalities of the colonial era and its aftermath were settled by force – as we have come to see for example most tragically in Rwanda,³⁴³ and as the case study of Iraq will illustrate. The result of these ethno-nationalist challenges to the state were attempts at 'pathological homogenization'³⁴⁴ – see below – by the ruling elites and the central

government that often solidified cleavages and led to an escalation from ethnic to ethno-nationalist conflicts against the straightjacket of multinational states decolonization had imposed on societies in the developing world. 'These developments of the decolonization period have prompted some observers of state and national identity formation to claim that instead of a nation(s) forming a state (as was the case in Europe), the state was created before a nation was even "imagined" – as in a *state-nation*'.³⁴⁵ The concept of the 'state-nation',³⁴⁶ highlighting the fact that a state with inviolable borders was imposed on the developing world in the process of decolonization before there was a nation that could have 'imagined', in the Andersonian terminology, such a state, makes perfectly plain the different experiences of state-formation in Europe and the non-European world. The fact that explanatory IR not only fails to account for the different trajectories of European nation states and post-colonial states, and how the colonial legacy shaped the latter, but claims universal validity for the former is illustrative of its inherent Eurocentrism. This Eurocentrism becomes even more apparent when explanatory IR attempts to explain the 'failure' of non-European sovereign nation states.

Failed states and de facto states

The double negative impact of authoritarianism and of the colonial legacy of ethnic divisions has routinely led to the sovereignty of post-colonial states being challenged in pursuit of demands of democratic representation or of ethnic pluralism or a combination of both. In response to these challenges the assimilationist nationalizing post-colonial state often resorts to what Heather Rae calls 'pathological homogenization' as a means of state-building; 'the methods state-builders have used to define the state as a normative order and to cultivate identification through targeting those designated as outsiders for discriminatory and often violent treatment'³⁴⁷. The violence of the assimilationist nationalizing post-colonial state is then met with violent means by the oppressed ethnic minority or segment of society demanding greater pluralism leading to an ever escalating spiral of violent conflict, of which ethnic conflict as discussed in this study is but one prominent expression. 'The creation of outsiders', then, Rae continues, 'is a political process in which "difference"

becomes translated into “otherness” and therefore a threat to be disposed of in one way or the other’,³⁴⁸ an aspect to the process of group identification that has already been addressed in chapter one. However, the extent to which ‘pathological homogenization’ plays a significant, and according to Rae even constitutive part of the state- and nation-building process in post-colonial states has been overlooked in the literature, which largely contents itself with labeling these states as inherently ‘weak’, ‘failed’,³⁴⁹ or ‘quasi states’, the latter being a term coined by Robert Jackson,³⁵⁰ in one of the most salient examples of the Eurocentrism in explanatory IR identified above.

The general understanding of sovereignty in explanatory IR and international law today differentiates between an ‘internal’ and an ‘external’ dimension of sovereignty,³⁵¹ as well as between a ‘constitutive’ and ‘declaratory’ theory of statehood.³⁵² While the ‘constitutive theory’ that requires recognition of a state by its peers as a criterion for its legal existence today is considered largely outdated³⁵³ – a question to which I will return shortly – the ‘declaratory theory’, as enshrined in the *Montevideo Convention* of 26 December 1933, defines states as persons of international law and invested with recognised agency in international relations that are constituted by four qualifications: (a) a permanent population, (b) a defined territory, (c) a government, and (d) the capacity to enter into relations with other states. If a political entity is in possession of both properties of sovereignty, an internal one, which means (c), being invested with the authority to exercise exclusive administrative control over (a) its population and, in the words of Max Weber, ‘the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force’³⁵⁴ within (b) a defined territory, and the external dimension, (d), the means to entertain relations with its peers, it de facto and de jure fulfils the criteria of statehood. A ‘failed’ or Jacksonian ‘quasi state’ then possesses ‘external sovereignty’, that is it has been recognised by its peers as a sovereign state – a status that cannot be revoked – but lacks ‘internal sovereignty’, that is the authority and legitimacy to exercise exclusive administrative control over the population and territory it claims.³⁵⁵ In sum, in the strict Weberian sense, it would not be a sovereign state at all, a dilemma Jackson recognises:

International society can enfranchise states that usually require general recognition of a government’s independence. But international society cannot empower states

to anything like the same extent since this for the most part involves internal relationships. State building is primarily a domestic process occurring over a long period of time that can only be brought about by combined wills, efforts, and responsibilities of governments and populations.³⁵⁶

In other words, Jackson acknowledges the normativity in the international sovereignty regime in the fact that at the time when these societies were decolonised and statehood bestowed upon them virtually overnight, they lacked the societal preconditions for successful state- and nation-building. Jackson also appreciates the fact that once irrevocable statehood had been bestowed upon these polities, due to the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of states, the international community forfeited most means to influence the state- and nation-building process in post-colonial states, and, arguably even contributed to bad governance and the exploitation and violation of citizens' rights and freedoms by their own governments by providing them with a cloud of legitimacy through recognition.³⁵⁷ What Jackson conveniently overlooks, though, is that the circumstance of not being 'ready yet' for statehood is not a deficiency inherent to these societies but a direct consequence of the colonial legacy.³⁵⁸ On the contrary, he argues:

Quasi states possess arms but they usually point inward at subjects rather than outward at foreign powers ... quasi states by definition are deficient and defective as apparatuses of power. They are not positively sovereign or naturally free ... The quasi state is an uncivil more than a civil place: it does not yet possess the rule of law based on the social contract. The populations of quasi states have not yet instituted a covenant. If no covenant exists, there can be neither subject nor sovereign nor commonwealth: no empirical state.³⁵⁹

Jackson's entire concept of quasi states is inherently Eurocentrist and borderline racist, resembling the Orientalism identified by Edward Said in socio-political discourses ever since the dawn of the Enlightenment,³⁶⁰ for, 'by also assigning the first world to the position of empirical states and the third world to that of quasi states, Jackson relies on a simplistic schema that constructs the first world as liberal, democratic, and progressive while the third world is relegated to stereotyping',³⁶¹ as the above passage attests. This Eurocentrism and Orientalism, however, is not limited to Jackson's juxtaposition of 'empirical' to 'quasi states' but is merely representative of the majority of explanatory IR's take on questions of sovereignty in post-colonial states, evidenced by, for

example, the argument of another influential theorist of explanatory IR, Hedley Bull:

Quasi states still share some of the characteristics that led European statesmen in the last century to conclude that they could not be brought into international society because they were not capable of entering into the kinds of relationship that European states had with one another.³⁶²

In light of such borderline racist declarations one cannot help but speculate that explanatory IR literature on sovereignty in post-colonial states not only seeks to draw a line between the developed and enlightened West and the under-developed and backward rest, where the former is portrayed in the best imperialist fashion as an ideal the latter would be well advised to emulate, but that it amounts to an outright defence of Europe's imperialist past as Füredi surmises:

The negative comparisons with the Third World were complemented by studies which suggested that it was the internal weakness of societies rather than colonialism which constituted the real problem. The substance of the argument was that the Third World was congenitally incapable of looking after its own affairs. Chaos, decay, and corruption were the characteristics associated with independent post-colonial states ... Problems were always portrayed as the fault of Third World societies. The evidence that imperialism had left behind a legacy of difficulties was invariably rejected.³⁶³

The direct opposite, nonetheless inherently related to failed or quasi states, is the concept of so called 'de facto states' since both are the consequences of the conveniently forgotten or rejected 'legacy of difficulties' with which imperialism and decolonization has endowed post-colonial states and societies. 'De facto states', a term that, among others, encompasses cases as diverse as Abkhazia, Nagorno Karabakh, Somaliland, South Ossetia, Transnistria, Northern Cyprus, and Taiwan, can be defined as those peculiar political entities in the international system that can successfully claim what failed states lack, 'internal sovereignty' or the authority and to some extent legitimacy to exercise exclusive administrative control over a certain population and territory, but lack 'external sovereignty', that is they are not recognised by the international community as sovereign states. They are the direct result of the clash of two principles of the post-colonial order in international relations and international

law: the right to national self-determination and the inviolability of existing borders.

During the nineteenth century it became acutely apparent to liberals that how the international system was structured at the time with multiple imperialist empires ruling over hundreds of millions of subjects of different nationalities violated the very liberal principles of the Enlightenment that had determined the birth of nations in Europe; in fact this violation of principles arguably had triggered World War One.³⁶⁴ With the demise of three of these multi-ethnic empires in World War One – namely the Habsburg, Ottoman, and Russian Empires – U.S. President Woodrow Wilson and other liberal thinkers and decision makers understood an opportunity to restructure the post-war international system along the lines of national self-determination as famously articulated in the President's *Fourteen Points* on 8 January 1918.³⁶⁵ The key problem with this new doctrine – among many others – was, succinctly summed up by Jennings, that 'on the surface, [the principle of self-determination] seemed reasonable: let the people decide. It was in fact ridiculous because the people cannot decide until somebody decides who are the people'.³⁶⁶ This question of how to define the people, the nation on which the right to self-determination would be bestowed, has troubled the principle of self-determination ever since.³⁶⁷ In the aftermath of World War One nations were predominantly ethnically defined and who would qualify for self-determination and a sovereign state of their own was based on how 'ready' for self-governance the people in question were deemed, leading to independent states for Poles, Czechs and Slovaks, Hungarians, and Southern Slavs in Europe, whose societies could claim a distinguished liberal tradition, and the mandate system in the Middle East where societies were seen as not yet fit for democratic self-rule.³⁶⁸ The mandate system in the Middle East – to be discussed in more detail in Part Two – resembled the colonial system in so far as great powers were instituted as stewards of people seen as not yet having the capacity for self-governance, but the administrative borders of these mandates were drawn not on ethnic principles but according to the strategic considerations of the great powers administering the mandates on the peoples' behalf. Consequently, when these societies were finally 'released' into independence in the 1950s and 1960s, the borders of the new states did not

reflect the ethnic composition within these regions but the administrative boundaries of the colonies and mandates. As a result of the nature of the decolonization process, a myriad of ethno-nationalist conflicts and attempts to redraw borders along ethno-nationalist lines of division were predictable to which the international community tried to respond by declaring the borders of the new states sacrosanct. Accordingly, the international system and international law, which like any law is man-made and as the prerogative of international elites with vested interests in maintaining the status quo is highly normative and arbitrary, today presumes states as actual beings and as organic, substantive, distinct, permanent, and bounded entities. Once external sovereignty, that is recognition by its peers, has been bestowed upon a state, it cannot be revoked. From an international law perspective, what is a state remains a state no matter to what extent it can perform 'internal sovereignty', by default it continues to perform 'external sovereignty'. Likewise, the boundaries of existing states are considered sacrosanct – enshrined in the *uti possidetis juris* principle³⁶⁹ – which prevents the emergence of new states, no matter where their processes of nation- or state-building has led them.

A consensus had held in international society that the right of self-determination was a matter to be resolved *under all conditions* within existing international boundaries, no matter how ethnically artificial or nationalistically oppressive (...) International law doctrine (...) generally confirmed this political and moral consensus that the 'self' in self-determination was meant to signify in *all* circumstances the existing *states* constituting international society. The only acceptable exceptions to this legal norm of limitation were in situations of secession by agreement.³⁷⁰

If what is an open-ended process is perceived as static, if what is dynamic and evolving is regulated to remain fixed, though, such a condition, as per the laws of physics, inevitably leads to tension. Self-evidently, in post-colonial states with their nationalities questions unresolved, the principle of the inviolability of borders has not led to the prevention of ethnic conflict but merely to successful secessionist entities not being recognised as independent states by the international community, since their very act of coming into being, secession, is seen as violation of international law. If these processes of nation- and state-building are obstructed in their 'natural' progress, in continuing to act out their perceived identity, by an international law and system that regards

nations and states as static and punishes violations of international norms, such as secession or irredentism with non-legitimation, i.e. non-recognition,³⁷¹ these processes are system-immanently forced to pursue alternative routes to the institutionalisation of their sovereignty. Such an alternative route is, according to the literature, the 'de facto state'.

Lacking conceptual consensus, these paradoxes of the international system are confusingly referred to by scholars as 'de facto states',³⁷² 'unrecognised states',³⁷³ 'contested states',³⁷⁴ 'state-like entity',³⁷⁵ 'de facto independent territory',³⁷⁶ or in a striking semantic contortion, 'unrecognised quasi states'.³⁷⁷ Semantics do matter here though, as their terminology reveals at least as much about the normativism of the respective scholars as about the phenomenon they essay to describe. Scott Pegg, who first treated the emergence of these peculiar political entities in the post-Cold War arena, comprehensively defines them 'de facto states', 'a secessionist entity that receives popular support and has achieved sufficient capacity to provide governmental services to a given population in a defined territorial area, over which it maintains effective control for an extended period of time'.³⁷⁸ By focusing on the illegitimacy of his 'de facto state', i.e. its birth by way of secession being in violation of international norms and laws, Pegg not only excludes cases where an argument for secession is difficult to make – Taiwan and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq being the most prominent examples – but also seems to buy into the essentialism of the state-centred discourse prevalent in international relations theory and political science, which leads him to fatalistically conclude, 'the de facto state is illegitimate no matter how effective it is'.³⁷⁹ Tozun Bahcheli et al., while employing the same term, 'de facto states', are more critical of the 'legal fiction of sovereign states',³⁸⁰ who, in their eyes, inevitably have to adapt to new realities; consequently, their 'de facto states' are 'states in waiting'. Yet, as James Harvey points out,³⁸¹ and as will be elaborated at great length in Part Three of this study, the Kurdistan Region has not emerged through a secessionist conflict, has not formally declared its independence, nor have its officials undertaken active steps in precipitating it, which renders the dichotomy 'de facto state' – 'de jure state' of little use, as in the case of the Kurdistan Region, where there is nothing to de jure recognise but its constitutional basis in the federal state of Iraq, which is not challenged by any member of the

international community. By the same token, the designation 'unrecognised state' advocated by Caspersen and Stansfield appears not very serviceable.³⁸² As they recognise that 'the absence of a formal declaration of independence can be a strategic attempt to increase for manoeuvre and the prospect for international support' (ibid.: 4), they include the Kurdistan Region in their cases; a 'demonstrated (...) aspiration for full, de jure, independence' instead of a formal declaration, they hold, suffices to qualify it as an 'unrecognised state'.³⁸³ From this perspective, a de facto or unrecognised state is nothing more but a state in waiting, a proto-state, a polity who has successfully gained control over its territory and – albeit unrecognised by other states – exercises sovereignty in this territory, yet whose sole *raison d'être* is to become a fully fledged, recognised sovereign nation state. The desire to become a state is simply assumed, often without much or with at best questionable empirical evidence; for in the state-centric perception of the social world of explanatory IR, what else would a nation that has successfully gained control over a territory aspire to but a state? Since in the modernist definition a nation is constituted by an aspiration for statehood, in the deterministic normativism of explanatory IR, alternative expressions of sovereignty such polities might harbour are not even considered. As I will set forth in Part Three of this study, though, I question this aspiration for de jure independence in the case of Iraqi Kurdistan together with, in general, the strict qualitative sequence from A to B to C, from secessionist liberation movement to unrecognised or de facto state to independence – or the aspiration thereof – as Caspersen & Stansfield and other authors of a explanatory IR provenance are propagating.

Clearly the most problematic term for such entities has been introduced to the debate by Pål Kolstø. Drawing on Robert Jackson's concept of quasi states, Kolstø makes a highly questionable case for terming them 'unrecognised quasi states'. In a normativism already criticised in relation to Jackson's 'quasi states' he proposes that 'if any of the unrecognised quasi states of today's world should succeed in achieving international recognition, most of them will not end up as "normal" or fully fledged states but instead transmute into recognised quasi states of the Jacksonian variety'.³⁸⁴ It is not surprising that de facto states generally get such bad press. In a state-centric international system, still dominated in scholarship and practice by the decree that holds sovereign states

as organic, substantive, distinct, static, and bounded entities and as the principal actors of the international system, de facto states are not only an anomaly but, as will be further elaborated in chapter four, challenge the system on two fundamental levels. On the one hand, they represent the dynamic nature of the process of nation- and state-building in which statehood is just a momentary phase, not a constant, and expose the international community of nation states as socio-political constructs, as, contrary to how explanatory IR's advocates would want to have it, not factual. In fact, I would go so far as to argue, they are the case in point par excellence for the fallacy of the explanatory IR paradigm of the sovereign nation state as a fixed, pre-given political entity. On the other hand, their creation constitutes a violation of the status quo, of the sacrosanct international system that guards state sovereignty and the inviolability of territories and borders like dogma. The very existence of de facto states is not only an affront to Jackson's empirical states that undermines their construct of the international community from within; in many cases, they have also come about as the product of *civitasicide*, the slaying or at least dismemberment of one of the states from which they emerged – a view subsumed in Gaspar Tamás interpretation of ethno-nationalism as 'ethno-anarchism' that only 'destroys states ... and fails to replace them with anything'.³⁸⁵ Hence, de facto states are often perceived as outlaws, as the pariahs of the international system, as 'transient anomalies'³⁸⁶ whose status, until resolved by, for example a reintegration into the state from which they originate, either by way of a negotiated political solution or by force, remains in the limbo of non-recognition.³⁸⁷ Yet, at the very latest, when this limbo persists, when what is portrayed as a 'temporal anomaly' becomes permanence, as is the case with Taiwan, or, to some extent, with Republika Srpska in Bosnia or the Kurdistan Region in Iraq, that the concept of all states as 'like units', of the 'empirical state' as a fixed, pre-given, static, and bounded unit that is central to how explanatory IR explains and conceives of the social world and the international system as well as to its self-image as a discipline, epistemologically and ontologically becomes no longer tenable.

Provisionally summing up these deliberations then, aside from an inherent Eurocentrism and often racialised systems of categorisation, what has been established in this section then is that explanatory IR's central framework of

sovereign nation states as fixed, pre-given political entities that essentially are 'like units' and exhibit a universal sameness in their defining characteristics is ontologically untenable. In fact, its very own categories and concepts of failed states and de facto states attest to them being not any of the above.

3.) Conclusion

The effects of groupism ...

After having demonstrated how explanatory IR conceptually treats ethnicity, ethnic conflict and state sovereignty, both epistemologically and ontologically as well as in terms of concepts, models, and analytical frameworks, and after having established a profound tendency to groupism in explanatory IR, and before proceeding with the case study, I want to sum up the deliberations made in this study so far by establishing in no uncertain terms the effects of such groupism, calling attention to the role of explanatory IR scholars who study identity politics as co-protagonists of these identity politics, and by shining a light on the consequences of a groupist epistemology and ontology on their objects of study, the supposed ethnic group in conflict. Earlier it has been established that by analytically treating ethnic groups as organic, substantive, distinct, homogeneous, and bounded units with social agency, explanatory IR scholars uncritically accept the rhetoric of ethno-nationalist elites; rather than calling it into question, they adopt the ethnic or nationalists elites' strategic essentialism as the basis of their enquiries and contribute to the reification and substantialisation of the those elites' primordialism and to the reproduction of its logic. But what does this process of reification and substantialisation mean in practice, what are its effects on the object of study for those explanatory IR scholars who study ethnic conflict, what are the very actual consequences of their adopting the strategic essentialisms and participants' primordialism of the ethno-nationalist elites they set out to study, of analytically treating ethnic groups as organic, substantive, distinct, homogeneous, and bounded units with social agency, and all too often analytically equating them to states? In a first instance then, explanatory IR scholars who approach and explain an ethnic conflict in groupist terms reify, and substantialise how ethno-nationalist elites want the group to be seen by the outside world and, to put not too fine a point to it, they are complicit in the solidification and substantialisation of the constructed ethnic lines of division, of the imagined 'us' versus 'them' dichotomies and the resulting identity politics that form the basis of their essentialised world views. In reifying and substantialising those essentialist and primordialist (self-

)perceptions of ethno-nationalist elites, explanatory IR scholars legitimize those (self-)perceptions and portrayals, this ethnicised discourse, and since the authority, the claim to leadership of ethno-nationalist elites is grounded in these constructed ethnic identities such scholars also indirectly legitimize their leadership, their position to speak authoritatively on behalf of the group. In sum, by reifying and substantializing the ethnicised discourse, by reproducing and confirming its logic, mainstream IR scholars, inadvertently or not, do the ethno-nationalist elites' bidding by authenticating and legitimizing their claim to representation, power, leadership and authority.

What is more, explanatory IR tends to substantiate, reify, and legitimize those ethnic elites' claims for the sovereign control over a certain territory. It has been noted earlier that explanatory IR notoriously kept struggling with forms of identity in its conceptualization of the international system. However, with the rise of ideational conflicts in the 1990s, such a position of conceptual negligence was no longer tenable. While at large ignoring, as it had always done, class and religious identities and permitting gender an existence at the margins of the disciplinary discourse – it focused on the one form of identity it considered itself best situated to problematise: ethnicity. This concentration on ethnic identities at the expense of other forms of identity, I hypothesise, is not only rooted in the self-perception of IR as the social science discipline dominating the scholarly discourse on issues of war and peace in the international domain but also because ethnic identity, rather than non-territorial class, religion, and gender, is presumed to be translatable into state-centric terms and rationalist positivist explanatory models. By translatable I do not refer to the nature of ethnic identity, on which explanatory IR, as has been shown, still has very little of meaning to say other than raking up primordialist conceptions of the ethnic group and nation, but rather the presumed purpose and objective of ethnic conflict – and conflict is what explanatory IR mostly deals with when studying ethnicity. If it were ontologically possible to reduce ethnic conflict to merely a power struggle over territory, as for example Monica Duffy-Toft does,³⁸⁸ classical IR, for whom power struggles over territory have been at the centre of its research agenda and expertise, could apply the same rationalist positivist models, concepts and frameworks it has applied to states, also to ethnic groups. In this sense, Duffy-Toft argues:

Understanding ethnic war therefore requires an understanding of how two actors come to view control over the same piece of ground as an indivisible issue. For ethnic groups, the key factor is settlement patterns ... [they] bind the capability and legitimacy of an ethnic group's mobilization for sovereignty. Where both capability and legitimacy are high ... ethnic groups are likely to consider control over disputed territory an indivisible issue and demand sovereignty. However, states are likely to view control over a territory ... as an indivisible issue whenever precedent setting effects come into play, ... i.e. the state fears establishing the reputation that it allows the division of its territory. Only when both an ethnic group and a state ... view the issue of territorial control as indivisible will violence erupt. If, however, the ethnic group does not demand sovereignty ... ethnic war is less likely.³⁸⁹

In the next paragraph Duffy-Toft clarifies that 'ethnic groups (and nations) are not states', and that 'although reducing ethnic groups to the ontological equivalent of states may make for elegant and parsimonious theories, my research makes it clear that such theories can be of only limited use'.³⁹⁰ What Duffy-Toft fails to realize, though, is that indirectly she is doing precisely that, ontologically equating ethnic groups with states, since she ascribes to ethnic groups an aspiration for sovereignty, which is generally seen as the prerogative of the nation and in consequence of the state. She claims that the pursuit of sovereign statehood by an ethnic group – who she defines also in groupist terms – against a state who defends the indivisibility of its territory is what turns an ethnic conflict violent. Thus, in one go, she not only ontologically equates the ethnic group with the nation but also with a proto-state, presuming not only its desire to control a territory in question in alternative terms, an autonomous region for example, but to become the unqualified sovereign of this territory, that is a new state. This chain of reasoning, of first conceptualising ethnic groups in groupist terms, and then ontologically and analytically equating them with nations and proto-states, is not limited to Duff-Toft's work, which is only given as a particularly revealing example, but runs like a red thread through most of the explanatory IR literature on ethnic conflict. What is more, I argue, treating ethnic groups in groupist terms and ontologically equating them with nations and consequently with proto-states is the defining criterium of explanatory IR's conceptualization of ethnic groups. I further argue that this ontological equation is what allows explanatory IR to continue applying the same rationalist positivist concepts, methods, and frameworks it applies for analysing states to ethnic groups. For, if ethnic conflict can be ontologically equated to inter-state conflict

as a power struggle over territory, the same theories and tools for resolving these conflicts as to conventional territorial conflicts can also be applied; that is by reducing ethnic conflict to a territorial conflict, it appears to be made manageable.

What actually happens though, is that the portrayal of ethnic groups in groupist terms, of conceptually equating them with states, becomes tantamount with a substantialization, reification and legitimization of their claims for sovereign control over a certain territory as well as to speak with authority on behalf of a organic, substantive, distinct, homogeneous, and bounded group. This process of legitimization, though, works both ways; that is, as discussed earlier, if we accept identity formation as a Barthian process of social differentiation between the self and the other³⁹¹ and as a Weberian form of collective political action,³⁹² a legitimization of the territorial claims, perceptions, images, narratives and portrayals of the self implicitly leads also to a legitimizations of territorial claims, perceptions, images, narratives, and portrayals of the other.³⁹³ Yet this other is not value-neutral. As outlined in the Introduction, the notion that Western philosophy is structured along a series of binary opposites in a hierarchical relationship with each other in which 'the second term in each pair' is not only co-constitutive of the first but as such is also 'considered the negative, corrupt, undesirable version of the first',³⁹⁴ forms the basis of Jaques Derrida's paradigm of deconstruction.³⁹⁵ Consequently then, if one applies Derrida's logic of deconstruction, also outlined in the Introduction, to how explanatory IR analytically treats ethnic groups in conflict, by reifying, substantialising, reproducing and legitimizing the self in identity discourses explanatory IR also reifies, substantialises, reproduces and legitimizes the negative attributes of the other, and its perception as the enemy, its vilification. It has been pointed out that any study of a minority group in, for example, a state is incomplete without giving equal attention to the study of the ethnic identity of the majority group.³⁹⁶ From that logically follows when applied to ethnic conflict that by reifying, substantialising, reproducing, and legitimizing the self-perception of the oppressed minority, explanatory IR's groupism also reifies, substantialises, reproduces, and legitimizes the perception of the majority and/or the nationalising state as an assimilationist oppressor; or, in reverse, by reifying, substantialising, reproducing, and legitimizing the majority

and/or the nationalising state's struggle for the survival of 'its' state, explanatory IR reifies, substantialises, reproduces, and legitimizes the perception of the minority as irredentist secessionists. In sum then, supposedly detached and scientifically objective explanatory IR scholars, in their groupist ontologies and epistemologies, in their taking ethnic groups as organic, substantive, distinct, homogeneous, and bounded units possessing social agency, are complicit in the ethnicised discourse, both at the level of the supposedly secessionist minority and the supposedly assimilationist and oppressive majority and/or nationalising state, and reify, substantialise, reproduce, and legitimize both sides' politics of division – as will be illustrated in the case study by deconstructing the (self-)perceptions of the Turkish state, Iraqi Kurdistan, and of the Kurdish political parties and insurgencies.

However, there is more to the picture than explanatory IR scholars as co-protagonists in ethnic conflicts reifying, substantiating, reproducing, and legitimizing already existing ethnic lines of division in an ethnicised discourse. Recapitulating what has been said in the Introduction about Foucault's concept of 'discursive formations' in the process of knowledge production,³⁹⁷ namely that objects of discourse only come into existence through their discursive formations including its inherent social configurations of power, authority, and hierarchy, when talking about explanatory IR's role in shaping the discourse of ethnic conflict, these discursive formations and their inherent social configurations need to be taken into account. Explanatory IR scholars who study, analyse, explain, and write on ethnic conflict are naturally part of this discursive formation, they are, in the terminology of this study, co-protagonists of ethnic conflict by virtue of their position to speak authoritatively about issues of war and peace in the international system, as well as by virtue of their role as categorizers of the categorized, in this case the ethnic group. However, the differentiation between social group and social category as self-defined and other-defined social entities is not as clear-cut and straightforward as some primers in the social sciences or a Brubakarian constructivism – see chapter one – may suggest. On the contrary,

categorisation is as much part of identity as self-identification ... categorization makes a powerful contribution to the everyday reality – the realization ... of groups. Attributions of group membership feature routinely in how we categorize others,

and the categorization of out-groups is intrinsic to in-group identification. Who we think we are, is intimately related to who we think others are, and vice versa.³⁹⁸

. Consequently, in their groupist epistemologies and ontologies on ethnic conflict, explanatory IR scholars do more than contributing to already existing ethnicised discourses, and they do even more than reifying, substantialising, reproducing, and legitimizing already existing ethnic lines of division and the 'us' versus 'them' dichotomies, together with the strategic essentialisms of ethno-nationalist elites and/or nationalising states in which they are grounded. If the discursive formations on ethnic conflict – of which IR scholars are a constitutive part and in which they are co-protagonists – only gain meaning through the discourse itself, and if the act of categorization is constitutive of the process of self-identification, then it is IR scholars who take part in bringing these very identities into existence, who take part in their creation and construction.

Since this is the core argument of this study about how explanatory IR analytically treats ethnic conflict, these conjunctures, in complete repudiation of the positivist rationalist essentialism discussed earlier, cannot be emphasised strongly enough when identifying the effects of a groupist approach to ethnic conflict. Those effects are: (1) Any scholar, whether adhering to a groupist perspective or not, participating in the discourse on ethnic conflict by way of studying, analysing, categorizing, explaining, or writing about it, is intrinsically part of the discursive formation on ethnic conflict and therefore actively takes part in the construction, and creation of the forms of identity he/she sets out to study, analyse, categorise, explain, or write about. (2) From that it follows that the epistemologies and ontologies under which this studying, analysing, categorising, and writing about is done, matter profoundly; if done from a groupist perspective, that is by taking on '*categories of ethnopolitical practice as our categories of social analysis*',³⁹⁹ by analytically treating ethnic groups as organic, substantive, distinct, homogeneous, and bounded units with social agency as well as analytically equating them with states, such a portrayal reifies, substantialises, reconfirms, and legitimizes the politics of division, strategic essentialisms, and 'us' versus 'them' dichotomies in which these ethnic identities are grounded as well as the categories/groups' empowered agents. (3) Since the binary opposites of 'us' versus 'them' are never value-neutral such a reification, substantialisation, reconfirmation, and legitimization of the binary

opposites in identity discourses themselves also intrinsically leads to a reification, substantialisation, reconfirmation, and legitimization of the values that come with it, that is the negative attributes of the other, its perception as the enemy, its vilification.

... and alternatives to it

As cautioned in the Introduction, the aim of deconstruction is never to develop new meta-theories, models, or frameworks that replace the ones that have been deconstructed, which cannot be the task of deconstruction, since to do so would violate its very principles, that is its inherently critical attitude to any kind of meta-theory. Therefore, readers who expect at this stage the concepts and models of explanatory IR on (ethnic) identity to be replaced with a new, neater definition are bound to be disappointed; to develop new definitions is not the task of this study – as a matter of fact, it would contradict its aspiration and methodology – and consequently will be left to others.

This limitation, however, does not prevent, after expounding the deficiencies of explanatory IR's approach to (ethnic) identity, and after revealing why explanatory IR does what it does, that is contextualising its approach – as has been done in the previous chapters – from pointing out alternative conceptualizations of (ethnic) identity from IR literature that harmonise more closely with the classic understanding of ethnicity, introduced in chapter one, which explanatory IR chooses to neglect for the reasons diagnosed. Chapter one has elaborated that Max Weber describes ethnic groups as human collectives defined by their 'subjective belief in a common descent';⁴⁰⁰ in other words for him ethnicity is not an essential, pre-given characteristic, as it is for most of explanatory IR, but a belief system, an ideology, a way of seeing the world that gets strengthened and solidified through collective behaviour, through acting together as a group. Likewise, it has also been shown in this passage that Frederick Barth views ethnic groups as emerging through social interaction with others, by constructing social boundaries that define as much who belongs to the group as who does not, that, in fact, the process of constructing social boundaries – understood as system of inclusion and exclusion – is constitutive of the group formation and identification process; in other words that the self

cannot exist without the other and vice versa, that they are mutually constitutive. Ethnic groups, thus, are 'in a sense *created* through that very contact [with other groups]. Group identities must always be defined in relation to that which they are not – in other words to non-members of the group'.⁴⁰¹ If it is the interaction with others that constitutes the ethnic group, if group formation and ethnic identification is processual, relational, circumstantial, and contextual – and not, as explanatory IR portrays them, relatively stable, pre-given, substantial, bounded, and at large homogenous units that can be attributed with social agency – then ethnic identities are logically the very opposite of stable, substantial, and a pre-given but are one of multiple and dynamic identities, 'points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us',⁴⁰² that are 'never a final or settled matter',⁴⁰³ are 'decentred, fragmented by contradictory discourses and by the pull of other identities'⁴⁰⁴ – and are accentuated or attenuated according to context. In sum, they are not factual but socio-political constructs and 'discursive formations', in keeping with Craig Calhoun, for whom ethnic groups and 'nations are constituted largely by the claims themselves, by the way of talking and thinking and acting that relies on these sorts of claims to produce collective identity, to mobilise people for collective projects, and to evaluate peoples and practices'.⁴⁰⁵

All this amounts to a sound rejection of essentialist groupism in explanatory IR, of ascribing the ethnic group with social agency, of analytically equating it with the state, and of ethnic identity as the independent variable to explain ethnic conflict. In his survey of the recent literature on ethnic conflict that operationalises ethnic identity as the independent variable Kanchan Chandra comes to the conclusion:

Ethnic identity – and concepts related to ethnic identity such as ethnic diversity, ethnic riots, ethnic parties, ethnic violence, ethnic conflict, and so on – either does not matter or has not shown to matter as an independent variable by most previous theoretical work on ethnic identity ... In most instances, the mechanisms driving our explanatory theories about the effect of ethnic identity assume properties such as the fixedness of ethnic identity, cultural homogeneity and a shared history, which are not associated with ethnic identities ... The outcomes our theories seek to explain, then, must be caused by some other variables that act independently or interact with ethnic identity.⁴⁰⁶

This assessment applies to explanatory IR frameworks such as the ethnic alliance model that most palpably seeks to explain ethnic conflict and the formation of ethnic alliances with ethnic identity as the independent variable, thus tautologically explaining ethnic conflict with ethnicity. It also applies to the ethnic security dilemma, on which Chandra observes:

This argument assumes that ethnic categories, like states, are fixed entities. If individuals could change their ethnic identities, then one response to the collapse of the state would be to switch to less threatening identities rather than go to war. The argument also implies that ethnic groups are more likely than other types of groups to have a common history. Otherwise, the security dilemma should be an explanation for intergroup conflict in the wake of state collapse in general, rather than ethnic conflict in particular. However, neither fixity nor a common history are intrinsic properties of ethnic identities ... This argument, thus, cannot be read as an argument about the effect of ethnic identities per se. The effect of ethnic identities here is contingent on some extrinsic variable that produces fixity in ethnic identities and a perception of a common history.⁴⁰⁷

If the effects of ethnic identity are contingent on an extrinsic variable which means that for the occurrence of ethnic conflict ethnic identity cannot serve as the explanans, that it has been demonstrated to fall through as the independent variable explaining the occurrence of ethnic conflict, ethnic identity should be operationalised as the dependent variable, instrumentalism argues. As has been shown, instrumentalism covers a wide spectrum of approaches, from Christia reducing ethnic identity to merely a political tool that can easily be traded for any other form of identity if the situation calls for it – thus rendering the elites who do the trading omnipotent in shaping the discourse, and by doing so reifying the structure via the agent – to Posner and Olzak's more nuanced application of instrumentalism that puts equal emphasis on the motives of elites and masses and highlights the limitations to either of them playing the ethnic card. They show that individuals and groups, elites and masses alike, in any given context can only operationalize identities from a pre-existing repertoire and that this choice comes with costs and long-term commitments. Yet, the trouble with instrumentalism in general – aside from its positivist belief in a strict causality – remains their prioritizing of mostly material interests to dictate people's choices and calling on identities. Posner, for example, states,

I am not denying that ethnic identities are sometimes sources of extremely strong feelings ... In many contexts ... viewing ethnic identity change as a product of strategic calculations about coalition size will be counter-productive and lead to misinterpretations of the motivations of social behaviour ... I [do not] want to suggest that emotions such as fear, hatred, or resentment do not trump rational calculations in motivating ethnic behaviour in some contexts.⁴⁰⁸

Yet his analysis is almost exclusively dedicated to economic incentives such as patronage systems, the expectation and distribution of sinecures and public goods provisions as the independent variables to explain why a certain type of identity has been activated in this context. Posner admits as much when clarifying, 'like ethnicity itself, the applicability of the strict instrumentalist approach I adopt is situational ... My rationale for adopting a purely instrumental view of ethnicity in this study is simply that, while not appropriate for every explanation, it is appropriate for the expressly political context that this book treats'.⁴⁰⁹ That is all fair and fine and does not in any way diminish the contributions of Posner's work commented on earlier. What it illustrates, though, is that instrumentalism does not provide a general theory of ethnic identity since it is only applicable in a certain, finite context. By its proponents' own admission, it fails to explain the affect-side of ethnic identity, for example why situations may arise in which someone refuses to abandon his or her ethnic identity even in exchange for material benefits or political advantages, why people may stubbornly stick to their ethnic identity against their economic or security interests, why ideational factors may outweigh cost-benefit analyses.

A possible solution to this conundrum of ethnic identity demonstrably failing to sufficiently explain the complexities of ethnic conflict as either the dependent or Independent variable is offered by Alexander Wimmer, who develops an intricate processual multi-level approach, where ethnic boundary construction can be seen as either dependent or independent variable, depending on context.⁴¹⁰

A multilevel process theory does not offer a simple formula relating 'dependent' to 'independent' variables as in mainstream social sciences, for example, by predicting the degree of political salience of ethnicity from levels of gross domestic product, democratization, or ethno-linguistic heterogeneity ... Rather, it is a generative model where variables are 'dependent' or 'independent' depending on which phase in the cycle of reproduction and transformation [of ethnic boundary

making] we focus. The model thus ... emphasize[s] that in order to understand the logic of social life we should focus on the processes that generate and transform its varying forms.⁴¹¹

While Wimmer's contribution has much to recommend itself and shares many commonalities with the processual approach advocated in this study two crucial reservations are to be made, both in relation to Wimmer's positivist epistemology. Wimmer's model still adheres to the principle that all social action and its underlying motives are grounded in a hierarchical sequence of cause and effect, that cause and effect can be clearly differentiated and categorized, that they can be operationalized as variables in order to explain these actions and motives, and finally that we analysts are capable of doing this differentiating, categorizing, operationalizing of variables, and explaining in a detached, objective and rational fashion.

I believe neither of this to be the case. Grounded in constitutive theory I would argue that the social world is too complex, too much in constant flux to be neatly delineated into variables, into clear-cut divisions of empirically measurable cause and effect, into distinct and finite categories, and, perhaps most importantly, that we social scientists by applying objective and rational benchmarks can adequately explain it. We are an intrinsic part of the social world we seek to explain, are co-constitutive of it, are its co-protagonists like the actors in our studies whose actions and motives we interpret. We are biased towards a certain view long before we conceive of a research project, and our selection of variables and the results our research produces are just a reflection of this bias, of our inherent subjectivity, and therefore can only offer a personal narrative, one 'reality' among many others, at best a snapshot with very limited capacity for generalizations. This intellectual honesty implies an admission that instead of explaining the social world we can only offer a perception of it, and an admission that the causes and effects of social action are not as readily quantifiable and translateable into variables as positivist epistemology suggests. And since they are not, I would propose, in line with constitutive theory, to do away with dependent and independent variables, hierarchical sequences of cause and effect, and clearly bound entities as categories of analysis. They do not reflect the diversity, fluidity, and complexity of the social world, and neither

does the fallacious notion of scientific objectivity and of the detached scientists as rational observer and equitable 'explainer'.

Instead, drawing on Fierke, I intend to make a case for perceiving the process of identity formation in the social world as a fluid and complex matrix of identities and interests without hierarchical sequence of identities and interests as dependent and independent variables. She elaborates:

A causal relationship requires the isolation of independent and dependent variables. A constitutive discourse analysis, by contrast, requires that we 'look and see' the matrix of identities and interests and the process by which they are gradually transformed through historical interactions. These interactions do not by definition magnify the difference between identities; they may also attempt to renegotiate a different type of relationship between self and other.⁴¹²

Aside from presenting an alternative to the positivist principle of explanatory IR of classifying the social world into quantifiable variables and clearly bounded categories by allowing for a more fluid, diverse, complex, and less hierarchical and standardized make-up of the social world, the alternate epistemology and ontology of constitutive theory would therefore, after deconstructing the binary opposites around which our social world is supposedly constructed, consider other forms of human coexistence, forms more grounded in congruities rather than differences. Most importantly, constitutive theory directs our attention away from the 'what' identity is, discussed ad nauseam and, as has been shown, rather unconvincingly, to the more fruitful examination of 'how' identity works. Fierke continues:

Conventional social scientific approaches treat entities as discrete and isolated ... [But] identities are not isolated. They are constituted within a world populated by other identities, particular kinds of objects and particular forms of action ... [Constitutive theory highlights those] by drawing out the structure of relationships, objects and actions, the everyday assumptions that constitute a world 'made strange', such that the analyst can observe its workings from more of a distance. In undertaking a study of this kind [i.e. a constitutive theory-based], the analyst is not observing 'the' world, as it exists objectively, but [is] rather looking at how 'a' world works in practice, including the power relationships and hierarchies that hold it together, the forms of legitimacy by which this power is maintained, or the challenges by which a particular constellation of identity and action is undermined and potentially transformed.⁴¹³

This constitutive perspective on ethnic identities has guided the first part of this study that put the role of the analyst and his attempts, grounded in positivist explanatory IR epistemologies and ontologies, to construct a world 'made strange' in order to take a step back and examine it 'objectively' from a distance, centre stage, and it will also instruct the empirical case study. Here, though, rather than a textual analysis, our attention will shift to demonstrating why a positivist approach with identities and interest operationalized as dependent and independent variables demonstrably fails to explain the relations between Iraqi Kurdish ethno-nationalist parties and the PKK from the early 1980s until the present. At each stage of these relations we will pause and, echoing Fierke's above call for a constitutive approach and what it entails, reflect on why their relations are better viewed through the prism of a fluid and complex matrix of identities and interests, how the interplay of these factors works, analyzing the structures and hierarchies of power that constitute the parties' domination of the respective Kurdish discourse for self-determination, and how Kurdish identities shifted and were transformed by intrinsic and extrinsic factors during this period.

Part Two

4.) State Formation and the Origins of Kurdish Ethno-nationalisms in Iraq and Turkey

Turkey's Sèvres Syndrome

The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, resulting from its defeat in World War One, was the cataclysmic event of the twentieth-century Middle East. Centuries-old political and socio-economic structures were replaced by new entities, most profoundly the modern, sovereign nation-state. Over the course of less than two years, about half a dozen new states were created on drawing boards in European chancelleries, where the victors of the great carnage tried to reconcile the idealistic principles of American President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, calling for the national self-determination of the peoples of the Ottoman Empire, and the popular demands of a new era with their traditional imperialistic ambitions. It is this contradiction in principles, world views, and directions that determined the fragmented process of state formation in the Middle East, while its legacies form the root-cause of countless ethnic and ethno-nationalist conflicts that keep haunting the region until today.

The Armistice of Moudros on 30 October 1918 ended the hostilities between the Ottoman Empire and the Entente in the Middle Eastern theatre of World War One. On 10 August 1920, representatives of the Ottoman Empire reluctantly signed the Treaty of Sèvres that deprived the Sublime Porte of 72 percent of the territory it had controlled before the war. It foresaw the creation of several independent Arab – as well as an Armenian and Kurdish – states under mandate of the League of Nations. In regard to the Ottoman Empire's Kurdish population the Treaty of Sèvres stipulated:

Article 62: 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 ...

Article 64: If within one year of 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 people are capable of such independence and recommends that it should be granted to them, Turkey hereby agrees to execute such recommendations, and to renounce all rights and title over these areas ... 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.⁴¹⁴

For the first time, the idea of an independent Kurdish state was realistically within the grasp of its people and enjoyed international support.⁴¹⁵ Yet it was not meant to be.

Unlike the German Reich or the Austro-Hungarian Empire, a good part of the Turkish political establishment and army refused to accept a peace by decree and took up arms against the Entente's imperialist power grabs. In the Turkish War of Independence (1919-22), the Turkish Nationalists around Mustafa Kemal 'Atatürk' not only mobilized large swaths of the population for their cause but also dealt the Greek invaders and their allies devastating blows. Needless to say, Turkish nationalism or Turkism did not emerge out of the blue with the 'Young Turk' Revolution of 1908, but, as all nationalisms, had various 'precursors, proto-nationalist movements, and ideologies that prepare[d] the ground for the emergence of [Turkish] nationalism'.⁴¹⁶ In fact, post-World War One Turkism or Kemalism should not be understood as a clear brake from Ottomanism nor from the more pronounced Turkish nationalism of the 'Young Turk' movement that, dominating the governing *Committee for Union and Progress* (CUP), de facto ruled the Empire since 1908. While doing away with its supposedly antiquated structures of governance, Turkism at first held out a 'new interpretation' of Ottomanism's basic principles, yet at the same time 'attribut[ed] a central role to the Turkish ethnic group within the Ottoman whole'.⁴¹⁷

In several important, interrelated aspects, Kemalism though, departed from traditional CUP doctrine. First, while acknowledging the primacy of education and the Turkish language,⁴¹⁸ Kemalism, echoing Heather Rear's 'pathological homogenisation' discussed earlier, put emphasis on forced assimilation. Every Muslim subject of the new Turkish state – 'Christians [were considered] as

unsuitable material for becoming “Turkish”⁴¹⁹ and consequently expelled in a mass-exodus⁴²⁰ – could become a Turk; those who refused to adopt the Turkish *Leitkultur* were treated like the non-Muslim minorities: they were expelled or eliminated in the name of a founding ideology, that, over the course of a few years, had become distinctly racist and social-Darwinist, with ‘lesser people’ preordained to pay their debt for the ‘survival of the fittest’.⁴²¹

The extent to which the political space became ethnicized in the early days of the Turkish Republic has to be understood as a function of the pathological paranoia inherent to the Kemalist perception of *watan*, the fatherland, or as Omer Taspinar calls it, ‘state borders nationalism’.

‘State borders nationalism’, which fundamentally stresses the indivisibility of nation and state within the republic’s territorial borders, continues to be the defining principle of Turkish nationalism. Given its major preoccupation with territorial sovereignty and the fear of disintegration, Turkish ‘state borders nationalism’ considers the granting of ethnicity-related minority rights as a betrayal of the indivisible unity between the state and its nation. As a result, even symbolic compromises regarding minority rights are considered as a prelude to separatism.⁴²²

This paranoia via ethnic and/or religious minorities, originating from the so called ‘Eastern Question’ during the late days of the Ottoman Empire, World War One and the War of Independence, in which Assyrians, Armenians, Greeks, and to a lesser extent Kurds had conspired with one or an alliance of Western powers against the Empire or the viability of a Turkish *watan*, became the leitmotiv of Kemalist state and security doctrine. Indeed, Turkish politicians and the army continue to be plagued by what has been called in the literature the ‘Sèvres Syndrome’.⁴²³ Fatma Göçek defines the ‘Sèvres Syndrome’ as a nexus of ‘those individuals, groups or institutions in Turkey who interpret all public interactions – domestic or foreign – through a framework of fear and anxiety over the possible annihilation, abandonment or betrayal of the Turkish state by the West’.⁴²⁴ Drawing on the Bourdieuan concept of habitus, Jung and Piccoli expand:

One essential aspect of the Kemalist habitus is its perpetuation of the Kemalist experience of external conspiracy and internal betrayal. The historical culmination of this experience as well as its social transmission to the National Movement was the Treaty of Sèvres. Although never implemented, the clauses of Sèvres, calling

for a territorial division of Turkey, became the incarnation of both the Ottoman defeat and the Turkish national resistance ... The Sèvres syndrome developed into a cornerstone of the Kemalist world-view, making it essential for an understanding of Kemalist perceptions of threat.⁴²⁵

What is remarkable in this context is not only the persistence of the 'Sèvres Syndrome' into our times,⁴²⁶ but that Sèvres actually became a founding myth of the Turkish Republic. After all, the Turkish nationalist forces defeated the Greek invaders and their Entente allies and wrested from the West the much more favourable Treaty of Lausanne (24 July 1923), in which Turkey's enemies officially recognised the Turkish Republic that had managed to carve out double the territory than what had been stipulated at Sèvres. Why then would a moment of defeat that was never implemented rather than the victory at Lausanne become one of the defining founding myths of the Republic? Göçek speculates that the Turkish nationalist government, torn between a population 'traumatised by a decade of wars capping a century of pain, suffering and humiliation'⁴²⁷ at the hands of the West and its own designs for imposing on this very population a project of rapid transformation and Western modernization, had to create an official, state-sanctioned valve for public sentiment to express itself – a valve that gained a momentum of its own, turned into a founding myth, and became a national syndrome.

What is for the purposes of this study a more central aspect, is the fact that the 'Sèvres Syndrome' did not remain limited to Turkey's relations with the West but became aggrandised into a general perception of 'bemoan[ing] Turkey's location in a "bad neighbourhood", and as 'besieged by a veritable ring of evil'.⁴²⁸ This pathological fear of external conspiracies against the Turkish *watan*, the sacred territory of the fatherland – whether Western or regional – is accompanied by a widely held perception of any internal opposition to Turkish state doctrine being either stirred from abroad or this internal opposition actually acting as a 'fifth column' for foreign interests. This perception of domestic problems as exogenous, as instigated abroad, is particularly relevant in the context of the two major challenges the Turkish politico-military establishment since the 1980s has identified for the survival of the state: Islamism and ethnic, i.e. Kurdish separatism. The attitude towards the so called 'Kurdish Question' in Turkey that any political demands or dissent of its Kurdish minority are not

home-grown, and therefore cannot be solved in political dialogue, that any ethnicised discourse is steered by external enemies, and that any party engaging in such a discourse is a foreign agent or acting on behalf of foreign interests is best summed up in a statement by former President Süleyman Demirel who categorically asserted, 'there is no other political solution to [Kurdish demands] than to render these people ineffective by force', and that the West is 'trying to involve the Sèvres Treaty to set up a Kurdish state in the region ... and that was what [the West] meant by political solutions'.⁴²⁹ Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit, after the capture of Abdullah Öcalan, took the same line, when declaring, 'there is no Kurdish problem in the country, but only PKK terrorism supported by the outside in order to divide Turkey'.⁴³⁰ Consequently, and as will be detailed throughout the third part of this study, this perception has strongly shaped the attitude and response of the Turkish politico-military establishment to any autonomous Kurdish region in Iraq that first and foremost was seen as a safe haven for Kurdish insurgencies and as a first step towards an independent Kurdish state that would then actively pursue the re-unification of all Kurdish lands and thus the division of the Turkish *watan*.⁴³¹ What is equally noteworthy is that, by the same token, the ethnic alliance model and related groupist frameworks that operationalise group solidarity based on shared ethnicity as their independent and, as has been detailed, determining variable to explain the behaviour of parties of the same ethnic group in ethnic conflicts – in this case the Iraqi Kurdish polity and its relations with the PKK – not only buy into the pathological paranoia of the Turkish state but actively contribute to the misrepresentation of legitimate Kurdish grievances in Turkey as exogenous. In other words, ironically, it is often Western scholarship and explanatory IR that is demonstrably complicit in the Turkish politico-military establishment manipulating the myth of the 'Sèvres Syndrome' and the discourse of denial, exclusion and persecution that comes with it.

On the 'artificiality' of the Iraqi state

'Of all the major states in the Middle East, Iraq faced the most formidable obstacles to state formation',⁴³² Simon Bromley observes in his comparative account of the processes of state formation in the post-World War One Middle East. He continues:

The sheer arbitrariness of the country's formation, together with the absence of any developed tradition of state stability and the degree of ethnic and religious heterogeneity ... produced an extremely refractory inheritance for state-building. In addition, as a major oil producer during the critical period when the state's authority was finally imposed on society, the rentier aspects of the Iraqi polity further increased its ability to opt for coercion over less brutal forms of mobilisation and control. The consequence has been the creation of the most controlled and repressive society in the Middle East.⁴³³

It is true that Iraq, perhaps more than any other state in the Middle East, is an arbitrary creation of the imperialist designs and compromises of the World War One victors, and while in the randomness of its borders, the heterogeneous composition of its population, and its rulers' proneness to authoritarianism it resembles many post-colonial states in Africa, it exceeds their inherent instability in the fact that its British imperialist overlords imposed on its society a completely alien ruling dynasty with no social or historical ties to Iraq's population whatsoever.⁴³⁴ Never in the history of the lands between the Persian Gulf and the Zagros Mountain Range has there been a single, coherent, political entity of its own. From the times of Nebuchadnezzar to Mehmed VI., the last sultan to reign from the Sublime Porte, it had always been part of larger empires in which the manifold localist and often competing identities of its people were overlaid by greater unifying ideologies and *Weltanschauungen*. With these common bonds severed after World War One, unlike Turkey – forged on the anvil of Kemalism – Iraq lacked and arguably still wants for a founding ideology furnishing the state with internal legitimacy and evoking loyalty from its citizens. Worse, when creating Iraq, the British, eager to establish an overland connection between the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf as a link to India, and who as the occupying force in Basra and Baghdad were seen as the logical choice for running the yet-to-be established Mandate of Mesopotamia, imposed at the Cairo Conference of March 1921 on a majority Shi'i population an alien Sunni ruler, their old war-time ally, Faisal, the son of Hussein bin Ali, the Sharif of Mecca.⁴³⁵ By doing so, they established the fatal pattern characteristic for Iraq of the Sunni Arab minority ruling over and oppressing a Shi'i Arab and Sunni Kurdish majority; a pattern culminating in the reign of terror of Saddam Hussein.

The British state-building exercise on the banks of the Euphrates and Tigris – one is hard pressed to believe they ever genuinely intended to build a nation there – was flawed from its conceptualization. It was established on two overriding principles: an ‘empire on the cheap’⁴³⁶ – to extract a maximum of profits with a minimum of input – and resulting from that, the application of ‘divide-and-rule’ maxims, a re-tribalization of society, and playing particularistic local interests off against each other.⁴³⁷ They set Shi’i against Sunni, Kurds against Arabs, and exploited existing feuds between tribes to their own ends.

Rather than neutralizing ethnic and religious differences within the heterogeneous Iraqi society ... the British reinforced them by elevating Sunni Arabs over other groups ... To control unruly tribal groups and Faisal’s power the British played off tribes against one another, instigating land disputes and encouraging internal hostilities.⁴³⁸

Until the mid-1940s, the British ‘divide-and-rule’ strategies, imported from North-western India, today’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan⁴³⁹ – at the time of the *Raj*, an as conflict-ridden land bordering notoriously unruly Afghanistan as Kurdistan was to belligerent Turkey – played out as expected. While the Turkish state to the north obliterated the traditional role of the sheikh and pursued an ambiguous policy towards Kurdish tribes, the British indirect rule over Iraq nurtured tribal structures and elevated the sheikhs as state-sanctioned rulers. In its short-sighted desire for ‘empire on the cheap’, i.e. local allies running the show for British interests instead of stationing troops there permanently at a dear price, London became paymaster in a trickle-down system of patronage, basing its control over Iraq on corrupt *aghas* and sheikhs for whom charity began and ended at home,⁴⁴⁰ particularly in Southern Kurdistan.⁴⁴¹

As much as the political structure and population composition of Iraq reflected not historic and societal conditions on the ground but the strategic needs of the British quasi-colonial system – in fact, if anything they were deliberately set to work in opposite direction to weaken national cohesion and therefore minimize the potential for local resistance – so did Iraq’s borders. The original Sykes-Picot Agreement, in which Britain and France had carved up the former Ottoman Empire for themselves, foresaw the *vilayet* of Mosul to be joined with the French Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon.⁴⁴² Soon, though,

Britain was forced to change its mind and persuaded France to cede control over Mosul. What ultimately tipped the scales for the incorporation of the *vilayet* of Mosul and its Kurds into the British mandate of Mesopotamia and thus *a la longue* into Iraq were first and foremost military and religious factors: once Mustafa Kemal's victories in the Turkish War of Independence had thwarted any hopes for a unified Kurdish state, Britain required an easily defensible, i.e. mountainous frontier with the Republic of Turkey, perceived as aggressive in its territorial ambitions and feared to be in cahoots with Bolshevik Russia. Of equal importance for London and Baghdad were the Sunni Kurds maintaining a balance against the Shi'i sectarian dominance in newborn Iraq – their inclusion guaranteed a desperately needed religious equilibrium, an aspect King Faisal was explicitly adamant about.⁴⁴³ By incorporating the Mosul *vilayet* into the British Mandate of Mesopotamia and by establishing the 'Brussels Line', agreed on as the border between Iraq and Turkey in the Anglo-Turkish Treaty of 5 June 1926,⁴⁴⁴ Britain drove a permanent divide between the Kurdish lands, separating communities that had lived in close contact and social interaction for centuries, cut off Mosul – a traditional thoroughfare for goods from Aleppo and Anatolia to Persia – from its natural commercial links and forced it to coexist with Baghdad and Basra to the south, who historically had always been oriented towards the Gulf and whose ethnic, religious, economic, and societal composition differed markedly from the Kurdish north.⁴⁴⁵

In sum and using Abraham Lincoln's famous analogy, when the British released Iraq into independence-on-paper-only in 1932,⁴⁴⁶ they left a house not only internally divided against itself but built on quicksand. A shaky monarchy headed by a child-king⁴⁴⁷ presided over a system of proverbial instability – illustrated by countless coup attempts and Britain being forced to temporarily re-occupy the country in 1941 – patronage, rampant corruption, artificially fuelled and rumbling on local conflicts, arrant social inequality, uneven modernization campaigns, the gradual transition into the status of a rentier state dependent on oil revenues, and cash-crop agriculture subject to fluctuations of the volatile 1930/40s global market.⁴⁴⁸ This quasi-colonial legacy of the Iraqi polity has given rise to a debate about the extent to which the 'artificiality' of the state created by the British imperialist power can explain Iraq's troubled history of myriad sectarian divisions, proliferation of violent conflicts, and brutal

dictatorships.⁴⁴⁹ This debate is taken up by Stansfield who sums it up as a perception of Iraq being ‘cobbled together’ to satisfy the imperialistic strategic and geo-economic requirements of the British quasi-colonial power, and

this description is then commonly used as the starting point to explain Iraq’s twentieth-century development, and, as a logic conclusion to such explanations, that it is Iraq’s existential fate to suffer under a succession of non-democratic governments ... From a constellation of dissociated peoples living in different geographical spaces, the modern state of Iraq was doomed to succumb to various manifestations of authoritarian rule because this was the only mechanism by which the fractious country could be held together.⁴⁵⁰

Stansfield holds against this reading of the genealogy of the Iraqi state in the twentieth century that ‘virtually all states are to some extent, as human constructs, “artificial”’, and goes on that,

the argument also presupposes that social and political characteristics in twentieth-century Iraq remained in a state of stasis, rather than one of dynamism and development. Why should it be presumed that just because Iraq was artificial in the 1920s nearly a century of existence as a state should not have endowed it with some form of societal consciousness?⁴⁵¹

While I agree with Stansfield that all states are social constructs – which, in my opinion and as elaborated earlier, does not make them artificial but constructed and performatively enacted realities – I do not agree with his implicit interpretation that therefore all states are the same, a constructivist variant, or ‘clichéd constructivism’ in Brubaker’s terminology, of the neo-realist view of the international system composed of states as ‘like units’ discussed in the previous section. This chapter’s comparison between the processes of state formation in Turkey and Iraq show that their origins and the polities resulting from these formative struggles could not be more different: on the one hand a state that was forged by a widely supported nationalist struggle against imperialist invaders and occupying forces and whose founding ideology drew on a rich canon of myths of origin, and on the other hand an arbitrary creation that corresponded with the geo-strategic needs of an imperialist power but whose people had nothing in common other than the polity that was imposed upon them and its alien ruler serving these imperialist needs. In other words, one does not have to go far, does not even have to go outside the region and belabour examples of imperialist states such as Britain or France versus post-

colonial states such as Iraq or Syria, to highlight their different origins and trajectories; for an empirical example that not all states are the same, that they are not 'like units', that a colonial and non-colonial past makes a profound difference for their future development one just has to turn to a comparison between Iraq and neighbouring Turkey. Stansfield is correct though, in pointing out that there was nothing pre-destined about Iraq's progression in the twentieth century, that it was not necessarily 'doomed' to authoritarianism and state collapse, that one should not 'presume'⁴⁵² that it could not have developed differently; yet, the fact that it did not, that it succumbed to authoritarianism and sectarian violence is a result of and can be explained by its quasi-colonial legacy, of the fundamentals, structures and parameters the British quasi-colonial power established.⁴⁵³ To deny these different preconditions specific to the post-colonial state, in my opinion, would not only be factually wrong but also represent a failure to recognise the role European imperialist powers have played in shaping the non-European world and the historic and moral responsibility that comes with that recognition – a recognition that, as detailed earlier, is unfortunately notoriously underdeveloped in a Eurocentric explanatory IR that often tends to whitewash its imperialist past. Finally, I would argue that Stansfield, throughout his monograph on Iraq, gives a detailed answer to his own question as to why 'nearly a century of existence as a state should not have endowed Iraq with some form of societal consciousness?'⁴⁵⁴ Because the parameters set to ensure imperialist control and exploitation during the British Mandate of Mesopotamia persisted and were made sure to continue in the post-colonial state of Iraq, reaching from Britain's repeated military interventions there, to oil concessions that benefitted foreign proprietors, to local elites collaborating and profiteering from these systems of dependence, exploitation and internal division, to the inviolability of state borders enshrined in international law and the modern international system, to the construct of the modern sovereign nation state itself.⁴⁵⁵

The origins of Kurdish ethno-nationalism in Iraq

In the British occupied Kurdish territories in what is today's Iraqi Kurdistan, the Kurdish rebellions in the north – see below – had the immediate effect of proving the Turkish Republic more conciliatory on the question of the future

status of the former Mosul *vilayet*. For the British, who, as part of their wider redrawing of maps of the entire Middle East, had once championed an independent Kurdish state and who had been on the verge of outright war with Mustafa Kemal's nationalist forces for almost six years, this respite meant that they could close the last chapter of contention with the Turkish Republic and embark on re-shaping their share of the Middle East to their visions.⁴⁵⁶ For the Kurds, it meant the ultimate division of their homeland when on 5 June 1926 Britain and Turkey reached a bilateral agreement for the former *vilayet* of Mosul to be incorporated into the British Mandate of Mesopotamia.⁴⁵⁷ Before this, Kurds in Southern Kurdistan had been kept in limbo for eight years on their future status. Eight years in which the prospect of independence under British suzerainty was held out, subsequently replaced by pledges of a special status within Iraq under British direct administration; yet, ultimately these grand schemes came to naught, all promises shot down in just another treaty signed on distant shores.⁴⁵⁸ Eight years in which the Kurdish leaders' particularisms and factionalisms allowed the British and the Turks to play them off against each other and use them as a bluff in the road up to Lausanne and after.⁴⁵⁹ As in Turkey, the Kurdish tribal leaders in Southern Kurdistan sought their fortune with the political system of indirect rule familiar to them – a benevolent suzerain interfering in local affairs as little as possible – rather than experimenting with the unknown, an ideology that must have appeared utopian and unrealisable. It should come as little surprise then that the first Kurdish nationalist leaders in Iraq on a supra-regional stage emerged from the rows of disgruntled sheikhs who felt excluded from the cornucopia Whitehall poured over their peers and frequently, arch-enemies.⁴⁶⁰

In the end, notwithstanding the fact that the League of Nations acknowledged that the Kurdish lands of the Mosul *vilayet* had historically never been part of what was called Iraq, and voicing serious doubts about the state's survivability,⁴⁶¹ all Geneva held out for the Kurds was a vague form of autonomy and the guarantee of local administration and education in Kurdish as the official language in those areas predominantly inhabited by Kurds.⁴⁶² And yet this consolation prize constitutes the prime difference between the Kurdish situations in Iraq and Turkey, and consequently accounts for the diverse paths Kurdish ethno-nationalisms have taken in both countries. While in Turkey, until

recently, the mere existence of the Kurds as an ethnic minority has been denied, Iraq's Kurds enjoyed a vague right to autonomy and local self-rule confirmed by the highest international body, the League of Nations. 'These provisions were expressed to constitute international obligations to protect the civil and political rights of the Kurds and their rights as a minority group'.⁴⁶³ As a result, the Kurdish nationalist struggle in Iraq, centred on the implementation of these guarantees, was determined by phases of on-and-off negotiations and collaboration with the central government, and, its initial stage aside, remained local in its orientation rather than pursuing a pan-Kurdish agenda. As will be repeatedly emphasized throughout this study, the Kurdish nationalist leaders in Iraq had more to gain from forcing Baghdad to accept the autonomy they could refer to in cold print, signed and sealed by the predecessor of the United Nations, than from embarking on an adventurous secessionism in pursuit of (re-)uniting the Kurdish lands. In sum, Kurdish leaders in Iraq had come to terms with the concept of the sovereign nation state almost from day one and sought to eke out a degree of self-government within these confines rather than challenging the principle by way of secession.

