

#### **Polish Journal of Political Science** Volume 10 Issue 2 Special Issue

#### **Editorial Board**

Clifford Angell Bates Jr., University of Warsaw Stephen Brooks, University of Michigan Michael Freeden, University of Nottingham, University of Oxford Marzenna James, Princeton University Angieszka Łukasik-Turecka, John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin Agostino Massa, University of Genoa Paolo Pombeni, University of Bologna Bogdan Szlachta, Jagiellonian University in Krakow Filip M. Szymański, Caridnal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw Andrea Zanini, University of Genoa Tomasz Żyro, University of Warsaw

#### **Editorial Team**

Special Issue Editor Piotr Sosnowski, University of Warsaw

#### **Lead Editors**

Chief editor: Jarosław Szczepański, University of Warsaw Secretary: Błażej Bado, University of Warsaw

#### Associate Editors Katarzyna Gruszka, University of Warsaw

Paulina Szczepańska, University of Warsaw

**Graphic design of the journal Krzysztof Trusz**, Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw

Desktop publishing Karolina Trusz

Language editor/Reviewing Adam Petrėtis

All articles in the journal are peer-reviewed

The journal is published by the Interdisciplinary Research Center of the University of Warsaw "Identity – Dialogue – Security" (Interdyscyplinarne Centrum Badawcze Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego "Tożsamość – Dialog – Bezpieczeństwo")

**Editorial address** Polish Journal of Political Science

Interdisciplinary Research Center of the University of Warsaw "Identity – Dialogue – Security" Prosta 69, 00-838 Warsaw email: centrum.tozsamosc@uw.edu.pl

Warsaw 2024

eISSN 2391-3991 Original version: e-book Submit your paper: pjps@uw.edu.pl



Polish Journal of Political Science is included in:



Tab	e of Contents
Intr	oduction to the Special Issue
4	<b>Piotr Sosnowski</b> State Building and Political Culture in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq
Arti	cles
10	<b>Mustafa Arıkan</b> Lifting Veil on Analyses of Political Fragmentations: A Critical Review of the "Cleavage Theses" in Iraqi Kurdistan Studies
44	Juan Carlos Castillo Quiñones Nohemi Echeverria Vicente (De)securitizing Kurdish Politics in Iraq? The Kurds in the Post-1991 Political Context
68	Kamal Chomani Corruption and Kurdish Nationalism: A Case Study of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq
96	Silvia-Lucretia Nicola A Tale of Two States? The Kurdistan Region of Iraq Caught Between Conflict and Cooperation with Central Iraq (1991–2020)
127	<b>Rebaz Jalal Ahmed Nanekeli</b> World Powers and the Fate of the Iraqi Kurds: Geopolitica Instability, the Emergence of the Kurdistan Region in Iraq and Its Survival



#### Mustafa Arıkan\*

Lifting Veil on Analyses of Political Fragmentations: A Critical Review of the "Cleavage Theses" in Iraqi Kurdistan Studies<sup>\*\*</sup>

DOI: 10.58183/pjps.0102SI2024

#### Abstract

This article focuses on political divisions in Iraqi Kurdistan. Fragmentation has consistently influenced both the political history and current politics of Iraqi Kurdistan. Consequently, understanding the historical and the current state of regional politics, as well as its future course, requires an awareness of political divisions. Due to this practical reality, political fragmentation is a subject addressed in numerous studies across various social science disciplines. Although many works discuss political schisms, only a few focus solely on divisions. Nevertheless, there is a scattered but rich analytical context for political cleavages, as these are addressed from diverse perspectives across multiple studies. This article first presents a bird's eye view of this analytical context and then critically assesses the literature on fragmentation in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Keywords fragmentation, cleavage, tribe, political party, Iraqi Kurdistan \* e-mail: marikan2003@gmail.com, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8034-3112

\*\* This article is an adaptation of author's PhD Dissertation, *Tribe*, *Party and Politics: A Study on Political Divisions Among Iraqi Kurds*, completed at Ankara University in 2023.



