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INSTITUTO DE CIÊNCIAS
SOCIAIS

Political Parties and the Press In The Kurdistan Region Of Iraq

Mohammedali Yaseen Taha

Supervisor: Doutor António Costa Pinto

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Tese especialmente elaborada para a obtenção do grau de Doutor em Ciência Política, na especialidade de Política Comparada

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2018

Dedication

This work is dedicated to:

My father's spirit - he always encouraged us to study and learn even at those times we believed there were other priorities.

My mother's spirit, and for all the days when she carried our cradles from one cave to another to protect us from horrific airstrikes in order to survive.

CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE TEXT

KDP - Kurdistan Democratic Party
KIG - Kurdistan Islamic Group
KIU - Kurdistan Islamic Union
KJS - Kurdistan Journalist Syndicate
KNA - Kurdistan National Assembly
KRG - Kurdistan Regional Government
KRI - Kurdistan Region of Iraq
NRT - Nalia Radio and Television
PUK - Patriotic Union of Kurdistan

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Abstract

Keywords: Kurdistan Region, Media System, Political System, Media and Politics, Political Parallelism

This thesis studies the political system in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), specifically in what is related to the media system and the interplay between both. The research is one of the very first attempts to present comparative study of politics and press in the KRI to understand the dynamics of the media systems and participate in the theoretical discussion of media and politics. A triangulation of methods and different sources are employed, such as qualitative analyses of current and archived laws, party and media documents, as well as personal semi-structured interviews and anonymous questionnaires conducted as part of this research. The framework adopted for studying the case was of the Hallin and Mancini's (2004, 2012). The attempt was not to fully apply this framework, but to use the variables to help deepen the understanding the KRI media system.

The results show that political parallelism is high which explains full party ownership of the media. The interdependence of media and politics is inevitable and one is not able to easily survive without the other. In addition, the journalists do not necessarily meet the professional requirements and being a member of one of the dominant parties which owns the media is sufficient. The state plays an important role in controlling and media related legislations remain mostly on paper rather than being fully implemented. Due to the party ownership, finding a market is the least priority for the majority of the press in the KRI.

This thesis employs categories and dimensions used in comparative studies. It uses the theoretical framework developed on the basis of Western cases which makes it possible for a new case to be available on the map of comparative scholars, a case that otherwise would not be studied.

Abstract in Portuguese

Resumo

Palavras-chave: Região do Curda do Iraque, Panorama dos Media, Sistema Político, Media e Política, Paralelismo Político

Esta tese estuda o sistema político na Região Curda do Iraque (RCI), especificamente no que toca ao sistema de media e à interação entre media e política. Esta investigação constitui uma das primeiras tentativas no sentido de avançar com um estudo comparativo sobre política e media na RCI, de modo a compreender a dinâmica dos sistemas mediáticos e contribuir assim para a discussão teórica sobre media e política. A abordagem metodológica desta tese faz uma triangulação de métodos e fontes diferentes, tais como análises qualitativas de leis atuais e arquivadas, documentos partidários e de media, entrevistas pessoais semiestruturadas e questionários anónimos levados a cabo no âmbito desta pesquisa. A estrutura da tese é adotada a partir do estudo do caso de Hallin e Mancini (2004, 2012). O caso de Hallin e Mancini não foi adotado aqui para ser aplicado integralmente neste contexto, mas sim de modo a podermos usar as suas variáveis e aprofundar assim o conhecimento do sistema de media da RCI. Isso ajuda à análise do contexto e a proceder a essa mesma análise de forma comparativamente mais relevante.

A novidade no que toca ao estudo deste caso num um cenário como a Região do Curdistão do Iraque é a principal razão pela qual o âmbito desta tese é essencialmente exploratório e descritivo. Isso pode ajudar também a definir o tom para pesquisas futuras que possam centrar.se na região e / ou em questões relacionadas com os media e a política.

Esta tese estuda também o sistema de partidos políticos e particularmente a sua relação com os media. Este estudo contribuirá também para a compreensão da dinâmica dos sistemas mediáticos

no Médio Oriente, assumindo-se como um contributo para a discussão teórica sobre media e política. Recorre a categorias e dimensões usadas em estudos comparativos. Usa o quadro teórico desenvolvido com base em casos ocidentais, permitindo deste modo a disponibilização de um novo caso no mapa de estudos comparados e garantido assim que este mesmo caso será estudado.

A unidade política desta tese é a Região Curda do Iraque. Uma área com experiência continuada de construção da democratização num cenário sem experiência democrática e que podemos chamar de nova democracia não estatal desde 1992. Uma das principais limitações deste tipo de estudos reside no fato de a maioria dos estudos na área dos media e política se centrarem sobretudo nas realidades ocidentais, não existindo qualquer estudo sobre a relação entre media e política no Curdistão e tentando preencher assim uma lacuna sobre esta região do Iraque particularmente no que toca aos media. De referir que não existem estudos sobre partidos e o seu sistema, exceto estudos sobre os recursos limitados de sobrevivência, sobre o movimento político e revolucionário e luta dos curdos por um estado independente. Assim é importante efetuar pesquisas sobre sistemas políticos e suas formas nestes contextos. Como investigadora, tenho vindo trabalhar esta questão como jornalista e mais tarde, como política, o que me ajudou a compreender melhor as coisas.

Para aprofundar o conhecimento sobre a principal questão desta investigação, nomeadamente qual o sistema de media na Região Curda do Iraque, desenvolvi uma série de questões com base nas dimensões desenvolvidas por Hallin e Mancini (2004, 2012).
Para além destas quatro dimensões, o desenvolvimento histórico dos media e da política na Região Curda do Iraque foi estudado e adicionado como uma nova dimensão. Assim, o conjunto

de questões desta tese resulta principalmente de cinco dimensões: Desenvolvimento Histórico, Mercado de Media, Paralelismo Político, Profissionalização e Papel do Estado. Para recolher dados sobre essas dimensões foram usados diferentes métodos. Para compreender a evolução histórica, consultámos arquivos de partidos, documentos, arquivo de jornais e media e efetuámos uma série de entrevistas presenciais:

Qual o contexto geral histórico, social e político que presidiu à criação desses dois fenómenos; partidos e imprensa na RCI e até que ponto as características económicas, sociais e profissionais no contexto deste território moldam a relação entre política e imprensa?

Para melhor compreender essa dimensão dos mercados dos media foram usados arquivos de jornais, sua distribuição geográfica e tiragem, entrevistas, regulamentações governamentais aplicadas a essas publicações como principais fontes de recolha de dados para analisar a dimensão mercado. Foram recolhidos também dados através de questionários com base sobretudo nas seguintes questões:

Qual mercado da imprensa na RCI? Qual a circulação de jornais?

Foram levados a cabo dois questionários para recolha de dados referentes à dimensão do Paralelismo Político. Um desses questionários foi realizado junto de políticos e outro junto de jornalistas. Além disso, foram levadas a cabo entrevistas presenciais semiestruturadas frente a frente com políticos e decisores na área dos media. Eis as principais questões que foram apresentadas:

Qual o grau de envolvimento dos jornalistas na política ativa, que relações têm com os partidos políticos e qual o envolvimento dos partidos políticos na tutela de jornais? Até que ponto as condições os partidos políticos controlam o conteúdo dos jornais e existe algum envolvimento direto ou indireto em termos de censura nos jornais por parte dos políticos e qual o grau de independência e de liberdade dos jornalistas na sua atividade diária?

A pressão que os jornalistas enfrentam no exercício da sua profissão e as restrições políticas são tidas como os principais obstáculos neste campo. Os dois questionários realizados para este estudo também foram utilizados para abordar questões relativas ao grau de profissionalização dos jornalistas, sua formação e nível de escolaridade e as principais questões nesta preocupação foram:

Qual o grau de profissionalismo do jornalista e que nível de educação, formação têm os jornalistas? Até que ponto a sua experiência é suficientemente formativa para apresentar notícias imparcialmente?

No que toca ao Papel do Estado como a última dimensão foram preparadas uma série de questões para as quais procurámos resposta em entrevistas com políticos e jornalistas, arquivos das leis existentes e dois questionários. Entre as principais questões, destacam-se as seguintes: qual o papel das instituições estatais e de governo na formação e desenvolvimento da imprensa na RCI e o estado aprovou disposições legais suficientes para promover um jornalismo independente e fiável na RCI? Em caso afirmativo, essas disposições legais oferecem liberdade suficiente aos jornalistas para darem informações, ou essa legislação limita a liberdade e a atividade da imprensa e dos jornalistas?

Os resultados mostram que a imprensa na RCI entrou em sintonia com a política partidária. De revolucionária ao porta-voz da guerra civil, de imprensa para o cidadão a imprensa eleitoralista, em suma, a sua agenda varia de acordo com a agenda partidária.

No que toca ao mercado dos media no RCI a mesma não depende do mercado, pois encontrar um mercado é a menor das prioridades da maioria da imprensa na RCI. A dependência dos media da tutela política e dos recursos fornecidos pelo partido tornou-os independentes do mercado. Os media têm um dono político e, apesar de se considerarem independentes, são economicamente dependentes de um partido. As diferenças multilíngues e de dialeto da RCI afetaram o mercado e os leitores.

O paralelismo político é alto, o que explica a tutela dos meios de comunicação por parte dos partidos. A interdependência entre media e política é inevitável e não sobrevivem facilmente uma sem a outra. Por outro lado, os jornalistas não cumprem necessariamente aos requisitos profissionais e ser membro de um dos partidos dominantes que detém os media é suficiente. O estado desempenha um papel importante em matéria de controlo e a legislação relativa aos media continua no papel em vez de ser implementada. Em virtude da tutela partidária, encontrar um mercado é uma prioridade menor para a maioria da imprensa na RCI. Os partidos criaram um espaço para media sem partidários. Não tutelados diretamente por um partido mas porte do seu departamento de media.

Em relação ao profissionalismo, os media são fundados pelos partidos e são tratados principalmente como um dos departamentos do partido. Os jornalistas eram tradicionalmente membros do partido e nomeados como jornalistas e ainda acontece termos decisores nos media que são sobretudo figuras sénior do partido. A maioria dos jornalistas trabalha para os mesmos órgãos de imprensa relacionados com o mesmo partido e isso abre espaço para a autocensura, como já foi referido "Sou membro do partido e sei o que é bom e o que não é bom para o meu partido". A região não é um lugar seguro para os jornalistas e registam-se diariamente mortes e

assassinatos e tortura de jornalistas. Para além da pressão do partido, laços e normas tribais também desempenham um papel importante na autocensura dos jornalistas. Também não há formação suficiente e esta área em muito nova tendo em conta o nível de ensino em jornalismo.

Quanto ao papel do Estado, as leis e regulamentos são importantes para o estabelecimento e desenvolvimento dos media no local. No entanto, as leis não ajudaram a desenvolver uma melhor prática de jornalismo devido à sua fraca implementação. Somado a isso, a intervenção do estado com presentes e os subsídios levaram ao controlo e manipulação de jornalistas, colocando-os sob a égide de sindicatos como capacidade de controlo como é o caso do Curdistan Journalists Syndicate to Control. Restringir a liberdade dos media ao abrigo das regras de segurança nacional ou dos valores nacionalistas por parte de partidos e do estado é uma prática corrente, não se percebendo muito bem que valores são esses e o se entende por segurança nacional.

INTRODUCTION: THE AIM OF THE STUDY, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND STATE OF THE ART

The aim of this study

The aim of this thesis is to study the relationship between the press and politics in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). We approach the KRI as a case study, as an example of the struggle between authoritarian and democratization efforts at the same time. It is an area with no democratic experience, that since 1992 could informally be called a 'new non-state democracy'. The scope is mostly exploratory and descriptive, setting the tone for future research that could focus on the region and/or on issues related to media and politics.

This research area is novel and there has been no study on the relation between the media and politics in Kurdistan. This thesis is an attempt to fill the gap in the field of politics in the KRI specifically as related to the media. In addition, this study will contribute towards understanding the dynamics of the media systems in the Middle East and participate in the theoretical discussion of media and politics. Periodically written press outlets issued and published in Kurdistan are chosen for study throughout this work. Research outcomes will show which parts of the press, how many of them and for what length of time the press in

the KRI has been owned/controlled by political parties. This research will also study the system of political parties and particularly as related to the press. There are also no previous studies on the parties and their political systems in the KRI. The majority of the research done in the KRI is 'survival research': and recently some pieces of research cover the issue of the struggle towards an independent state. Therefore, currently it is important that research is carried out on the press and political systems and their structure. This research takes place while a political system is in the formative process.

Research questions

While centering on the relationship between the press and politics in the KRI, four main research themes drive this study. These are as follows:

Historical development: Political parties and the press have both emerged and developed in the KRI in the twentieth century. What is the general historical, social and political context that created these two phenomena - parties and press in the KRI - and to what extent did the economic, social and professional characteristics of the context shape the relationship between politics and the press? What events and historical developments have impacted the general state of affairs of the politics and press in the KRI?

Press market: What market does the press have in the KRI of newspapers? Wha? What is the circulation of newspapers? What is the impact of the regional and linguistic segmentation of the KRI society on the emergence and development of the newspaper circulation?

Political parallelism: What is political parallelism and how is it expressed in the KRI? To what extent are journalists involved in active politics and what relationships do they have

with political parties? What involvement do the political parties have in the ownership of the newspapers? To what extent and in what conditions do political parties control the content of newspapers and is there any direct or indirect newspaper censorship involvement by politics? How much independence and freedom do journalists have in their daily activities? What role do syndicates of play in the KRI, and how much independence do they have as related to the other political institutions?

Professionalization: What is the level of journalist professionalism? What level of education, training and specialization do journalists have? To what extent is their experience sufficiently formative in order to present news impartially?

Role of the state: What is the role of the state and government institutions in the formation and development of the press in the KRI? Is the state providing sufficient legal provisions to foster independent and reliable journalism in the KRI? If yes, do these legal provisions offer sufficient freedom to journalists to provide the information, or is this legislation limiting the freedom and activity of the press and journalists? To what extent are the legal provisions implemented and what are the gaps that allow the immixture of politics into the press? According to the development and analysis of these research questions, the thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter 1 presents the theoretical framework. The literature review, research design and methodology employed are detailed in this chapter. This chapter will specify the methodology of the thesis, explaining the variables and indicators analyzed.

Chapter 2 presents the general characteristics the KRI as the case study for this research. General accounts regarding the region's political system describe approximately a century

of political and social development. **Chapter 3** will continue describing the development of the region's political parties in more depth along with the development of some elements of the media and press. **Chapter 4** will present the four dimensions of the media system in the KRI after the enactment of the journalism law, after 2007.

Chapters 5 and 6 of the thesis deal with the empirical analysis and are intended to provide evidence of the unfolding relationship between the press and politics in the KRI. **Chapter 5** will present the aspect of censorship and self-censorship of journalists, based on evidence collected by the author through interviews and questionnaires addressed to journalists in the KRI. **Chapter 6** will present the relationship between press and politics from the point of view of politicians. **Finally,** the concluding part will generalize results from the previous analyses and will refer to the main conclusions and future research suggestions regarding this subject, pointing out the strengths and some weaknesses of the analysis and possible issues subject to further research.

Intended contributions of this study to the state of the art

The intended contributions of this study are many. First of all, this research will contribute to the ongoing debate on theories and practice of media and politics. Secondly, it will add a novel case study to the scholarship of comparative accounts of roles, expectations and impact of the media on the process of democratization in developing countries and non-Western world. Not least, this research offers first hand evidence that can be used in other studies related to politics in the KRI.

CHAPTER ONE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK, RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The framework and main expectations of this thesis are based on current broad theories of comparative politics and comparative communication, along with the author's experience of the case under study.

The theoretical framework, research design and methodology employed are detailed in this chapter. The theoretical framework is based on four main research dimensions drawn out of mainstream research on media and politics. These dimensions are: media market, political parallelism, professionalization of journalists, and the role and intervention of the state in the media system. These dimensions are then broken down to measurable indicators for which it was possible to collect data and draw conclusions based on empirical evidence. The data was obtained by the author from one-to-one semi-structured interviews and questionnaires with acting politicians and journalists from the KRI. The research is completed by qualitative data and analysis of legislation, official documents, and other available archive resources.

This thesis offers mainly descriptive and exploratory accounts of an almost non-studied

case, that of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and the intricate development of its press and politics. Far from being exhaustive, this thesis does not offer any explanations or causal links for any of the described phenomena. In order to be able to determine an accurate causality mechanism in the relationship between media and politics in this region, more replication of research is needed with further evidence and lessons drawn. Whenever the quantitative data allows, correlations and some logical inferences are made.

1.1. Literature review: The relationship between politics and media

The core concern of this thesis is the development of, and relationship between, media and politics in the KRI. Before embarking on an analysis of the case, the results of the current literature on media and politics across the world will inform the research design and theoretical expectations for this study.

1.1.1 The research problem: Politics and media

In a classic text about government, Lasswell (1936) has defined politics as the study of 'who gets what, when, and how'. From this perspective, politics involves a range of actors engaged in a process of gaining and maintaining power in an organized society, through a range of rules accepted by a majority. Developments of theory and practice of government have put political parties at the core of the government process, as being the 'inevitable' (Bryce 1921: 119) though 'necessary evil' (Tocqueville 1831). Parties are the carriers of aggregated social values in the model of representative democracy, that arrive in

power through competition with a clear agenda to hold power. These are the basic definitions that this thesis is starting from, while developing the theoretical framework and research design for this thesis.

Expanding on the process of gaining and holding power by political parties, media appears as a main interface between power institutions and the citizens. It is a medium of communication of information and messages between the society and the governing institutions. In an ideal world, media would have an independent and impartial role in the process of information transfer, providing truthful content free of bias. However, the real world experience proves that as much as political parties may be 'evil' but 'necessary', the media can be more often than not biased by partisan agendas. Just as the process of gaining power can be altered by hidden interests in most of today's societies, the media can be a tool used and abused in the political process to influence voters, convey partisan messages and ultimately alter the ideal democratic process. This is the nutshell of prominent current theories studying phenomena directly or indirectly related to politics and the media.

Media is one of the main characteristics and tools in empowering and consolidating democracies. Civil participation occurs when flows of information are accessible to citizens and cause them to participate in the process of decision-making. Scholars agree upon the fact that media has direct and indirect involvement in promoting and assisting democratic processes especially in less democratized regimes (Curran et al., 1991; Kellner 2004; McQuail 2005). Meanwhile, there is scarcely a case of a functioning success story of a democracy where free and diverse media are not there to provide citizens with the information that assists them to form opinions based on making rational decisions. McNair

(1999: 21) approves the latter by defining the media in a democracy as '*a platform of public and political discourse that creates an informed citizenry'* . According to Delli, Carpini & Keeter (1996: 1), '*a broadly and equitably informed citizenry helps assure a democracy that is both responsive and responsible*'. For this purpose, the diversity of the media and a variety of viewpoints, as well as freedom of the press, is appreciated as a vital principle of democracy that allows citizens to make their choices of information. Moreover, O'Neil (1998) theorises that the success of democratic processes depends much on the access of the citizens to a varied flow of information in order for them to be able to participate, chose, and make decisions in an informed way. And, conversely, politicians also find the media can be a platform to present their views to the citizens. In fact, the media is the fundamental channel through which are formed the relations between politics and citizens.

1.1.2 Four theories of the press

In-depth studies concerned with the media and politics date from the early 1950´s, where development and interrelation between political systems and media systems are analyzed. The book *Four Theories of the Press* by Siebert et al. (1956: 1) is considered one of the first attempts at comparative analysis of media systems, where four theories of press are introduced: Authoritarian, Libertarian, Social Responsibility, Soviet Communist, theories. Siebert and his colleagues argue that the formation of the press depends on the political and social structure and is characterized by the historical conditions of the development of media, politics and society.

The first theory, *Authoritarian*, refers to the type of media/press developed in the late

Renaissance based on the belief that 'truth is not the product of a great mass of people, but of a few wise men' (Siebert et al., 1956: 2-12). They propose 3 main characteristics of this theory as: 1) the press supports the state 2) the press is licensed by the state 3) the press cannot criticize acts of the state. The second theory is that of the *Libertarian* press. This theory of the press is linked with the beginning of the age of enlightenment at the time of famous thinkers such as Milton, Locke, Rousseau, Voltaire, Jefferson. This press theory depends on the belief that truth and information are the natural rights of a man. The theory's 4 main characteristics are: 1) the press is a means of informing 2) the press provides man with the truth 3) the press gives space to the free ideas of individuals with no intention of offence to the private individual or the public 4) the press observes the government. The third theory is the *Soviet Communist* one, which somehow has the same characteristics as the authoritarian theory, but with more refined methods of operation. Its main characteristics are known as: 1) the press must be a support to state actions and plans 2) the press is a product of state/party registered members only, and only they have the right to publish 3) the state, politicians, and party have influence over the press 4) the press does not criticize the state. The fourth theory is *Social Responsibility*. This theory accords the press a heavy responsibility towards society to be being accurate, objective, and balanced. The press is self-regulated, free and accessible to everyone, and all politicians are treated equally.

One of the core conclusions conveyed by the authors is that the press and other media will reflect the 'basic beliefs and assumptions that the society holds' (p.1-2). Here, different cultures may have different principles and priorities.

1.1.3. The media as a competitive market in the political process by state and political parties

When it comes to the interplay between media and politics, two contradictory positions are delimited by the scholarship in this field. One refers to the media as a main supplier of reliable information in a diverse and pluralistic system of power-sharing (Davison, 1970: 22-24). While the other introduces the media as in competition with varied information providers bringing an emergence of diverse ownership that competes in favor of different groups (Curran et al., 1982: 16). From this point of view, it can be concluded that media might be seen as a market, where as a rule the information has to be reliable, but mostly is used to manipulate and out-do the competition. Here, media can be seen as a product that any interested party can acquire and own, with subsequent self-interested use.

In her study on the case of Finland, Francis Millard (1998) describes the ownership of media by different political parties as problematic, concluding that allowing different parties to operate their own media outlets could foster political divisions and instability. Millard anticipates possible clashes between parties caused by the ownership of the media, especially when each media outlet may deny the coverage of the other or might be used as a means against the other groups.

Political actors tend to be quite successful at using media in favor of their interests. The importance of sending information to spread agenda and ideology motivates political powers to create direct and indirect links with the media. This does not mean that media is free of dependency from politics, but in turn, the media also needs politicians to inform

citizens of the process of decision-making. In other words, as Mancini (1993: 36) puts it: 'politicians use media to leak information with an aim to deliver the message to the administration or to undermine their rivals'.

Above all, a state can play three major roles as challenging policies towards media as referred to by Randal (1998: 38). First, is the ownership, subsidising, and management of the media; and second, is the regulation of patterns of the media; while the third, is the control over content and messages of the media. As has been mentioned, the correlation and interdependence of media and politics is undeniable and as Curran et al. (1992: 21) states: 'while media are dependent on the central institutions of society for their raw material, these institutions were at the same time dependent on media to communicate their viewpoints to the public'. Eventually, within the legal environment there have been discussions that legal rules and regulations can also assist media to advance democratic goals. Monroe E. Price and Peter Krug (2006: 100) suggest an environment 'in which citizen preferences are a key to the long-term operability of the rule of law and a system of laws that facilitate the contribution the media can make to the democratization process'.

1.1.4 News theories and research into media and politics

Studies of media and politics are mainly focused on Western world realities: most existing studies have at their core assumptions and expectations built on Western democracies (Nerone, 1995: 70). The main limitations of these studies are that the non-Western realities are overlooked, and expectations are overstretched to political, social, and cultural settings that have different characteristics and that can hardly be applied to existing theoretical models. The most oft-quoted theoretical framework that analyses the relationship between

the media and political systems belongs to Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini with their 'Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics' (2004: 21-30). The authors analyze media systems by adopting four dimensions. First, *Media market* and its development focusing on the circulation and readership of the press. Second, they propose *Political parallelism* as a concept for testing the relationship and connections between the media and political parties. Their focus on political parallelism is that the differences in media systems in different countries rely very much on differences in their political systems. The third dimension they use is *Journalistic professionalism*, and the fourth is *the way that the state is involved* in the media system.

1.1.5 Media in the Arab world

Most mainstream studies on media and politics in general are based on, and relate to, Western democracies. Theories and findings are confined to these known cases and, to a certain extent, the expectations that scholars have built on these cases are becoming normative for non-Western countries. An unfulfilled expectation in this context is that he regionalism and globalization process would cause a convergence in content and practices of media, where the export of democracy and Western values would inevitably reproduce the media systems in a broader geographical context.

Referring to the Middle East where political and social conflicts finish in bloodshed and war more often than not, caution is needed in applying Western-based theories. Political and social contexts are uneven across the globe: far from being homogenous, they reflect disparate realities and social norms. This is mentioned as a general problem in the Arab world by Ambassador William A. Rugh (2004) in his book on Arab mass media.

The studies of Rugh result in the advancement of three ideal types of media system based on similarities of cases from the Arab world, mainly informed by the Four theories of press developed by Siebert et al. These ideal-types are: mobilization, loyalist and diverse types.

First, the *mobilization* type of media system is characterized by strict direct or indirect control by a small, aggressive ruling group that faces no significant opposition. There are no competing political parties or elections; a regime monopolizes power, making sure that the press does not criticize the leaders or the basic policies of the government. In addition, the media is used as a tool to mobilize popular support for the political programmes of the regime. The regime and its agents do not necessarily own all the media directly, and may allow newspapers and magazines to remain in private hands. Control is exercised through political parties, through the personnel appointed, and clear political guidance. Moreover, the control is facilitated by self-censorship and a restricted political environment.

The *loyalist* type is found in countries where there are no political parties or competitive elections and there is no encouragement of dissent against the government. But the regime adopts a more passive attitude towards the media and does not pursue media mobilization in specific political purposes. Private owners of media exist, on condition that the most important policies of the government are supported by the media. Indirect means of control are used, such as strictly regulated laws, non-compliance sanctions, and government authorities whose task is to monitor the media and enforce regulations. Some criticism is allowed, strictly avoiding certain areas, such as the head of state, religious leaders, issues deemed 'national security', even friendly governments.

A third type would be the *diverse* media system, where different opinions are expressed by political parties or groups. The few restrictions on freedom of expression are regulated by specific laws, but these are not strictly applied. Ownership of newspapers is diversified among private actors and there is substantial competition in editorial policies, with open criticism towards the government.

An important pillar in the thesis of Rugh is that these media types change in time, whenever the political system changes its characteristics. Given the high volatility of political systems observed in the Arab world (e.g. Syria, Libya, Egypt), media systems change accordingly. Expanding on this idea, the media systems here are highly dependent upon the political environment: professional capacities within the media establishment come second to the political will and winds of change. In addition the economic instability of the media makes it to be dependent mainly on the support of government and other political actors and interests.

Resuming our literature review, the press-type theories will inform the analysis of the general political and media setting of the case study of the KRI, while the framework detailed by Hallin and Mancini (2004) will be employed for a more in-depth exploration of the details and characteristics of the relationship between media and politics in the KRI.

1.2 Theoretical framework and research design: the four dimensions of media system

Four analytical dimensions developed by Hallin and Mancini (2004, 2012) are employed as a research model in this work, in order to define the existent media system in the KRI. There are various *caveats* when applying this model of four dimensions to a system

different from the one it was originally applied to in a Western context (Shen, 2012). However, it is argued that almost all existing media around the world meet the four dimensions of media market, state-media relationships, political parallelism, and journalistic professionalism (Voltmer, 2008). Therefore, the model is adopted here with close attention to the nature of the political system and the cultural, historical and social reality of the KRI.

The four dimensions proposed by Halin and Mancini (2004, 2012) are as follows (see *table*):

Dimensions	Indicators
1. Media market	• Newspaper circulation • Regional and linguistic segmentation of media markets
2. Political parallelism	• Party membership of journalists (political affiliation); affiliation of journalists to political parties • Ownership of newspapers by political parties • Control of parties over press, censorship and issue control; receiving directions from political party • Degree of perceived independence by journalists • Journalist Syndicate as a form of political control from the political parties • Laws on the relationship between political parties and media/press
3. Journalistic professionalism	• Education • Experience in journalism: years of work in journalism • Training and courses undertaken/ specialization • Self-censorship

4. Role of the state	• Law No. 10/1993 • Press Law • The law No. 17/1993 • Law of political parties • Law No. 4/1998, • Law of Journalists Syndicate of Kurdistan-Iraq • Law No. 13/2001, • Journalists retirement law • Iraqi Constitution. Ratified in a national referendum in 2005. • Law No. 35/2007 Journalism Law • 7. Law No. 11/2013 The law of access to information

Table 1: Four dimensions of media and their indicators

Dimension #1: Media market

The media market is related to the expansion of media to a more general public. It takes the news from a limited group of chosen sources to a broader diffusion to 'everybody who is ready to listen'. The concept of media market has been developed and used analytically by Hallin and Mancini in their study of Western Europe and N. America (Hallin and Mancini 2004: 21). These concepts found huge support among the comparative scholars, due to the relative ease of operationalization. This lead to the break down of the concept of the circulation of newspapers, as well as the regional or linguistic segmentation of the readership market. The dimension 'media market' recalls easily the economic theories of the market and sends us to the well-known idea of the 'demand and supply' side of the market. Here, 'supply' would be represented by the total number of available information outlets, while 'demand' would be determined by such factors of individual level of readership like gender, geographical belonging, education, social, political divides that determine the potential and actual capacity of the readership.

The total number of news outlets plus the geographical and linguistic characteristics of the

news outlets are used in this research.

Dimension #2: Political parallelism

Political parallelism is a characteristic of the media systems and 'refers to the character of links between political actors and the media and more generally the extent to which media reflects political divisions' (Hardy, 2008). Daniel C. Hallin and Mancini used the term to reveal the links between media and politics, adapting a concept coined by Colin Seymour-Ure in his 1974 research, who applied the concept of political parallelism to the links between the press and political parties (Seymour-Ure, 1974).

The dimension of political parallelism has been among the core variables in the comparative analysis of the Hallin and Mancini framework. Taking the nature of the political system into account, the indicators used are: political affiliation and party control and ownership of media; the level of the relationship; connections; affiliation and ties between media and political parties; ownership of newspapers by political parties; control of parties over press; censorship and issue control (e.g. receiving directions from a political party); and the overall degree of independence felt by the journalists (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 21). The journalists´ opinions on the role of the journalists syndicate in the KRI are analyzed, asking to what extent the syndicate represents the interests of its members. The political membership of journalists is another indicator used here, asking journalists working at media outlets in Kurdistan about their involvement in politics and activity within political parties.

We ask if party-affiliated journalists work for the paper supported by the same party. Self-

censorship is another indicator used here, with the intention of determining to what extent journalists are aware of, or induced to be aware of, issues that are better to avoid exposing in the media.

Dimension #3: Journalistic professionalism

The professionalization of journalists refers to the degree the practice of journalism can stand as an independent profession, with its own skills, norms and rules, and the ability to offer practitioners the needed support for a decent standard of living. Journalists' experience, number of years working, courses and training, and prior career routes, are all taken into account.

Dimension #4: Role and intervention of the state in the media system

The state has an undeniable role in regulating the media system directly and/or indirectly. The degree of the presence and intervention by the state can determine the room for manoeuvre of those involved in the production and delivery of media products and their circulation and reconversion. In this section, the following are analyzed: state control and any imposed restrictions and rules for the sake of national security, as well as statements and press releases by state officials. State control and/or intervention, is made mainly though special laws directed at the media. Not least, the state is responsible for the conditions of freedom of choice, freedom of speech for journalists, their protection and security. In general, Hallin and Mancini's (2004, 2012) suggested four dimensions covering variables in the study of media and politics, are relevant to the case of the KRI.

1.3 Theoretical expectations

Existing studies of press and politics are mainly descriptive in character, based on analyses of secondary data from public statistics or findings of other research. These kind of studies do not offer room for the creation of preliminary hypotheses to be tested, at least not in the manner of quantitative research. Moreover, there is no previous study or collected data on the political system in the KRI and almost no attention has been paid to the interaction of press and politics. Therefore, the results of this thesis will contribute towards a better understanding of the case, even if they do not employ general testable hypotheses and models for that related to press and politics, which would create a more robust case which could be replicated in the future.

Taking into account studies and theories from other cases, the following expectations and propositions regarding the *media system in the KRI* can be formulated:

1 Weak media market: press in the KRI mostly depend on their owners for revenue, budget providers who are mainly political parties. This puts them in the position of being less concerned about the market and its revenues.

2 Low-level professionalization of journalists: due to the young age of regional institutions and low availability of professional training in the region, it can be expected that press personnel lack professionalism, freedom and independence.

3 High political parallelism:

3.1 There is a geographical polarization of media outlets across the society, according

to the political party system.

3.2 The press is owned by political parties and subject to political control and has limited freedom.

3.3 There are a high number of journalists with declared affiliation to a political party.

3.4 There are strong clientelistic and patronage connections between the outlets and journalists with the political parties.

4 Inefficient application of the state laws:

4.1 Despite the existence of good law texts, there is no implementation of them on the ground, nor control of their application.

4.2. The budget and finances of the state are used by the clientelist political parties, which offer subsidies and financial help in an uneven and non-transparent manner.

5 A set of general propositions regarding the entire political system, according to the classic study of the four theories of the press: Authoritarian, Libertarian, Social Responsibility, Soviet Communist (Siebert et al., 1956: 1).

5.1 All these models can be found in the region. *A non-consolidated system.*

5.2 The practices of the press in the KRI could be categorized as authoritarian due to the direct and indirect control and ownership that politicians have over the press. This is complimented by the inability and impossibility, in some cases, of the media to criticize the state and the politicians in power.