In the first decades of the Iraqi state there was little room for ethno-nationalist divisions, though. The fight against the excesses of an exploitative state of dependency and the common struggle against British imperialism and its puppet regime in Baghdad united all national movements in Iraq, their ethnicity in most cases coming a distant second. This unity of purpose explains the formation of seemingly impossible coalitions of Kurds with pan-Arabists, Nasserists with Ba'athists, Communists with the petty bourgeoisie, and intellectuals with day labourers against a state whose short-sighted modernization campaigns had driven them off the fields and into urban skid rows.⁴⁶⁴ In the Kurdish case, these odd alliances were personified in the controversial figure of Mulla Mustafa Barzani, until 1943 a mere regional brigand, after World War Two the legendary leader of Kurdish nationalism in Iraq. Although hailing from a distinguished pedigree of religious leaders associated with the Naqshbandiyya order of Sufis, he, at the end of the day, was a particularist warlord from the mountainous outback whose constituency lived off raids on neighbouring tribes, who had distinguished himself by several unsuccessful local campaigns against the central government.⁴⁶⁵ And yet Mulla

Mustafa, whose boundless personal ambition was only checked by his fickle strategic foresight, accomplished what his rebellious peers had failed to achieve: to amend their personal vendettas to a 'national' level by appealing to Kurdish national consciousness, mustering alliances with Kurdish urban leftist movements.

For in the beginning, Kurdish nationalism in Iraq did not proliferate from the mountains with which it has become mythically associated, but blossomed in the cities, among urban intellectuals and impoverished day labourers. The effects of the Great Depression, a painful slump in tobacco prices,⁴⁶⁶ Kurdistan's prime cash crop, and their exclusion from the oil bonanza, aggravated by constant political turmoil after Faisal's death in 1933, allied Kurdish with Arab nationalists in the *Iraqi Communist Party* (ICP), uniting them in their struggle against imperialist exploitation, governmental corruption, and the tribal chiefs and *aghas* who collaborated with and lived on the system of Britain's 'empire on the cheap' that accrued all economic and strategic benefits while offering the Iraqi people very little in return.⁴⁶⁷ 'Shared spaces for Arabs and Kurds within the anti-imperialist movement encouraged the Kurds' collective identity as Iraqis to become salient alongside their sense of Kurdish ethno-nationalism'.⁴⁶⁸ The anti-imperialist parties' greatest deficiency, though, was their lack of manpower; their clandestine cells in the urban centres, intellectual debating societies, and combat organs were a powerful force when it came to talking the talk, but walking the walk required rebellious tribal chiefs like Mullah Mustafa, who could muster the manpower to challenge the imperialist order. These individual components – the ideological appeal of nationalism and Mullah Mustafa's command over the malcontent tribes – if merged, could prove a composition with the potential to unhinge the notoriously unstable Iraqi state. And merge they did.

The short, glorious and epic last stand of the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad⁴⁶⁹ – a Kurdish Soviet-backed separatist polity born out of the chaos of post-World War Two Iran and the dawn of super power rivalry in the Gulf – not only gave the Kurdish nationalist movement in neighbouring Iraq wings, and boosted Mulla Mustafa's stardom but once again, most dramatically, confirmed the need for tribal-nationalist cooperation. While distinguishing himself in the military defence of Mahabad, across the border in Iraq, Mulla Mustafa was

unwilling to accept a subordinate role to Mahabad's *Kurdish Democratic Party* of Iran (KDP-I).⁴⁷⁰ He envisioned the alliance he had entered with the Communist *Rizgari Kurd* (Kurdish Liberation) *Party* to act as a catch basin for the myriad embryonic Kurdish nationalist organizations that failed to make a difference on their own, with him helming the Kurdish anti-imperialist struggle in Iraq. This alliance required a new organisation, which while independent from Mahabad's KDP-I, would carry on its spirit as the vanguard of Kurdish nationalism in Southern Kurdistan. This alliance was the birth hour of the KDP, the *Kurdish Democratic Party*.⁴⁷¹

The union between Mullah Mustafa, who 'like any good tribal leader (...) was constantly seeking to widen his [personal] regional authority',⁴⁷² and urban nationalists can be characterized as 'a marriage of convenience, albeit with suspicion on both sides'.⁴⁷³ He routinely put the interests of the land-owning tribes he represented before the class struggle advocated by the urban nationalists around Ibrahim Ahmed and his son-in-law Jalal Talabani. The resulting 'conflict between the two groups [within the KDP] has become a characteristic of Kurdish politics ever since'.⁴⁷⁴

The 14 July 1958 Revolution by Nasserist Free Officers under Abd al-Karim Qassem was a watershed event for Iraq and the wider Middle East.⁴⁷⁵ It toppled the British-backed monarchy, terminated the state of quasi-colonial dependency and, having dissociated the country from the Western camp, turned Iraq into a pawn in the dominant super power confrontation. For a decade it brought to power an array of (pan-)Arabist dictatorships of various political *couleures* and Cold War alignments, each succeeding the other with increasing regularity often through more or less bloody coups. Most importantly though, the multiethnic alliances that had brought down the monarchy ruptured and 'the political space became more clearly ethnicised, centralised, and militant'.⁴⁷⁶ In post-1958 Iraq, competing ethno-nationalisms amplified and faced each other in an incrementally violent struggle over the future of Iraq, setting both Kurds against Arabs and Iraqi against pan-Arabist nationalism.⁴⁷⁷

However, it would be a gross simplification to understand the Kurdish nationalist movement as merely a reaction to (pan-)Arabist aggression in the ensuing confrontations between Kurdish nationalists and tribal alliances with the

(pan-)Arabist regimes in Baghdad over autonomy, self-rule, and cultural rights for Iraqi Kurdistan that escalated into a series of full-scale Kurdish wars.⁴⁷⁸ On the contrary, the Kurdish nationalist movement in Iraq had become a full-fledged political actor that was instrumental in bringing down consecutive regimes, militarily stood its ground in three full-scale wars, inflicted such heavy casualties on the forces of the Iraqi government and destabilized the country to such an extent that it forced every new regime coming to power to the negotiation table.⁴⁷⁹ A pattern emerged in which Nasserists or Ba'athists did made ample concessions on Kurdish self-rule – and thus antagonized their own constituencies – not because they genuinely believed in the need for nation building, but because they realized that Kurdish nationalists and Mulla Mustafa's tribal alliances had the potential to bog them down in costly campaigns in the mountains. Weakened in fruitless military campaigns and having lost face politically, they were toppled by their own armed forces and/or their (pan-)Arabist competitors.⁴⁸⁰ The Kurdish nationalist movement in the 1960s was a force to be reckoned with, the purchase, pacification and integration of which the survival of the central government depended. Mulla Mustafa recognized his role as the one force capable of tipping the scales and wielded his power by calling in ever larger concessions with considerable skill. No matter how excessive his demands, he balked at claiming actual independence,⁴⁸¹ which might have resulted in the various (pan-)Arabist ethno-nationalist factions uniting against the Kurds. Instead he shrewdly maintained his edge and the inter-Iraqi balance of power.

Another reason for Mulla Mustafa's political restraint was the fact that his Iraqi Kurdish nationalist camp was as internally divided as his (pan-)Arabist opponents in Baghdad. In 1964, long simmering tension within the KDP between the leftist political bureau, headed by secretary general Ibrahim Ahmed and his son in law Jalal Talabani, and Mulla Mustafa over the latter's autocratic leadership erupted, resulting in an irrevocable split right down the party's ranks, from which a decade later the PUK would emerge.⁴⁸²

The origins of Kurdish ethno-nationalism in Turkey

Any analysis of the origins of Kurdish ethno-nationalisms in the Middle East in general and of Kurdish ethno-nationalism in Turkey in particular is faced with the puzzling question as to why the Kurdish tribes in Eastern Anatolia failed so spectacularly to capitalise on the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the new order crafted at Sèvres. After all, Section III Articles 62-4 of the Treaty of Sèvres foresaw a Kurdistan region whose future political status was to be determined by public referendum, a region that included the *vilayet* of Mosul and indirectly held out the prospect of an independent Kurdish state.⁴⁸³ And yet, ironically, it was the Kurdish tribes, who would have gained most from a defeat of the Kemalist opposition to the Sèvres order, who became one of the Turkish Nationalists' staunchest confederates – a strategic choice comparable to a scenario where Czechs, Croats, and Slovaks might have sided with the dying Habsburg monarchy against the prospect of independent states they were promised by the Allies at Saint Germain-en-Laye and Trianon. How come the Kurds acted so blatantly against their best national interest to play a significant part in shutting this unique window of opportunity?

The answer is, there was no Kurdish national interest at this time. Unlike Turkish nationalists, the Kurds had not yet reached a stage in their 'national temporality',⁴⁸⁴ which would allow them to rally the masses for a common cause behind an internally and externally legitimised leader. Indeed, most Kurdish decision makers in eastern Anatolia were staunch Ottomanists fighting for the retention of the status quo, not to revolutionise it.⁴⁸⁵ In addition, externally fuelled, inner-Kurdish divisions and the continual re-tribalisation policies of past Ottoman central governments prevented the Kurds from exploiting their once-in-a-nation's-lifetime chance for statehood when the Allies signed the death certificate of the Ottoman Empire at the Treaty of Sèvres, and turned them into hapless late-comers in the scramble for national self-determination. Once this unique window of opportunity – the implosion of an empire – was closed, they had to take on modern nationalising states who, protected by the principle of state sovereignty, dealt with their minorities as they saw fit.

Not long after expelling the Greek invaders with their Entente allies, having wrested from the latter a revision of the Sèvres treaty at Lausanne in July 1923

– that permanently buried any hope for a Kurdish state⁴⁸⁶ – the Turkish nationalists showed their true colours. In the decade after Lausanne, the Turkish state attempted to perpetrate ethnocide against its Kurdish minority; the juggernaut of Kemalism, the new nationalist doctrine of the victorious, emerging Turkish Republic, literally wiped out any embryonic notions of Kurdish nationalism that may have existed, politically paralysing the Kurdish people for the coming generation. Once Kemalism's external enemies had been defeated, Turkish nationalists rigorously forced through their modernising reform agenda. On 1 November 1922, the Sultan was deposed; on 29 October 1923, the Republic proclaimed; and on 3 March 1924, the Caliphate abolished – for good measure, associations on religious grounds were forbidden, all *medresses* (religious schools) closed, and all *tarikats* (Sufi orders), the cornerstone of folk-Islam in the Kurdish lands, were banned.⁴⁸⁷ Within eighteen months, all bonds uniting Kurdish identity with the state were severed, all the Kurds had fought for during the War of Independence was squashed, not by imperialist, Christian guns, but by the stroke of a pen from their nominal brothers in faith, the Kemalist reformers in Ankara.

It is impossible to underestimate the importance the abolishment of the Caliphate had on the development of Kurdish ethno-nationalism in Turkey. As a direct consequence, it triggered what Hakan Yavuz categorizes as 'the second stage in the construction and politicization of Kurdish ethno-nationalism in Turkey'.⁴⁸⁸ Both urban Kurdish nationalists and rural tribal leaders watched Turkish nationalists' doings with mounting concern. They felt betrayed by Ankara's 'sell-out' on the *Mosul vilayet*⁴⁸⁹ – until recently portrayed by Atatürk as a constitutive part of *watan* never to be sacrificed, now bartered away for British comity, thus effectively tearing Kurdish lands apart⁴⁹⁰ – threatened by the increasing dominance of Turkishness, and its gradual elimination of the Kurdish element from the official domain. Above all, they were appalled by the Turkish nationalists' relentless dismantling of Ottoman institutions. Here, the sacrilege committed when abolishing the Caliphate mattered most to the predominantly pious Kurds in eastern Anatolia. It was the politico-religious dimension of the Caliphate, an implicit safeguard against ethno-centrist hegemonic ambitions within the *ummah*, which when banished into the dustbin of history, forged an alliance between urban Kurdish nationalists and tribal sheikhs.⁴⁹¹ The ruthlessly

imposed secularisation and modernisation reforms of the Kemalist regime thus forged an alliance between ideological antagonists that would have been inconceivable a few years earlier, and provoked a rebellion that shook the young Republic to the core.

In February 1925, the revered clergy, Sheikh Said of Piran, managed to rally 15,000 Zaza tribesmen behind his ethno-religious flag that took the Turkish Republic 52,000 soldiers to crush by mid-April.⁴⁹² This rebellion has to be acknowledged as a turning point in the history of the Kurds in Turkey for three reasons. First, the failed Sheikh Said revolt of 1925 forged and cemented the entente between urban nationalists and religio-tribal chieftains that was to determine the Kurdish proto-nationalist movement in Turkey for the next decade. Second, until 1938, in response to the mounting unparalleled suppression, it triggered a chain of more than three-dozen Kurdish insurrections, ranging from local skirmishes to full scale military operations across international borders culminating in the doomed Kurdish Ararat Republic and the ethnocidal massacres of the Dersim campaign.⁴⁹³ Eastern Anatolia had become a permanent war zone in a protracted ethnicised conflict, which in terms of territorial spread, destruction of livelihoods, human casualties, and costs in troops and resources for the Turkish state unseen since the War of Independence.⁴⁹⁴ Third, and most lastingly, the Sheikh Said rebellion served as a pretext for the Turkish state⁴⁹⁵ to unleash its arsenal of ethnic cleansing campaigns and Turkification-by-force programs with the clear intent of destroying Kurdish ethnic identity⁴⁹⁶ – a textbook-like application of what Heather Rae has, as discussed earlier, called ‘pathological homogenisation’.

During these thirteen years of repression [1925-38], struggle, revolt, and deportation ... more than one and a half million Kurds were deported [or] massacred ... The entire area beyond the Euphrates ... was kept under a permanent state of siege until 1950.⁴⁹⁷

In the years immediately before and after Dersim, the Turkish state, in addition to renaming Kurdish settlements with Turkish aliases and outlawing the Kurdish language,⁴⁹⁸ systematized its ethnic cleansing campaigns by employing deportations, summary mass-executions, death marches, and the razing of hundreds of villages to the ground. From the perspective of the Turkish state, Kurds had become nonentities; they were to be either ‘turkified’, i.e. assimilated

as non-ethnic Turkish citizens, or eliminated outright. By 1940, the ethnocide of the Kurds in Turkey seemed complete.⁴⁹⁹ Co-opted by force, deported, or summarily executed, Kurdish ethno-nationalism in Northern Kurdistan appeared to have vanished into thin air when the smoke over Dersim cleared. The decades between the massacre of Dersim and the gradual revival of Kurdish ethno-nationalism on the political stage in the 1960s may seem to have been lost, yet Hamit Bozarslan makes a compelling case for Kurdish ethnicised conscience, suppressed in the political arena, finding its niche in the cultural domain where it ensured Kurdish ethnic identity's survival and re-emergence, all the more forceful a generation after the last Kurdish rebellion had been crushed.⁵⁰⁰

For Kurdish ethnic identity to gain ground, it required fundamental changes in the Turkish political system. Ironically, it was political reforms, liberalisation efforts, and the emergence of civil society in Turkey that encouraged the radicalisation of Kurdish ethno-nationalism that would ultimately lead to the emergence of the PKK.

5.) KDP and PUK

The KDP

In the previous chapter it has been outlined that the origins of the KDP in Iraq are rooted in an alliance between Kurdish urban leftist movements and traditionalist rural tribesmen who felt excluded from the quasi-colonial systems of patronage the British had introduced to ensure compliance with the nascent Iraqi state and its underdeveloped political structures. The most prominent of these tribes was the Barzani clan, deriving its name from the village of Barzan in the remote Kurmanji-speaking mountain areas of northern Iraq just south of the border with Turkey. In the turbulent era of the dissolution of the Kurdish emirates during the *tanzimat* reform era, the Barzani family, whose local authority derived from their religious status as sheiks of the *Naqshbandi* Sufi order, had earned a reputation as a safe haven for political refugees, 'a sort of utopian society' that soon became 'a centre of emerging Kurdish nationalism'.⁵⁰¹ Although it would be more correct to speak of a centre of political dissent – since, as detailed earlier, it would be a case of reading contemporary categories into the past to identify Kurdish nationalist sentiments prior to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire – it can be argued that from the days of the division of the Kurdish lands in the Anglo-Turkish Treaty of 1926 the Barzanis acted as the leaders of a series of uprisings against the political order imposed on them by London, Baghdad and Ankara, and that the rebellion Sheikh Ahmad Barzani launched in 1931 against the Iraqi government can be read in the context of wider Kurdish rebellions in the region, most prominently the concurrent Ararat Rebellion in Turkey.⁵⁰² In this campaign Sheikh Ahmad's younger brother Mulla Mustafa earned his first military spurs; combat experience that had Mulla Mustafa become the commander in the defence of the ultimately doomed Kurdish Republic of Mahabad in Iran.⁵⁰³ The frequency and apparent ease in which these cross-border alliances between various Kurdish movements were formed in the first decades after the imposition of the sovereign nation-state principle on the region not only attest to a notorious inability of the weak nationalising states to control their territory, but also to the existence of a degree of solidarity among Kurdish tribes and movements transcending the

recently established borders. To deduce from this degree of solidarity, however, common ethnicity as the independent variable determining relations between various segments of Kurdish societies in all four nationalising states of Iraq, Turkey, Iran, and Syria, as the ethnic alliance model and related groupist frameworks do in their reification of ethnic identities, would be a gross simplification of the complex dynamics within the matrix of interests, identities, and resulting behaviours of actors in this context.

The ambiguity and complexity of dynamics in these relations becomes apparent in Mulla Mustafa's machinations, who, while defending the KDP-I's Mahabad in Iran,⁵⁰⁴ tried to capitalise on his involvement with the KDP-I for his own ends, namely to craft an umbrella organization uniting under his leadership the traditionalist tribal alliances in the rural hinterland and secular leftist movements such as *Komala-i-Liwen* (Young Men's Organisation), *Hiwa* (Hope), and *Shoresh* (Revolution) in the more cosmopolitan, educated, urban centres of Sulimaniyah and Kirkuk.⁵⁰⁵ Mulla Mustafa can be credited with the realisation that, 'for a Kurdish movement to succeed, the tribes needed to work with the educated urban political parties, along the lines of the KDP-I'.⁵⁰⁶ Yet, in these attempts, though, Mulla Mustafa was opposed by the leader of the Iraqi branch of the KDP-I, Ibrahim Ahmed, whose loyalty to Mahabad and a more expansive pan-Kurdish nationalism cum socialism forbade his involvement in Mulla Mustafa's contrary, traditionalist and narrow ambitions, limited to self-determination within Iraq. The new KDP, officially formed at the party's first congress in Baghdad on 16 August 1946, thus could have remained a flash in the pan, had it not been for the fall of Mahabad and the execution of its leaders in March 1947 – dealing the KDP-I an almost lethal blow – that forced Ibrahim Ahmed to consider a merger with Mulla Mustafa's Iraqi KDP that was born out of competition with the very KDP-I Ahmed represented.⁵⁰⁷ Ironically then, although the success of the KDP and Mulla Mustafa's rise to stardom with the Kurdish nationalist camp in Iraq was only made possible by the fall of Mahabad, the immediate effect of this military defeat meant for him a decade of exile in the Soviet Union,⁵⁰⁸ an absence from the political scene in Iraq during which the new party's fate was determined by Ibrahim Ahmed.⁵⁰⁹ Upon Mulla Mustafa's return from exile in the wake of the 1958 Free Officers coup in Iraq, animosities between his traditionalist tribal constituencies who thrived as feudal landholders

and the socialist Politburo under Ahmed's leadership advocating for land reform, would gradually intensify. The genealogy of the KDP so far and its internal contradictions is summed up by Stansfield:

The KDP had been formed by an uneasy alliance of tribal and urban leftist elements, with both attempting to take advantage of the other, but with the urban leftists falling into the alliance with the tribes through the charisma and achievements of Barzani. The arrival of more radical and energetic leftists such as Ibrahim Ahmed again strengthened the left and the scene was set for the future internecine political fights which came to characterise Kurdish politics from then on.⁵¹⁰

One aspect that illustrates these internal divisions particularly well is the formation of the irregular Iraqi-Kurdish forces, the *peshmerga*, literally translated as 'those who face death'.⁵¹¹ When in 1961 the Qassem regime resorted to direct military action against Barzani and the KDP, the animosities between the KDP Politburo, 'ever wary of forming dependencies on the tribal militia of Barzani',⁵¹² and Mulla Mustafa, likewise, forbidding the KDP to operate in his tribal stronghold along the Turkish border, resulted in the establishment of an irregular force within the sphere of influence of the Politburo between Raniyah and Sulimaniyah, whose ranks were swelled by Kurdish deserters from the Iraqi army. Soon, 'the army cadres managed to develop [these guerrilla] into a rough mountain fighting force'⁵¹³ superior in military knowhow and ideological motivation to Mulla Mustafa's tribal militias, and it is largely thanks to the *peshmerga* the Kurds prevailed against Qassem's nominally more advanced forces.⁵¹⁴

These internal divisions within the KDP turned out no longer bridgeable and openly erupted to the surface in 1964. After initially having struck a compromise on Kurdish self-governance with Qassem's successor, the Ba'athist regime under Abdul Salam Aref and Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr, Mulla Mustafa was forced under military pressure to accept a political accord that made no mention of Kurdish autonomy; what made matters worse in the eyes of the KDP Politburo was the fact that Mulla Mustafa had not even bothered to consult the party before accepting a lesser deal on behalf of all Kurds in Iraq,⁵¹⁵ and that he had indicated to the Ba'athist government that 'he had no objection to the abolition of political parties'⁵¹⁶ – a move the KDP Politburo could only interpret as an

existential threat. When the Politburo revolted, Mulla Mustafa had leading members of the body such as Ibrahim Ahmed and his son-in-law, Jalal Talabani, expelled and later persecuted into exile in Iran, where they formed a breakaway faction,⁵¹⁷ from which a decade later the PUK should emerge.

While the significance of the 1964-split and the resulting KDP-PUK rivalry cannot be emphasised strongly enough as the most decisive factor to determine the development of Kurdish ethno-nationalism in Iraq for four decades, the immediate consequences of the expulsion of the so called 'Ahmed-Talabani faction' meant for Mulla Mustafa the freedom to assert his absolute control over the party by cleansing it from all internal opposition. In turn, his absolute dominance in the Kurdish nationalist movement in Iraq significantly strengthened his position via Baghdad, where the bloodless coup of July 1968 brought the Ba'athists to power for the second time in Iraq.⁵¹⁸ President Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr and his deputy, Saddam Hussein, had learned their lesson from their previous fray with Mulla Mustafa and tendered full recognition of Kurdish cultural and political rights in Iraq; in short, they bid 'the best deal ever offered to the Iraqi Kurds. At the time of signing, the agreement was hailed as a sincere move towards solving the Kurdish problem by all parties'.⁵¹⁹ This was precisely what the Ba'athists resolved to accomplish – not with the intent of truly crafting a multiethnic Iraqi nation but an accommodation of Kurdish demands dictated by necessity. Quite simply, the regime's survival depended on reconciling and appeasing the Kurds. The '11 March 1970 Manifesto', as the groundbreaking agreement came to be known, stipulated the Iraqi constitution would be amended to read 'the Iraqi people is made up of two nationalities, the Arab nationality and the Kurdish nationality';⁵²⁰ promised to join all areas with a Kurdish majority in a self-governing unit, where Kurdish would be an official language; pledged to allocate generous special funds for the development of the Kurdish region along with the execution of overdue agrarian reform; and guaranteed proportional distribution of positions in government, bureaucracy and the armed forces, including a Kurd as vice-president of Iraq. Indeed, 'the period 1970-4 saw de facto autonomy throughout the region with the KDP effectively controlling it through the appointment of the governors. During this period, the Kurds learned the techniques of administration and government'.⁵²¹

No wonder the accord 'has remained the Kurds' favoured foundation stone for future relations with the rest of Iraq'.⁵²²

Much ink has been spent on why the newly found Ba'athist-Kurdish harmony was so short-lived. Ex post, both sides accused the other of having acted in bad faith and having failed to implement crucial stipulations of the deal from the beginning. Had the political space become ethnicised to an extent that made Arab-Kurdish reconciliation structurally impossible? Did the Ba'athists actually propose the accord as a ruse to lull the Kurds until they could consolidate power in Baghdad and felt strong enough to strike? Did Mulla Mustafa overplay his hand by insisting on the incorporation of oil-rich Kirkuk into the Kurdish administered area and, as Ghareeb suggests,⁵²³ maintain antagonism with the central government so his own position in Kurdistan could not be challenged by the Ahmed-Talabani faction? Most probably a combination of all the above factors played a role. What can be established beyond speculation is that the apple of discord poisoned relations soon after the ink had dried on the '11 March Manifesto'. In a strategic miscalculation, Mulla Mustafa entered an unholy alliance with the Shah of Iran, the United States and Israel against the pro-Soviet Ba'athist regime.⁵²⁴ Soon thereafter though, betrayed by his allies⁵²⁵ – Iran struck a lucrative deal with Ba'athist Iraq in Algiers that secured its unrestricted access to the Schatt al Arab – and his forces routed by a determined and well-trained Iraqi Army, Mulla Mustafa's forces suffered a complete rout. More than a personal defeat – he died four years later of lung cancer in American exile⁵²⁶ – the reverse of 1975 signalled a changing of the guard within the Kurdish nationalist movement in Iraq. The era of Mulla Mustafa Barzani's dominance and the pre-eminence of local special interests over the reformist wing of the KDP had come to a drastic end. However, the fiasco of 1975, with the admitted benefit of hindsight, can also be interpreted as a transition from one phase of Kurdish ethno-nationalism in Iraq to another; one in which the movement was set on a broader fundament with two parties, the KDP and the PUK – founded in the same year and as a direct consequence of Mulla Mustafa's miscalculations – competing for influence; a new phase in which Kurdish nationalism in Iraq was to ascend to a mass-scale movement encompassing all strata of society and ultimately blossoming into what became called the Kurdish de facto state in Iraq.

After a series of internal feuds, divisions and reunifications in the late 1970s and early 1980s as a result of the devastating defeat of 1975 and the systemic dissonance between ‘traditionalists’ and ‘progressives’ that had troubled the KDP ever since its founding, the KDP ultimately remained firmly within the grasp of the Barzani clan, especially after the death of its most outspoken internal critic, Sami Abdul Rahman, in an *Ansar al-Sunna* suicide bombing in Erbil in February 2004.⁵²⁷ After the death of Mulla Mustafa his sons Idris and Massoud jointly led the KDP restored in Iranian exile until, after Idris suffered a heart attack in 1984, Massoud became undisputed leader, supported by his nephew, Idris’ son, Nechervan Idris Barzani. The question of succession in the KDP after Massoud, from today’s vantage point, seems limited to a competition between his son Masrour and his nephew Nechervan Barzani. No wonder then that ‘critics of the KDP claim that the KDP decision-making process is dominated by the immediate family of Massoud and Nechervan Barzani, with the rest of the party being little more than the implementing agency of the family’s wishes’,⁵²⁸ and while giving itself a veneer of democratically legitimated internal decision-making and elections for leadership at party congresses – the fact that ‘the KDP is the only party in Iraqi Kurdistan that has had a continuous programme of party congresses and conferences’ is prominently stressed by Massoud Barzani⁵²⁹ – that these conferences and the party’s main bodies such as the Central Committee are seen to merely act to rubberstamp the decisions made by the party leadership, that is essentially the Barzani clan. ‘When his enemies denounce him as a tribal, feudal man, they mean that Massoud [Barzani] does not distinguish between his own family’s interest and those of the Kurdish people as a whole’.⁵³⁰ In fact, it would not be grossly exaggerated to view the KDP as a vehicle for the power politics and political ambitions of the Barzani clan, today exhibiting, rather than the ‘democratic centralism’ identified by Stansfield and Anderson⁵³¹ – see below – the ‘dynastic republicanism’⁵³² of other (Arab) Middle Eastern states.⁵³³ ‘The post-colonial political orders and the ideologies that underpinned them, once emancipator vanguards on behalf of independence and republicanism, seem today to be regressing back into monarchism (read here as rule through hereditary succession)’.⁵³⁴ Sadiki further expounds:

The dynamic of ‘privatization’ of power must be appreciated through sound understanding of both ‘hereditary succession’ and ‘dynastic republicanism’ as

central to what is called here 'ruling complex' or *murakkab al-kursi*. Literally, the notion of 'comfortably sat' or 'positioned' the Arabic word 'murakkab' denotes, divulges the 'free-rider' element involved in lubricating the wheel of political patronage-clientelism. There is a labyrinth of dependent or 'parasitic' social forces that owe their status and preservation to Arab ruling houses. These forces exist at both the apex and bottom of the political pyramid. They represent many interests tied to the ruling houses by way of dependence on the status quo. They are secular and religious, military and civilian, tribal and non-tribal, and public and private. They make the news; they guard the locus of power; they represent, endorse and defend the system; they occupy the market and the religious pulpit; and they close their minds to the possibility of an 'alternative' order or rulers. In return the system 'feeds' them the distributive rewards (status, resources, officialdom, self-preservation), deepening and nurturing their dependence. This whole 'murakkab' or stratum serves as a prop for the system; and the system reciprocates this supportive function.⁵³⁵

The privatization of power based on patronage-clientilism, or as commonly referred to in the region as *wasta*, pervades every aspect of political and social life in Iraqi Kurdistan and is blatantly obvious to anybody conducting even a few days of field research there. On this aspect the PUK-controlled territories of Iraqi Kurdistan do not differ much from the KDP-dominated areas. What distinguishes the latter from the former, in addition to its rapid descent into authoritarianism with all the accompanying symptoms of human rights violations – routinely denounced by *Human Rights Watch*⁵³⁶ and other international human rights watchdogs,⁵³⁷ problematised in several media outlets⁵³⁸ as well as by governmental agencies⁵³⁹ and further discussed in Part Three – is the aspect of 'dynastic republicanism' and the system of 'hereditary succession', not unlike the pre-'Arab Spring' regimes analysed by Sadiki, with all political power resting with one family, the Barzanis.

The PUK

[When a]sking ardent backers of either the PUK or KDP what the policy and ideological differences between the two parties ... I have yet to receive an answer that goes beyond the contention that one party fights more valiantly for the Kurdish cause, while the other allies itself with the hated central government more frequently. Iraqi Kurds not too closely attached to either party, however, tended to

ascribe the differences to the leaders' personalities, interests, and old tribal rivalries.⁵⁴⁰

When confronted with this quote, one of the founders of the PUK, Omar Sheikhmous, had to admit that today the ideological differences between PUK and KDP are minimal – both promote a separatist Kurdish ethno-nationalism with the aim of wresting ever greater autonomy from the Iraqi state – but that the 'main difference between KDP and PUK is their style of leadership'.⁵⁴¹ Stansfield and Anderson⁵⁴² have identified 'democratic centralism' as the organisational principle of both parties. While, as detailed above, I argue the KDP is better characterised by 'dynastic republicanism' due to the dominance of the Barzani family and the principle of hereditary succession, I concur with Stansfield and Anderson that 'democratic centralism' best describes the organisational structures and decision-making processes of the PUK.

'Democratic centralism' as a political concept, 'was first formulated in the revolutionary movement in Russia. At that point it constituted simply a call both for organisational cohesion and for the adoption of democratic procedures in the Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Party' as the Bolsheviks had experienced them during their exile in Western Europe. 'To some extent [they] succeed[ed] in building these desiderata' – such as party elections and the freedom of expression – 'into their political practices'.⁵⁴³ Soon thereafter the imperative for internal cohesion, the centralist element came to supersede the democratic one, though. As Vladimir Lenin put it, 'the principle of democratic centralism ... implies universal and full freedom to criticise, so long as this does not disturb the unity of a defined action; it rules out all criticism which disrupts or makes difficult unity of action decided upon by the party'.⁵⁴⁴ In practical political and organisational terms this qualification meant that internal debate about policies in the designated bodies was tolerated, even encouraged, yet once a decision had been made by the party leadership it was expected to be implemented unconditionally and without further opposition. 'Once policy has been established by the party leadership, after vigorous internal debate, it must be implemented without dissent by the rank and file. Thus, the structure is democratic on the way up ...', – expressed in, for example, elections at routinely held party congresses, where 'the higher tiers are elected by the lower' ... – 'but authoritarian on the way down'.⁵⁴⁵ This inherent authoritarianism in policy

implementation has a tendency to descend into rather dictatorial structures with a strongly centralised leadership cadre, who, if its actions are not to be questioned, is itself increasingly rarely challenged from within the party.⁵⁴⁶ One of the most prominent critics of Lenin's democratic centralism, Leon Trotsky who ultimately paid for his dissent with his life, observed the pattern that, 'the party organization (the caucus) at first substitutes itself for the party as a whole; then the Central Committee substitutes itself for the organization; and finally a single "dictator" substitutes himself for the Central Committee'.⁵⁴⁷ In other words, and this particularly holds true for the Stalinist era of democratic centralism, 'to criticise the leader is to betray the party and its ideals; thus the leader becomes infallible';⁵⁴⁸ and party elections and congresses, once for a more or less open debate, become exercises in rubber-stamping pre-formulated policies and predetermined leadership cadres, the most prominent contemporary example being the National Congresses of the Communist Party of China, which meets at least once every five years to exercise the 'democratic element' of its version of democratic centralism. It has to be said, though, that the PUK, from its inception, constituted too heterogeneous a merger of diverse political movements and local power bases to ever achieve such a pure form of democratic centralism, yet in essence, at least until the *Gorran* split in 2009, the organising principle of a somewhat more ambiguous democratic centralism than in contemporary China applies to it.⁵⁴⁹

As has been mentioned, the nucleus of the PUK was the progressive 'Ahmed-Talabani faction' of the Politburo that in 1964 split from the traditionalist majority of the KDP in defiance of Mulla Mustafa's authoritarian rule, and then lingered in exile for a decade. What moved them back onto the political stage in Iraq was the fatal blow the KDP had been dealt in 1975 resulting in the Kurdish nationalist movement in Iraq yearning for an alternative to Mulla Mustafa's brand. 'The collapse of the KDP in 1975 was such a traumatic event in Kurdish history, comparable to Mahabad; it affected Kurds in all parts, in Turkey, in Syria ... everywhere there was a need for a new movement, not-aligned with the West [who had betrayed the KDP] and self-sustained', Omar Sheikmous summed up the public sentiment in Iraqi Kurdistan and beyond after this watershed moment.⁵⁵⁰ Jalal Talabani and his followers, together with new KDP Politburo dissidents and more radical, 'third way' Maoist student movements,

intended to capitalise on the public mood and the implosion of the KDP. In the late 1960s, with disillusion with Soviet-style Communism growing in the Third World, Maoist revisionism that put greater emphasis on nationalist liberation than its Soviet counterpart, rapidly gained ground among radical leftist NLMs in Asia, Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East. These ideological shifts

reached Iraqi Kurdistan through left-wing parties in Iran ... who were against the old-style Communist parties, and through Palestinian parties and literature. To young, politically minded Kurds, such a combination of socialism with Kurdish nationalism proved to be highly attractive, particularly when faced with the increasing autocracy of Barzani and the infighting within the KDP Political Bureau.⁵⁵¹

At the time of the March 1970 Manifesto, which these movements criticised as a concord between traditionalist Kurdish landholders and the dictatorial central government, these groups were little more than disparate cells lacking any overarching structure that could combine their 'third way' ideology into a more coherent political force. As with the KDP three decades earlier, it took a man from a rather traditionalist background, deeply embedded in the religio-tribalist structures of the Qadiri *tekiye* of Sufism,⁵⁵² to band together these diverse elements into a political umbrella organisation of his own design. In fostering contacts with Maoist student cells in Baghdad and Kurdistan in the late 1960s/early 1970s Jalal Talabani, or *Mam Jalal*, 'uncle Jalal' as he is affectionately called in Iraqi Kurdistan,⁵⁵³ put to good use his connections and reputation from his student days, where 'in February 1953, he secretly [had] helped to establish the Kurdistan Student Union-Iraq and [had become] its secretary-general'.⁵⁵⁴ This rapport, which, from his exile in Damascus, he kept nourishing by keeping in contact with student groupings in Iraq, Talabani capitalised on when he played a crucial role in the formation of a single party, *Komala*, to unify these diverse student cells in June 1970 under the leadership of Newshirwan Mustafa, the editor of the influential Maoist student magazine *Rizgary* who in 2009 would fall out with Talabani and form the *Gorran* party..

Yet *Komala* was only meant to be the first step in Talabani's plan to form an alternative Iraqi Kurdish nationalist party to the KDP. In order to advance his designs the Maoist students had to be allied with KDP dissidents and those members of the politburo in opposition to Mulla Mustafa's authoritarian

leadership style – and for this alliance the 1975 collapse of Kurdish armed resistance and Mulla Mustafa's defeat proved the necessary catalyst. When in March 1975 Mulla Mustafa gave the order to cease all hostilities against the central government, *Komala* and *peshmerga* units loyal to Talabani refused,⁵⁵⁵ while Talabani held secret meetings in Damascus, Beirut, and Berlin to unite *Komala* with the KDP dissidents under a new umbrella organisation. The co-founders – Jalal Talabani, Newshirwan Mustafa, Fouad Masoum, Kamal Fouad, Adil Murad, Omar Sheikmous, and Abdul-Razaq 'Faili' Mirza – first got together for preliminary discussions on 22 May 1975 in Talitla Restaurant in Damascus, a week later in a meeting in Berlin between Talabani, Newshirwan Mustafa and others the final decision for the formation of the PUK was reached,⁵⁵⁶ and the party was officially established in Damascus on 1 June 1975 with the declared aim of:

organising the revolutionary, patriotic and democratic forces of the Kurdish people in the form of a broad democratic and patriotic front that allows the fighting unity and coexistence of the different progressive tendencies under the leadership of a Kurdish revolutionary vanguard.⁵⁵⁷

The immediate success of the PUK can be explained mostly by two factors:⁵⁵⁸ (1) when Mulla Mustafa had surrendered to the central government, they were the only Kurdish nationalist grouping with the manpower, logistics, and organisational capacity to take up arms and continue the nationalist struggle against the Ba'athist regime; (2) the PUK constituted a radical alternative to the worn down, defeated KDP, Mulla Mustafa's high-handedness and his autocratic leadership that appeared to many Kurds to serve tribal-traditionalist interests first. Another factor that markedly distinguished the PUK from the KDP – and arguably made it more attractive to young radical nationalists who liked to think in non-hierarchical terms – was that 'the PUK was not a unified party in the sense of the KDP, but was more of a broad semi-front',⁵⁵⁹ a front that, rather than the KDP, who, arguably with limited success, had tried to unite disparate social and nationalist movements within one party, understood itself as an umbrella organisation with the ambition and potential to harmonise these varying but often overlapping directions, to craft a certain nationalist unity out of diversity. Ultimately, though, 'too many ideological compromises were made to traditionalist elements ... and in order to gain mass

appeal ... [from] land reform [to] women's rights ... [and] the PUK lost its ideological fervour with the negotiations in 1983⁵⁶⁰ between Talabani and Saddam Hussein (to be discussed in Part Three). In the end, the PUK's Maoist nationalism turned out quite bourgeois, resulting in its ideological and nationalist direction becoming virtually indistinguishable from the KDP, as ascertained earlier by Romano.⁵⁶¹

Due to its heterogeneous structure the main difference between KDP and PUK is the latter's internal decision making process, characterised by 'seemingly more opaque' structures, and with PUK politburo meetings being described as 'highly charged and chaotic', as being notoriously 'dominated by arguments and tense discussions'.⁵⁶² The heterogeneity of the party is also reflected in the fact that until the early 1990s the various groupings of the union held their own congresses, and 'that the first [actual] PUK Congress was [only] held in 1992, and was not followed until early 2001'.⁵⁶³ The one element that holds these disparate elements together is Jalal Talabani, whose leadership style, rather surprisingly and unbecoming the role of *primus inter pares* he is often forced to play, is usually described as more mercurial and dictatorial than Massoud Barzani's.⁵⁶⁴ Nonetheless, Talabani managed to not only hold his PUK together but to field a formidable opposition to the resurgent KDP in the 1980/90s. Little wonder then that when Talabani left the political stage of Iraqi Kurdistan for becoming President of Iraq in April 2005, his absence came to be keenly felt, and the party structures started to crumble until in 2009 a disillusioned Newshirwan Mustafa split along with many second-rank followers to form their own party, *Gorran*, who in local elections in Iraqi Kurdistan in September 2013 defeated the PUK on its very home turf.⁵⁶⁵

Another element that distinguishes the PUK from the KDP, of particular interest in the context of this study, is the more pan-Kurdish direction its founders originally intended. As a matter of fact, the imperative for an alternative to KDP's focus on limiting its nationalism to Iraq, that is reaching an accord with the central government on a generous autonomy status, had been one of the driving forces behind the negotiations on the formation of the PUK, with a strategic consideration to widen the nationalist struggle to Iran and Turkey explicitly discussed during the months leading up to June 1975. Future co-founders of the PUK such as Abdul Razaq Mirza reached out to the KDP-I in

particular,⁵⁶⁶ yet the Iranian Kurdish parties proved hesitant to enter an alliance with an Iraqi Kurdish movement just a few months after Mulla Mustafa had collaborated with the Shah's regime against them.⁵⁶⁷ Likewise, and despite the fact that one of the co-founders of the PUK, Omar Sheikhmous, hailed from Syria, Talabani shied away from teaming up with Kurdish movements in Syria, which would have alienated his most influential external backer, the Assad regime in Damascus. For Sheikhmous the final decision made by Talabani – 'he pushed for it', Sheikhmous recalled – to confine the PUK, like the KDP, to an 'Iraqi-Kurdistan only'-policy came as a particular disappointment.⁵⁶⁸ However, even if a pan-Kurdish platform for the PUK was abandoned before the launch of the party and during its early days, the legacy of this debate is reflected, when compared to the KDP, in the PUK's more international orientation and its closer liaison with Kurdish nationalist movements in Iran and Turkey that occasionally could result in actual material cooperation,⁵⁶⁹ most prominently and importantly in the context of this study, when the PUK came to save the PKK from sinking into insignificance in 1979. In fact, it is no exaggeration to say that the PUK contributed in no small fashion to the PKK becoming the most redoubtable ethno-nationalist insurgency in Kurdish history.

6.) The PKK

The origins of the PKK

The PKK was born out of the distinctive features of the socio-economic and political space in Turkey in the late 1960s / early 1970s. Perhaps at first rather surprisingly the military coup of 1960 ushered in an era of political pluralism with a new constitution in the following year, safeguarding the principle of democratic checks and balances, the separation of powers, and civil liberties from elevated freedom of expression to granting trade unions the right to strike as well as constructing an electoral system conducive for governing coalitions in order to avoid single party rule as during the *Demokrat Parti* (DP) era.⁵⁷⁰ While to some extent established party politics continued – such as the reliance of major parties on political machines in Eastern Anatolia headed by feudal Kurdish landholders that could guarantee votes⁵⁷¹ – on the other hand the political space, or one should rather say corset, was forced open by the emergence of the Workers Party of Turkey (*Türkiye İşçi Partisi*, TWP), the first official party positioned clearly outside Kemalist state doctrine and the first socialist party to win representation in parliament,⁵⁷² what is a more significant first in the context of this study is that the TWP was the first political party in Turkey to acknowledge the Kurds as a distinct people with grievances and legitimate demands in Turkish society. 'For the first time since the founding of the republic, a legal political party had come to recognise the existence of a Kurdish minority within national borders'.⁵⁷³

The reason why the TWP proved so attractive to Kurdish voters – in the 1969 elections four of the 15 TWP MPs were Kurds – was not only its openness towards emerging Kurdish ethnic consciousness but also has to be seen as a function of the massive socio-economic changes Eastern Anatolia experienced during this decade. The Menderes government had already introduced a *laissez faire* capitalist program of free enterprise and import-substitution industrialization⁵⁷⁴ that, hand in hand with technological advances in the mechanization of the agricultural sector, hit the traditional stratum of Kurdish society, sharecroppers who paid the feudal landlords an agreed proportion of the crop, exceptionally hard. The liberalised economic climate allowed feudal

landlords to accumulate ever wider tracts of land, and mechanization provided them with a leverage to force sharecroppers to accept ever more exploitative rent arrangements.⁵⁷⁵ 'Former sharecroppers in both the mountains and the plain's of Turkey's Kurdish region increasingly became transformed into seasonal agricultural workers, or were forced to migrate either to Kurdish cities or to the West of Turkey, if not out of the country altogether'.⁵⁷⁶ This rural exodus, with often the population of entire villages migrating to Izmir, Ankara, and Istanbul, swelled urban shantytowns where inhabitants eked out a meagre existence under most precarious conditions – a development known in Turkish as *gecekondular*, entire districts of built-over-night shanty-neighbourhoods.⁵⁷⁷ In the urban centres of Anatolia and the Mediterranean, Kurdish migrants came into contact with organised labour movements and were exposed to the teachings of Marxism-Leninism that promised them a better future in a socialist government. The mounting challenge of a radical, popular left, spurred on by events in Europe and the success of Marxist insurgencies in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, momentarily polarised the political space in Turkey and deeply unsettled the Kemalist establishment; in response Colonel Alpaslan Türkeş founded in 1965 the *Nationalist Action Party* (MHP, *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*), whose notorious youth wing, the *Grey Wolves*, attacked leftist movements in open street battles.⁵⁷⁸

By 1971 the program of economic reform had demonstrably failed, the Turkish state was bankrupt,⁵⁷⁹ and the politico-military establishment had lost tolerance with its experiment in democratic pluralism. For the second time in the history of the Turkish Republic the military intervened with the intent of imposing a cooling phase on the country and cleansing the political system of radical leftist elements;⁵⁸⁰ one of its first victims was the TWP, banned in 1971. For a short while the military could afford to lend itself to the illusion of having brought the situation under control: the 1961 Constitution had been amended, curtailing civil liberties and granting the *National Security Council* extended powers, special courts had been introduced to effectively do away with radical leftists, the *Grey Wolves* strengthened and trained by CIA instructors as part of 'Operation Gladio', martial law imposed in Eastern Anatolia, the media gagged, and the autonomy of universities truncated.⁵⁸¹ In 1973 the military felt confident enough to reintroduce parliamentary democracy and acquiesce into a general

amnesty the following year.⁵⁸² Yet, if they had thought they could pacify the country and redirect the political space into well-trodden Kemalist channels, they were in for a surprise. If anything, the polarised political space turned out to be nothing but a precursor to the unprecedented political violence of the 1970s that reached almost civil war-like dimensions, pitting the state apparatus and the ultra-nationalist, paramilitary *Grey Wolves* against a myriad of radical leftist movements, who after 1974 came out of hiding and fought for such diverse ideals as enhancing civil liberties, workers rights and economic equality, defeating the capitalist-imperialist nexus, or outright socialist world revolution.⁵⁸³ It was in this polarised climate of proliferating political violence that the PKK was born, and its emergence can be understood as a combination of a complex of manifold but interrelated socio-economic and political factors, which can only be cursorily summarised here: from wider global phenomena,⁵⁸⁴ the imposition of laissez faire capitalism and top-down modernisation programs that on the one hand fuelled inequality in agrarian Eastern Anatolia but on the other hand radicalised migrant workers, the continuation of policies of ‘pathological homogenisation’⁵⁸⁵ with their outright denial of the existence of Kurdish identity, and ‘opportunity structures’ unique to the condition of the political space in Turkey.⁵⁸⁶ On the one hand the Kemalist politico-military establishment was no longer able to maintain the traditional order and in its attempts to re-establish order by force achieved little but a radicalisation of its opponents, and on the other hand a progressive political opposition that mollified the worst excesses of the Kemalist establishment’s repression and sought to widen the political space in order to potentially win the radical left as a partner in forcing open the Kemalist corset for democratic pluralism and eventually the creation of a more egalitarian society – the doctrine of a national democratic revolution or *milli demokratik devrim*.⁵⁸⁷ Those attempts quite naturally were bound to fail, since the radical left understood the legal opposition as not much different from the Kemalist establishment and used the widened political space for its own ends.

Given these parameters it is easily discernible that ‘the PKK does not have its political background in Kurdish politics ... but [was] born from the revolutionary left in Turkey’.⁵⁸⁸ Initially what became the most potent insurgency in Kurdish history was nothing more but a group of radicalised students in Ankara – three Kurds, Abdullah Öcalan, Ali Haydar Kaytan, and Cemil Bayık;

and three Turks, Kemal Pir, Haki Karer, and Duran Kalkan – of whom some happened to cohabit and who spent their leisure time wallowing in revolutionary utopias.⁵⁸⁹ The part of town where they lived was a classic, predominantly Kurdish *gecekondu* with the potential of many sympathetic ears for their rhetoric of national liberation, class struggle and socialist revolution. Another important political platform for ideological exchange and the recruitment of sympathisers was the socialist student organization *Ankara Demokratik Yüksek Öğretim Derneği* (Ankara Democratic Higher Education Association, ADYÖD), of whose leadership committee Öcalan became a very proactive member.⁵⁹⁰ When ADYÖD was closed down by the state authorities in December 1974, the group had learned the hard way that in the contemporary political system to effect revolutionary change by legal means and as part of an official movement was doomed to fail. They determined to go underground in rural Eastern Anatolia.

Given the group's urban background in student movements, this move may seem puzzling at first. Yet the relocation appears not first motivated by nationalist liberation ideology, i.e. perceiving Turkey's Kurds as a distinct ethnic group that needed to be liberated from the assimilationist dominance of another ethnic group, the Turks, but born out of the Guevarist *foco*-theory (or 'nucleus' theory) of guerrilla warfare that put the disenfranchised peasants at the vanguard of the revolutionary struggle.⁵⁹¹ In other words, at the time Öcalan and his followers perceived the Kurdish peasants of rural Eastern Anatolia, analogous to the proletarian worker in Marxist-Leninism, in class terms first and ethnic terms second, and understood them as a vanguard in a class-based revolution turning Turkey as a whole into a socialist utopia.⁵⁹² When the group, then operating under the name *Kurdistan Devrimcileri* ('Kurdistan Revolutionaries' or *Şoreşgerên Kurdistan* in Kurdish) or nicknamed *Apocular*, the 'followers of Apo', of 'uncle' Öcalan, reconvened in Ankara in late 1976 to assess their relocation to Kurdistan, the strategy was deemed a success. The group had attracted about 300 recruits, many of them 'university and teacher's school students or drop-outs. Their origins were rooted in the poor, mainly landless villagers that comprised the overwhelming majority of Kurdish society, families with close to a dozen children, illiterate ..., and a tough life based on small-scale farming and animal husbandry'.⁵⁹³

Abdullah Öcalan

Abdullah Öcalan was born in 1949 to a poor peasant family in the village of Omerli in Sanliurfa province. The conditions in villages in Eastern Anatolia like that of Öcalan's was evocatively described in a 1983 *Le Monde* article:

Each family had a few chickens and possibly five or six goats. The agha would visit occasionally to reaffirm his authority and assign work. This consisted mainly of labour on the cotton plantations of the Mesopotamian plain ... All except the very old and very young would descend to the plain daily to work an eleven-hour day. For this the rates of pay were US\$1 for a child, \$1.50 for a woman, and \$2 for a man. Villagers reckoned they had a 30 percent mortality rate among the children.⁵⁹⁴

It appears fair to say that from earliest childhood on Öcalan was exposed to arrant human suffering, appalling poverty and the gross inequality and exploitative nature of the *latifundia*-like system of agriculture in Turkey's Kurdish provinces with the local *agha* not only domineering over a host of cheap labour forced to exist in slave-like conditions but de facto reigning as master of life and death. And yet, although Öcalan failed the exam for entering military school, in 1966, he was given a second chance in an Ankara high school training young students for a career in the civil service.⁵⁹⁵ There, like many young Kurds of his age,

[he] began to explore [his] identity while in high school or university. Some fell under the sway of a teacher or youth leader who was a secret Kurdish nationalist, others came to see the contradiction between their personal lives – in which they were raised in a Kurdish-speaking village, listening to Kurdish radio emanating from across the border – and the public ideology that insisted that Kurds were actually Turks. Like Öcalan, many were simply swept up in the leftist movements and Kurdish radicalism that burgeoned in the late 1960s.⁵⁹⁶

Öcalan's enchantment with radical Marxist-Leninism was a gradual process that did not ensue in earnest until the military coup of 1970. The brutal crackdown of the state apparatus on student organisations left a lasting impression on him and he began to actively participate in street rallies and public protests – an engagement that earned him a seven month imprisonment at Ankara's Mamak Military Prison, where he made good use of the time served by devouring the prison library's stock on Marxist literature and forming close ties to fellow, politically more advanced inmates from the Ankara radical student

groups. It was thus in prison that Öcalan received his political education, a time he later fondly recalled as 'my transition to becoming a professional revolutionary'.⁵⁹⁷ Upon his release in October 1972, Öcalan had internalised the lesson many radical leftists took from the coup and three years of military rule – that political change and democracy in Turkey were not realisable by peaceful means within the official channels of the political system.⁵⁹⁸

So far, though, nothing in his biography helps to explain how within a year after his release from prison Öcalan came to occupy a relatively dominant position within ADYÖD. If anything, Öcalan's conversion to nationalism and Marxist-Leninism was comparatively recent and he lacked the political network and prestige of many of his peers. What is even more puzzling to many analysts – and here I openly admit the limitations of a researcher sitting in the comfort of a European university library or flying in for a few months of field research when compared to those colleagues from a Kurdish background who have actively experienced, grown up among, and lived the struggle for liberation – is the messianic *Führerkult* that later developed around Öcalan, the god-like devotion he still enjoys among many of Turkey's Kurds and in the diaspora even more than a decade after his imprisonment. Whatever one may think of Massoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani, they are two leaders of nationalist movements who, at one time in their lives, have actively commanded their *peshmerga* in the field; Öcalan on the other hand has directed the PKK fighters from the relative comfort of his (generous) residences in Lebanon and Syria, from the time of his departure into exile until his expulsion from Damascus in October 1998. Despite this lack of combat experience and relatively limited exposure to personal risk, despite the pathological irreconcilability and ruthlessness bordering persecutory delusions with which he habitually had PKK dissidents hunted down and killed, despite his 'conversion' and public apology during his trial which one finds hard not to interpret as quite an obvious attempt to save his own skin, Öcalan's capture by the MIT provoked dozens of Kurds to self-immolate in protest, and until today his name is considered with reverence as the embodiment of the Kurdish struggle for self-determination in Turkey by, inexplicably to me at least, a multitude.