#### Introduction

his article examines analyses of fragmentation within the academic literature on Iraqi Kurdistan. Since the phenomenon of fragmentation remains as vital today as in the past, it continues to be an issue addressed by many studies dealing with the region across various disciplines. However, the scarcity of studies focused solely on this topic is notable. Here, the article centers on fragmentation, which most studies address as a secondary issue, exploring how it is framed in the region's historiography and the impact of these uses. Thus, a topic that most studies treat as secondary is positioned as the central theme of this article. In this context, the article has a number of intertwined aims. First, it seeks to provide a comprehensive analytical framework that offers an overview of the arguments in the literature explaining political divisions in Iraqi Kurdistan, here referred to as "cleavage theses." It then analyses the diverse ways these theses are used and their influence on related research. Through this approach, the article assesses the explanatory capacities of the conventional methods and conceptual tools typically employed to analyze political fragmentation in Iraqi Kurdistan studies. However, the aim extends beyond a critical re-reading of existing analyses in the literature. The article also proposes analyzing recent political fragmentation in the region through the concept of party. This shift in perspective implies a reconsideration of several key questions essential to studying the region.

S hould political fragmentation in Iraqi Kurdistan be analyzed as a matter of historical continuity, or as part of a history that includes important moments of transformation and interruption? In other words, should these fragmentations be analyzed as a meta-historical phenomenon that spans centuries in the region's history, or as a dynamic process consisting of distinct periods, each with transformations and unique characteristics worthy of detailed examination? To what extent is it valid to read the fragmentations as an eternal evil that recurs from the region's distant past to the present, and what assumptions underlie such an interpretation? Furthermore, do analyses based on concepts like "tribe," "tradition," "archaism," "backwardness," "betrayal," or a "lack of national consciousness" provide a suitable conceptual framework for understanding this issue? Do the endemic characteristics often attributed solely to Iraqi Kurdistan or the broader region suffice as a conceptual framework? Equally, to what extent does the intricate web of relations between external actors, such as great powers, regional states, or host states, and the region's political players clarify the issue? Why is there a scarcity of approaches that engage with concept/studies of parties in analyzing contemporary political fragmentation, whose sides are the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), which recently celebrated its

## of Polish Journal Science

78<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), one of the most influential organizations in the region for nearly half a century? What contribution or insight might the concept/studies of parties provide to the understanding of the contemporary situation in the region?

The questions above guide the conceptual research of fragmentation analysis in this study. Cleavage theses, as termed here, contain important clues about how key concepts, such as nation, state, and the political, are contextualized in literature on the region. This is because every determination of fragmentation is based on the presupposition of an ideal political unity or unification of society. It should be noted from the outset that fragmentation is not treated here as a traditional archaic obstacle to modern political integration strategies, which is more crystallized in discussions of nation- and state-building. Instead, this study aligns with perspectives suggesting that division is an inherent and contingent tendency of the political. Beginning particularly in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, fragmentation tendencies in the region have begun to have a modern character, suggesting that these tendencies are intrinsic to state-building processes that can be observed in many other societies. When examined through the concept of party, the fragmentations of this period point to sociological commonalities rather than anthropological distinctions that set the region apart from other parts of the world. In other words, fragmentation is addressed independently of idealized designs or strategies of political unity based on the nation or state. Put more succinctly, the discussion on political fragmentation moves from specific parts to the general whole, rather than from the whole to its parts. In this context, the article critiques the limitations of methodological nationalism within the region's historiography. Despite the significant implications that various interpretations of fragmentation hold for understanding the literature on the region, it is notable that there are very few studies devoted exclusively to this topic. Accordingly, another aim of this article is to draw attention to the importance of political fragmentation as an issue often referenced but seldom analyzed in depth.

A n analysis of the literature on Iraqi Kurdistan reveals that studies across diverse disciplines, from history and sociology to anthropology and political science, often touch upon political fragmentation or include sections that discuss this issue. This increases the value of the few studies devoted to the topic. Among these, A. Vali's *The Kurds and Their 'Others': Fragmented Identity and Fragmented Politics*, which examines fragmentation within the context of Kurdish identity and politics across regional states, occupies an important place.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, M. Gunter's works, *The KDP-PUK Conflict in Northern Iraq* and *Kurdish Disunity in Historical Perspective*, are pioneering in their direct focus on political fragmentation in Iraqi Kurdistan.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, many studies on Iraqi Kurdistan car1. A. Vali, *The Kurds and Their 'Others': Fragmented Identity and Fragmented Politics*, in: *The Kurds: Nationalism and Politics*, eds. F.A. Jabar, H. Dawod, Saqi Books 2006, pp. 49–78.