5.3. A Soviet communist model could also be applicable with the kind of a

media that serves as the mouthpiece of the state, politicians or the party.

5.4. Both libertarian and social responsibility models can be found within the structure of the media. These would be supported by tendencies of liberalization in part of the market, along with strong control from the side of the state-like institutions that are under construction, and, in addition, the influence of regional and global changes in media-society-politics relations.

1.4 Data and research methods

This research uses a triangulation of methods and employs different sources, such as qualitative analyses of current and archived laws, party and media documents, as well as personal semi-structured interviews and anonymous questionnaires conducted as part of this research.

1. **Archives**: Archives are used mainly to describe the historical evolution of the region and the changes that have taken place in relation to the development of the political system and media. The following archives were available to the author: party archive department of KDP and PUK, radio tapes from the 1990s, Parliamentary laws and resolutions.

2. **Documents**: Non-archived current documents are used in order to add qualitative data regarding the context and dynamics that otherwise are not visible in the current press.

3. **Laws**: A number of laws related to the press have been consulted. These are:

- Law 10/1993: *The Press Law*;

- Iraq Constitution 2005 (Article 38, the right to freedom of expression is guaranteed);

- Law 21/2011 adopted by the Iraqi Council of Representatives. This law is also known as *Journalist Rights Law*;

- Law 35/2007: *The Journalism Law*, passed in the Kurdistan Parliament in 2007;

- Law 11/2013: *The Right of Access to Information* adopted in 2013.

4. **Printed daily newspapers** published in the KRI: *Kurdistani Niwe, Evro, Hawler, Khabat, Waar, Awena, Rudaw*

5. **Semi-structured elite interviews**: As already mentioned, there are virtually no studies related to the subject of this thesis. The semi-structured interviews were one of the main means of gathering data and obtain as many different points of view, as was practically possible (Deacon et al., 1999: 291). Six interviews were held personally by the author with individuals who are/or were directly involved in the events, and/or those linked directly to the subject of the study. Among the interviewed respondents there were: politicians (leaders and simple members of political parties, parliamentarians) and: journalists (media decision-makers, such as owners of outlets and journal directors, along with chief-editors and other categories of journalist).

The interviews were held face to face. All the interviews were held in Kurdish and translated into English by the author. Please refer to Appendix 3 for the complete list of the interviews and the dates when these were held. All the interviews are transcribed.

6. **Questionnaires with politicians and journalists**: Two main categories of respondents - parliamentarians of the legislature 2013-2017 and journalists of daily newspapers published in the KRI - were targeted with specially-designed questionnaires. The

questionnaires were anonymous in order to obtain answers that would be as reliable as possible. As for the content of the questionnaire, the questions were designed by the author with the intention of capturing the aspects and characteristics of the four dimensions of the media system, used as a framework. The results are analyzed using a mixture of descriptive and inferential statistics, illustrated by graphs. The analysis was performed using the SPSS software. The full version of the questionnaires can be found in the Appendices.

- *Journalists' questionnaire*

The total population of journalists that work for press in KRG is unknown, as there are no official lists of registered journalists. The exact number of outlets that are registered with the Syndicate of Journalists is available (please see Appendix 6 for more details): there were 765 outlets of different types (such as daily, weekly and monthly publications). However, 150 forms were distributed in the period June-July 2014 among the journalists of the three provinces of the KRI, 50 for each province. There were 131 returns: 49 forms from Duhok, 44 from Erbil, and 38 from Sulaimani. Out of the total respondents, 75% work for daily newspapers and the other 25% work for weekly newspapers.

- *Politicians' questionnaire*

The questionnaire dedicated to politicians has 57 returned answers, which is about 48% out of the total number of 111 parliamentarians currently in office. The questionnaire was distributed and responses collected from October-November 2014.

1.5 What is this study and what is it not?

This is a comparative study of politics and press in the KRI. Despite presenting a case study, there is a comparative character underlying this research. First, it employs categories and dimensions used in comparative studies, making it easy for it to be inserted into the family of the larger comparative studies. By using the theoretical framework developed on the basis of Western cases, a new case becomes available on the map of comparative scholars, a case that otherwise would not be studied. Second, even if the of this scope of this study is limited, a historical perspective is adopted in this research, allowing for chronological comparison of the events and the evolution of these phenomena over time. In the first part of the thesis the development of the press and politics in the KRI over a few decades is traced, offering the possibility to use a 'before and after' outlook. Third, political parties and news outlets are the units of analysis to which the comparative approach is being applied. Finally, this research may be seen as interdisciplinary, as it lies among the comparative communication studies, with the use of insights from comparative media studies. However, there is a strong component of comparative politics as well, as the relationship between political parties and the press is taken into account. This reveals aspects that are somewhat understudied in the comparative politics scholarship with regard to media and politics.

The term media refers to a system of media communication, which generally covers a large range of communication channels, mechanisms and actors. The scope of this thesis is to concentrate on the press aspect of the media system in the KRI, leaving aside the other media aspects that compose and define the general and broad system of media. Separate,

extensive studies would be required for other aspects such as audio and video broadcasting, social media, media and electoral politics, mediatization of political issues, political parties and leaders. These issues are outside the scope of this thesis, due to obvious limitation of resources.

1.6 Research ethics

The author has received the written permission of the interviewed respondents to quote and make public their answers. The questionnaires are anonymous and no names can be disclosed. Most of the consulted documents are still public and can be accessed on websites or on demand.

CHAPTER TWO: KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ:

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

BEFORE AND AFTER 2003

Introduction

2.1 Historical and political Background of Kurdistan Region of Iraq

The KRI borders Turkey to the North, Syria to the West, and Iran to the East covering

40,643 square kilometres. The population of the region is estimated around 5.2 million as

15-20 % of total Iraqi population. The KRI is the only official status of a Kurdish

administration from the four parts of the area where Kurds are mainly living in Turkey,

Iraq, Iran and Syria. The history of these[1] territories being divided into four parts goes back

to the days after the fall of Ottoman Empire following the WWI. On 10 August 1920, in

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[1]   See more at Kurdistan Regional Government's official website, http://www.gov.krd/p/page.aspx?l=12&s=050000&r=303&p=213 , Retrieved on 5 July 2016

Sèvres[2], France, a peace treaty between the Ottomans and the allies of WWI promised Kurds a state of their own (Wagner, 2004: 53-62). This promise was never kept but instead three years later on 24 July 1923, another treaty in Lausanne[3] divided the Kurdish territories between the four states of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria (McDowall, 1996: 115-151). An Independent Kurdish state was denied mainly because of the predominant geopolitical conditions in the region and the conflicts of interest among the world powers (Bulloch & Morris, 1993). Ever since, in these four areas there are ongoing revolts, disagreements and demands for freedom and the right of self-determination and a state for the Kurds. Most of these attempts were suppressed and silenced by the governments but the most successful out of these revolts was that of the Kurds in Iraq. Since 1920, there have been numerous attempts by the Kurds to rebel in these four states. The more serious uprising against the Iraqi government started in the 1930s under the command of their national leader Mulla Mustafa Barzani (Yildiz, 2004). In Iraq the Kurdish rebellion was more widespread. As a result, the regime's suppression was more brutal against them. As well as the attempts at rebellion, the Kurds in Iraq have attempted numerous times to find a way to attain autonomy and self-rule in their populated areas. This was mainly because there has been no confirmed place for the Kurds in the establishment of Iraq, as Romano (2010:1345) stated:

As leaders in Baghdad (whether under the monarchy before 1958 or the

republican regimes that followed) sought to legitimize their rule, forge a new

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[2]   Section III, Articles 62-64 of Sèvres Peace Treaty: http://treaties.fco.gov.uk/docs/pdf/1920/TS0011.pdf
      Retrieved on 5 July 2016

[3] The full treaty in English is available at: http://sam.baskent.edu.tr/belge/Lausanne_ENG.pdf
      Retrieved on 5 July 2016

state, and unite Shi'is and Sunnis via a discourse of Arab nationalism, the

Kurds' place in Iraq remained ever uncertain.

The revolts in Iraq entered a more organised partisan resistance after the formation of KDP led by Mulla Mustafa Barzani. Barzani founded Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and became the first leader of this in Iraq on 16 August 1946. The establishment of this political party played an important role in progressing and 'promoting Kurdish nationalism' organising, leading and directing revolts against the Iraqi government's suppression. The party led the Kurdish national revolution, and demanded rights for the Kurdish people since its establishment (Stansfield, 2003: 61).

Iraq as a state was established in the aftermath of World War I. From its establishment in the early 1920s until the early 1990s the Kurds attempted numerous uprisings and revolts against successive Iraqi governments. Suppression was imposed on the Kurds of Iraq starting from the time of the monarch up to the time of the republicans. In other words, all the successive governments in Iraq have committed crimes against the Kurds and have systematically oppressed these people. Heavy wars have been imposed against the Kurds in Iraq and the Kurdish areas have been subject to destruction and continuous attacks. There have been few agreements between Baghdad and the Kurds. The very first agreement between both sides was established on 11 March 1970, known as 11 March Agreement. According to Marr (2012: 152) this agreement was to guarantee the representation of the Kurds in Iraq and in the Iraqi government by protecting their legal rights and recognition of their cultural rights:

[*'... It provided for Kurdish autonomy (the first official use of the word), and it guaranteed proportional representation of Kurds within a future legislative body, the appointment of a Kurdish vice president at the national level, the expenditure of an equitable amount of oil revenue in the autonomous regions, and the recognition of both Kurdish and Arabic as official languages in Kurdish territory'.*]

The most illustrated and serious accomplishment of the Kurdish movement in Iraq could be considered as the Autonomy Agreement of 1970[4]. This agreement reached a functional stage after the uninterrupted war started by the Kurds in 1961, fighting for their rights against the Iraqi government, had lasted for almost a decade (Harris, 1977). The harsh results of war and ongoing partisan fights brought the Iraqi government to the negotiation table. As a result both sides came up with the Autonomy Agreement of 1970. According to this agreement, which was as well-known as the March Agreement, the Iraqi government was mandated to grant a broader freedom for Kurds. One of the most notable achievements of this agreement was that for the first time the Kurds were allowed to take part in the formation of the government (Stansfield, 2006). After years of war and disputes between Iraqi government and Kurdish rebels' national movement, the March 1970 autonomy agreement is considered the foundation stone for the establishment of Kurdistan Region (Mills and Sen, 2016). The agreement was the result of a negotiation between the Iraqi government and the leader of Kurdish National Movement Mulla Mustafa Barzani. According to the agreement the Kurds would be granted more freedoms such as the right to self-government, education in the Kurdish language and political participation (Bulloch & Morris, 1993).

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4   See more at Iraq and Kurdish Autonomy https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/3011338.pdf?_=1467734862366https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/3011338.pdf?_=1467734862366
      Retrieved on 5 July 2016

However, this agreement did not last long and failed to be implemented. The failure of its implementation led to another wave of conflict between the Kurds and Iraqi government in 1974. A year after, the support that was granted to the Kurdish armed resistance stopped. This basically came about because of the signing of the treaty of Algiers between the Shah of Iran and Saddam Hussein. After this agreement, Iranians stopped supplying the Kurdish revolutionary movement with ammunition and arms. This halted the armed resistance of the Kurdish rebellions against the Iraqi government. Immediately after, the Iraqi government started a series of brutal attacks against the Kurdish areas aimed not only at the Peshmerga rebels but also the villagers and the Kurdish cities. As a result, hundreds of thousands of Kurdish families in the North of Iraq were displaced and sought refuge in Turkey and Iran. These attacks continued: they were known later as the process of Arabisation, an ethnic cleansing operation committed by the Ba'ath Party against the Kurds in the North of Iraq. As a result of tyrannical suppressions by the Baath regime, thousands of Kurdish families fled to Iran and Turkey in 1975. The year 1975 was a crisis year for the Kurdish nationalism movement in Iraq. Despite the collapse of the revolution after the Shah-Saddam agreement, a major breakup occurred in the Kurdistan Democratic Party at the same time. This happened when Jalal Talebani founded the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and a significant number of KDP members joined the newly established party.

The 1979 revolution in Iran and removal of the Shah from power was the end of the Algiers Agreement. Two years later, Iran and Iraq entered an armed conflict that lasted for eight years. By the occurrence of the war, Iran resumed its support for the Kurdish resistance. Both sides, the Iranians and the Kurds of Iraq, now had a common enemy and

they formed a coalition to fight side by side against the Iraqi army.

This war lasted for eight years and during this time the Baath regime under the leadership of Saddam Hussein committed many crimes against the people in the North of Iraq. During this time, the Kurdish area of Iraq became a stage for war and genocide. The Baath regime officially declared an operation against the Kurdish people. The operation, Al-Anfal Campaign, started in the early 1980s and was aimed at the ethnic cleansing of the Kurds in Iraq. This campaign against the Kurds in the North was motivated by the military assistance given by the Kurdish Peshmergas to Iranian forces during the war. Al-Anfal campaign caused the killing of approximately 182,000 Kurds between the 1987 and 1988. More than 4,000 villages were destroyed. Over 5,000 civilians died in a matter of hours when unconventional weapons were used against civilians (Anderson & Stansfield, 2004; Human Rights Watch, 1993). According to O'Leary (2002, 18): 'Its [the campaign's] specific aim was to cleanse the region of saboteurs - who included all males between the ages of 15 and 70. Mass executions were carried out in the targeted villages and surrounding areas'.

2.2 Kurdistan Regional Government 1991 - 2003

2.2.1 The Gulf War and the Uprising

After eight years of war with Iran and eventually entering another war with Kuwait, the Baath regime in Iraq became weaker. This gave a chance to the Kurds to rise up against the

Baath regime and establish their autonomous government. The Uprising of Spring 1991 is considered to be among the most important events in the history of the Kurdish national movement. Under the support and the shelter provided by the international community a no-fly zone was established which provided the Kurds with autonomous status inside Iraq.

In February 1991, the United States and its allies intervened in Iraq and Kuwait, responding to the invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein which occurred in 1990. As a result, Saddam was pushed back and Kuwait was liberated. The uprising in the North then started in early March, 1991. This was a revolt by the people inside the Kurdish cities again the tyrannical and brutal acts of the Baath regime. The uprising was backed by the Kurdish Peshmergas who joined the civilians in overthrowing the Baath and pushing them out of the Kurdish cities. This started in early March 1991 and lasted for almost one month. By 21 March, the Kurdish people and Peshmergas had managed to expel the regime from Erbil, Duhok, Kirkouk and Sulaimani (Meiselas & van Bruinessen 2008). Apparently, the liberation of the oil rich city of Kirkouk through the Kurdish Uprising was not tolerated by Saddam. As a result, on 29 March Saddam's Republican Guard received an order from him to retake the Kurdish region and in one day all cities were back under the control of Saddam's Baath Regime (McDowall 2005). This counterattack of the Baath regime caused the displacement of the entire population of the Kurdish region, who had already had the bitter experience of brutal chemical gas used against them in 1988. They fled towards the Turkish and Iranian borders (Meiselas & van Bruinessen 2008). This displacement of hundreds of thousands was a serious humanitarian disaster as the majority of those fleeing had no choice but to remain for months on the border between Turkey, Iran and Iraq. In April 1991, the Kurdish political leadership decided to start negotiating with Iraq (Gunter 1992). As expected, negotiations did not succeed. Following that, the US and its allies

intervened to provide humanitarian aid, and by expelling the Baath army from the North, they established a safe haven for the Kurds (Meiselas & van Bruinessen, 2008). This achievement was accompanied by the declaration of a 'no-fly' zone in northern Iraq which was eventually legalised by the UN Security Council as Resolution No. 688 adopted on 5 April, 1991. This put an end to displacement and the refugees started to return back to their homes.

2.2.2 Kurdistan Parliament and the establishment of Kurdistan Regional Government

The Kurdistan Parliament-Iraq, is a unicameral assembly of legislation. It was established in 1992 and has functioned since then with a relatively stable legislative capacity. In 2005, the Kurdistan Parliament and the other political institutions of the KRI were adopted into the Iraqi constitution and are functioning according to the Iraqi constitution.

[*Legislation enacted in the region of Kurdistan since 1992 shall remain in force, and decisions issued by the government of the region of Kurdistan, including court decisions and contracts, shall be considered valid unless they are amended or annulled pursuant to the laws of the region of Kurdistan by the competent entity in the region, provided that they do not contradict the Constitution.*]

(Iraqi Constitution 2005, Article 141)

The establishment of a parliament in the North of Iraq was based upon a decision taken by the Kurdistan National Front. The National front was basically a committee which consisted of all the representatives from Kurdistan's political parties, most of them the

leading decision-makers. The committee then, took a decision to establish a Kurdistan Parliament and implement parliamentarian rule in the region. This decision was a unilateral declaration of federalism in Iraq without seeking willingness from Baghdad. The reason behind the necessity of establishing a ruling system was that after the uprising in Kurdistan Region the Iraqi officials and state institutions withdrew from the Kurdish cities in the North. Therefore, the region found itself in an administration vacuum and decided to replace it with local rule. Nonetheless, before the establishment of parliament and the Kurdistan Regional government, a delegation visited Baghdad hoping for an agreement with the Baath regime regarding the fate of the Kurdistan Region's administration. At that time, the main demand of the Kurdish delegation was for an autonomous federal region within Iraq, much similar to the 1970s agreement between both sides. As expected, the Kurdish delegation's request in Baghdad was rejected and there was no agreement. It was only after that that the Kurdistan National Front formed a committee of 15 experts to decide on an administrative system in the region. The committee produced a document that later on was adopted as *Law No. 1*[5], 1992 of the parliament. The document, as mentioned, was also a unilateral declaration of federal autonomy in the Kurdistan Region. Instantly, the unilateral declaration of federalism was denounced by Baghdad and neighbouring countries but that did not halt the Kurdish politicians from establishng their own regional government. As a result, there was a vote in 1992 for a one-chamber parliament, elected by direct vote every 4 years, inspired by the consolidated democracies. Later in 2009, the name of the parliament changed from Kurdistan National Assembly to *Kurdistan Parliament-Iraq*, through an amendment to the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament's by-law.

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[5]   Kurdistan National Assembly Elections Law – Iraq, No. 1 of the year 1992 (unofficial translation): http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:gwnmBcD68TwJ:gjpi.org/wp-content/uploads/consolidated-amendment-to-electoral-law-of-the-kip-unami-unoffical-translation-final-annotated.doc+&cd=3&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=ro

Immediately after its formation, the parliament started to adopt foundation and landmark laws to establish a council of ministers and ministries, and then granted a vote of confidence to the cabinet of the first Kurdistan Region's government. Formation of the Kurdistan parliament in basic liberal democratic style could be considered the continuation of a wave that started in the world in the 1990s. The world in the 1990s was going through a transformation and '*by the late nineties, 60 percent of the world's independent states had become electoral democracies*' (Diamond, 2015: 142). On the one hand, this shift also refers to the fact that the Kurdish political leadership was more aware of the world around them and had better knowledge of world developments, which meant that the Kurdish leadership had a better understanding of the world and greater opportunities to communicate with the rapid changes in the world political system. On the other hand, this move towards democracy was also a giant step towards social change in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Suddenly, millions of individuals participated actively in decision-making, which was never the case before.

2.2.3. Formation of Kurdistan Parliament and de facto Autonomy

As a result, on 19 May 1992, approximately one million voters[6] participated in parliamentary elections in the three governorates of the Kurdish region in northern Iraq. The two main parties formed alliances and their final results were very close to each other. The KDP won 50.22 and PUK won 49.78 per cent of the vote (Aziz, 2011). The election process and its results were approved by the London-based organization, Electoral Reform

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[6]   Total number of participation was declared as 971953 voters. For more information, see http:// perleman.org/Default.aspx?page=page&c=Parliament-History1992 Retrieved on 15-06-2017

Society, which announced the elections as free and fair with no evidence of substantial fraud that would have significantly affected the result (Romano, 2006). Following the elections the Kurdish National Assembly was established and started to adopt landmark laws that became the foundation stone of Kurdistan Regional Government. The political developments in the North of Iraq and the establishment of autonomous government was an irritant mainly to the neighbouring countries such as Turkey, Iran and Syria who presumed the Kurds would declare an independent state of their own (Bengio, 2005). As a result, these three neighbouring countries announced their common commitment to maintaining the territorial integrity and unity of Iraq (McDowall, 2005). As a result, the region and its system after the 1992 elections and the formation of the parliament remained as de facto autonomy. This practice of autonomy was never permissive by the government in Baghdad until the fall of Baath regime.

The close results of the two winning parties made them decide to form a power-sharing consensus. It took the name of 'Fifty-Fifty government'. The seats in the National Assembly were also shared between the two parties, 50 for PUK and 50 for KDP, out of 105 seats. The remaining 5 seats were allocated to the Christian community in the region as quota seats. In 1992 the establishment of this de facto state was legitimised by the foundation of Kurdistan National Assembly[7], which is the parliament of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Law No. 1[8] of the region instituted the one-chamber parliament, elected by direct vote every 4 years, on the inspiration of the consolidated democracies. Now, more

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[7]   Due to an amendment to the Kurdistan parliament's by-law in 2009, the name changed from Kurdistan national assembly to Kurdistan parliament-Iraq.

[8]   Kurdistan National Assembly Elections Law – Iraq, No. 1 of the year 1992 (Unofficial translation): http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:gwnmBcD68TwJ:gjpi.org/wp-content/uploads/consolidated-amendment-to-electoral-law-of-the-kip-unami-unoffical-translation-final-annotated.doc+&cd=3&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=ro

than two decades has passed and the parliament has been evolving continuously in both structure and content: re-shaping to adjust itself and to try to accommodate factors such as manifested intentions of independence from the central government, democratic aspirations, security and economic problems, local cultures, continuous struggles and learning of political elites.

The situation in Iraq and Kurdistan shifted into a new reality after the US-led coalition to remove Baath party from power in Iraq. The Kurds, as one of the main opposition parties took part in the war against the regime and side by side with the coalition forces fought for a better future in Iraq. Later, the Kurds took part in rebuilding Iraq and drafting a constitution for all Iraqis.

After the toppling of the Baath party from power in Iraq, under the supervision of the coalition forces, an Iraqi interim government was appointed. This government consisted of the representatives from different Iraqi ethnic and religious groups[9]. The interim government was supposed to be a committee of all Iraqis to draft a constitution. This constitution was ratified in 2005[10], Kurdistan Parliament-Iraq was granted the power of law-making as a regional parliament, on the condition that the legislation did not contradict

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[9]   The Iraqi interim government was created on 28 June 2004, to govern the country until the drafting of a new constitution. It was replaced with the Iraqi transitional government on 3 May 2005.

[10]   For further information regarding the arrangements of the Iraqi Constitution, see John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary (2005) Iraq's Constitution of 2005: Liberal consociation as political prescription, International Journal of Constitutional Law; Nathan J. Brown Senior Associate Carnegie (2005) The Final Draft of the Iraqi Constitution: Analysis and Commentary Endowment for International Peace; Dodge, Toby (2005) Iraq's future: the aftermath of regime change. Adelphi Papers.

the Iraqi Constitution[11]. The legislation of the federal parliament can be adopted in KRI only in the region. Otherwise, in the KRI priority is given to the legislation and laws adopted by the Kurdistan Parliament-Iraq. The Iraqi Constitution recognises, among others, that the region of Kurdistan has the right to exercise legislative powers. In the case of a contradiction between regional and national legislation in respect to a matter outside the exclusive authorities of the federal government, the regional power has the right to amend the application of the national legislation within the region. Furthermore, the 2005 Constitution recognises the legislation enacted in the region of Kurdistan after 1992, '... *Provided that they do not contradict the Constitution.'* (Article 141).

2.2.4. The terms of Kurdistan Parliament - Iraq (1992-2017)

The Kurdistan Region of Iraq and its institutions function according to the laws and

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[11]   The provisions in the Iraqi Constitution regarding the Region of Kurdistan are as follows:
        Article 116: The federal system in the Republic of Iraq is made up of a decentralized capital, regions, and governorates, as well as local administrations.
        Article 117: First: This Constitution, upon coming into force, shall recognize the region of Kurdistan, along with its existing authorities, as a federal region.
        Article 121: First: The regional powers shall have the right to exercise executive , legislative, and judicial powers in accordance with this Constitution, except for those authorities stipulated in the exclusive authorities of the federal government.
        Second: In the case of any contradiction between regional and national legislation in respect to a matter outside the exclusive authorities of the federal government, the regional power shall have the right to amend the application of the national legislation within that region.
        Third: Regions and governorates shall be allocated an equitable share of the national revenues sufficient to discharge their responsibilities and duties, but having regard to their resources, needs, and the percentage of their population.
        Fourth: Offices for the regions and governorates shall be established in embassies and diplomatic missions, in order to follow cultural, social, and developmental affairs.
        Fifth: The regional government shall be responsible for all the administrative requirements of the region, particularly the establishment and organization of the internal security forces for the region such as police, security forces, and guards of the region.
        Article 141: Legislation enacted in the region of Kurdistan since 1992 shall remain in force, and decisions issued by the government of the region of Kurdistan, including court decisions and contracts, shall be considered valid unless they are amended or annulled pursuant to the laws of the region of Kurdistan by the competent entity in the region, provided that they do not contradict the Constitution.
        *See: http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/text.jsp?file_id=230001

legislations of parliament. Law No. 1 1992[12] is the very first law legislated by the Kurdistan Parliament. This law has been considered the foundation stone for the political system in KRI since 1992. The law was enacted and the first parliamentary term was voted in 1992 on the basis of a closed-party-list electoral system, with a minimum threshold of 7%[13]. The seventh amendment of the law in 2013 changed the system into a semi-open-party-list of proportional representation[14]. Consequently, the last elections in 2013 were based on a semi- open-party-list proportional representation system. In the vote for the fourth term, electors voted for a party list and also prioritised one candidate from the same list. After the election results are announced, each party is allocated seats in proportion to the number of received votes, using the order of top winning candidates on its list.

The history of the Kurdistan Parliament-Iraq can be described by its 'ups and downs'. The plenary has experienced so much instability that at times it resulted in conditions of instability in the country and the region. There were times when the sessions were not held due to political disputes and disagreements. At the same time, there have been glorious times, like the period of the civil war in KRI, when the parliament refused to be a part of the conflict and continued legislating. The first term of the parliament and government in 1992 was formed upon a consensus between Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). These were the first elections after the region declared unilateral autonomy within a federal system. This autonomy was declared in association

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[12]   The law was drafted by a committee consisting of representatives of *Kurdistan Front* and then passed and approved by the Kurdistan Front leadership. On 19 May 1992, approximately one million voters participated in parliamentary elections in the three governorates of the areas under Kurdish control in the northern part of Iraq.

[13]   Election Law No. 1, 1992: http://perleman.org/files/articles/010315072126.pdf
         First Amendment of the election law: http://perleman.org/files/articles/150915101618.pdf
         Seventh amendment of the election law: http://perleman.org/files/articles/080713065045.pdf

[14]   Law No. 15, 2013

with Law No. 1, 1992. Neither Baghdad nor any regional or international states agreed with this declaration of autonomy. Nevertheless, the region continued as a de facto autonomy. The main participants of the first elections were KDP and PUK. Seven other political parties took part in the elections: Islamic Union of Kurdistan (IUK), Kurdistan Communist Party, National Democratic Union of Kurdistan, Turkmen, Assyrians and Chaldeans, Social Democrats of Kurdistan, and Toilers party. This alliance won approximately 90% of the votes and the cabinet they formed was named as *Unitary Government.*

The internal political crisis mainly caused by the civil war led to a delay in holding the second term elections on time. The elections for the second term of the parliament took place in 2005, more than nine years after the date they were supposed to be held, in 1998. Due to the fact that the 7% threshold was lifted and quota seats were added for the minorities, the number of parties that entered parliament was higher: besides the bigger KDP and PUK, smaller parties like Kurdistan Islamic Union, Communist Party of Kurdistan, YNDK, Turkmen, Assyrian, Social Democrats, Labors party, Islamic Group and Toilers party were able to win seats.

The situation was different for the third term and in the elections of 2009. The elections for this term were held on time but at the same time the political map of the region faced a change. The previous alliance of majority seats in the parliament and the power-sharing between KDP and PUK came to an end, with less hope to get close to those results again. This was due to the major fracture inside the PUK, the split of a group that later created the *Movement for Change (Gorran).* This newly-founded party took part in the elections and managed to win 24% of the votes, while KDP and PUK together won 57% of the total votes. After the election the newly-founded party, Gorran, declared itself the opposition.

This move by the Change Movement had no precedent in the parliament and KRI government. It was the first time that a political party with a salient number of seats in the parliament became an opposition party. The change movement secured nearly 1/4 of the total seats in the 2009 elections. Besides these three parties, other parties such as Communist party, Islamic Movement, Islamic Union, Islamic Group, Social Democrats, Future Party, Rafidayn, National council of Chaldean, Assyrian, Ashuri, Turkmen Democratic Movement, Turkmen Brotherhood and Turkmen Reform Movement also won seats in parliament.

The fourth term of parliamentary elections were held on 21 September 2013. The parliamentary parties for the fourth legislature were: KDP, PUK, Change Movement, Islamic Movement, Islamic Union, Islamic Group, Social democrat, Labors Party, Rafidayn, National council Chaldean, Assyrian, Ashuri, Abna Nahrain, Erbil Turkmen List, Turkmen Change and Renovation, Iraqi Turkmen Front and Turkmen Development. In these elections, all political parties ran with no previous alliance and none of them were able to win more than 50% of the seats required to form the cabinet. Thus, they needed coalitions and as a result a consensus of all parties formed the cabinet. Nevertheless, the political agreement between the parties did not last long and as a result the sessions of parliament were locked during this term, in October 2015. This happened after Gorran insisted on the amendment of the presidency law, advanced as being the solution for political crises in the region. At the beginning, this amendment was supported by the simple majority of parliament and it passed on its first hearing. But for the second hearing the simple majority which is needed for a session to be held was not complete and the session did not happen. As a result, the amendment attempts failed. Immediately after this, a number of demonstrations occurred in Sulaymaniyah governorate and its suburbs,

targeting KDP branches and offices in that area. KDP reportedly accused Gorran of being responsible for the attacks against its branches and offices. The tension between the two parties rose to such an extent that KDP announced that they would no longer recognise the president of parliament from Gorran, accusing him of being biased. On 12 October 2015, the president of the parliament was not allowed to enter Erbil, the capital city of the region. A week later, KDP reshuffled the coalition and the prime minister sacked the Gorran ministers from his cabinet. This led to the stalemate and the parliamentary sessions stopped being held.

The parliament was only reactivated nearly two years later on 15 September 2017. This was the time when the political parties in the KRI were involved in holding a referendum on independence. The majority of the parties supportive of the referendum agreed to reactivate the parliament for a more legalised and legitimised atmosphere of the referendum. So, the session of parliament, reactivated after almost two years, was also to pass the legislation which instructed the High Election and Referendum Commission to hold a referendum on 25 September 2017, in the KRI and the areas outside the administration of the KRI (Disputed Territories).

The parliament is made up of a number of fractions representing political parties. Each fraction is formed after the parliament members take the oath. The formation of the fractions is an internal issue for the political parties and usually the parties have a say in deciding the posts inside their fraction. However, the fractions tend to elect their president in a democratic way where members of a fraction vote for the presidency board. There are also other responsibilities to be distributed among the members of each fraction such as presidency and presidency board of the committees. This is also a process that is supposed to be held democratically inside the fractions but again, the party's decision is final.

Members of each fraction are expected to be cohesive especially in the legislative voting process. Regarding the presidency unit of each fraction, for instance, the presidency of the KDP fraction, which is currently the largest one with 38 seats, consists of the president of the fraction, deputy president, coordinator and a spokesperson. The fractions abide by the orders and discipline of their political party through and the presidency board of fractions that are supposed to be in continuous contact with their political parties. There are issues being discussed at the parliament such as budget, new drafts and legislation that need the final decision of the political party. Usually it is the responsibility of the president of the fraction to ask the members of the fraction to be aware of acting cohesively in order to achieve the party goals in certain pieces of legislation.

2.2.5. The internal war between KDP and PUK

A consensus and sharing of power was intended to bring stability and harmony between the two parties, but did not last long. Two years later, in May 1994, the dispute between the two parties reached the level of armed clashes.

The war between PUK and KDP automatically turned the Kurdistan Region into two war fronts, one in the KDP-controlled areas and the other in the PUK-controlled areas. At the beginning of the war the PUK headquarters in Duhok was captured by KDP, and KDP Branch 4 in Silemani was captured by the PUK fighters. These two areas, as with the two parties, formed their own determination: each of the two political parties had their own militia fighters. The division went deeper and they established their own government and other separate institutions in Erbil and Silemani. Not only that, but the two parties also

allied with neighbouring powers in attempts to defeat each other (Rogg & Rimscha, 2007). For instance, PUK sided with Iran and with the support of the Iran Revolutionary Guard (Sepahê Pâsdaran) was able to control much of the KRI territories. In mid August 1996, PUK forces with the support of the Iranian soldiers, reached Safin Mountain and controlled the city of Shaqlawa. After that they took over Salahaddin where the headquarters of KDP is located, and where most of its leaders including the Barzani family resided. This led the KDP to send a message to the President of Iraq, Saddam Hussein, asking for support. On 31 August 1996, the Iraqi army reached Erbil and in a very short time the PUK frontline was defeated and the KDP regained control over Erbil and the surrounding areas. It made the situation more complicated when the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) started to attack the KDP. This allowed Turkey to find a place in the conflict and to fight its main foe, the PKK, inside the KRI. In other words, all the three neighbouring countries, Iraq, Iran and Turkey were fighting inside KRI and heating up the conflict between the main Kurdistan political parties.