In his analysis of Öcalan's leadership, Ali Kemal Özcan, as would seem natural, belabours Max Weber's conceptualisation of 'charismatic authority'.⁵⁹⁹

Weber famously differentiated between three types of legitimate authority,⁶⁰⁰ (1) traditional authority, in which a social group, due to historically established or hereditary structures, accepts its subordination to an individual or elite as can be found among priesthood, family clans, tribes, etc..; (2) rational or legal authority, where leadership is regulated and legitimised through norms on which at least a majority of the group (democratically) agrees; and (3) charismatic authority, where it is the 'charismatically qualified leader as such who is obeyed by virtue of personal trust in him and his revelation, his heroism or his exemplary qualities so far as they fall within the scope of the individual's belief in his charisma'.⁶⁰¹ Weber understood charisma as 'a certain quality of an individual personality, by virtue of which he set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities'.⁶⁰² However, both Weber and Özcan drawing on his concept, rightly comprehend charismatic authority, that is 'resting on devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him'⁶⁰³ as a discursive process, as a social phenomenon which, in reference to what has been discussed earlier, only gains meaning through the discourse, that is through the relationship between the leader and his 'followers' or 'disciples'.⁶⁰⁴ In other words, and as already elucidated by Foucault,⁶⁰⁵

charisma is not a thing that can be possessed by an individual. Neither does it emerge automatically from certain circumstances regardless of individual qualities and initiative. Stated more precisely, charisma is a process that exists only in social relationships. It is a product of the qualities and actions of individuals and situational factors, but the nature of the situation is its most important determinant.⁶⁰⁶

After identifying the phenomenon as a discursive process, Weber devotes his analysis to how charismatic authority becomes routinized and institutionalized, since 'for Weber, it was not the moral teachings that become routinized but the personal authority of the charismatic individual once he transferred his command to an impersonal, stratified order'.⁶⁰⁷ In *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* Weber convincingly explains that it is primarily in the interest of the administrative or bureaucratic strata of the group or organisation for the charismatic authority of the leader to become institutionalised, since these strata derive their own authority by reference to the

leader's charismatic qualities;⁶⁰⁸ in other words, their authority rests on the 'reification'⁶⁰⁹ of the leader's charisma, a process Lee calls 'the ramifications of an individualised hegemony'.⁶¹⁰ While these soundly argued theoretical deliberations help us in appreciating charismatic authority as a discursive process in general, and furnish an understanding of how, over the years, Öcalan's individual charisma became routinized and institutionalised within the 'bureaucratic structures' of the PKK to the extent that when he was captured and imprisoned the mere reference to Öcalan, the symbol, sufficed for his successors to ensure obedience within the party, they do not shed greater light on the Messianic devotion with which Öcalan is regarded and venerated by so many Kurds in Turkey outside the PKK. Nor, as Özcan admits, does it explain 'what is unique to Kurdish societal praxis, and its interaction with Turkey's Kurdish policy, is that the routinization of Öcalan's charisma has been reified before the institutionalization of the party. Even, one may say, the routinization firmly took place without the party having institutionalised'.⁶¹¹

Due to similar command structures, processes of successful organisational restructuring after devastating defeats, the importance of cross-border sanctuaries, and their involvement in the international drug trade Vera Eccarius-Kelly compares and contrasts the PKK to Colombia's *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC),⁶¹² I, however, concur with David Romano that, in particular with respect to the insurgencies' leadership figures, a perhaps more fitting comparison would be Peru's *Sendero Luminoso*.⁶¹³ Both insurgencies share a cell-like structure organisationally, their involvement in the international drug trade, and their Marxist-Leninist/Maoist liberation ideology is roughly comparable; however, unlike Öcalan, Abimael Guzmán, the founder of the Shining Path, was a highly educated university lecturer. Like Öcalan, though, he directed the liberation struggle from the relatively safe distance of constantly changing hideouts, refusing to soil his hands with commanding his guerrilla in combat or carrying out the countless killings he ordered; the pathological and seemingly senseless brutality of violence almost habitually meted out as punishment for 'regime collaborators' and internal dissidents from within the organisations' ranks or from among the constituency they claimed to fight for, often in gross disproportion to their engaging the regimes' regular forces in combat, is another characteristic they share. Finally, when captured in

September 1992, Guzmán, like Öcalan, cut a deal with the state authorities to save his skin, declared the peoples' war over and called for peace and national reconciliation, leading to group divisions that left *Sendero Luminoso* even more disunited and weakened than the PKK less than a decade later.⁶¹⁴

It is a common misperception and an act of intellectual hubris to believe that after studying a subject in depth researchers should have all the answers; in fact, I consider it a thorough research process if my inquiry leaves me with more questions than answers. And so, after having analysed both movements, the PKK and *Sendero Luminoso*, for years, I admit that I still fail to fully comprehend why so many members of these insurgencies not so much willingly followed their leaders into death – for their leaders never led them into combat – but how such dubious figures like Abimael Guzmán and Abdullah Öcalan succeeded in indoctrinating tens of thousands of their followers to self-sacrifice.

The PKK's ideology and official formation

In his insightful discourse analysis of the PKK ideology, Cengiz Gunes surveys the major literature of the past two decades on the PKK.⁶¹⁵ With an eye on the parameters of this study, and since there is no need for reinventing the wheel, I will draw in my analysis on his observations. Aside from the official propaganda of the Turkish state apparatus and affiliated mouthpieces such as the Washington-based *Institute of Turkish Studies* and *The Turkish Research Program* at the *Washington Institute for Near East Policy* (WINEP), it appears that recent scholarship is struggling to locate the PKK within the nationalist/secessionist spectrum of contemporary NLMs. On the one hand, Kirişci & Winrow argue, 'it would seem inappropriate to allocate to "the Kurds" a particular label ... it would seem that the Kurds are an amalgam of Turkic, Armenian, and more dominant Indo-European groupings, ... the origins of the Kurds are hence somewhat obscure',⁶¹⁶ an unease with applying the social category 'nation' to the Kurds, shared by White,⁶¹⁷ that does not prevent Kirişci and Winrow from explaining the PKK sanctuary in Iraqi Kurdistan along the lines of an ethnic alliance. On the other hand, Barkey & Fuller contest:

The PKK's program mirrored the slogans of the extreme Left: Kurdistan with all of its four segments, controlled by Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria, represented the

weakest link in “capitalism’s chain” and the fight against imperialism was a fight to save Kurdistan’s natural resources from exploitation.⁶¹⁸

They continue:

In fact, behind the left-wing rhetoric, the PKK had always been a nationalist movement. Its promise to save the exploited of the Middle East notwithstanding, its very formation represented a break with the Turkish Left and abandonment of the “common struggle” ... Hence, its assumption of a nationalistic image is in fact not just in keeping with the times but also a return to its real self.⁶¹⁹

As Gunes criticises correctly, Barkey & Fuller seem to imply that nationalism and ‘left-wing rhetoric’ are contradictory ideologies, a somewhat astonishing claim given the long and well established history of, for example, African and Asian NLMs, where both ideologies merged harmoniously, as did nationalism with liberalism in 19th century Europe. As a matter of fact,

nationalism is [always] strongly connected to other political ideologies and nationalist movements are involved in some other aspects of political demands. This is evident in the Kurdish case because since the creation of Turkey, Kurdish national demands were articulated within various discourses; initially within the Islamist conservative discourse (the early 1920s), as a modernist discourse (1920s and 1930s), under-development (1960s), Marxist-Leninism (1970s and 1980s), and, finally, democracy (1990 onward).⁶²⁰

The significance of this observation, to which I will return shortly, cannot be underestimated since no ideology, be it nationalism, Communism, or liberalism, operates within a societal vacuum but always in tandem with and in opposition to other ideologies and discourses nor does it not change, fluctuate, develop over time and within an overall dynamic discourse – again the example of the union between nationalism and liberalism guiding the revolutions of 1848 and many national liberation movements in Europe since then is the example routinely referred to by modernist theoreticians, and in this case study, as elaborated earlier, the KDP and PUK are also instructive examples.

Earlier, I have outlined how the PKK emerged from the radicalised political left in Turkey in the 1960s and 1970s. By then a reading which situated the Kurdish peasant as the ‘oppressed nation’ in its abstracted form – trapped and exploited in a feudal structure of permanent dependence and in a dichotomous relationship with its constitutive other, the ‘oppressor nation’, that is the wider

global capitalist-imperialist nexus and its local agents, the Turkish bourgeoisie and Kurdish *aghas* – was widely held among the Turkish radical left and emerging, more explicitly among Kurdish liberation movements.⁶²¹ The question that increasingly divided the emerging Kurdish liberation movements such as Kemal Burkay's *Socialist Party of Turkish Kurdistan* (TKSP, *Türkiye Kürdistan Sosyalist Partisi*) from its peers in the TWP was twofold: first, the debate on whether societal change was achievable in socialist union of Turkish and Kurdish liberation movements and within the officially sanctioned channels of the political system, and second, a growing perception of Kurds in a national rather than merely abstracted form, whose liberation from oppression would have to include their dissociation from their Turkish 'brethren'. Already in 1974 Burkay declared:

Turkish governments have prevented and delayed, in economic and cultural terms, the nation-building process of the Kurdish people. Their freedom has been subjected to bloody suppression and terror. Force is used to keep Turkish Kurdistan under control and to suppress the Kurdish people's democratic revolution. The Turkish bourgeois government reduced Kurdistan to the status of a colony.⁶²²

By conceptualising Kurdistan as a colony, the Turkish establishment as a colonialist power, as a co-protagonist in the global capitalist-imperialist nexus whose society overall benefitted from the subjugation of the voiceless Kurdish masses, Burkay went a step further than the earlier 'oppressed nation' – 'oppressor nation' dichotomy. He understood the 'Kurdish nation as,

divided by the combined efforts of the imperialist, racist, and feudal reactionary forces, and which has been forced to live under the yoke. Because of this, in Kurdistan, the feudal relations have not been defeated and a bourgeois democratic revolution has not occurred. Therefore the main contradiction for the Kurdish people is national.⁶²³

In his writings Burkay, one may say, thus equates Turkey's Kurds with those societies in Africa still under the colonial yoke – Portugal granted its colonies independence in the following year after decades of wars of liberation – who cannot follow the traditional Marxist-Leninist revolutionary trajectory of feudalism-capitalism-socialism since the system of colonial dependence, while having allowed Turkey to progress to the capitalist stage, still held them captive in feudalism. Burkay's concept of national liberation and the nation is therefore

still class-based, with nations being defined according to what stage they occupy in the Marxist-Leninist revolutionary trajectory.⁶²⁴ Despite this reasoning, Burkay did not advocate secession from Turkey:

[Burkay] did not envision a complete separation between the Kurdish national movement and the Turkish socialist movement. In fact, their close cooperation and unity was possible and needed because both movements had common interests and shared goals ... Greater cooperation between the revolutionary movements would be the most productive strategy as it would increase the likelihood of both revolutions.⁶²⁵

The TKSP's 'goal was to achieve a federal Kurdish state within Turkey',⁶²⁶ very similar to the struggle for political autonomy advocated by the PUK in Iraq.

The PKK is therefore not the first Kurdish liberation movement in Turkey to have conceptualised the Kurds as a nation apart from Turks, nor is it the first to have called for a unification of the Kurdish lands to overcome the imperialist division, established at Lausanne, that was widely seen as the root cause for the Kurds' persistence in feudal dependence, nor to have identified the Kurdish *aghas* as the local collaborators with and greatest profiteers from the quasi-colonial system of feudal dependence – all these positions PKK and TKSP shared.⁶²⁷ What set the PKK apart from the TKSP and other similar organisations in Turkey's Kurdish political landscape are three factors: (1) the PKK's significant contributions to the Kurdish nationalist discourse in Turkey during the late 1970s/early 1980s becoming increasingly ethnicised – here Öcalan's writings reach from rather obscure, pseudo-historical attempts at establishing a connection between today's Kurds and the ancient Medes to the mythification of the annual *Newroz* (New Years)-celebrations⁶²⁸ – resulting in the conceptualisation of the Kurdish nation altering in the 1980s from class-based to ethnic, thus converting the struggle for Kurdish liberation into an ethno-nationalist conflict; (2) the emphasis on the Turkish part of Kurdistan forming the vanguard in reuniting all Kurdish lands into an 'Independent, United and Democratic Kurdistan',⁶²⁹ as, for example, outlined in a 1982 Manifesto:

Only the struggle in Centre-North-West Kurdistan in Turkey can lead the Kurdistan national liberation movement. This is because this part represents more than half the area and population of Kurdistan and more importantly it is the area where the new social forces have broken the backward old social structure and are the most developed.⁶³⁰

Therefore, although the PKK committed to the revolutionary trajectory that the liberation and unification of Kurdistan would constitute but a preliminary stage to the wider, regional (if not global) socialist revolution, it more explicitly than any other Kurdish NLM in Turkey entertained, at least in principle, the pursuit of secession. While it is important, in terms of the PKK's ideology, to put this pursuit of secession within the context of a wider socialist revolution – an aspect Barkey & Fuller seem to neglect in the above quoted passages – it can be ascertained, and in fact is crucial to strongly emphasise for the purpose of this study, that the PKK is the only (sic!) modern Kurdish ethno-nationalist movement that not only advocated for secession and an actual (not just abstracted) unification of all Kurdish lands but actively fought for these principles in all four parts of Kurdistan. As will be detailed throughout Part Three of this study, this constitutes the major difference between PKK and KDP/PUK and, naturally, had them become competitors and antagonists. Finally, (3) the PKK differed most profoundly from other Kurdish movements in Turkey, such as the TKSP, in allowing for the armed struggle, that is a guerrilla insurgency – to which all other parties only paid lip service, if that – to be tantamount with its political work; in fact, the armed struggle was considered an integral part of it.⁶³¹ This guerrilla insurgency was to be directed against the organs of the Turkish state, the Kurdish *aghas* as imperialist profiteers from the system of feudal dependence in Kurdistan, (internal or external) collaborators with both agents, and competing Kurdish nationalist movements in Turkey that refused to accept a subordinate role to the PKK's dominance in the struggle for national liberation – given their ideological proximity and the PKK's ruthless pursuit of gaining dominance over all other Kurdish nationalist movements in the region, it should come then as no surprise that the PKK clashed with the TKSP as early as 1975.⁶³²

In the short duration from the group's departure from Ankara until the PKK's official founding on 27 November 1978, these ideological positions were developed and refined in the years thereafter. If one tries to identify a symbolic signifier to highlight the differences between the PKK, KDP, and PUK, its founding moment may serve as well as any other: while the KDP was launched at an official congress in Baghdad (sic!), and the PUK initiated over the course of several meetings with its founding members jet-setting between Damascus,

Beirut, and Berlin, the PKK was inaugurated in a clandestine gathering in the rural backwater of Fis village outside Diyarbakir, where Abdullah Öcalan was voted general secretary of the new party, and Cemil Bayık his deputy.⁶³³ However, within less than a year of this historic meeting, the party faced complete annihilation. All through 1978/9 the writing was on the wall that the Turkish military was gearing up for another coup – ominous signs which Abdullah Öcalan, who fled the country in July 1979, read correctly so that when on 12 September 1980 Chief of Staff General Kenan Evren announced military takeover, Öcalan listened to the broadcast from the safe distance of Lebanon.⁶³⁴ Most of his unfortunate followers, less endowed with the gift of providence, were either killed or ended up in jail during the military crackdown immediately before, during, or after the coup. For the PKK, the period of military rule from 1980 until 1983 constitutes a double-edged matter: on the one hand, the party gained widespread public recognition, with its members bravely defending their struggle for national liberation at show trials and enduring often fatal hunger strikes in prison⁶³⁵ – so that by 1983 the PKK as the sole ‘true’ defender of Kurdish self-determination was on everybody’s lips. On the other hand, with most of its members killed, imprisoned or dispersed in exile, the 1980 coup left the PKK effectively comatose; it would have been nothing but a footnote in Kurdish history, had it not been for the Iraqi Kurdish ethno-nationalist parties, the PUK and KDP, resurrecting it.

7.) Conclusion

Any attempt to summarise the vastly different dynamics and trajectories of state-formation in the twentieth century Middle East would go well beyond the confines of this study – in fact it is questionable whether in light of the diverse genealogies of polities such as Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States, etc. any such attempt is possible and whether here the generalising categorisation ‘Middle East’ is not as misplaced as in other contexts – which is why I refer to others for so copious a task,⁶³⁶ and will limit myself to *herausarbeiten* a few commonalities and differences in state-formation and Kurdish ethno-nationalism in Turkey and Iraq pertaining to this study:

(1) ‘The impact of British rule in shaping modern Iraq has been second only to that of Ottoman rule’,⁶³⁷ Phebe Marr highlights the importance of the watershed moment that was the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the occupation of the territories between Suez and the Shat-el Arab by imperialist (British and French) forces in the aftermath of World War One and the transformation of most of these territories into League of Nations-decreed mandates, administered by the imperialist powers. The ‘Mandate System’ constitutes a most peculiar synthesis of the Wilsonian doctrine of self-determination and the strategic interests of the imperialist powers, and while holding out independence for the future, for the time of the Mandate System, ‘the creation of British and French mandates masked a de facto policy of colonial domination virtually indistinguishable from that found elsewhere in the British or French empires at the time’.⁶³⁸ Consequently, those polities who were created by and gained independence through the Mandate System, such as Iraq, can be considered post-colonial states.

(2) Insofar then, Iraq exhibits the triple-legacy of colonialism identified for post-colonial states earlier: an unresolved nationalities question due to the arbitrary imposition of state borders reflecting the strategic needs of the (quasi-)colonial power rather than the actual ethnic composition on the ground; a system-immanent authoritarianism due to the (quasi-)colonial power running an ‘empire on the cheap’ that ensured compliance through a ‘divide-and-rule’ maxim that played local elites and their constituencies off against each other; a

system of lasting dependence on a volatile world market dominated by the 'capitalism-imperialism nexus' due to the collaboration of local elites in this nexus and the economic structure of the post-colonial state as a rentier state providing in unequal exchange cash crops, cheap labour, or, in the case of Iraq, oil for advanced technologies and FDI.

(3) Turkey, on the other hand, is the only successor state of the Ottoman Empire that defended itself successfully against the Mandate System and therefore, although closely associated with the West during the Cold War and as dependent on the volatile world market as the next state, can be considered to have experienced a more genuine national development that – despite differences – more closely resembles the process of state-formation in Europe than the post-colonial state. Due to the dominant role of the military and the precursors of the CHP in the Turkish War of Independence, combined with the *Führerkult* around Atatürk, the political system in Turkey until well into the 1980s, however, can also be considered as inherently prone to authoritarianism, illustrated in the quip of former President Süleyman Demirel that 'God first created the Turkish military and then He realized He had forgotten something and added the people as an afterthought'.⁶³⁹

(4) Both Turkey and Iraq, though, were forced into the corset of the modern international system with its defining principle of the inviolability of state borders. This external imposition of a state system, an alien form of governance, in whose formulation and configuration the new subjects had no say, markedly distinguishes the European experience in state-formation from most of the rest of the world, in particular the Middle East. Here,

state makers [were compelled] ... to attempt to consolidate their power through the development of political institutions while simultaneously attempting to justify the existence of their various states and regimes to populations for whom the very idea of the territorial nation-state, the specific boundaries of existing states, and the concept of secular authority lack legitimacy. This situation is decidedly different from the state-building experience in Western Europe. In that case, the state developed conterminously with the state-system. As a result, there was no external intervention to impose boundaries upon the region.⁶⁴⁰

In addition to the earlier detailed differences this disparity between co-creator and recipients of the specious blessing of the principle of self-

determination is what sets apart most profoundly the processes of state formation in Europe from the experience of the post-colonial state: the former was not only present at the creation of the modern state-system but actively took part in its design, while the latter was left with no alternative but to simply come to terms with it. Consequently, the stringent corset of state-centrism did not allow either Turkey and Iraq or the ethnic minorities within their borders to seek a solution for their unresolved nationalities questions outside this system, i.e. the redrawing of borders or secession.

(5) As far as the nationalities question is concerned, in Iraq, one can identify a sectarian discourse based on the classic 'us' versus 'them' binary opposites of Kurds versus Arabs and Sunni versus Shi'a with each thus defined group struggling for influence in the post-1958 state. Aside from cursory and short-lived episodes no ruler in Baghdad ever attempted a sincere project of nation-building, of crafting a new, more broadly defined and inclusive sense of communality. The doctrine of Turkification, on the other hand, can be understood as a peculiar form of racist 'civic nationalism' that did not allow for any expressions of ethnic or religious pluralism. Ethnic and religious minorities in Turkey until the 1990s seen as fifth columns in the service of foreign agitators and interests, were either assimilated or annihilated.

(6) As for the genealogy of Kurdish ethno-nationalism, before World War One Kurdish nationalism was largely limited to cultural societies and literati circles in Istanbul, developing and becoming salient when the borders of the nationalising states of Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria were already drawn. As a consequence thereof, the process of Kurdish identification has been oriented towards varying constitutive others and has been shaped by the political, social, and economic contexts in the respective countries and societies. While Kurds in Turkey were confronted by an effectively and ideologically strong nationalising state that denied them their very identity, Kurds in Iraq faced a notoriously weak state which, lacking any coherent national legitimisation, was torn apart by legion internal divisions. Consequently, while Kurds in Turkey became the victims of a cataclysmic ethnocide before their national consciousness became salient, Kurdish ethno-nationalism in Iraq blossomed along, and often in collaboration with the manifold currents of (pan-)Arab ethno-nationalism, which, until the second half of the 1970s, frequently bestowed upon Kurdish leaders

the role of kingmakers in inner-Iraqi power struggles. This role was exacerbated by Iraq – unlike Turkey – becoming an early battlefield of super power rivalries during the Cold War, which had its Kurdish parties enjoy the dubious privilege of serving as their proxies.

Ultimately, while in Turkey the traditional Kurdish elites were either shattered early on, or largely co-opted by the nationalising state, traditional societal structures in Iraq not only prevailed but tribal leaders often formed the vanguard of the Kurdish ethno-nationalist movement. In light of these different trajectories it then appears justifiable to conclude with Martin van Bruinessen, the only scholar who has conducted extensive ethnographic field work in all major parts of Kurdistan, 'it might, in fact, be more apt to consider the Kurds not as one, but as a set of ethnic groups',⁶⁴¹ and to speak of Kurdish ethno-nationalisms in plural rather than a singular, which would imply an ethnic group defined by cross-border unity, communality and solidarity that is, in this case, absent. And yet it is such presupposed cross-border unity, and communality by which the internationalization of the so called 'Kurdish conflict' is explained by the ethnic alliance model and related groupist frameworks of explanatory IR.

Part Three

8.) The Origins of the PKK Sanctuary in Iraqi Kurdistan

PKK-PUK collaboration in Lebanon and Syria

The conventional narrative in most of the literature that deals with relations between the PKK and the Iraqi Kurdish parties – rather in passing and without much scrutiny ascribing it to either an ethnic alliance or instrumentalist explanatory model – has these relations start with the ‘Declaration of Solidarity’ between the PKK and KDP of 1983. One of the eminent authorities on the PKK in the 1980s, the Turkish journalist İsmet İmset, for example, states unequivocally, ‘in fact, there was no major cooperation between the PKK and the Iraqi Kurds until 1983’.⁶⁴² This view, however, is demonstrably wrong. As this study reveals, an Iraqi Kurdish party, the PUK, was in fact the very player who made the PKK’s survival after the Turkish military coup of 12 September 1980 possible, whose vital support enabled the PKK to rise from the ashes of marginalization to become the most potent insurgency in Kurdish history. In sum, and in light of what will be detailed in the following, it is no exaggeration to assert that without the good offices of the PUK, the PKK may have ceased to exist in 1980.

By 1978, the Turkish state had imposed martial law in most south-eastern provinces, with the military penetrating every village in large numbers and thus making it increasingly difficult for PKK insurgents to carry out their at first rather amateurish operations. Although Öcalan claims that due to his foresight the organization managed to extract most of its top commanders from Turkey into the safety of neighbouring Syria just in time,⁶⁴³ ‘the military intervention did deliver a blow to the PKK ... Of the thousand or so detainees convicted of belonging to the PKK, a number were ... Central Committee members and included some of Öcalan’s most trusted comrades’; many of them ‘died in prison and others further weakened the organisation by becoming informers’.⁶⁴⁴ There can be little doubt that the radical left in Turkey had been dealt a devastating blow by police operations under martial law and the 12 September military coup; in security operations between 12 September 1980 and 31 March 1981, ‘a total of 19,978 suspects were caught and put on trial in the three years of military rule and only 916 of these were from the right or extreme right

organisations; ... 15,500 suspects were charged with membership in or engaging in the activities of the left-wing organisations ... [of which] the PKK took the largest toll'⁶⁴⁵ – and that the PKK would have suffered a fate similar to sister organisations like the TKSP, had it not established relations with a sympathetic foreign government, the regime of Hafez al-Assad in Syria. It is these relations with the Syrian government on which Imset focuses in his subsequent analysis, but without asking how they were established in the first place, how a political refugee and then no-name like Abdullah Öcalan managed to secure for his newcomer organisation the support of the mighty Syrian intelligence service, the *mukhabarat*. For in July 1979, Öcalan fled to Syria via Lebanon, where, for three months, he came to stay with Adel Murad, one of the co-founders of the PUK. At the time, like most of the PUK leadership, Murad lived in exile, where from Beirut, in his day job, he covered political events in Iraq and Iran for Lebanese newspapers, yet in fact coordinated the PUK's activities in Lebanon. Murad recounts his first encounter with Öcalan:

One evening I met with two of my Iranian contacts who told me that two persons had come from Turkey, that they were the new left there, important people I should meet ... They were very secretive, always concerned about security, even a bit scared ... we met then in my apartment at night, that was the first time I met Abdullah Öcalan. With him was a woman, her name was Myriam, I had no idea who she was, she only spoke Turkish, no Kurdish ... we sat down and Öcalan started talking, for an hour he kept going, but I could barely understand anything, his Kurdish was difficult [to understand], the Iranians, who spoke Turkish, had to translate ... I let Öcalan – his name was Ali then, nobody knew that it was Öcalan, and later I organised a passport for him on the name of Ali, a Jordanian passport – so I let Öcalan stay with me until I could find a translator ... Öcalan did not like the Iranians [translating] our talks, he later said he wanted to talk to me directly because I'm a Kurd ... so I got a translator, and Öcalan stayed with me ... in the end he stayed for three months in my apartment.⁶⁴⁶

Murad not only organised a translator but also sought approval for his talks with Öcalan from the PUK leadership. 'I wrote Mam Jalal [Talabani] and informed him about this new Turkish group, and that they wanted us to help them setting up contacts here in Lebanon. He answered that I should go ahead and help them but to proceed with caution because we had no clear idea who they were.'⁶⁴⁷ Murad did as he was told and brought Öcalan in touch with Nayif Hawatmah's Syrian-backed *Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine*

(DFLP). Murad attended the long conversations between Hawatmah and Öcalan, and recalls that at the end of the first meeting Hawatmah 'gave him ten Kalashnikovs and [later] promised him [more] assistance ... Within weeks dozens of young fighters of Öcalan's group came from Turkey, we received them and sent them on to the Palestinian camps in the Beqaa [Valley].'⁶⁴⁸

Murad's portrayal of events appears plausible for three reasons. First, as will be shown shortly, the collaboration between the PKK and the Iraqi Kurdish parties, far from a credit one would seek to take in the current political discourse, is a matter the latter generally tend to downplay if not outright deny. To some extent then, Murad, who served as Iraq's Ambassador to Romania and currently as general secretary of the PUK Central Committee, yet has no reputation of keeping his opinions about the fossilised and corrupt structures of the party to himself, when admitting to the crucial role his party played in accommodating the PKK in its hour of need, acts against the current discourse and the image the Iraqi Kurdish parties generally tend to cultivate these days. Second, Murad can refer to a picture of himself with Öcalan taken during the days when the PKK leader stayed at his apartment in Beirut. The PUK was thus instrumental in throwing the comatose PKK a lifeline by facilitating contacts with the Palestinian NLMs operating in Lebanon in the early 1980s. Third, Aliza Marcus in her account of the PKK's early years hints to as much when she writes, 'in late 1979 or early 1980, Öcalan succeeded in getting a meeting in Beirut ... with the DFLP. This meeting, probably arranged by Kurds Öcalan met in Beirut ...'.⁶⁴⁹ For the first time in the literature on the PKK I can now substantiate and document that the Kurds in Beirut to which Marcus refers were Adel Murad and the PUK leadership.

Shortly after their first meetings the DFLP agreed to host and train a small number of PKK fighters in its camps in the Syrian controlled Beqaa Valley, most prominently the Helwe Camp.⁶⁵⁰ 'The offer was not unusual. At various times, the DFLP trained Nicaraguan Sandinistas, Iranian leftists, Greek Communists, and even the odd Saudi'.⁶⁵¹ In addition to wider ideological fraternity and solidarity among Marxist-Leninist NLMs, 'the DFLP likely also had more concrete reasons for helping. Giving shelter to other leftist revolutionaries allowed the DFLP to promote the image of an important, international revolutionary movement ... and it helped them pad their numbers at a time of

rising tensions with Israel'.⁶⁵² By the time of the 12 September coup in Turkey, the numbers of PKK fighters the DFLP hosted had swelled to an extent that the DFLP could no longer accommodate them. But 'Öcalan, in the meantime, [had] successfully established similar training arrangements with other Palestinian organisations. This allowed the PKK to spread its people among the different Palestinian factions, including Yasir Arafat's Fatah, George Habash's *Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine*, Samir Ghosheh's *Palestinian Popular Struggle Front*, and the Lebanese Communist Party'.⁶⁵³

One of the PKK fighters who arrived in Lebanon via Syria in the wake of the coup was Selahettin Çelik. He recounts his journey:

As soon as we crossed the border, [Syrian intelligence] knew about us ... The Kurds in whose houses we stayed, they had to inform the authorities about us ... We took Arab names, the Syrians gave us identity cards, ... and we moved on to Lebanon ... We felt bad about relying on [Syrian] help ... They treated the[ir own] Kurds very badly, we knew that, we saw that ... but there was nothing we could do about it. We needed [Syria's support] to get to Lebanon. We would not risk any trouble with them.⁶⁵⁴

What can be established at this point beyond any doubt is that without the logistical support of the Syrian regime in channelling PKK fighters escaping Turkey to Lebanon and furnishing them with identity cards and that without the armed training and logistics the PKK received from the DFLP and other Palestinian NLMs, Abdullah Öcalan and his fledgling insurgency would have been finished. To Aliza Marcus Selahettin Çelik summed it up:

In reality, we were finished as an organisation after 1980. We had no strength in Europe, in Turkey we were in prison. But in Syria we could gather ourselves together. The minute we got money we used it to send people to Europe [to work in the Kurdish communities there]. From the Palestinians we learned things. We learned about making demonstrations for martyrs, about ceremonies. We did a lot of reading on a people's war [together], we also had armed training. They gave us clothing, cigarettes. We owe the Palestinians something.⁶⁵⁵

What can be further established is that the Assad regime in Syria has a long tradition of using regional NLMs as proxies to fight or at least to sting more powerful neighbours, many of which it has issues with. This practice reaches from its support of Palestinian organisations in the parts of Lebanon it controlled in both fighting Israel but also its antagonists in the Lebanese Civil War, to

hosting Jalal Talabani and the PUK in Damascus to deal a blow to the Ba'athist regime in Baghdad with which it was at an ideological enmity, to today employing Hezbollah to fight the Syrian opposition in the Syrian Civil War since 2011. With its most powerful neighbour in the region, Turkey, the Syrian regime had many unsettled disputes, from Turkey's annexation of the province of Hatay in 1939, originally part of the French Mandate of Syria, to its *Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi* (GAP) development project for southeastern Anatolia with a series of hydro-electric dams and mass scale irrigation sapping the waters of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, to its alleged shelter of the Muslim Brotherhood after the Hama insurrection in 1981.⁶⁵⁶ Hosting the PKK in the Syrian-controlled parts of Lebanon, facilitating its collaboration with Syrian-backed Palestinian NLMs, and providing logistical support was a convenient tool to deal Turkey a blow by proxy, all the more convenient since Syria's involvement came with the advantage of political deniability.⁶⁵⁷ In the years after 1980 both PKK-Syrian and PKK-Palestinian collaboration increased substantially, to the extent that Öcalan, who had resettled to Damascus, 'was enjoying Syrian hospitality to the best of his benefit ... he owned a villa in Damascus, travelled around in a red Mercedes provided for him from Syria and was protected by Syrian Kurds who are still his only bodyguards. In every way, he was living the life of a Syrian official'.⁶⁵⁸ Likewise, the PKK presence in the Beqaa Valley had increased so much that it had taken over control of the Helwe Camp, and in 1981 and 1982 the organisation held its first two congresses abroad there.⁶⁵⁹ What is more, while Syria adamantly prohibited any agitation against the regime among its own Kurdish population, it gave permission for the PKK to recruit fighters from within their ranks, 'hoping this would redirect local Kurdish attention away from fighting for change inside Syria'.⁶⁶⁰ On the phenomenon of Syrian Kurds being recruited by the PKK with the encouragement of the Assad regime, Omar Sheikhmous, a Syrian Kurd, recounts:

[The PKK in Syria] had very good recruiters, especially among students and women. They were clever in recruiting youngsters, who were sent to Lebanon first and then to Turkey. For Syrian Kurds, the PKK was very attractive because the Syrian Kurdish community was corrupt and factionalised and Syrian intelligence had infiltrated it ... About 30-35% were recruited by government organs. It was mainly state security that worked as an initiator and organiser. They had a number of contacts in the Syrian community, mainly in Idrin, Damascus, Qamishli, and Aleppo. There was a clear agreement: "You'll be sent to fight in Turkey and

therefore you'll not be asked for military service, and after several years you come back" ... When the recruits left Syria, security kept their identity cards. There were two considerations behind this: First of all, they could not easily return but needed permission of security to do so. Second, if they were killed or tracked in Turkey, there would be no reflection on Syria.⁶⁶¹

Not even the fact that Öcalan was living the high life in Damascus courtesy of the Syrian authorities illustrates the scope and depth of the support his group received from the Assad regime as well as these practices of forcibly recruiting Syrian Kurds into the ranks of the PKK.

The question remains to what extent the PUK, another proxy Syria hosted and supported generously since its founding, after its initial part in paving the way for PKK-DFLP cooperation, played a role in further facilitating contacts between Syrian authorities and the PKK. Sarkho Mahmoud, who lived as a student in Damascus during the 1980s and from 1985 on was one of the PUK's external representatives in charge of liaison with other Kurdish and non-Kurdish political parties there, observed on whether the PUK facilitated contacts between the PKK and the Syrian authorities: 'we made the door open for them ... through the Iraqi opposition in Syria, in which we were very strong, we helped them to set up talks with the Syrians.'⁶⁶² In the same interview he further claimed that PUK members had also assisted in establishing contacts between the PKK and the regime of Muammar Ghaddafi in Libya.⁶⁶³ When I asked Adel Murad, Sarkho Mahmoud, and Omar Sheikhmous why the PUK had lent a helping hand to the PKK, who, after all, just before the coup distinguished itself mostly by fighting Kurdish parties in Turkey which the PUK had traditionally been affiliated with, such as Kemal Burkay's TKSP, all gave more or less the same answer: 'We were young, we were naïve. We dreamt of building a large anti-imperialist front all over the Middle East, including many Kurdish parties and organisations from many countries. So, we reached out and helped any group we could work with ... and we hoped that [the PKK and other Kurdish parties in Turkey] would mend their differences.'⁶⁶⁴ In light of these lofty declarations, the ethnic alliance model appears at first sight an apt explanatory framework to account for the PUK's support of the PKK in 1979/80, therewith saving it from obliteration. However, even though ideational factors appear to have determined the PUK's behaviour towards the PKK – material interests can be ruled out since the PUK had little to gain, and the PKK refugee have-nots

had nothing to give in terms of material benefits – a few important qualifications must be put in place that ultimately render untenable common ethnicity as the determining variable in explaining these acts of solidarity. First, the ethnic alliance model, strictly speaking, does not apply here since the PUK neither controlled a state of its own nor did it ‘play a role in policy making’⁶⁶⁵ in a neighbouring state; both PUK and PKK were political refugees, leading a paltry existence in exile, with little to lose from working together and equally dependent on the charity of others. During the time in question for our current analysis nobody, neither the PUK, nor the DLFP, nor the Syrian government, could have foreseen the PKK’s rise to becoming the most potent insurgency in Kurdish history within less than a decade; consequently, they must have thought their support of Öcalan’s group of little, almost negligible consequence. Adel Murad makes a point when emphasising that he ‘saw no great difference’ between offering Öcalan a couch to sleep on and facilitating contacts with the DFLP, since the consequences and extensive impact of his doing so were impossible to anticipate at this moment.⁶⁶⁶ They were seen as simple acts of charity and hospitality towards an ideologically related Kurdish organisation in need. The concurrence of two ideational factors, ethnicity and a radical leftist ideology, constitutes the second caveat to common ethnicity as the determining variable for categorising their relations and to the ethnic alliance model serving as an applicable explanatory framework. Omar Sheikmous above remarks illustrate that for the PUK, the PKK’s Marxist-Leninist pedigree counted as much as the fact that both were Kurdish organisations fighting for national self-determination. In particular in light of both groups’ collaboration with the Palestinian NLMs operating in Lebanon, who had no ethnic ties with the Kurds, I would find it very difficult if not impossible to draw a clear line between political ideology and ethnicity determining these groups’ behaviours. This difficulty becomes even more apparent when extending the level of analysis to include the Syrian government, in whose case only instrumentalist but no ideational factors appear to have determined the behaviour of the Assad regime, the PKK, and the PUK with each availing themselves of the other for their own strategic and materialist ends; when bringing the Syrian Kurds and their prominence in the ranks of the PKK into the equation, the situation appears again less clear-cut, though. Here, a host of ideational factors⁶⁶⁷ as well as material interests, i.e. avoiding conscription into the Syrian military, seem to account for their

joining the PKK. In sum, I would argue that this first example of PKK collaboration with external actors, when considering the whole body of evidence at all levels of analysis – PKK-PUK, PKK-PUK-Palestinian NLMs-Syrian government, and PKK-Syrian government-Syrian Kurds constellations – in its entirety already attests as to why the simplifying reductionism of either the ethnic alliance model or instrumentalism fall short of convincingly explaining the PKK's various 'alliances'. Instead it supports the case I have made in this study for appreciating these actors' relations as a complex, shifting, and situational matrix of identities and interests, as advocated by Fierke,⁶⁶⁸ in which each actor's motives ought to be studied individually as well as in their interaction with each other in order to get a workable grasp of the matrix' dynamics.

The PKK pitching camp in Iraqi Kurdistan

When considering the dire conditions of the PKK in 1980 there can be no doubt that the PUK was instrumental in resurrecting Abdullah Öcalan's fledgling organisation from the dead. Likewise, when considering the PKK's expansion in numbers, military strike capability, enhanced sophistication in tactics of guerrilla warfare through military training, equipment, and overall professionalization between 1980 and August 1984, when it actively launched its insurgency in Turkey, there can be little doubt about the extent to which the support of the Syrian regime of Hafez al-Assad and the Palestinian NLMs operating in Syrian-controlled Lebanon proved instrumental in achieving this transformation. Not only had the collaboration with Syrian intelligence and Palestinian NLMs, facilitated by the PUK, provided the PKK with a second life, it allowed it to consider, in 1984, the transition from individual hit-and-run strikes to an elaborate guerrilla campaign based on the classic Maoist three-stage model of guerrilla warfare, later adapted by Vo Nguyen Giap, of (1) mobilization through targeted propaganda among the peasantry and contention of the authorities' security forces in the region through guerrilla warfare, (2) equilibrium through protracted conflict and mobile warfare, thus sapping the authorities' resources and public support, and (3) general counteroffensive as part of mass-scale public uprising against the authorities.⁶⁶⁹ This transition is epitomised in the creation of the PKK's Vietcong-style armed wing, the *Hezen Rizgariya Kurdistan*

(HRK, Kurdistan Freedom Unit),⁶⁷⁰ renamed into *Arteşa Rizgariya Netewa Kurdistan*, (ARGK, People's Liberation Army of Kurdistan) in 1986.⁶⁷¹

What the PKK dramatically lacked though was a strategically suitable geographical launch pad for its first strikes into Turkish territory. The flat, arid terrain of the Turkish-Syrian border was incompatible with guerrilla warfare, and the Syrian regime proved hesitant to become that directly involved in the PKK's launch of military strikes.⁶⁷² When faced with this predicament of having a guerrilla ready to strike but no access to the theatre of operations, the second Iraqi Kurdish party, the KDP, stepped in to save the day for the PKK. In July 1983, at first sight perhaps surprisingly, the KDP and PKK signed an accord of mutual cooperation, titled 'Principles of Solidarity', that was made public in the following year.⁶⁷³ In this eleven article long declaration both parties committed to a joint effort, 'depend[ing] on the force of the Kurdish people' against 'every kind of imperialism and the struggle against the plans and plots of imperialism in the region'; they further pledged to seek and further 'cooperation with other revolutionary forces in the region and to effort the creation of new alliances'.⁶⁷⁴ Wary of each others' past though, in article 10, KDP and PKK pledged not to interfere in each other's internal affairs, providing 'that the organisations would not side with actions which could damage the unity of the parties and that they should respect the organisational and political independence of each other';⁶⁷⁵ if this principle were violated, the covenant foresaw a modus in which the aggrieved party would inform the other of its objection, then issue a warning, and if not altered, would be at liberty to terminate the compact.⁶⁷⁶ In October 1984 Massoud Barzani and Abdullah Öcalan met in Damascus for the first and only time to publicly unveil their alliance with the communiqué even translated into Arabic.⁶⁷⁷

To be sure, the history of Kurdish ethno-nationalism is full of ephemeral acts of cross-border cooperation between the various Kurdish ethno-nationalist parties and the four nationalising states; rarely though has such cooperation, normally rather dealt with in clandestine fashion, took on such formal a character with public announcements and a detailed set of regulations. At least on paper then we can speak of a classic strategic alliance here between the two Kurdish parties that, although not explicitly including a clause of mutual defence or stipulations for collective military action, resembles a military alliance insofar

as the KDP granted the PKK access to its territory and joint use of its infrastructure, i.e. camps, in Iraqi Kurdistan. Consequently, even before the accord was made public, the PKK established its largest camp yet, called Lolan camp, in the inaccessible mountainous border area of Iraq and Turkey – a camp that tellingly also acted as the KDP’s regional headquarter and clandestine radio station as well as a base camp for the Iraqi Communist Party.⁶⁷⁸ The importance of this development cannot be underestimated, since by granting access to and sanctuary on its territory, the KDP provided the PKK with the one element Öcalan was missing in his strategy: a launch pad with direct access to the target state for projecting guerrilla operations into Turkey in a territory as suitable for irregular warfare as the jungles of Vietnam or peaks of Afghanistan. This most advantageous position provided the PKK with the ideal conditions, in August 1984, to carry its guerrilla war into Turkey, a war that has lasted now for three decades, making it thus one of the longest examples of guerrilla warfare in modern history, and costing 50,000 lives – a war that arguably would have been difficult if not impossible to launch had the KDP not granted the PKK sanctuary. Also, the PKK sanctuary in Iraqi Kurdistan, together with Syria’s support of Öcalan’s group, allowed the Turkish politico-military establishment to portray the Kurdish uprising in southeast Anatolia as an external problem and the PKK as agents controlled from abroad by shadowy regional powers conspiring against Turkey.⁶⁷⁹

For any insurgency the blessings of sanctuary are obvious, have been highlighted by guerrilla commanders from Mao Tse-tung to Ernesto Che Guevara, to Vo Nguyen Giap as well as theoreticians of insurgency and counter-insurgency,⁶⁸⁰ and I have detailed them together with providing a more nuanced model of insurgency-sanctuary state relations elsewhere.⁶⁸¹ Idean Salehyan is the latest in an array of political scientists who have highlighted the importance of international borders to shelter insurgencies from the jurisdiction of their target states.⁶⁸² If we conceptualise the international system as a conglomerate of sovereign states that, as three main paradigms of explanatory IR would have it, exercise absolute power and control within their border but have little or no legal basis to prosecute subversive elements abroad, it is plainly clear why protest movements, NLMs or insurgencies find it attractive to evade persecution, imprisonment or torture by relocating most of their

operations into the territory of a neighbouring state well-disposed to their cause – geographical proximity being an additional factor in their favour, as insurgencies usually cannot project force across long distance. By going abroad, insurgencies thus not only successfully dodge the judicial, policing, and military powers of the target state, they also significantly raise the stakes of the conflict by internationalising it. They not only win a material and logistic supporter for their cause but also a potent patron in international fora and bodies that are in most cases ‘states only clubs’. The insurgencies therewith also make it more costly for the target state to prosecute them: doing so would violate the sovereignty of the neighbouring state and risk the condemnation in international bodies that comes with it, hazard an inter-state confrontation between two regular, more or less well-equipped armies, and even if the target state is willing to take that risk and intervene abroad, in most cases it would result in a lengthy and costly occupation to extirpate the insurgency and the neighbouring state’s support of it.⁶⁸³ Erin Jenneand Clayton Thyne demonstrate how the assistance of foreign governments and the higher costs resulting for the target state to combat them, significantly increases the bargaining position of the insurgents and may induce them to raise and radicalise their demands.⁶⁸⁴ ‘Thus, the inclusion of additional parties to the bargaining environment can make it more difficult to find an acceptable settlement because external patronage alters expectations about the domestic balance of power’.⁶⁸⁵ Ironically then, the very principle of state sovereignty that holds international borders sacrosanct and all too often the internal affairs of states’ untouchable, to the same extent and when finding sanctuary in a neighbouring state, befits the (secessionist or separatist) insurgency that seeks to topple or revolutionise this order. In these aspects of sanctuary I agree with the cited analysts; what I do not agree with, and what I seek to problematise in this study, is the tendency to reduce the motives for political action of states, parties, NLMs or insurgencies – whether they are the recipients or givers of sanctuary – to singular explanatory factors such as common ethnicity or material interests and by doing so, to reify these factors and the discourses from which they emerge.

For this study then, the central questions in this context are why the KDP, at first sight rather unexpectedly, reached out to the PKK, entered a formal alliance with Öcalan’s group, granted it access to its territory and sanctuary, and

even allowed it to share its infrastructure such as camps, supply lines, and means of communication. As with the PUK, at cursory inspection a lot seems to speak for the ethnic alliance model as an explanatory framework. After all, when justifying his alliance with Öcalan, even Massoud Barzani himself boasted:

For us, it is always a source of pride that in the regions that we have liberated with the cost of our blood, we have opened the area as a fortress for every Kurdish fighter. We signed the alliance with the PKK with this logic and for these reasons.⁶⁸⁶

At closer scrutiny, though, such lofty declarations are revealed as strategic essentialisms, maintaining an essentialised version of the group, the pretence of group cohesion and solidarity for strategic purposes. If we as scholars though, rather than calling it into question, adopt the strategic essentialisms of ethno-nationalist elites like Massoud Barzani as the basis of our enquiries or take on '*categories of ethnopolitical practice as our categories of social analysis*',⁶⁸⁷ as the ethnic alliance model and related explanatory frameworks propagate, we contribute to the reification and substantialisation of the ethno-nationalist elites' primordialism and to the reproduction of its logic. Having said that, in order to reiterate the central point of critique of this study of the preeminent approaches of explanatory IR to explaining ethnic conflict, and before discussing alternative explanations, it is only proper to clarify why I am confident to discount Barzani's declaration of solidarity based on common ethnicity as a strategic essentialism.

Other than the PUK, where at least in its early stages and only to a certain degree ideological congruities with the PKK are identifiable, the ethno-nationalisms of KDP and PKK are strikingly dissimilar. As a matter of fact, up to 1983, more than anything else, KDP and PKK can be seen as antagonists. Not only did the PKK, as the only modern Kurdish ethno-nationalist movement, advance a secessionist ethno-nationalist agenda, while the KDP's at best can be understood as separatist which by default would have put the former at odds with the KDP whose self-perception as the grand old party of Kurdish self-determination in Iraq would not have tolerated Öcalan's competition on its very home turf, while the PKK saw itself as the vanguard for the liberation and unification of all Kurdish lands. What is more, PKK and KDP can be located at the opposite ends of the spectrum of Kurdish ethno-nationalism. From even

before the founding of the PKK, for Öcalan the KDP had embodied all that was wrong with Kurdish ethno-nationalism, the very reason for its failure, and he never tired of castigating Mulla Mustafa Barzani and his successors as adhering to a 'primitive' and 'defeatist' ideology in speech after speech.⁶⁸⁸ Also, in its very founding declaration of 27 November 1978, the PKK explicitly positioned itself against the KDP's strategy of wresting from the state concessions for Kurdish autonomy, which, through acceptance and facilitation of the division of the Kurdish lands, it understood as nothing but attempts at playing into the hands of imperialist nationalising states.⁶⁸⁹ Öcalan elaborated:

The KDP program for autonomy is not accidental. This represents the special interests of Kurdish feudals, and it is an instrument to develop them into a bourgeoisie ... The feudal class cannot demand more than autonomy. They do not go against their interests. Independence is against the interests of the Kurdish feudals. The struggle for independence means the death of the Kurdish feudals. Only the forces of the proletariat can achieve independence.⁶⁹⁰

Given the opposing ideologies of PKK and KDP, these tirades and declarations were more than strategic essentialisms or examples of mere ethnic outbidding; the antagonism with the KDP was rooted in the very core of the PKK's perception of itself as a Marxist-Leninist NLM with the declared objective of liberating the oppressed Kurdish masses not only from the nationalising states that denied them the expression of their ethnic identity but also the Kurdish tribal landlords that participated and profited from this system of oppression and exploitation. And, as has been detailed earlier, these Kurdish tribal landlords were the founding constituency of the KDP, and the Barzanis were not only prominent representatives of this stratum of Kurdish society but also the most potent champion of their interests. What is more, in this role the Barzanis were not limited to Iraq, but, as has been shown in the previous section, had inspired the founding of an affiliated party in Turkey, the KDP-T by Faik Bucak, one of the wealthiest landlords in the Siverek area.⁶⁹¹ These very feudal landlords and Kurdish *aghas* who made a profit from collaborating with the Turkish state and who acted in elections as a political machine for the established parties, the PKK had designated its prime target during its early years of operation. As a matter of fact, nothing illustrates this ideological primacy and therewith the antagonism with the KDP better than the fact that on 30 July 1979 the PKK dared as one of its signature feats an assassination

attempt on Mehmet Celal Bucak, the head of the Bucak tribe – that had constituted the founding core of the KDP-T – and a deputy of in the governing coalition with the right-wing MHP.⁶⁹²

It therefore seems not very plausible, as some authors claim,⁶⁹³ that the KDP entered the alliance with the PKK in order to strengthen its pan-Kurdish credentials, deeply impaired after the collapse of Mulla Mustafa's 1975 revolt and the split with PUK. Why, of all organisations advocating Kurdish self-determination in Turkey, would the KDP have entered an alliance with the one most opposed to its own brand of Kurdish ethno-nationalism? Why the only Kurdish NLM that laid claim to leading the Kurdish struggle for self-determination not only in Turkey but also in Iraq, where it would have competed with the KDP? Why then open the door to Iraqi Kurdistan for the PKK, giving it access to this political stage? Furthermore, the argument that the KDP sought to boost its pan-Kurdish credentials appears even less probable given the fact that, at the same time as Massoud Barzani extended his hospitality to the PKK, the KDP launched an attack on its sister organisation in Iran, the KDP-I, on behalf of its ally, the Khomeini regime in Tehran, and as part of the wider Iran-Iraq War that had started with Iraq's invasion of 22 September 1980.⁶⁹⁴ In light of these doubts and of the overall KDP-PKK antagonism, ideational factors appear to hold little purchase in explaining why the KDP entered an alliance with the PKK in 1983, granted it access to and sanctuary on its territory, and the ethnic alliance model and related frameworks can be discarded as a plausible explanatory model for these developments and the parties' motives. One additional caveat, already mentioned in the context of the PUK, also applies to the KDP's support of the PKK three years later: the KDP simply could not have foreseen the PKK's ascendance from second rank guerrilla in the pocket of the Assad regime to becoming the Middle East's most potent insurgency over the course of just a few years, and therefore can be excused for not fully appreciating what it actually bargained for.

Ensnared in its sanctuary in Iraqi Kurdistan and with direct access to the designated theatre of operations in Turkey, on 15 August 1984 the PKK began in earnest its peoples' war for the liberation of Kurdistan with dual attacks on the towns of Semdinli and Ehru, and in October of the same year, in a deliberate propagandistic strike, stepped up its activities with another widely publicised

attack coinciding with President Kenan Evren's visit to the area;⁶⁹⁵ in the spring of 1985 the PKK fought its as yet toughest battle in Siverek with 60 casualties among guerrilla, security forces and civilians.⁶⁹⁶ These successful attacks caught the Turkish politico-military establishment by complete surprise,⁶⁹⁷ allowing the PKK, who by early 1985 was operating with at least 200 guerrillas active inside Turkey at any time, to intensify its propaganda among the Kurdish village population with the aim of persuading them to join the insurgency and to ultimately prepare the ground for a general mass uprising.⁶⁹⁸ Yet, by mid-1985 the Turkish army had not only significantly stepped up its military presence in the area but also introduced the system of 'village guards', Kurdish villagers armed, paid, or at least as often press-ganged into the service of the army, to defend remote villages against guerrillas operating in the area, thus effectively creating state-sanctioned death squads and paramilitary services.⁶⁹⁹ Within in a year the PKK insurrection had turned into a full-scale civil war with tens of thousands to perish and millions to become internally displaced.

If ideational factors cannot explain the KDP-PKK accord, what are the motives behind the parties' behaviour? In the current political discourse and climate, in which KRG politicians try their hardest to project the image of a reliable partner of the West and in which the Kurdistan Region is completely dependent on Turkey politically and economically, the KDP understandably would prefer their past alliance with PKK to be forgotten. These attempts at rewriting and whitewashing history sometimes take on a bizarre form, such as when I interviewed the Chief of Staff to President Barzani, Fuad Hussein, and he outright denied that the KDP 'had ever supported or collaborated with the PKK'.⁷⁰⁰ Such brazen denials, in light of how well documented events and the 'Principles of Solidarity' accord are, not only are an insult to the intelligence of the questioner but let today's decision makers in the KRG appear surprisingly unprofessional in plying their political trade; indeed, rather than cloaking it, they offer us an insight into how uncomfortable they must be in coming to terms with their past. Alternatively Imset and McDowall suggest an instrumentalist explanation for why the KDP invited the PKK onto their territory.⁷⁰¹ In May 1983 the Turkish military had launched a substantial raid in the Iraqi-Turkish border region in pursuit of Kurdish militants who had fled there from Turkey but its attacks indiscriminately hit them and Barzani's *peshmerga* who had just

returned there from Iran alike. Imset and McDowall hypothesise Barzani intended to create a buffer between his forces and the Turkish border, a buffer zone he planned the PKK to fill for him. This explanation, though, seems not plausible. If Barzani had feared Turkish incursions into his territory, why would he invite an organisation whose presence surely would trigger further retaliation from the Turkish military – a chain of events that unfolded precisely in this fashion once the PKK had pitched camp there?

I, for one, believe the KDP-PKK alliance of 1983 is rooted in the eternal rivalry between KDP and PUK and wider geo-political changes in the region. Since the PUK had sent *peshmerga* into the field to continue Iraqi Kurdish resistance against the regime of Saddam Hussein in the wake of the collapse of Mulla Mustafa's uprising, KDP and PUK were embroiled in a de facto civil war, yet both sides were too weak to gain an upper hand.⁷⁰² The situation dramatically changed when in September 1980 Saddam Hussein invaded Iran and the entire region was flung into a war the like the Middle East had not witnessed since World War One, with more than a million casualties. In this confrontation of titans, the KDP, scraping a living in exile in Iran, opposing Baghdad, and dependent on whoever was in power in Tehran, whether the Shah or Ayatollah Khomeini, took sides from early on, and since 1981 was employed by the Iranian Revolutionary regime against the KDP-I.⁷⁰³ For the PUK the outbreak of the war posed a profound predicament. Nominally allied with and dependent on Damascus and Tehran against Baghdad, it, on the other hand, was not keen on siding with its archenemy, the KDP against the KDP-I, who it still hoped to woo into a wider, more pan-Kurdish platform. In this decisive stage, Talabani, who had been encouraged in this move by KDP-I leader Ghassemlou, displayed shrewd brinkmanship by staking the fate of his party on one card: he accepted the overtures of Saddam Hussein for negotiations that, with Saddam Hussein driven into a corner, Talabani hoped could yield an even more generous autonomy statute than Mulla Mustafa Barzani's 1974 'March Manifesto' and cement his leadership of all Iraqi Kurds. In the spring of 1983 the PUK sided with the KDP-I against Iran, which in turn joined forces with the KDP in attacks on the PUK,⁷⁰⁴ and in December of the same year the PUK officially entered negotiations with the regime of Saddam Hussein. In a 2000 interview with PBS' *Frontline* Talabani recalls:

When we went to Baghdad in 1983, [Saddam Hussein] received us and was very kind to us. He said that by coming here, you have done some historical achievements. First of all, your homeland is in danger, you are coming to protect it from Iranian invasion. Second, he said, “you came to cooperate with us while your party is in a weak position.” Third, he said that you are not supporting invaders, you are supporting your government, your people. And he said, “you have done historical favours and we owe you.” He told me, “Jalal, I will give you something, some Kurdish demand that will raise you not only in the eyes of Iraqi Kurds but with Iranian Kurds and Turkish Kurds.” And he looked at Tariq Aziz and he said, “this nationalistic political position of PUK must be studied in Iraqi history and in the schools.”⁷⁰⁵

Yet for the PUK, Talabani’s brinkmanship backfired spectacularly. Not only did other Iraqi Kurdish groups such as the ICP refuse to heed his call for rapprochement with Baghdad, the negotiations opened rifts within his own party; the picture of Saddam Hussein and Talabani kissing cheeks remains until today one of the most iconic images of Iraqi Kurdish leaders betraying their own people,⁷⁰⁶ while Saddam Hussein, who only played for time, dragged on the negotiations without committing to much, and the PUK was expelled from Syria in 1983 for its changing sides.⁷⁰⁷ After more than a year of fruitless talks, and after having lost considerable public and inner-party support as well as major allies, most prominently the Assad regime, Talabani had to accept that he had been duped, and in 1986 he reluctantly reconciled with the KDP and the Iranian regime, accepted arms and provisions from the latter, and joining the fight against Saddam Hussein.⁷⁰⁸

Yet throughout 1983 and 1984 the prospect of a PUK-Baghdad alliance had posed a very clear and present danger to the KDP, an alliance with the potential to expel it from Iraqi Kurdistan for good and, if Talabani’s negotiations for Iraqi Kurdish autonomy would have succeeded, would have doomed the KDP to a meagre existence at the margins of the Iraqi Kurdish ethno-nationalist discourse. McDowall, for example, states when discussing an April 1983 PUK attack on the KDP and ICP, ‘in some circles the PUK was suspected of working in tandem with Baghdad, and possibly even Ankara’.⁷⁰⁹ Given the dimension of this threat looming on the horizon during the crucial months of mid-1983, it seems logical that the KDP was eager to augment its military capacities by opening its territory to organisations that could be used for fending off an all-out attack by the PUK and the Iraqi army. It further seems logical that the PKK,

whose ranks by then had grown substantially, was seen as having the potential to come to the KDP's assistance in times of need. A KDP-PKK alliance was therefore in the best strategic interest of the KDP, and the vital threat of a PUK alliance with Baghdad might have proven enough for the KDP to temporarily put aside their ideological differences with the PKK; likewise, the prospect of sanctuary in Iraqi Kurdistan and direct access to the designated theatre of operations on the eve of Abdullah Öcalan's intended launch of his military campaign surely would have outweighed his reservations to side with the, as he saw it, 'primitive', 'defeatist', and 'bourgeois' KDP. To identify the KDP-PUK antagonism and the shifting regional alliances during the early stages of the Iran-Iraq War as the driving force behind the KDP-PKK accord gains even further plausibility when considering the fact that KDP and PKK shared the same external supporters. While the PUK's relations with the Assad regime deteriorated all through 1983 until it was formally expelled from Damascus at the end of the year, with the onset of the Iran-Iraq War, the KDP found itself at the same side as the regimes in Tehran and Damascus; likewise, the PKK's collaboration with the Khomeini regime can be documented for as early as mid-1979 when Adel Murad was approached in Beirut by Iranian agents on Öcalan's behalf and had intensified since then.⁷¹⁰ It is therefore conceivable that KDP and PKK were encouraged to mend their differences by the nationalising states backing them and that, at least to some extent, the KDP-PKK alliance was concocted in Tehran and Damascus. While naturally it proved difficult to provide a smoking gun substantiating this rationale for the KDP's behaviour, it is a reading leading analysts of Kurdish ethno-nationalism I interviewed – Abbas Vali, an intimate expert on the workings of the Iranian regime and its relations with Kurdish parties in Iran, Iraq, and Turkey, and Doğu Ergil, an expert on the PKK and the Turkish politico-military establishment and Turkish intelligence, among them – deem 'absolutely plausible'.⁷¹¹ It is, until confronted with more plausible alternative interpretations, the reading of events I will settle for in this study. In sum then, it therefore seems that when analysing the relations between the PKK and the Iraqi Kurdish ethno-nationalist parties and the matrix of identities and interests that constitutes these relations, for this particular episode and for the timeframe under consideration, the years 1983/4, materialist/strategic interests appear to outweigh ideational factors in determining both parties' decision making.