2. M. Gunter, *Kurdish Disunity in Historical Perspective*, "Seton Hall Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations", 2018, Vol. 19, pp. 26–45; M. Gunter, *The KDP-PUK Conflict in Northern Iraq*, "Middle East Journal", 1996, Vol. 50, No. 2, pp. 224–241.

ried out within different disciplines contain substantial insights on the subject, even if fragmentation is not their main focus. In political science, for example, *Iraqi Kurdistan: Political Development and Emergent Democracy*, considered a classic work on party politics in the region, offers important observations on these divisions.<sup>3</sup> Aga, Sheikh and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan represents one of the most authoritative works on this subject within the discipline of anthropology.<sup>4</sup> Classic works such as *The Kurdish National Movement: Its Origins and Development*,<sup>5</sup> A Modern *History of the Kurds*<sup>6</sup> and *The Kurds of Iraq: Building a State within a State*<sup>7</sup> contain rich data on the historical background of the fragmentations.

In addition to the above, many other studies on Iraqi Kurdistan with different disciplinary motives also contain sections on political fragmentation. This study attempts to address the confusion created by the richness of determinations, which at first glance appear scattered, by analytically categorizing them under the overarching term of "cleavage theses." Within this context, the article analyses what it calls "geo-political cleavage theses," which examine the sources of fragmentation through the lens of global and regional dynamics, linking them to competition among external actors such as "great powers" and "regional states" in Iraqi Kurdistan. A second category, focusing on local dynamics, includes arguments that address the issue through the geography, religion, language, and ethnicity in the region. Essentially, each fragmentation analysis offers an interpretative context in which several of these cleavage theses are used in combination. This study differs from conventional analyses that examine fragmentation directly, by focusing instead on the influence these different uses of cleavage theses have on historiography. It is also important to note that the academic literature on fragmentation extends beyond the scope of these categories. Recent studies, in particular, have sought to move past the traditional conceptual framework summarized above.

Recent studies that approach the issue, particularly regarding the conceptualization of de facto states, provide a significant discussion on political fragmentation. In this context, studies that approach the region from a security policy perspective, focusing on concepts such as "de facto state," "proxy war," and "patron-client relationship," offer new conceptual tools for analyzing political divisions, differing from those used in conventional analyses of the issue.<sup>8</sup> Other studies that approach the issue with a similar conceptual framework illuminate the impact of a multi-patron setting within a dynamic network of patron-client relationships on political divisions from a different angle.<sup>9</sup> Analyses of the "fragmented de facto state structure" in Iraqi Kurdistan, viewed through the complex internal dynamics of the region, contribute significantly to the analytical context of political divisions.

3. G.R.V. Stansfield, Iraqi Kurdistan: Political Development and Emergent Democracy, Routledge Curzon 2003.

13

4. M. van Bruinessen, Agha, Shaikh and State: The Social and Political Structure of Kurdistan, Zed Books 1992.

5. W. Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement: Its Origins and Development*, Syracuse University Press 2006.

6. D. McDowall, *A Modern History of The Kurds*, I. B. Tauris 2004.

7. O. Bengio, *The Kurds of Iraq: Building a State within a State*, Lynne Reinner Publishers 2012.

8. P. Sosnowski, Path Dependence from Proxy Agent to De Facto State: A History of 'Strategic Exploitation' of the Kurds as a Context of the Iraqi Kurdistan Security Policy, "International Journal of Conflict and Violence", 2022, Vol. 16, pp. 1–13, DOI: 10.11576/ijcv-5688.

9. K. Palani, *Client Agency in a multiple patron setting: The case of Iraqi Kurdistan*, "Territory, Politics, Governance", 2024, pp. 1–18, DOI: 10.1080/21622671.2024.2390526.

By considering Iraqi Kurdistan as a "fluid political entity" from the outset, these analyses relate the internal dynamics to the "volatile partnerships" and party competition surrounding the power structure, brings a new theoretical perspective to the fragmentation debate.<sup>10</sup> The possibilities offered by this new analytical context are important for understanding the impact of political fragmentation not only on the region's recent past but also on its contemporary situation, as exemplified by the independence referendum.<sup>11</sup> In terms of the conceptual tools they use, studies in this group employ a comparative perspective that tends to treat the phenomenon of fragmentation not as an endemic feature of the region but as a political phenomenon with commonalities in other parts of the world. This study takes a similar approach, but follows a different path. It analyses the region's recent history within the framework of the fragmentation debate, focusing on the concept of party, and argues that the tendency towards fragmentation is a contingent tendency with a modern character inherent in the institutionalization of political power from the outset.