'The dead heat between the KDP and the PUK merely underlined the manifold and overlapping antagonisms between the two parties: personal between the two leaders, geographical between Bahdinan and Suran, linguistic between Kurmanji and Surani, and ideological between "traditionist" and "progressive" cultures. The geographical pattern had been confirmed in the vote, with the KDP's overwhelming sway in Dohuk, and the PUK's supremacy in Sulaymaniyah and Kirkuk provinces'.

McDowall (2005: 385)

The civil war lasted for more than four years and during this period both parties appealed to the governments of Iraq and Iran to defeat each other and take areas under their control. In September 1996 a KDP-led government was announced at the National Assembly (Parliament) in Erbil. Equally, in January 1997, the PUK announced a new government in Silemani. This split the regional autonomous government into two parts and as a result the era of two governments emerged. The fractions were so deep that even though more than two decades passed, the two different Peshmerga forces remained divided under control of the two parties. Meanwhile, during the civil war both parties' media claimed complete control over the whole Kurdistan region. An estimated 5000 fighters and civilians lost their lives and tens of thousands of families were displaced as a result of internal war in KRI (McDermid, 2010).

There were numerous interventions by the US, France, and Iran that resulted in temporary ceasefires. Finally, in 1998, the Washington peace agreement was signed through the intervention of the US and the two parties agreed upon a ceasefire. This agreement was focused mainly on security and peace and it emphasised that the agreement between the two parties 'would make the return to armed conflict less likely' (Aziz, 2011: 87). The agreement did not put an end to two administrations and the split remained between the two co-rivals. During all this period the MPs on both sides agreed on several extensions of the parliament's term until elections were possible. In October 2002 the MPs of both parties entered into a transitional session until elections in 2005. Besides, the MPs decided to pass the Law Number 16, 2002: a ratification of the Washington ceasefire agreement between KDP and PUK, in the Kurdistan National Assembly.

During the internal war, parliamentarians refused to be a part of it and stood against it. The members of both parties remained at the chamber in Erbil without getting involved in the war. Hence, parliament, for more than a decade, legislated for both administrations in Erbil and Sulaimani. At the beginning of the civil war, Jawhar Namiq, the president of Kurdistan National Assembly, who was a member of KDP politburo, released a statement clearly opposing the civil war between the two parties. Together with other members of parliament from both parties he went on a protest against the war. They opposed civil war fiercely and they staged a 103-day sit-in protest at Panagiri Hall inside Parliament. Although their protest did not put an end to the civil war, it nevertheless marked the important stance taken by MPs to engage in continuous cooperation rather than constantly stop the process of legislation.

The impact of the civil war on the way the region is currently structured remains evident. The two parties showed their determination to reunify the two administrations in practice immediately after the peace agreement. The successive regular parliamentary elections in 2005, 2009 and 2013, and the formation of the consensus government in Erbil were important steps towards removing signs of two administrations in the region. However, the armed forces, known as Peshmergas, remained as before under partisan authority. According to Law No. 1, 2005 (amended), the president of the region is commander in chief of the Peshmerga and armed forces (Article 13, 1). This remained the law on paper, but in practice each party, PUK and KDP, had their own Peshmergas under their command. After the 2009 elections and formation of the cabinet, the Ministry for Peshmerga was formed: mainly aiming at the reunification of the two parties' Peshmergas and armed forces. At first, the two forces were put into the form of two units, unit 70 for PUK and unit

80 for the KDP Peshmergas. Similarly, Kurdistan Security Council was founded to gather both sides' security and intelligence units under one umbrella. Nevertheless, all these attempts were useless and the two parties' various forces continued to remain under the control and command of their partisan line.

2.3. Kurdistan Region after 2003

2.3.1 Operation Iraqi Freedom and the Kurds 2003-2013

After all the tyrannical acts of the Baath regime against the Kurds in Iraq, the removal of this regime was a dream for the Kurds. In 2003, the Kurds were also partners of the US-led military intervention that aimed at the removal of Saddam Hussein and Baath regime from the power in Iraq. The US and allies were given the military support of the Kurds and also their agreement to use Kurdistan as a military base during Operation Iraqi Freedom (Lawrence 2008). Although the Kurdish autonomous government was one of the most remarkable achievements of the Kurdish National Movement, it left the region unstable, due to the internal conflict. However, this situation changed dramatically during and after the US-led intervention in Iraq, which forced KDP and PUK and their Peshmergas to work together (van Wilgenburg, 2012: 49). For the first time in the political history of Iraq the Kurds were given equal rights with Arabs to participate in Iraqi government. In June 2004's Transitional Government the Kurds were active participants. Then in the drafting committee of the Iraqi constitution the Kurds played an important role and their main focus was to guarantee a highly decentralised region. Marr (2012: 293) noted: '*The Kurds worked to weaken the authority of the central government on issues such as taxation,*

health, and education. In essence, the Kurds wanted a virtually independent state in the North in a voluntary union with Iraq – a confederation – with a right to secede. Even though they did not get this, they did manage to get a weak central government and a highly decentralised polity'.

Kurds of Iraq supported the constitution of 2005 believing that this constitution met most of their demands. According to the Iraqi constitution, the Republic of Iraq has a *'federal system that is made up of a decentralised capital, regions, and governorates, as well as local administrations'* (Iraq. Const. Art. 116). Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) is a recognized region in the Iraqi constitution and the region is made up of three governorates: Erbil, Sulaimani and Duhok. KRI enjoys a constitutional legitimacy to adopt its own regional constitution that *'defines the structure of powers of the region, its authorities, and the mechanisms for exercising such authorities'* (Iraq. Const. Art. 120). During the 2004 referendum on the Iraqi Constitution, the Kurds held another, unofficial, referendum that collected 1,700,000 signatures in favour of secession from Iraq (Galbraith, 2005). Although the referendum was not official, the results were presented to the UN headquarters and the US administration. The results of this referendum were neglected and the attitude taken was mainly towards a united Iraq (Chorev, 2007). In the 2005 elections for the Iraqi Council of Representatives, the Kurds won 75 seats out of 275.

Meanwhile, in the same year, 2005, the elections for the second term of Kurdistan Parliament-Iraq were held, thirteen years after the first. These were the first elections after Operation Iraqi Freedom. KDP and PUK built an alliance together with seven other political parties: Islamic Union of Kurdistan (IUK), Kurdistan Communist Party, National

Democratic Union of Kurdistan, Turkmens, Assyrians and Chaldeans, Social Democrats of

Kurdistan, and Toilers party. This alliance won over 90% of the votes and the cabinet they

formed was named the United Cabinet.

The Kurds have been able to guarantee more independence within the constitution of Iraq.

According to the Iraqi Constitution[15], Kurdistan Parliament has the authority to legislate as

a regional parliament dealing with different areas in a condition that they do not contradict

with the Constitution[16]. The legislation of the federal parliament can be enacted in

Kurdistan but in areas related to Kurdistan Region of Iraq the priority is given to the

legislation and laws of Kurdistan Parliament. The Iraqi Constitution recognises, among

others, that the region of Kurdistan has the right to exercise legislative powers. In case of a

contradiction between regional and national legislation in respect to a matter outside the

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[15]   For more information regarding the arrangements of the Iraqi Constitution, see John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary (2005) Iraq's Constitution of 2005: Liberal consociation as political prescription, International Journal of Constitutional Law; Nathan J. Brown Senior Associate Carnegie (2005) The Final Draft of the Iraqi Constitution: Analysis and Commentary Endowment for International Peace; Dodge, Toby (2005) Iraq's future: the aftermath of regime change. Adelphi Papers.

[16]   The provisions regarding the region of Kurdistan in the Iraqi Constitution are as follows:
        Article 116: The federal system in the Republic of Iraq is made up of a decentralized capital, regions, and governorates, as well as local administrations.
        Article 117: First: This Constitution, upon coming into force, shall recognize the region of Kurdistan, along with its existing authorities, as a federal region.
        Article 121: First: The regional powers shall have the right to exercise executive, legislative, and judicial powers in accordance with this Constitution, except for those authorities stipulated in the exclusive authorities of the federal government.
        Second: In case of contradiction between regional and national legislation in respect to a matter outside the exclusive authorities of the federal government, the regional power shall have the right to amend the application of the national legislation within that region.
        Third: Regions and governorates shall be allocated an equitable share of the national revenues sufficient to discharge their responsibilities and duties, but having regard to their resources, needs, and the percentage of their population.
        Fourth: Offices for the regions and governorates shall be established in embassies and diplomatic missions, in order to follow cultural, social, and developmental affairs.
        Fifth: The regional government shall be responsible for all the administrative requirements of the region, particularly the establishment and organization of the internal security forces for the region such as police, security forces, and guards of the region.
        Article 141: Legislation enacted in the region of Kurdistan since 1992 shall remain in force, and decisions issued by the government of the region of Kurdistan, including court decisions and contracts, shall be considered valid unless they are amended or annulled pursuant to the laws of the region of Kurdistan by the competent entity in the region, provided that they do not contradict the Constitution.

exclusive authorities of the federal government, the regional power has the right to amend the application of the national legislation within the region. Furthermore, the 2005 Constitution recognises the legislation enacted in the region of Kurdistan after 1992 'provided that they do not contradict the Constitution' (Article 141).

Anyone aged 18 or over who is a citizen of the Kurdistan Region and is on the electoral register is eligible to vote in a direct, universal and secret ballot. Anyone aged 25 or over who is a citizen of the Kurdistan Region and is on the electoral register is also eligible to put his/herself forward as a candidate for the parliamentary elections. Elections for the Kurdistan Parliament are based on a semi open party-list proportional representation system. Electors vote for a party's list and the voter can also prioritise one candidate inside the same list[17]. After the election results are announced, each party is allocated seats in proportion to the number of votes it received, using the order of top winning candidates on its list. Nowadays, at least, since 2005, elections are held every four calendar years.

In the 2013 elections, parties took part with no previous alliance and not surprisingly none of them were able to guarantee the majority of the seats to form the cabinet. Thus, they made a consensus of five major parties and with participation of the Christian minority quota the Cabinet of Consensus was formed.

The parliament's fourth term was to be concluded by 1 November 2017. A week before the termination of the fourth term the parliament held a session on 24 October and extended its term for two legislative terms which is eight months. This means that the elections for the

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[17]   The electoral system used to be a closed-party list proportional in 2005 and 2009 elections but the law was amended in 2013 and the new amendment proposed a semi open-party list of proportional representation. See more at http://perleman.org/files/articles/080713065045.pdf Retrieved on 15-06-2017

presidential and parliamentary elections are postponed for eight months. On 29 October, President of KRI Masoud Barzani sent a letter to the parliament refusing to stay in office during any extensions. As a result, Parliament passed legislation and distributed the powers and authorities of the president among the Parliament, the Cabinet and the Judiciary CSouncil.

2.3.2 Economic system and economic development of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Concerning the economy, the KRI has seen development in petroleum wealth and natural resources in the years after the new constitution. Article 112 of Iraqi constitution is in accordance with the region Oil and Gas Law approved by Kurdistan Parliament in 2007[18]. These legal basis are the ones that region's officials claim as their legitimate right to maintain, manage and produce their own natural resources. The president of the KRI stated *"The Kurdistan Region hasn't taken a single step in violation of the constitution, we are only practicing our rights."*[19] The central government, however, is against the KRI policy of natural resources that leads to economic independence. Kurdistan Regional government and central government in Baghdad are in ongoing disputes over the legalities, terms and methods of the oil and gas contracts signed in Erbil (International Crisis Group, 2008). After all, this has not stopped the KRI to be an attractive cite for international major oil companies to sign numerous agreements of cooperation and extraction with ministry of natural resources of the regional government. As Gunter (2011:104) stated: "Given the

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[18]   See Oil and Gas Law of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq available at: http://www.krp.org/uploadedforms/_OilGasLaw_en.pdf Retrieved 15 June 2017
See also Kurdistan Region of Iraq Investors Map available at: http://www.oryxpetroleum.com/uploads/PDF/Kurdistan_Region_of_Iraq_Investors_Map.pdf
Retrieved 15 June 2017

[19]   http://www.rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/26022014   Retrieved 15 June 2017

KRG region's progressive investment law, free market practices and excellent security situation relative to the rest of Iraq, foreign direct investment in the region exploded".

According to the Iraqi constitution the region is granted an annual budget of 17% from the federal budget. KRI officials claim that they have never received 17%: what received was between 10% and 12%. In January 2014, the Iraqi prime minister Nouri al-Maliki signed an order to cut the wages, salaries and budget of the KRI. After this, several meetings between the two sides were held to tackle the problem but the federal government did not agree to resend the KRI share. Four months later the first crude oil shipment of KRI was sold on the international market. KRI officials refer to this as the only solution to maintain the economy of the region while the central government blocks the budget share. During the same year in June, Islamic State terrorist group took control of several parts of Iraq in the South and centre of Iraq. This led to the displacement of thousands of Iraqi families. The majority of the internally displaced Iraqis found refuge in the KRI. Two months later the Islamic State advanced towards the North and attacked the KRI. As a result the KRI by the beginning of 2015 had a population of more than 1.5 million refugees and IDPs, more than 1000 kilometers of frontline with ISIS and a budget cut from Baghdad. Meanwhile, the oil prices internationally went down, which, together with other mentioned factors led to inability of the region to pay even the salaries of public employees.

The landlocked reality of the region has made it dependent on Turkey, as a neighboring country through which the KRI oil is mainly exported via pipelines and through Turkish harbours. As a non-state and non-sovereign entity, the KRI unlike other exporters of oil, is also limited in its international loans and sovereign wealth funds (Mills and Sen, 2016).

Despite all this, the KRI is recognised as a wealthy region with high potential in energy sectors and with the capacity to distribute or redistribute wealth, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit[20].

2.3.3 Erbil and Baghdad relations after 2003

The 2005 constitution of Iraq enshrines a decentralised federal state in Iraq. In the preamble, the Iraqi constitution identifies the Iraqi government as being a 'republican, federal, democratic, pluralistic system'. In Article 47, separation of power is taken as a principle of government in Iraq. This constitution grants the 'Region' status of Kurdistan Regional Government in Article 117. In Article 141, the constitution recognises all the 'legislation enacted in the region of Kurdistan since 1992 shall remain in force' and also the decisions taken by the government in KRI 'to be considered valid'. Basically, when looking at the text of this constitution there appears to be no problem at all but when it comes to its implementation, it is another story. The reality is that this constitution with the main principle of decentralisation is to be implemented by those who as a majority believe in full centralisation. This has led the Iraqi constitution to be relinquished while the preamble refers to 'the adherence to this Constitution' as a condition so that 'preserves for Iraq its free union of people, of land, and of sovereignty.' The first dispute between Baghdad and Erbil after 2005 was over the implementation and respect of the constitution. Article 140 carried the solution for disputed territories between Baghdad and Erbil to be solved by a referendum to be held in those areas 'by a date not to exceed the 31st of December 2007': the authorities in Baghdad refused to hold the referendum and as a result disputes started.

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[20]   See more at http://www.italy.krg.org/21062014E.html Retrieved on 15 June 2017

In the same year, the parliament of Kurdistan Region of Iraq adopted the Oil and Gas Law 22/2007[21]. The law justifies the rights of KRI to progress energy industry by referring to the principles of the Iraqi constitution. Articles 115 and 121 of the constitution grant the exclusive and legislative powers to decide on the new contracts and agreements concerning the natural resources of the region. Furthermore, the KRI Gas and Oil Law refers to Articles 111 and 112 of the constitution which grants the ownership of the newly-explored oil wells. This law could be considered as the start of institutionalising and localising the oil and gas field in KRI. At the same time it could be considered as the inception of the main dispute between Baghdad and Erbil. The disagreement on both sides came at the moment when Baghdad cut the budget share, wages and salaries of KRI.

One of the main deficiencies of the system in KRI is the absence of a constitution for the region to regulate the political system. The draft Kurdistan constitution was finalised in 2009, but due to some disagreements among the political parties, a new committee for redrafting was established in 2015. This committee consisted of 21 members intending to represent the diversity in the Kurdistan region: however the committee members and their representation were fully politicized. The committee had 90 days to finalize the draft, but due to disagreements between the main parties, the committee stopped its work shortly after its creation. Besides the intra-group misunderstandings, there is no large pressure for this constitution to come into being, because a constitution of Kurdistan would unveil and expose the intentions of independence of the region, which intentions are not accepted by the central federal government of Iraq. Hence, issuing a constitution would escalate the

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[21] The English version of the law is available at: http://cabinet.gov.krd/uploads/documents/ Kurdistan%20Oil%20and%20Gas%20Law%20English__2007_09_06_h14m0s42.pdf Retrieved 20 June 2017

conflict even more with the central government. These factors hamper the emergence of an Iraqi Kurdistan constitution, maintaining it in a stand-by non-legal draft.

Otherwise, the region made the necessary preparations to hold an independence referendum. The president of KRI Masoud Barzani held a meeting with Kurdistan political parties on 7 June 2017. The decision of this meeting was to hold the referendum on 25 September 2017[22]. Immediately after, on 8 June 2017, president Barzani issued a presidential order[23] addressing the Independent Commission of Elections to make the necessary preparations to hold a referendum for Kurdistan Independence on 25 September 2017. This decision drew local and international reactions. Fuad Hussein, chief of staff of the Kurdistan President stated, 'The Kurds have the right to self-determination as a right endorsed by the United Nations and as a people who have their land, language, culture, history and identity'. The decision to hold the referendum was not welcomed by the Iraqi officials in Baghdad. 'Any decision that concerns the future of Iraq must take into consideration the constitutional texts, as it is an Iraqi decision,' said Saad al-Hadithi, the spokesperson of the Prime Minister of Iraq. Prime minister of Iraq Hider al-Abadi also said that it was not the right time faor referendum. 'The desire of our Kurdish brothers to create a country of their own is their right given the desire and the objective and nobody has the right to deter them. But holding a referendum at this time is not right as the ISIS war still rages, the region's situation is not suitable and some neighbouring countries believe this move poses a threat to their own nations security'.

Binali Yildirim, the prime minister of Turkey in a press conference on 9 June 2017 told

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[22]   President Masoud Barzani in a tweet on 7 June 2017 posted 'I am pleased to announce that the date for the independence referendum has been set for Monday, 25 September 2017'. Link to the tweet: https://twitter.com/masoud_barzani/status/872496589868290049

[23]   KRI Presidential Order Number 106 of the year 2017, for more information, see http://www.kdp.info/a/d.aspx?l=13&a=101036 Retrieved on 12 June 2017.

journalists that 'We want a united Iraq. Iraq belongs to all Iraqis as one state. We already

have many problems in the region. We do not want to have a new problem added'. Overall,

the reactions at the regional and international level similarly focused on the unity of Iraq.

2.4. Kurdistan Independence Referendum

Kurdistan Independent High Election and Referendum Commission (KHEC), also referred

to as Independent High Elections and Referendum Commission (IHERC), was established

according to Law No. 4, 2014 adopted by Parliament of Kurdistan-Iraq. The drafting of the

law started immediately after the address of President Barzani to Parliament on 3 July

2017, when he requested Parliament to form a referendum committee and pass the law for

the KRI electoral commission. Twenty days later, the law[24] was passed in a popular vote in

parliament, and according to the law the commission was to be established within ninety

days. The establishment of this body and formation of a referendum committee was

initially the result of the intention of the KRI political leadership to hold a referendum of

Independence. However, this did not go ahead as planned, and it was only ten days later

that ISIS took over the city of Sinjar and the direction of the fighting moved towards the

North of Iraq and Kurdistan Region. This meant the region had to defend more than one

thousand kilometres of frontline from ISIS (Wintour, 2016). As a result, the KRI entered

the war and the only priority for the region for more than two years was the war against

terror. KRI Peshmergas in those two years fought in cooperation with international allies

and the Iraqi army, and liberated most of the areas which were under ISIS control. After

that, the region and its political leaders restarted their plan that was initiated before the

ISIS attack in 2014.

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[24] The PDF version of the law is available at: http://perleman.org/files/articles/020914010617.pdf

On 7 June 2017, after a meeting of political parties headed by Masoud Barzani, president of KRI, they decided that a referendum on independence would be held on Monday, 25 September 2017. Later a referendum committee was formed, mainly from the attendees of this meeting and representatives of a number of other political parties and ethnic groups. Although one of the four points of the declaration of the first meeting was to '*hold the efforts together in order to reactivate Kurdistan parliament*'[25], in fact the decision was taken at a time when the Kurdistan Parliament was still 'frozen'. The Parliament had not sat for almost two years due to the disputes between the political parties mainly KDP and Gorran. These disputes were not solved by the time this meeting was held and as a result the two main political parties, Change Movement (Gorran) and Islamic Groug (Komal), refused to take part in the meeting headed by Barzani. The two parties subsequently declared that the decision undertaken by this meeting was illegal and that the only place to decide on such a fateful matter as holding a referendum was in parliament. The two parties have repeatedly refused to take part in the joint meetings of KRI political parties (Referendum Committee) stating that the '*high priority is to activate the parliament*'[26]. The committee in the following meeting that was held on 30 June, made a statement[27] with three points. The second point of the statement was to reactivate the parliament in two weeks. This did not happen in two weeks as well and the parliament was only able to have its first session after one month and two weeks. On 15 September, the parliament session was held after more than two years of closed doors. This session was held as an

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[25] See the statement of the political parties' meeting at: http://presidency.krd/kurdish/articledisplay.aspx?id=ovrdCltbCxg=

[26] The official statement of Gorran spokesperson is found at: http://www.gorran.net/en/Detail.aspx?id=12447&LinkID=128

[27] The statement is found at: http://presidency.krd/kurdish/articledisplay.aspx?id=BWd4AEWj3N8=

extraordinary session to support the referendum and was also considered as the reactivation

session of the Kurdistan Parliament-Iraq. The session passed a resolution that delegated the

Kurdistan Independent High Election and Referendum Commission to hold a referendum

in the Kurdistan Region and the Kurdistani territories outside the Region's

Administration[28] due to the acting related laws in KRI.

2.4. The Question and the implementation

'Do you want the Kurdistan Region and the areas of Kurdistan outside the region's

administration to become an independent state?' The question was in Kurdish, Arabic,

Turkmen, and Assyrian languages. The term 'the areas of Kurdistan outside the region's

administration' was introduced politically to replace the term 'disputed areas'. The

disputed areas referred to the unsolved dispute between the Kurdistan Region and Baghdad

over territories which both sides claim. According to Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution

this dispute was supposed to be overcome through a referendum to be held in Kirkouk and

other disputed territories by a date not to exceed 31 December 2007.

> [… *this Constitution, provided that it accomplishes completely (normalization and*
>
> *census that concludes with a referendum in Kirkuk and other disputed territories to*
>
> *determine the will of their citizens, by a date not to exceed the 31st of December*
>
> *2007*]
>
> Article 140, Iraqi Constitution, 2005

The issue of the disputed territories and the unwillingness of the central government to

solve it is considered, among others, as the main dispute between Erbil and Baghdad. The

regional government has accused the centre of violating the constitution and more

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[28] The parliament delegates the commission to hold the referendum at its first meeting after reactivation.
See the details at: http://perleman.org/Default.aspx?page=article&id=23494&l=3

specifically the articles related to the regional government. The violation of the constitution as claimed by the KRI has been committed by successive Iraqi prime ministers, ministers, council of representatives, the Shura Council, Judiciary and Military[29]. The region accuses the central government of violating or not fulfilling over 55 articles out of 144 articles of the constitution.

Table 2: Violation of the Iraqi constitution claimed by the KRI

Section of the Constitution	Number of violated or unfulfilled articles	Number of Articles for which required legislation has not been passed	Total
Fundamental Principles	1, 2 (2), 4, 5, 9, 12	7, 9	7 articles out of 13 articles
Rights and Freedoms	14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 23, 24, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 37, 38, 40, 42, 43, 44, 46	21, 22, 28	23 articles out of 32
Federal Powers	48, 49 (1), 61 5C, 65, 80, 87, 88	61 9C, 65, 84 (1), 85, 86, 92 (2)	10 out of 53 articles
Independent Commissions	102, 103, 104	105, 106, 107, 108	7 out of 7 articles
Powers of the federal government	109, 110 (9), 111, 112, 115, 117, 118, 119, 121, (1, 3, 5), 125	112 (1), 113, 114, 125	12 out of 14 articles
Final and Transitional Provisions	130, 132, 135 (1), 136 (1), 137, 140, 141	132 (3), 142	8 out of 18 articles
Total			67 out of 144 articles which is 47% of the constitution

Source: www.cabinet.gov.krd

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[29] The full report of violations of constitution committed by the Iraqi government is found at: http://cabinet.gov.krd/uploads/documents/2017/Constitutional_violations_Sept_24_2017.pdf

The political leadership in Kurdistan mainly argued that the results of the referendum will be negotiated with Baghdad in a peaceful way. Meanwhile, they focused on the rhetoric that the will and determination of the people of Kurdistan Region concerning a referendum vote shall be respected. Nevertheless, Baghdad repeatedly called for the non-holding of the referendum as irresponsible and not timely. The neighbouring countries reacted in an even harsher manner calling on KRI authorities not to hold an independence referendum as it was a '*grave mistake*'[30].

Islamic Republic of Iran which is considered another strategic neighbour of the KRI stated its opposition to the referendum of independence. The country declared its adherence to the unity and integrity of Iraq as tweeted by the Iranian supreme leader Khameneyi '*Iran opposes holding talks of a referendum to partition Iraq and considers those who fuel the idea as opponents of Iraq's independence.*'[31]

However, despite all the pressures from Baghdad and neighbouring countries, the referendum was held in the KRI and Kurdistan territories outside the KRI, as referred to as the '*disputed territories*'. The region's authorities specified that the vote in the disputed territories was not to determine the fate of those areas and the issue was to be negotiated with Baghdad. At the same time Baghdad refused all negotiations with the KRI after holding the referendum. The majority of disputed territories had been under the control of the KRI since early 2016. ISIS took over those areas in 2014 after the Iraqi army withdrew from most of the areas without any confrontation. Therefore, the areas were no longer under the control of the Iraqi army after being liberated by the KRI Peshmergas.

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[30] See Binali Yildirim's statement at: http://www.middleeasteye.net/fr/news/turkish-pm-condemns-irresponsible-iraqi-kurdistan-referendum-vote-92163096

[31] Ali Khameneyin, the supreme leader of Islamic republic of Iran's tweet on the referendum in Kurdistan Region of Iraq: https://twitter.com/khamenei_ir/status/877229666830045184

As explained before, the Kurdistan Independent High Election and Referendum Commission was the authorised body to carry out the referendum in KRI (KHEC). Due to the provisions of Section One of Article 56 Law No. 1, 1992 (amended) and under the legislation adopted by Kurdistan Parliament on its ordinary session No. 18 dated 23 July 2014, the Kurdistan Parliament passed Law No. 4, 2014 establishing KHEC. The commission was ready to hold the referendum and all the required preparations were made including the participation of international and local monitors and observers[32].

Despite all the pressure the KRI went ahead with the decision and the referendum was held on 25 September 2017. The results of the referendum as expected were 92.7% votes in favour of an independent Kurdistan with registered voters turnout of 72.8%[33]. Immediately after the referendum, the central government reacted harshly. Baghdad refused any kind of negotiations with Erbil and instead applied sanctions on the region including the closure of borders, in cooperation with neighbouring countries, and an airport ban. The embargoes continued as the only condition by the centre for the start of negotiations with the region was to nullify the referendum. Meanwhile, the region rejected cancelling the referendum results as urged by Baghdad.

2. 5 Political Parties in the KRI

2. 5.1 Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)

The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) was founded on 16 August1946. It is considered the very first party to struggle systematically for the rights of the Kurds in Iraq. The

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[32] A sample of registration for the international observers and monitors to take part in KRI referendum: http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?m=1102913833397&ca=2954c5e3-2934-487c-b1bd-c79d21ec97b9

[33] For full report of results, see http://www.khec.krd/pdf/173082892017_english%202.pdf

establishment of KDP brought a change in the Kurdistan Region's political life and had an impact on its development. KDP held its foundation congress in Baghdad on 16 August 1946. KDP was founded by the Kurdish revolutionary leader Mustafa Barzani, from a tribal family leadership background in Barzan area. In 1979, Barzani died and the leadership passed to his son, Masoud Barzani who also, until the present moment, is the president of the KRI, and has been since the 2005 elections. According to Stansfield (2003) the circumstances that helped the establishment of the KDP were a combination of tribal militancy, the development of an urban Kurdish intelligence that promoted Kurdish nationalism, and the particular role that Mulla Mustafa Barzani and the Barzani tribe played. Currently, Masoud Barzani, the President of the Kurdistan Region is also President of KDP. According to the presidency law, 2005, the president was to be elected in the parliament in a confidential vote. The law was amended in 2009 and Barzani was re-elected in a direct vote winning nearly 70% of the votes. In 2013 his two terms were concluded and, by law, he could not run again. His term was extended by a law passed in the Kurdistan Parliament in 2013 after a majority of the KRI political parties, mainly PUK, requested him to stay in office. In 2015, the extended two years also terminated but a new presidential election was not held. Then the term was extended again until the next election in 2017. In the 2013 elections the party won 38 seats in the Kurdistan Parliament.

2.5.2 Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)

The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) was formed on 1 June 1975 in Damascus, Syria. Jalal Talabani, a former secretary general of KDP Students Union is considered the main founder of PUK. The party was founded after a breakup of Talabani with a number of other

prominent members from KDP in 1975. The party has been led by Jalal Talebani until today. Jalal Talabani was elected as President of Iraq in 2005 and was re-elected in 2010 for a second term. He suffered a stroke in December 2012. After that, Fuad Masoum, another founding leader from PUK was nominated and elected as President of Iraq in 2014. The PUK and KDP since 2005 had an agreement of power-sharing where both parties agreed to rule the KRI and act as an influential bloc in Baghdad. As a result, they ran together as the Democratic Patriotic Alliance and won a majority of seats in Kurdistan Parliament and secured an influential fraction in Baghdad. This came to an end in 2009 with the formation of the Change Movement (Gorran) as it fractured the PUK. In the 2013 elections the party won 18 seats in the Kurdistan Parliament.

2.5.3 The Change Movement (Gorran)

The two parties, KDP and PUK, majority and duopoly continued until the parliamentary elections in 2009. Then, a new political power entered the competition. The Change Movement (Gorran) emerged as a separate group from the PUK. The movement was led by Nawshirwan Mustafa, former deputy secretary general of PUK. Mustafa was one of the main decision-makers and leaders of PUK who also had enough influence to form a new political reality in the region. The new party won 1/4 of the seats in the Kurdistan Parliament, with 25 seats in the 2009 elections. After that they decided to remain as an opposition party. This was the first time in the history of the KRI that a party declared itself the opposition. The situation changed after the 2013 elections, when almost no alliance took place prior to the elections and then no party won a sufficient majority to form the cabinet alone. The Change Movement won 24 seats in the 2013 elections and entered a

consensus of five main political parties together with KDP, PUK, Islamic Union and Islamic Group. Within this consensus, Gorran participated in power-sharing for the first time since its establishment. The Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Defence, and the Presidency of the Parliament were among the Gorran's notable portfolios in the 2013 consensus. This agreement, however, lasted less than two years at which point the party was accused, mainly by KDP, of not respecting the consensus.

2.5.4 The Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU)

In 1994 the Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU) was established by a group of Kurds with a religious background. The party's most influential character was Salahaddin Bahaaddin who became its first Secretary-General. KIU is associated with the Muslim Brotherhood and their main ideology is to form a state of Islam that at the same time is underpinned by democratic values. The party is the most influential Islamic political party in the region. During the 2013 elections it won 10 seats in the Kurdistan Parliament[34].

Conclusion

In this chapter a historical and political review of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq is presented. It explains the current situation in the KRI and its status as a part of Iraq. To conclude, first, the Kurds have not been able to demonstrate unity within Iraq. Different parties with different agenda and interests have been in continuous dispute, the most obvious being the civil war in 1994 between PUK and KDP over revenues. The failure to

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[34]   All the elections results are found at http://perleman.org/Default.aspx?page=page&c=xol4, retrieved on 20 June 2017

retain unity among the Kurds has prevented the KRI from reaching its greater goals such as full autonomy, independence.

Second, the formation of the Kurdistan Parliament on a liberal democratic model can be considered as a continuation of the world transformation towards democracy. This shift not only introduced a new political system but also heralded a great step towards social change in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The new system was a hopeful step towards the end of tribalism, had it only lasted longer and the civil war not occurred two years later.

Third, the regional powers have also used the Kurds in Iraq to further their own interests. For instance, the Shah of Iran used the Kurds against the Iraqi government before the Algiers Agreement. After the agreement between Iran and Iraq in 1974 the Kurdish Peshmergas were left with no support. This led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Kurds in the North of Iraq. After the 1979 Iranian Revolution, Iran again made use of the Kurds against the Saddam Regime. However, this could be argued as being in favour of the Kurds, as the ancient proverb says that the enemy of my enemy is my friend.

Fourth, the ongoing clashes between Iraq and the Kurds, with little intention of reconciliation on Baghdad's part, strengthened the rebels in Kurdish areas day after day; while Iraq's involvement in other regional conflicts, on the other hand, such as the eight-year Iran-Iraq war and the invasion of Kuwait, were factors that weakened Baghdad. Continuous conflicts and wars left Iraq in a more fragile condition than ever to confront the establishment of a Kurdish autonomous entity in 1991.

Fifth, beside the fragility of Baghdad due to continuous wars, the Kurds made use of the creation of the no-fly zone and safe haven. This drew a separation line between Iraq and the KRI for more than a decade. This division helped the KRI to establish its own character in the region and take steps towards building institutions.