If Talabani's flirtation with Saddam Hussein did not pay off for the PUK, neither did Barzani's alliance with the PKK for the KDP. Turkey retaliated against the August 1984 PKK offensive with a vengeance. On 15 October 1984 Ankara and Baghdad signed a security protocol that allowed Turkish troops to penetrate Iraqi territory up to five kilometres in hot pursuit of PKK fighters, and in the following years launched several air raids of alleged PKK camps in Iraqi Kurdistan, the most severe occurred on 15 August 1986, killing 200, among them many Iraqi Kurdish civilians and KDP *peshmerga*.⁷¹² By this time, the KDP had realised that instead of an ally – the PKK did no such thing as to join forces with the KDP against the PUK – they had incurred Turkey's wrath, resulting in heavy casualties in repeated indiscriminate Turkish air raids. Since 1984 the KDP had tried to persuade the PKK to abstain from operations that could provoke Turkish air raids, but the PKK proved undiscerning. Selahettin Çelik, who attended one of these meetings with the KDP in 1984 in Iran (sic!), recalled, 'we listened to Idris Barzani, assured them of our good intentions, and then chose to ignore them.'⁷¹³ Consequently, after another heavy Turkish attack, in May 1987, the KDP, as per the requirements of the 'Principles of Solidarity', issued a formal warning to the PKK, before severing relations completely and declaring the accord null and void.⁷¹⁴ Little surprise then that once the KDP-PKK alliance was severed, Öcalan reverted to his usual rhetoric, denouncing the Barzanis as 'traitors of the Kurdish movement, enemies of the Kurdish people'.⁷¹⁵ By then, the PKK had entrenched itself in several camps in Iraqi Kurdistan under its exclusive control, and there was precious little the KDP could do about it. The PKK had come to Iraqi Kurdistan to stay and still does so after thirty years.

Al Anfal

In the final stages of the Iran-Iraq War the regime of Saddam Hussein perpetrated a genocidal ethnic cleansing campaign against the Kurdish minority in northern Iraq. The Anfal Campaign, named after the eighth sura of the Qu'ran on the spoils of war, lasted from March 1987, when Ali Hassan al-Majid was appointed Saddam Hussein's viceroy in northern Iraq, until 1989, and comprised of targeted ground and aerial bombing of villages with chemical

agents, the systematic destruction of villages, mass deportations, and the operation of concentration camps.⁷¹⁶ According to *Human Rights Watch*, during the campaign the Iraqi authorities and their local willing executioners killed 50,000 to 100,000 civilians, destroyed 4,500 villages in Iraqi Kurdistan, attacked 250 villages with chemical weapons, and removed tens of thousands from their homesteads by force.⁷¹⁷ A distinct component of the Anfal Campaign was a programme of 'Arabization' that expelled Kurdish inhabitants from northern villages and cities – most prominently oil rich Kirkuk – and replaced them with Arab settlers from southern and central Iraq, a factor that significantly contributes to the current ethnic tensions in the affected areas.⁷¹⁸ The tragic climax of the Anfal Campaign was the attack on the town of Halabja on 16 March 1988 with mustard gas, VX, and sarin, in which 5,000 civilians, mostly women and children were killed.

To dispel any notions of ethnic group solidarity once and for all, the PKK watched the juggernaut of Saddam Hussein's genocidal ethnic cleansing campaign from the sidelines; what is more, it directly profited from it. With the KDP, PUK, and any non-organised Iraqi Kurdish resistance broken, with their armed forces ground down to a nub, and with their leaders, backs to the wall, desperately holding on to the last vestiges of territory or being pushed across the borders into Iran, the PKK reigned supreme in Iraqi Kurdistan. By 1988/89, with the PKK able to field several thousand fighters,⁷¹⁹ no one, not even the mighty Iraqi army, could contest the PKK for its absolute control over the Iraqi-Turkish border region. In fact, the Iraqi army had no intention of doing so; on the contrary, the demise of KDP and PUK, the PKK's absolute control over the border region, and the formidable challenge it posed to the Turkish state had raised Baghdad's interest in Abdullah Öcalan's group and encouraged it to intensify its attempts at establishing lines of communication with the PKK. This PKK-Baghdad link became public when, in 1991 during the chaos of the Iraqi Kurdish uprising in the wake of the Gulf War, the PUK came upon a series of top secret Iraqi documents that it passed to the *Turkish Daily News* and the London-based Arabic daily *Al Hayat*. The *Turkish Daily News'* article from 12 August 1992 read:

In a document marked top secret correspondence contains details of a meeting between officials of the security services and Baran Ahmed , who was described in

the document as the PKK official in charge of the Hakkari, Semdinli, and Cukurca regions. Baran was said to have direct contact with Öcalan. According to this document, Baran offered his party's readiness to cooperate in intelligence affairs, including gathering intelligence on Turkish and American military facilities in Turkey and to fight the KDP of Barzani. Another document contained details of information supplied by contact from the PKK about the movement of Turkish and American troops in the southeast areas and the different types of planes, weaponry, and so on at the [U.S.] Adana (Incirlik) base. In exchange of this information and readiness for cooperation Baran reportedly asked the Iraqis to widen the relations between the two sides officially on higher levels ... In fact, Baran had also asked for all Iraqi troops in the region to ignore the presence of the PKK and for Baghdad to provide [them] with printing facilities and weapons, i.e. BCKs, RPGs, and 60mm mortars. He even said that the PKK was willing to pay for these supplies.⁷²⁰

These documents gave substantial weight to what the Iraqi Kurdish parties had suspected of the PKK for several years: that the PKK, in exchange for equipment, weaponry, and the Iraqi army turning a blind eye to their activities, provided the very regime that had just perpetrated genocide against the Iraqi Kurds with intelligence on them, indeed, even offered to fight them for Baghdad.

This picture corresponds with the information I gathered in interviews with PKK dissidents. They all indicate that between 1985/6, when relations with Barzani's KDP deteriorated, and until the 'Principles of Solidarity' accord was formally renounced in May 1987, relations between the PKK and Iraqi army and intelligence services subsisted on a low, informal level, with neither side committing to anything substantial, and from 1987/8 on gradually intensified.⁷²¹ However, both the sequence of events as well as the nature of the information the PKK provided to Iraqi intelligence are crucial here. Until 1990, in the run up to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, Saddam Hussein would have had little interest in intelligence on U.S. air force deployment in Turkey and, while intelligence on Turkey was always welcome, Iraqi intelligence was primarily interested in gathering information on the KDP – an understandable prioritisation since it was fighting the KDP (and PUK since 1986) in the life and death struggle that was the Iran-Iraq War. The implications of this chronology and the fact that it is conceivable that the PKK provided Iraqi security services with intelligence on the KDP in 1987/8, however, are nowhere mentioned in the literature and are too woeful even for PKK dissidents to contemplate, which is why they all

remained reticent about details in my interviews with them. For it would mean appreciating that the organisation they belonged to, believed in, fought and sacrificed so much for, through sharing intelligence, assisted the regime of Saddam Hussein in perpetrating genocide against ‘their fellow Kurds’, that this intelligence was used by Iraqi security services and armed forces in executing the *al Anfal* campaign.

Given the means at my disposal and the limits of conducting ethnographic research on such a potentially sensitive topic, it proved impossible to further substantiate the nature, breadth, and depth of the Iraqi regime’s relations with the PKK during these crucial years. Yet, the possibility and plausibility alone of the PKK providing Iraqi security services with intelligence on the KDP during the genocidal *al Anfal* campaign – or at the very least to directly benefit from it – reveals any attempts by IR scholars to label the PKK sanctuary in Iraqi Kurdistan an ethnic alliance and to belabour ethnic group solidarity between PKK and KDP/PUK as the main explanatory factor for interpreting the relations between the PKK and the Iraqi Kurdish parties not only as factually untenable but also as utterly cynical.

9.) The Kurdish Wars of the 1990s

1991 – The annus mirabilis for the Iraqi Kurds

1991 was the year of wonders for the Kurds of Iraq, in which, out of the debris of utter defeat and the suffering and grief of genocide, like a phoenix from the ashes, they emerged almost born again, and, virtually overnight, came to determine their own fate by crafting the most independent political entity in Kurdish history. The chain of events leading up to 1991 was triggered by Saddam Hussein's occupation of Kuwait in the previous year, and his transmogrification from courted ally of the international community against revolutionary Iran, to pariah against whom an international military alliance was forged. To be sure, though, the beginning of the year did not augur any such auspicious developments for the Iraqi Kurds. On the contrary, the year started with them suffering another devastating defeat.

On 15 February 1991, in the midst of the Allied air campaign and about a week before the launch of the ground campaign to liberate Kuwait, U.S. President George H. W. Bush addressed the Iraqi people via *Voice of America*:

There is another way for the bloodshed to stop: and that is for the Iraqi military and the Iraqi people to take matters into their own hands and force Saddam Hussein, the dictator, to step aside and then comply with the United Nations' resolution and rejoin the family of peace-loving nations.⁷²²

Similar appeals were made by US political and military leaders as well as U.S.-funded radio stations in Saudi Arabia and Egypt all through February, and yet when the Iraqi people heeded this call and took matters into their own hands, it came as a complete and inconvenient surprise to the Gulf War Allies.⁷²³ Equally surprised were the leaders of KDP and PUK, Massoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani, who since 1988 had joined forces in the *Iraqi Kurdistan Front* (IKF), in their exile in Iran, when, beginning with Raniyah on 4 March, the Kurdish population in Iraq rose in a spontaneous and uncoordinated mass uprising, called *Repareen*, that encompassed every strata of Kurdish society, even the detested *jash* – literally 'donkey', a derogatory term for Iraqi Kurds who had been cooperating with the Saddam Hussein regime.⁷²⁴ Within days the

peshmerga of the IKF had joined the public and liberated every city in northern Iraq except Kirkuk and Mosul, and Talabani was dreaming of marching on Baghdad.⁷²⁵ Yet, with the uprising failing to spread to the Sunni Arab centre of Iraq and international aid not materializing,⁷²⁶ Saddam Hussein was at liberty to launch a counter-offensive by the end of the month, which crushed the Kurdish resistance, similar to the failed Shi'a revolt in the south, within days.⁷²⁷ The onslaught of Saddam Hussein's troops on Kurdish civilians and the refusal of the U.S. administration to impose restraints on his indiscriminate attacks triggered a wave of up to 2.5 million refugees heading for the Turkish and Iranian borders.⁷²⁸

This turn of events came as a shock to Turkey. Finding itself between a rock and a hard place, either having CNN broadcast the Turkish military refusing millions of civilian refugees entry into Turkey and safety – thus leaving them at Saddam Hussein's mercy or freezing to death in wintry mountains – or adding hundreds of thousands of Kurds to Turkey's southeastern Anatolia, already on the brink of its own Kurdish mass uprising, and thus rendering the security situation there completely uncontrollable, President Turgut Özal personally intervened with President Bush and British PM John Major for a quick solution to the humanitarian crisis.⁷²⁹ The significance of this development and sea change in Turkish foreign policy cannot be underestimated. For more than four decades Turkey had cooperated with whatever regime held power in Iraq in suppressing the struggle for self-determination and political autonomy of its Kurdish population, as well as all too often indirectly collaborated in Baghdad's military offensives and pogroms against them.⁷³⁰ Now, in the aftermath of the Gulf War and the failed Iraqi Kurdish uprisings, Turkey, *volens* and almost overnight, found itself occupying the unusual role of senior champion of the fate of Iraq's Kurds in the international arena. What is more, Turkey, the hitherto implacable opponent to any form of Kurdish political autonomy in the entire region, against its will but pushed into this role by rapidly developing events, was to play midwife to the emergence and survival of the most independent political entity in Kurdish history.

Urged by Turkey, France, and Iran, and with the U.S. abandoning its reservations due to Turkish-French-British pressure, on 5 April, the UN passed Security Council Resolution 688 that demanded from Iraq an end to the violent

repression of its people and assistance for the international humanitarian organizations in gaining access to the refugee population, as well as for Iraq to cooperate in all international efforts to alleviate the suffering of the affected population. It is worth noting that Resolution 688 made no mention of the no-fly zones the Gulf War Allies established north of the 36th and south of the 32nd parallel, and that the military aspects of what became known as ‘Operation Provide Comfort’ – or ‘Operation Safe Haven’ by its British name – were based on the Allies’ liberal interpretation of the wording in the resolution.⁷³¹ Provide Comfort not only prevented Saddam Hussein from capitalizing on his victory by dealing the Iraqi Kurds the final blow, but over a few months it also forced him to recognize the futility of seeking a military solution.⁷³² At the eleventh hour, the Iraqi Kurds had been rescued by the most unlikely and most self-serving savior, Turkey.⁷³³ I concur with Frelick and Kirişçi that Provide Comfort served for the main part the security interests of states, and that the needs of the Iraqi Kurdish refugees were of secondary importance;⁷³⁴ for if Turkey had not perceived this onrush of refugees as a security threat – and since Turkey, with the world’s attention centred on Iraq after the Gulf War, could not afford to cold-shoulder the refugees as it had done just three years earlier during the *Anfal* campaign – it is highly questionable whether the international community would have come to the rescue of the Iraqi Kurds. What is more, as will be discussed in the next section, visionary Turgut Özal had his own ideas for a rapprochement between Turkey and the Iraqi Kurdish parties, a vision for which his intervention during the 1991 refugee crisis was just a first step.⁷³⁵

When in October 1991 the negotiations between the Iraqi Kurdish parties and Baghdad on an autonomy statute broke down without result, Saddam Hussein, demonstrably a man of questionable strategic acumen, took a most unusual step. In an attempt to starve the Iraqi Kurds into submission he imposed an economic and administrative embargo on northern Iraq by withdrawing the entire bureaucratic apparatus of the state – from policemen to tax collectors, from civil servants to teachers – freezing salaries of Kurdish employees, and stripping anybody who sought to enter northern Iraq off fuel and food supplies, thus essentially forcing the Iraqi Kurdish population to subsist under a double embargo, an external one imposed by the UN on the whole of Iraq and an internal one levied by Saddam Hussein on the Iraqi

Kurds.⁷³⁶ Saddam Hussein calculated that the harsh conditions of winter combined with the burden of more than a million refugees and IDPs would overexert the international community's assistance and the IKF's political and organizational capabilities, forcing the latter to accept an autonomy agreement largely on his terms. This, however, proved a strategic miscalculation second only to his invasion of Kuwait the previous year. Not only did he withdraw his forces to a line running from the Syrian border to south of Dohuk and Erbil, west of Chamchamal, and southwest of Kifri, thus abandoning considerably more territory than designated either as the safe haven imposed by the international community or the no fly zone north of the 36th parallel – thus voluntarily relinquishing control over the area that roughly corresponds with today's Kurdistan Region of Iraq.⁷³⁷ What is more important, his blockade created a political vacuum in northern Iraq, a new political space the Iraqi Kurds, for the first time in history, could potentially frame and organize on their own, without consultation or confrontation with the central government in Baghdad.

In this, though, the Iraqi Kurdish parties knew they would have to tread with extreme caution since any step towards wider self-determination would be interpreted by their neighbours and the West as an attempt at independence, in the worst case leading them to reconsider their protection of the safe haven and no fly zone as well as their economic and developmental assistance, both on which the IKF and the Iraqi Kurdish population depended wholesale.⁷³⁸ Barzani and Talabani therefore must not have taken lightly the step to hold general elections for a legislative assembly in order to provide the people with a democratically elected administration that could fill the void Saddam Hussein had left behind, and they were routinely warned against 'go[ing] down the road of elections' by U.S. military on the ground and officials in Washington.⁷³⁹ Despite the risk of losing their precious international support, KDP and PUK proposed to hold elections for a legislative assembly for 3 April. After a month's delay the elections were actually held on 19 May 1992, resulting in 45 percent for the KDP and 43.6 percent for the PUK in the 105 seats strong parliament, and on 4 June the *Kurdistan Regional Government* (KRG) was formed, run jointly by KDP and PUK.⁷⁴⁰

The elections of 19 May, 'for all the haste in its preparation and the occasional cases of fraud and malpractice [was] an historic moment', not only

because 'it demonstrated almost uniquely outside Israel and Turkey, the ability of a Middle Eastern electorate to conduct a peaceful, multi-party election',⁷⁴¹ but also, and more importantly, can be considered the birth hour of Kurdish self-rule in Iraq as well as, in the political science literature, the Kurdish de facto state in Iraq.⁷⁴² It has to be emphasized, though, that this Kurdish self-rule in Iraq came about entirely by accident, can be considered the singular, outstanding aberration of historic patterns of the regional and international powers dealing with Iraq's Kurdish minority, a true *annus mirabilis* that would have been impossible without the profound sea change in the political dynamics of the Middle East generated by the Gulf War. As in Kosovo, the international community had created a so called de facto state by accident, rendered the autonomy of the Iraqi Kurdish people possible through their intervention but without plan or intent. In actual fact, in light of the historic trajectories outlined in Part Two, the decisions by the Turkish state, however it saw its hands forced by events beyond its control, to mutate almost overnight, from an opponent to a backer of the Iraqi Kurds in the international arena, and Saddam Hussein's choice to leave them to their own devices can be understood as the most momentous event in Iraqi Kurdish history since the implosion of the Ottoman Empire. This event, which unexpectedly resulted in Iraqi Kurdish self-rule, however, came at the price of complete dependence of the Iraqi Kurdish parties and the fate of their political entity on external actors, most prominently Turkey – a dependence that has shaped Iraqi Kurdish politics ever since, in particular the KDP and PUK's dealing with the PKK.⁷⁴³

First Iraqi Kurdish-Turkish overtures towards harmonization

If 1991 was the *annus mirabilis* for the Iraqi Kurds, then 1990 was the year in which the PKK reached the zenith of its power. To be sure, the military confrontation with the mighty Turkish state, combined with its strategy of forced depopulation of hundreds of villages in southeastern Anatolia and the paramilitary system of 'village guards', had repeatedly dealt the insurgency heavy blows.⁷⁴⁴ On the diplomatic front, Turkey's pressure on Syria to curb its support for the PKK finally appeared to bear fruit when in 1987 both countries signed a security protocol, after which the PKK was no longer able to conduct

raids into Turkey from Syrian territory.⁷⁴⁵ This, however, was compensated by the strategic position the PKK had gained in Iraqi Kurdistan, where, after the accord with the KDP had broken down, they had struck a similar deal with the PUK in May 1988.⁷⁴⁶ As has been shown, though, by 1988, the PKK enjoyed unrestrained control over the Iraqi-Turkish border and was no longer in need of collaboration with the Iraqi Kurdish ethno-nationalist parties. What is more was the change of dynamics of the armed struggle in Turkey itself. On 13 March 1990 the PKK had conducted a raid in the Mardin-Savur region in which thirteen guerrillas died. The funeral procession of one of these fallen insurgents turned into an outpouring of public anger, which law enforcement tried to muzzle by force, lighting a spark that triggered a wave of public demonstrations in the tens of thousands throughout the entire region.⁷⁴⁷ This people's uprising, often called the Kurdish Intifada or *Serhildan*, fundamentally altered the dynamics and nature of the guerrilla campaign in Turkey, propelling the PKK insurgency, to their great surprise and without taking an active role in this spontaneous development,⁷⁴⁸ from the first stage of guerrilla warfare, discussed earlier, to what appeared the brink of the third and final stage: a general counteroffensive as part of mass-scale public uprising against the authorities. With the *Serhildan*, 'the guerrilla fight had taken on a mass character. Urban centres became a theatre of daily guerrilla operations. The numbers of guerrilla fighters multiplied ... there was no part of Kurdistan, in which the guerrilla could not operate and carry out raids'.⁷⁴⁹ For a brief moment, the PKK appeared to have brought the mighty Turkish state to its knee.

In the end, though, the PKK failed to capitalise on the potential of the *Serhildan*:

In fact the PKK had little capability to guide or move these demonstrations forward ... One reason was the difficulty of operating in an urban environment ... [where the PKK yet] had not placed special emphasis on establishing themselves ... [another is that] it seems logical to assume that PKK commanders, who saw themselves as leading the Kurdish fight, also were concerned that these protests might somehow draw attention and people away from the guerrillas' struggle.⁷⁵⁰

Whatever the PKK's reasons for not sufficiently making strategic use of the public uprising that erupted in 1990 and continued until 1994 with noticeable sparks in demonstrations during the annual *Newroz* celebrations, the events in

the aftermath of the Gulf War that fundamentally reconfigured the power constellations of the Middle East proved as much a watershed moment for the PKK as for the Iraqi Kurdish ethno-nationalist parties. The most immediate and for the PKK most dramatic change wrought by the events in March/April 1991 was that the Iraqi Kurds had become completely dependent on the PKK's opponent, Turkey. Not only did the Turkish parliament have to approve the use of Incirlik AFB by Allied fighter jets for patrolling the no fly zone in Northern Iraq as part of Operation Provide Comfort,⁷⁵¹ what is more, virtually all international development aid for the destitute Iraqi Kurdish population had to pass through Turkey. Hoshyar Zebari, a KDP foreign policy spokesman and future Foreign Minister of Iraq, summed up the Iraqi Kurds' plenary dependence on Turkey aptly: 'Turkey is our lifeline to the West and the whole world in our fight against Saddam Hussein. We are able to secure allied air protection and international aid through Turkey. If [Operation Provide Comfort] is withdrawn, Saddam's units will again reign in this region and we will lose everything'.⁷⁵² As a result of this novel and yet absolute dependence on Turkey, KDP/PUK could ill afford any move that might antagonize their benefactor – all the more since this benefactor had already developed a queasy feeling about Iraqi Kurdish self-rule increasing by the day, a development for which it saw itself as at least indirectly and partially to blame. The Iraqi Kurdish ethno-nationalist parties therefore had to drastically reconsider their relations with the PKK since, they correctly assumed, Turkey would not tolerate backing an incipient Iraqi Kurdish political entity whose emergence was anyway anathema to Ankara, to continue its support or indulgence of the PKK on its territory. These strategic considerations were given further impetus by the unprecedented attempt of Turkish President Turgut Özal in reaching out and establishing quasi-formal relations with KDP/PUK in the spring of 1991.

Much speculation has been devoted to whether Özal, a true visionary ahead of his time, merely reacted to rapidly unfolding events or pursued a grand vision that, in addition to drawing on the good offices of the Iraqi Kurdish parties to open a channel to the PKK, even allegedly intending to bring Iraqi Kurdistan, the former *vilayet* of Mosul, back under Turkey's orbit;⁷⁵³ according to Robins, 'Özal argued, Turkey should bring the impoverished northern Iraqi economy into its orbit, as a way of maximizing Turkish influence in the territory. Özal believed

that for as little as \$30-40 million Turkey could create a relationship of dependence'.⁷⁵⁴ While these speculations, to which I add my two cents worth elsewhere,⁷⁵⁵ would go beyond the scope of this study, suffice it to say here that in the talks detailed below Jalal Talabani allegedly repeatedly offered Iraqi Kurdish collaboration if Turkey wished to annex Iraqi Kurdistan in the aftermath of the Gulf War⁷⁵⁶ – an offer that, to put it mildly, would put his understanding of national self-determination at odds with the modernist and explanatory IR definition discussed earlier – and that today, as will be detailed subsequently, this relationship of dependence appears widely accomplished.

What can be established here is that as early as 20 February 1991 – four days before Coalition forces entered Kuwait (sic!) – the public relations officer of President Özal, Kaya Toperi, called the Kurdish journalist Qamran Qaradaghi of *Al Hayat* at his office in London and asked him to communicate to Jalal Talabani that President Özal wished for him to come to Ankara for a meeting. Qaradaghi, who enjoyed close personal relations with Talabani and later became his press secretary, recalls that during an interview a week earlier, it had been Özal who had done most of the questioning, showing great interest in Qaradaghi's opinion on the rapidly developing situation in Iraq, the political positions of KDP and PUK as well as their relations with the PKK, to which Qaradaghi replied, 'Mr. President, if you are that interested in all these issues, may I suggest, why not reach out and establish direct contact with Jalal Talabani and Massoud Barzani. I am certain they would welcome such a move.'⁷⁵⁷ A week later Qaradaghi had Özal's answer, on which he acted quickly. On 8 March Talabani and Mosheen Dezayee, Massoud Barzani's representative, 'arrived together in Istanbul on a flight from Damascus and were immediately flown to Ankara's military airport by personnel of the National Intelligence Organisation (MIT)'⁷⁵⁸ to meet with the under-secretary in the Foreign Ministry, Ambassador Tugay Özceri, on Özal's behalf. The fact that Talabani left Iraqi Kurdistan in the midst of the *Repareen* illustrates the importance he accorded to this meeting, a sensational diplomatic breakthrough he appraised as, 'a new page ... turned in relations between Turkey and the Kurds of Iraq'.⁷⁵⁹ Further,

he stated that he had assured the Turkish officials that the Kurds did not want to establish an independent state in northern Iraq and then explained that, "Turkey

has for years been putting forth effective and significant obstacles to the struggle we have been waging in northern Iraq. We wanted to explain our goals and eliminate Turkey's opposition ... We were received with understanding".⁷⁶⁰

If, for Jalal Talabani, this first official engagement at the highest level of Turkish officials with representatives of the Iraqi Kurds – followed by a second meeting two weeks later when the *Repareen* was about to collapse⁷⁶¹ – was the diplomatic sea change he portrayed it to be, it also lets President Özal's initiative on behalf of the Iraqi Kurds and his role in bringing about Operation Provide Comfort appear in a different light, as part of a greater strategy not only to save the Iraqi Kurds from Saddam Hussein but also to ensure their dependence on and solid establishment in Turkey's geo-strategic orbit.⁷⁶² To some extent, one may say that with these meetings, the establishment of the safe haven and Operation Provide Comfort on Özal's initiative, together with the fact that all international aid for Iraqi Kurdistan passed through Turkey and that the Turkish parliament had to renew every six months permission for Operation Provide Comfort allied fighter jets to operate from Incirlik AFB, the first steps towards an Iraqi Kurdish client relationship with Turkey were laid – a client relationship which closely resembles the economic and strategic dependence President Özal allegedly had in mind for them.

For Özal's representative, though, the main issue of interest in these first talks was the PKK and what role the Iraqi Kurdish parties could play as intermediaries in the process of national reconciliation Özal planned, and in which he, overall, acted independent of and in opposition to the Turkish politico-military establishment.⁷⁶³ Özal, an economist by trade who had recently begun to refer in public to his own Kurdish ancestry, perceived the so called 'Kurdish Question' in Turkey as mainly a problem of cultural divides and structural underdevelopment, which he thought could not be addressed militarily but by massive official investment programs in southeast Anatolia and by granting the Kurdish population of Turkey certain cultural rights.⁷⁶⁴ In recognition of the potential of the *Serhildan* to widen into a mass scale uprising, for a brief window of opportunity Turkish officials were willing to experiment with gestures of opening the political space for dialogue. In an unprecedented move, on 7 June 1990, Turkish authorities had permitted the formation of the first explicit Kurdish political party, *Halkın Emek Partisi* (HEP or People's Labour Party) after seven

Kurdish MPs had split from the SHP,⁷⁶⁵ and President Özal called for a lift on the ban on the use of Kurdish language in public everyday but not official discourse.⁷⁶⁶ Özal intended to now expand on this window of opportunity by reaching out to Abdullah Öcalan, who likewise had shown signs of distancing himself from his maximal demand for Kurdish independence. After lauding Özal for his initiative – ‘To tell the truth, I did not expect [Özal] to display such courage ... In this context, he shamed us ... He has taken an important step’⁷⁶⁷ – Öcalan announced in an interview with AFP that the PKK ‘might opt for a diplomatic-political solution’, that he would consider holding ‘conditional’ negotiations with Turkish authorities, and ‘the PKK no longer sought independence, just “free political expression” for Turkey’s Kurds’.⁷⁶⁸

To broaden and expand on this opening Özal required an intermediary of renown and with direct access to Öcalan in Damascus. He found this intermediary in Jalal Talabani, who, conveniently, was also politically dependent on Turkey. The first personal meeting between Talabani and Özal took place in Ankara in June 1991, where KDP/PUK were given permission to open liaison offices in Ankara, and, to ease the Iraqi Kurdish leaders’ travel restrictions, both Barzani and Talabani were given Turkish diplomatic passports (sic!).⁷⁶⁹ Thus well equipped, Talabani assumed his role as mediator and repeatedly met Öcalan for talks in Damascus during October, and in November announced that the PKK was willing to declare a four months ceasefire.⁷⁷⁰ Such promising announcements turned out grossly premature, though. Not only were the talks between Talabani and Öcalan complicated by the Turkish military continuing its incursions into northern Iraq in pursuit of PKK fighters – Imset lists five major raids by the Turkish air force for the period between August and October alone,⁷⁷¹ at the very time when Talabani was trying to win Öcalan for a ceasefire – but also by the fact that President Özal considered a unilateral PKK ceasefire as a first conciliatory step to pave the ground for political consultations, while Öcalan considered a ceasefire his ultimate concession after Turkey met some of his demands. In sum, it has to be said, that ‘Özal had many good intentions but no concrete plans whatsoever’ on how to practically engage the PKK in talks and what specific issues such talks should cover.⁷⁷² Not only that, but Özal, after his rapprochement with the Iraqi Kurdish leaders had become public, increasingly acted in isolation from the politico-military

establishment, the MIT, the media, and PM Demirel,⁷⁷³ and it was questionable whether he could muster the political backing to implement any concessions made.⁷⁷⁴

What further exacerbated the situation was that, while Özal may have deemed Talabani the ideal intermediary, Öcalan saw him as merely a puppet of the Turkish state willing to do Ankara's bidding in exchange for protection and international backing of the emergent Iraqi Kurdish polity. 'Öcalan sarcastically declared that Talabani had written him from Ankara to "lay down your arms unilaterally, accept a ceasefire, come to Ankara and sit at the table with obscure people, and be thankful and grateful for whatever you are given"'⁷⁷⁵. Talabani's attempts then at 'mediating with muscle',⁷⁷⁶ a rare case when the mediator himself resorts to coercive measures to facilitate conflict parties yielding some of their demands, led to the IKF issuing an ultimatum in February 1992 that 'if the PKK failed to cease activities against Turkey [from Iraqi Kurdish territory], it would be purged from the region',⁷⁷⁷ only further antagonised Öcalan. He went on to denounce, as had become routine by then, Barzani as a 'collaborator ... reactionary, feudal person, and a primitive nationalist', and accused him and Talabani of 'trying to stab the PKK in the back by cooperating with Turkey ... The first thing we must do is remove these leeches ... They espouse the views of the fascist Turks. These two leaders are now our enemies'.⁷⁷⁸

Within Öcalan increasingly feeling cornered – on 25 December 1991 the Soviet Union had dissolved, putting a successful Marxist-Leninist world revolution in greater doubt than ever before, the Turkish military, as part of Operation Provide Comfort, had gained access to Iraqi Kurdistan, and a military alliance between KDP/PUK and Turkey appeared an ever greater possibility – increasingly there was a storm brewing between the PKK and the Iraqi Kurdish parties. Öcalan must have felt as if his room to manoeuvre became more limited by the day, and the condition of the PKK camps, caught between the Turkish border and international troops operating in Iraqi Kurdistan together with the KDP/PUK *peshmerga*, more desperate.

I suppose he felt like losing control of events, in Turkey and Southern Kurdistan. In Turkey we did not know how to react to the [mass protests], how to respond to the public sentiment, how to make use of it for our struggle, how to channel it. In Southern Kurdistan he feared losing the leadership in the Kurdish struggle [for self-

determination] to Talabani and Barzani. He feared them joining forces with Turkey against the PKK.⁷⁷⁹

With the tide of international and regional events turning against him, Öcalan decided to take the bull by the horns and embark on a path of escalation. In an interview with the Turkish daily *Milliyet* on 26 March 1992 Öcalan announced the founding of a regional affiliate for Iraqi Kurdistan, the *Partiya Azadiya Kurdistan*, (PAK or Kurdistan Liberation Party), designated to politically challenge KDP/PUK on their very home turf.⁷⁸⁰ Although even Çelik admits that the PAK 'never exceeded its marginal existence',⁷⁸¹ and PUK representatives, with the benefit of hindsight, have discounted the PKK's regional branch as a 'non-issue',⁷⁸² at the time the founding of PAK must have appeared to Talabani and Barzani as an intolerable provocation. Graver than that though were the ever increasing small-scale military clashes between the PKK and Iraqi Kurdish *peshmerga*, mainly of the KDP. Those isolated clashes came to a head when, in Zakho on 29 June 1992, the KDP reportedly ordered the killing of the Sindi tribal leader Sadik Omer for joining PAK; in retaliation the PKK assassinated the local KDP commander in Dohuk, which again was answered by the KDP launching a full scale offensive against the Sindi tribe and attempting to blockade the PKK camps at the Turkish border.⁷⁸³ On 24 July, Öcalan retaliated by 'succesfully placing an embargo on trade between Turkey and northern Iraq',⁷⁸⁴ by shelling the Harbur border through which virtually all international aid and imports for Iraqi Kurdistan passed.

This PKK-imposed ban threatened to cut the Iraqi Kurds' economic lifeline, as local drivers, in fear of the consequences, stopped taking supplies to northern Iraq. Soon a shortage of foodstuffs and medicine resulted, and prices doubled and tripled. The PKK asserted that it would lift the trade ban only if Barzani would remove his blockade of the PKK camps.⁷⁸⁵

If the founding of PAK had been merely a political provocation, and the clashes with the Sindi tribe can still be understood as brawls at the tribal level, the PKK's embargo of the Harbur border posed an existential threat to the survival of Iraqi Kurdistan. 'The effects [of the PKK's] actions were felt immediately,' Mohammed Tawfiq, then a PUK official in Dohuk near the border crossing, remembered,

every day less goods came from Turkey, there were shortages of food, of fuel, of medicine. Prices went up, people could no longer afford the most basic goods ... We were very vulnerable then, completely dependent on imports from Turkey and [international] aid. The PKK tried to exploit this, tried to turn our people against us, have them lose faith in our government ... less than a month after the first free government in Kurdistan was formed we had to fight for our survival.⁷⁸⁶

It was a fundamental challenge the KRG could not afford to leave unanswered, and Barzani and Talabani took up the gauntlet. Barzani declared:

Öcalan's men acted as if they were the authorities and started to control roads and collect taxes ... [they] threatened to expel the government and parliament from Erbil. They said they would hang all those "who sold out the homeland" ... They even threatened to expel us from Dohuk and Sulimaniyah and started to form espionage, terrorism, and sabotage networks inside cities. It has unequivocally been proven that they are conspiring and planning to undermine the existing situation in Kurdistan and its experiment in democracy and national self-determination.⁷⁸⁷

On 30 September 1992, the war of words escalated to an actual armed confrontation with the IKF forces launching a major offensive against the PKK all through Iraqi Kurdistan, and on 26 October the Turkish army joined the fray.⁷⁸⁸

The fighting was focused on two main fronts – the area around Bahdinan known as Haftanin and the Xarkuk/Biradost region close to the Iranian border where the PKK guerrillas were being "sandwiched" – a word coined by the Turkish press from a statement made by Jalal Talabani – between Turkish warplanes on bombing missions and peshmerga forces, mainly from the KDP, PUK, and Biradost tribe's own militia on the ground. The three-pronged advance came to be codenamed the "Sandwich Operation" ... [Yet] apart from the aerial bombardments by the Turks, most of the action in this war was concentrated after dark, peshmerga against guerrilla⁷⁸⁹

Cornered between the Turkish military and the *peshmerga* of KDP and PUK, the PKK formally surrendered to the latter on 30 October. Osman Öcalan was transported with a small delegation to Erbil where he signed a ceasefire agreement obliging the PKK to cease all activities of a military nature in the territory controlled by the KRG, to abandon all its camps along the Turkish border and acquiesce in being removed to camps to be designated by the KRG, as well as to stop all its involvement in political activities aimed against or

agitating against the Kurdistan Regional Government and the parties comprising it.⁷⁹⁰ In exchange, about 1,700 PKK fighters were resettled to Zaleh camp north of Sulimaniyah where they were allowed to keep all their weapons, ammunition, and supplies, as well as to continue their peaceful political activities for as long as they did not oppose the activities and policies of the KRG.⁷⁹¹

When analysing the brief war between the IKF and the PKK two aspects require further scrutiny. The PKK has always claimed that KDP and PUK had formed an alliance with Turkey to crush them,⁷⁹² and Çelik contends that since June 1992 Talabani and Barzani had repeatedly met with the commander of the Turkish Gendarmerie in the region, Gen. Eşref Bitlis, and the commander of *Jandarma İstihbarat ve Terörle Mücadele* (JITEM, Gendarmerie Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism Organisation), Gen. Cem Ersever, in Erbil and in army barracks in Silopi to prepare and coordinate their forces for their attack on the PKK.⁷⁹³ The PUK vociferously denies these claims, and refers to a KRG public statement from 28 October calling for Turkey to withdraw its forces from Iraqi Kurdish territory.⁷⁹⁴ However, when examining the events that led up to the war, in particular in light of the rapprochement and closer political ties between the Özal presidency and KDP/PUK leaders, the role Özal had intended for Talabani as an intermediary between himself and Öcalan, the role Turkey played in establishing and policing the Iraqi Kurdish safe haven – with Turkish military on the ground – and the gradual and entirely predictable escalation of the conflict between KDP/PUK and PKK, Henri Barkey concludes, ‘from a military perspective, it would have been grossly negligent if [Turkey and the IKF] had not coordinated their actions, politically it is difficult to imagine that they did not’⁷⁹⁵ – an assessment with which I completely agree. Once Talabani’s mediation efforts had proven fruitless and relations between the PKK and the KRG deteriorated rapidly, it simply would not have made any sense for the IKF to take on the PKK on its own with the Turkish military across the border alert and ready to strike.

The second concern relates to the generous terms with which the PUK allowed the PKK to surrender – relocation to camps in PUK controlled territory and the PKK fighters keeping all their weaponry and ammunition – terms of surrender that had not been discussed with the KDP, and about which Barzani,

who wanted to finish off the PKK, was reportedly furious.⁷⁹⁶ What is more, when the PKK fighters were transported to Zaleh camp, the PUK commander Mustafa Chawrash, of his own accord and 'as a gesture of goodwill', he declared, even equipped them with additional light weapons and ammunition from PUK stocks.⁷⁹⁷ Why, if the PKK were forbidden to carry out any military activities on Iraqi Kurdish territory, would the PUK allow the guerrilla fighters to keep their weaponry? Why did the PUK, after acting in alliance with the KDP during the conflict and when facing the unique opportunity of ridding themselves once and for all of the PKK, accept a unilateral ceasefire with the PKK not only without informing its coalition partner but presenting Barzani with a *fait accompli*? I cannot help but speculate that, while individual field commanders like Chawrash might have acted on their own initiative, he must have still done so within a discourse, an overall sentiment in the PUK, propagated by its leadership, that did not want the PKK to be finished off. If that is the case one has to wonder what motivated this discourse, what interests and identities bred this sentiment? Could the notion of ethnic group solidarity explain the PUK's change of heart? While such subjective feelings of relatedness and kinship ties again may have played a role at the individual level, it seems somewhat implausible that after a month's heavy fighting Talabani suddenly came to perceive the PKK as 'kin'. It seems more plausible that if the PKK had been annihilated in October 1992, Talabani, the designated intermediary of President Özal, would have been considerably less useful to Turkey. In the lopsided relationship of complete dependence on Turkey, the Iraqi Kurds had very little to give, no leverage worth speaking of except for the influence they supposedly could exert on the PKK. Would it not make sense then to keep this factor in play for as long as possible, to have the PKK card up their sleeve for future use, to continue exerting this one leverage on Turkey for as long as the situation permitted? Furthermore, as developments just eighteen months later would prove, the harmony between PUK and KDP during the *Repareen* and the first two years of the Kurdistan Regional Government proved short lived. There were already signs on the horizon that the proverbial antagonism between both parties would erupt again – as it did with a vengeance in 1994. Is it not conceivable then that Talabani shrewdly kept the PKK alive, against his allies' wishes, and relocated them, fully armed, to a camp in PUK controlled territory to be able to draw on this formidable fighting force in case of new tensions with the KDP? Admittedly,

such a reading of events is done with the benefit of hindsight, but it not only fits the historic pattern outlined here so far but it again, when discussed, is deemed plausible by other authorities on the politics of the Iraqi Kurdish parties.⁷⁹⁸

If Talabani indeed pursued such brinkmanship, it paid off for him almost instantly. In December he took up his mediation efforts with Öcalan in Damascus again, allowing him on 8 March 1993 to present President Özal with the Öcalan's surprisingly conciliatory terms for a ceasefire:

- (1) I am giving up the armed struggle. I will wage a political struggle in the future.
- (2) I am withdrawing my past conditions for holding talks to resolve the Kurdish problem. Turkish officials can hold talks with Kurdish deputies in the National Assembly.
- (3) We agree to live within Turkey's existing borders if the necessary democratic conditions are created to allow us to do so.⁷⁹⁹

Without waiting for a Turkish response, Öcalan even went a step further and on 17 March 1993, together with Jalal Talabani, declared a unilateral PKK ceasefire at a historic press conference in Lebanon.⁸⁰⁰ Öcalan proclaimed:

[Turkey's Kurds] want peace, dialogue, and free political action within the framework of a democratic Turkish state ... We hope that the Turkish authorities will understand that this question cannot be resolved militarily, and that the Kurdish people, their existence, their language, their identity, and their rights cannot be ignored ... We are not working to partition Turkey. We are demanding the Kurds' human rights (cultural, political, and so on) in the framework of one homeland.⁸⁰¹

The importance of the monumental step of the PKK declaring a unilateral and unconditional ceasefire cannot be underestimated. With it, 'the PKK intended to issue two signals ... its readiness for negotiations, and, on the other [hand], the turning back from its ultimate aim of creating a Kurdish state. The PKK no longer insists on this demand but instead strives toward the aim of finding a federalist [re]solution [to the conflict] within Turkey'.⁸⁰² It therefore constitutes not only a fundamental shift in the PKK's nationalist ideology but also the most auspicious window of opportunity for a peaceful solution to the PKK conflict in Turkey in the 1990s. Alas, this unique opportunity came to naught with the untimely death of Turgut Özal of a heart attack on 17 April 1993, after which the Turkish politico-military establishment, who had always been wary of his initiative, reverted to a hard, militaristic line towards the PKK.

This episode in relations between the PKK and KDP/PUK clearly shows that the ethnic alliance model has no explanatory value for understanding actors' behaviour in this internationalised ethno-nationalist conflict. As an explanatory model for analysing and conceptualising the relations between an insurgency and a supposedly 'co-ethnic' political entity where it found sanctuary, in the case of the PKK sanctuary in Iraqi Kurdistan from 1991 until 1993, it has no analytical purchase, not only because instead of an alliance, the parties were fighting each other, but for the reasons as to why the fighting occurred. The ethnic alliance model claims that 'conflict between a state and an ethnic group will escalate to the international level when other elite members of that same ethnic group play a role in policy making in another state and that state finds the first state to be politically relevant'.⁸⁰³ If we put aside for a moment the fact that the PKK and KDP/PUK, as has been argued throughout this study, cannot and should not be categorised as belonging to the same ethnic group, what is particularly striking here is that at the very moment when KDP/PUK played the most significant role in policy making in the territory and political space where the PKK had found sanctuary – that is when they crafted a political entity not nominally independent from but acting and performing statecraft independently from Baghdad as a so called de facto state – which is when the ethnic alliance model is supposed to become most relevant, they turned on the PKK. And I would argue, they turned on the PKK to protect that very political relevance the ethnic alliance model lists as a prerequisite for an ethnic alliance. In other words, dependent on Turkey and the international community for their very survival, KDP/PUK had to confront the factor that could jeopardize their newly gained political relevance; that is, they fought the PKK because it posed a vital threat to their political relevance.

When both KDP and PUK were just one of dozens of insurgencies operating in the 1980s Middle East, they did not have much to lose from forming a temporary alliance with the PKK. Yet, when their status changed in 1991, when they gained political relevance as the recipient of international aid and diplomatic as well as military backing, precisely because they feared they could lose this political relevance, they had to turn on the PKK. As Rex Brynen has detailed,⁸⁰⁴ and I have expanded on elsewhere,⁸⁰⁵ a sanctuary state will always have to walk a tightrope between hosting an insurgency on its territory

enhancing or putting its sovereignty at risk. For example, it can be argued that at least temporarily Honduran strongman General Gustavo Álvarez benefitted from hosting on its territory the CIA-backed Contras during the 1980s,⁸⁰⁶ while Jordan hosting Palestinian *figda'iyyin* not only threatened to undermine the Hashemite dynasty's hold on power but the very survival of Jordan as a state, which is why they were bloodily expelled in 1970/1 in what became known as the 'Black September'.⁸⁰⁷ While I will argue that in the 2000s the KRG performed such brinkmanship, trying to gain political capital via Turkey from the PKK's presence on its territory, in 1991/2 the emergent Iraqi Kurdish political entity, however defined, was in no position and too dependent on Ankara and the international community to dare any such tightrope walks. In addition, from 24 July 1992 on, when the PKK imposed an embargo on traffic between Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan, it not only posed an indirect threat to the political relevance of KDP/PUK – potentially provoking Turkey to sever its ties with them or to intervene militarily – but directly menaced the very survival of the Kurdistan Regional Government just a month after its inauguration.

In the literature the thirty days war between the PKK and KDP/PUK in 1992 is often referred to as the first stage of *birakuji* or 'fratricidal war' that came to define Iraqi Kurdish history in the 1990s,⁸⁰⁸ and in the case of Özcan and Tahiri is used as an example of the manifold 'internal divisions' that have prevented the Kurds from gaining statehood. Yet, as I have continually maintained throughout this study, it would be wrong for us analysts to categorise Kurds from Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria as belonging to the same ethnic group. For this reason, it would likewise be wrong to portray the conflict between the Kurds of Iraq, the KDP and PUK, and Kurds from Turkey and Syria, the PKK, as an 'intra-group ethnic conflict' or a 'fratricidal war'; by the same token, theories of factionalism do not apply to this case since if they do not belong to the same group, they cannot be factions of it. Likewise, manifestations of the conflict such as the strategic essentialisms of ethnic outbidding should not be misinterpreted as the conflict's causes. To be sure, Öcalan never tired of decrying Barzani and Talabani as 'collaborators, reactionaries, feudal persons, primitive nationalists', and 'leeches', who collaborated with the 'fascist Turks', and, as cherished in PKK ideology, may have genuinely believed that his organisation fought on behalf of and for the national self-determination of all Kurds, and that he could

speak with greater authority on their behalf than either Barzani and Talabani. Yet, to infer ethnic groupness from these acts of ethnic outbidding, from these strategic essentialisms, would amount to taking Öcalan's beliefs and preaching as gospel – something the intended audience, brainwashed for years in PKK training camps or persecuted by assimilationist nationalising states may have done sincerely with their hearts and minds or out of necessity, but which we scholars, for whom such restraints do not apply, should be hesitant to do. The strategic essentialisms and calculated radicalisation of ethnic outbidding do not make an ethnic group, as the Manichean categorization of being 'with us, or against us' does not make those who opposed George Bush's invasion of Iraq in 2003 sympathisers of terrorism.

If these attempts at explaining ethnic conflict with ethnicity hold little purchase, instrumentalist explananda appear to better capture the dynamics of relations between the PKK and KDP/PUK and what motivated their actions. To be sure, the actions of these parties during the first half of 1992, that led to the thirty days war of October, can be reduced to material, in this case security interests. The PKK feared an emerging IKF-Turkish alliance, and the KRG feared that the PKK's presence on its territory would either antagonise Turkey or that the PKK would directly challenge their authority, as it did when it shut down border traffic in July. While these realist accounts are accurate, I feel they do not capture the whole picture, and that it would be not only reductionist but also erroneous to completely discard identity as an explanatory factor. For I would argue that in 1991/2 Iraqi Kurdish identity, if such a generalisation can be made, entered a critical period of transformation that is still ongoing today. Over the course of just a few months the Iraqi Kurds, until then either ignored or (ab)used by the international community, saw their fates altered from being the victims of a genocidal campaign of ethnic cleansing to becoming the fosterlings of the international community; they had to come to terms with and adjust their perceptions as well as their behaviours towards the very power, Turkey, that until then had opposed Kurdish autonomy in Iraq most ardently becoming their benefactor; and finally, they came to exercise the first cautious steps in crafting a political entity, however defined, of their own control and acting independently from the Iraqi government that had oppressed them for generations. Certainly, such a fundamental transformation in their self-perception altered their interests,

as, in turn, did the strategic interests of having to adapt to rapidly changing developments affect the transformative process of their identities. I would be hard pressed to determine a causality in these developments, of either identities shaping interests or interests being a function of identity, but would argue that both went hand in hand as a complex matrix of identities and interests shaping actors' behaviour and actions – and therefore would make a strong case for studying them as such.

All out civil war

If for explaining the first stage of what is commonly, and as has been shown, wrongly referred to as *birakuji* or Kurdish 'fratricidal war' we have to belabour a complex matrix of shifting interests and emergent identities, for the second stage, terms such as 'intra-group conflict' or 'civil war' seem more appropriate and the traditional instrumentalist arsenal of explanatory IR suffices to explain the conflict between KDP and PUK that turned violent in the first half of 1994. Naturally, both parties accused each other of bad faith, of betraying the national unity of the Kurdistan Regional Government, and of selling out the Kurdish people and Iraqi Kurdish self-determination to external forces. 'The PUK called the KDP "international traitors" and counter-revolutionaries, the betrayers of Kurdish nationalism for party interests'.⁸⁰⁹ The KDP proved in no way inferior in their heated rhetoric:

The *Jalalis'* [followers of Jalal Talabani] war this time more than any time is against the Kurdish people and their interests. The PUK and Jalal Talabani have established a culture of *jashati* [treason] in Kurdish history. The PUK's attack is a careful plan in coordination with the enemies of the Kurds to destroy the Kurdish Regional Government in Iraqi Kurdistan ... If the KDP is attacked by the enemies of Kurdistan, the Kurdish heroes will smash them ... long live the peshmerga of the KDP and Barzani.⁸¹⁰

Such exercises in ethnic outbidding and strategic essentialisms, as instructive as they are for discourse analysis, should not disguise the fact that they are merely expressions and manifestations of the conflict that must not be mistaken as its causes. Virtually all analysts agree that in the on and off conflict between KDP and PUK from 1994 until 1998 ideological and ideational factors played no role,⁸¹¹ that it can be best described by theories of factionalism.⁸¹²

Any appeals to national unity were appeals to a myth, since, despite auspicious beginnings in 1992, 'essentially, the elected parliament had been carrying out decisions made at the party headquarters of the KDP and the PUK, rather than in the KRG legislature. Both parties' administrations were based on clientilism'.⁸¹³ At the end of the day, this civil war was nothing more and nothing less than a power struggle over supremacy in Iraqi Kurdistan, in which the decades-old antagonisms between both parties, detailed in Part Two, openly came to the surface. Additionally, very material interests resulting from the configuration of the political space in Iraqi Kurdistan since 1992 played a major role. The 1992 elections, in which although, as Jalal Talabani had put it, 'everyone ended up dissatisfied with the results', 'all Kurdish parties accepted, albeit reluctantly, in order to safeguard the unity of Kurdish ranks and to portray the Kurds as civilised people before the world',⁸¹⁴ had produced a fifty:fifty power-sharing deal between both parties. However, when in December 1992 a smaller party merged with the KDP this carefully calibrated equilibrium threatened to come out of balance. 'These changes did indeed send shockwaves through the PUK camp and altered the balance between the groupings partaking in the already strained power-sharing system of governance ... The inclusion of the smaller parties created a sharp polarization between the PUK and the KDP'.⁸¹⁵ The KDP, who had already fared slightly better in the 1992 election, was eager to exploit this advantage. 'In January 1994, the Central Committee of the KDP met and, believing to have been strengthened by coalescing with the smaller parties, decided that the 50:50 system was no longer the favoured method of power-sharing. Massoud [Barzani] subsequently proposed ... that a new election should take place in the immediate future'.⁸¹⁶

Other factors also turned out to the PUK's long-term detriment. One of the major sources of income for both parties were the duties collected at the Harbur border gate as well as revenues from smuggling goods from and into Turkey, Iran, and Syria. Of those borders the PUK controlled only parts of the one with Iran, and had for long suspected the KDP of not declaring and submitting all duties from Harbur to the KRG institutions, thus leaving the PUK at a precarious financial disadvantage.⁸¹⁷ With the KDP eyeing snap elections and a majority government, the PUK ran risk of losing millions of dollars in revenue, putting the

party's survival in question. What aggravated the PUK perhaps most, though, was that while virtually all of the KDP's territory was protected by the internationally patrolled no-fly zone, the majority of PUK territory, including its stronghold Sulimaniyah, lay south of the 36th parallel, and therefore was at constant risk from the Iraqi army. In sum, in almost every aspect the PUK felt either short changed or that the political space since 1992 had developed to its distinct disadvantage. 'The PUK felt itself being gradually squeezed out of power and starved of finances. Hence the PUK was probably the party that initiated the 1994 civil war, in an attempt to redress the worsening balance of power in Iraqi Kurdistan'.⁸¹⁸

The first round of fighting in May 1994 was triggered by a banality,⁸¹⁹ but 'by the beginning of June more than 600 civilian and military deaths had occurred in fighting throughout much of Kurdistan. In late May PUK forces seized the Kurdish parliament building in Erbil ... [and] the fighting threatened the continuation of much needed international aid'.⁸²⁰ Over the next four years thousands of Iraqi Kurds came to perish in the civil war that escalated into a regional conflagration drawing in all of the Kurdistan Region's neighbours and major powers further afield. Initially all regional powers, who after the turmoil of the Gulf War, saw a stabilised Iraqi Kurdistan as a strategic priority, tried to prevent the civil war in Iraqi Kurdistan from getting out of hand. 'Turkey, Iran, and, ironically, even Baghdad also offered to mediate ... while in late January 1995, U.S. President Bill Clinton sent a message to both Barzani and Talabani in which he warned, "We will no longer cooperate with the other countries to maintain security in the region if the clashes continue"'.⁸²¹ Over the course of the next three years the U.S. repeatedly threatened to cut off its international aid and even end its military protection of the Iraqi Kurds through Operation Provide Comfort. Kenneth Pollack, then Director for Near East and South East Asian Affairs of the *National Security Council* (NSC), recalls:

We used everything we got to get them to stop their fighting each other that only played into the hands of Saddam. We used incentives and disincentives, threatening to terminate our military engagement in the CTF [Combined Task Force for OPC I and II and from 1997 on Operation Northern Watch]. That message was absolutely sent. We clearly said, we're not going to support you, if you keep fighting each other, if you keep bringing in the Iranians and Saddam.⁸²²

It seems that by late 1994 the war had gained a momentum of its own, with the antagonisms between KDP and PUK built-up over decades fully unloading, and no party able or willing to give ground, and even their most powerful external supporters, the U.S. and Turkey, proving unable to bring their clients under control for longer than the ink on another futile peace agreement took to dry.⁸²³ Of all regional powers, it was Turkey that most feared a long-term destabilised Iraqi Kurdistan. 'Turkey saw harmony among the Iraqi Kurds as a way to prevent the ... PKK from raiding Turkey from Iraqi Kurdish territory. Civil War between the KDP and PUK, however, created opportunities for the PKK to [re-]establish camps in northern Iraq'.⁸²⁴ Consequently, Turkey pursued a dual strategy of stepping up its military incursions into northern Iraq – with two major offensive from March until May and then again in July 1995 – to prevent the PKK from regaining lost ground, while at the same time acting as a mediator in two major rounds of talks between KDP and PUK in Silopi in the summer of 1994 and in Ankara in 1996/7.⁸²⁵ Turkey's fears proved well-founded since the PKK not only managed to take advantage of the chaos of war and regained the camps at the Turkish border it had abandoned in 1992 but, on 26 August 1995, also launched a major offensive against the KDP.⁸²⁶ The PKK claims that it acted on its own accord – its press organs announced that the KDP had 'to be wiped out because it was backing Turkey's bid to crush the PKK' and for forty years had been 'in league with the Turkish intelligence services'⁸²⁷ – and denies that it attacked the KDP in concert with the PUK.⁸²⁸ This, however, seems as unconvincing as KDP/PUK claiming they had not coordinated their 1992 attacks on the PKK with Turkey. Both PKK and PUK received support from the same external actors, Iran and Syria, and the PKK prepared its assault on the KDP from PUK territory. 'For their own ulterior motives such regional powers as Syria and Iran, as well as the PUK, apparently encouraged the PKK. The former two states acted because they did not want to see their U.S. enemy successfully broker an end to KDP-PUK strife ... while Talabani sought in effect to open a second front against Barzani'.⁸²⁹ On a short term basis, it seemed as if Talabani's brinkmanship of letting the PKK live to fight another day from three years earlier had paid off. As he should have expected, though, in the long run, the PKK's offensive against the KDP provoked Turkey to intervene directly in the conflict on the side of the KDP. On 14 May 1997, Turkey invaded northern Iraq with 50,000 troops, and in September, with its tanks advancing to within a

few miles of Erbil, even shelled PUK positions along the strategic Hamilton Road.⁸³⁰ For what may somewhat be euphemistically coined Turkey's 'partisan peace-making',⁸³¹ Talabani had stronger words. For him, 'Turkey has discarded its neutral role and is now an ally of Barzani.'⁸³²

The civil war's darkest hour occurred when, on 31 August 1996, Barzani joined forces with Saddam Hussein against the PUK and their combined forces took Erbil, and later on its own (but generously equipped by the Iraqi Army) conquered the PUK stronghold Sulimaniyah, to which the U.S. responded with cruise missile strikes on command and control facilities in Iraq proper.⁸³³ For many Kurds until today this 1996 KDP-Iraqi army alliance against the PUK is Iraqi Kurdistan's day that will live on in infamy; for Kurdish-born analysts like Tahiri it is further testimony of Kurdish tribalist 'backwardness' and their nationalist parties' incapacity for national unity,⁸³⁴ and Ali Kemal Özcan even goes so far as to identify "treason" as an inseparable element of the Kurdish ethnic personality (sic!).⁸³⁵ Supposedly more detached observers too, come to a similar, in my opinion troublesome conclusion:

Tribalism, factionalism, and splits correctly constitute the standard historical narratives of organised Kurdish nationalism. The traits these stories manifest have been the major internal obstacles to the creation of both Greater and Lesser Kurdistans ... This factionalism may be seen as rooted in the paradoxical but nonetheless intimate connection between particularistic "tribal" loyalties and universalistic "modern" nationalist ideologies ... The "tyranny of cousins" has certainly been part of Kurdish culture, along with fratricide, feuding, and fatuous divisions.⁸³⁶

Such juxtapositions of arbitrary values such as 'tribalist' and 'backward' versus 'modern' and 'civilised' are troublesome for their blatant normativism alone. As Ernest Gellner observed:

Nationalisms are simply those tribalisms, or for that matter any other kind of group, which through luck, effort or circumstances succeed in becoming an effective force under modern circumstances. They are only identifiable *ex post factum*. Tribalism never prospers, for when it does, everyone will respect it as true nationalism, and no one will dare call it tribalism.⁸³⁷

What is even more troublesome for the historic baggage such normativisms carry and what in my opinion becomes neither intellectually nor ethically justifiable is when we scholars as categorisers start ascribing certain derogatory

psychological or social connotations and characteristics such as 'backward', 'treasonous' or 'fratricidous' as cultural attributes or traits to whole ethnic groups, nations, or people. Not only are such normativisms borderline pseudo-scientific, they have the potential of getting us dangerously close to a cultural stereotyping of what should be a bygone era in the social sciences.

Ultimately, in 1998, the U.S. and Turkey reached two separate crucial diplomatic breakthroughs, each with a major impact on Kurdish history. In early September the U.S. finally succeeded in bringing Talabani and Barzani to the negotiation table in Washington. After two days of heated negotiations both leaders reached an accord, hailed as the 'Washington Agreement', that ended the Iraqi Kurdish civil war and was presented with great fanfare and under the aegis of Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to the world on 17 September 1998.⁸³⁸ While it is difficult to establish a direct relation,⁸³⁹ it is quite striking that a month later President Bill Clinton signed the *Iraq Liberation Act* into law, adopting an official U.S. policy for regime change in Iraq and designated certain groups in Iraq as recipients of covert funding to bring about the toppling of Saddam Hussein's regime.⁸⁴⁰ On 4 February 1999, President Clinton revealed what groups would qualify for U.S. assistance with both KDP and PUK featuring prominently on the list. The fact that the bill was introduced for a vote in the House of Representatives on 29 September,⁸⁴¹ less than two weeks after Barzani and Talabani had signed their peace accord, is too conspicuous for coincidence, and leads one to believe that the 'Washington Agreement' was sweetened by the promise of millions of dollars of covert funding and KDP/PUK being enhanced to the status of quasi-official allies in U.S. efforts to bring about regime change in Iraq.⁸⁴²

For the PKK the 'Washington Agreement' was bad news. The PKK had demonstrably benefitted from the civil war between KDP and PUK and regained most of the ground lost in 1992, which is why Gunter's theory that the PKK deliberately attacked the KDP to torpedo the Drogheda peace talks between both parties⁸⁴³ could very well hold some merit. For as long as the two Iraqi Kurdish parties were fighting they would not interfere with the PKK setting up camp at the Turkish border again, and the PKK could shape the outcome of the struggle by strategically throwing its weight behind one combatant as the situation required. The prospect of KDP and PUK reaching a lasting settlement

and returning to Washington's and presumably Ankara's good graces was therefore inherently against the PKK's interest. In the same weeks as Barzani and Talabani were making peace in Washington, though, the PKK was dealt a much heavier blow when, after more than fifteen years, Turkish diplomatic, and in this case even overt military pressure finally paid off, and the Syrian government expelled Abdullah Öcalan on 9 October 1998.⁸⁴⁴ With that dramatic turn of events began the PKK leader's four months desperate odyssey through Europe until his capture by Turkish intelligence in Kenya on 15 February 1999.⁸⁴⁵ It was a blow from which the PKK would not recover.

