

THE ROLE PLAYED BY THE KURDISTAN REGIONAL GOVERNMENT IN THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE IRAQI STATE

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Abstract

The Iraqi Kurds have stood firmly at the forefront of many changes and challenges in the Middle East and Iraq since 1991, taking the opportunity to stand firm and to become a semi-autonomous entity with an established regional government. Events after 2003 offered a second historical opportunity to determine their present and future position on the Iraqi political map as a major partner constructing the new Iraqi State and developing their region. The thesis aims to address and challenge the claim that the Kurds have become more integrationist than secessionist since the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime.

Through a descriptive and analytical narrative of the evolution of the KRG's situation and the Kurds' assertion of their national demands towards Iraq. The study identifies four major dimensions of KRG policy towards Iraq. These include the need to address chronic problems and political disputes through commitment to the new Iraqi Constitution; to apply federal system and maintain democratic principles guaranteeing the rights of all ethnic and religious minorities, through full implementation of Article 140; to resolve the legitimacy of KRG's international and regional oil contracts through real power sharing between regional governments and the federal government; address the dilemma of the rights and duties of the Kurdish forces (*Peshmerga*) vis-a-vis the Iraqi army. As national forces protecting the Kurdish region, the Peshmerga also fought Saddam Hussein's regime participated with US troops in its downfall and joined in fighting terrorism elsewhere in Iraq.

Iraqi factions and parties need genuine political will to overcome tribal and religious differences. Strengthening the current political consensus and implementing a constitution to prevent violations by factions or political groups will help to secure Iraq as a unified state, and to prevent regional interventions of the sort that have so far led to insecurity and destabilisation.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgments	iv
List of Acronyms.....	ix

INTRODUCTION 1

Background.....	1
1. Aims and Objectives.....	5
2. Rationale and Motivation.....	7
3. Research Question	10
4. Overview of Research.....	11

Chapter 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY 14

Introduction.....	14
1.1 Theory of Integration and Non-State Actors	17
1.2 Consociational Theory.....	19
1.3 Federalism Theory.....	23
1.3.1 Theorists of Federalism and Their Role in The Success of The Theory of Federalism.....	25
1.3.2 Definitions of Federalism.....	29
1.3.3 Federalism in Practice: As a Political Entity.....	32
Conclusion.....	35

Chapter 2: THE KURDS IN IRAQ 39

Introduction.....	39
2.1 A General Overview on Kurds and Kurdistan.....	39
2.2 The Kurds and Power Politics in Iraq.....	41
2.2.1 The Kurdish Situation During The Ottoman Period.....	43
2.2.2 The Situation of The Kurds During The British Mandate.....	44

2.2.3 The Growth of National Consciousness and The Emergence of Resistance Movements.....	47
2.2.4 The Kurds’ Situation During The Iran–Iraq War 1980-1988.....	53
Conclusion.....	55
Chapter 3: THE KURDISTAN REGIONAL GOVERNMENT (KRG) 1991-2003	57
Introduction.....	57
3.1 The Kuwait Crisis and The Outbreak of The Uprising in Kurdistan Region	58
3.2 The Kurdish Uprising in The North.....	60
3.3 The Establishment of Safe Havens for The Kurds and Its Protection....	63
3.4 The United Nation’s Resolutions on Iraq and Their Impact on the Kurds	66
3.5 The Formation of The Iraqi Kurdistan Front (IKF) and Its Implications	69
3.6 The Kurdish Elections in 1992 and The Establishment of KRG.....	71
3.7 The Outbreak of Internal Fighting Between The PUK and KDP.....	74
3.8 Reconciliation with The Administrative Division of The Kurdistan Region Between The PUK and The KDP.....	77
Conclusion.....	79
Chapter 4: THE KURDISTAN REGION, POST 2003: NEGOTIATING THE IRAQI CONSTITUTION	82
Introduction.....	82
4.1 Preparations For The War.....	85
4.2 Iraq’s Liberation and Repercussions on the Kurdistan Region.....	89
4.3 The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and The Interim Government of Iraq.....	91
4.4 The Formation of The Interim Governing Council of Iraq and Transitional Administrative Law (TAL).....	96
4.5 The Process of Elections (General and Provincial Elections) in The Kurdistan Region and Iraq.....	100
4.6 The New Iraqi Constitution and Its Repercussion Over The Kurdistan Region.....	108
Conclusion.....	118

Chapter 5: REPERCUSSIONS OF THE FEDERATIVE SYSTEM IN THE KURDISTAN REGION AND IRAQ 123

Introduction.....	123
5.1 Federalism and Achieving Peaceful Coexistence Among The Iraqi Factions	124
5.2 Reservations and Fear of Federalism.....	133
5.3 Obstacles of The Implementation of Federalism and Its Implications.....	139
Conclusion.....	144

Chapter 6: THE ISSUE OF KIRKUK AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS FOR THE KURDISTAN REGION 148

Introduction.....	148
6.1 The Emergence of Arabization in Kirkuk.....	150
6.2 The Ethnic Composition of The City of Kirkuk.....	157
6.3 Importance of The Census 1957 for The Issue of Kirkuk.....	161
6.4 Regional and International Interventions in The Kirkuk Issue.....	166
6.5 The Challenges for Kirkuk Post 2003.....	173
Conclusion.....	179

Chapter 7: IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 140 AND THE CASE OF KIRKUK 184

Introduction.....	184
7.1 Article 140 and its Implications for the Future of Kirkuk.....	187
7.2 Establishment of The Committees for Article 140.....	192
7.3 The Obstacles Against Implementing Article 140.....	197
7.4 Seeking Solutions to Chronic Dilemmas of The Issue Of Kirkuk.....	203
Conclusion.....	211

Chapter 8: CONSIDERING OIL CONTRACTS BETWEEN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND KRG	217
Introduction.....	217
8.1 Great Powers and The Competition Over Kirkuk's Oil Fields.....	219
8.2 The Dilemma of Legitimate Oil Contracts and The Distribution of Powers Between The Federal Government and The KRG.....	221
8.3 Moving Towards A Solution for The Distribution of Oil Revenues Between The Federal Government and The KRG.....	232
Conclusion.....	238
Chapter 9: CONSIDERING THE MILITARY AND THE CASE OF THE PESHMERGA	244
Introduction.....	244
9.1 The Status of The Kurds In The New Iraqi Army.....	246
9.2 The Exacerbating Crisis Between The Iraqi Federal Government and The KRG.....	250
9.3 Finding Solutions to Resolve The Differences.....	256
Conclusion.....	262
FINAL CONCLUSION	267
Charts, Graphs and Tables	278
Official Documents	297
Bibliography	301