Sixth, the level of trust between the Kurds and the Iraqi rulers is very low. From the monarchy until today Kurdish rights have been denied. In the same way that the former ruling Iraqi regimes suppressed the Kurds, the current government does the same through the cutting of budget share, wages and salaries. This mistrust between the elites has been transferred to the public as a belief that there is no hope for a better future for Kurds within Iraq. This was further confirmed in 2004, when 1.7 million Kurds in the KRI signed to secede from Iraq. Today the setting of 25 September 2017, as the date scheduled for the holding of a referendum on Independence in the KRI, is also another indicator that the Kurds of Iraq believe in secession rather than remaining part of the current nation state.

Seventh, the KRI with its underlying natural resources such as oil and gas is seen as an important economic area. With such an abundance of resources in the region, and the extent to which autonomy and de-centralisation has been guaranteed in the Iraqi constitution, the Kurds are now in a stronger position than ever in Iraq. This enabled the Kurds to respond to the economic sanctions imposed by Baghdad, especially in early 2014. Since then, practical steps towards economic independence from Baghdad have been taken.

Eighth, political disputes and disagreements are still at a level that seriously damages the political system. The Kurdistan Parliament entered into freeze mode for nearly two years over the disputed views between the main parties regarding the political system. This also highlights the fragility of the political system in the KRI especially in the absence of a constitution.

Ninth, the historical dream of the Kurds is still undimmed and they would use any opportunity to reach it. The referendum for an independent Kurdistan has been planned by the KRI politicians and they called for it at the moment they could afford to do so. Despite the brutal reactions that followed, the outcomes and results of this referendum have provided the Kurds with a legitimate card to demand their natural right of self-determination - democratically.

CHAPTER THREE: THE FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRESS IN THE KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ (1961 - 2014)

Introduction

The existence of the Kurdish press was dependent on the evolution of political movements and political circumstances. Hassanpour (1992) states that the Kurdish press is '*the organ of Kurdish nationalism*' (p. 221). Or in the words of Ahmadzadeh (2003): *'the emergence of journalism among the Kurds marks the beginning of their movement for national rights'*. However, the Kurdish press has witnessed developments over time in line with developments of Kurdish national movements. Therefore, with the understanding that the development of the Kurdish press went hand in hand with development of Kurdish politics, this chapter is divided into three periods: the first being *rebellion press (*1961-1991). This period started when the press was a means of communicating revolution. It started with the rise of Kurdish revolution in 1961 and lasted until the uprising in 1991. The second period was *partisan press (*1991-2003). The uprising brought the revolutionaries and their press down from the mountains into cities in northern parts of Iraq. During this period the press worked as a partisan mouthpiece for the main two political parties. These two parties

entered a civil war during this period and their press was used as a means for attack and war. The third period was *press of autonomy*: following laws and legislation *(*2003-2014). In this period, Kurdistan Region of Iraq was granted regional autonomous status according to the Iraqi constitution. During this time a number of important press-related laws were adopted. This period lasted until the rise of the terrorist organization Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

Rebellion press refers to the period during the, and especially in the aftermath of, World War II and the end of the Iraqi monarchy. This period is explained through the times of the mountain revolution especially from 1961 to 1991. Here is presented the rebellion press in the years between 1961 to 1970 that is also known as the September Revolution[35] and the period which is known as the May Revolution[36] from 1971-1991. The second period, *partisan press*, is related to more than a decade of a de-facto autonomous region in Iraq starting from 1991 until the fall of Baath regime in Iraq in 2003. The third period as *press of autonomy* will be explained after the adoption of press-related laws and regulations. This started mainly in the years following the establishment of the Kurdistan Parliament in 1992 and continued after the fall of the Baath regime in 2003.

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[35]   September Revolution (*Shorishi Eylul*): The first organised rebellion against the Iraqi government led by Molla Mustafa Barzani. It lasted from 1961-1970.

[36]   May Revolution (*Gulan* Revolution) after the collapse of the September Revolution especially by the end of the Cold War and the new Algiers Agreement between Iraq and Iran, the Kurds of Iraq entered a new era of revolution. This period is known as the May Revolution. It took place as a mountain rebellion from 1971-1991.

3.1 First period: Rebellion press: the press during the days of mountain rebellions (1961-1991)

The first period is explained by giving a historical background to the rise of the press in the mountains during the revolution. Developments of such a press are discussed in terms of moving towards a means of spreading nationalism among those rebelling in the mountains and also among the people within cities, despite all the restrictions. This period covers the times of rebellion for the Kurdish movement when a secret press and mountain press emerged. During the time of revolution special attention was paid to the press and communications: the leadership of the movement understood its importance. Therefore, newspapers, magazines, and manifestos were continuously issued and distributed. Distribution was not limited to the mountain rebels but also it was secretly sent and distributed among the people within cities. The mountain rebels in this period also managed to launch a mobile radio station. This was another method of spreading the message and the ideology of the movement in a more practical manner. The radio was very basic, using an AM radio transmitter. The station was mobile, changing its position according to the Peshmergas' position. The frequency of the radio station was also moveable. The state continuously attempted to silence the mountain station through various means such as broadcasting parasite censors. The position of the radio was attacked numerous times and the radio changed position from one cave and mountain to another. The station opened a place in the heart of Kurdish people inside the cities and also those in exile in the border cities of Iran and Turkey. The audience waited on a daily basis for the radio transmission to start so they could hear the latest developments in the revolution and about Peshmerga victories.

The revolution and the Kurdish resistance against the Iraqi government was continuous but there were times when both sides reached a ceasefire and short-term agreements. The agreements did not last long because the Iraqi government called for negotiations and ceasefires only at the times when they were weak. The agreements were easy for Baghdad to violate after finding themselves again in a position of strength. After the 1958 revolution in Iraq known as the Republican Coup against the Hashemite monarchy, Abdulkareem Qasim, the new prime minister and his government showed openness towards Kurdish people and their rights (Dawisha, 2009: 171-183). Therefore, upon their invitation on 6 October 1958, Mustafa Barzani returned from exile (Barzani, 1998: 158). Barzani and his followers had spent more than a decade within the Soviet Union (Sluglett, 1987: 79-82). Immediately afterwards, on 4 April 1959, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) was allowed by the government to launch its daily newspaper, *Khabat*, as the mouthpiece of the party. The newspaper received a working license from the government on 9 February 1960 (Alzubaidi, 1998: 34). Qasim's policy of openness did not last long: in the second half of 1959 he started a policy of suppression against the Kurdish people. Then, on 23 September 1961, at a press conference in Baghdad, Qasim declared war against the Kurds (Talabani, 1970: 105). Consequently, the KDP was banned from activities as a political party in Iraq.

The September Revolution (Sluglett, 1987: 79-82), *Shorashi Aylul*, is known as the first Kurdish-Iraqi War (11 September 1961 – 1970). This revolution was led by Mustafa Barzani, the leader of the KDP, who managed to defeat pro-Iraqi forces in the Kurdish areas and create an integrated Peshmerga[37] force, demanding regional autonomy.

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[37]   Peshmerga is a national Kurdish fighter. They were the main resistance fighters during the Kurdish National Movement seeking their rights including the right of self-determination. The word Peshmerga literally means: those who face death or those who are ready to sacrifice. This sacrifice mainly refers to the devotion of these fighters to their cause.

Although Baghdad repeatedly responded to the insurrection, the Iraqi army was not able to silence the uprising in the Kurdish areas. In 1963 there was a Baath military coup as a result of internal instability and distrust inside the government of Abdulkareem Qasim of that time. During the Baathists' rule, the war continued, mostly targeting the destruction of villages and carrying out mass bombings of civilians. One year after, another coup led by Abdulsalam Arif ousted the Baathists. Arif's continuous offensives against the Kurds failed, and he therefore declared a ceasefire. In 1966 Arif died and was replaced by his brother Abdulrahman Arif who re-started attacks on Kurds. His attempts also caused many casualties in the Iraqi army who was faced instability after being defeated repeatedly by the Peshmergas. The chaos in the army led to another coup in 1968 with the Baathists returned back to power. It could therefore be argued that the Kurds' hard struggle was among the main factors for the Iraqi army's inconsistency (Sluglett, 1987: 103-105). The highland nature of the Kurdish areas in Iraq granted the insurrection a tough geographical location from which to continue rebellion. During all that time the Kurdish Peshmergas' main locations were the mountains.

The September Revolution (1961-1975) is considered an important period of Kurdish contemporary history in Iraq. During the same time, the leadership of the revolution gave important attention to the press and the means of communication leading to the development of a mountain press alongside the armed rebellion. A core question here is whether the revolution contributed to the development of the press in Kurdistan or not? To answer this question the natural evolution of the Kurdish press should be taken into

account. The Kurdish press was a product of the Kurdish national movement and both developed together in parallel.

3.1.1 Mountain rebellion

In the late nineteenth century, the Kurdish national movement evolved to a point where it demanded rights for the Kurdish people for the first time, including the right to have a state of their own. Ever since then, Kurdish journalism has always been a part of political and national movements. This means the Kurdish press as had to work under pressure and in disturbing circumstances. The Kurdish press has been repeatedly banned, exiled, and stopped by successive governments in power. As a result, the *secret press* developed as an important component of Kurdish national and political movements.

The tough political situation for the Kurdish political parties was the main factor in the rise of Kurdish secret press. This type of press has played an important role during the Kurdish political movement in Iraq. It was also known as the mountain press or Peshmerga press: it emerged in the early 1960s. The main political party leading the national movement was the KDP but the press was not merely a KDP-oriented press: other parties such as the Kurdistan Communist Party also had their mouthpiece newspapers published secretly in Kurdish. However, it is difficult to follow the developments in the rise of the Kurdish underground press because it was distributed among members and followers of the party who were asked to destroy it immediately after reading its instructions. This makes it hard to find an archived copy.

Given the hard situation of Peshmergas in the mountains with limited access to any means of publishing or printing, those responsible for the press had difficulties producing it.

Therefore, a year after the 1958 ceasefire between the Kurdish resistance and Baghdad, in 1959, the KDP officially received its license to publish *Khabat* as its mouthpiece newspaper. This was the time when they also managed to buy a printing machine in Baghdad. The life of this licensed newspaper was short: it was banned by the authorities in Baghdad at the same time as the KDP was banned from all political activities on 23 March 1961 (Raman, 1998: 223). The printing machine and printing facilities also were taken over by the government. Shortly after, the revolution began. At that time the KDP managed to secretly bring a small and primary printing machine with limited capacities from Baghdad and install it at a house where one of the hidden party cells was located in Sulaimani (Shawis, 1998: 55). Later, this machine was transported part by part in secret into the mountains, and installed, together with the radio station inside a cave called Girdarash. The circumstances of the revolution made it difficult to establish a media centre in one place. The printing machine and radio station were mobile and their locations changed from time to time. (Appendix 3, Interview #7). Under such circumstances, *Khabat* *w*as could not be published regularly and it was only possible to publish it in emergency as a means of communication among Peshmergas, Kurdish secret cells and rebels to spread news of the struggle against Iraqi offensives and calling for unity among the Kurds to stand together to achieve victory (Ahmed, 2000: 70).

The other KDP revolution publication was *Dangi Peshmerga*; Voice of Peshmarga. Its first issue appeared in December 1963. This publication included news of victories of the revolution and enemy defeats, provided Peshmergas with instructions and educated them about the necessity of defending their nation. It also spread national awareness among the fighters and the people (*Dangi Peshmerga*, 1969: 5).

Kurdish writers and intellectuals such as Ibrahim Ahmed[38] and Hajar Mokriyani[39], as well as a number of educated KDP members like Sami Abdulrahman[40] and Jalal Talabani were among the principal 'movers' for the emergence of a revolutionary press. These publications mainly depended on the educated members of the party to fill its pages and mostly the whole content of the papers and also the radio station were prepared by a committee named *committee of publication and guidance of Kurdistan revolution* (Ahmed, 2001: 3). Then, the publications were circulated among the literate members and Peshmergas. The publications were not necessarily periodical but at the time of being prepared they were also sent to the party branches to be distributed among their members in the mountains. The main danger was distributing them inside cities where the government strictly banned any such publications, and anyone seen with such a document could the face death penalty. (Appendix 3, Interview #7).

The Communist Party of Iraq also had a hard time dealing with Baghdad governments. This reached the point where the lives of their members were seriously in danger especially after the 1963 coup that brought the Baath party to power in Iraq. Therefore, many of their members escaped and joined the Kurdish revolution in the mountains of Kurdistan (Jundi, 1994: 229). Their Kurdish mouthpiece newspaper was named *Rêgay Kurdistan* and was

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[38]   Ibrahim Ahmed is a Kurdish novelist and writer who was the first KDP Secretary-General. Later, with his son-in-law Jalal Talebani, he led the opposition split from the KDP and formed the PUK.

[39]   Abdulrahman Sharafkandi (Hajar Mokriyani) is a known Kurdish poet, writer and revolutionary intellectual.

[40]   Mahmoud Abdulrahman (Sami Abdulrahman) was a Kurdish politician who also worked at Iraq Oil company. He joined the Kurdish revolution in the mountains in 1963 and worked as a consultant to Barzani. He was a main architect of the attacks on the Kirkouk refineries in 1966 during the revolution.

issued from 1962-1972 (Ahmed, 2001: 30). The main message of this newspaper called for peace and harmony alongside their communist and Marxist ideologies. Through this newspaper they referred to the Kurdish revolution as a continuation of revolutions in Iraq aimed at freedom and coexistence (*Rêgay Kurdistan*, 1964: 3).

The revolution continued with successful victories over the Baath regime. Those victories made the Baghdad government consider a resolution to the long-lasting conflict. As a result, a series of negotiations between Baghdad and the Kurdish leaders started and talks ended up with an agreement known as '11 March 1970 Peace Agreement' (Mcdowall, 2004: 327-328). The peace agreement, for the first time, granted the Kurds of Iraq autonomous status with rights such as adopting the Kurdish language together with Arabic as the two official languages of the country. According to this agreement the Kurds of Iraq were promised the granting of autonomy. This promise was never kept and the agreement was not implemented. As a result, the agreement collapsed as the Baath party and its government showed no interest in its immediate implementation. Therefore, a new wave of conflict between the Kurdish revolutionary Peshmergas and the Baathists started in 1974. Less than a year after, Baghdad made an agreement with Tehran. This was the main reason that the Kurdish rebellion was defeated. The 1975 Algiers Agreement between Iraq and Iran was signed by the Shah of Iran and Saddam Hussein. The agreement was initially to solve the border issues between the two countries but it mainly focused on weakening the Kurdish rebellion movement. This was the original aim of the Baath regime, to achieve the defeat of the Kurdish movement through this agreement. According to this agreement Iran would stop any kind support for the Kurdish rebellion and would withdraw its soldiers

from Iraqi territories[41]. After this, Iraq started harsh offensives against in the North aimed at attacking the Kurds and after a series of heavy battles, the Kurdish rebels withdrew and were defeated. The Baath campaign against the Kurds was not merely aimed at attacking the fighters but also the public and villagers. The attacks after the Algiers Agreement were also aimed at destroying the Kurdish villages and ended up causing the flight of more than one hundred thousand Kurdish refugees to Iran and Turkey. The Algiers Agreement is known as the defeat of the revolution among the Kurds. Nevertheless, this did not silence the rebellion forever and the Kurdish forces returned in strengthened, and only a year after, they started a new rebellion *Shorashi Gulan*, the April Revolution. Shortly after, the newly raised revolution received support from Iran. This came as the Shah-Saddam Algiers Agreement came to an end automatically with the rise of 1979 revolution and the collapse of Shah's regime in Iran. After that Iran provided support to Peshmergas especially during the 1980s Iran-Iraq war. During the eight years of war between Iran and Iraq, Peshmergas received military support from Iran and fought against their common enemy. This also played a significant role in the creation of an autonomous Kurdish status in the North of Iraq.

At times of revolution, despite all the restrictions, some papers such as *Jin, Shafaq, Afrat, Kishtokal and Iraqi new* which emerged the years before the revolution continued to be published. Besides, there were also four other Kurdish daily, weekly and seasonal newspapers who were licensed during the years of revolution (Jabari, 1975: 62). Those newspapers were:

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41   See the full text of the treaty at: http://untreaty.un.org/English/treaty.asp

•*Erbil* (weekly) issued in Kurdish and Arabic by Erbil Municipality in February 1962 and continuing up to 1964.

•*Raparin* (weekly) issued in Kurdish and Arabic by Abdelaziz Talib in 1963 and until 1968, 307 of its issues were published.

•*Tutin* (Seasonal Scientific) its first issue was published in 1962 in Kurdish, Arabic and English. It continued until 1972.

•*Dangubas* (weekly) issued in Kurdish and Arabic in Baghdad in January 1966.

During the period known as the September Revolution the importance of the press was explicit to the leadership of the revolution and political parties. The revolution was eager to keep the press as one of the main communication means of the revolution. Despite its secrecy it played an important role in conveying the revolution's message in the mountains and also inside the cities. The production of the revolution's press was the responsibility of educated senior cadres and members of the parties. For this reason the committee of publication and guidance of Kurdistan revolution was established in order to prepare the press and radio content. On the other side, the Iraqi government in its methods of suppressing the revolution was a threat to the cities' hidden cells (the distributors of the publications), as well as in the mountains by bombing the caves where the radio and press had their activities. Overall, the September Revolution's press can be referred to as a revolutionary press.

3.1.2 Mountain radio (1963-1991)

The leadership of the revolution realised the importance of having a radio station to get their voices heard. The decision was taken, but putting together a radio station under such circumstances in the mountains was a challenge. Finally, in March 1963, in Shikawtarash,

a cave located on Mawat Mountain in Sulaimani province, the first waves of radio Kurdistan were sent on shortwave 43 meters (Bayiz, 2002: 141-146). In general, the press activities mainly operated from the bases of the Kurdish revolution, which were at that time in the mountainous areas. This radio, *Dengê Kurdistan, Voice of Kurdistan,* rapidly became popular among the people although it broadcast for only two to three hours a day (Appendix 3, Interview #7). The radio programmes focused mainly on revolutionary messages and news related to Peshmerga victories over the Iraqi army.

During the May Revolution the radio programmes broadcast for one and a half hours from 8:00 pm to 9:30pm Baghdad time. Hajar Mokriyani, the poet and one of the establishers of the mountain press in his book *Cheshti Mijewir* refers to the importance of radio during the revolution as being '*more powerful than an army of ten thousand soldiers*' (Mukriyani, 1997: 476). The Iraqi government for its part did not stay silent with regard to this radio station with its impact of influencing public opinion against the government. Therefore, along with the bombing of the mountains and caves, the government sent parasites to block the waves from reaching the people. This led to the station taking other decisions such as transporting the station from one cave to another, especially when they suspected the station's whereabouts had become known. The frequency was also changed from time to time in order to escape the parasites and censors (Appendix 3, Interview #7). Thus the audience got used to searching for Kurdistan Radio on different frequencies from one day to another. Baghdad has always denied the existence of a station like that on Iraqi territory. The Baath regime which was uncomfortable with the existence of a radio station found there was nothing they could do to stop it, so would repeatedly claim that it was broadcasting and receiving support from Iran. The facts were that the radio was located in the Kurdish mountainous areas with repeated Iraqi airstrikes bombing its suspected

location. (Fathullah, 1999: 80).

The radio programmes were effective during the revolution. The main focus was to cover subjects related to the rights of Kurdish people and the oppression that had been imposed on them. In fact, it was easier for the radio to reach out to the public in order to easily convey the message of the revolution to the people. The overall aim was to create patriotic awareness among people. The radio was banned inside the towns and the cities, but nevertheless kept being heard. There were cases when there was only one radio in the whole village and people would gather secretly at one place to listen to the radio programs. People felt attached to the radio programmes, especially in the evenings when they were eager to hear the news of Peshmerga victories from the radio. Together with its revolutionary mission to communicate its messages from the mountains to the cities, the radio also played an important role in improving the culture and Kurdish language at the time (Bayiz, 2002: 141-146). Regarding the type of programmes broadcast on radio, *Tehsin Dolemeri*, who worked for the mountain press and was also a radio announcer at that time in the mountains, says:

> [*... the programmes were starting with patriotic songs like (Çemê Rêzan) and (Ey Reqîb)[42]. Then, firstly there was the news. We used to have local and international news. For the local news we used to focus on the revolutions and Peshmargas. We covered victories of Peshmargas and also the oppression that was imposed on the Kurdish people by the Iraqi government such as the killing of innocent children and women, executing, bombing and destroying villages*

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[42] These two songs are known among the most popular patriotic songs especially in the Kurdish part of Iraq. However, one of them (*Ey reqîb*) is considered the national anthem of the Kurds.

and towns… etc. For the international news we had cadres who were gathering

news through international stations and translating it.]

(Appendix 3, Interview #7).

The main focus of the mountain radio was to spread nationalistic messages and strengthen the feeling of patriotism among the public. There was a clear division between what to be addressed regarding the internal politics and what is relevant to the case internationally. The news was addressing atrocities and crimes committed by the Baath government against the people of Kurdistan in Iraq. This was intended to raise the awareness of the public about the inimical acts of the Baath regime against the Kurdish people. The messages were mainly included with the victories of Peshmaras in war against the Baath regime and the advances of the revolution and resistance against the regime to gain the rights of the Kurdish people. The leadership of revolution believed in the impact and effectiveness of the radio waves inside the cities. Although the station was put together with very primitive means and everything was very basic, it was still able to carry the message of the revolutionary Peshmergas from the mountains to their people behind those mountains. Meanwhile, the people were also expecting and waiting for the times of the radio programmes. The mountain radio was a very important source of information for the Kurdish people to understand the advances of the Peshmergas and to follow the development of their cause.

All news and content was prepared and agreed upon by the committee of

publication and guidance of KDP politburo before being announced. We had

messages of guidance and instructions intended to be sent to our audience. For

every broadcasting day we used to have an overview of the political situation.

To prepare the news, in all the party branches we used to have two-way radio

receivers to communicate the daily news of their areas. We also collected news

from other party committees by riding motorcycles or bicycles bringing the

bulletins from different committees. All the news and the content were prepared

at the committee of publication and guidance of the KDP politburo.]

(Appendix 3, Interview #7*)*

The mountain station and the news generated for the station were also under the direct control of the political party. A special committee was formed to evaluate the news and content of broadcasting and publications. All the gathered news was first evaluated by the committee and then the committee was in the position of deciding whether to put it out on air or not. This committee was a part of the politburo of the KDP, and its job was to monitor, evaluate and approve the publication and broadcasting.

The mountain station continued to operate as a mouthpiece of revolution from inside the caves and the mountains. Despite its limited resources, it aired messages to its audiences on a regular basis. A number of literate and educated members of party and Peshmergas were assigned to do the work of operating the station. They were doing almost everything, from news gathering to announcing the news and even technicians' jobs. The station was under the direct supervision of the publication and guidance committee of KDP politburo. This committee regularly prepared content and announcements specifically targeted at people inside the cities. The committee also was also responsible for the selection of qualified members (mainly from among Peshmergas) to join publications committee. The mountain station's other function was to be used as a source of information for Peshmergas

on different frontlines. The station used secret codes to communicate among each Peshmerga group. To avoid discovery, these codes were changed regularly. The radio station served as a partisan machine, mainly aimed at mobilising the public towards certain objectives of the revolution.

> *[… We were Peshmergas, technicians, journalists, writers, announcers and so on all at the same time. We had few people who had any idea how to work with media. In my personal case, I was writing poetry and presenting it occasionally among Peshmargas. That is how I was asked to join the press team. We did not have press professionals but we were learning through doing it. In the beginning we had two electronic engineers from whom we learned everything technical needed for that station.]* (Appendix 3, Interview #7)

The limitation of professional capacities was an inevitable fact. There were few educated members among the party and Peshmergas who joined the revolution. However, among those who joined the revolution, there were tens of students who had not been able to finalise their studies due to political reasons. For example, during resistance times, Kurdish students were rarely accepted for study at university level. A heavy security check was required in addition to the support and recommendation of influential individuals. This left the young Kurdish high school graduates, who were not admitted to the universities for political reasons, two choices: join the army for mandatory military service or join the revolution in the mountains and become a Peshmerga. Many of those, especially during the 1980s chose to join the revolution. In addition, even accepted and admitted to university were dismissed after a year or two, accused of being part of secret Kurdish political cells.

This accusation was as serious as facing the execution penalty. As a result, many young Kurds left university in the 1980s and joined the Kurdish resistance in the mountains. It was young Peshmergas who were mainly the educated ones in the mountains. Nevertheless, being able only to read and write could be the main qualification for recruitment to the publication committee. The mountain press personnel were not assigned solely to publication and press work. The whole operation of both publications and radio station were managed by people who learned it by doing it. The members of the publication committee and press were at the same time Peshmergas and revolutionary fighters. They also learned to operate the radio station and deal with its technical issues.

[… our goal was to be able to broadcast to each household in Kurdish areas. Although they were listening secretly, from the very beginning the radio received a very warm reception by the people. This, for sure, faced harsh reaction by Baghdad and at the same time raised our motivation. The Iraqi side used continuous parasites to censor and block our waves but we were obliged to change our sender location to escape the parasites. Meanwhile, our audience were also used to searching for our new locations on AM when parasites were censoring it. It was a challenge, but we persisted. Our station was a moveable one. In order to hide it from the airstrikes we used to remove the antennas and put them together again after each air bombardment. Tall poplar trees were used to place our antennas again. Sometimes it was not easy to hide and a couple of times our place was bombed and our comrades were martyred. But all the risks aside, we were continuing to broadcast because we believed if we stopped then the enemy would have achieved its goals.]

(Appendix 3, Interview #7)

The challenge that the mountain press faced was enormous. War, bombs, airstrikes, censorship and blocking of waves did not stop them from continuing. Both the leadership of the revolution and the Iraqi government of that time were aware of the importance of the press. Peshmergas did everything they could to maintain the press especially the radio station. At the same time, the Iraqi government was using every means to suppress and silence the revolution's voices. The mountain press messages were heard by the public inside the Kurdish cities and towns. This was a very powerful mobilisation means used by the revolutionaries and it was difficult for the government to combat. The government in return was sending parasite waves to block the waves being sent from the mountains and to silence the radio. When this was happening, the radio personnel in the mountains shifted the waves into another frequency signal. Those people listening were used to this device and anytime a parasite was imposed, people were aware and would change the receiver's frequency.

Overall, the underground press played an important role in the Kurdish national movement in Iraq. The role was carried out mainly through the establishment of the revolutionary press that included publications and basic radio broadcasts. The publications were not as influential as the radio, simply because secret distribution within the cities was difficult. Therefore, the role of radio was more obvious during the Kurdish revolution that places the radio among the best means of communication especially during the May Revolution - *Shoreshi Gulan*. Despite all the parasites and restrictions imposed by the Iraqi regime, the radio continued to broadcast. Even technical and logistics shortcomings did not stop the radio from being broadcast all those years. The radio, on the one hand, was spreading messages with a national and patriotic content to create awareness among the public of the

tyrannical actions of the Iraqi army. On the other hand, it was one of the unique players in strengthening the Kurdish language and culture as a means of communication.

3.2 Second period, Partisan press: press coming down from the mountains into cities (1991-2003)

The second period is the partisan press. This period mainly covers the time during the historical transformation of the region and the establishment of the Kurdish de facto federal autonomous government. This period presents the transformation of the press from the mountain to the cities. For the first time the Kurdish press operates inside the cities and under a Kurdish authority with more freedom. During this period the facilities for the publications led to the evolution of a party press in a rapidly increasing and developing press. This was when each political party launched its own media and press institutions immediately after descending from the mountains. The first legal document related to the press was also passed by the Parliament of Kurdistan in 1993, known as Law Nr. 10 of 1993. Only two years later, when the civil war between the two main parties started, the press from both sides played a part as a means of war and incitement.

3.3.1 The Uprising and de-facto government

If the year 1975 is considered as a defeat for the Kurdish revolution, then one can refer to 1991 as the year of victory which was the turning point in the history of the Kurdish struggle for self-government. In 1991 the situation allowed Kurds to create a new reality in Iraq. Wounded Iraq was too fragile to think of a fresh war with Kuwait, especially after the damage of eight years of aimless war with Iran. The Kuwait invasion can be considered an end for Baath and Iraq hegemony in the region. Shortly after entering Kuwait, coalition

forces intervened and it was at that point they started to put limits and boundaries for Saddam's tyrannical acts in the region. The following spring was a blossoming for the Kurds of Iraq. For the first time an uprising allowed them to control their populated territories such as Erbil, Sulaimani, Duhok and also Kirkouk provinces. These cities together form what is nowadays known as Kurdistan. Shortly after, the Baath regime in Baghdad returned in revenge. This caused the flight of nearly two million citizens to the northern borders of Turkey and Iran. The conclusion to this came when British, US and their allies came to rescue the Kurds and provide them with humanitarian support under different names such as Operation Provide Comfort and Operation Haven. To protect them from Iraqi air attacks, on 5 April 1992, in accordance with UN Resolution 688, the no-fly zone area was applied in Kurdish areas and as a result Kurds returned back from the border camps.

As soon as they were back in Kurdistan, political parties and groups started to consider a form of unity among themselves. As a result, they formed the Kurdistani Front, consisting of representatives from seven Kurdish political parties and groups of that time. But they had problems concerning the governing of the area. Therefore, the Kurdistani Front decided to start a series of negotiations with Baghdad regarding administration issues. These negotiations never ended up with fruitful agreements, and neither side was ready to compromise with the other. As a result, on 26 October 1991, the Iraqi government started to withdraw its government offices and institutions completely from Kurdish parts in the North. This left areas with a huge legal and administrative vacuum. Thus, the Kurdistani Front formed a committee of 15 experts from all parties to come up with a system of governance in the region. Their intention was to build an administration that would meet

the needs of citizens in the region. This committee then, proposed a draft election law[43] to the political representatives of Kurdistan and it was approved in April 1992 to hold a parliamentary election. On 19 May, voters participated in multi-party free and open parliamentary elections in Kurdistan. The threshold was 7% and each one of KDP and PUK won the election and formed a shared government. The power sharing seemed not to work for the nature and reality of the political groups of that time, and it lasted only two peaceful years[44] and during those two years some important laws and resolutions were passed by the Kurdistan National Assembly[45]. One of those significant laws was the Press and Publication Law which was passed on 25 April 1993, as proposed by the Kurdistan Region's Ministry of Culture, Law No. 10 of 1993.

3.2.2 The press after 1991

The Kurdish political parties who were aware of the important role of the press from their mountain experience, now were able to launch their own press with a wider freedom and providing better access for the audience. On 1 December 1991, the first Kurdish daily newspaper published after the uprising was *Kurdistani Nwe* launched by the PUK in Erbil. This was followed by *Birayeti* daily newspaper published by the KDP. In addition, tens of other media publications and also radio and tv channels came into being, taking advantage of the atmosphere of freedom for the media. Nevertheless, all the media were controlled or backed by one political agenda or another. Meanwhile, on 26 November 1992, a daily

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[43]   Law No. 1, 1992: the law of 'the Kurdistan National Assembly' which has so far been amended five times.

[44]   On May 1994 the disagreements between the two parties reached such a level that they entered into armed clashes. This turned the Kurdistan Region into two war fronts: one in KDP-controlled areas and the other in PUK-controlled areas. On one side, the prime minister who was from PUK party during the civil war became the military commander. The deputy prime minister from the KDP on the other side took the commandership of the KDP frontline.

[45]   According to Law No. 2, 2009, the name Kurdistan Parliament-Iraq is used instead of National Assembly of Kurdistan-Iraq.

newspaper, *Harem* (The Region), was established by the government in Kurdistan, as their official publication.

During this time political parties who had come into being during the revolution and now had descended from the mountains, for the first time started to build civilian offices. Journalism inside cities was a new experience for them. Previously, journalism was used by them only to broadcast revolutionary messages to their members and the public, but now journalism entered another phase, based mainly on providing information to citizens. The two main parties, KDP and PUK, installed the same press machines from the mountains with the same personnel as decision-makers for their press. After 1992, the press was a part of the politburo and branches of political parties. Over time the two parties employed a number of new members in their media departments. This was primarily done by the main political parties while each worked at strengthening their mouthpiece publications and channels.

When the PUK and KDP entered the war, in the same way as the region was divided into two frontlines, the press was also divided between two main parties. Even the smaller parties who stayed the ally of one party or another, had to decide which press 'line' to choose. Therefore, the press during the civil war in Kurdistan Region served as the two parties' war machine to spread hate speech against each other. In general, the press in Kurdistan was a means of struggle as mentioned by the president of *Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate* in an interview conducted with him:

[... Generally, the press in Kurdistan is a product of our political struggle. Therefore, it has been used as a means of defence, of attack, as well as for the spreading of a political agenda.]

(Appendix 3, Interview #2)

3.3 Third period: The laws and legislation related to the press adopted by the KRI Parliament (2003-2014)

For presenting the third period in this chapter, the importance of the press-related pieces of legislation passed by the Kurdistan Parliament is explained and an analysis of the regulation of the press within the law is presented. We also give some historical background together with an analysis of Journalism Law No. 35/2007. The importance of this period lies in the rise of a large number of press and media outlets. However, the diversity of the press stems from the political affiliation of each one, usually with with political parties. Journalism Law No. 35/2007 and the Law of the Right to Access Information No. 11/2013, are among the main press-related pieces of legalisation in this period.

3.3.1 Iraqi criminal law and publication law

In Iraq, the press and publications have traditionally been under the control of the state (Ricchiardi, 2011). Besides legislation, resolutions and laws to regulate the press, the state directly owned and controlled the press. Laws were often outdated and still they were not implemented. For instance the Iraqi press for many years followed the regulations introduced in 1931, the Law of Publications No. 82. Prior to the adoption of this law, the only press-related legislation was the one from 1863 of the Ottoman Empire, which

regulated the press in all the areas under the authority of the Ottomans including Iraq.