10.) The PKK and Iraqi Kurdistan in Post-2003 Iraq

The PKK after the capture of Abdullah Öcalan

For an insurgency like the PKK, so strictly structured around a *Führerprinzip*, in which Öcalan's often seemingly endless ideological musings were considered gospel and his orders dogma, the capture, show trial, and life sentence for its leader amounted to the most severe blow the group had to endure in its history, and it appears a miracle that it survived this at all. The more since to many of its rank and file, Öcalan's 'conversion' during the trial must have appeared as a betrayal of all they had fought and often given their and their families' lives for. At first Öcalan declared an end to the two decades long armed struggle and encouraged his guerrilla to lay down arms:

I want to make an important appeal. I want to offer a peace congress to the PKK. If the government extends a hand to us for peace, the PKK will become the state's most powerful ally ... I am calling for an end to the armed struggle. The PKK should stop resisting the democratic state ... My authority in the organization is unbroken. If the government gives me a chance, I can make the PKK fighters come down from the mountains within three months.⁸⁴⁶

For any PKK fighter in the field this alone must have been difficult to come to terms with. Not only did Öcalan call for a unilateral ceasefire and promised the Turkish authorities his and his cadres' full cooperation, he called the Turkish state – who tens of thousands of Kurds in decades of PKK indoctrination had come to see as the relentlessly assimilationist and oppressive enemy – a 'democratic state'. And yet Öcalan went even further in a statement of 2 August 1999, in which he questioned the armed struggle of the PKK over the past two decades itself, and tried to portray himself as a reasonable man of peace while blaming others within the organization for the escalation of the conflict since the 1980s:

It can hardly be said that military activities under the leadership of the PKK had developed into a proper guerrilla warfare in terms of basic strategy and tactics. Even more wrong would it be to suppose that the way of warfare of the high-ranking responsible persons had been the way I wanted it to be ... Especially in 1997, under the name of an offensive against village guards, there were attacks on civilians, among them women and children, that should never [have been] the

target of military attacks ... I find it important that people know that I was involved in quite a tough struggle against this from 1987-97 ... It is not difficult to find out that the activities that harmed the PKK most have mainly happened in that period and by the hands of people like these who tried to take control by themselves.⁸⁴⁷

What is surprising is that these barely disguised attempts by the PKK leader to save his own skin and avoid the death penalty by portraying himself as the man who can persuade the PKK insurgents to lay down arms, and therefore be of greater use to the Turkish state alive, are taken by analysts like Hussein Tahiri as a genuine analysis of the PKK's ideological, strategic, and tactic errors. Tahiri claims:

Öcalan realised that with the tribal structure of Kurdish society with such a deep division and so much contradiction the demand for an independent Kurdish state based on Marxist-Leninist doctrine was too ambitious a demand. It could not be realised at this stage, so cultural rights could be more appropriate for the Kurds in Turkey.⁸⁴⁸

I would argue that this reading of Öcalan's complete about-turn, that strikingly occurred not while in command of the PKK and able to stop the killing of tens of thousands of Kurdish civilians, members of the Turkish state apparatus, and his own men and women, but when facing the death sentence, says less about Öcalan's realisations about the structure of Kurdish society than the author's bias.⁸⁴⁹ This example is certainly instructive for discourse analysis in so far as it shows how Öcalan as a symbol can still shape the perceptions, identity, and *Weltanschauungen* of many Kurds; what is more significant for immediate political developments, though, was that the PKK command, although at first issuing orders that Öcalan, who was feared to be influenced by the Kurdish state apparatus, were to be ignored, heeded his call and implemented a unilateral ceasefire from 1 September 1999 on that lasted until 1 June 2004.⁸⁵⁰

At this stage, though, when analysing the PKK's evolution from the capture of Abdullah Öcalan until today, one has to ask, in the words of Doğu Ergil,

when we say "the PKK", who are we talking about today? Are we talking about Öcalan on İrmalı, the fighters in the mountains in Qandil, the TAK [*Teyrêbazên Azadiya Kurdistan* or Kurdistan Freedom Falcons], the criminal networks that sustain the organisation and profiteer from trading drugs, weapons, and smuggling, or the many affiliated organisations in the diaspora in Europe? And where do the

legal Kurdish political parties like the BDP [*Bariş ve Demokrasi Partisi*, in Kurdish *Partiya Aştî û Demokrasiyê* or Peace and Democracy Party] fit into the picture?⁸⁵¹

To this I would answer, to a greater or lesser extent all of the above actors need to be taken into consideration. This heterogeneity and multi-layeredness that not only makes the post-1999 PKK so difficult to analyse but also complicates the on and off peace process since the Turkish state not only has no clearly identifiable interlocutor with which to negotiate but also, once a comprehensive deal had been struck, it is not at all certain whether all the various actors subsumed under the today rather vague term 'PKK' would abide by it. This heterogeneity is a result of the chaotic period from 1999 until 2004/5, in which the organisation tried to respond to the capture of its leader, his demands for a political reorientation towards political dialogue with the Turkish state, mass scale defections of prominent cadre members, and an increasingly hostile international environment in the wake of 9/11, the consolidation of the Iraqi Kurdish polity, the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, and the rise of the AKP in Turkey. It is reflected in a rapid succession of party congresses that often ended in heated disputes, divisions, prominent defections and power struggles between the group's leaders, attempts at re-branding and re-naming the movement, and giving it a new ideological direction that took until 2003 to gain consistency and logical clarity. At its Eighth Congress in April 2002 the PKK changed its name into *Kongreya Azadî û Demokrasiya Kurdistanê* (KADEK, Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress) in order to emphasise its commitment to non-violent struggle for Kurdish cultural and civil rights within the democratic framework of the Turkish state. The congress declared:

Our Congress has ascertained that with the realisation of the Kurdish national awakening the PKK has completed its historical mission and [by accomplishing this] has irrevocably occupied an important position in [the] history of [the Kurdish people]. In light of this our Congress has resolved to terminate all activities under the name PKK by 4 April 2002.⁸⁵²

Yet in November 2003 KADEK abolished itself and was re-launched as *Kongra Gelê Kurdistan* (Kongra-Gel, People's Congress of Kurdistan) in order to make the party more politically inclusive, allowing for former *Demokrasi Partisi* (DEP, Democracy Party) MPs to hold prominent positions within its ranks, only for the organisation to re-establish itself as PKK in 2005.⁸⁵³

Naturally, these organisational and ideological revisions, shifts and new orientations did not come unopposed; the most prominent of these defections occurred in August 2004, when, after losing out in a power struggle with the faction around Murat Karaylian and Cemil Bayik, Osman Öcalan and Nizamettin Taş left the PKK to found a rival organisation, the *Partîya Welatparêzên Demokratên Kuristan* (PWD, Patriotic and Democratic Party of Kurdistan), with former *Halkın Demokrasi Partisi* (HADEP, People's Democracy Party) MP Hikmet Fidan that among other differences with the Karaylian/Bayik faction, advocated for a closer cooperation with KDP and PUK. After Fidan was assassinated in Diyarbakir in July 2005, and two other prominent party leaders killed in a car bomb in Iraqi Kurdistan the following year – Osman Öcalan and Nizamettin Taş harbour no doubt that the PKK was behind the assassinations – the party descended into obscurity, though.⁸⁵⁴

As significant as these structural shifts, factional feuds, and defections are for analysis, our prime concern is with the PKK's ideological re-orientation after 1999, and in particular its re-conceptualisation of national self-determination. The ideological paradigm shift that started to emerge from Öcalan's prison writings⁸⁵⁵ constitutes an amalgam of anarchist conceptualisation of society cum critique of the nation state, utopian socialism, feminism, and a rather obscure Mesopotamian historicism.⁸⁵⁶ Central to the post-1999 PKK ideology, and of prime interest for this study's deconstructive approach to state sovereignty, are the concepts of 'radical democracy' and 'democratic confederalism' developed by 19th century anarchist theoreticians Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Mikhail Bakunin, and Peter Kropotkin.⁸⁵⁷ Those writers conceptually opposed the ideology of liberal, democratic nationalism prevalent in 19th century Europe, and developed an alternative model to the centralising nation state for how society is rooted in a purportedly 'truer' form of democracy, federalism, and regionalism. While Proudhon recognised that the liberal, mass democratic, and centralised nation state had the potential of turning into a majority-sanctioned despotism of elites promoting ever more comprehensive homogenisation of society in order to maximize their control over it,⁸⁵⁸ Bakunin developed the utopian concept of a global federalism replacing individual, competing, and authoritarian nation states. Taking the pre-1848 Swiss Confederation as an example, Bakunin envisioned a federalism that is rooted in an individualist and

regionalist conceptualisation of society, resulting in a bottom-up and voluntary collectivisation of people, goods, and means of production into communes, and, on the long run, into a global confederation:

All the supporters of the League should therefore bend all their energies towards the reconstruction of their various countries in order to replace the old organisation founded throughout upon violence and the principle of authority by a new organisation based solely upon the interests, needs, and inclinations of the populace, and owing no principle other than that of the free federation of individuals into communes, communes into provinces, provinces into nations, and the latter into the United States, first of Europe, then of the whole world.⁸⁵⁹

Bakunin, though, emphasised the completely voluntary character of any political federation and formation into a polity; a community that could be as freely dissolved by its members as it was formed:

Just because a region has formed part of a state, even by voluntary accession, it by no means follows that it incurs any obligation to remain tied to it forever. No obligation in perpetuity is acceptable to human justice ... The right of free union and equally free secession comes first and foremost among all political rights; without it, confederation would be nothing but centralisation in disguise.⁸⁶⁰

This anarchist conceptualisation of a democratic, communally based, organised society in confederation with other equally structured societies is in direct opposition to the liberal, modernist understanding of nation and state advocated by explanatory IR, as discussed in Part One. It challenges the hegemonic concept of nation, national self-determination, and the state on four fundamental levels: (1) similar to Marxism, it argues that the formation of political units, i.e. modern sovereign nation states, advanced by modern liberal nationalism is a (bourgeois) elite project and therefore not truly democratic, contradicting the equation of liberal democracy and modern nationalism that constitutes the key criteria of the modernist understanding of nationhood; (2) instead of the top-down implementation of nationhood and state sovereignty, it argues for a voluntary association of free individuals at the grass-roots level that, if desired, pursue an equally voluntary project of confederation with other like-minded communities that is at any time reversible; (3) due to the fact that any political community is voluntarily entered, it can as freely be dissolved or abandoned, therefore, unlike the modern nation state and the state-centric system, valorising the right to secession as one of its founding principles – in

other words, to them, self-determination only makes sense with an implicit and comprehensive right to secession, an ideal, as has been shown, the liberal modernist understanding of the principle of explanatory IR denies; finally, (4), in particular Proudhon argues that such a voluntary confederation of individuals is better suited to accommodating diversity within society than the assimilationist and pathologically homogenising nation state discussed in Part One.

Öcalan, who identifies the organisation of societies into states as the 'original sin' of humanity,⁸⁶¹ argues that the 'democratic confederalism' he advocates, 'builds on the self-government of local communities, and is organised in the form of open councils, town councils, local parliaments and larger congresses. The citizens themselves are agents of this kind of self-government, not state-based authorities'.⁸⁶² These local councils and various forms of self-governance in the Bakunian sense, united in a democratic confederation, Öcalan sees as the prime driving force behind Kurdish liberation and unification. I therefore agree with Akkaya & Jongerden,⁸⁶³ who argue that authors like Özcan⁸⁶⁴ got it wrong when claiming that the PKK has abandoned the struggle for an independent and united Kurdistan. The post-1999 PKK ideology therefore,

does not mean the abandonment of the ideal for a united Kurdistan, but rather that this ideal is aimed at in a different way. The ultimate aim of independence is no longer embodied in the realisation of a classical state, but in the establishment and development of self-government ... Instead of a classical state-building process, that is, from above, establishing the overarching structures of governance, a process of constructing Kurdistan from below is being attempted, that is, a genuinely democratic confederalism.⁸⁶⁵

I further agree with the authors that the PKK today advocates in theory a compelling alternative to the hegemonic state-centric international system of assimilationist and pathologically homogenising modern nation states for whom sovereignty all too often means the suppression of democracy and self-determination. The post-1999 PKK therefore not only 'successfully reinvented itself' but 'Öcalan's critique of the (classical) concept of the nation-state brings him to a fresh conceptualization of politics. He considers the nation-state as outdated, and instead pleads for a system named democratic confederalism as an alternative to the state'.⁸⁶⁶ Consequently, it would be wrong, to apply, as

Özcan does, to the post-1999 PKK the same understanding of nationalism, national self-determination, and independence as to the pre-1999 PKK, for while the latter can be conceived with the traditional understanding of these principles of explanatory IR, the former revolutionises and ontologically challenges them. It has to be said, though, that as intellectually intriguing as this alternative concept of political communal organisation is, in practice, the PKK with its authoritarian organisational structure and its ongoing attempts to monopolise the Kurdish political discourse remains as much an obstacle to its realisation as the nationalising states it opposes.

In practical terms, from 2000 until its return to the armed struggle in 2004, the PKK tried to facilitate a national democratic dialogue on cultural and democratic rights for Turkey's Kurds, in which it was assisted by the affiliated *Demokratik Toplum Partisi* (DTP, *Partiya Civaka Demokratik* in Kurdish or Democratic Society Party), who until its ban by the Turkish Constitutional Court in 2009, propagated an ideologically related 'Project for Democratic Autonomy'.⁸⁶⁷ In terms of organisational structure the novel concept of democratic confederalism is implemented in the PKK encouraging the formation of regional sister-organisations such as *Partiya Jiyani Azadi Kurdistan* (PJAK, Kurdistan Free Life Party) in Iran, *Partiya Yekita ya Demokratik* (PYD, Democratic Union Party) in Syria, and *Partiya Careseriya Demokratik a Kurdistane* (PCDK, Kurdistan Democratic Solution Party) in Iraqi Kurdistan, united under the umbrella organisation *Koma Civaken Kurdistan* (KCK, Kurdistan Democratic Confederation). This re-conceptualization of national self-determination through democratic confederalism, though, not only brought the PKK into conflict with the nationalising states as well as with the U.S. state-building project in Iraq, but also reignited its ideological antagonism with KDP and PUK.

The KRG-AKP rapprochement

The Iraqi Kurdish ethno-nationalist parties entered the new century as much divided as they had spent the previous one. The Washington Agreement had put an end to the armed confrontation but left the so called Iraqi Kurdish de facto state partitioned into two power blocks corresponding with the two

segments of territory KDP and PUK had militarily and politically controlled since 1996. Those two regions were run as separate political entities. In Erbil the KDP administered its territory through a third KRG cabinet, and in Sulimaniyah the PUK established its own third cabinet; virtually every executive and legislative structure, government ministry, bureaucratic institution, and civil service existed in double,⁸⁶⁸ resulting not only in a disproportionately inflated bureaucratic apparatus cum cumbersome decision making process but also a reification and protraction of the proverbial factionalism between both parties. On the other hand, once the fighting had stopped, the two KRGs could refer to a gradually improving economy⁸⁶⁹ as well as to learning, practising, and to a certain degree mastering apart what they had failed to execute together: running an increasingly efficient political and bureaucratic administration.⁸⁷⁰ The qualified success of the two KRGs leads Stansfield to conclude that not only would a unified administration have been unfeasible at this stage, but that the era of peaceful division actually yielded tangible benefits for the Iraqi Kurdish political system and the people both parties governed:

If there is one lesson to be learned from Kurdistan in the 1990s, it would be that the KDP and PUK have difficulty coexisting peacefully when asked to work closely together ... Mistrust continues to be palpable, and competition underlies the entire relationship ... The historical baggage of nearly half a century of continuous rivalry and episodic fighting weighs heavily on both the KDP and the PUK ... [but] the executive governmental structures have matured considerably under the divided political system ... [and] the capability of Kurds to govern their own country has obviously been enhanced by these actions.⁸⁷¹

Yet, again, as in 1991, the Iraqi Kurdish ethno-nationalist parties were forced by external actors and events to put aside their differences and cooperate. And, as in 1991, at the outset of the second U.S. invasion of Iraq, prospects for the Iraqi Kurds to benefit from this campaign again looked dire. Understandably, in its war plans for Iraq the Bush administration conceded greater importance to Turkey and the opportunity to open a second, northern front than to the quibbling Iraqi Kurdish ethno-nationalist parties. In Ankara, in 2002, a new political party, the *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (AKP, Justice and Development Party), had come to power that not only substantially differed in its composition, ideology, and constituency from any previous mainstream Turkish party but soon were to revolutionise and lastingly alter the Kemalist consensus

on which the Turkish political system had rested since the founding of the Republic.⁸⁷² The dilemma the new Turkish government posed for the Bush administration was not so much about the price Washington would have to pay to win Ankara over for its invasion of Iraq, but that even if Washington were to pay what was asked of it, the AKP leadership could not guarantee whether it could get enough of its MPs in line to back in parliament the stationing of U.S. troops on Turkish soil, where a majority viewed what they saw as an 'imperialist crusade' against a fellow Muslim country without legitimization or justification, extremely critically.⁸⁷³ With tens of thousands of U.S. troops waiting off Turkish ports to disembark, crucial time in the run up to the vote ticked away haggling over what Turkey expected in compensation, and U.S. diplomats trying to square the circle of getting the Iraqi Kurds to agree to a Turkish troop presence in a buffer zone extending up to 40 kilometres into Iraqi Kurdistan – as expected, the Turkish military was keen to make the best of an inevitable war it opposed in principle by extending operations against the PKK – which Massoud Barzani threatened to meet by force.⁸⁷⁴ For the Iraqi Kurds, when war loomed on the horizon in February 2003, it did not so much promise the downfall of their nemesis in Baghdad as it did threaten the possible end of their de facto independent polity and their exercise in self-government at the hands of a Turkish occupation.

Despite these seemingly insurmountable obstacles, it came as a surprise to everyone involved when, in a historic and extremely narrow vote on 1 March 2003, the Turkish parliament rejected the U.S. request for a second, northern front to be staged from Turkish soil.⁸⁷⁵ With some pathos but not lacking in accuracy the most fortunate incident of the vote of the Turkish parliament against taking an active role in the US-led Iraq War can be considered the second birth hour of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

For the Kurds of Iraq the outcome of 2003 could be seen as a best case scenario, since it removed the hated Saddam Hussein and kept the Turkish army out of their territory. Since they were the only group in Iraq which firmly supported US policy, and had substantial forces on the ground which Turkey lacked, it was the Iraqi Kurds, rather than the Turks, who emerged as America's most effective local allies.⁸⁷⁶

Consequently, they became the main beneficiaries of U.S. state-building in Iraq, while Turkey had taken itself out of the equation and of having any say in the unfolding political future of its southern neighbour. The political gambit at the highest stakes on the future status of the Kurdistan Region in 2004/5 forced the Iraqi Kurdish ethno-nationalist parties to collaborate and speak with one voice in Baghdad. The incentive of permanently enshrining their autonomy status in the constitution, together with their pre-eminence as key U.S. allies, and the magnitude of the damage further disunity could cause, compelled KDP and PUK to succeed in what had eluded them for more than three decades: to at least at the surface bury the hatchet of factionalism and implement a power-sharing deal fit for the purpose of representing the Kurdistan Region by common consent. The unification process of the two KRGs started with the January 2005 elections that resulted in Massoud Barzani being elected President of the Kurdistan Region by the Iraqi Kurdish National Assembly in June – a development eased by his old rival, Jalal Talabani, becoming President of Iraq in April – and culminated in the ‘unification agreement’ of January 2006.⁸⁷⁷ This agreement allowed the two parties to effectively monopolise the political space in Iraqi Kurdistan by forming consecutive coalition governments, in which the key posts of prime minister and parliamentary speaker rotated routinely, and ministries as well as their budgets were allocated in back-room deals among the parties’ strongmen and hopefuls.⁸⁷⁸ While it can be argued that Talabani’s departure for Baghdad eased the implementation of mechanisms of power-sharing, the absence of leadership in the PUK in Iraqi Kurdistan, together with a growing public frustration over the dominance of the two parties, soon became acutely felt, resulting in 2009 in *Gorran* to split from the PUK under the leadership of Newshirwan Mustafa.⁸⁷⁹ Since then *Gorran* has made a name for itself and significantly increased its share of the Iraqi Kurdish vote mostly at the expense of the PUK,⁸⁸⁰ this, coupled with Jalal Talabani’s rapidly deteriorating health after a debilitating stroke, led me to suggest that it may be about time for obituaries to be written on the PUK.⁸⁸¹ The almost comatose condition of the PUK and its leader has allowed Massoud Barzani and the KDP – after a wave of public protest in the wake of the ‘Arab Spring’ was silenced by force, intimidation, and playing the nationalist card in Kirkuk⁸⁸² – to reign supreme in Erbil.⁸⁸³

The historic decision by the Turkish parliament to deny the U.S. a second, northern front in its 2003 invasion of Iraq not only saved the Kurdistan Region of Iraq from Turkish occupation, it also resulted in an unprecedented period of strained relations between Washington and Ankara that extended to the U.S. client polity in Erbil.⁸⁸⁴

For five years, between 2003 and 2008, Turkey refused to have any dialogue with us, they simply did not talk to us, they did not even talk to the US ... there were no political consultations, no talks on how to deal with the PKK, no negotiations on Kirkuk or on the post-conflict order of Iraq ... only silence. We wanted to engage them in dialogue on many issues but could not get them [to talk to us].⁸⁸⁵

By imposing a de facto political embargo on Iraqi Kurdistan and pursuing a stubborn, and ultimately self-defeating refusal to engage in any meaningful political dialogue with the Bush administration – who after what it considered a betrayal in 2003 was not keen to amend relations either – the Erdoğan government virtually took itself out of the equation of having any say in the post-war restructuring of Iraq.⁸⁸⁶ By 2007 the AKP leadership had to realise that its obstructionism was leading nowhere and was no longer sustainable. This recognition had primarily four reasons:

(1) First and foremost it illustrates recognition by the Turkish government of the dramatically altered nature and political status of the Kurdistan Region in the post-2003 order of Iraq. In the negotiations for the *Transitional Administrative Law* (TAL) of 2004 and the Iraqi Constitution of the following year the Iraqi Kurdish ethno-nationalist parties got all they had bargained for, with a ‘highly decentralized’ system that ‘gave the Kurds a victory by recognizing KRG control in the north and allowing it to continue government functions in these regions, to retain control over police and security, and to tax in KRG areas’.⁸⁸⁷ Ironically, the biggest negotiation victory for the KRG in the TAL had originally been intended to placate the Sunni Arabs,⁸⁸⁸ who felt overall left out from the dialogue on the future order of Iraq, by granting a provision for a two-thirds majority vote in three governorates to block the adoption of a new constitution, thus providing the KRG with an iron-clad veto on any future political arrangement that would not enshrine the principle of ethnic federalism in the constitution,⁸⁸⁹ leading Brendan O’Leary and Khaled Salih to delight: ‘Kurdistan

is, in short, legally secure for now. Its existence is official. Its status can be both secured and extended'.⁸⁹⁰

The Iraqi Constitution of 2005 merely cast in stone the principle of ethnic federalism for which the TAL had already prepared the ground.⁸⁹¹ 'On this issue, the Kurds won virtually all the arguments. They insisted on a distribution of power between the central government and regions, which gave the latter priority. The Kurds worked to weaken the authority of the central government ... they managed to get a weak central government and a highly decentralized polity'.⁸⁹² Article 111 of the constitution turned out to stipulate that 'in case of a conflict between regional and national legislation, the region would prevail ... [in sum,] the federal government was given few exclusive authorities'.⁸⁹³

For the Iraqi Kurdish ethno-nationalist parties the prevalence of the principle of ethnic federalism that enshrined their national self-governance in the three governorates of Dohuk, Erbil, and Al Sulaimaniyah in the Iraqi Constitution constitutes unquestionably the greatest accomplishment in their seventy year struggle for national self-determination, leading Brendan O'Leary to conclude, 'on paper Kurdistan [is] freer within Iraq than any member state within the European Union'.⁸⁹⁴ Of equal importance, and both an expression as well as a function of Iraqi Kurdistan's altered political status, was the fact that every day the rest of Iraq descended more into the chaos of ethno-sectarian civil war, Erbil came to be seen in Washington as the only stable and reliable partner in Iraq. Turkish foreign policy simply could no longer afford to ignore that the Kurdistan Region had become a key U.S. ally in the region nor, that even when it limited its relations to the Iraqi government, its main interlocutors – President Jalal Talabani and Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari – were Iraqi Kurds and naturally represented Iraqi Kurdish interests to a perhaps greater extent than Iraqi positions.

(2) Due to several setbacks in Turkish foreign policy since the AKP had come to power and in response to the dramatic changes in regional power constellations the U.S. occupation of Iraq had brought about, Turkish political scientist and advisor to PM Erdoğan, Ahmet Davutoğlu, hailed as the 'brains behind Turkey's global reawakening',⁸⁹⁵ developed a paradigm shift that would revolutionise Turkish foreign policy; subsumed under the catchword 'strategic

depth' the new, less paranoid Turkish foreign policy doctrine, instead of perceiving Turkey's neighbours as an inherent threat, sought to engage them in projects of mutual interests and to capitalise on the rich legacy of the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East and beyond.⁸⁹⁶

(3) The Turkish military-politico establishment, with the PKK conflict again intensifying since 2004, would have to rely on U.S. acquiescence, if not active cooperation for carrying out any cross-border operations into Iraq.

(4) While the Turkish politico-military establishment kept snubbing the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Turkish business there not only had stayed on but was booming, and Turkish business associations increasingly exerted pressure on the AKP government to abandon its obstructionism and back up Turkish investments in the region with a diplomatic rapprochement.⁸⁹⁷

Many opinion makers and scholars cum retired politicians in the U.S. policy world bemoaned the deterioration of relations with as crucial an ally as Turkey and behind the scenes prepared the ground for reconciliation and a reinvigorated partnership that would also include the KRG.⁸⁹⁸ Their efforts bore fruit when during a state visit to Washington on 5 November 2007 PM Erdogan managed to convince President Bush that both countries were allies in the 'War on Terror' and that the PKK was a vital threat to the two countries' strategic interests in the Middle East; both sides reached an agreement on military intelligence cooperation and, it is safe to assume in light of developments in the following month, tacit U.S. approval of limited Turkish incursions into northern Iraq in pursuit of the PKK.⁸⁹⁹ 'In effect, America would now give a green light to Turkish operations in northern Iraq, provided they were limited to attacks on the PKK and did not cause unnecessary civilian casualties'.⁹⁰⁰ Thus well provided for with U.S. political backing and 'real time intelligence', the Turkish Air Force flew the first sorties against PKK camps in Iraqi Kurdistan since the Iraq War on 16 December 2007 that were followed by a substantial ground incursion in February 2008.⁹⁰¹ Although the KRG engaged in the usual pro forma condemnation of the attacks,⁹⁰² Iraqi Kurdish leaders' consternation appears less convincing with Jalal Talabani capitalising on improved relations and intelligence cooperation between the U.S. and Turkey and visiting Ankara in his capacity as President of Iraq on 7 March 2008,⁹⁰³ merely a week after Turkey

had withdrawn its troops from northern Iraq. Indeed, *Wikileaks* cables from the U.S. embassy in Ankara indicate that U.S. support with real time intelligence of Turkish military operations in northern Iraq was conditional to Turkey mending its differences with the KRG.⁹⁰⁴ During Talabani's visit it stands to reason then that he made use of his unique position as President of Iraq and leader of the PUK to prepare the ground for a Turkish-KRG rapprochement. In sum then, the diplomatic build up to the 2007/8 Turkish incursion into northern Iraq in its seemingly endless war with the PKK, via Washington's good offices, resulted in Turkey abandoning its policy of isolating the KRG and entering into a political dialogue with the Iraqi Kurdish parties after five years of strained relations. 'Without the political cover that the American help provided, the [AKP] government would have faced even fiercer domestic opposition to extending any olive branch to Iraqi Kurds. Iraqi Kurds for their part toned down their criticisms of Turkey and especially of the air strikes'.⁹⁰⁵

After February 2008, which in retrospect can be identified as a watershed moment, relations between Ankara and Erbil improved profoundly and, from a current perspective, lastingly. The first direct meeting at the highest political level since the days of Turgut Özal between representatives of the Iraqi Kurdish parties and the Turkish government took place in Baghdad on 1 May 2008, when KRG PM Nechirvan Barzani met with Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu and the Turkish Special Envoy Murat Özçelik, in which both sides reached an accord on improving political and economic ties and, in foresight of the AKP's 'Kurdish Initiative' in the following year, agreed on jointly working towards a political solution of the 'Kurdish Question' in southeast Anatolia;⁹⁰⁶ an agreement that was further substantiated by the establishment in November 2008 of a Trilateral Commission between the US, Turkey, and Iraq – prominently represented by the KRG – with a joint command centre in Erbil to facilitate security cooperation between all parties in setting active steps against the PKK.⁹⁰⁷ These first substantial steps towards strategic cooperation and political rapprochement between Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan were followed up by even higher level contacts when during the 'Kurdish Initiative' and in acknowledgment of the KRG's role in it, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu met President Barzani in October 2009 in Erbil, the first personal meeting by President Barzani with PM Erdoğan in Ankara on 4 June the following year, and

ultimately culminated in the historic first visit of a Turkish Prime Minister to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq in March 2011, when, with much pomp, they jointly inaugurated the new Erbil International Airport and the Turkish Consulate in Erbil.⁹⁰⁸ In light of Turkey's relations with the Iraqi Kurdish nationalist parties since the creation of the state of Iraq and subsequently the Kurdish political entity in northern Iraq as outlined in this study, it is impossible to underestimate the historic significance of this rapprochement between the KRG and Turkey's AKP government. This sea change signals nothing less than, at least in relation to the Kurdistan Region, the AKP overcoming the 'Sèvres Syndrome' that has determined Turkish identity and foreign policy ever since the founding of the Republic. Today, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq is no longer seen by the decision makers in the AKP as pursuing pan-Kurdish separatism or as an external agent inciting ethnic divisions among Turkey's Kurdish population but as a strategic partner in the region with largely complimentary interests and policies. This paradigm shift in perceptions becomes even more momentous given the relatively short time frame in which it evolved, from utter political boycott in 2007, when PM Erdoğan announced, 'I met with the Iraqi President and Prime Minister. I won't meet with any tribal leader ... I won't meet with Barzani,'⁹⁰⁹ to declaring during Barzani's Ankara visit less than three years later:

We [Erdoğan and Barzani] will build together a very solid bridge in bilateral relations between Iraq and Turkey and between the Kurdistan Region and Turkey especially. We will be in touch. We will also engage in economic cooperation. We will act together on energy and infrastructure.⁹¹⁰

The climactic improvement of relations is all the more astonishing since on the one issue that has determined Turkey's perception of and interaction with the Iraqi Kurdish political parties, their ambivalent relations with the PKK and its presence on Iraqi Kurdish territory, very little actual progress beyond symbolic gestures was made. True, the KRG initiated policies that restricted the freedom of movement of PKK political representatives in Iraqi Kurdistan and made it more difficult for journalists to reach the PKK camps in the Qandil mountains.⁹¹¹ By the same token, Iraq, which is in this case effectively the KRG since the influence of the central Iraqi government at the Iraqi-Turkish border is practically nil, Turkey, and the U.S. have established a political dialogue and operational infrastructure to combat the PKK on Iraqi territory, yet five years after this

mechanism has been set up its effectiveness remains to be seen. The fact is that the PKK is still entrenched in its stronghold in the Qandil mountains, and the KRG has not done significantly more to change this fact since 2008 than before the KRG-AKP rapprochement. Yet if the thawing of relations and paradigm shift in Turkey's perception of its Iraqi Kurdish neighbours cannot be explained by the very issue that dominated them for three decades, what other factors brought about this dramatic sea change?

I would argue that an overriding *explanandum* is the changed self-perception of Turkey, both at the political level but also in the public discourse, together with a growth in self-confidence since the AKP came to power. Today's Turkey is a regional, geo-strategic and economic powerhouse, a member of the G20, who actively shapes politics in the Middle East and beyond, whose Turkish Airlines have become a major carrier transporting Turkish investors to every part of the globe,⁹¹² and who, at least during the early stages of the 'Arab Spring', was hailed by Western and Turkish media alike as a model to be emulated by the democratic regimes hoped to gain power in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, and Yemen.⁹¹³ The AKP brand offered to optimists a promising version of how Islam, capitalism, traditional values, and democratic freedoms can be successfully merged; the fact that this optimism has waned both in Turkey and the countries in the region who were supposed to emulate it does not negate the fact that for a while Turkey was seen as a regional model, which had a profound effect on Turkish identity, self-perception and foreign policy. An equally cogent *explanandum* is the fact that the AKP, while not being the first Turkish government to recognise that its 'Kurdish Question' cannot be solved by military means, was the first government not only willing to go where no other Turkish mainstream party had gone before but also, due to its own eternal strife with the Turkish military, the Kemalist 'Deep State', and the Turkish judiciary, was able to outplay those forces traditionally opposed to any democratic reforms or engagement with Turkey's explicitly Kurdish parties, interest groups, and political movements. In so far the AKP can be seen as fundamental in bringing both these changes about, thus altering Turkish society perhaps more radically than any political party since the days of Atatürk.

As far as relations between the AKP and the KRG are directly concerned, I would argue that the AKP recognised the wisdom in the old colonialist adage

that the flag, i.e. politics, follows trade. What is remarkable is that despite the political embargo Ankara had imposed on the KRG from 2003 until 2008, economic relations between both trade partners kept booming:

By early 2007, the volume of bilateral trade between Turkey and northern Iraq had grown to an estimated \$5 billion a year. In addition, Turkish contractors had secured an estimated \$2 billion worth of construction contracts, including large infrastructure projects such as airports, highways, universities, housing complexes and even the new KDP headquarters. By early 2007 there were estimated to be 1,200 Turkish companies in northern Iraq, creating 14,000 jobs for Turkish citizens in northern Iraq and employment for several hundred thousand more back in Turkey. The KAR even received around 10 percent of its electricity from Turkey. Much of the trade was conducted between Iraqi and Turkish Kurds. Several Iraqi Kurds, including relatives of KDP President Massoud Barzani, had also established companies inside Turkey which exported food and consumer goods to northern Iraq. However, the Turkish contractors in northern Iraq also included several businessmen who were known to have strong Turkish ultranationalist sympathies or links to the AKP government.⁹¹⁴

Those Kurdish investors from Turkey who constituted a major power base of the AKP increasingly exerted pressure on their government to assist them in making gains in this important foreign market rather than continually posing obstacles to the inroads Turkish businesspeople made.⁹¹⁵ This factor gained even greater significance with the Kurdistan Region transforming from an importer to a major supplier of energy to Turkey.⁹¹⁶ Today, there can be no doubt that Turkey effectively dominates the Iraqi Kurdish market:

Economic relations between Turkey and the Kurdistan Region are excellent, and both sides are enjoying substantial benefits from our close economic cooperation. Today, about 20,000 Turkish citizens are permanently living and doing business here. Half of all foreign companies registered in the Kurdistan Region are Turkish. Five major Turkish banks are operating here, 20 Turkish schools and institutions of higher education are educating the future generation of Turkish citizens living here and of the local population, 600 Turkish construction companies are involved in large-scale infrastructure projects, and Turkish Airlines and other private Turkish carriers operate daily flights between several major Turkish airports and Erbil and Sulimaniyah, which has boosted tourism and contributed to easing business relations. Overall, Turkey has a trade volume with Iraq of about \$12 billion last year, of which 70 percent is with the Kurdistan Region.⁹¹⁷

As a matter of fact, to put this in perspective, for two consecutive years in 2011 and 2012 Iraq was Turkey's second biggest export market after the EU,⁹¹⁸ which, if 70 percent and counting of this trade is accounted for by the Kurdistan Region, underscores the paramount importance bilateral trade has for both polities and consequently for their relations. I would even go so far to argue that the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and Turkey's southeast Anatolia by now constitutes one of the economically most integrated areas in the Middle East.

This alignment of economic interests has been accompanied by an increasing consonance of strategic interests in the region, in particular in Syria, where both the KRG and the AKP government from early on have taken an unambiguous stance against the Assad regime, and radical Islamist insurgencies alike, and although Massoud Barzani was forced to strike a temporary strategic understanding in Erbil in July 2012 between the KDP-backed *Kurdish National Council* (KNC) and the PYD branch of the PKK, yet both leaders, Barzani and Erdoğan, would doubtlessly prefer a KDP-controlled alternative to the current PYD dominance among Syria's armed Kurdish opposition.⁹¹⁹ In that case then, the U.S. and Turkey, the latter in particular, may try to avail themselves of Barzani's pan-Kurdish appeal to reduce the PYD's influence within the KSC to a sufferable limit and, through the Iraqi Kurdish KDP and its Syrian Kurdish allies, at least have a say in the political future of Syria's Kurds.

Ironically, southeastern Anatolia became the very arena where the AKP has already clearly tried, and arguably succeeded in capitalizing on and exploiting for its own ends the image of Iraqi Kurdistan as a beacon of hope for wider Kurdish political and cultural aspirations and of its leader Massoud Barzani as a Kurdish leader the AKP not only can work with but also as an alternative to Abdullah Öcalan's radicalism. Under pressure by the Gezi Park Protests widening to a wave of mass civil society protests engulfing Turkey's major cities,⁹²⁰ PM Erdoğan landed perhaps his as yet greatest PR-coup by meeting with President Barzani in Diyarbakir, the 'spiritual center' of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey, on 18 November 2013. There Erdoğan not only broke the taboo of referring for the first time in a public address to 'Kurdistan' as a territorial concept and listened to Barzani addressing the crowds in Kurdish, both statesmen also enjoyed the performance of Shivan Perwer, another legendary

figurehead of Kurdish ethnic identity, who after 37 years in exile had returned with Barzani to his homeland. Barzani, in turn, concluded his speech with shouting in Turkish, “Long live Turk-Kurd brotherhood, long live freedom, long live peace,”.⁹²¹ At this stage it is not clear whether both leaders have formed a genuine, albeit temporary partnership designed to ensure their mutual political survival and intend to form a united front of conservative parties against the PKK and the BDP,⁹²² who threatens to cost Erdoğan dearly in upcoming 2014 elections, or whether it is just another attempt at both sides manipulating each other. What I would argue is, is that Barzani lending the struggling Erdoğan a helping hand in the very ‘spiritual capital’ of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey for decades dominated by the PKK and BDP (and its predecessors) was a deliberate snub of both movements, and that Barzani increasingly intends to extend his appeal as the leader of the freest political entity in Kurdish history and the promise of self-determination – however defined – the Iraqi Kurdish experiment holds for so many Kurds beyond the borders of the Kurdistan Region. Ultimately, both sides appear to have entered a true marriage of mutual conveniences then: the AKP instrumentalises Barzani and Iraqi Kurdistan’s pan-Kurdish appeal and significance in the Kurdish ethno-nationalist discourse in Turkey and beyond, and by doing so not only keeps the PKK and BDP at bay but also tries to influence this discourse in line with its interests, and Barzani enjoys and tries to expand on his role of pan-Kurdish figurehead by the grace of the AKP.⁹²³

What is also remarkable about this marriage of mutual conveniences is that both sides have reached this point by bracketing the very issue that had dominated their relations for the past three decades, the PKK’s status in Iraqi Kurdistan,⁹²⁴ and by doing so have reached on the long run a mutual understanding on how to jointly deal with this issue. To this extent then, the KRG-AKP rapprochement at the end of the 2000s, as I have expanded elsewhere,⁹²⁵ can be understood as a textbook case of de-securitization. Securitization theory,⁹²⁶ in a nutshell, holds that very few issues in the social world are per se threats or security issues, but that what we come to perceive as threats or security issues is contextual, contingent, and part of a social process and discourse. Not unlike ethnic identity as a social category, a security issue then is constructed through perceptions and performances, first and

foremost by labeling it a security issue or a threat in the political discourse through a speech act:

With the help of language theory, we can regard “security” as a *speech act*. In this usage, security is not of interest as a sign that refers to something more real; the utterance *itself* is the act. By saying security something is done (as in betting, giving a promise, naming a ship). By uttering “security”, a state representative moves a particular development into a specific area, and thereby claims a special right to use whatever means are necessary to block it.⁹²⁷

Proponents of securitization theory therefore argue that ‘issues can become security issues by virtue of their presentation and acceptance as such, rather than because of any innate threatening qualities per se’.⁹²⁸ Securitization is then the ‘shifting [of] an issue out of the realm of “normal” political debate into the realm of emergency politics by presenting it as an existential threat’,⁹²⁹ and, if the social agent who does the securitizing of the relevant issue is seen by the public as someone who speaks with authority, such as the military, scholars, or the government, the public is likely to accept this transformation from non-security to security issue and the measures introduced to meet this existential threat as justified. In other words, the process of securitization not only covers the speech act of labelling something a security issue but the entire social process and discourse that comes with and results from it. De-securitization then is the reverse of the process of securitization, as it describes the social discourse in which an issue is shifted back from ‘the realm of securitization and emergency politics ... into the realm of “normal” or technical political debate’.⁹³⁰

In our case, for decades since the founding of the Turkish Republic, the Turkish politico-military establishment has perceived and portrayed the possible emergence of a Kurdish autonomous political entity, let alone an independent state, in a neighbouring country as an existential threat to the territorial and political integrity of the Turkish *watan*, mostly because it was feared that such a polity would first fuel the desire for separatism among Turkey’s Kurdish minority and then lend political and perhaps even military support to their struggle for national self-determination. Yet, as we have seen in the case study, the desire for national self-determination among Turkey’s Kurds and the insurgency of the PKK for those ends predate the emergence of an autonomous Kurdish polity at Turkey’s borders, and in the two decades since the Kurdistan Region de facto

became autonomous, one would be hard pressed to argue that the existence of such a polity per se has increased the risk to the territorial integrity of Turkey – on the contrary, while before 1991 northern Iraq was as notorious a source of unrest, lawlessness, and political anarchy as they come, once the KRG established its control there, Turkey at least has an interlocutor to address with its security concerns, hold accountable, and can, as has been demonstrated, cooperate with on several issues .

By the same token, Turkey defined its relations with the KRG until 2008 primarily through a security lens, that is what determined relations between Erbil and Ankara was almost exclusively the presence of the PKK on Iraqi Kurdish territory and how to deal with it. Here, again, while the Turkish politico-military establishment could have chosen to focus on other, non-threatening issues such as economic cooperation – as it ultimately did – for over fifteen years it chose not to, determined to perceive the KRG exclusively within the realm of a security issue. What the AKP accomplished then after 2008 by to some extent bracketing the PKK issue from its relations with the KRG and focusing instead on areas where cooperation was easily achievable and mutually beneficial, is shifting the issue at hand – relations with the KRG – from the realm of securitization or emergency politics to a level of a “normal”, more technical, and economically as well as politically lucrative discourse. In other words, it desecuritized Turkey’s relations with Iraqi Kurdistan. What is even more remarkable than this respectable feat in itself is the dynamic that developed from it. For the issue of relations with the KRG not only got desecuritized, by bracketing the most controversial aspect – the PKK presence on Iraqi Kurdish territory – by first instead focusing on areas of mutual interest such as trade relations and strategic cooperation in Syria, both sides (the AKP and KRG) paved the ground for political cooperation on the very issue Turkey had always feared in the context of an autonomous Kurdish political entity at its borders: how such an entity would affect its own Kurdish population and their desire for national self-determination. If the past three years are anything to go by, the answer must turn out positively and most reassuringly for the Turkish politico-military establishment since KRG leaders not only proved willing to assist the AKP in shaping the Kurdish ethno-nationalist discourse in Turkey in a direction in line with AKP thinking, but both sides, the KRG and AKP leadership, even

discovered that their strategic interests via the Kurdish ethno-nationalist discourse in Turkey corresponded, offering ample room for collaboration in imprinting their partnership on this identity discourse. The AKP leadership believes that through Massoud Barzani, who is politically and economically dependent on Turkey in Iraqi Kurdistan, they can influence the Kurdish ethno-nationalist discourse at home. Both sides clearly benefit from holding up Barzani as a moderate and conservative alternative to the PKK's radicalism as well as to the BDP with whom the AKP has to compete for votes in southeast Anatolia, and both sides intend through their partnership to shape Kurdish ethnic identity in Turkey as sympathetic to the AKP. In sum, I would say, using Lord Ismay's famous maxim for NATO as an allegory, the purpose of their partnership in the ethnic discourse among Turkey's Kurds is to keep Barzani in, the BDP down, and the PKK out.

As in the theoretical section, I argue here that instead of a causal sequence between identities and interests, in which either interests determine one's identity – as neo-realists would have it – or, as systemic constructivists argue, for interests to be a function of an agent's identity, identities and interests should be conceptualised as a complex matrix with no identifiable sequence or hierarchy. I, for one, in the current ethnicised discourse in southeast Anatolia, would be hard pressed to determine where precisely Massoud Barzani's strategic interests to exert his influence beyond Iraqi Kurdistan and to collaborate with the AKP end, and his self-perception as a (pan-)Kurdish leader with wider nationalist appeal who feels an evolving degree of communality and solidarity with Kurds across the border begins. The complex dynamics of this situational, shifting, and ambiguous matrix is one aspect of Iraqi Kurdish identity at the outset of the 21st century – or at least, given the limitations of this study, of the self-perception of Iraqi Kurdish leaders at this watershed moment in Kurdish history.

The PKK and the Iraqi Kurdish ethno-nationalist parties in the 2000s

Relations between the Iraqi Kurdish ethno-nationalist parties and the PKK in the early 2000s were as much defined by complex ambiguities and ambivalences as they had been in the 1990s. While on the one hand rumours were spreading that while on the run in Rome Abdullah Öcalan might be offered asylum by the PUK in Iraqi Kurdistan,⁹³¹ less than two years later PUK and PKK were fighting again. The reasons for this round of hostilities between September and December 2000 remain opaque. 'The reason never was clear – the PKK claimed Talabani's PUK party attacked first, the PUK accused the PKK of breaking an agreement to stay in its mountain redoubts – but it probably had a lot to do with maintaining group unity and giving PKK fighters some sort of armed focus,' Marcus speculates.⁹³² Gunter as well as Brauns & Kiechle,⁹³³ on the other hand, argue that the PUK had been pressured by Turkey into attacking the PKK. The Turkish military certainly showed no willingness to agree to the unilateral ceasefire the PKK had declared in September 1999; on the contrary, it seemed as though after the capture of Öcalan the Turkish military-politico establishment was determined to defeat the PKK once and for all – illustrated by a series of cross-border incursions throughout 1999, in which the Turkish military was assisted by the KDP.⁹³⁴ In line with its ceasefire of September 1999 the PKK formally asked the KDP to cease hostilities in November 1999, and Cemil Bayık pledged that 'despite the attacks launched by the KDP, the PKK had no intention of responding';⁹³⁵ yet the KDP chose to ignore the PKK overtures for peace. Interestingly, this episode of KDP-PKK fighting is not mentioned in the literature; on the contrary, Gunter portrays the PUK-PKK fighting of September and December 2000 as an isolated incident, which the KDP refused to join, and in which the PUK tried to remove the PKK from the Qandil mountains, where they had established themselves in 1998, in order to open the area for a direct trade route with Turkey.⁹³⁶ To me it seems that after dragging its feet for two years after the Washington Agreement, the PUK had finally been persuaded by Turkey through incentives and disincentives to join its operations to kill off the PKK;⁹³⁷ why the KDP sided with Turkey in 1999, yet refused to join the Turkish-PUK alliance in its fight against the PKK in September and December 2000 remains a mystery, though.

While this episode fits the already established historic pattern of rapidly shifting temporary alliances and antagonisms between the Iraqi Kurdish nationalist parties and the PKK, what profoundly altered the dynamics of their relations, as it did for the entire Middle East, was the Iraq War. It had not been lost on the PKK that, unlike in 1991, the U.S. invaded Iraq in March 2003 to stay as an occupying force. Doubtlessly, it had also noted with a sigh of relief that Turkey had taken itself out of the picture with its parliament's refusal to grant U.S. forces the opening of a second, northern front. Finally, the PKK, like the rest of the world, must have conjectured that after the initial quick victory, the U.S. was about to fundamentally re-shape the political order of the Middle East and would not refrain, if necessary, from toppling one hostile regime after the other with Syria and Iran being the most likely next candidates on the list, which would leave the PKK with nowhere to go. With the U.S. the dominant power in the Middle East in the spring of 2003, it would not seem far-fetched to venture the guess that the PKK would have been eager to reach some kind of accommodation with the new hegemon that would allow it at least to remain in Qandil. It is in this context that the proverbial sphinx of Kurdish ethno-nationalist movements, PJAK, comes into play, for which no analyst is able to reach a well-grounded and conclusive explanation.

On the face of things PJAK is a sister-organisation of the PKK operating under the KCK umbrella and within the concept of democratic confederalism to advance, by military means if forced to, Kurdish cultural and civil rights within a confederal Iran. That is at least how today's PKK and PJAK want it understood, with the PKK admitting that they and PJAK share logistics, facilities, supplies, and men in their mutually operated bases in the Qandil mountains at the Iraqi-Turkish-Iranian border, yet are to be seen as separate but equal,⁹³⁸ similar to the PKK's sister organisation PYD in Syria. PJAK asserts its aims are to 'unite the Kurdish and Iranian opposition, to change the oppressive Islamic regime in Iran and to establish a free democratic confederal system for the Kurds and the Iranian peoples.'⁹³⁹ For the Turkish politico-military establishment PKK and PJAK are essentially the same, two sides of the same coin,⁹⁴⁰ which, based on the principle the enemy of my enemy is my friend, has led to increased Iranian-Turkish anti-terror cooperation, despite the Iranian Regime's past support of the PKK.⁹⁴¹ At the same time, the blogosphere and Iranian media are

brimming over with allegations that the U.S. has used PJAK as a proxy to destabilize Iran, a conspiracy theory also detailed in more respectable publications,⁹⁴² and, as could be expected, by the peerless Seymour Hersh.⁹⁴³ However, as is the nature of the beast with covert operations, all claims are hardly ever sufficiently substantiated and often amount to not much more than, for example, a local security official in the border area in 2007, when asked whether the CIA or U.S. Special Forces were covertly training PJAK fighters, answering with a smile, 'I'm allowed to say no, but I'm not allowed to say yes.'⁹⁴⁴

One angle none of these sources mention and that is also absent from the sparse scholarly literature on PJAK is what I came across in my field research. Two prominent PKK dissidents, Osman Öcalan and Nizamettin Taş, independently of each other, claim that when PJAK was founded in 2003 it was their brain-child with the explicit agenda of gradually transforming the PKK into PJAK and winning U.S. support for continuing a peaceful political dialogue with Turkey, while simultaneously using PKK fighters to destabilize the Iranian regime for the Bush administration.⁹⁴⁵ In that they intended to copy the *Mojahedin-e-Khalq* (MEK, or People's Mujahideen of Iran), a dissident group cum micro insurgency Saddam Hussein had hosted at Camp Ashraf near Baghdad, and for whom more substantial evidence exists that the U.S. at least toyed with the idea of using them as proxies against the regime in Tehran in their post-2003 hubris.⁹⁴⁶ Unlike what the official PKK party line asserts, that PJAK is an expression of democratic confederalism and the regional branch of the KCK, Öcalan and Taş – who fell out with each other while still in the PKK and again after their PWD alternative project failed – claim that during the chaotic days before 2003/4 when the PKK tried to formulate a coherent strategy and ideology, PJAK was conceived as a means to continue the political dialogue with Turkey under tacit U.S. backing, while, quid pro quo, providing PKK fighters for the Bush administration's clandestine war against Iran. In other words, they intended for the PKK to become PJAK, and only when they had been forced out of the PKK in August 2004 and driven to pursue their third way project with the PWD, PJAK had been appropriated by the PKK leadership and integrated into its democratic confederalism strategy.⁹⁴⁷ Asked whether this

initiative bore any fruits, whether they managed to reach out to American officials to get support for PJAK, Nizamettin Taş remembers:

N. T.: In the second half of 2003 and the first half of 2004 we met with many Americans in Mosul, in Baghdad, here in Hewler for talks. We asked them for money, for supplies, and weapons to fight in Iran.

Q.: Who were these Americans you met?

N. T. They were military commanders and intelligence officers working here in Iraq.

Q.: Do you remember what organization or institutions they worked for? What their functions in Iraq were, what their ranks were?

N. T.: No, I don't remember [those details], but they were high-ranking American military intelligence. We had about ten meetings with them, and we had the Americans agreeing to our proposal ... But in these days all strategic decisions had to be approved by [Abdullah Öcalan], and he said no to our meetings.

Q: So you are saying that in these talks you were close to reaching an agreement with the Americans you met to supply you with weapons to fight in Iran, but that nothing came of it because Öcalan forbade it?

N. T. Yes, the Americans agreed to supply PJAK, they wanted us to work with them, but Öcalan disagreed with it ... That's why we left the PKK.

Q.: Why did Öcalan disagree with this initiative? Would it not have been good for the PKK to receive American support?

N. T. It was not Öcalan speaking. He was controlled by Ergenekon. It was not him making decisions, it was Ergenekon.⁹⁴⁸

The scope of this study does not allow me to pursue this angle further and I do not advocate any specific theories or *explananda* on PJAK, but, if Taş' account is credible, it would explain the sporadic meetings between U.S. officials and PKK leaders so many sources report of, why it took the U.S. until 2009 when the Obama administration came in, to designate PJAK a terrorist organisation,⁹⁴⁹ and why, in the period of 2003 until 2007, during which Ankara had fallen out of Washington's graces, all remained quiet on the KDP/PUK-PKK front: the two Iraqi Kurdish nationalist parties may have waited to see what their major external backer, the U.S., had in plan for PKK/PJAK.

By the same token is it conceivable that during this period of insecurity from 2003 until 2008, when relations between Ankara and Erbil improved, and while the Iraqi Kurdish nationalist parties were negotiating in Baghdad over the scope, contours, and boundaries of their political entity within a federal Iraq, they preferred to keep the PKK as an ace up their sleeves, as a form of leverage that

could be employed if Turkey were to oppose the political structure of the new Iraq that turned out distinctly in the KRG's favour. Until 2008, when Turkey *nolens volens* came to terms with the enhanced status of the Kurdistan Region, KDP and PUK knew that any increase in Iraqi Kurdish autonomy was anathema for the Turkish politico-military establishment that would see it as a first step towards future independence – these Turkish fears applied in particular to the inclusion of oil-rich Kirkuk into the Kurdistan Region, which it was presumed, would provide Erbil with the economic muscle to declare independence in the future.⁹⁵⁰ The Iraqi Kurdish nationalist parties had very little to counter this perception. No matter how often their leaders went on the record that they did not intend to pursue a unilateral declaration of independence and were not preparing for it, the Turkish politico-military establishment would not abandon the almost pathological impression – dating back, as has been shown, to the post-World War One era – that its Kurdish minority together with Kurds abroad were conspiring with external actors, in this case the U.S., to divide the Turkish *watan*. If Turkish decision makers could not be convinced of the Iraqi Kurds' non-secessionist intentions, KDP and PUK logic might have dictated, Ankara would have to be offered something else to appreciate their willingness to cooperate with Turkey in a re-structured Iraq, and to acquiesce into the KRG gaining political and territorial ground in this as yet to be constructed polity. Of the little leverage KDP and PUK had on Turkey, the PKK card would have been the strongest, either played by offering their good offices in finding a political solution to the conflict or by collaborating in a final military assault on the PKK, in exchange for Turkey not posing an insurmountable obstacle in the pro-Kurdish political reconstitution of Iraq.⁹⁵¹ Naturally, most KRG officials reject any notions that the Iraqi Kurdish nationalist parties would have considered the PKK presence on their territory a leverage to be used against Turkey when the situation called for it. The paraphrased official post-2005 KRG line on the PKK is:

The PKK is an issue external to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. It is a domestic issue for the Turkish state, and therefore any solution to it has to be found in Turkey, and primarily by Turkey. We believe and advocate for this position to be a peaceful, political dialogue, and pledge to do anything in our power to assist such a dialogue, but there is nothing we can do against the PKK in the mountains at our border with Turkey.⁹⁵²

When reminded that since the KRG claims to be in quasi-sovereign control of its territory it has an obligation to neighbouring states to prevent attacks from insurgencies from its territory on neighbouring countries, the usual paraphrased response is either, 'we are part of the federal state of Iraq and share this responsibility with the Iraqi state' – an astonishing attempt at having it both ways, since the KRG would not tolerate Iraqi troops policing its border with Turkey – or,

we fought the PKK in the 1990s, suffered many casualties in these wars, but failed to dislodge them – as did the Turkish military on dozens of occasions. How are we to succeed in a task, in which the mighty Turkish military failed? ... There is no military solution to the PKK's presence in the mountains, only a political one. But this political solution cannot come from us, it has to come from Turkey, we can only assist in it.⁹⁵³

One high-ranking official representing the KRG abroad with whom I talked, while denying that the KRG has used the PKK as leverage on Turkey in the past, at least considered the potential for the PKK presence to be used as a leverage in future KRG-Turkish negotiations:

As a government, and [Turkey] too, any two parties, they would leverage anything they have, they would be dumb not to ... I'm not saying that we use it as a leverage, ... on all these issues such as the status of Kirkuk there was no dialogue with Turkey [between 2003 and 2008], Turkey refused to engage with us or the Iraqi government, but now that relations [with Turkey] are good ... I think we should leverage everything, that's would you do as a government negotiating with other governments.⁹⁵⁴

Naturally, the Turkish government disagrees with the official KRG line on the PKK presence on its territory:

Even if we accept that the KRG cannot prevent the PKK from carrying out attacks on Turkey from Iraqi territory – to which the Iraqi state, of which the Kurdistan Region of Iraq is a part, would be obligated by international law – there are many ways the KRG could limit the PKK's freedom to operate on Iraqi territory. My government has very openly and repeatedly stated that we think the KRG has not done enough in this regard, but we appreciate that recently they have been putting means into place that limit the PKK's capabilities.⁹⁵⁵

Notwithstanding the means the KRG put in place in 2011 to limit the PKK's freedom to operate on its territory, such as curtailing access for journalists to

Qandil – which prevented me from conducting interviews there – I find it hard to believe that a joint military operation of Turkey, the U.S., and the KRG after 2008, when these parties had mended their differences, would not be able to dislodge the PKK from its mountain strongholds. ‘The question is not whether the KRG can do this together with Turkey and the U.S., but whether they want to do it. The KRG lacks the political will to enter such an alliance to fight the PKK, it is not in their interest,’ Denise Natali, an authority on Iraqi Kurdistan who lived there for many years, agrees.⁹⁵⁶ Several Iraqi Kurdish journalists I talked to in Erbil and Sulimaniyah share this view that if there had been the political will of the KRG to join an alliance with Turkey and the U.S. to expel the PKK from its territory, they could have accomplished it, but that the KRG has no interest in doing so. Having established that, opinions differ on why the KRG lacks the political will to confront the PKK as part of an international alliance. Some say that Iraqi Kurdish and Kurdish opinion worldwide would not tolerate KRG *peshmerga* fighting fellow Kurds on Turkey’s behest, while others argue that such a war would claim too many lives, and yet others again agree with the position that it is politically more expedient for the KRG to have a weakened PKK on its territory, where it can be controlled and potentially used in a trade-off with Turkey.⁹⁵⁷

I would argue that, when reasoning for using the PKK as leverage in future negotiations with Turkey, the above quoted KRG official got the sequence of strategic thinking wrong. During the period when Turkey boycotted the KRG from 2003 until 2008 it would make sense to keep the PKK card up one’s sleeve, not as leverage – since hardly any contacts took place between both parties – but to use as an asset in case Turkey’s boycott would transform into outright obstruction. Today, since Turkey-KRG relations are excellent, trade is booming, and both governments cooperate on a host of economic and strategic issues, from joint energy projects to supporting the same clients in the Syrian Civil War, exerting leverage with the PKK would be counterproductive. What is more, in the current political discourse, with the KRG trying to portray itself globally in costly media and lobbying campaigns as an island of peace and prosperity open for business and investment, the PKK is no longer an asset but a disturbing factor. This became apparent when I interviewed the KRG Minister of Trade, Sinan Abdulkhalq Ahmed Chalabi, and reminded him that we had met

the previous year with a student delegation from the University of Exeter, of which a good number were Kurds from Turkey. The minister was in a foul mood since on a screen behind us CNN was broadcasting images into the world of Turkish fighter jets bombing PKK positions on Iraqi Kurdish territory while he was preparing to host the Erbil International Trade Fair, the biggest economic event the Kurdistan Region had staged in its history. 'Yes, I remember, you were here with these militants,' the minister grumbled. 'They kept saying, "we are from Northern Kurdistan." Why use the same language as these militants?', he said and pointed at the screen. 'Why not say, we are Kurds from Turkey?'⁹⁵⁸ Intriguingly, here we had a minister from the freest political entity in Kurdish history using the same semantic line of argument the Turkish state had employed for decades, objecting to Kurds using the word Kurdistan. He then kept taking issue with the 'reckless militancy' of the PKK jeopardising everything the Kurds in Iraq had accomplished, compromising relations with Turkey, driving away business and foreign investors, and discrediting the Kurdistan Region as an economic hub for the region.⁹⁵⁹ Today, as in October 2011 when this interview was conducted, the strategic thinking of KRG decision makers is primarily investment-oriented, and the PKK is seen as bad for business;⁹⁶⁰ in this world view the PKK's presence in Iraqi Kurdistan is certainly not seen as an ace up their sleeves but, at the very least, a disruptive element, or, in the language these decision makers understand best, a disturbance term in Arbitrage Pricing Theory used to calculate the rate of return of the economic asset the Kurdistan Region constitutes.

Again, though, I believe the relations between the Iraqi Kurdish nationalist parties and the PKK in post-2008 Iraqi Kurdistan cannot be explicated by instrumentalist *explananda* alone, that is by being reduced to material interests. If that were the case, since the PKK is a disruptive element to the peace and progress of the Kurdistan Region, the KRG would join forces with Turkey to rid themselves once and for all from them. That they have not taken military action against them since 2000 – given the incessant fighting of the 1980s and 1990s, this decade of peace appears almost an eternity – I believe, is a function of the evolving identity of Iraqi Kurdistan that is currently in a process of rapid transformation, and therefore is one facet to the variations of Kurdish identity of

the Iraqi Kurdish nationalist parties. Aliza Marcus concludes her study on the PKK with the observation:

"Turkey's Kurds used to face Istanbul," remarked ... Tayfun Mater, a former activist in the militant Turkish left, and an often prescient commentator. He meant that many Kurds, whether or not they backed the PKK, once believed the answer to the Kurdish problem lay in the multicultural streets of Istanbul, that Kurds and Turks may jointly come up with a mutually agreeable solution. "But these days, they face Iraq," he said.⁹⁶¹

A similar point is made by Akkaya & Jongerden, representative of many accounts on the post-2005 Kurdistan Region, that 'Iraqi Kurdistan ... as an autonomous, self-ruling territory ... turned out to be a center of attraction for many Kurds'.⁹⁶² Indeed, it was this image of hope for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq to become a champion of Kurdish civil rights in the wider Middle East that I took from my 2005 travels through southeastern Turkey and my talks with Kurdish friends from Turkey and Iran in Vienna that lead me to write my 2007 novel and induced me to study the relations between the PKK and the Iraqi Kurdish nationalist parties. In 2010, I attended a presentation of the KRG Representative to the UK, Bayam Abdul Rahman at SOAS in London, where she was beseeched by the mostly Kurdish audience for the KRG to advocate on this group's behalf with the Iranian government, to be more outspoken on the dragging 'Kurdish Initiative' with Ankara, to demand from Damascus to grant Syrian Kurds citizenship, to plea with the Danish government to stop its indictment against ROJ-TV, etc.⁹⁶³ – demands very often beyond the KRG's level of influence with regional or European governments, and yet, still in 2010, despite critical voices starting to question the KRG's potential to act as a saviour for Kurds throughout the region,⁹⁶⁴ the narrative of hope that the freest political entity in Kurdish history would advocate on the behalf of Kurds everywhere has persisted among many. Ever since the days of Mulla Mustafa, while strategically pursuing an Iraqi Kurds-first policy, Iraqi Kurdish leaders have basked in the glory of being seen as spiritual figureheads of the Kurdish struggle for self-determination in all parts of what is called Kurdistan, yet today, when this allure has actually become part of the perception of the Kurdistan Region by other Kurds and has aroused very real demands and expectations, this role seems to often ask too much of Iraqi Kurdish leaders. 'There are so

many expectations of our leadership by Kurds everywhere,' Abdul Rahman admitted later.

Expectations we cannot always live up to ... we will always be sympathetic to Kurds struggling for human or cultural rights everywhere in the region and here in Europe and will never tire to advocate on their behalf but first and foremost we are committed to the well being of [our] people in Iraqi Kurdistan ... [which] sometimes puts limitations on what we can do.⁹⁶⁵

These limitations become particularly acute when Iraqi Kurdish evolving identity as the freest political entity in Kurdish history, and the wider Kurdish expectations that come with that perception, clash with the strategic interests of the KRG to maintain Turkey's goodwill towards the Kurdistan Region. The resulting complex matrix of identities and interests that often mirrors a tightrope walk or 'delicate balance' the KRG is compelled to strike, as Michael Gunter has observed.⁹⁶⁶ In other words, identity does matter in PKK-KDP/PUK relations in the 2000s but not in the simplistic notion the ethnic alliance model suggests of the Iraqi Kurdish nationalist parties forming an alliance with the PKK against Turkey – which has been soundly disproven with this study. Instead these relations operate in a more complex matrix of shifting interests and evolving identities that can explain why the KRG, despite material interests suggesting it, cannot afford to act militarily against the PKK on Turkey's behest: to do so would run counter to the configurations of the complex matrix of Iraqi Kurdish identities and interests in the 2000s, and as such the refusal of the KRG to engage the PKK militarily is to be seen as part of this matrix in permanent flux.

This tightrope walk of balancing identities and interests that constitute the meaning of Iraqi Kurdish identity in the 2000s/2010s both via Turkey but also Kurdish expectations in the region and diaspora, becomes apparent with the KRG's attempts to assist the 2009 'Kurdish Initiative' of the AKP government with a pan-Kurdish peace conference aimed at facilitating a peaceful solution to the PKK conflict. Just within its first two years in power the AKP government had implemented more far-reaching reforms of Kurdish minority rights than any previous Turkish government – from lifting the state of emergency in the provinces of Southeast Anatolia where it was still enforced to removing restrictions on the use of Kurdish language in public, to permitting limited radio

broadcasting on private channels and tolerating Kurdish language education at private schools.

While those reforms were not new and indeed most were introduced before the AKP took office [by previous governments in order to prepare the ground for accession talks with the EU], it was the AKP that turned them into a coherent reform agenda, had the political will and talent to sell them to an often sceptical public, and allocated the financial and other resources that were needed to implement them ... For the most part, the AKP ... has carefully crafted its reform agenda around the concepts of individual rights and general minority rights rather than Kurdish collective rights as such – a position that also happens to be aligned with the predominant EU approach to such matters.⁹⁶⁷

The AKP's reforming zeal stalled, though, when the PKK ended its unilateral ceasefire in 2004. With military casualties in southeast Anatolia mounting and TAK carrying out terrorist attacks on civilian targets and tourist infrastructure in Istanbul and Turkey's coastal resorts in the summer of 2006,⁹⁶⁸ the government of PM Erdoğan was forced to launch a series of major offensives into Iraqi Kurdistan in late 2007 and early 2008, that, although militarily ineffective, as discussed earlier, brought the U.S. government and the KRG back on Turkey's side. The military impasse, combined with the AKP competing with the DTP for the 'Kurdish vote' and a new, less paranoid foreign policy doctrine that instead of perceiving Turkey's neighbours as an inherent threat sought to engage them in projects of mutual interests, lead to a shift in the public discourse with civil society organisations and business associations – most prominently the *Türkiye Ekonomik ve Sosyal Etüdler Vakfı* (Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation, TESEV) – demanding a reconsideration of the state's approach to Kurdish minority rights and the PKK conflict. Although at first hesitantly, the AKP took up the cue,⁹⁶⁹ and under the leadership of the Minister of the Interior Beşir Atalay started to engage in a far-reaching dialogue with civil society organisations to prepare the ground for extensive political, social, and economic reforms – since July 2009 dubbed the 'Kurdish Initiative' – that were supposed to culminate in a grandiose 'National Unity Initiative' and, a pet project the AKP had pursued since 2007, the drafting of a new constitution embracing the diversity of Turkish society.⁹⁷⁰ Despite such auspicious openings, 'it soon became evident ... that the AK Party had not thought out its Kurdish Initiative very well and then proved rather inept in trying

to implement it'.⁹⁷¹ While 'representatives of Kurdish civil society, Kurdish intellectuals, and leftist political activists expressed frustration about the glacial pace of progress, and the ease with which demands for increased democratic rights had been framed as ethno-nationalist, divisive, or separatist in spirit',⁹⁷² PKK and DTP misused the government's offer of amnesty for a publicity stunt that scared the Turkish public away from considering more far-reaching concessions and eroded popular support for the Kurdish Initiative.⁹⁷³ It is debatable whether the AKP ever sincerely pursued a reformist agenda with the potential of breaking the three decade long stalemate between the Turkish state and the PKK,⁹⁷⁴ and whether the PKK with its various sub-divisions and competing decision-making bodies was ever willing and able to respond to conciliatory gestures and a genuine national dialogue for peace in kind. The fact is that by the end of 2009 the AKP had lost interest in pursuing its Kurdish Initiative any further; the banning of the DTP by the Constitutional Court on 11 December was merely the death blow to an already wasted away momentum.⁹⁷⁵

All throughout 2009, though, Iraqi Kurdish and international media were abuzz with the proposal for a pan-Kurdish peace conference to be held in Erbil and hosted by the KRG, that not only for the first time would bring together all main Kurdish parties to discuss ethno-nationalist conflicts in all four parts of wider Kurdistan but also to accompany the Kurdish Initiative of the AKP government.⁹⁷⁶ Simultaneously, the possibility of Scandinavian countries granting high-ranking PKK leaders asylum was explored,⁹⁷⁷ and allegedly CIA officers even went to Qandil to persuade the PKK to lay down their arms.⁹⁷⁸ There were clear indications that a substantial international effort was under way to find a peaceful solution to the PKK conflict and for confidence building measures between the KRG and the AKP government that appeared to follow the script of a 2007 report by David Phillips, a U.S. scholar held in high regard by policymakers in both Erbil and Ankara, in which he had laid out precisely such a roadmap for peace;⁹⁷⁹ in April 2009 Phillips and the *Atlantic Council of the United States* hosted a first promising workshop between Turkish and Iraqi Kurdish delegates in Washington.⁹⁸⁰ However, as in Turkey, by the end of 2009 the momentum suddenly petered out and the initiative disappeared from the headlines. Theories for the failure of the KRG supporting the AKP's Kurdish

Initiative with a pan-Kurdish summit abound, the most obvious being that the KRG abandoned the idea when the AKP aborted its own Kurdish Initiative, which it was supposed to accompany. Phillips believes that Turkey's whole 'Kurdish Initiative amounts to nothing ... that the AKP never was sincere about it, never put the necessary political capital behind it,' and in addition that 'any PKK presence at such a conference [in Iraqi Kurdistan] would have legitimised the PKK, an impossible scenario for Turkey ... when they realised that they pulled the plug.'⁹⁸¹ Others believe that Turkey, after initial support, backed off from approving the summit at the eleventh hour when it realised the risks that would inevitably come with dozens of Kurdish delegates from all four countries coming together discussing their right to national self-determination. 'I think it was typical of Nechervan Barzani, one of his many over-ambitious projects that was not thought through enough, not discussed with all parties, and lacked political backing and planning,' Abbas Vali evaluated the KRG plans for a pan-Kurdish conference.⁹⁸² One of my Iraqi Kurdish journalist contacts concurred, 'it was a vanity project. And when the Turks saw where this was heading, they shut it down.'⁹⁸³ In retrospect the KRG plan to host a pan-Kurdish conference in Erbil may seem to have lacked planning and did not sufficiently take into account Turkey's reaction to the idea of dozens of Kurdish delegates congregating in Erbil to discuss the future of Kurdish national identity on a national and supra-national level. To me it seems more than just one of the many KRG vanity projects, though. I would argue it looks like a genuine attempt to bring the centripetal forces that constitute the dynamic matrix of shifting interests and evolving identities of the current Iraqi Kurdish political space into harmony, to square the circle, if you want, of strategic interests via Turkey, and taking a more active role as a figurehead in the Kurdish nationalist discourse to satisfy the expectations of so many Kurds abroad. The fact that the KRG-sponsored pan-Kurdish summit ultimately fell through then does not diminish its illustrative value in showing the workings of the matrix of identities and interests that constitutes the contemporary nature of Iraqi Kurdish political space and the nationalist discourse.

Iraqi Kurdistan – a political entity within but at the same time apart from Iraq

Another aspect that shapes this matrix of identities and interests and has a significant impact on the relations between the KRG and Kurdish ethno-nationalist parties in other parts of what is called wider Kurdistan, is the image of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq as a beacon of hope, a source of emulation or a model case for and potential supporter of Kurdish national self-determination beyond Iraq. In order to appreciate the significance of this image and to evaluate its political and ideational potential in a wider ethnicised Kurdish discourse cum struggle for national self-determination, one needs to return to the question about the nature and status of the current Kurdistan Region of Iraq. In other words, one needs to ask what is actually meant by ‘the freest political entity in Kurdish history’, what are its freedoms and constraints, how are those expressed in political practice, which is what I will focus on for the remainder of this chapter.

Strictly speaking, from a perspective of international law only, the case of Iraqi Kurdistan is quite straightforward: it is an autonomous region within the federal Republic of Iraq. In terms of political realities, though, the case is all but clear-cut. For what kind of autonomy or federative status are we talking about here? The degree of autonomy the Kurdistan Region enjoys in Iraq surpasses all comparable international cases of federally structured states, whether the U.S., Russia, Scotland within the UK, the regions of Flanders and Wallonia in Belgium, the Basque region in Spain, Quebec in Canada – none of these international precedents can claim a degree of autonomy and self-governance comparable to the Kurdistan Region.

The Kurdistan Region has its own parliament, and its President Massoud Barzani ... is the commander in chief of the Iraqi Kurdish armed forces ... estimated 127,000 deployable men that, despite this being stipulated in the constitution, have not yet been integrated into the Iraqi Army and likely never will. With a population of 4.7 million and an annual GDP of \$20 billion, the Kurdistan Region, in sheer economic figures, plays in the same league as independent states like Albania, Cambodia, and North Korea. International investors continue to flock there, major European carriers like Lufthansa operate direct flights to its capital Erbil, where five star hotels run by the Kempinski and Hyatt group are mushrooming, and all major EU countries as well as the US, Korea, Japan, and Russia have consulates or

interest sections there. The Kurdistan Region itself entertains representations that are de facto embassies in three dozen countries.⁹⁸⁴

When evaluating the degree of autonomy the Kurdistan Region enjoys in Iraq, including de facto autonomous foreign representation and control of its own armed forces, one cannot help but agree with Brendan O’Leary that ‘Kurdistan [is] freer within Iraq than any member state within the European Union’,⁹⁸⁵ yet the member states of the European Union are still independent, sovereign states. If the degree of de facto independence Erbil enjoys from Baghdad exceeds that of London, Paris or Berlin from Brussels, how is it then justifiable to analyse the status of the Kurdistan Region in legal terms only and to content oneself exclusively with what is written on the non-blushing paper of the constitution?

Such a strictly legalistic approach appears even less justifiable because the KRG since 2005 has spared no effort in unilaterally expanding on its freedoms in defiance of the central government in Baghdad – in particular on the two most controversial issues the constitution failed to adequately address: the status of the so called ‘contested territories’ and the question of who ultimately controls the natural resources and resulting revenues in the autonomous region.

Provisions on oil and gas were often ambiguous and sometimes contradictory. Oil and gas were owned by all the people of Iraq “in regions and governorates” (Article 109), but management of these resources from “current fields” was to be undertaken “with” producing regions and governorates, making this a shared responsibility; so, too, was the distribution of proceeds, in proportion to the population (Article 110).⁹⁸⁶

Given the paramount importance of the state’s vast oil and gas reserves for the economies and prosperity of Iraq proper and the Kurdistan Region, it should come as no surprise that for nine years now Erbil and Baghdad have failed to reach a comprehensive legislative accord on the exploitation, licensing, management, pipeline infrastructure, and distribution of revenues of the wealth of natural resources within the territory controlled by the KRG.⁹⁸⁷ The failure to reach a hydrocarbon law by common consent and the ambiguities in the language of the constitution have led the KRG to repeatedly invoke Article 115 that ‘states the supremacy of regional laws over federal laws,’ and according to their interpretation, ‘can be invoked if no agreement is reached on the

management of oil and gas resources and the distribution of proceeds'.⁹⁸⁸ Thus supposedly legally covered, the KRG has kept going about unilaterally awarding exploitation licenses to international oil companies in circumvention of the central government, most prominently to Exxon Mobil in 2011/2.⁹⁸⁹

The issue of the Kurdistan Region's control over Iraq's natural resources becomes even more explosive in those areas with an assumed Kurdish majority population yet outside the Kurdistan Region's jurisdiction, the so called 'contested territories', the most prominent being the oil rich city of Kirkuk.⁹⁹⁰ As has been mentioned previously, Kirkuk, before Saddam Hussein's Arabization campaign was an ancient, multiethnic city with an inherently fluid identity of Arabs, Turkmen, Jews, and a large Kurdish community.⁹⁹¹ It appears futile to discuss whether Kirkuk in recent history actually had a Kurdish majority population;⁹⁹² what matters here is the paramount symbolic value of the city as the prime urban centre of the Kurdish community in Iraq, and as a means to right the wrongs of the Saddam Hussein era, which led Jalal Talabani to once call it 'our Jerusalem'.⁹⁹³ After the 2003 war Kurds returned to Kirkuk in large numbers, supporting the argument that if today a referendum on the status of Kirkuk were held, the outcome presumably would go in favour of joining the Kurdistan Region.⁹⁹⁴ Such a referendum is precisely what Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution foresaw being held by 31 December 2007,⁹⁹⁵ yet given the incessant ethnic tensions in the city, in 2006 the US *Iraq Study Group* recommended that 'international arbitration is necessary to avert communal violence' and for the referendum to 'be delayed',⁹⁹⁶ an opinion consented to by the UN, who, among several alternatives, advocated either for a special status of Kirkuk or for an afore negotiated compromise to serve as the basis for a future referendum.⁹⁹⁷ Since then, as with a national hydrocarbon law, the process has stalled, all parties to the conflict routinely employ local militias as proxies in the contested territories, leading to charged standoffs between the KRG *peshmerga* and the regular Iraqi army, as had happened in Khanaqin in Diyala province in 2008 and again in 2012,⁹⁹⁸ as well as in Kirkuk during the Kurdish mass protests of 2011.⁹⁹⁹

On most of these issues Turkey, since 2008, has come to either indirectly back the the KRG via Baghdad, directly profited from it, as in the case of energy supplies, or at least rescinded obstacles it had posed previously to thwart Iraqi

Kurdish expansionism – all to the extent that some Turkish commentators lamented that the AKP had sacrificed good relations with Baghdad to support the KRG,¹⁰⁰⁰ and for Bill Park to conclude that, ‘indeed, the KRG now appears as an almost isolated beacon of Turkey’s “zero-problems” approach to its neighbours’.¹⁰⁰¹ With respect to Kirkuk, Ankara, for whom the city and its oil resources’ incorporation into the Kurdistan Region had long constituted a red line, downgraded the support for its local proxy, the Iraqi Turkmen Front (ITF, *Irak Türkmen Cephesi*).¹⁰⁰² In December 2011, the Vice-president of Iraq, Tareq al-Hashimi of the cross-sectarian *Iraqiyaa* party of former PM Iyad Allawi, confronted with politically motivated charges by the Maliki government, fled to the Kurdistan Region, who refused Baghdad’s request to extradite him.¹⁰⁰³ After a diplomatic row as between two sovereign states, Hashimi escaped to Turkey, where he resides today, protected by state security,¹⁰⁰⁴ and where Barzani visited him in April 2012, after, in a joint press conference with PM Erdoğan, condemning PM Maliki’s ‘increasing authoritarianism’ and his ‘stirring ethnic and sectarian’ tensions in Iraq.¹⁰⁰⁵ As of today, the most brazen Kurdistan Region-Turkish joint venture in defiance of nominal Iraqi sovereignty occurred in the following month when PM Erdoğan announced that the two governments, together with Exxon Mobil, would build a new network of pipelines directly linking Turkey to the Kurdistan Region’s rich oil and gas reserves.¹⁰⁰⁶ Since until now most of the Iraqi Kurdish oil and gas exports have reached Turkey through the Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline, outside the KRG’s territorial control, this step indicates a major shift in Ankara’s thinking towards recognition of Erbil’s sovereign control of its natural resources at the expense of the Iraqi central government. Given this degree of diplomatic exposure, and in a most ironic twist of fate, it appears no exaggeration to suggest that the AKP government in Turkey has replaced the U.S. after the American troop withdrawal in 2011 as the main external backer of Iraqi Kurdish autonomy via Baghdad.¹⁰⁰⁷ In December 2012, PM Nechirvan Barzani alluded to as much when he was interviewed on the possibility of Iraqi Kurdish independence:

I believe, yes, we have a very good opportunity. But we have a lot of challenges as well. How we can — I mean an independent Kurdistan — first of all we have to convince at least one country around us. Without convincing them, we cannot do this. Being landlocked we have to have a partner, a regional power to be convinced and internationally, a major power to be convinced to support that.¹⁰⁰⁸

While Barzani might be overly optimistic in hoping that the ‘one country around us’ he is referring to, which is obviously Turkey, would eventually support Iraqi Kurdish independence, the degree of Turkish-KRG collaboration against Baghdad has reached a level that the power who originally conceived of and nurtured their rapprochement, became increasingly concerned. Francis Ricciardone, U.S. ambassador in Turkey warned:

Turkey and Iraq have no choice but to pursue strong ties if they want to optimize the use of Iraq’s resources and export them via Turkey. If Turkey and Iraq fail to optimize their economic ties, the failure could be worse than that. There could be a more violent conflict in Iraq and [the chances of] disintegration of Iraq could be [strengthened].¹⁰⁰⁹

Joost Hiltermann of the ICG was even more explicit when observing, ‘the U.S. government is very pleased with [the] rapprochement between Turkey and KRG, but it will not support an alliance between Ankara and Arbil that would tear Iraq apart.’¹⁰¹⁰ All the more since in America, despite the initial enthusiasm about Iraqi Kurdistan as the ‘sole success story’ of the Iraq War,¹⁰¹¹ in light of increasing authoritarianism, unbridled corruption and human rights violations in the Kurdistan Region,¹⁰¹² the media coverage has become more critical.¹⁰¹³

Nonetheless, the degree of constitutional and extra-constitutional freedoms the Kurdistan Region enjoys leads Denise Natali to still treat it as a de facto or quasi state and James Harvey to call it a ‘de facto independent territory’ despite its federal status within Iraq.¹⁰¹⁴ Likewise, Gareth Stansfield, after initially embracing the federal/regional principle for Iraq,¹⁰¹⁵ appears to have increasing doubts as to whether the Kurdistan Region’s current status is not merely a transitional state towards full independence. After declaring that ‘the Kurdistan Region has matured into an institutionalised reality in territorial, political, and economic terms’, he outlines a scenario that although ‘hypothetical’ is ‘constructed on facts and events that have come to pass in recent years’¹⁰¹⁶ for the Kurdistan Region to declare independence by 2016. Tellingly, in Stansfield’s scenario, it is again Turkey that comes to the KRG’s rescue with a military intervention, after the latter suffered a rout at the hands of the Iraqi army over Kirkuk. By the same token, Ofra Bengio speculates that Barzani is pursuing a ‘creeping independence ... until the Kurdish leadership is sure that Ankara and Washington would accept Kurdish independence as a fait accompli’,¹⁰¹⁷ a

scenario she further elaborates in a monograph and op-eds.¹⁰¹⁸ Again, as a decade earlier, it is explanatory IR scholars and their state-centric determinism that collaborate through their categorisations in creating the 'realities on the ground' in ethnicised discourses. Realities that, according to them, then permit only one 'pragmatic' solution: to translate said ethnic divisions, which have been portrayed as but are not independent of the discourse that constitutes them, into institutionalised divisions, i.e. long term, the breakup of a state into two or more independent sovereign nation states.

Yet, is it actual independence that Massoud Barzani and the KRG are truly after? While in a public opinion poll in 2012, 60 percent of 2,500 questioned in all three provinces supported the idea of the Kurdistan Region becoming an independent state¹⁰¹⁹ – a significant drop from a provisional referendum held in 2005 in which 99 percent endorsed independence¹⁰²⁰ – Hussein Tahiri alleges, 'historically ... it was the Kurdish leadership who would be asking for an independent Kurdish state while the Kurdish masses lacked those sentiments. After the invasion of Iraq it has become the Kurdish masses who are demanding a Kurdish state, while [their] leaders do not'.¹⁰²¹ Admittedly, The Iraqi Kurdish leaders' statements in this context are inconsistent and often contradictory. In January 2005, for example, Massoud Barzani declared:

I am certain there will be an independent Kurdistan, and I hope to see it in my lifetime. Self-determination is the natural right of our people, and they have the right to express their desires ... When the right time comes [a Kurdish state] will become a reality.¹⁰²²

On the other hand, as recently as in April 2012, in what might have been one of his last major interviews, Jalal Talabani went on the record:

Not only is independence not possible, but also now it is in the interest of the Kurdish people to remain within the framework of Iraq ... it is within the framework of a democratic federal Iraq that we are engaging in all activities, and we have all kinds of freedom and we have all possibilities, but we must be realistic. A politician who wants to serve his people must lead people in a way that serves their interests ... Imagine the Kurdish Parliament decided to be independent. Even if none of Turkey, Syria, Iraq or Iran fought the new state with arms, but simply closed the borders, how could anyone get there? So we must be realistic, we are enjoying our rights now.¹⁰²³

Such ambiguities and contradictions are understandable, though, given that international support for Kurdish independence today appears no greater than in 2005. Despite the AKP-KRG rapprochement, I believe, a unilateral Iraqi Kurdish declaration of independence is a red line not even PM Erdoğan would permit Massoud Barzani to cross, and the U.S. opposition to Iraqi Kurdish independence, to me, seems to have increased rather than tapered off since 2005. Insofar then, from a perspective of *realpolitik*, Barzani using the threat of declaring independence as leverage via Baghdad, yet in actual terms refraining from crossing this bridge too far makes perfect sense. Nonetheless, it is an opinion routinely encountered in the cafes of Iraqi Kurdistan when sitting together with journalists, political activists, or students critical of the KRG and Barzani's leadership that the Iraqi Kurdish president has no intention of pursuing independence but is actually content to emulate the Kurdish emirates of early modern times, where hereditary rulers enjoined a considerable degree of autonomy from the Sublime Porte.¹⁰²⁴

In the many military clashes between the Ottoman and Safavid Empires of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the border region the Kurdish tribal federations inhabited became of paramount strategic importance to both sides. 'As a result, Kurdish allegiance to the two empires fluctuated during th[e sixteenth] century, indicating that the Kurds were not passive partners in the state-tribe interaction',¹⁰²⁵ allowing Kurdish tribal leaders, often successfully, to play their temporary imperial overlords off against each other. One prominent example is Sharaf Khan IV of Bitlis - whose grandson, Sharaf Khan V, authored the famous *Şerefname* on the history of Kurdish dynasties in eastern Anatolia – other examples include, 'when in the war of 1578-90, the Kurdish lords of Bitlis and Hakkari were able to use their allegiance to the Ottomans to extend their own territories. In 1605, however, the defection of some of the Kurdish leaders to the Safavids was a factor in Shah Abbas' victory'.¹⁰²⁶ Successive Ottoman dynasties tried to bring the wayward Kurdish principalities under closer central control. They introduced a system of *sancaks* (district), governed by a *sancakbeyi*, and several *sancaks* constituted an *eyalet* or *beylerbeyilik* (province), where executive authority lay with the *beylerbeyi*, later *vali* (governor) as the representative of the sultan.¹⁰²⁷ In general, 'the beys of frontier regions enjoyed greater autonomy than the beys who ruled sancaks

closer to the center'¹⁰²⁸ – with the most remote *sancaks*, bordering a hostile empire, such as Safavid Iran, enjoying the greatest degree of autonomy. In order to better control the vacillating Kurdish emirs and to further integrate their dominions into the administrative structure of the empire, 'hereditary succession was granted to the Kurdish beys loyal to the Ottoman state, an exceptional privilege in the Ottoman administration, ... and the Ottoman state was extremely careful to ensure that power remained in the hands of the same ruling families'.¹⁰²⁹ In a few cases of *sancaks*, referred to as *hükümete*s at the Iranian border, the degree of self-rule went even further:

The state preferred not to interfere in their succession and internal affairs, and contented itself with recognising the authority of the rulers. The sultan issued official diplomas of investiture to show his approval ... They neither paid taxes to the Ottoman state nor provided regular military forces to the *sipahi* army.¹⁰³⁰

As has been briefly outlined earlier, the more these autonomous Kurdish principalities became integrated into the administrative structure of the empire and the more the central government succeeded in asserting its authority there through the *beylerbeyi*, the more Kurdish self-rule at the border came to fade during the second half of the seventeenth century, culminating in the last Kurdish emirate of Botan being abolished by force in 1847 as part of the *tanzimat* reform process.¹⁰³¹

Is it conceivable then that Massoud Barzani pursues a more conservative, historical understanding of national self-determination that, while at odds with the modernist paradigm of the independent sovereign nation state being the end to all nationalist means, is more in tune with Kurdish cultural tradition and is distinguished by the principle of hereditary succession, mirrored in Sadiki's 'dynastic republicanism' that, as has been outlined earlier, defines the KDP? Additionally, such an alternative approach to national self-determination would also better reflect the realities on the ground than many disgruntled Iraqi Kurdish liberals' urge for independence, since independence does not seem achievable in the current regional power constellations. Also, I would hazard the guess, it matters a greater deal to Massoud Barzani that Turkey and Exxon/Mobil are jointly developing oil and gas pipelines with the KRG in defiance of the central government in Baghdad than if Iraqi Kurdistan were recognised as an independent state by, say, Nicaragua, as is the case with

Abkhazia. An alternative and more traditionalist approach to national self-determination then, whether inspired by the historic experience of the Kurdish emirates or not, far from being 'backward' and 'tribalist' as Tahiri charges,¹⁰³² exhibits a greater degree of pragmatism, of making due with what is feasible in terms of realpolitik, than the, upon reflection seemingly utopian, demands for independence.

In one crucial aspect at least, though – aside from the fact that any historic analogy from Medieval or early modern times should be treated with extreme caution when discussed in the context of the political status of Iraqi Kurdistan in twenty-first century – Massoud Barzani's position in today's Iraqi Kurdistan as a frontier region between Iraq, Turkey, Iran, and Syria differs significantly from the historic cases discussed. For unlike the Kurdish emirs, today's Iraqi Kurdish leaders not only dominate politics at the periphery, but also hold considerable sway at the centre of the polity they nominally are part of:

The President of Iraq, Jalal Talabani, is [also] the leader of ... [the] PUK, the foreign minister, Hoshiyar Zebari [of the KDP], is a Kurd, as is one of the Deputy Prime Ministers, the Minister of Trade and several other lesser portfolios; 57 of 325 Iraqi MPs are members of Kurdish lists who played the role of kingmakers after the 2005 and 2010 elections.¹⁰³³

As a matter of fact, and quite ironically in light of developments thereafter, today Nuri al-Maliki would not be prime minister of Iraq, had it not been for Massoud Barzani throwing his weight behind him after arduous eight months of horse-trading, when the March 2010 elections at first produced the secular, cross-sectarian *Iraqiyya* alliance of former PM Iyad Allawi as numerical winner at the polls.¹⁰³⁴ Such a temporary collaboration between Barzani and Maliki may appear at first sight perplexing, yet Toby Dodge points out that both Maliki's *Islamic Dawa Party* and the KDP belong to the political elite that had benefitted and thrived on the *muhāsasa* principle, 'the division of cabinet posts according to sectarian quotas, with its assertion of religious and ethnic identity, its defence of elite interests and its encouragement of both personal and political corruption and government incoherence'.¹⁰³⁵ To this 'elite pact' the victory at the polls of a movement on an explicitly secular, non-sectarian platform with an agenda to transform the political landscape in Iraq away from ethno-sectarian binary opposites towards a more pronounced Iraqi identity, 'was a direct threat',¹⁰³⁶

which is why Maliki and Barzani cooperated in neutralising *Iraqiyaa* in yet another government of national unity.¹⁰³⁷ As a result of these complex dynamics, not only had ethno-sectarian divisions and those politically benefitting from them again triumphed, but relations between the Kurdistan Region and the central government in Iraq are not exclusively antagonistic but considerably more ambiguous than commonly portrayed. While some analysts argue that the Iraqi Kurdish leadership would not dare breaking from Iraq for fear of losing the seventeen percent of revenues from national oil and gas reserves due to the Kurdistan Region according to the constitution¹⁰³⁸ – an argument increasingly sounding less convincing as the Kurdistan Region's vast untapped natural resources may have the potential of making it self-sufficient in a not too distant future – it is these inner-Iraqi power constellations and machinations, I would argue, that provide the most convincing argument against a unilateral declaration of independence of the KRG any time soon: for as long as the Kurdistan Region nominally remains part of Iraq, its leaders can influence the political space and process within its perceived constitutive other – a luxury no so-called *de facto* state has, and the KRG would relinquish of necessity with independence. For the same reason, it appears worth pondering, Turkey might benefit from a perpetuation of the status quo rather than – as Stansfield and Bengio argue,¹⁰³⁹ and some Iraqi Kurdish leaders may hope – coming to the KRG's rescue in a unilateral bid for independence: through the KRG as a client entity, Ankara, to some extent, can influence the political space and process in Iraq as a whole, which is a considerably bigger benefit than just securing an independent Iraqi Kurdistan within its orbit.

Aside from the admittedly limited applicability of historical parallels to contemporary polities, the above historical analogies then describe the present configurations of power, authority, sovereignty, and self-rule in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region only to some extent. Yet, the simplistic and dichotomous approach of explanatory IR, simply asserting whether sovereignty exists or not, is no less incomplete. This constructed exclusivity of sovereignty that supposedly clearly demarcates an 'inside' sphere of domestic order from an 'outside' of chaos and anarchy, an 'us' versus 'them', and arbitrates zones of exclusivity and universality, is, in the words of Cynthia Weber, the founding 'myth of [explanatory] IR',¹⁰⁴⁰ yet as has been shown in Part One, is an

epistemological and ontological fallacy that in its simplicity not only fails to capture the complexity of the actual social world but also, as the constitutive element of the sovereignty discourse, does not exist prior to that discourse. Consequently and since the principle of sovereignty as an act of representation that seeks to establish stable, fixed, and pre-given binary opposites as natural facts where there are none beyond the discourse of which said acts of representation are part, it remains 'forever in the realm of discourse and cultural, not in the realm of natural',¹⁰⁴¹ and should be studied as an expression of said discourse rather than the factual reality it is portrayed to be. If the binary opposite of sovereignty as clearly demarcating fixed and stable zones of inclusion and exclusion prior to the discourse that constructs it does not exist in any state, the fallacy of this paradigm becomes most apparent in the case of contemporary Iraq. Here, the contradicting conceptualisation of sovereignty and ethno-sectarian groupness, when, after reifying, essentialising, and substantialising ethnic divisions, attempting the thus constructed identity groups to coalesce and co-exist in the political form of a state without having nurtured any sentiments or allegiances to a shared communality beyond those groups, has rendered a situation where it is patently impossible to distinguish between an 'inside' and an 'outside', a 'domestic' and 'foreign', clear-cut zones of inclusion and exclusion. The result is not only an inherently dysfunctional state but also a Kurdistan Region *within* but at the same time *apart* from Iraq. The nature of the Kurdistan Region as a political entity *within* but at the same time *apart* from Iraq, in which as an everyday practice political identity is (re-)negotiated within and constituted by a discourse among the inhabitants and political leaders of the Kurdistan Region, Iraq proper, the neighbouring countries and their ethnic minorities, and the international community at large; in other words it is re-producing day-in, day-out its distinct form of identity anew, and according to rapidly changing configurations of the matrix of identities and interests what it means to be an Iraqi Kurd.

Such a discursive practice of political and ethnic identities cannot be captured by the simplistic and epistemologically as well as ontologically flawed principle of sovereignty of explanatory IR. Its failure to explain the heterogeneous, often contradictory, and ambiguous realities of this discourse becomes even more apparent given the fact that the discourse on national self-

determination does not necessarily follow the established, modernist and Eurocentric discourse of the sovereign, independent nation state as the culmination of all nationalist endeavours. On the contrary, Iraqi Kurdistan may be described as the site where three distinctly different concepts of national self-determination collide: (1) the hegemonic but at the same time Eurocentric and inherently contradictory understanding of explanatory IR; (2) the PKK's concept of 'democratic confederalism' that, in rejection of the centralising and homogenising nation state, seeks to craft a more democratic society from the bottom up through communes, local collectives, and voluntary federations based on individualism and regionalism that embraces the inherent diversities and manifold identities of a society; (3) a more traditionalist understanding of self-governance grounded in the Kurdish historic experience as a border region between empires where the political space is determined by conflicting, and at large ritualised suzerainties rather than exclusive sovereignties, and where dynastic republicanism, charismatic leadership, individual prowess, and personal achievement of elites is of greater relevance for governance and the relations between several nominal suzerains and their autonomous tributary than institutionalised practices and the letters of a constitution. The existence or mere possibility of these two alternative conceptualisations to national self-determination – in the case of the PKK's 'democratic confederalism' the essence of the party's ideology, in the case of the latter, at this point, mostly educated speculation – amounts to nothing less but a substantial rejection of the claim of universal applicability of the modernist paradigm. Again, this makes Iraqi Kurdistan such an ideal case for studying the diversities the discourse on national self-determination, far from being a one way street, can pursue.

This rejection of the universalist claim of the modernist paradigm and the resulting identity discourse and political practice that constitutes what it means to be an Iraqi Kurd as well as co-constitutively shape the parameters of a polity within but at the same apart from Iraq cannot be adequately captured by the one-size fits all, exclusivist, essentialist, and highly normative concept of sovereignty. Insofar then, all the above detailed actions of the KRG and the Iraqi Kurdish leadership – whether their attempts to erode Baghdad's control over Iraqi Kurdistan's natural resources and oil/gas revenues, the seemingly endless strife over the future of the 'contested territories', the role as kingmaker

in inner-Iraqi power struggles, the rapprochement between AKP and KRG, and the resulting Turkish backing of Iraqi Kurdish autonomy, the lobbying activities in Western capitals, the image of an island of peace and prosperity in a region defined by conflict and chaos that is purported, and ultimately the competition with the PKK, in Syria and elsewhere, for a pre-eminence in the (pan-)Kurdish ethno-nationalist discourse – are but expressions of the complex matrix of identities and interests at play in today's Iraqi Kurdistan. To this extent then, Iraqi Kurdistan is neither an anomaly of the international system, as Caspersen & Stansfield argue for 'de facto states' in general and the Kurdistan Region in particular to be understood,¹⁰⁴² or a case sui generis but a clear expression and manifestation of the discursive character of the matrix of identities and interests that constitutes the political entities we study in IR.

Ultimately then, reading this matrix as discursive practice liberates us as analysts from having to play soothsayers, tea-leaf readers, and from occupying too interventionist a role as co-protagonists in the ethno-nationalist conflicts we set out to describe. For by routinely invoking the modernist state-centric paradigm with independent statehood as the defining aspiration and desired outcome of any struggle for national self-determination, political scientists of the explanatory IR persuasion already pre-determine the trajectory of such conflicts, define its character through categorization, and collaborate with the ethno-nationalist elites and their strategic essentialisms in directing the political discourse in one and only one direction. From this perspective, a failure to ultimately achieve independent statehood is all too often seen as a result of the dynamics of the conflict – that is the stronger party, at least to some extent, prevailing and thwarting the aspirations for national self-determination of a people either on the battlefield or at the negotiation table. The possibility that independent statehood has not and may still not be the 'natural' aspiration of the Iraqi Kurdish leaders, that they may consider it as corresponding with their strategic interests and ideational values to seek alternative expressions of a more qualified sovereignty, is rarely taken into account in their analysis. For to do so would fundamentally contradict the modernist state-centric paradigm and the pre-conceived notions about the nature of nationalism of these scholars and/cum practitioners. In a nutshell, it would substantially challenge the state-centric founding myth of IR. And yet scholars of the explanatory IR persuasion

keep clinging fast to this reading of national self-determination, even though, as has been shown in this study, at least until 1992 – perhaps even later, given the episode when Talabani offered Özal Iraqi Kurdistan for annexation – the Iraqi Kurdish leaders harboured no demonstrable aspiration for independent statehood and since then continue to send mixed and deeply ambiguous signals. If they remain ambivalent about it – whether out of pragmatic, strategic calculations or for differing perceptions of nationhood – why are we scholars as categorisers then more explicit, essentialising, and deterministic than the situation evidently demands?

11.) Conclusion

The objective of this study has been to deconstruct explanatory IR's understanding, frameworks, and concepts of ethnic conflict by employing a constitutive theory-grounded approach. In the theory section the focus has been on a critical reading of the discourses and narratives on ethnic conflict explanatory IR has constructed and established. Those narratives and discourses are characterised by a positivist, essentialist, and substantialist belief that the social world can be divided, measured and categorized into organic, static, substantive, distinct, homogeneous and bounded units and that these ethnic groups can be analytically equated with states, thus ascribing them with social agency as unitary or unitarily acting protagonists of ethnic conflict. In their examinations of ethnic conflict explanatory IR operationalizes ethnic identity as either the dependent variable, merely a political tool utilized by ethnic elites and entrepreneurs (and the masses) in their pursuit of mostly material interests, and thus of only extrinsic value in attempts to comprehend and capture the dynamics of ethnic conflict, or as the independent variable, where ethnic conflict is tautologically explained with ethnicity. Not only have the epistemologies, ontologies, and methodologies of this discourse been exposed as fallacious, it has also been shown how closely they correspond with the narratives set forth by the ethnic elites and entrepreneurs these studies set out to study. By reifying ethnic groups, presenting them as factual, static, substantive, distinct, homogeneous and bounded units of the social world that can be ascribed with social agency explanatory IR scholars not only play into the hands of ethnic elites and their claims to represent the group in an antagonistic relationship with the other, through their way of portraying the composition of the social world they often further accentuate, substantiate, and occasionally write those ideational lines of division that constitute them into existence.

These themes and points of critiques have been taken up in the case study, in which, by way of examining the relations between the Iraqi Kurdish ethno-nationalist parties and the PKK from the early 1980s until the present, I have shown the frameworks of explanatory IR on ethnic conflict, in particular the

ethnic alliance model and instrumentalism, to fail in adequately explaining the dynamics and complexities of their relations. The ethnic alliance model operationalizes ethnic identity as the independent variable and more explicitly than any other explanatory IR framework analytically equates the ethnic group with the state; instrumentalism, on the other, that deploys ethnic identity as the dependent variable all too often reduces it to a mere political tool with which shrewd and calculating ethnic elites manipulate the docile masses in pursuit of material interests, thus admitting it only extrinsic value and no explanatory qualities. While one could say that both are thus situated at opposite ends of the spectrum of explanatory IR's approach to ethnic conflict, I have argued that a systemic constructivism and instrumentalism in particular exhibits a tendency of reifying the structure via the agent.

In the case study I have demonstrated that neither instrumentalism nor ethnicity as the independent variable, on their own, comprehensively explain the motives and behaviour of the actors determining the relations between the Iraqi Kurdish ethno-nationalist parties, KDP and PUK, and the PKK. There are instances where instrumentalism, that is predominantly interests shaping policies and identities being reduced to political or propaganda tools, as when the KDP granted the PKK sanctuary on its territory in the early 1980s either on order of its external backers in Iran and Syria or in a failed attempt to win the PKK as a potential ally against its nemesis, the PUK. Likewise, the civil wars of the 1990s between KDP/PUK and the PKK and later PUK/PKK and KDP can be understood as violent expressions of regional rivalries and factionalisms in the case of the latter, and as dictated by the complex political necessities of the first Kurdish de facto state and its dependence on Turkey and the international community at large. Yet, instrumentalism cannot sufficiently explain why the Iraqi Kurdish ethno-nationalist parties started to collaborate in the first place – after the military coup in Turkey the PUK literally saved the PKK from oblivion – nor, as I have argued the complex dynamics and shifting alliances of today's Iraqi Kurdistan both within Iraq and all the more when adopting a wider geographical lense and including the KDP's attempts at positioning itself as a regional champion of wider, perhaps even pan-Kurdish aspirations for national self-determination in Turkey and Syria,

The case against the ethnic alliance model is even more clear-cut. First, as I have demonstrated by way of an extensive historical excursus in Part Two, aside from epistemological objections, it would be untenable to categorize the Kurds in the Middle East as one ethnic group, that is Kurds in Iraq, Turkey, Iran, and Syria all belonging to the same ethnic group with common ideational boundaries and constitutive others and characterised by networks of intra-ethnic solidarity and mutual commitments. On the contrary, already in the historical excursus I have shown that Kurds in Iraq and Turkey are defined by their relations and boundaries towards different constitutive others – the Kemalist and Ba’athist regimes in Ankara and Baghdad – and followed a completely different trajectory in their processes of becoming and being nationalist. Second, given the almost proverbial rivalry between KDP and PUK it would be completely fallacious to conceive of the Iraqi Kurds as a unitary actor or unitarily acting political entity that can be analytically equated with a state. Third, and perhaps most damning for any attempts to showcase the PKK sanctuary in Iraqi Kurdistan as an example of an ethnic alliance, as it is routinely done in the literature, the relations between PKK and KDP/PUK are more often determined by rivalry and armed conflict than by solidarity and cooperation. As a matter of fact, at the very moment when the ethnic alliance model is supposed to have come into effect, when Iraqi Kurdistan became a state-like entity – however defined and open to debate – or its main protagonists came to dominate the political discourse and exercised territorial control, in the wake of the Gulf War, KDP and PUK did not reach out to the oppressed ‘co-ethnic’ minority in Turkey and its empowered incumbent, the PKK, but, in alliance with Turkey, attacked Öcalan’s group. With that episode at the very least the case against the ethnic alliance model and ethnic group solidarity to explain ‘intra-ethnic’ relations and the internationalization of ethnic conflict can rest as disproven.

Yet the purpose of this case study has not only been to show why the main frameworks of explanatory IR fail to explain the formation of ethnic identities in ethnic conflict, but also to illustrate how ethnicity works in these contexts. Grounded in constitutive theory I have argued why I believe that instead of explaining the relations between and within so called ethnic groups through factual, static, substantive, distinct, homogeneous and bounded categories and an artificially measurable division of identities and interests that can be

operationalized as dependent and independent variables, the social world is better conceived of as a fluid, ever shifting, open-ended, and complex matrix of identities and interests. At each stage in the analysis of the relations between the Iraqi Kurdish ethno-nationalist parties and the PKK I have paused and made a case against explaining it by employing dependent and independent variables and for a processual approach that views them as an intricate, never completed, eternally unfolding matrix. This, in my opinion, becomes most apparent when examining the shifting sands of identities and interests in post-2003 Iraqi Kurdistan and what it means to be an Iraqi Kurd in the twenty-first century. This dense, web-like mosaic of competing sovereignties with the freest political entity in Kurdish history existing in permanent transition within but at the same time apart from Iraq, pan-Kurdish and parochial identities pulling in opposite directions, and strategic considerations and material interests at the local, regional, and geo-political level dictating restraint while at the same time autonomy has gained a momentum of its own that pulls Iraqi Kurdish leaders – sometimes against their will – towards ever wider national self-determination, constitutes an ideal and incredibly rich case study to study not so much what ethnic identity is but how ethnic identity works. In terms of identities and interests Iraqi Kurdistan is constituted and at the same time internally split by centrifugal and centripetal forces and ideologies. Large strata of the Kurdish diaspora in Europe see the freest political entity in Kurdish history as a beacon of hope and champion of Kurdish rights for national self-determination across the entire region, an aspiration Iraqi Kurdish leaders fear and simultaneously try to exploit for their own ends; they try to walk a fine line between expanding their polities' autonomy and not antagonizing their external backers together with the status as Washington's most reliable ally, yet the relative freedom Iraqi Kurdistan enjoys and a mainly young population that has never come to know Arab rule increasingly questions why they have to continue co-existing in an artificial state with Arabs towards whom they feel no solidarity, commonality or shared identity; the ambiguous status of ever wider autonomy allows Iraqi Kurdish leaders to strengthen their hold onto power at home, where they play the ethno-nationalist card against the central government in Baghdad and perpetually hold out the promise of independence to their constituency – a promise they may never be in a position or want to fulfil – yet at the same time their influence in Baghdad allows them to play kingmaker in the formation of

every Iraqi government for the past decade; likewise, they remain economically and strategically dependent on Turkey, who, aside from Baghdad, quite contradictorily poses the biggest obstacle to Iraqi Kurdish independence out of fear that it might set a precedent for its own Kurdish population to demand a similar status, yet at the same time Erdoğan AKP utilizes the pan-Kurdish reputation and nationalistic pull of Massoud Barzani to sway Kurdish voters in Turkey. Given the ambiguities, complex dynamics, and contradictions, of which I have just elaborated the most obvious, that constitute the matrix of identities and interests in contemporary Iraqi Kurdistan even the most ardent positivist would fail to comprehensively explain them by allocating dependent and independent variables, divining a definite line parting identities from interests and ideational from material motives for actors's behaviour, let alone translate those into quantifiable data.

Exercising a modernist interpretation of nationalism that views the ethnic group as a precursor to an ethnically defined nation and the nation as a proto-state, explanatory IR often analytically equates the ethnic group with the state, thus not only endowing it with social agency but portraying as it as a unitary actor or unitarily acting entity. Again, Iraqi Kurdistan serves as a powerful case in point why such an equation is untenable. Given the notorious rivalry between KDP and PUK with each side even joining forces with their constitutive other, the genocidal regime of Saddam Hussein, against their opponent, and their on-and-off alliances and hostilities with the PKK, the myth of the ethnic group as unitary actor is easily refutable. What is more interesting, though, I argue that the sovereign nation state is as much a social construct as the ethnic group, a social construct, like the ethnic group, based on a constructed dichotomy of internal versus external, of order and rule of law at home versus anarchy abroad. The occurrence of so called failed states and de facto states illustrate the inherent contradictions of this supposedly clear-cut dichotomy. Failed states lack internal sovereignty, that is they lost control over parts or most of their territory and population, while de facto states exhibit a comprehensive control of their claimed territory but lack external recognition as a state by the international community. This shows that sovereignty cannot be reduced to a simple ascertainment of whether it exists or not but that the real question – as with ethnic identity – is how sovereignty works. The complexities, ambiguities, and

contradictions of sovereignty at work in the indeterminate political space of today's Iraqi Kurdistan illustrate not only that the presupposed linear development from ethnic group to nation, to state may not be at all linear but curvy, oscillating, interrupted, in fact, for intrinsic not extrinsic reasons, may never reach its supposed conclusion, but also highlights the constructed nature of sovereignty better than in so called established states. In established states sovereignty is said to exist, period. Iraqi Kurdistan, whose sovereignty is contested, provides a much richer case to study how sovereignty actually works, how it is enacted through foreign policy, how it harmonises national identit(ies) with national interest(s), and that, ultimately, in the post-modern world of universal neo-liberal consensus, it can be more important to strike a deal on the exploitation of national resources with ExxonMobil or offer your constituency the dubious blessings of international brands opening a branch in their local shopping mall than being recognised by a handful of second rank states as a peer.

Explanatory IR theory purports to depict the social world as it is, as factual, as grounded in reality, as empirically measurable. Rejecting the false idol of scientific objectivism that claims to be capable of a detached and rational analysis of how the social world works, constitutive theory this study commits to, posits all of us researchers that study social relationships as co-protagonists of these relations. Contrary to explanatory theory that purports to tell 'the' definite story about how the social world works, constitutive theory maintains that there are myriad interpretations and takes on social issues out there, that the ones presented as factual and common-sense are but one possible reading of things and that we social scientists will by our very nature as human beings always be biased and partisan in the narratives we tell. Yet, even though we are all co-protagonists of the social world we try to understand and analyse, it makes a difference whether we present our findings as one possible reading of actors' motives and behaviour or as the definite account of social interactions and relations; it makes a difference whether we have the intellectual honesty to acknowledge our role in taking part in influencing and shaping the narratives and discourses about our objects of analysis or pretend to deliver a scientifically verified ultimate and singular truth that remains irrefutable irrespective of the researcher's ideological disposition and level of engagement with its subject.

For, last but not least, it makes a great difference to what extent we become involved with our subject of analysis, whether we manage to maintain the very minimum of a critical attitude or increasingly come to advocate a certain direction or cause in our writings, research, lectures, and testimonials as experts at public hearings and parliamentary inquiries. At the very least, we social scientists cannot have it both ways, hold up the principles of a detached scientific objectivism – anyway an intellectual fallacy – and at the same time through our ontologies and methodologies, such as the selection of variables or our categorization of ideational groups as social agents, directly or indirectly adopt the narratives of our subjects of analysis and thus substantiate their claims to legitimacy.

These are but some of the issues I have raised in my critique of positivist explanatory IR's approaches to ethnic conflict and state sovereignty. In sum, I would like to believe, it amounts to a solid and comprehensive deconstruction of the epistemologies, ontologies, models, frameworks, and methodologies of explanatory IR's approach to ethnic conflict and state sovereignty at the theoretical and empirical level. However, I, of course, do not claim to have provided a definitive account of ethnic identity formation and so called intra-ethnic relations, state sovereignty or Kurdish ethno-nationalism, nor for my findings and insights to have universal applicability. What I offer here is a well-wrought but basically always highly subjective interpretation of scholars' role as co-protagonists of ethnic conflict, a reality and not the reality of the development of Kurdish ethno-nationalism, a true account of the relations between the Iraqi Kurdish ethno-nationalist parties and the PKK but not the ultimate truth on them.

Further case studies are called for, those that critically examine and deconstruct the reification and essentialization of groupness in the discourse on ethnic and ethno-nationalist conflict, both at the level of ethnic elites as well as focusing on the scholarship on these conflicts, and either by scrutinizing the intra-group level, as V. P. Gagnon has demonstrated for the former Yugoslavia, or by questioning the inter-group level, as is the lens through which this present study approaches the complex. At an earlier stage of research, when I intended to give the comparative dimension more room, I conducted some preliminary research on the discourse on pan-Albanian nationalism and the fear among Western policy makers of opening the door for a 'Greater Albania' in the run up

to 1999 Kosovo intervention and discovered many striking parallels to the Kurdish case. Yet, the essentialization and substantialization of ethnic groupness is not limited to the Western discourse on ethnic conflict. For decades politicians and scholars in India and the state of West Bengal in particular portray Bangladeshi immigration as an attempt to create a 'Greater Bangladesh' by stealth, a subject to which I plan to direct my future research. More generally, while this study furnished an in-depth overview of the problem of reification of groupness in the study of ethnic and ethno-nationalist conflict in explanatory IR literature, more detailed theoretical inquiries into individual aspects and effects of this practice would be desirable; say, for example, how they shape the paradigm of consociationalism in ethnic conflict resolution or whether the questions raised here would not require a redefinition of nationalism and nationhood. In addition to my commitment to the ethical concerns I have raised throughout, I would consider it a great accomplishment for this study to have acted as an incentive and point of departure for such pressing future inquiries.

Notes

¹ Smith (1995: 26-7). He further expands his thoughts on this epistemological division in his reply to Alexander Wendt's (1999) *Social Theory of International Relations*, in Smith (2000).

² Wight (2010:43).

³ Kaplan (1994).

⁴ Joras & Schetter (2004).

⁵ Moreton (2015).

⁶ Jesse & Williams (2011: 15).

⁷ Cordell & Wolff (2009: 14). Another example for a distinct IR approach to a primer on ethnic conflict would be Taras & Ganguly (2006). In this instance, one of the authors, Rajat Ganguly, professes to an openly primordialist understanding of ethnicity and nationalism (Ganguly 1998).

⁸ Cordell & Wolff (2009).

⁹ Zalewski & Enloe (1995).

¹⁰ Stack (1997: 11).

¹¹ Zalewski & Enloe (1995: 297).

¹² Some of the arguments here, in particular pertaining to neo-realism and neo-liberalism, can already be found in Cederman (1997); as I will demonstrate, though, Cederman's constructivism itself features some of the shortcomings and fallacies he criticises in neo-realist and neo-liberal approaches to nationalism, ethnicity, and ethno-nationalist conflict.

¹³ Smith (2000).

¹⁴ Hansen (2013: 171).

¹⁵ Brubaker (2004).

¹⁶ Berger & Luckmann (1991 [1966]: 106).

¹⁷ Giddens (1984: 180).

¹⁸ Calhoun (1992) quoted in Cederman (1997: 21).

¹⁹ For a detailed overview on the various state-centric versus non state-centric debates in IR, see Hobson (2000).

²⁰ Lake (2008: 42).

²¹ Youngs (1999: 34).

²² Ashley (1984: 240, 268).

²³ Youngs (1999: 35).

²⁴ Spivak (1987).

²⁵ Fierke (2007).

²⁶ Fairclough (2010: 3).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Foucault (1972: 132).

²⁹ Laclau & Mouffe (1990: 100, italics in original).

³⁰ Campbell (2009: 166).

³¹ Foucault (1972).

³² Rouse (2005: 96).

³³ Campbell (2009: 167).

³⁴ Lessa (2006: 285).

³⁵ Laclau & Mouffe (1985: 108).

³⁶ For a consummate analysis of this debate, see Hansen (2006).

³⁷ Derrida (2004: 78).

³⁸ McQuillan (2009: 5).

³⁹ Caputo (1997: 32).

⁴⁰ Johnson (1981: viii).

⁴¹ Derrida (1978, 1981a & b, 1982, 1998), Edkins (1999), McQuillan (2009), Norris (2002), Hansen (2006), Fagan et al. (2007), Zehfuss (2009).

⁴² McQuillan (2009: 9).

⁴³ Campbell (1998a: 30).

⁴⁴ Edkins (1999: 74).

⁴⁵ Hall (1995, 1996).

⁴⁶ Derrida (1981b: 42).

⁴⁷ Hall (1996: 1).

⁴⁸ Derrida (1981b).