As a part of federal Iraq, the Kurdistan Region followed the regulations in force in the country. This, with the exception of the partisan and mountain press and publications especially during the revolution times in Kurdistan Region. After the fall of the monarchy in Iraq the situation did not change towards the better. During this period pieces of legislation to regulate the press and both the Publication Law of 1968 and the Criminal Law known as Law No. 111/1969[46] were adopted. Both of these criminalised journalists for insulting the government[47]. Having press and publication legislation adopted as a chapter within Criminal Law is revealing. In other words, journalists are treated as criminals according to the law in Iraq especially if their reports are not endorsed by the state. This was considered as direct pressure and censorship against journalism in Iraq. Therefore, all the publications and broadcasting media in Iraq were under the direct control of the state. However, this was not exactly the case in Kurdistan Region. The region adopted its own laws regulating the press and journalism and those pieces of legislation in the region provided journalism with a broader freedom to practise. The following are two paragraphs from the Criminal Law related to the press:

SECTION THREE

Liability in offences of publication

Paragraph 81 - Without prejudice to the criminal liability of an author or illustrator of a book or other means of expression, the editor in chief of a newspaper is punishable in his capacity as principal to an offence committed

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[46]   the law with its amendments is available in English at: https://www.unodc.org/res/cld/document/irq/1969/penal_code_html/Iraq_The_Penal_Code_1969ENG.pdf

[47]   See more at: https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2016/iraq

by means of that newspaper. If there is no editor in chief, then the editor in

charge of the department responsible for the publication is liable. However,

either of them may be absolved from the penalty if he can establish during the

investigation, that the publication had occurred without his knowledge and if

he provides all the information and documentation available to him that will

assist in the identification of the person responsible.

Paragraph 83 - No person is absolved from criminal liability of publication

offences even though the writing, drawing or other form of expression is a

quotation from or translation of publications that are issued in Iraq or abroad

or if they are merely rumours or stories propagated by others. This provision is

not applicable if the publication quotes official government publications[48].

Concerning the practice of journalism and publishing in Iraq, Criminal Law mainly focuses

on the convicting of journalists and editors rather than on their protection or their rights.

This automatically puts the editors under pressure to do everything to be very careful about

what is being published and what is not. Criminal Law was the only law to deal with cases

regarding the press and journalists in Iraq. This means that there was no space in the legal

framework for the protection of the professionals in this field. Freedom of speech had little

meaning in the Baath system: the press was free to praise the Baath regime and its

dictatorship in Iraq. Having criminal law as the main legal framework of dealing with

journalists, was another method of state control, at its peak of brutality during the Baath

regime. There was no other way: the only expectation from editors and journalists was to

abide by the Baath rules. No one had the right to criticise or even express a simple opinion

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[48]   the law with its amendments is available in English at: https://www.unodc.org/res/cld/document/irq/1969/penal_code_html/Iraq_The_Penal_Code_1969ENG.pdf

that went slightly against party principles. All types of publication, including writing, drawing, voice and video records, quotations and translations of text, whether issued inside or outside the country, were under heavy control.

Publications went through a filtration process before receiving a publishing license. Therefore, the majority of decision-makers in the Iraqi media were senior Baath party members. Even Saddam Hussein's eldest son, Uday Saddam, was appointed as a chief editor of the *Babel* newspaper[49]. In general, editors were expected to abide by Baath party principles.

3.3.2 Press-related laws in the KRI

After the US-led coalition and removal of the Baath party from power in Iraq, the Kurds, as one of the main opposition groups took part in rebuilding a new Iraq to gather with other entities of Iraq. After that, an interim government was appointed in Iraq made up of representatives from different Iraqi ethnic and religious groups[50]. Then, a committee was established to draft a constitution for a democratic Iraq[51]. In 2005 this constitution was ratified in a referendum and thereupon it became the basis of legislation and the political system in the new Iraq. According to the 2005 constitution, Kurdistan entered a federation with Iraq and this granted the Kurdish administrated areas the status of a federal autonomous regional government within Iraq. In addition, this constitution considers all

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[49]   An article on Uday and his press-related activities is available at: http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/iraq/uday.html

[50]   Iraqi interim government was created on June 28, 2004, to govern the country until the drafting of new constitution. It was replaced with the Iraqi transitional government on May 3, 2005.

[51]   The US-led coalition invasion of Iraq was legitimised by the willingness of the US and its allies to democratise the country. However, critics argued that this democratisation did not happen and despite all efforts, shortly after the invasion further factions were to be found inside Iraq that continue until today. See more at: Barker, Michael J. 'Democracy or polyarchy? US-funded media developments in Afghanistan and Iraq post 9/11.' *Media, culture, and society* 30.1 (2008): 109.

laws and resolutions passed by the Kurdistan parliament as valid legislation[52]. The Kurdistan parliament is fully authorised, according to the constitution, to accept, refuse or amend any legislation passed by the Iraqi council of representatives, and to decide whether it be adopted in the KRI or not.

Concerning the press-related laws and regulations, the KRI started to legislate in the 1990s. The Law No. 10, 1993, is one of the very first pieces of legislation adopted by the Kurdistan Parliament-Iraq. This law is considered the foundation law for regulation of the press and publications in KRI. In addition, the same law guarantees the independence of the press and freedom of speech (Article 2). This is mainly because the necessity of having journalism and the press in a legal framework in the KRI was sensed since the beginning of autonomous rule in the KRI. Therefore, in 1993, one year after the creation of parliament, a draft of the Press Law was proposed and the law was adopted as the first legal framework for the practice of journalism in the KRI. Later, in 1998, parliament passed the law of *Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate (KJS)* as the official body representing journalists. Then in 2001 a law was passed regulating the retirement of journalists. The establishment of KJS was of importance especially during a time when the two main parties, KDP and PUK, alongside with their press were just coming out armed conflict. The foundation of Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate was one of the first steps to reconciliation especially among the media and press on both sides. Obviously, the both sides during media was playing negative role especially in escalating the conflict and further deepening the disputes. Therefore, the KJS was a step forward towards peace and reconciliation starting

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[52] Constitution of Iraq 2005, Article 141: Legislation enacted in the region of Kurdistan since 1992 shall remain in force, and decisions issued by the government of the region of Kurdistan, including court decisions and contracts, shall be considered valid unless they are amended or annulled pursuant to the laws of the region of Kurdistan by the competent entity in the region, provided that they do not contradict the Constitution.

from the press of both sides.

Along with Press Law No.10 of 1993, the law of Political Parties No. 17 of 1993, also plays an important role in heading the press in the KRI in a certain direction which the press in the KRI was heading to. This law grants political parties the right to have their own media. This did not mean that all the media in the region would be owned or controlled by one political party or another, but at that point that was the case. This could not be seen as the one reason for the rise of a political party's press in general, but parties were aware of the role of the media in circulating their ideas. Besides, they benefitted from decades-long experience of their mountain and rebellion media. Thus, in the 1990s the press was completely owned and controlled by the political parties and groups in the region, especially the two main parties, who started to operate their own press as one of the main pillars of their party institution. In addition, there were two other laws passed related to the press and its destination in the KRI. One of these laws was Law No. 4, 1998, Journalists Syndicate of Kurdistan-Iraq and the other was Law No. 13, 2001, Journalists Retirement Law. The journalists retirement law plays an important role in the protection of journalists and their professional career. The journalists retirement law, for the first time, was a way of appreciating the profession and accepting its practitioners inside the system.

In order to understand the role of the state in regulating the press, an attempt to analyse licensing and permissions processes is undertaken. Some regulations regarding the qualifications of the chief editor and the owner of the press, shut-down conditions, and censorship methods are also referred to in the Law of the Press, 1993.

The law consists of 19 articles, basically aimed at regulating press and publications in Kurdistan Region at the beginning of autonomous Kurdistan's government. To understand

the importance of this legislation, we highlight the space provided by this law for the rights and regulations to publish, restrictions and censorship, licensing and freedom of publication. 'The law seems to be very basic but compared to the press limitations in Iraq and the Middle East area, this is considered to be unique for that time' as Azad Hamadamin, Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate's president noted (Appendix 3, Interview #2).

According to Article 2 of this law, each citizen is free to publish with no inspection or censorship of the press. Nevertheless, there are some qualification set for anyone who desires to start a press publication. The concessionaire and the chief editor are both required to have a number of qualifications. These conditions are considered as restricting those individuals who were previously convicted from starting their own publications. This law specifies Article 5 for the licensing process. This process takes place by requesting an appeal to the ministry of culture where only the minister has the authority to approve or disqualify a press from being licensed within 30 days. According to the law, the appeal must include the name of the concessionaire and chief editor as well as the name and language of the periodical and its type. In case of non- approval, the appellant can refer to the appellate court and there the court decision is final. Here, the law makes the press face clear restrictions by going through the process of licensing. Through this complicated process, any publication can be banned or not approved by the ministry, as, for instance, if they are not in favour of their politics. Meanwhile, another positive side of this legislation is that, after licensing, the publication gains legal status and neither the administration nor the court can withdraw the right of publishing from it, shut it down or ban it (Article 6, 1). Overall, the law, to some extent applies the principles of freedom of the press in democracies but at the same time it is subject to restrictions especially concerning the

obstacles of licensing. Nevertheless, it should be taken into the consideration that this law was passed in 1993, only one year after the granting of a status of autonomy to the KRI. In addition, this law was passed inside a country such as Iraq with its Baath regime where there was no such culture of legislation according to the principle of a free and independent press.

After the fall of the Baath regime in 2003 the elections for the second term of parliament took place in 2005. Since then, elections were held regularly every four years. During the last three elected terms of the Kurdistan parliament only one press-related law was drafted and passed by parliament: Law of Journalism No. 35, 2007. A number of other press and media-related drafts have been proposed to parliament but none of them has made it into law so far. The following is a table that shows all the press-related laws which regulate the press and media in the KRI.

LAWS	YEAR ADOPTED	MAIN REGULATIONS
Law No. 10/1993 Press Law	1993	• Foundation law for regulation of press and publications • Guarantees the independence and freedom of press journalists (Articles 2 and 14) • Regulating licensing of press and publishing (Article 5).
Law No. 17/1993 Law of political parties	1993	-Grants all the region's political parties the right to own their media (Article 13)
Law No. 4/1998, Law of Journalists Syndicate of Kurdistan-Iraq	1998	• Establishment of Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate, a union of journalists in the KRI. • The syndicate guarantees support for its members and journalists in the KRI and protects them (Articles 4 and 19). -Support towards more professional journalism (Article 4). -The syndicate guarantees support for its members and journalists in the KRI and protects them (Articles 4 and 19).
Law No. 13/2001, Journalists retirement law	2001	- Regulating retirement for journalists
Iraqi Constitution. Ratified in a national referendum in 2005.	2005	Guarantee of free press in Iraq (Articles 36, 37 and 38)
Law No. 35/2007 Journalism Law	2007	1. Guarantee of: • freedom press and expression, • protection of journalists, • independence of journalists, • professionalism. (Article 7) 2. Regulating press and periodical publications in the KRI (Article 2) 3. Regulating the legal rights and obligations of journalists (Articles 8 and 9). 4. The law is mainly focused on the written press. 5. Removing the licensing requirement for press and publication (Article 1).
Law No. 11/2013 The law of access to information	2013	1.Guarantees citizens' access to the information from public and private sectors. 2.Support for more transparency as a principle of democracy. (Article 2) 3.Creating a freer atmosphere for publication and expression. (Article 2)

Table 3: Laws Regulating Press in Kurdistan Region of Iraq

In 2007, the Kurdistan Journalist Syndicate proposed a draft law to the parliament of Kurdistan. After a series of discussions inside and outside parliament, mainly between the lawmakers and journalists, the law was voted and adopted in December 2007. This law is called Journalism Law No. 35, 2007. The law is made up of fourteen articles within five chapters. This law is also focused mainly on the print media for which a number of local practitioners voiced disagreement. There is still no law related to broadcasting or other media. Journalism Law No. 35, 2007 refers to freedom of press and freedom of expression as fundamental rights of journalists. Article 2 of this law and 5 sub articles are entirely devoted to this issue. The right to publish and right to ownership of a publication are also thoroughly regulated in this law. The law grants journalists immunity having the ability to practise their profession without being arrested and the right to not have their office or house searched without a prior court order. This immunity however, is questioned by local journalists as there are still cases when journalists are arrested, attacked, jailed and even tortured with no regard for this law. This law removes the licensing bureaucracy for press and periodical publications. An announcement to be published in two newspapers in the KRI is sufficient for a newspaper or publication to start up officially and legally. The announcement shall include information about the newspaper or the periodical which is to be established (Article 1, Law No. 35/2007)[53].

On 5 June 2013, another important law was drafted and passed by the parliament of Kurdistan, The right to access information law, No. 11, 2013[54]. This law essentially refers to the importance of citizens being allowed to access information and their right to be

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[53]   See the law in Kurdish: http://perleman.org/files/articles/221008121630.pdf Retrieved on 06/04/2017

[54]   See the law in Kurdish: http://www.perleman.org/files/articles/120713023536.pdf Retrieved on 06/04/2017

informed. The law was adopted as a guarantee of transparency in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. According to the law, all public and private institutions in the Kurdistan Region are obliged to have one or more named employees assigned to provide the public with information upon request (Article 7, 1).

By the establishment of the Kurdistan parliament, for the first time, the Kurdish press was regulated by the Kurdish authorities. Nevertheless, such regulations and legislation are mostly to better control the press activities by the state. Sometimes, this leads press in a direction where it remains as an institution controlled by the state. The justification of the state in necessitating the laws and regulations for the press is to protect the rights of journalists and freedoms of press. As can be seen, all the press- related regulations and laws in Kurdistan refer to the importance of freedom of expression and press. However, those regulations also do not seem to fully guarantee the rights and freedoms of the press and practitioners of the field tend to face continuous problems with the law.

Conclusion

It is evident that the emergence of the Kurdish press has been in parallel with the evolution of political and national movements. The Kurdish press has always been an inseparable part of the Kurdish rebellion for their national and political rights particularly in Iraq. Therefore, the development of the press has been dependent on political developments in Kurdistan. The Kurdish press has been a part of the Kurdish rebellion and the mountain struggle. Then, it was a part of the autonomous de-facto state after 1992 and after that started to adapt itself into an era of institution-building when the Kurdistan parliament passed press-related legislation.

In fact, the Iraqi governments have shown the same level of hostility to Kurdish political parties and their press. Meanwhile, the Kurdish rebellion press and secret press continued uninterrupted because of their awareness of the necessity of communication between Kurdish Peshmergas, themselves and also their people inside cities. In the case of communicating with those inside cities, radio played an important role, but at the same time secret publications were also influential.

When political parties spread to the cities in 1992, they were already aware of the important role of the press from their mountain experience. As a result they launched their own press with ever-wider freedom, and continued to assure better access to press for their audience. This led to the press going through a period of regulations within the local legislature, the Kurdistan Parliament. For the first time, the Kurdish press functioned under laws and regulations legislated by their own state. Although the existing laws are not always considered by the practitioners in the field as protecting their full freedoms, they nevertheless helped the press to progress and develop. As it has been noted, it can be concluded that the press in the KRI has developed over a period of time, despite the fact that this development is parallel with the political development. Therefore, in essence the fact that this chapter is divided into three periods is also an indicator of the development of the Kurdish press from one period to another. To sum up, the press in the KRI has developed over time depending on political development.

CHAPTER FOUR: FOUR DIMENSIONS OF MEDIA SYSTEM IN THE KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ

Introduction

A notable finding of this research is the fact that almost all the media in the KRI are owned, run, controlled or linked to political parties. At the same time media outlets are supposed to be the source for information being provided to the public in the region. In fact, what people receive from these channels are mostly political messages which focus restrictedly on political agenda-setting of political parties. As Hallin and Mancini put it, 'Media systems are shaped by the wider context of political history, structure, and the culture' (2004: 46). The political background of the region, culture and social structure is highly reflected in the local media and press. In other words, in order to understand the way media outlets operate in Kurdistan, a thorough understanding of political and cultural history of the region in the last century is needed. This chapter gives an overview of the political history, culture and structure of Iraq and Kurdistan. The chapter will first describe post-Saddam Hussein Iraq and attempts at democratisation especially in what is related to press and politics. Then, it will give an overview of the four dimensions of the press (Hallin and Mancini, 2004) with a specific focus on the KRI.

4. 1. Background

The Iraq of post-Saddam Hussein has repeatedly been motivated and supported by the international community to function as a democratic state. Above all, the United States of America claimed it was working towards democratising the country. after the 2003 military

intervention changed the system in Iraq. The Kurds of Iraq were among the main local opposition forces who fought side by side with the US led coalition in favour of a regime-change in Iraq. The Kurdish Peshmergas took part in the war against the Baath Regime in Iraq together with the coalition forces, and the region was used as a military base by the coalition forces. The aftermath of the war for Iraqis was an era of hope that peace and prosperity would return to Iraq. However, to make that hopecome true, Iraq faced challenges, and shortly afterwards the country became home to sectarian conflict. Minorities found it difficult to live in Iraq peacefully. When the new constitution for Iraq was being drafted under the supervision of the US and their allies, the Kurds again were one of three main participants in the drafting committee. Meanwhile, the Kurdish nationalist agenda and dream of independence was sensed by everyone, but this time Kurds decided to be part of a federal Iraq. A regional government was proposed for the Kurds, and this was guaranteed in the draft constitution. Later the region was recognised according to this constitution, *along with its existing authorities, as a federal region* (Article 117, Iraqi Const. 2005). The powers of the regions are guaranteed in Section Five,

2005 Iraqi constitution[55]. However, the ratification of the constitution did not put an end to the chaos in Iraq, and in some ways it even aggravated it. For instance, Article No. 140 of the Constitution proposes the issue of the disputed territories be solved in a free referendum by the inhabitants of those areas in order to set the boundaries of those areas, whether they are a part of the Kurdistan Region or not. This referendum was scheduled for not later than the end of 2007 but due central and federal government disagreements it did

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[55]   [Article 116:
The federal system in the Republic of Iraq is made up of a decentralized capital, regions, and governorates, as well as local administrations.
Article 117:
First: This Constitution, upon coming into force, shall recognize the region of Kurdistan, along with its existing authorities, as a federal region.
Second: This Constitution shall affirm new regions established in accordance with its provisions.
Article 118:
The Council of Representatives shall enact, in a period not to exceed six months from the date of its first session, a law that defines the executive procedures to form regions, by a simple majority of the members present.
Article 119:
One or more governorates shall have the right to organize into a region based on a request to be voted on in a referendum submitted in one of the following two methods:
First: A request by one-third of the council members of each governorate intending to form a region.
Second: A request by one-tenth of the voters in each of the governorates intending to form a region.
Article 120:
Each region shall adopt a constitution of its own that defines the structure of powers of the region, its authorities, and the mechanisms for exercising such authorities, provided that it does not contradict this Constitution.
Article 121:
First: The regional powers shall have the right to exercise executive, legislative, and judicial powers in accordance with this Constitution, except for those authorities stipulated in the exclusive authorities of the federal government.
Second: In case of a contradiction between regional and national legislation in respect to a matter outside the exclusive authorities of the federal government, the regional power shall have the right to amend the application of the national legislation within that region.
Third: Regions and governorates shall be allocated an equitable share of the national revenues sufficient to discharge their responsibilities and duties, but having regard to their resources, needs, and the percentage of their population.
Fourth: Offices for the regions and governorates shall be established in embassies and diplomatic missions, in order to follow cultural, social, and developmental affairs.
Fifth: The regional government shall be responsible for all the administrative requirements of the region, particularly the establishment and organization of the internal security forces for the region such as police, security forces, and guards of the region.]

not take place[56]. Baghdad was pushing for imposing more centralised power while the KRI

was seeking more autonomy. Therefore, the disputes between Baghdad and Erbil deepened

day by day and reached a stage where Baghdad cut all the wages and budget share of the

regional government due to disputes over new oil contracts in the KRI. The budget cut

happened in January 2014 and so Kurds continued their unilateral management of the

Kurdistan Region's oil contracts. The issue came to a head when in September 2017 the

region held an independence referendum. Immediately after, the central government

applied more brutal sanctions over the region including an airport ban and closing the

borders. The authorities in Baghdad accused the Kurds of violating the constitution in

holding such a referendum for secession. For their part, the region's authorities accused the

federal government of themselves violating the constitution. The Kurdistan Regional

Government even released a full report referring to the constitutional violations of

Baghdad[57].

4.2 The four dimensions of press

4.2.1 Dimension#1: Media market

It is clear that the market for the media is an important factor for its sustainability and

development. However, marketing methods and policies may differ from one place and

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[56]   Article 140:
        First: The executive authority shall undertake the necessary steps to complete the implementation of the requirements of all subparagraphs of Article 58 of the Transitional Administrative Law.
        Second: The responsibility placed upon the executive branch of the Iraqi Transitional Government stipulated in Article 58 of the Transitional Administrative Law shall extend and continue to the executive authority elected in accordance with this Constitution, provided that it accomplishes completely (normalization and census and concludes with a referendum in Kirkuk and other disputed territories to determine the will of their citizens), by a date not to exceed the 31st of December 2007.

[57] The full report in English is available here: http://cabinet.gov.krd/uploads/documents/2017/ Constitutional_violations_Sept_24_2017.pdf

time to another. For the printed media, circulation numbers are of paramount consideration for editors in order to continually increase their readership. This runs the press towards a direction where numbers, tirage and sold outs matter. Therefore, mass circulation of different media, like any other product in any given market, automatically creates competition, even though now other methods of media marketing and circulation are pursued, such as the online market. However, the traditional newspaper still exists with its traditional markets. In the model which Hallin and Mancini (2004) present there is a focus on the wide differences in newspaper readership as one of the main indicators for differentiating among media systems in different countries. Therefore, the need to prioritise media circulation through marketing could be considered as one of the most important methods of sustainability for newspapers in western world. However, this might not apply in the same way in the KRI where democracy and institutional infrastructures including a free press are still at a fledgling stage.

In general in the KRI, the press does not automatically feel obliged to seek economic independence through finding a market and sources of revenue. This is mainly because the majority of the press are affiliated to, or owned by, politicians or political parties, and there is a press budget allocated. However, the majority of these media claim that they attempt to be financially independent from political parties. *Rudaw,* for instance, is one of the media establishments in the region that considers itself a company concerned with marketing:

[…We are a company and of course we care about marketing. In fact we have

been able to reach out to a large number of viewers, listeners and readers, by

using different methods from printed newspapers to Android and iOS

applications: we therefore receive many advertising offers from outstanding

companies and businesses both internationally and in Kurdistan. For the first

time in the Kurdish media, we have been able to bring in sponsors for our

programmes and publications. There is a good income to be had, but due to

current financial crises in the KRI we also face difficulties. I can easily say that

our income is more than the income of all the other KRI media establishments

together. But still, the market has never been able to meet all our expenses or

even a half of our expenses, and we still need a source of support.]

(Appendix, Interview #3)

Rudaw is a major media channel with one of the largest audiences in the KRI. The channel's main income source is its owner, Nechirvan Barzani, who is Deputy President of the leading political party and at the same time Prime Minister of the region. *Rudaw* is also one of the most active channels on social media. In general, media channels and newspapers in the KRI refuse to reveal their sources of income but it is almost obvious for the public to know what belongs to whom, where and how. These channels tend to reveal their identity by siding with a particular political agenda, either during an election campaign or even in a particular political case that may arise in the region. Usually audiences of media channels and readers of newspapers are aware to some extent of the ideological allegiance of what they read, watch or hear. The Director General of *Rudaw* disclosed the identity of the owner and income sources of the channel during our interview:

Well, I will be frank because I am giving this interview to be used in an

academic work. I have not even disclosed this on Rudaw itself when I was

interviewed on the first anniversary of Rudaw. As H. E. Necirvan Barzani

himself does not declare it as his own project, why should I say that? But, that

is true, Mr. Necirvan Barzani is the main support for this institution and it

belongs to him, I am a manager here, I am not the owner.

Although *Rudaw* is considered one of the professional channels in the region and they work at being as impartial as possible, they still belong to a political party which may impose its influence, especially critical moments. Meanwhile, this could be considered as a new way of politicising the media by introducing it as an independent, impartial and credible source and at the same time using the advantage of its popularity at times of party need. These types of media project are first established through huge investments by politicians who believe in the power of media. Later, they simply get accustomed to promoting a political agenda. This could be named as indirect political ownership and advantage from the media. The directors of this type of media, and journalists, tend to deny having political ties or obligations towards a political party. Ako Mohammed, Director General of *Rudaw* told us they have no relations with the KDP and are not part of their media apparatus:

About our involvement with KDP and its media machine we have no

connection to that. We do not receive anything from them and even at times

they are harsher with us than other media channels. So, it is not fair to label us

as affiliated to a party because even the political party does not consider us as

one of them. Our main aim is to publish news professionally and we don't

believe in the attacking form of media which is now the case in Kurdistan, we

do not have any personal issues with anyone or any group.

This type of media is different from party media. In the case of party media, the main aim is to directly serve the party and its agenda. Therefore, there is a clear distinction between current party media and that during the period of revolution and in the mountains. Obviously, the main role played by the media of the mountain and rebel times was spreading national and revolutionary ideologies. The role of today's media is to legitimise party performance and influence the vote in favour of the party. However, the way each political party defines media is totally different, and particularly as concerns marketing and revenue:

[...*we have an intellectual project, not one for benefit. We are not focusing on selling our newspapers or any other media product, that is not the main goal, but we still sell. Our aim, as I mentioned is not business it is rather journalism and culture. Our main income is not the market, we do not depend on the market. In our party budget for the media, we do not consider the revenue as income. We do not run our media with its revenue.*]

*(*Appendix, Interview #5)

Seeking a market has not been the main burden for the media in the Kurdistan Region. Most media channels do not even have a marketing plan. Finding income resources is the last thing in the minds of editors and media decision-makers in the KRI. This is mainly because all the surviving media and press in the KRI are the ones owned and funded by political parties. The newspapers for instance, care little about circulation planning, and the revenue they receive from the selling of the newspaper is not really considered as their income. In addition, the market is also too weak to cover the expenses of media channels and the press in order to survive. In fact, there are also no serious companies or

establishments specialising in circulation. There is no postal service covering Iraq, neither is there one in the KRI. Local and city-to-city transport means do not function. These are considered among the main obstacles of circulation for the publications in KRI. One of the very first attempts to open a company for circulating newspapers was initiated by a political party. In June 2007, *Tatar Company*[58] was established following a decision by KDP's media and culture department. This company's only purpose was the circulation of newspapers and publications all over the Kurdistan Region and sometimes even in Baghdad, Mosul and other parts of Iraq. At first, this company was available for use by press outlets regardless of affiliation, but later an order from the KDP limited it to KDP publications only.

4.2.2 General market for the printed media in KRG

This section details the general market for the printed media in KRG. The data comes from the general register of the Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate and includes all the officially registered printed media in the KRI. The data was collected by the author during research for this dissertation.

A dataset was created with 765 entries, with data on the following variables:

Name of publication; owner of publication; language and province of publication (but not of distribution); type of publication according to the number of times issued per week; year of first publication; printing house. These data were available from the official records for printed publications in KRG. Finally, the party affiliation for each publication was

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[58]   Tatar Company was first established as a private company to distribute newspapers and magazines in the KRI. Later it became part of the KDP media department.

established in a qualitative way, through asking a number of experts with knowledge in the field to which party that publication belongs.

The following data are described in this chapter (please see the Appendix for the entire dataset of the Newspapers registered with the Kurdistan Syndicate of Journalists).

Article 4 of the Iraqi Constitution declares Arabic and Kurdish as Iraq's two official languages together with the right of other minorities such as Turkmen, Syrian and Armenian to be educated in their mother tongue. However, in the KRI the main and the official language remains Kurdish and this is the main language of the press. In addition, other languages such as Assyrian, Turkmen, Arabic and recently English are used in the press. This right is also granted in the Kurdistan Region's draft constitution.

Article Seven of the KRI (2009 draft constitution) is as follows:

1) Kurdish is the official language of the Kurdistan Region.

2) Official correspondence with the regional and federal authorities shall be in both Arabic and Kurdish.

3) Teaching Arabic in the Kurdistan Region shall be mandatory.

4) The Turkmen language is to be considered the language of education and culture for the Turkmen in addition to the Kurdish language. Syrian shall be the language of education and culture for those who speak it, in addition to the Kurdish language.

Nonetheless, the Parliament of Kurdistan-Iraq, in 2015 passed a new law, Law No. 4, 2015, to form a new committee for drafting the constitution. A draft was previously prepared in

2009 but due to the internal disputes between the political parties about that draft, a re-drafting was proposed. According to the law, the new committee is to consist of 21 members representing the political diversity of the region, and is to finalise a new draft in a period not exceeding 90 days. Later, this committee and all its activities were halted as a result of political disputes over issues such as the amendment of the Kurdistan Presidency Law.

At present the languages used in the Kurdistan Region's press are Kurdish, Arabic, Turkmen and Assyrian. Kurdish is the first language for the majority of the press. The second is the use of both Kurdish and Arabic together. Turkmen and Assyrian languages are also used in their population areas in the press, which also publishes bilingually. For instance, Assyrian is more popular in Duhok and they Kurdish and Arabic also to publish and Turkmen in Erbil and Kirkouk where they also publish a trilingual press in Turkmen, Kurdish and Arabic. This is an indication that these minorities besides having a message for their own readers, also have things to say to the Kurdish and Arabic speakers in a society where they coexist.

There are also two dialects of Kurdish spoken in the KRI, Sorani and Kurmancî (also called Badînî). Badînî is mainly spoken in Duhok governorate and also some districts and sub- districts of Erbil governorate. Thus, the major spoken dialect, which is also the official dialect of the government, is Soranî. Therefore, there the readership of newspapers published in Badînî is limited in other governorates of the KRI. For instance, *Evro* daily newspaper which is in Badînî Kurdish dialect is not able to find a market in other cities than Duhok. The same is not however true for the Soranî Kurdish newspaper which has a

good circulation in Duhok and in Badînî-speaking areas: Government and political correspondence is mostly in Soranî and it remains the main medium of instruction in the region.

Figure 1: Ownership of newspapers by province and city.
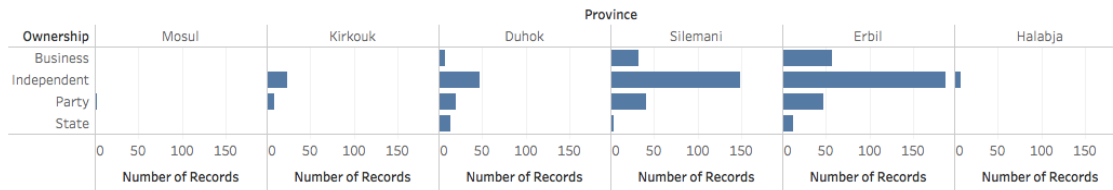
Political parties own the majority of the press in the KRI although ownership is not necessarily direct: it may be through different channels. As well as the newspapers declared by political parties as their mouthpieces or owned by them, there are a number of newspapers declared as independent but which are nevertheless still connected in one way or another to political parties. Private individuals, non-profit organizations, business and profit groups can also be used in an indirect way that furthers the interests of one party or another.

Moreover, even State institutions and public universities can be controlled by political parties according to their influence in the area. For instance, in Sulaimani where the PUK is in power, a newspaper published by a municipality or university will not stay neutral when it comes to PUK politics. The same is true for Duhok and the KDP because of the influence of this party in that governorate. This table shows the date when the newspaper was first published in each province. According to this finding, the number of publications started to increase significantly after 2003. This had to do with the change of regime in Iraq after the US-led intervention and the end of Baath control over the media in the country.