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- ⁴⁹ Fierke (2007: 81).
- ⁵⁰ On Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), see van Dijk (1993, 2008), Fairclough (2001a & b, 2003, 2010, & Wodak 1997, & Fairclough 2012), Chouliaraki & Fairclough (1999), Wodak (2001), Locke (2004), Blommaert (2005), Simpson & Mayr (2010), Egan-Sjölander & Gunnarsson-Payne (2011). For excellent applications of CDA as deconstruction in the context of ethnic conflict, see Campbell (1998a) and Hansen (2006).
- ⁵¹ Gagnon (2004).
- ⁵² Echoing Hutchinson (2004), here, rather than 'nation state', I use the term 'nationalising state', not only to indicate that the four states in the context of this article – Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria – are home to more than one nation, but also to allude to the often brutal process of assimilation during their ongoing state formation.
- ⁵³ Rose (1991: 454).
- ⁵⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵⁵ Peters (1998: 62).
- ⁵⁶ Tansey (2009: 492).
- ⁵⁷ Goodman (1961).
- ⁵⁸ Horowitz (2001: 226).
- ⁵⁹ Rae (2002).
- ⁶⁰ Fierke (2007).
- ⁶¹ Özkirimli (2010).
- ⁶² Smith (2009: 8).
- ⁶³ Izady (1992: 34, italics in original).
- ⁶⁴ Smith (2004: 61).
- ⁶⁵ Brubaker (1996), Wimmer (2008), Özkirimli (2010).
- ⁶⁶ Varshney (2002).
- ⁶⁷ van den Berghe (1978, 1981, 1999).
- ⁶⁸ Connor (1993). Walker Connor's contributions to the study of ethnicity and nationalism are located within the wider scholarly debate on primordialism/essentialism in Conversi (2004).
- ⁶⁹ Horowitz (2001).
- ⁷⁰ Ibid. (95, 56).
- ⁷¹ Ibid. (57).
- ⁷² Özkirimli (2010: 51).
- ⁷³ Zana (2009).
- ⁷⁴ Masrour Barzani in an interview with James Calderwood, quoted in Calderwood (2011).
- ⁷⁵ Kedourie (1994 [1960]), Nairn (1981 [1977]), Breuilly (1993 [1982]), Gellner (2006 [1983]), Anderson (2006 [1983]), Giddens (1985), Brass (1985, 1991), Hobsbawm (1990), Mann (1993), Hechter (1998, 2001).
- ⁷⁶ Smith (2004: 46-7, italics in original).
- ⁷⁷ Ibid. (47-9).
- ⁷⁸ Gellner (2006: 1).
- ⁷⁹ Giddens (1985).
- ⁸⁰ Mann (1993).
- ⁸¹ Breuilly (2001: 32).
- ⁸² Ibid. (1993: 2).
- ⁸³ Tahiri (2007).
- ⁸⁴ Özcan (2006: 5).
- ⁸⁵ This notion has been problematised for the Kurdish context by Houston (2009).
- ⁸⁶ Tahiri (2007).
- ⁸⁷ Weber (1978 [1922]: 389).
- ⁸⁸ Ibid.
- ⁸⁹ For a conceptualisation of identity as a form of ideology see Malešević (2006a).
- ⁹⁰ The importance of symbols, narratives of origin, cultural artefacts, etc., in the production and reproduction of the nation is at the core of Anthony Smith's ethno-symbolist approach to nationalism. See Smith (1999, 2003, 2009), Hutchinson (2004), Guibernau & Hutchinson (2004), Leoussi & Grosby (2006).
- ⁹¹ Weber (1978 [1922]: 389).
- ⁹² Jenkins (2008a: 10, italics in original).
- ⁹³ Barth (1998 [1969]: 15).
- ⁹⁴ Malešević (2004: 2-3). It can be argued, though, that a similar point was already made two decades before Barth by Everett Hughes, see Jenkins (2008a: 11).
- ⁹⁵ Malešević (2004: 3).

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- ⁹⁶ Eriksen (2002: 10, italics in original)
- ⁹⁷ Nagata (1981).
- ⁹⁸ Anderson (2006: 6-7, italics in original).
- ⁹⁹ Fenton (2010: 52, italics in original).
- ¹⁰⁰ Barrington (1997: 712).
- ¹⁰¹ Varshney (2003: 86).
- ¹⁰² Entessar (1992).
- ¹⁰³ Varshney (2003: 86).
- ¹⁰⁴ Hall (1996: 6).
- ¹⁰⁵ Jenkins (2008b: 5).
- ¹⁰⁶ Rattansi (1999: 84).
- ¹⁰⁷ Brubaker (2004: 8).
- ¹⁰⁸ Kecmanovic (2002: 141).
- ¹⁰⁹ Sampson (1968: 33).
- ¹¹⁰ Kecmanovic (1996: 36).
- ¹¹¹ Kristeva (1993: 50).
- ¹¹² Spivak (1987).
- ¹¹³ Smith (1998: 158).
- ¹¹⁴ Morton (2007: 127-8).
- ¹¹⁵ Brubaker (2004: 9).
- ¹¹⁶ Ibid. (10, italics in original).
- ¹¹⁷ Fenton (2004), Brubaker (1996, 2004, 2009), Gagnon (2004).
- ¹¹⁸ Brubaker (2004: 10).
- ¹¹⁹ Laitin & Posner (2001), Fearon (2003), Posner (2005a), Brown & Langer (2010).
- ¹²⁰ Kaplan (1994). For a similar primordialist understanding of identity and culture in mainstream IR, see also Samuel Huntington's infamous *Clash of Civilizations* (2002) or Suny (1993).
- ¹²¹ Brubaker (2004: 14).
- ¹²² Ibid. (15).
- ¹²³ Jenkins (2008b: 9).
- ¹²⁴ Ibid. (10).
- ¹²⁵ Kettell (2006).
- ¹²⁶ Singer (1961: 81).
- ¹²⁷ Waltz (2001 [1959]).
- ¹²⁸ Waltz (1979).
- ¹²⁹ Bull (2002 [1977]).
- ¹³⁰ Waltz (1979: 96).
- ¹³¹ Ibid. (97).
- ¹³² One may say that classic realism since the 1990s is experiencing somewhat of a revival with the works of Snyder (1991), Wohlforth (1993) and Schweller (2006) refocusing on a unit-level analysis that gives greater room to questions about the internal properties of states, the latter in particular focusing on elite cohesion and therefore of interest for this study.
- ¹³³ Cederman (1997).
- ¹³⁴ Ashley (1984: 268).
- ¹³⁵ Wohlforth (2012: 36).
- ¹³⁶ Sterling-Folker (2013).
- ¹³⁷ Keohane & Nye (2001 [1977]).
- ¹³⁸ Krasner (1983).
- ¹³⁹ Keohane (1984).
- ¹⁴⁰ Sterling-Folker (2013: 115).
- ¹⁴¹ Cederman (1997: 20).
- ¹⁴² Little (1997), Wæver (1997, 2007), Hobson (2000), Lacher (2003), Brown & Ainley (2009) Steans et al. (2010), Sterling-Folker (2013).
- ¹⁴³ Lacher (2003: 521).
- ¹⁴⁴ Ruggie (1983), Keohane (1989), Buzan et al. (1993).
- ¹⁴⁵ Wæver (1997).
- ¹⁴⁶ Brown & Ainley (2009: 47).
- ¹⁴⁷ Rose (1998), Sterling-Folker (2002).
- ¹⁴⁸ Bush (2003: 5, italics in original).
- ¹⁴⁹ Wolfers (1962).
- ¹⁵⁰ Bush (2003, & Keyman 1997).
- ¹⁵¹ Bush & Keyman (1997: 313).

¹⁵² Davis & Moore (1998: 93).
¹⁵³ Ibid. (92).
¹⁵⁴ Hurd (2008), Reus-Smit (2009), Fierke (2010), Jackson & Sørensen (2012), Daddow (2013).
¹⁵⁵ Wendt (1999: 231).
¹⁵⁶ Fierke (2010: 171).
¹⁵⁷ Adler (1997: 326).
¹⁵⁸ Wendt (1992: 396-7).
¹⁵⁹ Legro (2005: 6).
¹⁶⁰ Fierke (2010: 171).
¹⁶¹ Wendt (1999, 2003), Reus-Smit (2009), Aalberts (2012).
¹⁶² Wendt (2003: 511).
¹⁶³ Wendt (1999: 337).
¹⁶⁴ Zehfuss (2002).
¹⁶⁵ Fierke (2010: 170).
¹⁶⁶ Wendt (1999: 181-3).
¹⁶⁷ Ibid. (224-5).
¹⁶⁸ Ibid. (201).
¹⁶⁹ Aalberts (2012: 75).
¹⁷⁰ Campbell (1998a), Zehfuss (2002, 2006) Reus-Smit (2009) Weber (2010), Aalberts (2012), Daddow (2013).
¹⁷¹ Hurd (2008: 301).
¹⁷² Wendt (1992: 394-5).
¹⁷³ Wendt (1987).
¹⁷⁴ Giddens (1979, 1984).
¹⁷⁵ Wendt (1987: 363).
¹⁷⁶ Fierke (2010: 170).
¹⁷⁷ McSweeney (1999: 123).
¹⁷⁸ Wendt (1987: 339). A comprehensive discussion of the structure-agency problem in IR is given in Doty (1997), Friedman & Starr (2006) and Wight (2006). For an overview of the current state of the debate within constructivism see Adler (2010).
¹⁷⁹ Cederman (1997: 20).
¹⁸⁰ Reus-Smit (2009).
¹⁸¹ Daddow (2013).
¹⁸² Wendt (1999: 40, 47).
¹⁸³ Adler (1997: 322).
¹⁸⁴ Checkel (1998: 327).
¹⁸⁵ Zehfuss (2006: 116).
¹⁸⁶ Wendt (1999: 11).
¹⁸⁷ Zehfuss (2002: 89).
¹⁸⁸ Reus-Smit (2009: 224).
¹⁸⁹ Ibid. (223).
¹⁹⁰ Brubaker (2004).
¹⁹¹ Cederman & Girardin (2007), Buhaug et al. (2008), Cederman et al. (2009a & b, 2010, 2013), Wimmer et al. (2009).
¹⁹² Wimmer et al. (2009: 316-7).
¹⁹³ In general I am very sceptical of the suitability of quantitative analyses for capturing the complexities of ethnic conflicts. On its limitations see an excellent symposium in *Ethnopolitics* 7 (2-3) with contributions by Shale Horowitz, Pieter van Houten, Patrick James, Stuart Kaufman et al.. In the annotations only the article by Horowitz (2008) is referenced but the entire exchange is to be recommended.
¹⁹⁴ At the same time, instrumentalism is often listed as a distinct approach to the study of ethnicity, nationalism and ethnic conflict, apart from constructivism, see for example Varshney (2002). For the reasons detailed above, here I locate it at the transition from neo-realism to a narrow constructivism. Notwithstanding the explanatory value of classic elite theory per se, I fail to see how a strict instrumentalism that in itself has very little distinct to say about identity makes a unique contribution to a more comprehensive understanding of culture and identity.
¹⁹⁵ Hobsbawm & Ranger (1984), Hobsbawm (1990).
¹⁹⁶ Brass (1993: 111).
¹⁹⁷ Hobsbawm & Ranger (1984).
¹⁹⁸ Cohen (1974: 92). Consequent with such a fuzzy conception of ethnicity, Abner Cohen goes so far as to declare London City stockbrokers an 'ethnic group' and compares them to Nigerian

Hausa traders at work among Yoruba communities. To him, 'city men are socio-culturally as distinct within British society' – an interest group that shares similar values and norms, and is organised in a loose network based on similar patterns of symbolic behaviour, language, etc. – 'as are the Hausa within Yoruba society' (ibid.: 99).

¹⁹⁹ Gellner (2006: 56).

²⁰⁰ Michels (1915).

²⁰¹ Mosca (1939).

²⁰² Pareto (1976 [1902-3], 2009 [1901]).

²⁰³ Putnam (1976: 22).

²⁰⁴ Bottomore (1964), Putnam (1976), Parry (1977), Malešević (2004, 2006a, 2010).

²⁰⁵ Christia (2012: 46, 7).

²⁰⁶ Anderson (2006: 7).

²⁰⁷ Malešević (2004: 123).

²⁰⁸ Ibid. (126).

²⁰⁹ Campbell (1998a), McSweeney (1999), Zehfuss (2002, 2006), Weber (2010).

²¹⁰ Weber (2010: 80).

²¹¹ Onuf (1989).

²¹² Posner (2005b) Habyarimana et al (2007), Eifert et al (2010).

²¹³ Ibid. (2005b: 11).

²¹⁴ Christia (2012: 46).

²¹⁵ Posner (2005b: 12).

²¹⁶ Ibid. (14).

²¹⁷ Olzak (2006: 36).

²¹⁸ Posner (2005b: 252).

²¹⁹ Ibid. (12).

²²⁰ The notion of scientific objectivism is critically discussed in Kuhn (1996 [1962]), Haraway (1988), Porter (1995), and Daston & Galison (2007). Together with 'presentism' and 'culturalism' Ken Booth (1999) has famously identified 'scientific objectivism' and/or 'positivism' as one of the 'three tyrannies' impairing scientific inquiry in the social sciences.

²²¹ Another, more technical point of critique would be that, although trying to beware of reification, a realistic description of the social world is difficult without referring to common parlance, abstract shorthand terms that trace how people think and identify in social contexts. Whether this is doable without any generalizing terminology at all is debatable, and, as has been observed (Malešević 2006b; Jenkins 2008b), Brubaker himself in his writings lacks consistency here.

²²² Jenkins (2008b: 9).

²²³ Bourdieu (1990b: 39).

²²⁴ Brubaker (2004: 33, italics in original).

²²⁵ Ibid. (10, italics in original).

²²⁶ The most widely used definition of social categories is given by Mann as 'a class whose nature and composition is decided by the person who defines the category ... a category is therefore to be contrasted with a group, defined by the nature of the relations between the members' (1983: 34). Alternatively, Jenkins sums the distinction between group and category up as 'collective internal definition' versus 'collective external definition' (2008b: 105).

²²⁷ Ibid. (12).

²²⁸ Foucault (1974, 1980), Derrida (1978, 1981a & b, 1998), Said (2003 [1978]), Shapiro (1981, 1988, 2003), Laclau & Mouffe (1985), Deleuze (1988), Edkins (1999), Hall (2003a & b). The recognition that knowledge production is a function of modes of power and politics of representation constitutes a core insight of post-structuralism and is part of the standard repertoire of any post-structuralist text in IR, of which to give a comprehensive list here would not only be of little value but also simply impossible given their sheer number.

²²⁹ van Crefeld (1991, 2008), Münkler (2005), Kaldor (2007).

²³⁰ The concept of 'new wars' is exemplarily deconstructed in Kalyvas (2001), Berdal (2003), Newman (2004) and Melander et al. (2009).

²³¹ Posen (1993: 103).

²³² The concept of the 'security dilemma' was first put forward by John Herz (1950) and since then is part of the classic canon of neo- or structural realism.

²³³ Jervis (1978), Waltz (1979), Mearsheimer (2001), Gray (2009).

²³⁴ Posen (1993).

²³⁵ For example see Weber (2010).

²³⁶ Lake & Rothchild (1996), Fearon & Laitin (1996), David (1997), Kaufman (2001), Cederman (2010).

²³⁷ For example see Brown (1996), Wagner (1993), van Evera (1994).

²³⁸ For example see Kaufmann (1996, 1998), Roe (1999, 2004), Saideman (2001).

²³⁹ Roe (1999, 2004).

²⁴⁰ Wæver et al. (1993), Buzan et al. (1997).

²⁴¹ McSweeney (1996).

²⁴² Peoples & Vaughan-Williams (2010).

²⁴³ Christia (2012).

²⁴⁴ Ibid. (50).

²⁴⁵ Theories of factionalism in ethnic conflicts in particular are detailed in Deane (2004).

²⁴⁶ Chandra (2004, 2006), Posner (2005b).

²⁴⁷ Waltz (1979), Walt (1990), Mearsheimer (2001).

²⁴⁸ Another interesting fusion of instrumentalism/elite theory and the ethnic security dilemma is offered by Stuart Kaufman (1996a) who translates the classic Waltzian realist division of studying international relations via 'three images' onto ethnic conflicts, with the 'first image', originally 'the individual' and in Kaufman's application 'mass preferences', the 'second image', in Waltzian terminology 'the state' and here defined as 'elite-led violence – that is, ethnic war created by leaders of ethnic groups for their own political purposes' (ibid.: 149-50), and finally the 'third image', in both cases the anarchic international or inter-ethnic system epitomized by the dynamics of the security dilemma. Although Kaufman's approach commits to analysing 'how factors at all three levels interact' (ibid.: 150), his fusion of instrumentalism and neo-realism ultimately results in ingenuously carrying over the epistemological and ontological fallacies of both approaches: from a deterministic and tautological conceptualisation of social elites that fails to adequately explain how the 'interaction' of his first and second image work to presupposing ethnic groups as organic, static, substantive, distinct, homogeneous and bounded units with social agency, to analytically equating them with states operating under the presumption of a system-immanently anarchic international or inter-ethnic system.

²⁴⁹ Christia (2012: 20).

²⁵⁰ Ibid. (8).

²⁵¹ Ibid. (46).

²⁵² Gunter (1999a: 134).

²⁵³ Fierke (2007).

²⁵⁴ Davis & Moore (1997, 1998).

²⁵⁵ Davis & Moore (1997: 172).

²⁵⁶ Davis & Moore (1998: 93).

²⁵⁷ Maoz (1997).

²⁵⁸ Azar (1982).

²⁵⁹ Gurr (1993, & Harff 1994).

²⁶⁰ Davis & Moore (1997: 174).

²⁶¹ Ibid. (181). The authors found that the presence of an 'ethnic alliance' increases conflict between dyads of states by 2 weighted points on a scale from 0 to 60 (ibid.: 179).

²⁶² Davis & Moore (1998: 100).

²⁶³ Gleditsch et al. (2008), Cederman et al. (2009a & b, 2013), and Salehyan (2007, 2008, 2009).

²⁶⁴ Petersen (2004: 39). She detected a 3.4 weighted points amplitude towards conflictual dyadic interaction on the same scale from 0 to 60 (ibid.: 36).

²⁶⁵ Saideman (2001: 181).

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Cetinyan (2002), Woodwell (2004), Jenne (2006, 2010), Gleditsch et al. (2008), Cederman et al. (2009a & b, 2013), Salehyan (2007, 2008, 2009),

²⁶⁸ Jenne (2010: 123-4).

²⁶⁹ van Evera (1994: 20).

²⁷⁰ Salehyan (2007, 2008, 2009).

²⁷¹ Lundgren (2007).

²⁷² Ganguly (1998).

²⁷³ Salehyan (2009: 53).

²⁷⁴ Ganguly (1998).

²⁷⁵ Ibid. (33, 34, n. 1).

²⁷⁶ Ibid. (27, 29).

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- ²⁷⁷ Those are, on the side of the target state, genocide, forced mass population transfers, i.e. ethnic cleansing, and forced assimilation. In contrast are 'methods of managing differences' such as arbitration, federalisation or power-sharing (McGarry & O'Leary 1993).
- ²⁷⁸ Brubaker (1996), Kaufman (1996b) Saideman (1998), Horowitz (2001) De Votta (2005), Jenne (2006) Coakley (2008).
- ²⁷⁹ Saideman (1998: 133).
- ²⁸⁰ Adamson (2013).
- ²⁸¹ Gagnon (2004), Caspersen (2010).
- ²⁸² Horowitz (2001: 354).
- ²⁸³ Entessar (1992), Gurr & Harff (1994), Kaufmann (1996), Kirisci & Winrow (1997), Byman (1998), Freij (1998), Helsing (2004), Husain & Shumock (2006), Milton-Edwards & Hinchcliffe (2008), Rear (2008), Salehyan (2007, 2008, 2009).
- ²⁸⁴ However, the term 'internationalization' itself might be an anachronism in an inaccessible mountain terrain beyond any attempt to enforce the law, monitor and police the borders or keep tabs on comings and goings. This is to say that the concept of 'internationalization of a conflict' does not mean the same in the Kurdish mountains as at the border separating the two Koreas. Until recent advances in satellite technology, generations of mountain dwellers with clan links encompassing the entire region and with the interchangeable expertise of pastoralists, smugglers, and insurgents have moved goods, arms, and drugs on hidden paths and hazardous tracks only known to their kin as freely as if in the Schengen Area. International borders have mostly existed on paper and in the heads of bureaucrats in the nationalising and state-building capitals of Tehran, Ankara, Baghdad, and Damascus.
- ²⁸⁵ Walt (1985, 1990).
- ²⁸⁶ Vasquez (2003), Little (2007), Kaufman et al. (2007).
- ²⁸⁷ Entessar (1992: 54).
- ²⁸⁸ The first military application of the alliance took place in 1956 when Iranian and Iraqi forces in joint operations crushed the uprising of Djiwanroji Kurds in Iran (Nezan 1993: 64).
- ²⁸⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁹⁰ Phillips (2007).
- ²⁹¹ Artens (2012), Černý (2014a).
- ²⁹² Bull (2002 [1977]).
- ²⁹³ Esmark (2004: 121).
- ²⁹⁴ Ashley (1984: 240, italics in original).
- ²⁹⁵ Youngs (1999: 25).
- ²⁹⁶ Weber (1970 [1919]: 78, italics in original).
- ²⁹⁷ Aalberts (2012: 14).
- ²⁹⁸ Hinsley (1986: 158, 26).
- ²⁹⁹ Frankel (1973: 38).
- ³⁰⁰ Morgenthau (2005 [1951]: 258-9).
- ³⁰¹ Tiunov (1993: 326).
- ³⁰² Vincent (1974: 14).
- ³⁰³ Aalberts (2012: 62-3).
- ³⁰⁴ The most prominent example is perhaps Krasner's (1999) division into 'interdependence sovereignty' as political sovereignty and various legal expressions of sovereignty such as 'Westphalian sovereignty' or the exclusivity of sovereignty over a particular territory, 'legal sovereignty' strictly spoken, i.e. states recognizing each other as peers in the international system, and 'domestic sovereignty' as how authority within the state is structured.
- ³⁰⁵ Simpson (2008).
- ³⁰⁶ Morgenthau (2005 [1951]: 34).
- ³⁰⁷ Aalberts (2012: 64).
- ³⁰⁸ 'Sovereignty like pregnancy, is either present or absent, never only partially realized' (James 1999: 462). Clearly, James' understanding of pregnancy is limited and almost offensively normative as the wide occurrence of 'partially realised pregnancies' due to miscarriages up to the third trimester tragically attests. How equally limited and normative his understanding of sovereignty is this study will show.
- ³⁰⁹ Anderson (1974), Claude (1989), Little (1989), Schroeder (1989), Craig & George (1995), Hall (1999), Knutsen (1999), Buzan & Little (2000), Carr (2001 [1939]), Mearsheimer (2001), Kissinger (2003).
- ³¹⁰ Wendt (1999: 9).
- ³¹¹ Ibid.
- ³¹² Biersteker (2010).

³¹³ Fukuyama (1989: 4).
³¹⁴ Biersteker (2010: 158).
³¹⁵ Waltz (1979: 93).
³¹⁶ Ibid. (95).
³¹⁷ Camilleri (2008: 35).
³¹⁸ Walker (1993), Bartelson (1995), Fowler & Bunk (1995), Biersteker & Weber (1996), Jackson (2007), Krasner (2009).
³¹⁹ Held (1995, 2000), Castells (1996, 1997, 1998), Youngs (1999, & Kofman 2008), Cameron et al. (2006), Agnew (2009), Cohen (2012).
³²⁰ Weber (1995), Holzgrefe & Keohane (2003), Welsh (2003) Malmvig (2006), Bellamy (2009), Cunliffe (2011).
³²¹ Krasner (1999).
³²² As will be discussed shortly Bartelson (1995), Weber (1995), and Biersteker & Weber (1996) are notable exceptions to this tendency.
³²³ Biersteker (2010: 162).
³²⁴ Malmvig (2006: 13).
³²⁵ 'However, Walker does suggest tentatively that gender, culture and class can be introduced into the theories of International Relations without reading these identities through the concept of sovereignty' (Ibid.).
³²⁶ Biersteker & Weber (1996: 3).
³²⁷ Tilly (1975, 1994), Smith (1983, 1995), Mann (1986, 1993), Hechter (2001), Anderson (2006), Gellner (2006).
³²⁸ In Meyer et al. (1997) this generalization of patterns and claims to universality of the nation state is carried to extremes when the authors contend to have identified over the past 200 years the emergence of a 'world-culture' with the nation state template as the constitutive feature.
³²⁹ Breuilly (2005), Wimmer (2008, 2012, & Feinstein 2010).
³³⁰ Strang (1990), Chatterjee (1993, 1999), Young (1994, 2012), Escobar (1995), Hansen & Stepputat (2001), Spruyt (2005), Anghie (2007), Amin-Khan (2012), Hobson (2012). For a study in this context specific to Iraq, see Rear (2008), on which I draw in later chapters.
³³¹ Amin-Khan (2012: 50).
³³² Cohen et al. (1981), Buzan (1991), Huntington (2002).
³³³ It has to be noted though that Tilly at times emphasizes the uniqueness of the European state-formation process when he writes, 'the European state-building experiences will not repeat themselves in new states. The connections of the new states to the rest of the world have changed too much' (1975: 81). On the following page, though, he contradicts himself by identifying several parallels between state-formation processes in eighteenth/nineteenth century Europe and the non-European world in the twentieth century (ibid.: 82). For a detailed discussion of Anderson in this contest see Amin-Khan (2012).
³³⁴ The different trajectories of state formation in Europe and the decolonized world were first brought to prominence by Alavi (1972).
³³⁵ Amin-Khan (2012: 50).
³³⁶ Young (1994: 283).
³³⁷ This 'capitalism-imperialism nexus' in the postcolonial states Amin-Khan (2012) juxtaposes with the 'capitalism-nation state nexus' in Europe that was aimed at strengthening capitalist development in Europe.
³³⁸ Robinson (1986).
³³⁹ This view also forms the core of the rich body of literature subsumed under 'dependency theory', of which Wallerstein (1974, 1980, 1989), Frank (1979, 1981) Cardoso & Faletto (1979), Tausch et al. (2000), and Harvey (2003) are but the most prominent examples.
³⁴⁰ Amin-Khan (2012: 32, 107).
³⁴¹ Hardt & Negri (2000).
³⁴² Alavi (1972), Bhabha (1990), Davidson (1992), Chatterjee (1993), Ayoob (1995), Hansen & Stepputat (2001), Premnath (2003), Amin-Khan (2012). On how these patterns are perpetuated in the era of globalization see, among others, Canterbury (2005) and Amin-Khan (2012).
³⁴³ Keane (1996), Taylor (1999), Gourevitch (2000), Melvern (2000), Mamdani (2001).
³⁴⁴ Rae (2002).
³⁴⁵ Amin Khan (2012: 109, italics in original).
³⁴⁶ Rashid & Shaheed (1993), Stepan et al. (2011).
³⁴⁷ Rae (2002: 4).
³⁴⁸ Ibid. (3).

³⁴⁹ Sørensen (2001), Kreijen (2004), Rotberg (2002, 2010), Piazza (2008), Ghani & Lockhart (2009), Patrick (2011). See also the annual compilation, *The Failed State Index*, by the online magazine *Foreign Policy* (2013).

³⁵⁰ Jackson (1996).

³⁵¹ Drawing on Isaiah Berlin's dual conceptualization of liberty, Jackson (1996) refers to these dimensions as 'positive' and 'negative sovereignty'.

³⁵² Spruyt (1994), Krasner (1999), Raič (2002), Shaw (2003).

³⁵³ Fowler & Bunck (1995), Raič (2002).

³⁵⁴ Weber (1970 [1919]: 78).

³⁵⁵ Jackson (1996).

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.* (21).

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁸ Fűredi (1994), Inayatullah (1996), Yew (2003), Hobson (2012).

³⁵⁹ Jackson (1996: 168).

³⁶⁰ Said (2003 [1978]).

³⁶¹ Yew (2003: 79).

³⁶² Bull & Watson (1984: 430).

³⁶³ Fűredi (1994: 94).

³⁶⁴ This question and the corresponding literature, which to cover would go well beyond the scope of this study, are discussed in Mann (2013).

³⁶⁵ Heater (1994), Whelan (1994), Moore (1998), Lynch (2002), Raič (2002), Hannum (1996, & Babbitt 2006), Manela (2007).

³⁶⁶ Jennings (1956: 56).

³⁶⁷ Moore (1998).

³⁶⁸ The extent to which benchmarks of liberal democracy, pluralism, modernization, and good governance were applied to non-European societies for recognition as sovereign states by non-democratic, non-inclusive, imperialist European powers and how these double standards legitimized the colonial and mandate system is problematised in Strang (1996). A similar point is made by Doty (1996) in her deconstruction of the colonial encounter and her critique of how mainstream IR theorizes states in the 'Third World', in particular the Jacksonian 'quasi state'.

³⁶⁹ 'Stated simply, *uti possidetis* provides that states emerging from decolonisation shall presumptively inherit the colonial administrative borders that they held at the time of independence (...) The relevance of *uti possidetis* today is evidenced by the practice of states during the dissolution of the former Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia, apparently sanctifying the former internal administrative lines as interstate frontiers' (Ratner 1996: 590). The Badinter Commission for former Yugoslavia favoured the application of *uti possidetis* in order to reduce 'the prospect of armed conflict' stemming from irredentist claims and thus 'providing the only clear outcome in such situations', because the envisaged democratic and cosmopolitan successor states were thought 'to function within any borders' (*ibid.*: 591). Despite the obvious fallacy and subsequently evidenced failure of these assumptions, *uti possidetis* today enjoys the status of a quasi default rule of international law.

³⁷⁰ Falk (2002: 33, italics in original). Examples are the peaceful secession of Slovakia from Czechoslovakia in 1992, and the government of Ethiopia, after a 30-year struggle, yielding to a referendum on independence being held in Eritrea in 1993. In a ground-breaking rule in August 1998, the Canadian Supreme Court declared that the federal government in Ottawa would have no legal basis to deny the government of Quebec the right to secession, if a clear majority of Québécois expressed their support in a public referendum (Guibernau 2000: 28).

³⁷¹ Hannum (1996), Bartkus (1999), Dugard & Raič (2006), Pavković & Radan (2007).

³⁷² Pegg (1998), Bahcheli et al. (2004).

³⁷³ Caspersen & Stansfield (2011).

³⁷⁴ Geldenhuys (2009).

³⁷⁵ King (2001).

³⁷⁶ Harvey (2010).

³⁷⁷ Kolstø (2006).

³⁷⁸ Pegg (1998: 1).

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁰ Bahcheli et al (2004: 8).

³⁸¹ Harvey (2010).

³⁸² Caspersen & Stansfield (2011), Caspersen (2012).

³⁸³ Caspersen & Stansfield (2011: 3). Clearly, Stansfield himself is not convinced to what extent an aspiration to statehood should serve as a criterion for selecting his case studies and whether

the chosen definition of 'unrecognised state' complies with the complexities and ambiguities of the studied cases, in particular the Kurdistan Region. While in the introduction to their edited volume he argues with Caspersen for the former (Caspersen & Stansfield 2011), in the following chapter, co-authored with Harvey, the duo adopts Harvey's terminology of 'de facto independent territories', not states, as they seem to share Harvey's previous doubts about an aspiration to statehood as a defining function of these political entities (Harvey & Stansfield 2011). This inconsistency further highlights the difficulties for international relations scholars in comprehensively situating these objects of their study in international relations theory and the ambiguities of said political entities' status.

³⁸⁴ Kolstø (2006: 723-4).

³⁸⁵ Tamás (1996: 172, 181).

³⁸⁶ Caspersen (2012).

³⁸⁷ As detailed earlier, the cases of recognition of secession in the post-Cold War order remain the exception that proves the rule. Both Eritrea in 1993 and South Sudan in 2011 only gained recognition as independent sovereign states once the states from which they had seceded, Ethiopia and Sudan, had acquiesced. Only the Republic of Kosovo gained limited, albeit wide, recognition as an independent sovereign state against Serbia's objection and refusal to come to terms with it. To what extent Kosovo constitutes a precedent then is heavily debated in IR and international law (Summers 2011; Ker-Lindsay 2012).

³⁸⁸ Duffy-Toft (2005).

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.* (2-3).

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.* (3).

³⁹¹ Barth (1998 [1969]), Neumann (1996), Rattansi (1999), Eriksen (2002), Brubaker (2004), Malešević (2004, 2006a), Jenkins (2008a & b).

³⁹² Weber (1978 [1922]).

³⁹³ The concept of the other as defining the self can be traced back to G.W.F. Hegel's master-slave dialectic and runs like a red thread through Western philosophy as analogous to asymmetric yet constitutive relations whether it is employed to explain domination through power/knowledge in a Foucauldian sense, in the post-colonial conceptualisation of an Edward Said or Frantz Fanon, or for deconstructing gender relations in a male-dominated culture. The exception is Levinasian ethics, in which the self bears a responsibility, a moral obligation towards the other inherent to us as human beings (Campbell & Shapiro 1999).

³⁹⁴ Johnson (1981: viii).

³⁹⁵ Derrida (1978, 1981a & b, 1982, 1998), Edkins (1999), Fagan et al. (2007), Zehfuss (2009).

³⁹⁶ Isajiw (2000), Jenkins (2008a).

³⁹⁷ Foucault (1972).

³⁹⁸ Jenkins (2008b: 12).

³⁹⁹ Brubaker (2004: 10, italics in original).

⁴⁰⁰ Weber (1978 [1922]: 389).

⁴⁰¹ Eriksen (2002: 10, italics in original).

⁴⁰² Hall (1996: 6).

⁴⁰³ Jenkins (2008b: 5).

⁴⁰⁴ Rattansi (1999: 84).

⁴⁰⁵ Calhoun (1997: 5).

⁴⁰⁶ Chandra (2006: 399).

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.* (420).

⁴⁰⁸ Posner (2005b: 12-3).

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁰ Wimmer (2008, 2012). Another example where ethnic identity is operationalized either as the dependent or independent variable according to context is the work of James Fearon and David Laitin, see Fearon & Laitin (1996, 2000), Fearon (2004) for their individual contextual approaches.

⁴¹¹ Wimmer (2008: 1009-10).

⁴¹² Fierke (2007: 81).

⁴¹³ *Ibid.* (81-2).

⁴¹⁴ Quoted in McDowall (2007: 464-5).

⁴¹⁵ Brown (1924), Helmreich (1974), O'Shea (2004), Özoğlu (2004), Bozarslan (2003, 2007), McDowall (2007).

⁴¹⁶ Hanioglu (2006: 3). On the rise of Turkish national sentiment during the Hamidian era, which among other factors was greatly influenced by 'Western' Orientalist discourse and on which the

CUP and its leading intellectuals built their ideology, see Kushner (1977) and Hanioglu (2006, 2010).

⁴¹⁷ Hanioglu (2006: 4).

⁴¹⁸ On the politics of Turkification in the early years of the Republic, see Bali (2006).

⁴¹⁹ Poulton (1997: 97).

⁴²⁰ On the fate of Jewish and Armenian minorities in the Turkish Republic in the 1920/30s, see Görgü-Guttstadt (2006) and Pekesen (2006). On the Greek mass expulsion from Turkey, see Clark (2006).

⁴²¹ For example, in 1926, Turkish foreign minister, Tawfiq Rushdi Saracoğlu, put it in illustratively blunt terms: 'In [the Kurdish] case, their cultural level is so low, their mentality so backward, that they cannot be simply in the general Turkish body politic ... they will die out, economically unfitted for the struggle for life in competition with the more advanced and cultured Turks ... as many as can will emigrate into Persia and Iraq, while the rest will simply undergo the elimination of the unfit.' (quoted in McDowall 2007: 200).

⁴²² Taspinar (2005: 59).

⁴²³ Jung (2001, & Piccoli 2001), Kirişçi (2006), Lundgren (2007), Göçek (2011).

⁴²⁴ Göçek (2011: 99).

⁴²⁵ Jung & Piccoli (2001: 149-50).

⁴²⁶ Göçek quotes a 2006 (sic!) public opinion survey in Turkey, in which 57 percent of those polled stated that the Copenhagen Criteria for Turkey's accession to the EU 'were similar to those required by the Sèvres Treaty' and 78 percent opined that 'the West wants to divide and break up Turkey like they broke up the Ottoman Empire' (2011: 98).

⁴²⁷ Ibid. (120).

⁴²⁸ Jung & Piccoli (2001: 116-7).

⁴²⁹ Quoted in ibid. (117).

⁴³⁰ Quoted in Göçek (2011: 154).

⁴³¹ Lundgren (2007).

⁴³² Bromley (1994: 135).

⁴³³ Ibid.

⁴³⁴ In this, Iraq resembled a well-established nineteenth century practice of the European great powers imposing alien dynasties on states that had recently gained independence, the most prominent example being Otto from the Bavarian House of Wittelsbach who became King of Greece in 1832 by dictate of the United Kingdom, France, Russia, and Prussia.

⁴³⁵ Olson (1992), Dodge (2003), Catherwood (2004), Sluglett (2007), Stansfield (2007a), Tripp (2007), Marr (2011). Aside from personal connections the British had established with Faisal – T. E. Lawrence and Gertrude Bell acted as his most outspoken advocates with Winston Churchill – strategic considerations preponderated. After the French expelled Faisal from Syria in July 1920 – his reign as king of Greater Syria lasted only four months and eighteen days – the Hashemites had to be indemnified somehow. Britain, the great power with the largest Muslim population, could ill afford to flout Hussein bin Ali, the Sharif of Mecca, the highest authority in Islam after Turkish Kemalists had abolished the Caliphate. The Hashemites were also needed as a counterweight against the power grabs of Ibn Saud and his *Ikhwan* (Paris 1998). Additionally, Gertrude Bell and Sir Percy Cox, the British High Representative in Mesopotamia, considered Shi'i incapable of government – Sir Percy being influenced by his recent experiences in Persia – and counted on assuring Faisal's unquestioning loyalty by keeping him in a state of dependence as a non-native among a hostile populace (Olson 1992; Catherwood 2004; Sluglett 2007).

⁴³⁶ Catherwood (2004).

⁴³⁷ Dodge (2003), Natali (2005), McDowall (2007), Sluglett (2007).

⁴³⁸ Natali (2005: 28-9).

⁴³⁹ McDowall (2007), Stansfield (2007a).

⁴⁴⁰ Dawood (2003), Dodge (2003), Stansfield (2007a).

⁴⁴¹ As early as 1919, one of the few dissenters of this policy, Major E. B. Soane, who favoured direct colonial administration for the Kurds, noted: 'Revival of the tribal system was ... a retrograde movement. Already South Kurdistan had become largely detribalized and a measure of prosperity, in consequence, had been its lot in pre-war times. Now, the political officer, accepted the views of Sheikh Mahmoud, devoted his energies to re-tribalizing. Every man who could be labelled a tribesman was placed under a tribal leader. The idea was to divide South Kurdistan into tribal areas under tribal leaders ... Ideal for the clansman but fatal for trade, civilization and tranquillity' (quoted in McDowall 2007: 157).

⁴⁴² Helmreich (1974), Catherwood (2004), Sluglett (2007), Stansfield (2007a), Tripp (2007), Fromkin (2009), Marr (2011), Barr (2012).

⁴⁴³ Olson (1992), Shields (2004), Asadi (2007), McDowall (2007), Sluglett (2007), Stansfield (2007a). Given the importance of oil in Iraq's recent history, a word needs to be said about the extent to which the oil riches of the Mosul *vilayet* influenced British imperialist design and its ultimate incorporation into the new state of Iraq (Kent 1976; Mejcher 1976; Gruen 2004). Advocates of black gold conspiracy theories would prefer to have it that all future Kurdish misfortune is rooted in imperialistic grabs for the Kirkuk field, a seemingly everlasting well of fortune that presently contributes almost half of Iraq's oil exports. At closer scrutiny, however, such arguments appear less clear-cut. Unlike the oil fields in Persia and at the confluence of the Euphrates and the Tigris, large deposits were suspected in Mosul province but were only confirmed in 1927 – in Churchill's considerations they are said to have played a minor role (Catherwood 2004), and are generally considered secondary by McDowall (2007), while Asadi (2007) quotes Council of Ministers minutes that emphasized the importance given to possible future oil discoveries.

⁴⁴⁴ The 'Brussels Line' was a provisional frontier between Turkey and Iraq suggested by Swedish diplomat Hjalmar Banting to a special session of the Council of the League of Nations convening in Brussels (Taha 2013).

⁴⁴⁵ Cuthell (2004), Stansfield (2007a), Tripp (2007), Marr (2011). For a general depiction of society in the Mosul *vilayet* in the years after World War One and firsthand accounts of British policy via the Kurds, see Edmonds (1957) and Fieldhouse (2002).

⁴⁴⁶ On the same day Iraq joined the League of Nations as an independent state, 3 October 1932, the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of June 1930 went into force, sustaining the relationship of dependency between the two unequal partners in exploitation, the puppet-regime in Baghdad and its string-puller in London. The British Mandate of Mesopotamia had ended in name only.

⁴⁴⁷ Faisal II became the last king of Iraq in 1939 at the age of three after his father, Ghazi bin Faisal, had been killed in a mysterious car crash after only six turbulent years on the Hashemite throne. The unfortunate Faisal, gunned down with his entire family in the 14 July 1958 Revolution, was immortalized as the caricature of a spoiled royal brat in the Belgian comic series *The Adventures of Tintin* by Hergé (Farr 2001).

⁴⁴⁸ Elliot (1996), Stansfield (2007a), Tripp (2007), Marr (2011).

⁴⁴⁹ Fattah (2003).

⁴⁵⁰ Stansfield (2007a: 28-9).

⁴⁵¹ Ibid. (29).

⁴⁵² Ibid.

⁴⁵³ Dodge (2003).

⁴⁵⁴ Stansfield (2007a: 29).

⁴⁵⁵ For an insightful, post-structuralist analysis of how the colonial legacy has and continues to shape the travails of the three most prominent 'hotspots' of the wider Middle East – Afghanistan, Palestine, and Iraq – see Gregory (2004).

⁴⁵⁶ Evans (1982).

⁴⁵⁷ Cuthell (2004).

⁴⁵⁸ Ibrahim (1983), Asadi (2007), McDowall (2007), Stansfield (2007a), Tripp (2007), Marr (2011), Barr (2012).

⁴⁵⁹ McDowall (2007).

⁴⁶⁰ The most notorious of these firebrands was the afore mentioned Sheikh Mahmoud Barzinj, who the British had installed as *hukumdar* (governor) of Sulaymaniah. Sheikh Mahmoud interpreted his position quite differently and soon declared himself 'King of Kurdistan'. He kept challenging British quasi-colonial rule in successive revolts until the 1930s when he was finally defeated by the British Royal Air Force (Jwaideh 2006 [1960], McDowall 2007; Tripp 2007). On the effects of this tribal policy on Iraqi society in detail and on the RAF's air campaigns, see Dodge (2003).

⁴⁶¹ Asadi (2007).

⁴⁶² Ibid.

⁴⁶³ Yildiz (2007: 14).

⁴⁶⁴ Jwaideh (2006 [1960]).

⁴⁶⁵ Gunter (1992), Jwaideh (2006 [1960]).

⁴⁶⁶ Sassoon (1987).

⁴⁶⁷ Batatu (1978).

⁴⁶⁸ Natali (2005: 45).

⁴⁶⁹ On the Musa Dagh-like fate of the Republic of Mahabad, the standard works are still Eagleton (1963) and Ghassemlou (1965); see also Koochi-Kamali (2007) and Vali (2011).

⁴⁷⁰ The party's official name was *Kurdish Democratic Party* (KDP-I), the adjunct I for Iran is used to distinguish it from Mullah Mustafa's *Kurdish Democratic Party* in Iraq (KDP).

⁴⁷¹ The name was changed to *Kurdistan Democratic Party* (KDP) at its Third Congress in January 1953. The KDP's founding, history, and evolution will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

⁴⁷² McDowall (2007: 293).

⁴⁷³ Ghareeb (1981: 39).

⁴⁷⁴ Stansfield (2003a: 63).

⁴⁷⁵ Dann (1969), Fernea & Louis (1991), Louis & Owen (2002), Farouk-Sluglett & Sluglett (2003), Anderson & Stansfield (2005), Stansfield (2007a), Tripp (2007), Marr (2011).

⁴⁷⁶ Natali (2005: 69).

⁴⁷⁷ Rubin (2007).

⁴⁷⁸ For a detailed account of the Kurdish wars, see O'Ballance (1973, 1996), Jawad (1981), and Ibrahim (1983).

⁴⁷⁹ Ghareeb (1981), Jawad (1981), Stansfield (2003a, 2007a), Anderson & Stansfield (2005), Asadi (2007).

⁴⁸⁰ The particularly short-lived Ba'athist rule from February until November 1963 was a prime example of the regime in Baghdad weakened by unsustainable confrontations with Mullah Mustafa until its competitors – this time Abdul Salam Arif – deposed it (Ghareeb 1981; Farouk-Sluglett & Sluglett 2003; Stansfield 2007a; Tripp 2007; Marr 2011). The socialist Ba'ath Party, an explicitly pan-Arab nationalist movement, was founded in the 1940s in Syria with a preponderant nucleus of Arab Christians, who viewed nationalist ideology of unification and advocacy of social equity as a means to transcend religious and cultural differences. Although its founding theoretician Michel Aflaq endorsed democratic principles, the Ba'ath Party soon exhibited fascist tendencies, reminiscent of German nationalist socialism – from early on its *Weltanschauung* had been strongly influenced by Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Johann Gottfried Herder's concepts of a *Kulturnation* and etatism – after gaining power in Syria and Iraq in 1963, it became the ideological basis for the totalitarian regimes in both countries. Troubled by numerous internal divisions, of which the one between Soviet-oriented Syria and more centralist Iraq was the most prominent, Ba'athism became the major inner-Arab antagonist of non-aligned Nasserism during the 1950s and '60s (Mahr 1971; Roberts 1987; Devlin 1991).

⁴⁸¹ Ghareeb (1981).

⁴⁸² Ibid., Entessar (1992), Stansfield (2003a), Asadi (2007).

⁴⁸³ Brown (1924), Helmreich (1974), O'Shea (2004), Özoğlu (2004), Bozarslan (2003, 2007), McDowall (2007).

⁴⁸⁴ Bozarslan (2007: 45).

⁴⁸⁵ Özoğlu (2004).

⁴⁸⁶ Ali (1997).

⁴⁸⁷ Poulton (1997), Taspinar (2005), McDowall (2007), Hanioğlu (2011).

⁴⁸⁸ Yavuz: (2001: 6-9).

⁴⁸⁹ Bozarslan (2003: 179).

⁴⁹⁰ Cuthell (2004).

⁴⁹¹ Olson (1989), Jwaideh (2006 [1960]), McDowall (2007).

⁴⁹² Olson (1989), van Bruinessen (1992), McDowall (2007), Üngör (2011).

⁴⁹³ Van Bruinessen (1992, 1997), Nezan (1993), McDowall (2007), Üngör (2011).

⁴⁹⁴ Nezan (1993), Üngör (2011).

⁴⁹⁵ In (deliberate) misrepresentation of the true motives for the rebellion, 'the Kemalist leadership perceived the Sheikh Said rebellion as a counter-revolution which threatened the fledgling Turkish Republic' and the result of 'British agitation'. Yet, 'there seems to be no evidence of British support for Kurdish nationalist uprisings after the proclamation of the Turkish Republic' (Taspinar 2005: 80-1). Indeed, once the final border between Turkey and Iraq had been agreed on and the *vilayet* of Mosul been assigned to the British mandate in Iraq, it was in London's best interest to win the Turkish Republic as an ally, not to foment Kurdish self-determination across the region. External conspiracies aimed at undermining the Turkish state and employing its ethnic minorities as 'fifth columns', against better knowledge, has continued to serve as a defining myth of Turkish nationalism well into the present.

⁴⁹⁶ Van Bruinessen (1997).

⁴⁹⁷ Nezan (1993: 68). Any figures on casualties or victims of deportation are to be treated with utmost caution. Jwaideh (2006 [1960]), for instance, by referring to a French scholar from the mid-1940s, indicates 40,000 Kurds killed during the actual Dersim campaign.

⁴⁹⁸ 'In the 1930s, for instance, people who spoke Kurdish in public were fined five *kurus* per word,' (Barkey & Fuller 1998: 19).

⁴⁹⁹ David McDowall goes a step further in stating, 'Turkey had unmistakably intended genocide of the Kurdish people. In practice its intentions were defeated by the sheer size of the task' (2007: 210). I rather side with van Bruinessen (1997) who labels it an ethnocide.

⁵⁰⁰ Bozarslan (2007).

⁵⁰¹ Gunter (2010a: 58).

⁵⁰² Jwaideh (2006 [1960]). On the nature of these early rebellions McDowall opines, 'Although sometimes describes as a nationalist rebellion, the evidence indicated that it was not ... There is little solid evidence that Barzani has espoused the Kurdish cause during the course of his revolt ... If one looks at his actions ... it is more plausible that ... like any good tribal leader, he was constantly seeking to widen his regional authority' (2007: 293). Stansfield makes a similar point when noting, 'the major revolts of this period ... are all characterised by tribal aims and support, with little, if any, thought for Kurdish nationalism or for alliance with the urban-based nationalists in Iran and Iraq. If nationalism became part of these struggles, it was usually as a means of mobilizing support for the benefit of the tribal rebellion' (2003a: 61-2).

⁵⁰³ Ghareeb (1981), Entessar (1992), Gunter (1999a), Stansfield (2003a), Jwaideh (2006 [1960]), McDowall (2007).

⁵⁰⁴ Relations between Mulla Mustafa and the political leader of Mahabad and head of the KDP-I, Qazi Muhammad, were wrought with antagonisms (Ghareeb 1981; Entessar 1992; Stansfield 2003a; Jwaideh 2006 [1960]). Likewise, the KDP-I's attempt at self-governance in Mahabad was opposed by most of the Kurdish tribes in Iran, and its territorial control extended only to a few nearby villages and hamlets (Eagleton 1963; Ghassemlou 1965; Vali 2011), which makes it difficult to appreciate it as a genuine nationalist attempt at self-determination and separatism, let alone secession.

⁵⁰⁵ Ghareeb (1981), Entessar (1992), Stansfield (2003a), Jwaideh (2006 [1960]), McDowall (2007), Tahiri (2007).

⁵⁰⁶ Stansfield (2003a: 65).

⁵⁰⁷ Ghareeb (1981), Entessar (1992), Stansfield (2003a), Natali (2005), Jwaideh (2006 [1960]), McDowall (2007), Tahiri (2007).

⁵⁰⁸ Mulla Mustafa escaped with 500 followers from Iraq in an epic three weeks excursion through Iran, constantly harassed by the Iranian army; his time in the Soviet Union earned him the nickname the 'Red Mulla' ((Ghareeb 1981; Entessar 1992; Stansfield 2003a; Jwaideh 2006 [1960]; McDowall 2007).

⁵⁰⁹ In 1957 many members of the *Iraqi Communist Party* (ICP) joined the KDP – by then renamed *Kurdistan Democratic Party* at its Third Congress in 1953 – which, for a while, was reflected in another name change into United-KDP (U-KDP) and gave the party an even more distinct socialist character (Stansfield 2003a).

⁵¹⁰ Ibid. (69).

⁵¹¹ Ibid., Chapman (2011).

⁵¹² Stansfield (2003a: 70).

⁵¹³ Ibid. (71).

⁵¹⁴ O'Ballance (1973, 1996).

⁵¹⁵ Ghareeb (1981), Entessar (1992), Stansfield (2003a), Romano (2006), McDowall (2007), Tahiri (2007).

⁵¹⁶ Stansfield (2003a: 72).

⁵¹⁷ Ghareeb (1981), Entessar (1992), Stansfield (2003a), Natali (2005), Romano (2006), McDowall (2007), Tahiri (2007).

⁵¹⁸ The first Ba'athist regime had been deposed in a pro-Nasserist military coup on 18 November 1963. Between 1963 and the second Ba'athist coup of 1968 Iraq was ruled by the Nasserist Aref brothers, Abdul Salam and Abdul Rahman Aref.

⁵¹⁹ Stansfield (2003a: 75).

⁵²⁰ O'Leary & Salih (2005: 34).

⁵²¹ Stansfield (2003a: 75).

⁵²² McDowall (2007: 327).

⁵²³ Ghareeb (1981).

⁵²⁴ Ghareeb (1981), Entessar (1992), Korn (1994), O'Ballance (1996), Stansfield (2003a), Natali (2005), Romano (2006), McDowall (2007), Tahiri (2007).

⁵²⁵ A classified 'House Select Intelligence Report', published one year after the Kurdish defeat in *The Village Voice*, read, 'The recipients of U.S. arms and cash were an insurgent ethnic group fighting for autonomy [the Iraqi Kurds] in a country bordering our ally [Iran] (...) Documents in the Committee's possession clearly show that the President, Dr. Kissinger and the foreign head of state hoped that our clients would not prevail. They preferred instead that the insurgents simply continue a level of hostilities sufficient to sap the resources of our ally's neighbouring country (...) Even in the context of covert action, ours was a cynical enterprise,' (quoted in Korn 1994: 12).

⁵²⁶ Ibid.

⁵²⁷ In 1981 Sami Abdul Rahman had split from the KDP and formed his own party, yet after poor showings in the 1992 elections rejoined the KDP in the following year (Gunter 2010a).

⁵²⁸ Stansfield (2003a: 107).

⁵²⁹ Quoted in *ibid.*. Stansfield provides an in depth overview with organigrams on the political decision making process of KDP and PUK and in this aspect can be considered the standard work on the politics of Iraqi Kurdistan until the 2003 Iraq War.

⁵³⁰ Gunter (1999a: 21).

⁵³¹ Stansfield (2003a), Anderson (2007).

⁵³² Owtram (2012).

⁵³³ Sadiki (2009, 2010).

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.* (2010: 101).

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁶ Human Rights Watch (2011, 2012).

⁵³⁷ Reporters Without Borders (2012).

⁵³⁸ Dagher (2010), Artens (2011).

⁵³⁹ UK Border Agency (2011).

⁵⁴⁰ Romano (2006: 197).

⁵⁴¹ Interview with Omar Sheikhmous, Exeter, United Kingdom, 10 July 2012.

⁵⁴² Stansfield (2003a), Anderson (2007).

⁵⁴³ Waller (1981: 4).

⁵⁴⁴ Lenin (1978 [1905/6]: 433).

⁵⁴⁵ Anderson (2007: 134).

⁵⁴⁶ Waller (1981), Tourish (1998), Anderson (2007).

⁵⁴⁷ Quoted in Deutscher (2003: 74).

⁵⁴⁸ Anderson (2007: 135).

⁵⁴⁹ I had the privilege of attending as a guest the 2010 PUK Congress in Sulimaniyah and can attest that it was more controversial than its congresses had been before the Iraq War, with negotiations on party direction and leadership lasting for weeks.

⁵⁵⁰ Interview Sheikhmous *op cit.*.

⁵⁵¹ Stansfield (2003a: 81-2).

⁵⁵² Gunter (1999a, 2010a).

⁵⁵³ 'There are at least two stories I was told about the origins of this name. One is that he was given it while young in memory of an admired maternal uncle who had recently died. The other story is that even as a young boy, Jalal took a very serious attitude, spoke well, and was accordingly given a name of distinction. The name "Mam", however, is far from unique in Kurdish society' (*ibid.*: 23).

⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid.* (24).

⁵⁵⁵ Stansfield (2003a).

⁵⁵⁶ Interview Sheikhmous *op cit.*.

⁵⁵⁷ Quote from Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (1977) *Revolution in Kurdistan: The Essential Documents of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan*, New York: PUK Publications, quoted in Stansfield (2003a: 80).

⁵⁵⁸ Entessar (1992), Stansfield (2003a), Romano (2006), McDowall (2007).

⁵⁵⁹ Stansfield (2003a: 80).

⁵⁶⁰ Interview Sheikhmous *op cit.*.

⁵⁶¹ Romano (2006).

⁵⁶² Stansfield (2003a: 114).

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁴ Gunter (1999a), Stansfield (2003a), Romano (2006).

⁵⁶⁵ Artens (2013a), BBC (2013), van Wilgenburg (2013).

⁵⁶⁶ Interview with Abdul Razaq Mirza, Sulimaniyah, 11 June 2010.

⁵⁶⁷ Interview Sheikhmous *op cit.*.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁹ This more international orientation is also reflected in the experiences of my own field research in Iraqi Kurdistan, where I found members of the PUK to be considerably more accessible and willing to engage in critical reflections on their party's history than were the KDP's members.

⁵⁷⁰ Pope & Pope (1997), Jung & Piccoli (2001), Karpát (2004), Türsan (2004), Taspınar (2005), Zürcher (2009), Aknur (2012).

⁵⁷¹ Natali (2005), Taspınar (2005).

⁵⁷² Lipovsky (1992), Türsan (2004), Taspınar (2005).

⁵⁷³ Taspınar (2005: 92).

⁵⁷⁴ Waterbury (1993).

⁵⁷⁵ White (1998, 2000), Natali (2005), McDowall (2007).

⁵⁷⁶ White (2000: 98).

⁵⁷⁷ Karpát (1976), Neuwirth (2004), Duyar-Kienast (2005).

⁵⁷⁸ Musil (2011).

⁵⁷⁹ Waterbury (1993).

⁵⁸⁰ Ahmad (1981, 1993), Hale (1994), Pope & Pope (1997) Jung & Piccoli (2001), Zürcher (2009). The extent to which the 'March 1970 Manifesto' that granted autonomy to Iraq's Kurds unsettled the Kemalist establishment and influenced the military's rationale for a coup cannot be underestimated (Taspınar 2005; McDowall 2007).

⁵⁸¹ Ahmad (1981, 1993), Hale (1994), Pope & Pope (1997), Parla (1998), Jung & Piccoli (2001), Jacoby (2003), Zürcher (2009), Örnek & Üngör (2013).

⁵⁸² Nye (1977).

⁵⁸³ Dodd (1983), Harris (1985), Barkey (1990), Hale (1994), Pope & Pope (1997), Jung & Piccoli (2001), Zürcher (2009).

⁵⁸⁴ The influence on the radicalisation of young Turkish exiles during military rule in Turkey from 1970 until 1973 through their exposure to radical youth movements and student organisations as well as clandestine cells of exiles of fraternal NLMs in Europe, Sweden and East/West Germany in particular – from the *Baader-Meinhof Group*, to *Brigate Rosse*, to the *Panhellenic Liberation Movement* (PAK), to a myriad of Palestinian groups, to the *Mozambique Liberation Front* (FRELIMO) – cannot be underestimated. On the PKK networks among the diaspora in Europe, see Wahlbeck (1998, 1999), Lyon and Uçarer (2001), Eccarius-Kelly (2002), Keeler (2007), and Grojean (2011). It would be no exaggeration to claim that the PKK had the most effective diaspora support network in Europe operating in the 1980s/1990s.

⁵⁸⁵ Rae (2002).

⁵⁸⁶ Romano (2006).

⁵⁸⁷ Landau (1974), Ahmad (1993), Zürcher (2009), Örnek & Üngör (2013).

⁵⁸⁸ Jongerden & Akkaya (2011: 126).

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁰ Çelik (2002), Özcan (2006), Marcus (2007a), Jongerden & Akkaya (2011), Gunes (2012).

⁵⁹¹ Guevara (1998 [1961]), Debray (1968), Weitz (1986), Wickham-Crowley (1991, 1992), Childs (1995), Crouch (2009).

⁵⁹² White (2000), Çelik (2002), Özcan (2006), Jongerden & Akkaya (2011), Gunes (2012).

⁵⁹³ Marcus (2007a: 37). Two outspoken future PKK dissidents, Selim Çürükkaya and Selahettin Çelik, for example illustrate this trajectory. While the parents of both hail from moderate rural milieu, Çürükkaya was a student at Tunceli Teachers School and Çelik studied engineering in Ankara. Both spoke fluent Turkish and had the skills and opportunities for promising careers, supposedly embodying the verisimilitude of Turkish nationalist ideology that if Turkey's ethnic minorities would 'accept' and 'live' their Turkishness they would be rewarded by society with wealth and status. What they ultimately came to embody, though, was the failure of the Turkish nationalist, assimilationist myth. Interview with Selahettin Çelik, San Louis, France, 9 May 2010.

⁵⁹⁴ Quoted in McDowall (2007: 421).

⁵⁹⁵ Özcan (2006), Marcus (2007a).

⁵⁹⁶ Marcus (2007a: 17). It has to be noted, though, that until later in his life Öcalan only spoke a broken Kurdish while he was fluent in Turkish (Özcan 2006; McDowall 2007; Tahiri 2007).

⁵⁹⁷ Quoted in Marcus (2007a: 25).

⁵⁹⁸ Özcan (2006), Romano (2006), Marcus (2007a), McDowall (2007).

⁵⁹⁹ Özcan (2006).

⁶⁰⁰ Weber (2009 [1924]).

⁶⁰¹ Ibid. (328).

⁶⁰² Ibid. (358).

⁶⁰³ Ibid. (328).
⁶⁰⁴ Ibid. (359).
⁶⁰⁵ Foucault (1980, 1983, 1984).
⁶⁰⁶ Jermier (1993: 221).
⁶⁰⁷ Lee (1992: 42).
⁶⁰⁸ Weber (2009 [1924]).
⁶⁰⁹ Özcan (2006: 184).
⁶¹⁰ Lee (1992: 43).
⁶¹¹ Özcan (2006: 188).
⁶¹² Eccarius-Kelly (2012).
⁶¹³ Romano (2006).
⁶¹⁴ Palmer (1994), Starn (1995), McClintock (1998), Ellenbogen (1999), Rochlin (2003).
⁶¹⁵ Gunes (2012).
⁶¹⁶ Kirişci & Winrow (1997: 24).
⁶¹⁷ White (2000).
⁶¹⁸ Barkey & Fuller (1998: 23).
⁶¹⁹ Ibid. (24).
⁶²⁰ Gunes (2012: 11).
⁶²¹ White (2000), Özcan (2006), McDowall (2007), Watts (2010), Gunes (2012).
⁶²² Quoted in Gunes (2012: 72).
⁶²³ Quoted in *ibid.*.
⁶²⁴ Ibid.
⁶²⁵ Ibid. (73-4).
⁶²⁶ Tahiri (2007: 225).
⁶²⁷ White (2000), Watts (2010), Gunes (2012).
⁶²⁸ Özcan (2006), Marcus (2007a), Gunes (2012).
⁶²⁹ Gunes (2012: 90).
⁶³⁰ Quoted in *ibid.*
⁶³¹ Imset (1992), Kirişci & Winrow (1997), Barkey & Fuller (1998) White (2000), Çelik (2002), Natali (2005), Taspınar (2005), Özcan (2006), Romano (2006), Ergil (2007), McDowall (2007), Marcus (2007a), Tahiri (2007), Brauns & Kiechle (2010), Eccarius-Kelley (2011, 2012), Gunes (2012).
⁶³² White (2000), Marcus (2007a), Özcan (2006).
⁶³³ For a commensurate list of those attending and their fate in the years to come, see Çelik (2002).
⁶³⁴ Ahmad (1981, 1993), Hale (1994), Pope & Pope (1997), Parla (1998), Jung & Piccoli (2001), Çelik (2002), Jacoby (2003), Özcan (2006), Romano (2006), Marcus (2007a), Tahiri (2007), Zürcher (2009), Eccarius-Kelley (2011), Gunes (2012).
⁶³⁵ White (2000), Çelik (2002), Özcan (2006), Romano (2006), McDowall (2007), Marcus (2007a), Tahiri (2007), Brauns & Kiechle (2010), Eccarius-Kelley (2011), Gunes (2012).
⁶³⁶ Ben-Dor (1983), Bromley (1994), Halliday (2000, 2005), Owen (2004), Ayubi (2008), Zubaida (2009), Milton-Edwards (2011).
⁶³⁷ Marr (2011: 21).
⁶³⁸ Rear (2008: 151).
⁶³⁹ Quoted in Göçek (2011: 102).
⁶⁴⁰ Rear (2008: 153).
⁶⁴¹ Van Bruinessen (2000: 14).
⁶⁴² Imset (1992: 182).
⁶⁴³ Ibid.
⁶⁴⁴ Ibid. (30).
⁶⁴⁵ Ibid. (29).
⁶⁴⁶ Interview with Adel Murad, Erbil, Iraqi Kurdistan, 3 September 2010. The fact that the contact between Öcalan and Murad was facilitated by Iranian intelligence indicates that already a few months after the Iranian revolution Öcalan's PKK must have enjoyed good rapport with the new regime. On Iran's ambivalent relations with Turkey and how Tehran – whether under the Shah or under Khomeini – has often used Kurdish groups to destabilise its neighbour, see Olson (1998).
⁶⁴⁷ Interview Murad *op cit.*.
⁶⁴⁸ Interview Murad *op cit.*.
⁶⁴⁹ Marcus (2007a: 55).

⁶⁵⁰ 'Syria had occupied the Lebanese Bekaa Valley in 1976 to protect its own border,' and as part of its wider intervention in the Lebanese Civil War (1975 – 1990), 'and Syrian heavy artillery ringed the nearby hills' (ibid.: 56).

⁶⁵¹ Ibid. (55-6).

⁶⁵² Ibid. (56). In exchange for armed training and receiving clothing and other supplies, the PKK fighters committed to defending the camps in case of an Israeli raid. (ibid.).

⁶⁵³ Ibid. (57).

⁶⁵⁴ Interview Çelik op cit..

⁶⁵⁵ Quoted in Marcus (2007a: 58).

⁶⁵⁶ Olson (1997, 2000, 2001), Marcus (2007a), Scheller (2013).

⁶⁵⁷ Imset (1992), Olson (1997, 2000, 2001), Çelik (2002), Byman (2005), Marcus (2007a), McDowall (2007), Tejel (2011), Scheller (2013). On the risk of the PKK becoming a proxy in Syria's regional power plays, Öcalan remarked in 1983, 'of course I know this, but I need time. I know they want to use me, but I will use them as well', quoted in Marcus (2007a: 74). According to Marcus (ibid.) the younger brother of Hafez al-Assad, Cemil, took a special interest in the PKK and visited its Helwe Camp in 1982.

⁶⁵⁸ Imset (1992: 32).

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid., Çelik (2002), Marcus (2007a).

⁶⁶⁰ Marcus (2007a: 100).

⁶⁶¹ Quoted in Scheller (2013: 101).

⁶⁶² Interview with Sarkho Mahmoud, Sulimaniyah, Iraqi Kurdistan, 1 June 2010. At the time of the interview Mahmoud was no longer affiliated with the PUK but had become an official with *Gorran* who had split from the PUK the previous year.

⁶⁶³ While it can be considered established that the PKK also received support from Libya (Marcus 2007; Eccarius-Kelly 2011), since this dimension would go beyond the scope of this study, I did not further investigate this claim.

⁶⁶⁴ Interview Sheikmous op cit..

⁶⁶⁵ Davis & Moore (1998: 93).

⁶⁶⁶ Interview Murad op cit..

⁶⁶⁷ 'There were multiple contributing factors, including a feeling of national solidarity, getting away from the social control of the elders, for women, freedom from the patriarchy, individual interests (access to material and symbolic resources), and the attraction of a movement advocating armed struggle as opposed to the Syrian Kurdish parties which were considered "too moderate"' (Tejel 2011: 135).

⁶⁶⁸ Fierke (2007).

⁶⁶⁹ Mao (2005 [1937]), Guevara (1998 [1961]), Sarkesian (1975), Laqueur (2009 [1976]), Snow (1997).

⁶⁷⁰ Even its naming the HRK deliberately emulated Vo Nguyen Giap's first guerrilla, the *Vietnam Freedom Unit* (Çelik 2002).

⁶⁷¹ Imset (1992), Çelik (2002), Özcan (2006), Marcus (2007a), Eccarius-Kelly (2011).

⁶⁷² Imset (1992), Olson (1997), Çelik (2002), Marcus (2007a), Scheller (2013).

⁶⁷³ Imset (1992), Gunter (1996), Marcus (2007a).

⁶⁷⁴ Quoted in Imset (1992: 183) and Gunter (1996: 50-1).

⁶⁷⁵ Imset (1992: 184).

⁶⁷⁶ Imset (1992), Gunter (1996).

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁹ Pope & Pope (1997), Jung & Piccoli (2001), Lundgren (2007), Göçek (2011).

⁶⁸⁰ Galula (2006 [1964]), Laqueur (2009 [1976]), Brynen (1990), Kilcullen (2010).

⁶⁸¹ Artens (2012).

⁶⁸² Salehyan (2007, 2008, 2009).

⁶⁸³ Ibid. (2009).

⁶⁸⁴ Jenne (2006), Thyne (2006).

⁶⁸⁵ Salehyan (2009: 49).

⁶⁸⁶ Massoud Barzani in an interview with Turkish journalist Rafet Balli in 1993, quoted in Marcus (2007a:70).

⁶⁸⁷ Brubaker (2004: 10, italics in original).

⁶⁸⁸ Quoted in Marcus (2007a: 34) and McDowall (2007: 422).

⁶⁸⁹ Çelik (2002).

⁶⁹⁰ Quoted in Tahiri (2007: 2002).

⁶⁹¹ McDowall (2007).

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- ⁶⁹² Gunter (1990), White (2000), Özcan (2006), Marcus (2007a), McDowall (2007).
- ⁶⁹³ Imset (1992), Marcus (2007a).
- ⁶⁹⁴ Van Bruinessen (1986), Chubin & Tripp (1988), Hiro (1991), Entessar (1992), O'Ballance (1996), Stansfield (2003a, 2007a), McDowall (2007), Tahiri (2007).
- ⁶⁹⁵ Imset (1992), Çelik (2002), Özcan (2006), Marcus (2007a), McDowall (2007), Eccarius-Kelly (2011).
- ⁶⁹⁶ McDowall (2007).
- ⁶⁹⁷ Lieutenant General Kaya Yazgan, in charge of the Seventh Army Corps in southeast Anatolia in 1983, admitted: 'It was an unexpected event ... Up until then we didn't know Apo. His name was known, but he was not someone who was focused on. And besides, PKK militants were seen more as bandits ... The politicians in Ankara did not believe that this event was the first sign of a big start'. Quoted in Marcus (2007a: 83).
- ⁶⁹⁸ Imset (1992), White (2000), Çelik (2002), Marcus (2007a), Eccarius-Kelly (2011).
- ⁶⁹⁹ By March 2000, the number of village guards in southeast Anatolia had risen to about 70,000. On the phenomenon of village guards and the impact their creation is having on Kurdish society, most dramatically the salience of organized everyday violence and symbiosis with organized crime, see van Bruinessen (1996), Balta (2004), Jacoby (2005), and Jongerden (2007).
- ⁷⁰⁰ Interview with Fuad Hussein, Erbil, Iraqi Kurdistan, 21 September 2010. When confronted with evidence, he retracted, qualifying that 'these were different times then'.
- ⁷⁰¹ Imset (1992), McDowall (2007).
- ⁷⁰² Entessar (1992), Stansfield (2003a), Asadi (2007), McDowall (2007).
- ⁷⁰³ Van Bruinessen (1986), Entessar (1992), O'Ballance (1996), Stansfield (2003a), McDowall (2007), Tahiri (2007). Saddam Hussein exerted bloody revenge on the Barzanis for their 'treason' of siding with Iran. Already in 1975 Saddam Hussein had resettled large numbers of the Barzani tribe by force to south Iraq and then to a camp outside Erbil. In 1982 the Iraqi army raided this camp and seized all males over the age of thirteen to be paraded through the streets of Baghdad before summary execution. According to McDowall (2007) up to 8,000 Barzani males perished during this display of Saddam Hussein's thirst for vengeance.
- ⁷⁰⁴ Entessar (1992), Stansfield (2003a), McDowall (2007).
- ⁷⁰⁵ Quoted in PBS (2000).
- ⁷⁰⁶ 'With the negotiations in 1983/4 [the PUK] lost its innocence, we lost our moral and ideological superiority, we lost the trust of the people. After 1983/4 we no longer were what we used to be,' Omar Sheikhmous reminisced. Interview Sheikhmous op cit..
- ⁷⁰⁷ Interview Mahmoud op cit..
- ⁷⁰⁸ Entessar (1992), Stansfield (2003a), McDowall (2007).
- ⁷⁰⁹ McDowall (2007: 347).
- ⁷¹⁰ Olson (1998, 2001, 2004). According to Imset (1992) the alliance with the KDP also allowed the PKK to set up a camp on Iranian territory in the Urumiye region.
- ⁷¹¹ Interviews with Henri Barkey, Bethlehem, USA, 1 February 2011; Robert Olson, Lexington, USA, 9 March 2011; Michael Gunter, Cookeville, USA, 11 March 2011; Doğu Ergil, Istanbul, Turkey, 25 October 2011; Abbas Vali, Istanbul, Turkey, 8 May 2012.
- ⁷¹² Imset (1992).
- ⁷¹³ Interview Çelik op cit..
- ⁷¹⁴ The full text of the KDP communiqué detailing their many grievances with the PKK is quoted in Imset (1992: 186).
- ⁷¹⁵ Quoted in *ibid.* (187).
- ⁷¹⁶ Human Rights Watch (1993, 1995), Randal (1998), Hiltermann (2007), Stansfield (2007a), Tripp (2007), Marr (2011).
- ⁷¹⁷ Human Rights Watch (1993, 1995). According to Iraqi prosecutors during the 2007 trial of Ali Hassan al-Majid, 180,000 Kurds were killed during the Anfal Campaign (Sinan 2007).
- ⁷¹⁸ Natali (2008), Anderson & Stansfield (2009).
- ⁷¹⁹ Gunter (1990), Gürbey (1996).
- ⁷²⁰ Quoted in Imset (1992: 190). Together with Izmir AFB Incirlik AFB was the major NATO AFB in Turkey, with routinely about 50 U.S. reconnaissance planes, fighters and bombers stationed there. Saddam Hussein correctly anticipated that Incirlik AFB would serve as the major site of operations for deploying USAF in a potential second northern front during the coming Gulf War.
- ⁷²¹ Interview Çelik op cit.; see also interviews with Osman Öcalan, Koy Sanjaç, Iraqi Kurdistan, 12 and 16 September 2010 as well as with Nizamettin Taş and Halil Ataç, Erbil, Iraqi Kurdistan, 23 October 2011.
- ⁷²² Quoted in Human Rights Watch (1992: 38).

⁷²³ Gunter (1992, 2002, 2011b), Jabar (1992), Graham-Brown (1999), Stansfield (2007a), Tripp (2007), Charountaki (2010), Shareef (2010), Marr (2011).

⁷²⁴ Gunter (1992), Human Rights Watch (1992), Jabar (1992), Laizer (1996), Randal (1998), Stansfield (2003a), Romano (2006), Asadi (2007), McDowall (2007), Tahiri (2007). As during the *Anfal* campaign Abdullah Öcalan personally instructed his fighters on radio not to join in the *repareen* for the liberation of Iraqi Kurdistan. Referring to media reports from March 1991, White discloses that several PKK cadres refused that order, joined the Iraqi Kurdish *peshmerga*, and were summarily executed for their disobedience in what 'was the last reported large-scale PKK internal bloodletting' (2000: 145).

⁷²⁵ Jabar (1992).

⁷²⁶ On the reasons for the U.S. failure to support the popular uprisings of March 1991, see Graham-Brown (1999), Charountaki (2010), Shareef (2010), and Gunter (2011b). Essentially, U.S. decision makers feared that the international alliance they had crafted for the liberation of Kuwait would not hold together in pursuit of regime change in Iraq. Additionally, the U.S. did not seem eager to replace a strong Iraq, on which it still relied as a regional counterweight to revolutionary Iraq, with a country plunged into seemingly endless sectarian strife, a civil war that potentially would require the U.S. to commit troops to stabilise the country. President Bush, Secretary of Defence Dick Cheney and other U.S. political and military decision makers had repeatedly made clear that this was a price for regime change they were not willing to consider. This reading of U.S. motives is further substantiated by the autobiography of then CJCS General Colin Powell (1996), and in an interview with General Norman Schwarzkopf (Arango 2011), then Commander in Chief of CENTCOM and of the international coalition during the Gulf War, who expressed his regrets for the U.S. role during the 1991 uprisings that was dictated by balance of power considerations with Iran.

⁷²⁷ Gunter (1992), Human Rights Watch (1992), Jabar (1992), Laizer (1996), Randal (1998), Stansfield (2003a), Romano (2006), Tahiri (2007).

⁷²⁸ Gunter (1992), Laizer (1996), Randal (1998), Stansfield (2003a). In a callous about-face Deputy White House Spokesman Roman Popadiuk, when confronted with the plight of the Kurdish and Shi'a Arab people who had headed the president's call for liberation, declared on 29 March 1991: 'The issue of internal unrest in Iraq is an issue that has to be settled between the government and the people of Iraq. It's a decision for the people of Iraq to make.' Quoted in Human Rights Watch (1992: 42).

⁷²⁹ Kirişçi (1993, 1996), Aydın (1998, 2002), Hale (2003, 2007), Robins (2003a), Natali (2005), Yıldız (2007), Gunter (2011a).

⁷³⁰ Lundgren (2007).

⁷³¹ Frelick (1992), Graham-Brown (1999), Di Prizio (2002), Romano (2004), Rudd (2004).

⁷³² Gunter (1992), Laizer (1996), Randal (1998), Graham-Brown (1999), Stansfield (2003a).

⁷³³ While it is true that British PM John Major, when faced with the plight of Kurdish refugees in the icy mountains of the Iraqi-Turkish border, also exerted considerable pressure on the U.S. to intervene and for the first time formally proposed the idea of a humanitarian 'safe haven' at an EC Summit on 8 April 1991, this idea had been first suggested to him by Turgut Özal (Kirişçi 1996; Di Prizio 2002; Robins 2003a; Yıldız 2004; Gunter 2011a).

⁷³⁴ Frelick (1992), Kirişçi (1996).

⁷³⁵ This line of argument is further elaborated in Černý (forthcoming).

⁷³⁶ Gunter (1992), Laizer (1996), Randal (1998), Graham-Brown (1999), Stansfield (2003a), Natali (2005), Romano (2006), Asadi (2007), McDowall (2007), Tahiri (2007).

⁷³⁷ Ibid.

⁷³⁸ Gunter (1992), Laizer (1996), Graham-Brown (1999), Stansfield (2003a), Romano (2004), Asadi (2007), McDowall (2007).

⁷³⁹ Interview with Najmaldin Karim, Sulimaniyah, Iraqi Kurdistan, 6 September 2010, then the unofficial representative of the PUK in Washington, later the personal physician of Jalal Talabani, and today the Governor of Kirkuk.

⁷⁴⁰ Gunter (1992), Laizer (1996), Graham-Brown (1999), Stansfield (2003a, 2005, 2007a), Romano (2006), Asadi (2007), McDowall (2007). Both KDP and PUK went to great lengths in emphasising in their election campaigns the stability of the Iraqi state, illustrated in, for example, the KDP's slogan, 'autonomy for Kurdistan, democracy for Iraq' (McDowall 2007: 380).

⁷⁴¹ McDowall (2007: 381).

⁷⁴² Stansfield (2003a), Anderson & Stansfield (2005), Gunter (1993, 2007, 2011c), Romano (2004, 2006), Chorev (2007), Natali (2010), Wolff (2010), Caspersen (2012, & Stansfield 2011).

⁷⁴³ Economically, for example, the Kurdistan Region since 1991/2 has become so dependent on relief supplies in the first instance, and food imports today, that very few agricultural products

are grown there competitively today – based on my own observations, even watermelons are imported from Turkey. On how international aid since 1991 has shaped the economy and society of Iraqi Kurdistan, see Graham-Brown (1999), Leezenberg (2000, 2003, 2005), and Stansfield (2003a).

⁷⁴⁴ Imset (1992), Gürbey (1996), Gunter (1997), Kirisci & Winrow (1997), Barkey & Fuller (1998), White (2000), Çelik (2002), Özcan (2006), Marcus (2007a;), Eccarius-Kelly (2011), Gunes (2012).

⁷⁴⁵ Imset (1992), Olson (1997, 2000, 2001). Until then Syria had flatly denied that the PKK operated within Syrian controlled territory (including Lebanon) at all. When in 1992, during another bilateral meeting in Damascus, Turkish intelligence MIT confronted Syrian officials with videos showing Abdullah Öcalan going in and out of official buildings in Damascus such cover ups were no longer supportable (Imset 1992). Since then, Syria, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and in the wake of the Gulf War eager to establish better relations with the West, stepped up its efforts to limit PKK activities, at least to a degree that they were not easily verifiable, which ultimately resulted in Öcalan's expulsion in 1998.

⁷⁴⁶ Imset (1992), Gunter (1996, 1997), Ibrahim (2000), Çelik (2002), Marcus (2007a).

⁷⁴⁷ Imset (1992), Gürbey (1996), Gunter (1997), Çelik (2002), Özcan (2006), Marcus (2007a), Eccarius-Kelly (2011), Gunes (2012).

⁷⁴⁸ 'The PKK was as surprised as the state by the strength of the protests ... The PKK, which did not realise how much pent-up support it had in urban centres, had no plan for how to react to such an outburst. "The demonstrations broke out without any involvement of the PKK," insisted former PKK commander Sari Baran, whose claim was repeated by other PKK members' (Marcus 2007a: 142-3).

⁷⁴⁹ Çelik (2002: 128). My translation from the original German.

⁷⁵⁰ Marcus (2007a: 143). Personally, I tend to side with this interpretation of events. Given Abdullah Öcalan's personality, I believe he in particular must have been reluctant to loosen his grip and dominance of the nationalist struggle and discourse by permitting a conflation of the armed guerrilla fight with an uncontrollable public uprising – a reading of events that is supported by the PKK's behaviour throughout the 2000s.

⁷⁵¹ Kirisci (1993, 1996), Barkey (1996), Aydın (1998, 2002), Graham-Brown (1999), Di Prizio (2002), Rudd (2004), Hale (2003, 2007).

⁷⁵² Quoted in Gunter (1996: 52).

⁷⁵³ Robins (2003a), Lundgren (2007).

⁷⁵⁴ Robins (2003a: 321).

⁷⁵⁵ Černý (forthcoming).

⁷⁵⁶ Gunter (1996, 1997, 2011a), Randal (1998).

⁷⁵⁷ Interview with Qamran Qaradaghi, London, UK, 21 April 2011.

⁷⁵⁸ Gunter (2011a: 90).

⁷⁵⁹ Quoted in *ibid.* (89).

⁷⁶⁰ *Ibid.* (90).

⁷⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶² Robins (2003a).

⁷⁶³ Pope & Pope (1997), Lundgren (2007), Marcus (2007a).

⁷⁶⁴ Gunter (1997, 2011a), Pope & Pope (1997), Barkey & Fuller (1998), White (2000), Lundgren (2007), Marcus (2007a).

⁷⁶⁵ On the question of the extent to which HEP had been infiltrated by the PKK and can be understood as merely a political front for the insurgency, see White (2000) and Marcus (2007a). HEP was banned by the Turkish Constitutional Court in July 1993 after a strong showing in parliamentary elections in 1991.

⁷⁶⁶ Gunter (1997, 2011a), Pope & Pope (1997), Barkey & Fuller (1998).

⁷⁶⁷ Abdullah Öcalan in an interview with Turkish journalist Mehmet Ali Birand, quoted in Gunter (2011a: 93).

⁷⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶⁹ Interview Qaradaghi *op cit.* The fact that Talabani and Barzani were travelling on Turkish diplomatic passports is widely mentioned in the literature on Kurdish nationalism and exploited by certain authors (Tahiri 2007) to illustrate that their nationalism was not genuine.

⁷⁷⁰ Gunter (1996, 1997). In the course of these negotiations, Gunter (1996, 1997) claims that Abdullah Öcalan in December 1991 travelled to Iraqi Kurdistan to meet with Talabani. I tried to verify this claim among my contacts of PKK dissidents – interviews with Çelik, Öcalan, Taş and Ataç *op cit.* – who all denied it. When confronted with these findings Gunter (*interview op cit.*)

corrected it. It therefore can be considered as established that Abdullah Öcalan has never been to Iraqi Kurdistan.

⁷⁷¹ Imset (1992).

⁷⁷² Interview Qaradaghi op cit..

⁷⁷³ Nonetheless PM Demirel met Talabani twice in Ankara in early 1992 and in August of the same year, and once held direct talks with Massoud Barzani (Imset 1992).

⁷⁷⁴ Imset (1992), Gunter (1996, 1997), Pope & Pope (1997), Barkey & Fuller (1998).

⁷⁷⁵ Gunter (1996: 53).

⁷⁷⁶ Fisher et al. (1996), Lutz et al. (2003).

⁷⁷⁷ Quoted in Gunter (1996: 53).

⁷⁷⁸ Quoted in ibid. (53-4).

⁷⁷⁹ Interview Çelik op cit..

⁷⁸⁰ Gunter (1996, 1997), Çelik (2002).

⁷⁸¹ Çelik (2002: 151).

⁷⁸² Interview with Ahmed Saadi Pire, Sulimaniyah, Iraqi Kurdistan, 10 June 2010

⁷⁸³ Gunter (1996).

⁷⁸⁴ Ibid. (54).

⁷⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁶ Interview with Mohammed Tawfiq, Sulimaniyah, Iraqi Kurdistan, 4 June 2010. At the time of the interview Tawfiq had left the PUK and become a spokesman for *Gorran*.

⁷⁸⁷ Quoted in Gunter (1996: 54).

⁷⁸⁸ Imset (1992), Gunter (1996, 1997), Laizer (1996), Randal (1998), Çelik (2002), Asadi (2007), Marcus (2007a), Tahiri (2007).

⁷⁸⁹ Laizer (1996: 62, 66). As is common in guerrilla wars any figures of casualties have to be treated with utmost caution. In the immediate days after the war the Turkish Chief of Staff Gen. Doğan Güreş claimed that the PKK had lost up to 5,000 fighters (Gunter 1996) while the PKK publication *Serxwebun* spoke of 193 guerrilla killed in action (Laizer 1996). Based on figures in Gunter (1996, 1997), Laizer (1996), Randal (1998), it appears prudent to estimate that all three parties to the conflict – the Turkish military, PKK, and KDP/PUK – lost several hundred fighters each during the conflict.

⁷⁹⁰ Interview Öcalan op cit..

⁷⁹¹ For the exact wording of the ceasefire agreement, see Laizer (1996: 68-9).

⁷⁹² Interviews Çelik, Öcalan, Taş and Ataç op cit..

⁷⁹³ Çelik (2002).

⁷⁹⁴ Interview Pire op cit..

⁷⁹⁵ Interview Barkey op cit..

⁷⁹⁶ Interview Gunter op cit..

⁷⁹⁷ Interview Mustafa Chawrash, Sulimaniyah, Iraqi Kurdistan, 31 May 2010.

⁷⁹⁸ Interviews Barkey, Gunter, Ergil, Olson, Vali op cit..

⁷⁹⁹ Quoted in Gunter (1997: 75).

⁸⁰⁰ Gürbey (1996), Gunter (1997), White (2000), Celik (2002), Özcan (2006), Marcus (2007a), Tahiri (2007), Gunes (2012).

⁸⁰¹ Quoted in Gunter (1997: 75-6).

⁸⁰² Gürbey (1996: 23-4).

⁸⁰³ Davis & Moore (1998: 93).

⁸⁰⁴ Brynen (1990).

⁸⁰⁵ Artens (2012).

⁸⁰⁶ Shepherd (1984), La Feber (1993), Schulz & Schulz (1994), Sobel (1995), Kinzer (2001).

⁸⁰⁷ Quandt et al. (1973), Bailey (1984), Shemesh (1988), Cobban (1992).

⁸⁰⁸ Laizer (1996), Gunter (1996, 1997, 1999a), Özcan (2006), Tahiri (2007).

⁸⁰⁹ Laizer (1996: 137).

⁸¹⁰ KDP radio broadcast from 15 October 1997, quoted from Tahiri (2007: 282).

⁸¹¹ Gunter (1999) Stansfield (2003a, 2007a), Natali (2005, 2010), Romano (2006), Asadi (2007), McDowall (2007).

⁸¹² See also interviews with Barkey, Gunter, Olson op cit.. McDowall (2007) and Tahiri (2007), on the other hand, belabour theories of tribalism, that in Tahiri's overall questionable approach supposedly explain Kurdish ideological 'backwardness'.

⁸¹³ Romano (2006: 209).

⁸¹⁴ Quoted in Gunter (1999a: 29, 30). Both Talabani and Barzani demonstrated their dissatisfaction with the election results by refusing to hold any senior office in the KRG, which undermined the legitimacy and credibility of the unified governmental structures.

⁸¹⁵ Stansfield (2003a: 151, 152).
⁸¹⁶ Ibid. (152).
⁸¹⁷ Interview with Chato Hawesi, a veteran PUK politburo member, Sulimaniyah, Iraqi Kurdistan, 7 June 2010.
⁸¹⁸ Romano (2006: 209-10).
⁸¹⁹ The first blood in what was to become a four year civil war was drawn in a dispute over a plot of land belonging to a KDP official and his PUK tenants (Gunter 1999a).
⁸²⁰ Gunter (1999a: 76).
⁸²¹ Ibid. (80, 81).
⁸²² Interview with Kenneth Pollack, Washington, USA, 21 March 2011.
⁸²³ It has to be said though, that the regional powers were also to blame for the failure of consecutive peace agreements. Turkey, for example, to issue with the U.S.-sponsored talks in Drogheda, Ireland, because the accord reached there did not sufficiently address the PKK sanctuary in Iraqi Kurdistan, and Iran, then allied with the PUK, torpedoed the implementation of the same talks because it sought to counter growing U.S. influence in the region (Gunter 1999a; Robins 2003a).
⁸²⁴ Gunter (1999a: 78).
⁸²⁵ Gunter (1999a), Robins (2003a), Lundgren (2007).
⁸²⁶ Gunter (1996, 1999a), Çelik (2002), Marcus (2007a).
⁸²⁷ Quoted in Gunter (1996: 56, 57).
⁸²⁸ Interviews Celik and Öcalan op cit..
⁸²⁹ Gunter (1999a: 84). Gunter (1996, 1999a) goes on to speculate that the PKK deliberately aimed at torpedoing the U.S.-sponsored talks in Drogheda that were about to reach a breakthrough just before the PKK attacked the KDP. In that case the PKK would have adopted the role of a spoiler who tried to protract the civil war in Iraqi Kurdistan by all necessary means, a situation in which it evidently benefitted from KDP and PUK fighting each other to mutual destruction.
⁸³⁰ Interview with Omar Abdullah, veteran PUK member and head of the military wing of the PUK until 1991, Sulimaniyah, Iraqi Kurdistan, 13 June 2010, who routinely liaised with Abdullah Öcalan on behalf of Jalal Talabani in Damascus throughout 1996/7.
⁸³¹ Robins (2003a).
⁸³² Quoted in Gunter (1999a: 88). As expected the KDP of course denies any formal alliance or coordination of military activities with Turkey, interview with the then KDP representative in Ankara, Safeen Dizayee, Erbil, 19 September 2010.
⁸³³ Graham-Brown (1999), Gunter (1999a), Byman (2000, & Waxman 2000), Stansfield (2003a, 2007a), Asadi (2007), Tahiri (2007), Lawrence (2009).
⁸³⁴ Tahiri (2007).
⁸³⁵ Özcan (2006: 5).
⁸³⁶ O'Leary & Salih (2005: 22-3).
⁸³⁷ Gellner (2006 [1983]: 84, italics in original).
⁸³⁸ Gunter (1999a), Stansfield (2003a), Natali (2005, 2010), Asadi (2007).
⁸³⁹ Kenneth Pollack hinted at the possibility of an at least indirect link between the Washington Agreement and the Iraq Liberation Act and the millions of dollars in covert funding that would come with it, having helped to change Talabani's and Barzani's mind in the negotiations. Interview Pollack op cit..
⁸⁴⁰ The change in Clinton administration's policy toward Iraq from containment to regime change, to some extent, can be explained by increasing neo-conservative pressure in Congress, the media, and from right wing think tanks. One of the most prominent here was the *Project for a New American Century* (PNAC) who in January 1998 sent an open letter to President Clinton calling for a change of policy in support of regime change; many of the PNAC signatories of 1998 would hold influential positions in the George W. Bush administration and were key in setting the U.S. on the road to war in 2002/3 (Altheide & Grimes 2005; Halper & Clarke 2005; Bialasiewicz et al. 2007; Burgos 2008; Dumbrell 2008).
⁸⁴¹ Freedman (1999), Gunter (1999b), Byman (2000, & Waxman 2000), Davis (2006), Ritchie & Rogers (2007), Charountaki (2010).
⁸⁴² An earlier episode of PUK involvement in a failed attempt by the CIA to orchestrate a coup against Saddam Hussein is detailed in Baer (2002), whose claims, though, should be taken with the grain of salt such firsthand accounts of covert operations require.
⁸⁴³ Gunter (1997, 1999a).
⁸⁴⁴ Olson (2001), Marcus (2007a).
⁸⁴⁵ Zaman (1999).

⁸⁴⁶ Quoted in Tahiri (2007: 244).

⁸⁴⁷ Quoted in *ibid.* (259-60). In response to his about-turn, one of Öcalan's lawyers, Ahmet Zeki Okcuoglu, resigned from his defense team and declared, 'For dictators, their own lives are more important than everything ... There is nothing that can't be sacrificed for this.' Quoted in Marcus (2007a: 285). Öcalan's long-time political opponent Kemal Burkay, had as much to say: 'He is a coward ... It is possible that since being arrested, Abdullah Öcalan thinks that he has been mistaken and that he has accepted [the idea of] a peaceful solution ... But Öcalan's statements to the court and to the state that "whatever you want, I will do" and his extending his respects to the Turkish Republic, and stressing many times his wish to be of service, this shocked Kurds and [the PKK's] members.' Quoted in *ibid.* (p. 284).

⁸⁴⁸ Tahiri (2007: 260-1).

⁸⁴⁹ In the end, one could say, for Öcalan his 'conversion' paid off. While he was initially sentenced to death on 29 June – notwithstanding the fact that the death sentence had not been carried out in Turkey since 1984, and that the Turkish state had little interest in making a martyr of Öcalan – this sentence was commuted to life imprisonment when Turkey abolished the death penalty in 2002 in its harmonization of its criminal law with European standards in EU accession talks (BBC 2002). The wording of the original death sentence and the court's reasoning can be read on BBC (1999).

⁸⁵⁰ Özcan (2006), Marcus (2007a), Tahiri (2007), Uslu (2007), Brauns & Kiechle (2010) Akkaya & Jongerden (2011, 2012), Eccarius-Kelly (2011), Gunter (2011c), Gunes (2012).

⁸⁵¹ Interview Ergil *op cit.*. The TAK is considered a radical splinter group from the PKK (Brandon 2006b; Marcus 2007b; Casier 2010); the BDP is the current incarnation of the legal Kurdish political parties that have been routinely outlawed by Turkish state institutions and then re-founded under a new name (Watts 2010; Kubicek 2011).

⁸⁵² Quoted in Brauns & Kiechle (2010: 99), my translation from the original German.

⁸⁵³ Özcan (2006), Brauns & Kiechle (2010), Akkaya & Jongerden (2011, 2012, 2013), Eccarius-Kelly (2011), Gunter (2011c), Gunes (2012).

⁸⁵⁴ Interviews Öcalan, Taş, and Ataç *op cit.*

⁸⁵⁵ Öcalan (2008, 2011a & b, 2012).

⁸⁵⁶ Brauns & Kiechle (2010), Akkaya & Jongerden (2011, 2012; 2013), Casier (2011), Gunes (2012).

⁸⁵⁷ Fowler (1972), Hyams (1979), Crowder (1991), Ward (1992), Prichard (2010), Carter (2012).

⁸⁵⁸ Hyams (1979), Crowder (1991), Ward (1992), Prichard (2010).

⁸⁵⁹ Bakunin (1973: 95-6). He was addressing the *League of Peace and Freedom* congregating in Geneva in 1867 in the wake of the Austro-Prussian War of 1866.

⁸⁶⁰ *Ibid.* (96).

⁸⁶¹ Akkaya & Jongerden (2011).

⁸⁶² Öcalan (2008: 32).

⁸⁶³ Akkaya & Jongerden (2011, 2012, 2013).

⁸⁶⁴ Özcan (2006).

⁸⁶⁵ Akkaya & Jongerden (2011: 156).

⁸⁶⁶ *Ibid.* (157).

⁸⁶⁷ Watts (2006, 2010), Çandar (2009), Casier et al. (2011) Gunes (2012), Erdem (2013).

⁸⁶⁸ Stansfield (2003a & b, 2005, 2006, 2010), Natali (2005, 2010), Ahmed (2007, 2012), Olson (2007).

⁸⁶⁹ Leezenberg (2003), Olson (2007).

⁸⁷⁰ Stansfield (2003a & b, 2005, 2006, 2010), Ahmed (2007, 2012), Olson (2007).

⁸⁷¹ Stansfield (2005: 205, 204).

⁸⁷² On the AKP, see Atasoy (2009), Yavuz (2009), Zürcher (2009), Hale & Özbudun (2010), Öktem (2011), Park (2012a), and White (2012).

⁸⁷³ Park (2003, 2005), Robins (2003a & b), Güney (2005), Rubin (2005) Kapsis (2006), Hale (2007).

⁸⁷⁴ Park (2003, 2005), Stansfield (2003b), Robins (2003a & b), Güney (2005), Rubin (2005), Kapsis (2006), Hale (2007), Lawrence (2009).

⁸⁷⁵ 264 MPs voted in favour, 251 against, with 19 abstentions. Yet since Turkish parliamentary regulations allow a measure to pass only with a majority supporting it, the 'nays' and abstentions combined outweighed the 'yes' by three votes (Kapsis 2006).

⁸⁷⁶ Hale (2007: 124). On the military dimension of the 2003 Iraq War and the immediate aftermath, see Woodward (2004), Packer (2005), Phillips (2005), Gordon & Trainor (2007), Ricks (2007) and Chandrasekaran (2010). On the role of the Iraqi Kurdish *peshmerga* during the war, see Lawrence (2009).

- ⁸⁷⁷ Stansfield (2006, 2007a, 2010), Natali (2010), Gunter (2011c), Marr (2011), Ahmed (2012).
- ⁸⁷⁸ Ibid. However, a full unification of government still remains to be implemented in a few key branches. 'Despite the supposedly unified KRG, the interior, *peshmerga*, and finance ministries are still divided into separate KDP and PUK branches. Also still split are the intelligence agencies: the KDP's *Asayesh* (Security) and *Parastin* (Protection) headed by Masrour Barzani (Massoud Barzani's son) and the PUK's *Zanyari* (Information) headed by Bafel Talabani (Jalal Talabani's elder son). The judiciary was also partisan. Most of the press too was not neutral' (Gunter 2011c: 142).
- ⁸⁷⁹ Romano (2010b), Salih (2010), Gunter (2011c, 2013), Ahmed (2012), Othman (2013).
- ⁸⁸⁰ Artens (2013a), BBC (2013), van Wilgenburg (2013).
- ⁸⁸¹ Artens (2013a).
- ⁸⁸² Amnesty International (2011), Arango & Schmidt (2011), Artens (2011), Salih (2011), Gunter (2013).
- ⁸⁸³ In a controversial and heated vote in the Iraqi Kurdish parliament in July 2013, KDP and PUK extended Massoud Barzani's presidency by two years, even though the Iraqi Kurdish constitution limits it to two consecutive four year terms (Ahmed 2013; Küçük 2013).
- ⁸⁸⁴ Relations between Turkey and the US were further compromised by the so called 'Hood Incident', when in July 2003 US forces captured a team of Turkish special forces operating in northern Iraq – allegedly either planning an assassination attempt on the Iraqi-Kurdish governor of Kirkuk or to arm the *Iraqi Turkoman Front* (ITF), a Turkmen political movement opposing Iraqi Kurdish rule over Kirkuk – paraded with hoods over their heads, detained and interrogated for about three days (The Economist 2003; Howard & Goldenberg 2003; Barkey 2005).
- ⁸⁸⁵ Interview Abdul Rahman op cit.
- ⁸⁸⁶ Barkey (2005, 2011), Olson (2005a & b, 2009), Park (2005, 2012a & b), Fuller (2008).
- ⁸⁸⁷ Marr (2011: 281).
- ⁸⁸⁸ Stansfield (2007a).
- ⁸⁹⁰ O'Leary & Salih (2005: 35).
- ⁸⁹²
- ⁸⁹⁴ O'Leary (2009: X).
- ⁸⁹⁵ Marr (2011: 293).
- ⁸⁹⁶ Ibid. (294-5).
- ⁸⁹⁷ Swift (2010).
- ⁸⁹⁸ Murinson (2006), Walker (2007), Aras (2009), Davutoğlu (2010), Sözen (2010).
- ⁸⁹⁹ Eccarius-Kelly (2011), Gunter (2011c), Ahmed (2012).
- ⁹⁰⁰ One key player was retired US Air Force Gen. Joseph Ralston, who enjoyed excellent connections to the Turkish military and business circles as well as among Iraqi Kurdish leaders, and was appointed US Special Envoy for Countering the PKK in a good will gesture in August 2006 (Flanagan & Brannen 2008). Another influential pundit engaging in behind the scenes shuttle-diplomacy between Washington, Ankara, and Erbil was the *Atlantic Council's* David Phillips, see interview Phillips op cit..
- ⁹⁰¹ BBC (2007), Myers (2007), Purvis (2007), Flanagan & Brannen (2008).
- ⁹⁰² Hale & Özbudun (2010: 135).
- ⁹⁰³ Al Jazeera (2007), Reuters (2008a), Der Spiegel (2008), Tavernise (2008).
- ⁹⁰⁴ Xinhua Daily News (2008), Reuters (2008b).
- ⁹⁰⁵ Ahmed (2012).
- ⁹⁰⁶ International Crisis Group (2011).
- ⁹⁰⁷ Barkey (2011: 56).
- ⁹⁰⁸ Charountaki (2012), Ahmed (2012).
- ⁹⁰⁹ Kardas (2009), Today's Zaman (2009), Charountaki (2012), Park (2012b).
- ⁹¹⁰ Ayhan (2010), Kurdistan Regional Government (2011), Charountaki (2012), Ahmed (2012), Kurd.net (2013a).
- ⁹¹¹ Quoted in Charountaki (2012: 191).
- ⁹¹² Quoted in ibid. (199).
- ⁹¹³ Interviews Bakir, Chalabi, Dizayee, Hussein, Karim, and Pire op cit..
- ⁹¹⁴ Bank & Karadag (2012) Ergin (2012) IMF (2012), Turkish Airlines (201), Elliott (2014).
- ⁹¹⁵ Cook (2011), Le Vine (2011), The Economist (2011), Kenyon (2012), Kardaş (2013), Oğuzlu (2013) Öniş (forthcoming).

⁹¹⁴ Jenkins (2008: 18).

⁹¹⁵ Ibid., Gunter (2010b, 2011c), Klein (2010), Charountaki (2012), Ahmed (2012).

⁹¹⁶ Ahmed (2012), Charountaki (2012), Park (2012b & c), UPI (2012), Dombey (2013), Pamuk & Coskun (2013), Okumuş (2014).

⁹¹⁷ Interview Aydin Selcin, then Turkish Consul General in Erbil, Erbil, Iraqi Kurdistan, 19 October 2011

⁹¹⁸ See Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Economy (2013).

⁹¹⁹ Ates (2012), Kurd.net (2012), Park (2012b & c), Tol (2012), Mert (2013), Rudaw (2013b), Tuysuzoglu (2013).

⁹²⁰ Berlinski (2013), Letsch (2013), Kotsev (2013), Shafak (2013), Steinvorth & Zand (2013).

⁹²¹ Çandar (2013), Çengiz (2013), Hürriyet Daily News (2013), Mert (2013), Reuters (2013), Tuysuzoglu (2013).

⁹²² The BDP is the successor party to the DTP after it was banned by the Turkish Supreme Court in December 2009.

⁹²³ Of course, it goes without saying that this marriage of mutual conveniences celebrated in Diyarbakir did not go unopposed. The BDP and many Kurdish civil society organizations in Turkey criticized Barzani and Shivan Perwer for selling out when allowing the AKP to exploit them (Çandar 2013; Tuysuzoglu 2013).

⁹²⁴ As Hugh Pope, the International Crisis Group chief analyst in Turkey, observed, 'what is remarkable in this context ... in the relations between the KRG and the PKK via Turkey since the Kurdish Initiative faltered in 2009 is not so much what the KRG could do to actively support a political solution to Turkey's Kurdish problem but how inactive the KRG has been over the past three years ... one gets the impression that they are content with watching developments in Turkey from the sidelines.' Interview with Hugh Pope, Istanbul, Turkey, 6 May 2012. At the time this interview took place I agreed with Pope, but the Diyarbakir episode in November 2013 and, perhaps less clearly, unfolding events in Syria, are illustrating that the KDP is now more prominently taking sides with the AKP against the PKK and affiliated political parties like the BDP, even in the political discourse in Turkey proper.

⁹²⁵ Černý (forthcoming).

⁹²⁶ Wæver (1995, et al. 1993), Buzan et al. (1997), Williams (2003), Taureck (2006), Stritzel (2007), Peoples & Vaughan-Williams (2010), Balzacq (2005, 2011).

⁹²⁷ Wæver (1995: 35, italics in original).

⁹²⁸ Peoples & Vaughan-Williams (2010: 78).

⁹²⁹ Ibid. (76).

⁹³⁰ Ibid. For an interesting application of de-securitization theory to Turkey's relations with Syria and Iran, see Aras & Polat (2008).

⁹³¹ Celik (2002) claims that when Öcalan arrived in Moscow for the second time in January 1999 during his European odyssey for asylum, his escape plan foresaw 'Southern Kurdistan', i.e. northern Iraq, as its final destination, which he intended to reach via Iran. In our interview he specifies that Newshirwan Mustafa had been voicing the possibility of the PUK granting Öcalan refuge on its territory, interview Çelik op cit.. I failed to secure an interview with Mustafa but one high-ranking PUK representative in Europe who visited Öcalan during his stay in Rome, Ahmed Barmani, denied that any such discussion had taken place or that any such offer had been made, interview with Ahmed Barmani, Sulimaniyah, Iraqi Kurdistan, 11 June 2010. In my opinion, granting Öcalan refuge in the heated international atmosphere after his expulsion from Syria, with even Italy and Germany, Russia, and several other European states, due to combined US and Turkish pressure, considering Öcalan too hot a commodity to deal with, and only a few months after the Washington Agreement had been signed, in which KDP/PUK committed to an anti-PKK line, it would have been political suicide for the PUK to harbor Öcalan on its territory. I would go so far as to speculate that such a move would have invited a Turkish invasion – surely Turkey would not be reluctant to such a dramatic step in northern Iraq since it had actively considered it for Syria, certainly a more formidable opponent than the PUK – and therefore think it implausible that the PUK leadership ever actively considered such an offer.

⁹³² Marcus (2007a: 289).

⁹³³ Gunter (2001), Brauns & Kiechle (2010).

⁹³⁴ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (2001).

⁹³⁵ Ibid.

⁹³⁶ Gunter (2001). It is worth remembering that the KDP-PUK civil war of 1994, to some extent, had started because the KDP controlled the only trade route with Turkey at the Harbur border crossing; ever since then opening an alternative route from PUK controlled territory was high on Talabani's agenda.

⁹³⁷ To further complicate matters, an expert on Kurdish inter-party relations who had visited Öcalan in Rome at the end of 1998, and who wishes to remain unnamed due to the sensitivity of the information, related to me that during their visit Öcalan had kept ranting about the PUK's betrayal in Washington after the PKK had, for years, paid the PUK millions of dollars in quasi protection money for allowing the PKK to re-establish itself after the 1992 defeat on PUK territory. As significant as this allegation is I was unable to verify it during my field research since, as expected, all PUK interviewees vehemently denied any such payments. Only Osman Öcalan hinted at the fact that during the KDP-PUK civil war, when the PUK faced defeat after the joint Iraqi-KDP forces' conquest of Erbil and was hard pressed for assets, the PKK purchased supplies and ammunition from the PUK at above market prices to help them out, interview Öcalan op cit..

⁹³⁸ Brandon (2006a), Cuffe (2007), Kutschera (2008), Renard (2008), Flood (2009a), Elik (2011), Rudaw (2013a), Di Stefano Pironti (2014).

⁹³⁹ PJAK Press Release of 7 May 2008, quoted in Renard (2008).

⁹⁴⁰ Elik (2011), TREND (2011).

⁹⁴¹ Cagaptay & Eroglu (2007), Elik (2011). How unstable this Turkish-Iranian rapprochement can be, is illustrated by the fact that whenever tensions between Tehran and PJAK ebb, the Turkish politico-military establishment fears that the Iranian regime will return to its old ways of supporting the PKK (Uslu 2011).

⁹⁴² Escobar (2007), Opper (2007), Rand (2007), Renard (2008), Di Stefano Pironti (2014).

⁹⁴³ Hersh (2008).

⁹⁴⁴ Quoted in Rand (2007).

⁹⁴⁵ Interviews Öcalan and Taş op cit..

⁹⁴⁶ Cafarella (2005), Khalaji (2007), Fayazmanesh (2008), Hersh (2008), Takeyh (2009), Rogin (2011), Wilkie (2011).

⁹⁴⁷ Interviews Öcalan and Taş op cit..

⁹⁴⁸ Interview Taş op cit.. Ergenekon was an ultra-nationalist conspiracy against the AKP government in Turkey, comprising of high ranking military, police, and intelligence officials, whose origins date back to Operation Gladio's counter-guerrilla during the Cold War, and who are generally considered part of the Turkish so called 'Deep State'. Since 2008 dozens of legal proceedings have been launched against alleged members of Ergenekon, yet these trials and investigations have also been criticized as attempts by the AKP government to rid themselves of domestic critics and in general to curtail civil freedoms (Kaya 2009; Cizre & Walker 2010; Hale & Özbudun 2010; Aydinli 2011; Öktem 2011; Straw 2013).

⁹⁴⁹ Kardas & Özcan (2009), Turkish Weekly (2009). David Phillips, an expert on Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan, when asked what he thinks about alleged PJAK-US intelligence meetings and possible small scale cooperation, thinks 'the Bush administration absolutely capable of such a folly,' interview with David Phillips, New York, USA, 11 February 2011.

⁹⁵⁰ Barkey (2005, 2011), Olson (2005a & b), Park (2005), Yavuz (2005), Lundgren (2007), International Crisis Group (2008), Romano (2010a), Gunter (2011c), Ahmed (2012).

⁹⁵¹ Eccarius-Kelly (2011).

⁹⁵² Interviews Dizayee, Hussein, and Pire op cit, as well as interviews with Falah Mustafa Bakir, the de facto Foreign Minister of the KRG, Erbil, Iraqi Kurdistan, 27 May 2010, and with Sinan Abdulhalq Ahmed Chalabi, the KRG Minister for Trade and Industry, Erbil, Iraqi Kurdistan, 20 October 2011, and with the KRG foreign representatives, aka de facto ambassadors, to the UK, Bayan Abdul Rahman, London, UK, 5 July 2010, and to the U.S., Qubad Talabani, Washington, USA, 25 February 2011.

⁹⁵³ Interviews Abdul Rahman, Bakir, Chalabi, Dizayee, Hussein, Pire, and Talabani op cit..

⁹⁵⁴ Due to the political sensitivity of what has been said here I decided not to disclose the identity of this KRG official.

⁹⁵⁵ Interview Selcin op cit..

⁹⁵⁶ Interview with Denise Natali, Washington, USA, 21 March 2011. The KRG's political will to confront the PKK is also questioned by Joost Hiltermann, the International Crisis Group analyst on Iraq, interview with Joost Hiltermann, Washington, USA, 9 February 2011.

⁹⁵⁷ Four interviews with not-to-be-named Iraqi Kurdish journalists in Erbil and Sulimaniyah, Iraqi Kurdistan, during 2010 and 2011.

⁹⁵⁸ Interview Chalabi op cit..

⁹⁵⁹ Interview Chalabi op cit..

⁹⁶⁰ This view is shared by several of the journalists critical of the KRG regime I talked to in Iraqi Kurdistan during 2010 and 2011.

⁹⁶¹ Marcus (2007a: 301).

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- ⁹⁶² Akkaya & Jongerden (2011: 154).
- ⁹⁶³ ROJ-TV is an international Kurdish satellite television channel widely considered to be a PKK propaganda organ. In January 2012 a Danish court determined that the station is 'financed and controlled' by the PKK and fined it for 'promoting terrorism' (Reuters 2012).
- ⁹⁶⁴ Naqishbendi (2011), Kurd.net (2013b), Mohammed (2013), Wood (2013).
- ⁹⁶⁵ Interview Abdul Rahman op cit.. A similar point was made by Qubad Talabani, interview Talabani op cit..
- ⁹⁶⁶ Gunter (2011c).
- ⁹⁶⁷ Bahcheli & Noel (2011: 115, 117).
- ⁹⁶⁸ Brandon (2006b), Grossbongardt (2006), Kirby & Turgut (2006), Casier (2010), Eccarius-Kelly (2011).
- ⁹⁶⁹ The first major concession the AKP made was the launch of a 24 hours Kurdish language state-run television channel, TRT 6, in January 2009 (Zeydanlioğlu 2013).
- ⁹⁷⁰ Candar (2009), Olson (2009), Casier et al. (2011), Eccarius-Kelly (2011), Gunter (2011c), International Crisis Group (2011, 2012a), Park (2012a), Çiçek (2013).
- ⁹⁷¹ Gunter (2011c: 178-9).
- ⁹⁷² Eccarius-Kelly (2011: 162).
- ⁹⁷³ In October 2009 the AKP had negotiated with the PKK the return to Turkey and amnesty of 34 guerrilla and sympathizers from the PKK-controlled Makhmour refugee camp in Iraq. When the PKK fighters arrived at the Harbur border in their uniforms, the DTP had arranged for thousands to welcome them in displays of public affection that could easily be interpreted as victory celebrations for the PKK. 'The Turkish authorities, who thought they had agreed with the PKK that the returnees would go quietly back to their villages, felt betrayed, angry and undermined as sensationalist Turkish media broadcast what appeared to western Turkish opinion as PKK victory celebrations. AKP's attempt to use the rhetorical symbolism of brotherhood [and] the high casualties on both sides ... in a way that included both Turks and Kurds backfired and began to be used against it in Turkish street rallies at substantial political cost' (International Crisis Group 2011: 8-9).
- ⁹⁷⁴ Casier et al. (2011), Çiçek (2013).
- ⁹⁷⁵ Al Jazeera (2009), Tait (2009).
- ⁹⁷⁶ Azadi (2009), Kurd.net (2009), Sadjadi (2009), United Press International (2009). A conference sponsored by the Gülen movement, that until 2013 was closely associated with the AKP, entitled "Searching for Peace and a Future Together", held in Erbil in February 2009 and attended by Kurdish delegates from Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan as well as representatives of Turkish religious and civil society organizations and journalists, can be considered a precursor to the envisioned pan-Kurdish summit and an attempt by both sides, the KRG and, indirectly through the Gülen movement, the AKP, to test the waters for a more prominent initiative (Olson 2009). On the Gülen movement, see Bilici (2006), Ebaugh (2010), Park (2012a), and a series of articles from a conference on the topic held in October 2007 at Leeds Metropolitan University, edited by Barton (2013).
- ⁹⁷⁷ Uslu (2009).
- ⁹⁷⁸ Artens (2009).
- ⁹⁷⁹ Phillips (2007), Artens (2009).
- ⁹⁸⁰ Phillips (2009).
- ⁹⁸¹ Interview Phillips op cit..
- ⁹⁸² Interview Vali op cit..
- ⁹⁸³ Interview with a to-remain-unnamed Iraqi Kurdish journalist in Erbil, Iraqi Kurdistan, in 2011.
- ⁹⁸⁴ Artens (2013b).
- ⁹⁸⁵ O'Leary (2009: X).
- ⁹⁸⁶ Marr (2011: 295).
- ⁹⁸⁷ Zidalis (2009), Alkadiri (2010), Natali (2010, 2012), Gunter (2011c), Ahmed (2012), International Crisis Group (2012b), Reed (2012), Tohmeh (2013).
- ⁹⁸⁸ Gunter (2011c: 146).
- ⁹⁸⁹ Kramer (2011), Natali (2012), Reed (2012). Several smaller international oil and gas companies such as Marathon, Hunt Oil, or the aforementioned DNO had already established themselves in Iraqi Kurdistan, yet the 'Big Six' of the international oil business had held back out of fear of jeopardizing their contracts in the south of Iraq. Exxon Mobil's move into Iraqi Kurdistan ended that restraint, yet was immediately sanctioned by the Iraqi government 'blacklisting' it from future biddings (Natali 2012; Reed 2012; al-Ansary & Ajrash 2014).
- ⁹⁹⁰ Zidalis (2012).

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- ⁹⁹¹ Natali (2008, 2010), Stansfield & Anderson (2009), Gunter (2011c), Marr (2011), Ahmed (2012).
- ⁹⁹² According to 1957 census Kirkuk city had a population of 39.8 percent Turkmen, 35.1 percent Kurdish, and 23.8 percent Arab, while Kirkuk province had a 55 percent Kurdish majority population. The 1977 census held under Saddam Hussein, on the other hand, showed a 44.4 Arab plurality in Kirkuk province versus 37.5 percent Kurdish and 16.3 percent Turkmen (Anderson & Stansfield 2009; Gunter 2011c).
- ⁹⁹³ The Economist (2007).
- ⁹⁹⁴ International Crisis Group (2007), Natali (2008, 2010), Stansfield & Anderson (2009), Gunter (2011c), Marr (2011), Ahmed (2012).
- ⁹⁹⁵ Ibid.
- ⁹⁹⁶ Baker et al. (2006: 45).
- ⁹⁹⁷ Stansfield & Anderson (2009).
- ⁹⁹⁸ Mohammed & Raouf (2008), International Crisis Group (2009), Sky (2011), Ahmed (2012), Alaaldin (2012), Arango (2012).
- ⁹⁹⁹ Artens (2011).
- ¹⁰⁰⁰ Cagaptay & Evans (2012), Pamir (2013).
- ¹⁰⁰¹ Park (2012c).
- ¹⁰⁰² Barkey (2011).
- ¹⁰⁰³ Ahmed (2012), Cagaptay & Evans (2012), Dodge (2012).
- ¹⁰⁰⁴ Cagaptay & Evans (2012), Park (2012b).
- ¹⁰⁰⁵ Ahmed (2012), Iyigun (2012), Today's Zaman (2012). On the increasing authoritarianism of the Maliki government in Iraq, see the critical portrayal by Dodge (2012).
- ¹⁰⁰⁶ Cagaptay & Evans (2012), Park (2012c), The Economist (2012), Gemici (2013), Gul (2013), Khoudouri (2013), Pamir (2013).
- ¹⁰⁰⁷ Bengio (2012a), Hiltermann (2012).
- ¹⁰⁰⁸ Quoted in Pamir (2013).
- ¹⁰⁰⁹ Quoted in ibid..
- ¹⁰¹⁰ Quoted in Çelik (2013).
- ¹⁰¹¹ Zakaria (2006), CBS (2007), Hitchens (2007). In 2006 the *Kurdistan Development Corporation* (KDC) launched a multimillion dollar advertising campaign in the US – and to a lesser extent in the UK – executed by the public relations firm Russo, Marsh, and Rogers with close links to the Republican party, and entitled 'Kurdistan: The Other Iraq' with the dual objective of emphasising the gratitude of the Iraqi Kurdish people for their liberation from the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein and to promote the Kurdistan Region for international investment and tourism (Glantz 2006; Kamen 2006; Flood 2009b).
- ¹⁰¹² Qadir (2007), Amnesty International (2009), Khalil (2009), Natali (2010), Human Rights Watch (2011, 2012), Reporters Without Borders (2012), Jabary & Hira (2013).
- ¹⁰¹³ Arango & Schmidt (2011), Artens (2011), Hawramy (2012), Monroe (2013), Wood (2013), Zebari (2013).
- ¹⁰¹⁴ Natali (2010), Harvey (2010).
- ¹⁰¹⁵ Stansfield (2007b).
- ¹⁰¹⁶ Ibid. (2013: 260-1).
- ¹⁰¹⁷ Bengio (2012b).
- ¹⁰¹⁸ Ibid. (2012a & c).
- ¹⁰¹⁹ Wing (2012).
- ¹⁰²⁰ Howard (2005), Tahiri (2007).
- ¹⁰²¹ Tahiri (2007: 327).
- ¹⁰²² Quoted in Tahiri (2007: 329).
- ¹⁰²³ Quoted in Hürriyet Daily News (2012).
- ¹⁰²⁴ Van Bruinessen (1992, 2002), Özoğlu (1996; 2004), Finkel (2005), Eppel (2008), Imber (2009).
- ¹⁰²⁵ Özoğlu (2004: 49).
- ¹⁰²⁶ Imber (2009: 177).
- ¹⁰²⁷ Van Bruinessen (1992), Özoğlu (1996; 2004), Finkel (2005), Imber (2009).
- ¹⁰²⁸ Özoğlu (2004: 53).
- ¹⁰²⁹ Ibid. (54).
- ¹⁰³⁰ Ibid. (57).
- ¹⁰³¹ Van Bruinessen (1992, 2002), Özoğlu (2004), Finkel (2005), Eppel (2008), Imber (2009), Hanioglu (2010), Ghalib (2011), Klein (2011), Ateş (2013).
- ¹⁰³² Tahiri (2007).

¹⁰³³ Artens (2013b).

¹⁰³⁴ International Crisis Group (2010), Marr (2011), Dodge (2012). For a portrayal of the *Iragiyya* alliance that has considerably lost influence after 2011, see International Crisis Group (2012c).

¹⁰³⁵ Dodge (2012: 156).

¹⁰³⁶ Ibid (155).

¹⁰³⁷ Ibid., Alaaldin (2010), Fadel (2010). The other force whose eleventh hour backing secured Maliki's victory in the negotiations on a coalition was the Sadrist Movement of Shi'ite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr (Escobar 2010; Marr 2011).

¹⁰³⁸ Olson (2005a), Park (2012b).

¹⁰³⁹ Bengio (2012a, b & c), Stansfield (2013).

¹⁰⁴⁰ Weber (2010).

¹⁰⁴¹ Weber (1998: 90).

¹⁰⁴² Caspersen (2012, & Stansfield 2011).

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