Figure 2: Type of Newspaper by Province.
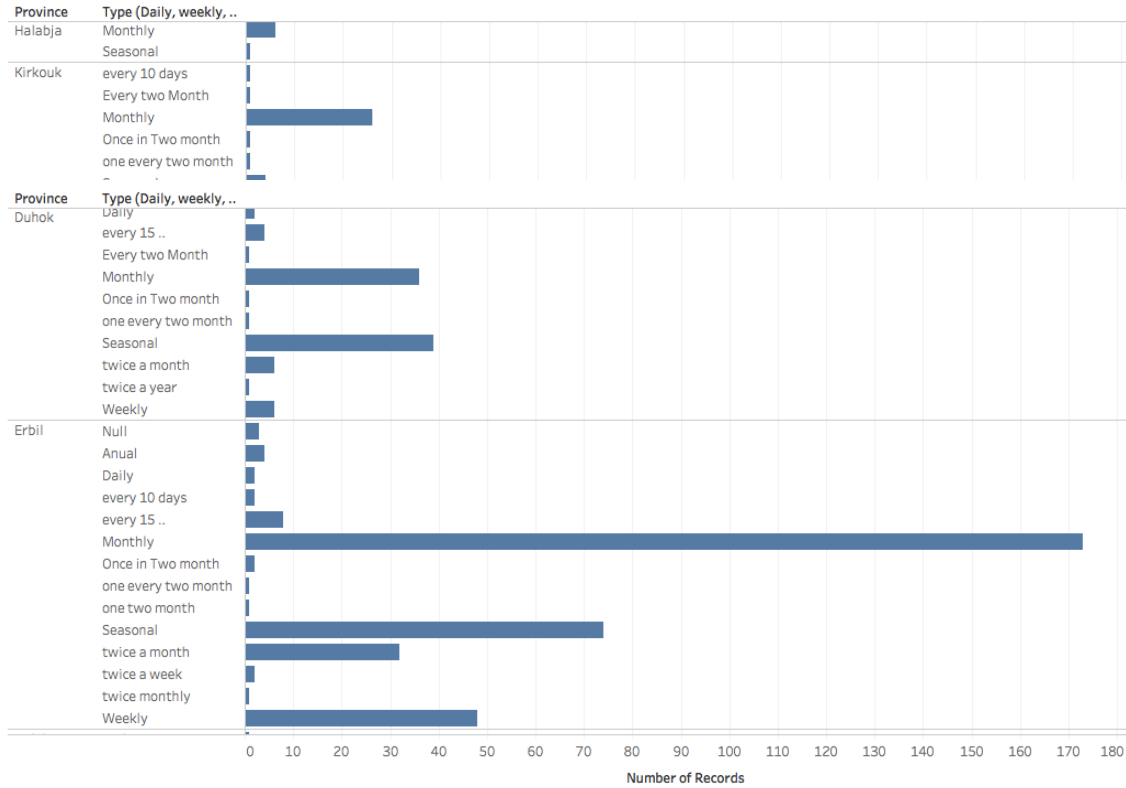
Dimension#2: Political parallelism

When a century ago in 1898, the first Kurdish newspaper was published in Cairo, it had a clear political and national line and was therefore published secretly. This newspaper was named *Kurdistan* and was considered the Kurds' first attempt at practising journalism. However, it was not easy to print and publish a Kurdish newspaper during that time due to the political restrictions. The Ottoman Empire set numerous obstacles and limitations for publications, and the state was in control of the press. Meanwhile, the founder of the newspaper, Miqdad Midhat Pasha, the founder of the newspaper, was determined to continue publishing *Kurdistan*. Nevertheless, the newspaper faced many difficulties including becoming a newspaper published in exile. *Kurdistan* was published for a dozen issues, then had to stop. Facing these types of restriction mainly imposed by the authorities

was the case of almost all Kurdish newspapers established after *Kurdistan* in those times. It was normal practice for Kurds to be banned from having publications in their mother tongue. Normally, newspapers were not permitted by the state. So newspapers had their beginnings by being published in secret, and irregularly. Threats and obstacles faced by the publication's editors, mainly from the state, then shut them down. The motive for restricting publications was fear by successive governments of a spreading of a sense of national identity among the Kurds.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, there is an explicit link between the rise of the Kurdish press and the Kurdish nationalism movement (Hassanpour, 1992; Ahmedzadeh, 2003). Therefore, it can be argued that development of the Kurdish press has been in parallel with the Kurdish national movement especially in the Kurdish part of Iraq. At the same time, the evolution and rise of the press alongside the Kurdish national movement and revolution, have been inevitable during the twentieth century in the other Kurdish populated areas, in Turkey, Syria and Iran. In Iraq the persistent resistance of the Kurds was mainly focused on their national rights and seeking of identity. The movement opened up an enormous space for emerging, revolutionary media. This type of media was mainly established in the form of mountain mobile radio stations, non-periodical newspapers and a number of secret publications distributed inside secret cells mostly in the cities and towns. This type of media continued until the turning point of the revolution after the 1991 political incidents in the area, especially in Iraq. The uprisings in the South and also northern parts of Iraq after the Gulf War gave the Kurdish national movement a new impetus. This was followed by the application of the 'no-fly zone' both in the South and in northern parts of Iraq, leading to the establishment of the autonomous administration for

the revolutionary Kurds. The period after this brought the Kurdish media out of exile: mountain radio stations and secret publications became established in the cities. That was when for the first time the newly founded parliament passed laws concerning the press and journalists.

> [*…the media after uprising started to be framed in its form and it is developing until today. When we started after the mountain period there were only a handful of people who had an idea about journalism throughout the region. It was a big challenge to work with zero knowledge, but we persevered. We have always tried to keep our media up to date with modern developments and to adjust to global systems. We continuously encourage our staff to learn, and this is done through different capacity-building programmes inside and outside Kurdistan.*]

(Appendix 3, Interview #2)

A new reality came into being for the press and media, even if with a limited capacity, when the de facto autonomous Kurdistan Region came into existence. The absence of professionals, infrastructure, culture and technicians were among the main challenges of this period. Nevertheless, the region's press witnessed an overwhelming eagerness to develop and improve. By the late 1990s, the number of newspapers, radio and TV stations were continuously increasing: the KRI upheld open policies towards the press and upheld its legal commitment to the principle of free speech. This was a unique case throughout Iraq and the standard of press in the KRI was by no means incomparable to that in Baghdad. What was known as the press in Baghdad was a handful of newspapers and media channels directly and strictly under the control of the Baath Regime. Therefore, the

2003 change of regime for the other parts of Iraq was a new period and a new era for the press. For the first time in the history of Iraq, the practice of a free press took hold, after the end of the Baath regime. This was a practice that had already been going on for approximately one decade in the Kurdistan region as a result of the region's autonomy, and non interference of Baghdad after 1992. Thus, compared to other parts of Iraq, the Kurdistan region was in freer and better shape for its press to develop.

In an interview, the secretary general of the Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate quoted a number: 500, for magazines and newspapers published in the region, and he said the number changed rapidly on a daily basis (Interview, 11 November 2014). This number had exceeded 700 by late 2015 (Appendix 5, Newspapers in KRG). However, the press in Kurdistan faced a number of shortcomings and difficulties especially in regard to the political influence at that time. In an interview with Aza Qaradaghi, a journalist with more than 20 years' experience who at the same time is a member of KDP's culture and media department, the media's situation was explained as below:

> *[…the media was started in this region by the political parties, and from those parties have emerged the structures of the media for the first time. This goes back to the political and social circumstances that the Kurdistan Region has experienced. During the years when Kurdistan was in rebellion and the Kurdish movement for liberation was going on, we did not merely use weapons to record victories: the press and means of media were also very important for the success of the revolution. They were used both to have the voice of their oppressed people heard in the world and also as a means of spreading*

information and messages among themselves and their people. Media was an
important part of standing against the invasion of Kurdistan, because invading
Kurdistan was not only taking land but was also invading the culture and
brains of people.

Media has been one of the main pillars of political development in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. The parties turned a new page of agenda-setting using press and media channels in the era after 1992. The same revolutionary media that was used during the parties' persistent struggle against the Baath regime became a calmer and rather freer media. Nevertheless, the same strategy was followed in the party media especially concerning the party members who worked for the party media. As for the parties, the press and communication means were of vast importance in reaching the public from the mountains and in legitimising the resistance as a just war for rights. During the time of mountain struggle, media played a vital role in gaining support from the citizens and in the recruitment of new fighters to the revolution and in receiving material support from the people. At the same time, as well as the political messages, the revolutionay press played an important role in preserving the culture and language of the Kurdish people. This was an important function of the mountain radio station when the Kurdish language was in danger of disappearing due to the hostile policies of the Baath regime, which banned the right of access to education or media in the mother tongue, and the use of which at all was limited, and prohibited in some cases. This was the situation of the press at the time of the resistance. Later, after the uprising and descent of the Peshmergas and political parties from the mountains to the cities, the media atmosphere also changed. However, party media continued to play an important role in preserving the language and culture side by side with

practising the partisan rule. In the period after the uprising the main focus and priority shifted from nationalistic, partisan messages alone to new developments: messages that included political marketing, and provision of information.

> [… *the period after the revolution when we came into cities, we decided to continue our media: we still believed that there was a need for media to spread national awareness.*]

(Appendix 3, Interview #5)

One of the main challenges of the media after 1992 was the lack of professionals in the field. The media continued with the same staff from the mountains and in time new people were trained just by doing the job. There was no school or even training provided to journalists in the 1990s in the KRI and most of the practitioners in the field were writers or those who had had who sufficient education to read and write in Kurdish. In the late 1990s there were attempts by different groups of writers and Kurdish intellectuals to transform the Kurdistan Region's press from a party press into an independent press. A number of attempts were translated into reality and newspapers such as *Hawlati* were carrying the flag of independent journalism. Despite the eagerness and serious endeavours made to move towards an independent press, it was not easy to start. A number of difficulties faced those attempting independent reporting and journalism in the KRI, which are still present today. Here are some of them:

- Not having economic independence
- The lack of a media market to generate income
- The presence of powerful political parties which control the media

- The absence of legal backing for the rise of an independent press

- The weak role of the state in supporting a free and independent press in the KRI.

At the same time, there are a number of press and media channels in the KRI that claim to be independent. Most of these self-styled independent channels are owned and operated by political parties side by side with the officially-known party media. Regarding the rise of an independent press in Kurdistan, Aza Qaradaghi calls them the '*Recycle bin of parties*'. He uses the 'recycle' phrase to refer to attacks by one party against another through particular media. According to Qaradaghi, having diverse viewpoints is not sufficient for the press to define itself as impartial or independent.

> *'This type of press is used by all political powers to attack one another and in return the media receives funds. This press allows everyone to publish and one can see articles supporting one particular party, with articles attacking that party in the same issue. 'Awene' and 'Hawlati' are good examples of such a press. This diversity in the Kurdish press is manipulated by parties as an indirect way of sending each other messages that they are unable to send directly.'*

(Appendix 3, Interview #2).

Today, one of the most popular media establishments in the region is *Rudaw Media Network*. Despite their claim of being independent and self-governing, it was evidently founded by Nechirvan Barzani, Deputy President of the KDP and Prime Minister of the KRI. The *Rudaw* company consists of a 24/7 HD satellite news TV and radio channel in addition to a weekly paper. They have attempted to report from around the world and from time to time *Rudaw* correspondents appear live in European countries, in the US and UK and in countries in the

Middle East. *Rudaw* is based in Erbil and was founded in 2012.

Bas newspaper is another newspaper that is funded by the KDP and has been published in Erbil since 2012. They have a weekly newspaper and their online news web platform[59] is also popular and operates in six languages. Since the beginning preparations were being made by *Bas* News Agency to establish a modern, professional TV news channel in Kurdistan. The Change Movement first started with an expanded media machine in 2009. They used to have the newspaper *Rojname* which they closed to focus more on their TV channel *KNN,* in addition to a number of online sources. They are mainly based in Sulaimani. Kurdistan Islamic Group (KIG), Kumal, also closed their printing media in order to concentrate on *Payam* TV and their online publications. *Xendan* is another publication house that emerged in Sulaimani. They have published *Aso* newspaper since 2004 and they consider *Aso* the first daily paper published in the KRI. *Aso* has been published weekly, monthly, three times a week and daily. Now it has stopped being published, but *Xendan* online news continues and is among the most active outlets in the KRI. *Xenda*n is said to be tied to, owned and controlled by PUK members.

Kurdistani Nwe, as the official mouthpiece newspaper of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) has been published continuously since its foundation in 1992. In addition to this daily newspaper there are a number of other newspapers and magazines published by, and closely tied to, Kurdistani Nwe. On the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) side, the official mouthpiece newspaper, *Khabat (Xebat)* has been published continuously since 1959. This newspaper is considered the first formal newspaper of a political party in the KRI. These two newspapers are directly run by the media departments of these parties. Besides the two officially declared

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[59]   The website is: http://www.basnews.com

newspapers, as described, these two parties have numerous other undeclared newspapers which they fund. It is not only the KDP and PUK, but other political parties too, which follow the same method of owning newspapers.

Hewler is another *daily* published in capital city Erbil. Without saying so, it obviously belongs to the KDP and together with *Xebat* is located inside the main building of the KDP department for culture and media. A weekly magazine, a new online channel, and an English-language weekly *The Kurdish Globe* are also published by this department and located in the building. In addition, there are tens of other newspapers, magazines, radio and TV channels being published or broadcast throughout the KRI under the auspices of the KDP culture and media department. The department pays attention to online and social media as well, keeping the party active online through a number of web pages, Facebook pages, Twitter feeds and through YouTube and other outlets. Other political parties pursue the same intensive media programme. For instance, the Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU) has published *Yekgirtu* weekly newspaper since their foundation in 1994. This Islamic party is also very active in broadcasting, and a satellite TV channel named *Spede* together with *Yekgirtu* Radio are the official party outlets. The KIU has its well-known local radio stations in Duhok, Erbil and Sulaimani, and more specifically for its religious ceremonies' coverage because of the focus of this party in reaching out to the public through religion. Hence, the much bigger focus is on the religious programmes on radio and TV.

From the above, it can be argued that the press in the KRI is heavily under the control of political parties. This leads to less of a sense of responsibility to their readers, and, rather, a sense of responsibility to their political parties. We have said that political parties own almost all the press Kurdistan. Whether direct or indirect ownership, it impacts on whether the press develops from

being partisan to being independent and impartial; whether the motive becomes more to inform readers than to satisfy politicians. This might also be related to the fact that the region is still a state-in-the-making. The findings of Tamar Liebes (2000) in her study on Israel are relevant to this: '*media stays under control of political and cultural elites during the process of nation-building and the formation of the new nation-state* (p. 24).

4.2.4 Dimension#3: Professionalization of journalism

In their model, Hallin and Mancini (2004) present the practice of a profession as *'based on systematic knowledge or doctrine acquired only through long prescribed training'* (Wilensky 1964: 138). Further, they focus on three dimensions of professionalization which they refer to as being *'fairly related'*. These three dimensions of professionalization are: *Autonomy, Distinct professional norms* and *Public service orientation (*Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 36). Autonomy is an important factor of professionalization of the press and in this model the focus is '*not necessarily the autonomy of individual journalists, but of the corps of journalists taken as a whole' (*Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 34-37). However, autonomy is not perceived to have existed by the majority of the journalists contacted during our survey for this thesis. When asked about ownership, 93% of the journalists contacted state that the newspapers they work for are owned by either political parties or politicians. 49% of the journalists contacted for this survey say that the newspaper they work for is owned by the political parties, while more than 45% say that their newspaper is owned by politicians.

For the second dimension which is introduced as *Distinct professional norms (*Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 36), they specifically refer to the practice of journalism organised as a *style of life*

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for journalists. This includes ethical principles and professionalism. In case of the KRI, the ethical principles are not officially declared but rather defined and organised among the journalists themselves. The practice of this profession is regulated mainly by laws passed by Parliament in the KRI, as described in previous chapters. Concerning professionalization, as also noted by Hallin and Mancini (2004), this has to do with the autonomy of the press. Professionalization is affordable when '*journalism is thus likely to be manifested in criteria of newsworthiness on which journalists will agree regardless of their political orientations, as well as a tendency for journalists to define their standing in the field in terms of the opinions of fellow journalists, rather than those of outsiders – political party leaders, for example, or stockholders' (*Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 37).

In our survey, when asked about the political affiliation of the journalists, approximately 25% of respondents avoided answering the question, while another 62% of the journalists answered that they have a party affiliation. The political affiliation of the journalists varies from one province to another among the three provinces where this questionnaire was distributed. The largest group were Duhok journalists, and 76% of them declared a political affiliation, 66% in Erbil and 35% in Sulaimani. This means that the autonomy of the journalists is not guaranteed, while the majority of them clearly state a political affiliation to at least one political party. Not only that, but journalists also feel pressured at work by political parties, by the state or by the media decision-makers. With regard to pressure from a political party or from some authority preventing them from writing about a particular issue, 24% of journalists feel this pressure. 73% gave the opposite answer and declare no pressure from a political party to write or not write about a certain subject. The pressure is slightly different when it comes to direct contact with the decision-makers of the newspaper. 20% declare feeling pressure from the editor of a newspaper,

while 79% feel no pressure from the editor of the newspaper. As well as all this, 19% of participants in this survey state that they have been subject to physical attack, imprisonment or threat during their work. This explains why it is difficult for an autonomous journalism to get established and to function professionally.

In addition, many journalists in Kurdistan have other jobs and they are not simply practising journalism. 50% of the journalists contacted state that they have other jobs in addition to working as journalists. This is related to the economic conditions in the region in general and in the field of the press in particular. However, for the purpose of this research a question was asked about the professional background of journalists, given the fact that journalism both as a practice and a profession is new to the region. Only 12% of journalists contacted said they hold a degree in journalism.

Public service orientation is also introduced by Hallin and Mancini (2004) as the third important dimensions of professionalism. This is largely related to the school of social responsibility of the media (see as well in Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm's social responsibility theory of the press,that belongs to this era in the scholarship on professionalism).

Journalism as a profession is practised by different groups of people. To practise professionally, some receive education in this field and some learn through the practice of doing the job, and some do both. However, the KRI journalism is traditionally practised by party members who also learn by practise. Schools and departments of media and journalism only started a few years ago in the KRI. The graduates of these departments are starting to enter the field. However, receiving education in the field of journalism alone is not sufficient to have attained the skills of

journalism. Overall, scholars argue that with the opportunity to practise and be educated in parallel level, there will be better outcomes (Gaunt et al, 1992).

The indicators for professionalism adopted in this thesis are as follows: *autonomy and independence, education, experience and years of work, training and courses, self-perceptions of independence, self-censorship and a journalist's sense of duty to national security*. These indicators are presented in the next chapter with the results of the questionnaire distributed among journalists in all three provinces of the KRI.

4.2.5 Dimension #4: The role of the state

Numerous laws have been adopted by the Parliament of Kurdistan since its establishment in 1992. It is the Law of journalism, No. 35, 2007, that concerns our study. This law is considered one of the most important legal interventions in the field of the media in the KRI. However, the role of the state concerning the press is two-fold and is not merely related to this law or its implementation in the region. Nevertheless, understanding this law and its role in shaping media activities in the region is one way of understanding the state's role in dealing with the media. Meanwhile, there must be a closer look at the legal and executive powers political parties hold to understand the role that they play in shaping reality.

The party interference in the press in the KRI is almost inevitable. It is not even considered as interference any more, it is owning and controlling the press and media. As an illustration, the KRI has been, and still is, functioning as a cake of two halves, one for the KDP and other for the PUK. This two-administration reality is a leftover of the civil war of the 1990s between the two parties. Silemani and its surrounding areas are mainly controlled by the PUK and in the other part is the KDP with its control over Duhok and Erbil. This division was largely shaped during

the civil war from 1994. Although the war ended in 1998, the two-administration reality remained. Although following the 2005 elections and the two further elections in 2009 and 2013 the government was unified, and there was only one governing body in the capital city in Erbil, the two-administration mentality continues to rule until today. The characteristics of dichotic administrations; one in Erbil and another in Silemani, can still be seen on the ground in the ruling system of the region. Unification was merely a power sharing of 50% for each party.

The two parties signed an agreement on 27 July 2007, known as the *Strategic Agreement.* It focuses on the meeting of the political relations between them in what is related to power-sharing at both levels, the KRI and Iraq. As a result the two parties have always continued to divide power among themselves whether in one administration or in separate ones.

To clarify, a reference is made to the process of forming a council of ministers of KRG in 2014. According to Decree 56, Law No. 1, 1992 Parliament nominates both prime minister and a deputy to form the cabinet in a period of time not exceeding 30 days (Law 56, 1992). The fact is that this law is designed according to the reality of the two-party control of the region. When one of the two parties fills the position of prime minister, the other party automatically fills the post of deputy prime minister. This process of 'couple-nominating' was one of the heated subjects of the formation of the eighth cabinet of the KRI. This led to an amendment of the law later on 21 May, so that the nomination process no longer goes through choosing a couple (Law No. 56, Amendment 1, 2014).

To return to the argument, in the KRI there is no single media outlet, news channel or even newspaper that is *officially* owned by the state. However, there are funds and subsidies provided

by the state to support media activities. Meanwhile, almost all the press and media in the KRI are owned by parties, mainly by the KDP and the PUK.

Another way of controlling the press is through civil society organizations such as the Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate which was formally designed to be a local union of journalists. The ruling system of the region has been able to politicize civil society organizations. Besides the internal organizations of the two main political parties, the KDP and PUK, that include women, students, lawyers, engineers, doctors, teachers, journalists, there are many other civil society organizations that are fully controlled by the parties. These groups are probably considered the backbone of the political organization of both parties inside society.

The press law of Kurdistan recognizes that a syndicate is the legal framework for journalists and they are encouraged to become members. This law makes membership of this organization a compulsory duty for journalists who practise in the KRI: the law provides protection only to members of the syndicate. In addition, as a way of holding journalists under control, the government grants pieces of land and real estate to journalists through the syndicate, which is almost a continuous process: those who have not received any land are put on the waiting list for the next government grant. This ties journalists to the syndicate and government will, in order to be subsidised by the state. Therefore, the Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate (KJS) is accused of being a partisan organisation under the direct control of political parties. The survey shows that many journalists believe that the syndicate is form of political control of the media in the region. Although the syndicate does hold periodical elections, they are also controlled by political parties. The two main parties have copied their model of shared government to organisations, so that the syndicate administration is also a shared one. In the last election in 2010 the secretary

and deputy had already been assigned by the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and PUK. According to a political agreement between the two parties the position of the secretary of the KJS belongs to the KDP and the deputy to the PUK.

Conclusion

From what is explained above, it emerges that the press in the Kurdistan region is heavily under the control of political parties. This makes them feel a lesser responsibility towards their readers than towards their political parties. As described, political parties in Kurdistan own almost all the press. This ownership whether direct or indirect, has an influence on the development of the press from a partisan to an independent, impartial press that cares more for readers being informed than for politicians being satisfied. Many current political leaders have worked as press editors and this continues today. Editors and press decision-makers in the KRI are mainly the senior members of the political party that owns the press. To conclude, first, the media market in the KRI is weak. This is mainly due to the funds and subsidies that the press receive from the political party owner on a regular basis. There is no eagerness or serious attempts to expand the market and revenue, as the budget from the party covers all expenses. This causes the market for the press to be weak. Second, the political party control of press in some cases has made the press publish what concerns their parties rather than their readers. This makes the political parallelism to be at a high level and strong in the KRI. Third, professionalism is also a process-in-the-making. Most journalists have no background in the field. This is also related to the newness of journalism in the KRI. The majority of journalists learn by doing the job. The recent establishment of journalism and media departments at the KRI universities are contributing to development in the field and to capacity-building of the practitioners. Finally, the role of the state is to be argued mainly in what is related to the laws of press and journalism in the KRI. Despite their limitations, the laws are good documents that if implemented properly would lead to

positive developments in the KRI press. Having the texts of written laws is one thing: their proper implementation is another. The weak implementation of the press-related laws has been one of the main obstacles to press development in the KRI.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE VIEW OF JOURNALISTS ON THE PRESS AND MEDIA IN THE KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ: CONTROL, RESTRICTION AND SELF-CENSORSHIP

Introduction

This chapter analyses the relationships between journalism and politics in the KRI, based on the answers to questionnaires distributed among the journalists of daily and weekly newspapers in the region.

The structure of this chapter is as follows: first, work experience, education and gender of respondents are described, followed by accounts for ownership and political affiliation of newspapers, and political affiliation of journalists. Finally, pressures and mechanisms to restrict the media and freedom of speech from the side of politics are described.

The total number of journalists that work for the press is unknown. There is no official register. The exact number of press and media outlets registered with the Syndicate of Journalists is available (see Appendix 6): there were 765 outlets of different types (e.g. dailies, weekly and monthly publications). One hundred and fifty forms were distributed in the period June-July 2014 among the journalists of the three provinces of the KRI, 50 for

each province. There were 131 returns: 49 from Duhok, 44 from Erbil, and 38 from Silemani. Out of the total respondents, 75% work for daily newspapers and the remaining 25% work for weekly newspapers.

5.1 The respondents: age, gender and work experience

The data from our questionnaire shows that males dominate among KRI journalists. Approximately 88% of respondents are male. Although there has been no previous study concerning the gender representation in the KRI press, the female percentage has been increasing. According to Aza Hasib, '*only a dozen female journalists worked in the field in 1992 and the number is higher nowadays: this shows development both in the field and the society*' (Interview #4, Aza Hesib). This is also related to the religious and tribal reality of a patriarchal society in the KRI that has led to gender imbalances, not only in journalism, but also in other professions. The responses show 80% of the female respondents are younger than 35 years old. The number of women working at TV channels is notably higher especially in TV shows and as news presenters. Women's representation in the KRI, especially in politics, is treated a *positive discrimination*. For instance, a quota law guarantees a 30% female representation in Parliament. The quota law for women obliges political parties to have at least 30% women candidates, and 30% of winning seats in each party have to be taken by women. However, this quota does not necessarily translate into other positions such as in the cabinet, or other political institutions.

5.2 Education and professional experience

The questionnaire was distributed among journalists of the three governorates of the KRI. Out of 131 respondents 38% are from Duhok governorate, 34% from Erbil, and 29% from

Silemani. Only 12% of journalists contacted hold a degree in journalism. This is partly related to the novelty of the field as an academic branch at universities and education institutions in the KRI. Regarding training courses for journalists in Iraq, after 2003 USAID introduced a programme called Iraqi Civil Society and Independent Media Program (ICSP). This programme budget from 2004-2007 amounted to $57,104,492 dollars (Al-Rawi, 2012: 58). A document from the US embassy in Iraq to the US secretary of state-Iraq entitled *Media Gold Rush in 'Virtual Marketplace'* refers to the professional capacity-building of the Iraqis (WikiLeaks, 2016):

> *The Iraqi media has acquired important professional capacity. Since April, 2005 over one thousand Iraqi journalists and managers have received technical training from USAID on investigative journalism and strategic management. Over two hundred journalists have received informal training by working with the MNF-I (Multi-National Force – Iraq) and Embassy press officers, and up to one hundred have participated in PAS (international study) exchange programs in the US and the region. The US has also invested heavily in infrastructure and training for both Iraq's independent media and telecommunications regulation and the Independent Media Network, both established by the CPA.*

After 2003, the Iraqi media was supported from different sources in order to be empowered and developed. These funds were mainly from state funds, international media channels such as the BBC and also international organizations including the UN, IREX [The International Research and Exchanges Board], IWPR [Institute for War and Peace Reporting] (Al-Rawi, 2012: 59). The funds were mainly focused on the training of

journalists and the development of Iraqi local media. Numerous training courses were held all over Iraq and a number of local media outlets were funded to develop. The aim was to democratise the country and activate an independent impartial media that compliments the democratisation process. The impact of these courses might have had a positive outcome for the individuals involved, but in general what was built from post-2003 was an ethnic, sectarian, religious media. Almost all the sectarian, religious and ethnic groups have their own media. At the first glance this might seem like a diverse media and that every community and group has their own freedom of expression, but in fact this diversity fosters further division and conflict among these groups. In other words, when each ethnic or religious group own their own media, there is a risk that such outlets foster conflict, especially each group has its own agenda and ideology.

In the KRI, training courses for media and press development were also held. When asked, 82% of journalists reported that they had received training and 18% declared that they had not received any training at all. The experience of journalists in the region derives mainly through practice and there has been little opportunity for them to receive education and follow appropriate training at school. Even today journalism does not necessarily focus on the study of journalism as the main requirement for practising in the field. In fact, one suggests '*a mixture of both training at school and meanwhile practising the job*' demonstrates better results (Gaunt et al, 1992: 459). 77% of respondents had more than seven years' work experience, and the other 23% less. This shows that the majority of KRI journalists have gained their knowledge about the field through experience. For majority of them this experience has been complimented by having the opportunity to attend training courses, while there are some who have not received any training and continue to practise. For some who work in the KRI media with no journalism background or any other serious

involvement in the media, this is merely a job provided for them by their political parties. Occasionally a party needs to transfer a cadre from one place to another, so a position in their media channels or newspapers is an option to be considered. Some manage to integrate and learn the job, and sometimes they stay as party 'watchers' inside the institution.

5.3 Second job for journalists

Fifty per cent of journalists contacted for this survey declared that they also have another job. This, at first glance gives an impression that journalists seek other sources of income and to some extent that is true. Low salaries oblige journalists do another job alongside their journalism. However, the Secretary-General of the Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate, Azad Hamadamin has a different opinion:

> *It depends on the journalists themselves and the quality of the job whether they enjoy working for their newspapers or media. I know many journalists who only do journalism and they don't really find time for a second job. Second, there are many teachers, writers, intellectuals who have other jobs but they do journalism as well. It really depends on the relation between them and their job. There were times when the media was not paying enough for a journalist to survive but nowadays the market is in competition and if you are a good journalist, you have good opportunities.* (Appendix 3, Interview #2).

The fact that those who are working as journalists have other jobs could also be related to the novelty of the field in the KRI. The market has little capacity to provide for media training and this gives space to those teachers, graduates with an interest in the field to enter journalism and become a part of it. They mainly keep their first job and

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continue doing both. Overall, the reason to keep two jobs at the same time is obviously economic. The KRI is going through economic shortages especially due to revenue disputes between the federal and regional governments. The central government has stopped providing the region with their budget share as well as public service wages since January 2014, resulting in the KRI's incapacity to pay wages and salaries regularly.

5.4 Newspaper ownership, political affiliation of journalists and political affiliation of newspapers

Ninety-three per cent of journalists contacted declared that the newspapers they work for are owned either by political parties or businesses or companies. Despite the official party media directly owned by political parties, there are some local newspapers with slightly more freedom to report on other issues than pure partisan subjects. Many such newspapers claim to be independent but as one of our interviewees said, it is not that difficult to tell to which side they belong:

> *The role that political parties played in establishing media in Kurdistan should not be ignored. Political parties in the KRI are considered the establishers of the media in the Kurdistan Region. These political parties came to the cities with a background of mountain media (rebellion media) with no actual practice of modern journalism. The origins of the media in the region can be traced back to the political parties' return to the cities. Nowadays, the media in the KRI is fully controlled by political parties and it is not difficult to tell to which party a newspaper belongs by only looking at the first page titles and headlines.*

(Appendix 3, Interview #4).

In the KRI there are examples of newspapers directly owned and controlled by political parties and a part of the party media apparatus, which claim to be independent. For instance *Evro* daily, published in Duhok declares on its front page that it is independent, while, in fact, it is part of the KDP media machine, all salaries and funds being provided by the party. *Hawler* is another example of a party newspaper which claims to be independent. However, it is located inside the KDP media department's building and all the staff are party members. This newspaper is published and distributed for free. It could be considered as an example of a new method of party media influence in the KRI. This is referred to by Mahmoud Mohammed, the KDP politburo member in charge of the media department, as an intellectual project and as spreading education.

Our aim is spreading culture and education, contributing to strengthening the language, and overall we have an intellectual project, not one for benefit. We are not focusing on selling our newspapers or any other media product, that is not the main goal, but we still sell. Our aim as I mentioned is not business, it is rather journalism and culture. Our main income is not the market, we do not depend on the market. In our political party budget for media we do not consider the revenue as income. We do not run our media with its revenue.

(Appendix 3, Interview #5).

Political parties seek all possible ways of reaching out to the public. Politicians have understood the importance of the press in making an impact and creating public opinion. Thus today there is major press and media competition between the political parties. One

way of feeling empowered for the political parties is to see their media in a powerful position. This helps them believe that they are in a secure position, that the press will make a positive difference in the way people support and vote for their party. Therefore, politicians come up with innovative ideas to control the media, and the KRI political parties are a case in point. One established a media channel with their money, employed staff and created full support systems and introduced it as an independent channel. Another established a full-colour newspaper, with the largest country-wide circulation in Iraq distributed and given away free of charge. *Hawler* is an example of such media and KDP politicians point to it with cultural pride:

> [...*KDP press has many things that we are proud of. One of them is the Hawler newspaper which is a new experiment in KRI journalism. As KDP, we wanted to introduce a new type of press to Kurdish journalism. This is a daily newspaper which is published with a large tirage and widely distributed free of charge. The publication contributes to national awareness and information in the Kurdistan Region. This is also a good start by the KDP in creating a strong tie between people and the press.*]

(Appendix 3, Interview #6)

There are cases where media claim to be independent and private, while actually they are not, e.g. the newly-launched media company *Rudaw. Rudaw* has a large audience and indirectly belongs to the KDP. .Its owner Necirvan Barzani is Deputy President of the KDP and current Prime Minister of Kurdistan. *Rudaw* has managed to recruit those journalists who were working with the opposition party media channels by attracting them with well-paid contracts. For the KDP, perhaps, one of the main achievements of this channel is the previous experience of those journalists of the opposition media who now work under the umbrella of this semi-political channel, which claims that it has balanced news-making, is independent

and away from any party influence. However, it is not common to see reports or news that go against the KDP political. line. Here is when ownership matters. The other self-styled independent channel is *Nalia Radio and Television (NRT)*, owned by Shaswar Abdulwahid, a businessman who led the No Campaign for the KRI referendum. *NRT* was automatically under the influence of the No Campaign and the channel owner of was provided with extensive coverage to practise his politics. The Secretary-General of the Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate considers that whatever media channels and newspapers claim about being independent, the majority of them are owned by political parties:

> *The Press in Kurdistan is either fully political or semi political. We might have*
>
> *independent journalists but there no independent press in Kurdistan. There are*
>
> *some newspapers launched here which believe that they are independent as*
>
> *long as they attack the government and criticize any act of state, while they*
>
> *belong to a political party that might be in opposition. Political parties own*
>
> *99% of the media in the KRI.*

(Appendix 3, Interview #2)

Partisanship of the media has a history in the region. For instance, the radio stations have been used as a means of sending nationalistic messages during the mountain revolutions. The station equipment and machine were usually in a backpack carried by Peshmargas from one cave to another in mountainous rebel times. Radio continued to be an influential means of communication until the civil war between the PUK and KDP started.

However, the role that political parties played in establishing the media in Kurdistan is not to be ignored. Overall, the political parties are considered as the founders of the media in Kurdistan Region. Obviously, they came to the cities with a background of mountain and rebellion media,

with no actual practice of modern journalism. Thus, a party-established media is not necessarily a typical media or press, but over time it has developed and that development continues.

5.5 Political or ideological affiliation of newspapers and journalists

When asked about political affiliation of the newspapers, journalists were evenly split. Forty-seven per cent of them believe that the newspaper they work with has a political affiliation while 45% believe their newspaper has no political affiliation. This is also related to the transition from partisan and mouthpiece media to semi-partisan and relatively independent media in the KRI. Media outlets declare themselves independent while their funds, salaries and all expenses directly or indirectly come from political parties. In return, the newspapers are expected to show support towards the politics of these parties 'in between their lines'.

Although party control of the press has always been the case in the KRI, methods continue to change over time. As a matter of fact, the press and media was mainly established by the political parties and their main aim was and still is to use it in favour of their politics. However, journalists are not fully chained by party politics. When asked if they agree that the newspaper they work for receives orders and directions from the owners, 76% of journalists 'strongly agree', 'agree' and 'partially agree' that that is the case.. The chief editor of *Hawler* told us that they do not face any kind of pressure in their work and they are free to report anything unless it is against the party's politics:

> *[…We do not have anyone controlling us and we are not under any kind of*
>
> *pressure to do this and not do that but we are rather free in practising*

journalism under one condition only, which is not doing anything that opposes

the main line of our political party. We are members of the KDP and we know

what is good and what is bad for our party. Meanwhile, we shall be aware that

what we do is different from politics and we must practise our profession as

journalists].

(Appendix 3, Interview #6).

Another usage of this type of press, indirectly linked to the political parties, is to express and touch upon subject matters which other, officially owned party press, would not report. For example, there are times when two or more parties publicly agree on certain policies, while within the parties there are concerns about the agreement. This is the time when they use this type of newspaper to express what they really mean. However, the mass media attacks by one party against one or more other parties happen when they receive instructions from politburo:

[…There are times when a party's gets instructions to avoid touching certain

subjects. Also there are times when we ask for a massive concentration on a

group or a political party. We give instructions, for instance, to start attacking

the politics of a certain party.]

(Appendix 3, Interview #4).

When asked about journalists' political affiliation, nearly 25% of the respondents avoided giving an answer. Out of those who responded, 62% admitted that they have a party affiliation. When respondents are divided by governorates, the results are as follows: 76%

in Duhok, 66% in Erbil and 35% in Suliemani. Society in general is politicised and affiliation to one party or another has become part of an individual's identity. Given the politicised atmosphere of the media in the Kurdistan Region and the way the media is controlled by political parties, it is normal to see followers and members of the same party working as journalists. As stated before, the majority of the party-owned media are run by their own senior members and they practise their political duty through journalism.

Forty-five per cent of the total number of respondents answered that they are members of the same political party that owns the newspaper they work for. The respondents from Duhok governorate are mostly working for their own party's newspaper. The reason is that the main two dailies published in Duhok belong to the KDP and the KDP receives more than 90% of its votes in Duhok governorate. This is when the journalists do not necessarily need instructions from their political party because they and their chief editors all know what to write:

> *We do not need instructions! Most of us are KDP cadres, we know our party*
>
> *politics and we can differentiate between what is good and what is bad.*

(Appendix 3, Interview #6)

When asked to agree or disagree that: *the press is a political project of political parties and all their disputes, agreements and disagreements are reflected in their media*, 44% partially agree that the media is politicized and is a place where political groups tend to settle accounts among themselves. Only 5% of the participants strongly disagree with this particular statement.

5.6 Pressure and physical attack on journalists

Concerning political pressure to join a certain party, 84% have felt no pressure while 8% prefer not to respond and 8% declare that yes, they have faced it. Concerning pressure from a political party or group preventing them from writing about a particular issue, 24% of journalists felt this pressure. However, 73% declare the opposite and stated they experienced no pressure from a political party whether or not to write about a certain topic. There are various ways of imposing pressure on journalists in the KRI. For instance during the time of war, which started in 2014, journalists received strict advice to act responsibly. There were concerns about issues considered by the state as sensitive issues related to national security and that journalists must pay attention and deal with them carefully. The Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate released remarks on the journalists' responsibilities, especially during the coverage of conflict, and published the following statement on 24 October 2016:

> *[The Council of the Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate announces the following statement in order to create awareness among the journalists and media channels working in crisis and conflict zones. The following remarks are to be taken into account by the journalists during the events:*
>
> • *The freedom of the press is a preserved principle of the Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate and adheres to Law No. 35. Hence the Syndicate calls all the parties involved to provide the journalists and press with freedom to practise their profession without discrimination.*
>
> • *The journalists and the press, especially during this time, must create harmony between their professional and their national duty.*
>
> • *The principle of protecting National Security is also a professional principle. For that reason, the concerned institutions such as the Ministry of Peshmerga and*

Ministry of Interior shall propose a roadmap for journalists regarding the issues related to national security. For this reason, the related institutions shall cooperate with the Journalists Syndicate to make sure all the journalists and press abide by the roadmap.

• *Media developments have made it easy for journalists to broadcast live pictures and voices from anywhere. This shall be regulated inside the cities and more specifically on the frontlines of the war.*

• *The Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate proposes to come up with an agreement between the syndicate and the press and media channels on improving the performance of journalism in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.*

• *The source of information shall be the official sources, as in 2014 when we proposed having the spokesperson of the Peshmerga Ministry as the official source for the information about the war. However, at that time this request was not taken into account.*

• *Due to an agreement between the Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate and the International Federation of Journalists, an office for the protection of journalists protection was opened in the KRI. The office delivered tens of training courses for journalists and the subject has been a curriculum topic in some of the journalism schools. Therefore the Syndicate proposes the following:*

• *Media channels shall send those journalists who have expertise in covering the war.*

• *Protective equipment must be provided for the journalists.*

• *The Syndicate is ready to provide training in this regard to any media channel*

which requires it.][60]

Above is an example of pressure on journalists in the form of protecting National Security. As clearly mentioned in the third point, the principle of national security is as important as the professional principle. This means that not taking national security into account puts your professional practice in question. Meanwhile, no one has ever introduced or defined national security and it can be anything a journalist does which is not liked by the authorities. Thus, journalists or the press can be accused of not practising professionally basically because national security equals professionalism. Prior to that (point two), the statement requests journalists to harmonise their professional duty and national duty. This is another headache for the journalists and another way to pressure them. The question: what is that harmony? Where and how should that harmony be kept? After that, in point six, when the Syndicate insists on their previo s plea to have the official spokesperson of the Ministry as the only source of information – this seems to be very unrealistic, especially when this statement starts with the belief of the Syndicate in the freedom of press, to ask journalists to take all their information about the war from the spokesperson of the Ministry. Otherwise, the statement of the Syndicate is fair. And, for instance, it is very important for the media channels to consider carefully who to send to the war zones and how well equipped a war journalist shall be.

We asked journalists if they feel any restriction imposed on them under the name of National Security during their practice and whether they believe that the press is

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[60] Translated by the author from Kurdish. The original text is available at: http://kurdjs.com/index.php/ku/ ئه‌-343/جالاکی‌-و-هه‌واڵ‌%E2%80%8Cنجومه‌%E2%80%8Cنی‌-سه‌%E2%80%8Cرێنمایی‌-ندیکا رۆڵ‌%E2%80%8Cرووداوه‌-بۆ-میدیا-رووماڵی‌-و%E2%80%8Cبڵاو-کان م-%E2%80%8Cده‌%E2%80%8Cکاته‌%E2%80%8Cوه‌%E2%80%8Cبۆ-سه‌-رجه‌%E2%80%8C ده‌%E2%80%8Cلابه‌-بۆ-میدیا-گاکانی‌%E2%80%8Cنه‌%E2%80%8Cزگاکانی‌-کانی‌%E2%80%8C-به‌%E2%80%8Cیوه‌%E2%80%8Cندیدار.html

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responsible for spreading a spirit of national solidarity. Eighty-two per cent of respondents declare that Kurdistan's national considerations must be taken into account while 12% disagree. Meanwhile, when asked the question whether restrictions on the media can be justified in the interests of national security, 62% state that it is against freedom of speech. Related to this, the number of who 'strongly agree', 'agree' and 'partially agree' that media must spread a spirit of national solidarity is very high (93%) - only 5% disagree.

The pressure is slightly different when it is related to direct contact with the editor of the paper. Twenty per cent admit pressure from the editor of a newspaper, while 79% declare no pressure from the editor. Regarding physical attacks, 19% of journalists who participated in the questionnaire declare that they have been subject to physical attack, imprisonment or threat.

> *I have personally been attacked after receiving threats and not listening to them. Yes, on a daily basis, but we believe in what we do. There is a necessity to change the style of media in the KRI. This is a transition period from a fully-controlled party media to a real independent one and on this path we shall endure and I believe it will pass towards a better atmosphere.*

(Appendix 3, Interview #1)

5.7 The Journalists Syndicate of Kurdistan

In response to the questionnaire, most journalists agree that the Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate is a political machine to keep the media under control. 65% of journalists believe that the Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate has been controlled in the last decades by the two

major political parties the KDP and the PUK. Every four years they go through a local congress where new administrative members are elected. More commonly than not, these administrative members are party members or supported by the two parties.

> *The Syndicate is another way of politicising the media atmosphere and the division among members of this Syndicate in terms of their political affiliation clearly shows on the membership lists. Even the elected administrative members of the Syndicate clearly state that they represent their political party.*
> (Appendix 3, Interview #1)

A remarkable number of journalists believe that the Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate is actually another way of exercising political control of the press in KRI. The institution is supposed to be an independent body to protect the journalists and become a platform for further developments in the field. However, the Syndicate is fully politicised and the members are classified by their political party affiliation. Even the management council of the syndicate is elected according to political agreements.

Twenty-four per cent of respondents state the opposite, denying that the Journalists Syndicate is a tool for political control of the media. Another 11% state they 'don't know', or they do not respond to this question.

Regarding the support journalists feel from the Journalists Syndicate, approximately 2% 'agree strongly', 22% 'agree', and 45% 'partially agree' that they are supported by the Journalists Syndicate. Another 12% disagree. A common example of the Syndicate supporting their members is through offering material benefits. For instance, Azad Hamadamin, the Secretary-General of the Journalists Syndicate, told us

'*during the period from 2003 to 2010, more than two hundred pieces of land have been distributed by the Syndicate to its journalist members*' (Appendix 3, Interview #2). These pieces of land were provided by the government to support only those journalists who were members of the Syndicate. However, not every journalist is a member. There are journalists who believe the Syndicate is an indirect instrument of political control. Asus Hardi, chief editor of *Awene* newspaper, is an example of a journalist who is not a member:

I am not a member of that Syndicate and I believe it is a product of a totalitarian mentality. This is inherited from the time of Saddam and the Baath. During the Baath time in Iraq, there was only one union or syndicate for each sector of civil society. These syndicates were directly tied into the party organisation system. The idea was initially to have the whole society under their political control. The Journalists Syndicate exercises the same control.

(Appendix 3, Interview #1)

Journalists in the KRI are in a developing situation, and new voices have appeared, among them those who oppose the old version of political control. There are many who believe they can change the way journalism is being practised by introducing independent viewpoints and avoiding partisanship in their work. The Syndicate has been perceived by some journalists as a machine of political control. This has not been denied by the officials of the syndicate and the political parties. The management council of the Syndicate consists of representatives of political parties, not journalists who would be the real representatives. The distribution of management council posts is according to the political power of the parties, and a member of the leading party becomes Secretary-General, the

second largest party takes the Deputy Secretary- General post, and so on. This could be interpreted differently as the Secretary-General of the Syndicate explains:

[...*when the Syndicate was launched in 1998, there were two main parties, the KDP and the PUK, and some other smaller parties' journalists in the region. Our management body mainly consists of the representatives of journalist institutions in the KRI, and most of them are owned by political parties. Up to the present, there has been no serious independent journalism launched in Kurdistan to be represented on the Syndicate's managing body. And in order to avoid clashes between different parties, the posts of the syndicates, not only this one but all syndicates in the KRI, are taken according to an agreement between political parties. If you ask me whether it is good or bad to have this agreement, honestly speaking I believe this has paralysed our job and the job of all other syndicates in the KRI.*]*

(Appendix 3, Interview #2)

This is clear evidence that even civil society and professional organisations are politicised and controlled by the political parties. Political parties play an important role in the way these organisations function and they have been used as political machines to control different professional communities in the KRI. In addition, this has been institutionalised in the internal regulations of political parties in the KRI. All the active parties in the KRI have a specific department for professional organisations within their party organisation system. This department is mandated to control and watch the activities of the organisation and mobilise them at the times they are needed.

5.8 Perception of journalists about the free press in KRI

Approximately 88% of journalists contacted for this questionnaire declare that they 'strongly agree', 'agree' and 'partly agree' that freedom of speech is enjoyed in the KRI. When asked if Journalism Law No. 35, 2007 had a positive impact on the media in the KRI or the opposite, 66% of the journalists 'strongly agree', and 'agree' over the positive impact of the Law. However, when asked whether they believe that this law *does not guarantee* freedom of speech and needs to be amended, almost the same amount of respondents, 67%, agreed.

The KRI continues to go through challenges and wars where patriotic and nationalist beliefs are still developing. Therefore, when asked whether they feel first a journalist, or first a patriot, or feel both, 35% state that they are first of all journalists, while 20% state that they are first of all patriots. Forty per cent respond that they are both journalists and patriots; 5% do not know or do not answer.

The free press and freely practising journalism in Kurdistan is in its infancy. Many journalists have gone through difficulties and hardships to practise this profession in the region:

> [...*We started a path that was not possible before. For example, it was not easy to criticise Barzani or Talabani in a newspaper when we started, but we did it. To be honest, one can make good use of the clashes and differences between parties in the region in order to create a space to criticise them. Thus, if the KDP is angry with you, you will see the PUK defending you without even asking them to, and the other way around - it works with all the parties. If we make both the KDP and the PUK angry, then the Change Party will be our*

supporter. So, we are not scared of publishing matters that make parties angry:

there is always the opposing party that is supporting you in attacking the other

party. Of course, it is important to understand that after 2003 many things

changed and the KRI became more open than before, in terms of freedom of

expression.]

(Appendix 3, Interview #1)

Journalists are fearful of not having the support of one of the parties. In criticising the act of a specific policy it is not possible for the press and media to be successful without having the backup and support of one of the major political parties. Meanwhile, there are a number of political parties in the region where much of their politics is carried on through the media and without a powerful media they might not be able to survive and remain in the same position of power. The Change Movement is one such example. The party before breaking up from the PUK, it established a giant media network and chose to take an opposition path. Later, when they declared themselves an independent political party, they already had a foundation established by their media.

Conclusion

The findings in this chapter are derived from the data collected by the questionnaire conducted among journalists of the three governorates of the KRI. In addition to the questionnaire, some journalists and press decision-makers were interviewed and they are also presented in this chapter. Data from our questionnaire shows a male domination among those working as journalists in the KRI press. However, the number of females is also increasing. Most journalists do not have an educational background in this field, the majority being journalists by experience. However, most of them have received training

related to their field. The fact that many journalists have another job is not only related to low salaries but to the type of work that a journalist does. It also depends on whether the journalist is passionate about the journalism job.

There is political domination over the press in the KRI. The majority of the newspapers are owned by political parties and there are others that claim to be independent but are indirectly owned by political parties. Thus, the partisanship of the media has a history in the region, the press still stays under the control of the political parties and the actual establishers of the media are political parties. Thus, the press still stays under the control of the political parties and the majority of journalists agree that the newspaper they work for receives direct instructions from their owners and political parties. In addition, the press is used by the parties to attack and oppose each other's politics, and for this the indirectly owned newspapers are generally used. The politicisation of the press is not merely related to the press outlets and institutions, but at the same time the majority of journalists are also politically affiliated and are active members of the parties. Most of them work for the newspaper that is owned by their party.

Political parties in the KRI have put much of their political activities on the shoulders of their media. It is almost impossible for some parties to survive without having their own powerful media. The dependency of the political parties on the media in KRI is evident and they invest more and more in improving their media skills. In similar vein, the media is dependent on the political parties. This interdependency means both happily contribute to each other's continuation as inescapable political partners. This means that both parties and the media mutually agree political projects.

Civil society and professional organisations are also politicised and controlled by the

political parties in the KRI. Parties have developed internal organisation regulations to keep track of their activities. In addition, the professional organisations and syndicates, such as the Journalists Syndicate, are actually run and controlled by the parties in a way that each one of the parties in power have their representation in those organisations. This shows that the parties are aware of the importance and the power of the press and media. There are cases of political parties in the KRI that might not be able to function without their powerful media, and they are fully dependent on their media.

The pressure on journalists while practising is on different levels. Most of the journalists declare that they do not face any political pressure to write or not to write about a certain issue. However, there is some self-censorship that journalists automatically fall into, especially at a time when there is conflict and war. The majority of the respondents declare that Kurdistan's nationalist considerations must be taken into account in the KRI press. This shows that journalists have a mixture of feelings dominant in their practice. Therefore, they mainly declare that they are both patriots and journalists at the same time.

Regarding physical attacks on journalists, 20% of the respondents declare that they have experienced it, and this is a number to be considered seriously concerning the safety of this environment in the KRI. The majority of the journalists contacted believe that there is freedom of speech in practice in the KRI and that Law No. 35, 2007 supports this principle.

Table 4: Age and gender of journalist survey respondents

Age	Male	Female	Total within age
18-25	(7) 6%	(6) 40%	(13) 10%
26-35	(49) 44%	(6) 40%	(55) 44%

36-45	(43) 39%	(2) 13%	(45) 36%
46-55	(10) 9%	(1) 7%	(11) 9%
56-up	(2) 1%	0	(2) 1%
Total within gender	(111) 88%	(15) 12%	(126) 100%

Table 5: Type of newspaper (daily, weekly)

The newspaper you are working with is published:

	Male	Female	Total
Daily	(86) 92%	(8) 9%	94
Weekly	(24) 77%	(7) 23%	31
Total	(110) 88%	(15) 12%	125

Table 6: Numbers and percentages of answers by type of newspaper and geographical coverage

Numbers and percentages of answers by type of newspaper and geographical coverage

	Daily	Weekly	Total
Duhok	48	1	(49) 38%
Erbil	25	19	(44) 34%
Sulaimani	25	12	(37) 29%
	(98) 75%	(32) 25%	(130) 100%

Table 7: Ownership and political affiliation of the journals

	Q: Does the newspaper have any political affiliation?			
	Yes	No	Don´t Know	
Q: Who are the owners of the newspaper? Political parties	52	6	3	(61) 48%
Business bodies	6	48	4	(58) 46%
Don´t Know	2	5	1	(8) 6%
Total	(60) 47%	(59) 47%	(8) 6%	(127) 100%

Table 8: Training and Experience of Journalists

	Do you have any training in journalism?		
	Yes	No	
How many years have you worked as a journalist? More than 7 years	86	14	(100) 77 %
Less than 7 years	21	9	(30) 23 %
	(107) 82 %	(23) 18 %	(130) 100%

Table 9: Political affiliation of newspapers and journalists

	Do you have any political affiliation?	The newspaper that you work for belongs to the same party that you are affiliated?
	Yes	Yes
Duhok	(38 /49) 76%	(26) 60%*
Erbil	(29 /44) 66%	(21) 72%*
Sulaimani	(13 /37) 35%	(11) 85%*
Total for the 3 regions	(80/130) 62%	(58) 45%*
		73% **

* % out of the total number of respondents from that province

** % of the respondents that admitted being party affiliated

CHAPTER SIX: THE VIEW OF POLITICIANS ON THE PRESS AND MEDIA IN THE KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ: CONTROL, RESTRICTION AND SELF-CENSORSHIP

Introduction

This chapter analyses the relationship between politicians and the press in the KRI, based on the answers to questionnaires distributed to Members of Kurdistan Parliament-Iraq. This is the second questionnaire of this thesis (Appendix 2), designed to ascertain the opinions and attitudes of politicians towards the press and politics in the KRI. The important factor is to analyse the inevitable relationship between politicians and the press. The relationship is rather one of interdependence that in some cases leads to close personal relations between politicians and journalists. The media's relationship with politics has a history that traces back to the propaganda and the role that it played in shaping public opinion (Street: 2005: 19). According to Hallin and Mancini (2012: 302): 'The relation between media and politics is situational, and any comparative analysis that ignores this fact, that assumes that journalists or media owners, for example, will act the same way toward political parties, the state, or social movements in every instance, is going to be a poor analysis.'

The above begins to explore the interplay between media and politics and their influence on each other. As mentioned before, the press and media in the KRI have developed as a political institution more than an information machine for the public sphere. Furthermore, the KRI type of

media has not been market-oriented and it has functioned, and functions, with almost no dependency on the market, i.e. it has stayed dependent on political parties and independent from the market. A significant number of the KRI politicians come from a background of working for their party media. This is also the case among the Members of Parliament. In addition, the daily interactions between the media and Members of Parliament sometimes turns parliament into a TV studio and sometimes turns the TV studios into the parliament plenary. Hence, the significance of the questionnaire to the Members of Parliament.

6.1. The relations between politicians and the press

The relationship between Members of Parliament and the press in the KRI is equivocal. Both sides keep this relationship on different levels. On the interpersonal level both MPs and journalists in the KRI usually communicate directly. Very often journalists call MPs on their private phone to ask a specific question, or to schedule an interview. MPs also call individual journalists or media channels if they have information they want to be made public. However, not all media channels or newspapers are ready to publish or broadcast news about a specific Member of Parliament or a party fraction in the parliament. Given that the media channels are party-owned, each Member of Parliament usually finds it easier to call the media channels or newspapers that are affiliated to their political party. On the other side, the media channels also pay priority attention to the news and information by the members of their party fraction before any other news from Parliament. This is an internal policy normally practised by all the party channels and newspapers in the KRI. Sometimes the leadership of a fraction calls a press conference to declare their fraction's position on particular issues.

Occasionally, parties advise their members not to take part or collaborate with certain media channels. The boycott of NRT by KDP members in 2015 is an example. In 2015 the KDP ordered its senior members, including Members of Parliament not to take part in NRT TV or its online newspaper. The KDP justified this by claiming that NRT is not impartial and is a threat to national security[61].

Parliamentary sessions are open to the public and journalists are allowed to participate and follow the session from a special area that overlooks the chamber. This area is open to any individual or journalist wishing to follow the session. There is only one security checkpoint and it takes about five minutes to access the public area. In order to bring in their cameras and equipment, journalists need to prove they are bona fide journalists or represent a press or media outlet.

According to the by-law of Parliament[62], one quarter of Members of Parliament can request that a session be closed to the public. These requests are usually justified by the sensitivity of the session agenda. This request however, must be approved by a majority vote of the session. Otherwise all the sessions are freely accessible for all the media channels to air live or for individuals to follow the sessions on live stream. The Parliament has a webpage which focuses on news related to the Members and the Parliament's activities. The site includes short biographies of all the Members of Parliament of all four terms. The agendas of sessions, live stream and majority of the laws passed and amended are available on this website.

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[61]   NRT is accused of receiving subsidies from local and central government. See documents available at: http://www.basnet.cf/2016/11/nrt_9.html , Retrieved 20 June 2017.

[62]   See the by-law of Kurdistan Parliament at: http://perleman.org/files/articles/130614120741.pdf , Retrieved 20 June 2017.

6.2 The questionnaire

The questionnaire was distributed among members of Kurdistan Parliament - Iraq. Out of 111 Members of Parliament the questionnaire reached 87 members and we received 57 valid responses. Several of the same questions were put to both journalists and MPs for the sake of comparing their opinions regarding the press. The opinions of politicians on press and media sheds much light on the interplay between the press and politics.

As well as their experience within the press before being elected, MPs were asked questions related to their level of education, experience, political party, constituency, and, if they had worked as a journalist, the type of press and in which city they had worked.

MPs were also asked about their perceptions concerning the ownership and control of the media by political parties, party and ideological hegemony and censorship that they experienced if they had worked with the press before being elected, as well as their role as legislators and their opinions about the current press law.

Finally, two questions were asked regarding their attitudes towards politics and democracy, one concerning their nationalist feelings and the other regarding democracy in the KRI. The significance of these two questions is that the first asks about their nationalist feelings in general and also towards the media. The second asks their opinion about democracy in the KRI. The question regarding nationalist feelings and values comes from the expectation that the media in the KRI may face pressure in the name of national values. The political rhetoric in the region is

dominated by nationalist messages, and that is almost the only point on which all political parties agree. Therefore, the media is also under the pressure of what are called 'national values'. The second question tests the opinions of the politicians concerning their belief in democracy in the KRI – Iraq, after 2003, was a US and Allied 'project of democratization'[63]. In the KRI there was (pre-war) an already existing self-ruling government claiming to be more democratized than other parts of Iraq. This question was asked to test the reaction of the KRI politicians on democracy in this autonomous region of Iraq.

6.3. Gender of MP respondents

Out of a total 57 respondents, 13 are female MPs (23%). This is close to the representation of women in the KRI parliament. There is a quota[64] law that guarantees 30% female Members in the Parliament. The female quota is organised so that each political party has at least 30% of women candidates, and 30% of winning seats for each party have to be allocated to women. This quota is a higher percentage than in the rest of Iraq which is 25%. The KRI female quota guaranteed the representation of women in decision-making in both the Parliament and Governorate councils.

6.4 Politicians with a journalist background

Forty-three per cent of politicians responded that they have worked as journalists before being elected as an MP. This is a significant result and is related to the politicization of the media in the KRI. Overall, as members declare in their biographies[65], 33 out of 111 Members of Parliament

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[63]   On 6 November 2003, President George Bush stated the broader vision of the USA and its allies in a 'mission to spread democracy throughout the Middle East'. See more at: http:// www.baltimoresun.com/news/bal-te.bush07nov07-story.html , retrieved on 12-06-2017

[64]   Fourth amendment to the Kurdistan Region's Elections Law: See the law in Kurdish at http:// perleman.org/files/articles/260309020909.pdf retrieved on 12 June 2017

[65]   http://perleman.org/Default.aspx?page=members&c=Presidency-Member2013

have a background of working as a journalist. As mentioned before, a majority of press and media entities belong to political parties. This might bring in members of the party to work with their media. It is like a coin with two similar faces. For instance, a senior party member works for his/her own party's press and actually this is when he/she declares him/herself as being a journalist. Then the same journalist, as a qualified party member is a candidate standing in elections and gets into Parliament and this is when he/she is considered as a politician. They mostly remain as politicians and mainly work as party members following party instructions, whether as a parliamentarian or as a journalist.

There are also other factors such as popularity among the public that might be considered by political parties regarding candidacy. This is particularly the case among the TV and broadcasting personalities. In the 2013 KRI parliamentary elections, a TV presenter who was a candidate for the Change Movement had an extraordinary record, receiving over 140,000 votes[66]. Given that the value of a seat in those elections was 19,500 votes, this candidate collected more than enough votes for 7 seats, which is more than 29% of the total seats his party gained.

6.5. Political parties in the Parliament

Thirty-three per cent of respondents are from the KDP, 28% from the Change Movement, 12% from the PUK, 8% from the Islamic Union and 3% from the Islamic Group. There are eight other fractions that were contacted and asked their opinion for this questionnaire. The representation of the respondents is also close to the percentage of party seats in the Parliament. There are seventeen fractions of political representation in the fourth term of Kurdistan's Parliament. The

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[66]   http://perleman.org/Default.aspx?page=page&c=xol4

following table shows the number of seats for each fraction of political parties in the Parliament for the 2013 elections:

Table 10: Number of seats for each fraction of political parties in the parliament for the 2013 elections

Fraction	Number of Votes	Number of Seats	Percentage
KDP	743984	38	38%
Change Movement	476736	24	24%
PUK	350500	18	18%
Islamic Union	186741	10	10%
Islamic Group	118574	6	6%
Islamic Movement	21834	1	1%
Socialist List	12501	1	1%
Azadi List (Communist Party)	12392	1	1%
Third Direction List	8681	1	1%
Rafidayn List (Assyrian and Chaldean Quota)	6145	2	Quota

Assyrian and Chaldean Council (Assyrian and Chaldean Quota)	5730	2	Quota
Turkmen Development (Turkmen Quota)	5259	2	Quota
Erbil Turkmen List (Turkmen Quota)	1951	1	Quota
Turkmen Change and Rehabilitation (Turkmen Quota)	1926	1	Quota
Iraqi Turkmen Front (Turkmen Quota)	1753	1	Quota
Abna Al-Nahrain (Assyrian and Chaldean Quota)	1093	1	Quota
Armenian List (Armenian Quota)	531	1	Quota

Source: http://perleman.org/Default.aspx?page=page&c=xol4

6.6 Ownership of media in the KRI

Thirty-five per cent of the respondents declared that the media they worked with was owned by a political party. At the same time, 56% preferred not to answer this question. In another question, they were also asked about the media in the KRI - are they controlled, owned or sponsored by political parties? Fourteen per cent of respondents 'strongly agree' and 61% 'agree' that the media is sponsored, owned, or controlled by political parties. Twenty-one per cent 'disagree' and 1% 'strongly disagree'.

In most countries '*the largest media firms are owned by the government or by private families*'[67]. The media is considered as the information provider for the public. This information most of the time includes political agendas and candidates' profiles in order for the citizens to vote in a more informed way. This is when questions arise concerning the information provided by the political party owned media and whether it would lean towards pushing the party's agenda. In the KRI, each political party has its own programme and providing information would probably be from the perspective of the party programme and agenda. Another model of the media which has emerged in the KRI are known to be privately owned, and are, in fact, not free from political interference. Nevertheless, political parties tend to deny the ownership of such channels. This is probably one reason why 56% of the politicians who responded to this questionnaire preferred not to answer the ownership question.

For instance, the largest media network in the KRI is *Rudaw* that declares itself as an independent private company. This company is owned, founded and fully funded by Nechirvan Idrees Barzani, the KRI Prime Minister and Deputy President of the KDP. *Nalia* Radio and

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[67]   http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDRS/Resources/
477365-1257315064764/2423_djankov.pdf

Television (NRT) is also the largest media network in the region and claims to be independent. Its owner, Shaswar Abdulwahid, is a member of the Change Movement and almost all the decision-makers of this channel are members of, or close to, the Change Movement. These political ties have given the two channels, *Rudaw* and *NRT*, a reputation as rivals. Emanating from two different parties, their messages conflict.

Below, is an example of these two channels covering the same issue from two different perspectives. The head of the *Rudaw* office in Washington D.C. reports that the US Department of Foreign Affairs does not oppose the KRI referendum for Independence and that 'they understand the will and rights of the people of Kurdistan'. However, the head of the NRT office in the USA reports the opposite, stating that the US Department of Foreign Affairs is against the KRI referendum for Independence.

The political influence of the media is further exposed when the owner of NRT declares a No Campaign for the Independence referendum in Kurdistan. This is followed by the establishment of a satellite channel to support this campaign. The campaign called itself 'No for Now'. This channel, as declared by the KRI officials and Ministry of Culture is illegal and has no registration within the Kurdistan Region. Meanwhile, NRT continued to advertise for the No Campaign channel and broadcast a number of their campaign advertisements. On 27 August 2017 NRT received a warning from the KRI's Ministry of Culture and Youth warning them that they were advertising for an illegal TV channel. Given the fact that the owner of both the NRT and the No Campaign channel is the same person, NRT took no notice. As a result, NRT's local broadcasts were banned by the KRI authorities. According to the Frequency Regulation passed by the Ministry of Culture and Youth, Regulation 1, 2014, Article 5, section 2, local broadcasts of the

NRT channel were stopped for one week.

In addition to local party ownership and interference, there are claims that there is also regional interference in the KRI media. This is again related to their owners and their close relationship with regional powers and neighbouring countries. The KDP has developed a closer relationship with Turkey in recent years. On the other hand, the PUK and Change Movement have developed their relations with Iran. Whether this accusation[68] is right or wrong, the claims about interference of regional powers are also connected to the regional relationships of the parties' owners.

In the KRI there is no government-owned media channel. This might seem to be an indicator of guaranteeing media independence. However, this gap is replaced by political party ownership which is a challenge to the independence and impartiality of the press.

In general, the ownership of the media in the KRI is related to funds and subsidies. The majority of funds provided for the media come from political parties who wish to establish a media that serves their agenda. Neither the government nor the private sector has been able to fund and subsidize the media in a sustainable manner. In addition, the media and press in the KRI are also unable to stand alone financially, mainly because of the weak media market, mis-management and lack of experience in the industry.

The law in the KRI has granted enough freedom to citizens so that individuals do not face legal complications regarding the establishment and ownership of the media. Regulations do not

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[68]   The access of the author to inside information from these two channels confirms the interference of Turkey and Iran. In the case of NRT, Iranian teams are repeatedly seen inside the channel and their role is significant in decision making. For *Rudaw*, the interference is indirect and mainly via phone. For example, on 24 April 2017, when there were Turkish airstrikes on Sinjar, taking the lives of five Kurdistan Peshmergas. *Rudaw* Turkish Service, at first reported that 'five Peshmargas were martyred'. Then after receiving a call, that was changed to: 'five Peshmargas were killed'. After that a local phone call made them change it again to 'martyred'. See: http://www.rudaw.net/turkish/kurdistan/2605201710?keyword=peŞmerge%20Şehit

restrict owners to owning only one media outlet or newspaper. However, private ownership in the KRI is mainly indirect ownership by political parties.

6.7 Journalism as a second job

Thirty-six per cent of respondents declared that they had another job when they were working as journalists. Fifty per cent of journalists declared that they had another job and being a journalist was not their main or only job. The low income and salaries of journalists obliges them to work part time. Moreover, 36% of the politicians contacted for this survey declared that they were members of political parties at the same time. Being an active member of a party in the KRI is usually considered as a job and members are paid regular salaries. Approximately 150,000 paid members are working with the KDP. These members are mainly employed in different offices of the KDP administration, starting from the office of the party president to the base of the governorate leadership and low level committees.

6.8 Politicised media in the KRI

Thirty-six per cent 'strongly agree' and 36% 'agree' that the media in Kurdistan is a political project and it serves the political agenda of its owners. This means that more than 70% of politicians who were contacted for this survey feel that the media is a politicized project. 22% 'disagree' and 1% 'strongly disagrees' that the media is a political project in Kurdistan.

Regarding the involvement of the Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate in the KRI press the respondents were asked two questions. Firstly, the Syndicate supportive towards the press and journalists or not? Secondly, what did the politicians feel about the political influence and control of the Journalists Syndicate? The Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate is introduced as being the legal

entity that makes sure the freedom of the press is guaranteed and that journalists' rights are protected[69]. However, according to Asus Hardi, the idea of the Journalists Syndicate is to have the journalists under the control of parties:

> *I am not a member of that syndicate and I believe it is a product of a totalitarian mentality. This is inherited from Saddam and the Baath's time. During the Baath time in Iraq, there was only one union or syndicate for each sector of civil society. These syndicates were directly tied with the party organization system. The idea was initially to have the whole society under their political control. The Journalists Syndicate is the same method of control.*
>
> (Appendix 3, Interview #1)

However, the function of the Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate is quite different as described by the Secretary-General of the Syndicate:

> *'The Syndicate is a volunteer organization for all those whose work is to practise journalism as a profession'*
>
> (Appendix 3, Interview #2).

Similarly to the journalists, politicians were also asked whether they have felt pressure in their work as journalists. This question was answered by those politicians who have worked as journalists before being elected as MPs. The results show that they experienced less pressure while working as journalists. Only 14% declare that they were under pressure to write on specific issues, compared to 24% among the journalists who feel under pressure to write on a certain issue.

Fifty-two per cent of respondents 'disagree' that the syndicate is supportive and another 3% 'strongly disagree'. Fourteen per cent 'agree' and 1% 'strongly agree' that this syndicate is a

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[69]   Law No. 4, 1998, Law of Journalists Syndicate of Kurdistan-Iraq: http://perleman.org/files/articles/150915101400.pdf

support for journalists. When asked whether the Syndicate is another way of politically controlling the press and media, 15% 'strongly agree' and 26% 'agree'. Forty per cent 'disagree' and 10% 'strongly disagree' that the Syndicate is another way of politically controlling the media.

The opinion of the respondents in answering the question regarding the ownership of the media is another significant finding.

6. 9. The role of the Journalism Law in the KRI

One of the significant findings of this questionnaire is the perception of lawmakers about the Law of Journalism, because of their own position in drafting, re-drafting and proposing new laws in favour of the development of journalism in the KRI. Nevertheless, their overall perception of the law is highly positive. When asked whether the Journalism Law has played a positive role in media developments, 78% 'agree' or 'strongly agree', while 19% 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' that it has a positive role in the development of the media.

When the opposite was asked 1% 'strongly agree' other 38% 'agree' that it did not play a positive role in media developments in the KRI. When asked their opinion as Members of Parliament regarding the freedom of the KRI press, only 3% 'strongly agree' that freedom of the press is enjoyed in the KRI. In addition, 29% 'agree' that freedom of the press is enjoyed in the KRI. The disagreement on this question is higher with 56% and 8% who 'strongly disagree' with the statement that freedom of the press is enjoyed in the KRI.

Journalists in Kurdistan complain about the lack of implementation of the laws. Asus Hardi, Chief Editor of *Awene* newspaper stated:

The law has good sides, but it is not fully implemented and there are still courts in the KRI that do not abide by this law. For example, the law considers any attack on journalists as an attack on government officials during their service but what we see is the attack on journalists on a daily basis and as if nothing happened.

*(*Appendix 3, Interview #1)

This means that the law itself is a document which supports the freedom of journalists and the press, but the problem is its implementation. The limitations and pressure that the journalists experience are not necessarily the results of the limitations of the law, but are caused by the lack of its implementation. This is not merely happening concerning journalism law - there are many cases where the laws are good but where their implementation is bad. It is mainly related to the executive branch of government and the responsibility they hold to implement the law. Moreover, there is no implementation committee, branch or body that is specifically responsible for implementing particular laws.

6.10 The press and nationalist values

Politicians were asked whether they feel primarily a politician or nationalist, or both or neither? Sixty-four per cent responded that they are first nationalists and 33% declared that they are both. Only 1% responded 'I am neither'.

In another question, politicians were asked whether the 'media is responsible to spread nationalistic values'. 49% of the respondents strongly agree and other 33% agree that media is responsible to spread nationalistic values. Only 12% 'disagree' and 3% 'strongly disagree' when asked their opinion on this statement.

When asked their opinion regarding whether nationalist values should be taken into consideration by the media in the KRI, 29% 'strongly agree' and 61% 'agree'. Only 3% 'disagree' and 5% 'strongly disagree'. There is thus a high expectation from the media by politicians to take national values into consideration. However, this is a rather complicated issue. On the one hand, there is no law or regulation that makes the media responsible to defend and spread national values. On the other hand, these values are not clearly defined and they might differ from one person to another. However, the right to self-determination is known as the main nationalist value and feeling of the Kurds ever since the fall of the Ottoman Empire (Cojer, 1996: 40). On 7 June 2017, Masoud Barzani, President of the KRI held a meeting with the KRI political parties where they set a date for a referendum on Kurdistan Independence, namely 25 September 2017[70]. On 8 June 2017, President Barzani issued a presidential order[71] authorising the Independent Commission of Elections to make the necessary preparations to hold a referendum on Kurdistan Independence on 25 September 2017. This decision precipitated both local and international reactions. Fuad Hussein, Chief of Staff of Kurdistan's President stated, The Kurds have the right to self-determination as a right endorsed by the United Nations, and as a people who have their land, language, culture, history and identity' (Hussein, 2017). However, the decision was not welcomed by Iraqi officials in Baghdad.

The independence referendum took place in the KRI on 25 September 2017. The turnout and the results were, as expected, high for an independent Kurdistan. The role played by the media before and after the referendum was very significant. The majority of the journalists and media

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[70]   President Masoud Barzani in a tweet on 7 June 2017 posted, 'I am pleased to announce that the date for the independence referendum has been set for Monday, 25 September 2017'. Link to the tweet: https://twitter.com/masoud_barzani/status/872496589868290049

[71]   KRI Presidential Order Number 106 , 2017, see: http://www.kdp.info/a/d.aspx?l=13&a=101036 , Retrieved on June 12, 2017.

channels 'went with the flow' and became the mouthpiece of supporters of the referendum. In addition, the political leadership in the KRI had set the agenda for the media and the way they must engage in the referendum process: it was their nationalist duty. There were three different official statements issued by the High Referendum Council, the Ministry of Culture and Youth, and the Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate. The High Referendum Council released a statement[72] on 1 October 2017, which consisted of seven main decrees. The sixth decree stated:

> [*Sixth: The meeting, in addition to thanking the media for playing a good role during the referendum, stressed that the role of the local media outlets should be to serve patriotic interests and that the meetings' attendants all agreed that within the framework of the law a limit should be put on any media that is directed to work against the interests of the country and its people.*]

The High Referendum Council by this statement puts the media before both its obligations and limitations. The obligations are for the media to *serve the patriotic interest,* and the limitations include the pressure on the media channels which do not support the referendum. These limitations might also include the media and press which decide to stay neutral because this neutrality, according to the referendum council, is not *a good role* and would not *serve patriotic interests.*

The statement released by the Ministry of Culture was even harsher. This statement also stresses the nationalist duty of the media and that the media must fulfil its duty to promote nationalist values.

> [*It is obvious that the Kurdistan Region of Iraq is passing through a sensitive moment. Our duty is to protect the country and the unitarity of the components of Kurdistan people. We all, and especially the media, must deal with this situation with*

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72 The full text of the statement is available at: http://www.rudaw.net/mobile/english/kurdistan/011020174

a deep sense of nationalist duty. Otherwise the ministry will deal with those media

acting against the nationalist values by means of laws and regulations.][73]

The Ministry of Culture and Youth is one of the main government institutions that deals with the press and media. Local broadcasting regulations and licensing, publication and press regulations are still controlled by this ministry. Their statement is also clearly focused on the need for the media and press to put 'nationalist responsibility' ahead of their agenda.

The third statement is by the Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate which also suggests that the media in the KRI abide by their duty to protect nationalist values and serve the country in this direction. Further, the Syndicate condemned the act of banning a number of Kurdish media channels in Iran, Turkey and by the Iraqi government[74].

The belief in protecting nationalist values is not merely vital to the politicians in the KRI - the journalists and their representatives share the same position. Azad Hamadamin, the Secretary-General of the Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate also believes that one of the main functions of the Syndicate is to protect national security:

> *The law considers the Syndicate as the official body of journalists and deals*
>
> *with only those journalists who are members of the Syndicate. Our goals are to*
>
> *defend the basic principles of this nation, protect national security, protect*
>
> *democratic values, and freedom of speech.*(Appendix 3, Interview #2)

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[73] This is a translated part of the statement by the ministry of culture and youth, the full statement is found at: http://www.kdp.info/a/d.aspx?s=040000&l=13&a=104153

[74] The full text of the statement is retrieved from: http://www.kdp.info/a/d.aspx?s=040000&l=13&a=103738

The Johannesburg Principles on National Security, Freedom of Expression and Access to Information[75] were adopted on October 1, 1995. This document focuses on the importance of freedom of expression and the press especially regarding state restrictions. Such restrictions include the justifications presented mainly by the state to label a press or media channel as acting against national security:

[*... Any restriction on expression or information that a government seeks to justify on grounds of national security must have the genuine purpose and demonstrable effect of protecting a legitimate national security interest.*]

    The Johannesburg Principles on National Security, Principle 1.2

Journalists in the KRI declare that they do receive such restrictions, mainly from politicians and the political parties. As there is no clear definition of the nationalist values presented by the politicians, the journalists believe that anything that opposes the views of politicians or a particular party can be labelled by them as a threat to nationalist values. Asus Hardi, the chief editor of *Awena*, believes that nationalist values are related to the degree of an individual's loyalty to the politicians:

[*... Not having an agreement or mutual understanding on the definition of nationalist values is our biggest problem. We have a totalitarian mentality that rules in this place. This*

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[75] The full text of the principles is available at: https://www.article19.org/data/files/pdfs/standards/joburgprinciples.pdf

Principle 2: Legitimate National Security Interest
(a) A restriction sought to be justified on the ground of national security is not legitimate unless its genuine purpose and demonstrable effect is to protect a country's existence or its territorial integrity against the use or threat of force, or its capacity to respond to the use or threat of force, whether from an external source, such as a military threat, or an internal source, such as incitement to violent overthrow of the government.
(b) In particular, a restriction sought to be justified on the ground of national security is not legitimate if its genuine purpose or demonstrable effect is to protect interests unrelated to national security, including, for example, to protect a government from embarrassment or exposure of wrongdoing, or to conceal information about the functioning of its public institutions, or to entrench a particular ideology, or to suppress industrial unrest.

mentality has prioritised the political party over the Nation. This means that when you don't speak the way the party desires, then you are labelled as being against the national values. At the same time, when you speak in favour of the political party, then you are a fine protector of nationalist values. The ideological basis of most of our political parties is a totalitarian one. The parties believe that they are the unique protectors of nationalist values, therefore, anyone who is against them is automatically against the nationalist values. That is when a journalist or anyone who criticises a political party is even labelled as betraying the national cause.]

According to Hardi, any media which works as a propaganda machine of a party is labelled as a protector of nationalist values, while the ones which criticise the ruling party can be portrayed as violators of nationalist values. As the findings of this thesis prove that majority of the media in the KRI are owned, linked to, and controlled by the political parties, therefore if anything is called a violation of nationalist values committed by media, it is in practice committed by the political parties. As a result, what is being violated is not necessarily nationalist values but rather party political values that differ from one party to another.

6.11 Democracy in the KRI

The last question put to politicians concerned their opinion about democracy in the KRI. They were asked to rate democracy from a scale 1 to 10, where 1 stands for 'very bad' and 10 stands for 'very good'. The most optimum response was 5 which stands in the middle with 31%. Overall, more than 70% of respondents rated democracy 5-8.

The KRI has gone through considerable political and economic development since the uprising in 1991. The function of the region as a de-facto autonomy made it different from other parts of Iraq where the Baath Regime ruled. This continued until the US-led intervention and the removal of the Baath from power in 2003. During this time, as Thomas L. Friedman (2007) explained it, the Kurdistan Region was expected to be 'a work in progress'. He suggested that 'Kurdistan's democracy is a work in progress and it still needs a lot of work if it is going to deliver for all the Kurdish people the kind of governance they need and deserve'. Freedom of expression, free media, rights of individuals, women rights, freedom of assembly, coexistence and minority rights, freedom of religion and beliefs, and the establishment of democratic institutions were among the main principles of ruling in the KRG. All the mentioned and a number of other principles are legislated and adopted as laws in the KRI. However, having such laws and rules in place is one thing: their proper implementation is another. Internal conflicts, clientelism and nepotism, tribal norms and beliefs, weak, fractious government, and inequality before the laws are among the main reasons for the poor implementation of the laws in the KRI.

Two years after the establishment of the KRI the two main parties, the KDP and PUK, entered into a civil war. This led to the division of the region into two administrations or two governments: one in Erbil and the other in Sulaimani. This continues up to the time of writing. Although the Parliament remained impartial and continued to legislate for both governments, the implementation and interpretation of laws was often different between Erbil and Sulaimani. After four years, in 1998, a ceasefire went into effect between the KDP and PUK. After that, attempts to unify the two administrations continued. After the overthrow of the Baath regime in Iraq the two main parties took part in the Iraqi interim and transitional governments, and they contributed to the drafting of the Iraqi constitution. In 2005 they took part as one unified list as the

Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan and won 75 seats out of a total 275 seats of the Iraqi National Assembly. Traditionally, the two parties are headed by families, the Barzani family leading the KDP and the Talebani family heads the PUK. Similarly, key positions in both the central and regional government, are also distributed among family members. As a result, Jalal Talebani, Secretary-General of the PUK was nominated for the position of Iraqi President and he was elected by the National Assembly. The position of Iraqi President was allocated to the Kurdistan Alliance as part of the consensus of forming the government. In the same year, for the Kurdistan parliamentary elections the two parties took part as the Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan. Besides the two parties, the alliance consisted of seven other parties. This was the largest electoral alliance ever experience in the KRI. The alliance won 104 seats out of 111 seats in the Kurdistan Parliament. Barzani was elected as President of Kurdistan by parliamentary vote and his nephew Necirvan Barzani was nominated by Parliament to form the government cabinet.

In an article written for *The Salt Lake Tribune*, Mathew D. LaPlante, justifies Bush's 'democratization' in Iraq by citing the example of the Kurdistan Region. He stated that the 'mostly autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government has many of the democratic characteristics Bush coveted for all Iraq when he ordered the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime' (LaPlante, 2010). He also claims that the KRI 'is a functioning democracy in the heart of the Middle East. It is a secular government in a majority Muslim nation. And it is an anti-terror ally in a region plagued by religious extremism.'

Overall, despite the internal problems and ups and downs, the KRI became a safe haven for many Kurdish people especially from neighboring countries such as Turkey, Iran and Syria. They came for different reasons including work opportunities, investment, and above all receiving

education in their mother tongue. Politicians from other parts who were escaping the suppression of regimes against Kurdish movements found refuge in the KRI.

As well as the Kurdish population of those countries, Turks, Arabs and Persians also started to invest in the KRI. In addition, music concerts were held in the KRI for the Iranian diaspora singers and musicians who were not allowed to hold concerts in Iran. Such concerts attracted the attention of Iranian tourists and the KRI became a new tourist destination for them.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the interdependence between the press and politics in the KRI has been the main feature. Media and politics continue to depend on each other and each of them fulfil their mutual goals. The differentiation line between politics and journalism is another challenge. People with a political background from inside political parties work for their party media and they may continue their political job as well. Politicians expect the press in the KRI to be aware and responsible regarding the use of nationalist values to help shape public opinion towards such values and beliefs. This is controlled relatively easily in the KRI given that the majority of press is owned by political parties and that the majority of parties have taken nationalist values as their basic principles.

Our expectation that the press in the KRI is mainly controlled and owned by the political parties was confirmed by the majority of politicians contacted for this study. In addition, the majority of respondents believe that the media is politicised and is a political project of the parties. This finding is significant, especially coming from politicians who are familiar with party systems and of whom some have already worked with party media.

The press-related laws in the KRI have played an important role in the development of the field. Nevertheless, the laws still need to be amended to further secure the rights and freedom of journalists. Pressure and attacks on journalists continue in the KRI and the current laws do not necessarily protect them. In some cases, the courts deal with journalists according to the criminal law. Meanwhile, freedom of the press continues to be a 'grey' issue for both politicians and journalists. Freedom, impartiality, and independence of the press face complex problems especially when the majority of politicians expect the press to abide by nationalist values. There is a strong belief among politicians that the media should be responsible for spreading national values. This could lead to a situation in the future where politicians could attempt to justify restricting press freedom, citing the of nationalist values. This is unlikely, given that nationalist feelings are rather high among the politicians and the majority of them see themselves as primarily nationalist.

Nationalist values and their protection is undoubtedly being used by politicians to put pressure on journalists and the press in the KRI. The parties in power to some extent are able to label any press report that opposes their politics, as a violation of nationalist values. At the same time, nationalist values differ from one party to another. As the majority of the media in the KRI are entirely owned by the parties, the strategy of Party A can be labelled by Party B as violating nationalist values, and vice versa.

Finally, democracy is believed to be enjoyed in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Laws and legislation adopted in the region carry the characteristics of democracy but in their implementation they face a variety of problems. In brief, the development of democracy in the KRI could be said to be under pressure from multiple factors such as internal conflicts,

clientelism, nepotism and tribal norms and beliefs.

Table 11: Perceptions of politicians regarding press and politics in the KRI

Question	Yes	No	No Answer
Have you worked as a journalist before becoming an MP?	44% (25)	56% (32)	0
Did you have a second job while being a journalist?	37% (21)	7% (4)	56% (32)
15. The newspaper you worked with belonged to the same party that you were a member of?	35% (20)	5,3% (3)	59,7% (34)
16. Have you ever wished to write about a topic and you were afraid to do so because of political pressure?	18% (10)	23% (13)	59% (34)
17. In your work as a journalist have you put under pressure to write about a specific topic?	14% (8)	30% (17)	56% (32)

Table 12: Perceptions of politicians regarding press and politics in the KRI

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don´t Know	No Answer
1. Media in Kurdistan is a political project not information project. All the agreements, conflicts and dispute and competition of political powers is reflected in their media.	37% (21)	37% (21)	23% (13)	2% (1)	0	2% (1)
2. Journalists syndicate is another way of political control of media in the region.	16% (9)	23% (15)	40% (23)	11% (6)	4% (2)	4% (2)
3. Journalists syndicate is a supportive body for journalists.	2% (1)	14% (8)	53% (30)	24% (14)	4% (2)	4% (2)
4. Media channels are whether owned, controlled or sponsored by political parties and thy receive orders and instructions from them (4. Do you agree your paper receives the orders and directions from the owners?	14% (8)	61 % (35)	21% (12)	2 % (1)		
5. Journalists feel independence of Media in KRG (5. As and MP do you agree that there is freedom of press in Kurdistan)	4% (2)	30% (17)	56% (32)	9% (5)	0	4% (2)
6. The Law of Journalists 2007 plays a positive role on media developments.	25% (14)	54% (31)	14% (8)	5% (3)	0	4% (2)
7. The Law of Journalists 2007 does not play a positive role on media developments and needs ammendments.	2% (1)	39% (22)	33% (19)	14% (8)	9% (5)	4% (2)

Media Coverage

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don´t Know	No Answer
4. Media is responsible to spread nationalistic feelings.	49% (28)	33% (19)	12% (7)	4% (2)	0	2% (1)
	I am first a Nationalist	*I am Both*	*None*			
7. About being journalist//politician// and a patriot, How do you feel more?	65 % (37)	33% (19)	2% (1)			

CONCLUSION: POLITICAL PRESS AND POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ

The general conclusions and discussion and the thesis results are presented in this section.

A weak media market, poor professionalism of journalists, high political parallelism and the weak role of the state were the main expectations and propositions of this research, to examine media systems and the interaction between media and politics in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Given that there was insufficient research, previous studies or collected data on political systems in the KRI and less attention was paid to the interplay between press and politics, this research aimed at contributing towards a better understanding of the case. As discussed in Chapter One, the research area is novel and few studies have been conducted analysing the trajectory of politics and media in the KRI. This study aimed to identify and explain the understanding of the dynamics of media systems in the KRI and to participate in the theoretical discussion of media and politics.

This thesis is an attempt to address the knowledge gap regarding media and politics by a triangulation of qualitative and quantitative research methods. Two surveys among a number of politicians and journalists and a number of in depth interviews conducted with politicians, media and political decision makers form a large part of the empirical evidence for this research. The journalists' responses to the questionnaires and interviews gave a rich and insightful view on the

following issues: ownership and political affiliation of the newspapers, political affiliation of journalists, the pressures and the mechanisms to restrict the media and freedom of speech. Then the politicians responded regarding issues such as their perception of the ownership and control of the media by politics, party and ideology hegemony, the censorship that they experienced, their opinions about their role as legislators and their opinions of the current press law. Both politicians and journalists responded to questions regarding democracy and nationalism. In answering these questions the research makes a contribution to the understanding of the relationship between press and politics in the KRI.

Chapter One of this thesis outlined the methodology. The theoretical framework, the research design and the methodology employed are detailed in this chapter. The methodology included the use of a single case study. Four analytical dimensions: Media market, Political parallelism, Journalistic professionalism and the Role of the state developed by Hallin and Mancini (2004, 2012) are employed as a research model in this work. These dimensions were used in order to define the existing media system in in the KRI. Then the dimensions were broken down into measurable indicators for which it was possible to collect data and make conclusions based on empirical evidence. Fieldwork in the KRI, qualitative data and analysis of legislation, official documents, and other available archive resources, one-to-one semi-structured interviews, a survey, and observation were used to complete the research. This research in a mainly descriptive and exploratory way studies the case of the KRI and the complex development of its press and politics.

To provide a historical and political bacSground, Chapter Two reviewed the contemporary political development of the KRI. This chapter presented the general characteristics of the case

study and general accounts regarding the political system of the region during approximately one century of political development since the creation of Iraq in the 1920s up to 1991. Secondly, the the Kurdish experience after the Gulf War in 1991 up to the US-led intervention in 2003. In this period the establishment of a de-facto Kurdish government, Kurdistan Regional Government and also the internal war was explained. Thirdly, the period after Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003 up to 2013 was discussed. In this period the role of the Kurds both in the establishment of a post-Saddam, post-Baath-regime Iraq, and in the strengthening of a decentralised Kurdistan Region, were explained.

Chapter Three developed a historical background to review developments in the Kurdish press in parallel with political developments in the KRI. The chapter is divided into three periods. The first period as Rebellion Press is introduced, between 1961 and 1991. This period describes the beginnings of the press as a means of communication for the Kurdish Liberation movement. The period starts with the Kurdish revolution in 1961 and lasts until the uprising in 1991. The second period is explained as Partisan Press (1991-2003). It explains the rise of media after the Kurdish uprising and the establishment of a de facto autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government, the work of the press as the mouthpiece of political parties, and its role in the internal war. Then in the third period the Press of Autonomy is explained. The autonomous decentralized powers of the KRI gave a space to adopt press related pieces of legislation which were discussed in this chapter.

In Chapter Four, the four dimensions of the press were analysed. The chapter gave an in-depth analysis of the four dimensions by comparing them to the press and politics in the KRI. Chapter Five and Chapter Six separately report the perspectives of journalists and politicians on the

interplay between politics and the press. In the Chapter Five the findings of the questionnaire of the journalists' survey were presented and analysed. Similarly, in Chapter Six, the findings of the politicians' survey are presented and analysed. These chapters explored the viewpoints of journalists and politicians concerning the current situation and also analysed their perspectives on the future of politics and press in the region.

The four dimensions of media in the KRI

Dimension 1: Media Market

The market for the press in the KRI is weak. Finding a market is the least priority for the majority of the press in the KRI. Some of them have started to give newspapers away and even distribute them free of charge. The dependency of media on the political ownership and the funds provided by the party has made them independent of the market. This means that the majority of the KRI press does not chase economic independence. However, most of the press in the KRI claim to be independent, even the ones that are directly connected and tied to the parties. It is extremely common among the media in Kurdistan to call themselves independent while the owners, who are mainly political, cut their budget. In addition, there are no distribution or circulation agencies in the region and they would not be able to survive. The attempts to formulate distribution agencies have failed numerous times. The differences in dialect also affects the market of the published press. Kurmanji-published newspapers do not find a market in Sorani-speaking areas and vice versa. In the end, it could be argued that the rise and flourishing of the media market in the KRI will be dependent on the independence and impartiality of the media with no political ownership and control.

Dimension 2: Political parallelism

The press and media have always been a part of politics and its developments have gone side by side with political developments in the region. The press has been present at different times but has sometimes played quite different roles. It played a resistance role and also a revolutionary messages communication role during the mountain resistance and with the Kurdish Liberation Movement. This type of press, basically founded as a revolutionary and even secret press, continued until it entered the cities. Obviously, the transformation to a type of city media did not happen overnight, and the process has continued until today. When the press and media descended from the mountains it was as an indissoluble part of politics and mainly as a partisan mouthpiece of the parties during the de facto autonomy after 1992. This has not changed much and all parties continue to own the press and impose their power on any publication or media attempts to be slightly independent. Only the technology and quality of the press has developed over time: the politicization is still in place.

The political movements in the KRI are considered to be the main establishers of the media. Moreover, the parties are the main manipulators of the media, using it merely and mainly in favour of their political agenda. This can be seen throughout different stages of political movements in the KRI. As discussed in chapters three, four and five, in all the different periods, media developments were dependent on political developments. Meanwhile, the media plays only one role, which is to be loyal and to adhere to the owner's political party.

Although journalists and editors have a responsibility towards their readers, circulation and quality of journalism, most journalists in the KRI feel more responsible towards their owners who are political parties and their leaders. This ownership is both direct and indirect and has a remarkable impact on the development of the press. Therefore, it is not difficult to see that the

political party control of the press obliges the latter to publish what concerns party politics rather than having regard for the professional practice of journalism and its duty towards an informed citizenry. This elevates political parallelism to a high level in the KRI press and media.

In the KRI, political parties are paralysed without their media establishments. There are cases of political parties where if you take their media away from them, they have no means whatever to present their political programme. This clearly indicates that the press and media has played a crucial role in political marketing, especially in the engagement and persuasion of the voters. The politics of these parties are 'hot' and broadcast on their satellite dishes to the public. Obviously, this serves their interests and represents their politics in influencing the hearts and minds of the people. It shows the importance of the media and press in the creation of political agendas and the way they are shaped in the KRI. As a result, the KRI political parties continue to give a higher priority to their media and invest considerable funds to improve their media capacity.

Ultimately, given that almost all the media is directly or indirectly owned and controlled by political parties, it has to be concluded that there is no independent press in the KRI. Some press and media channels are fully dependent and some others are under the influence of the political parties. One cannot escape the conclusion that the media in the KRI is fully politicised.

Dimension 3: Professionalism of journalists

Journalistic professionalism and practices are also related to politics in the KRI. Given that the establishment and the institution of the press and media in the region is heavily dependent on the political parties, the personnel and practitioners in this field are also fully politicised.

Political party members and those who had sufficient literacy to read the news and write the news, started to work in the media at the time of the revolution. They were replaced by more educated young cadres after uprising started, from 1991. The level of professionalism increased

in the aftermath of the 2003 regime-change in Iraq. This was due to the international attention on Iraq and the funds that were specified for media development in the country. Thus, many journalists had the opportunity to develop and educate themselves and learn professional norms. In addition, journalism and media schools were opened at the universities and education institutions where the practice of journalism was slowly starting to enter into a professional phase. Establishment of journalism departments at the universities in the KRI where journalism and media education is provided on a professional level is undoubtedly a positive move. However, education by itself is not necessarily sufficient to produce professional journalism. It takes practice and education actimg together to develop the field. Above all, there are a number of social as well as political pressures that do not allow creation of an atmosphere where professional journalism can be fully practised. The high level of involvement of journalists in politics and the fact that the majority of them are members of political parties and are, at the same time, loyal to societal or tribal norms, limits their actual practice of impartial and independent journalism. As we discovered, the majority of journalists in the KRI are party-affiliated. They mainly tend to work for the same press as the party of which they are members. Therefore, we can conclude that their freedom, at different levels, is limited. Criticism of actions of the political party of the newspaper that you work for is a serious risk. Moreover, editors and press decision-makers also put limits on journalists and prevent them from touching upon certain issues, especially those concerned with the party's weaknesses.

Not only that, the journalists tend to automatically censor themselves in the KRI. This is mainly because the security of journalists is not guaranteed - the party could react harshly towards them. Journalists in the KRI are attacked, threatened, put under pressure during their daily work. The KRI remains a dangerous zone for the practice of journalism. The continuing wars, terrorism,

internal conflicts and political tensions as well as tribal norms are among the serious threats that put the lives of journalists in serious danger.

Dimension 4: Role of the State

Laws and regulations have not fully been able to help develop the practice of journalism for the better. However, legislation on the media and journalism in the region has made some contribution to the creation of a better practice of journalism. In general, there is a need to amend the press-related laws and legislation in the KRI, but at the same time they can be considered as the foundation stones of media development. Meanwhile, existing laws are not implemented properly. At the same time, despite the important role played by the legislation and the laws in developing the press in KRI, they are still not able to secure or guarantee the rights and freedom of journalists. The KRI has unlimited access to the internet, unlike other countries in the region where online media access is limited. As a result, the internet and new media in the KRI has played an important role in the political parties' media promotion and production. The online community is growing fast and it is very influential, especially among the youth. This drives the politicians' attention and brings them actively on to twitter, Facebook, and other social networks. There are other ways of the media being controlled by political parties, and through the parties by their representatives in government. One of these methods is to tempt journalists with subsidies and gifts, such as pieces of land. This was practised in the KRI in the last decade and the Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate (KJS) prioritised journalists in the distribution of such gifts from the government. As a result, those who were not members of the KJS, i.e. those who were not party members, lost out. In general, the state regulations with regard to the licensing and freedoms of establishment are not the main challenge. Instead, as described, it is the lack of implementation of the press and media related laws that is the main challenge to the development of media regulation in the KRI.

The parties in power expect the media to protect nationalist values and to promote them. Sometime the state puts pressure on the journalists and the media in this regard. However, those values are not only undefined but differ from one party to another and at different times. The media in KRI has no clear definition of the nationalist values, even when they are accused of violating them! Some, but not all, journalists believe that any media that praises the ruling party or parties is a fine protector of nationalist values and those that criticise the parties should be labelled as violators of those values.

Some policy implications of this study

From a normative point of view, the findings of this thesis offer a number of possible policy recommendations which could help sustain a healthier relationship between the press and politics in the KRI. The following points are among the main concluding suggestions from this thesis:

- The press in the KRI should be motivated to step towards economic independence. This would lead to their political independence which at the same time would help to foster the establishment of a free and independent press.

- Laws need to be amended. The amendments must be carefully provisioned by both the press practitioners and also the lawmakers in order to serve the press and journalists independence.

- Legislation needs to be adopted concerning the limitation of party control and ownership of the media.

- New laws and legislation need to be adopted to secure the protection of journalists and to reduce the risks they face from political pressure.

- Journalists need to be trained and schools of journalism and media need to be developed in order to support the development of the highest standards throughout the press and media in the KRI.

- Media and press channels need to be able to support journalists financially in a decent and sufficient way, in order to avoid them considering journalism as a second job.

Suggestions for further studies:

- Analysis of press related laws in the KRI and the way they are implemented? If not fully implemented, why?

- Political tensions and rivalry between the KRI political parties which encourage instability and conflict

- Media and press markets in the KRI and the feasibility of the development of the media market

- The internal media structure of political parties in the KRI

- Direct and indirect ownership of media by political parties in the KRI

- The influence of online media on the traditional press and on journalists in the KRI

- The media and its role in peace-making and peace-building in the KRI

- The role of media in conflict escalation in the KRI: the case of the internal war

- The media at war: responsibilities of the media during armed conflict

- The role of the media in political campaigns in the KRI

APPENDIX 1: THE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR JOURNALISTS (English)

APPENDIX 2: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR POLITICIANS (English)

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEWS WITH MEDIA DECISION MAKERS INSIDE AND OUTSIDE

POLITICAL PARTIES

Interview#1: Asus Hardi, Chief Editor of Awena Newspaper, and director of Awena Company

Interview#2: Azad Hamadameen, Secretary general of Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate

Interview#3: Ako Mohammad, General Manager of Rudaw Network

Interview#4: Aza Hesib Qaradaghi, Senior Member of KDP department of culture and Media,

journalists, writer and Director general of Zagros Media channel

Interview#5: Mahmoud Mohammed, Member of KDP Politburo and in charge of KDP

department of Culture and media

Interview#6: Salar Osman, Chief Editor of Hawler Daily Newspaper

Interview#7: Tehsin Dolemeri, worked during mountain press and he was also a radio announcer

of the times of mountain.

APPENDIX 4: A SAMPLE OF PARTY MEDIA STRUCTURE: KDP MEDIA DEPARTMENT

APPENDIX 5: POLITICAL PARTY STRUCTURE (KDP)

APPENDIX 6: List of all Newspapers Registered With The Journalist Syndicate In The

Kurdistan Region Of Iraq As Of 2015

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