This study aims to highlight the absence of the concept of "party" in analyses of a society whose recent history has been significantly marked by party fragmentation. It focuses on the crucial role that political parties have begun to play in the region since the latter half of the last century. Despite the vibrant party landscape in Iraqi Kurdistan, there is a notable lack of extensive literature on party studies in the region. Consequently, it is challenging to assert that the political parties in the region are the subject of theoretical interest commensurate with their practical importance. To address this gap, the study conducts a selective reading of data from existing research on the region's recent past, focusing on fragments within the literature that show the importance of the role played by political parties. The article employs a method of selective reconsideration of historical data presented in relevant studies. In this context, it emphasizes the importance of political parties not only in representing divisions within Kurdish society but also in constructing and perpetuating these divisions. Moreover, the study argues that numerous aspects of this issue require analysis through the lens of the concept of "party," and that conventional analyses have certain limitations when approached from this perspective. Thus, rather than being based on empirical findings about fragmentation, the research is conceptual, utilizing data from existing literature. Ultimately, it posits that this research will enrich the field by testing the assumptions guiding fragmentation analyses and historiography in Iraqi Kurdistan studies, while also adding a new field to party studies that generally focus on the Western world. Iraqi Kurdistan, therefore, presents a promising area of observation for party studies concerning the fragmentation debate.

10. K. Palani, *Kurdistan's De Facto Statehood: A New Explanatory Framework*, Routledge 2023, pp. 16–20.

14

11. K. Palani, et al., *The Development of Kurdistan's de facto statehood: Kurdistan's September 2017 referendum for independence*, "Third World Quarterly", 2019, Vol. 40, Issue 12, p. 2271, DOI: 10.1080/01436597.2019.1619452.



#### Cleavage Theses in Iraqi Kurdistan Studies

revery analysis of political fragmentation in Iraqi Kurdistan presents an explanatory context in Luwhich various arguments are used together. These arguments, each aimed at clarifying certain aspects of the issue, can be labelled as cleavage theses. Analytically, these theses can be categorized into two groups based on their emphasis on external or internal sources of cleavages. The first group of cleavage theses focuses on the external sources of political divisions in a border region. These arguments, referred to as "geo-political cleavage theses," aim to shed light on the roles of global and regional actors that influence the shaping of cleavages. Geo-political cleavage theses, which can be applied to different periods, draw attention to the impact of the intricate network of relations established by empires, great powers, or nation-states with the political actors of the region. The second group of theses differs from the first by emphasizing local dynamics in the region. At the center of these theses are anthropological, psychological, linguistic, theological, geographical, and, in some cases even outright speculative arguments. For instance, the argument that explains divisions through a "betrayal reflex" is speculative, while the argument that divergence is due to feelings of "hatred" and "jealousy" between factions relies on a crude psychologism. Other theses that focus on local dynamics emphasize the distinction between the northern and southern parts of the region in various respects. For example, when the dialect distinction (Bahdinan-Soran) between the two regions is highlighted, a linguistic element is incorporated into the analysis. When influential religious orders (Naqshbandi-Qadiri) or the religious-secular divide are mentioned, a theological argument is added. Similarly, when the distinction between mountain and plain, or the emphasis on mountainous topography, which facilitates fragmentation while hindering integration, is brought up, a geographical argument is incorporated into the analysis of fragmentation. In most cases, analyses of fragmentation based on ethnic references, such as "Kurdish factionalism," are closely related to the "concept of tribe." When considering local dynamics, it can be said that the most effective argument within conventional analyses is the "anthropological division thesis," which focuses on the concept of tribe.

In its simplest form, the anthropological thesis seeks to identify the guiding principle behind fragmentation tendencies in Kurdish society through the logic of tribal organization. It constitutes the most theoretically sound argument within the conventional analytical context that focuses on the local dynamics of fragmentation. This thesis is informed not only by the long-standing practical impact of tribes on divisions but also by the rich literary corpus on tribes that has gradually developed over centuries. From classical works of the imperial era to the official archives of the modern period, and from the observations of orientalists to the fieldwork of anthropologists, this vast body of literature

contains a rich record of tribal structures and dynamics. A recurrent theme in this literature is the tension between "raison d'état" and the "tribal reflex." However, this thesis finds its most theoretically robust expression in anthropological literature. The political principle of tribal organization, specifically the principle of segmentary opposition/alliance, is most clearly manifested in conflicts. This principle operates not only at the tribal level but also at supra-tribal levels, such as confederations and emirates. Indeed, alongside the primary ideological concept of segmentary opposition/alliance (and the solidarity of the tribe against outsiders), one sometimes finds traces of a dichotomy within the social universe that cuts across this tribal segmentation. The alliances forged between chieftains seeking external support against their rivals and foreign powers aiming to expand their influence in the region demonstrate how political fragmentations, triggered by conflicts, have historically been manipulated by states.<sup>12</sup> In this context, Bruinessen develops one of the most comprehensive and in-depth analyses of fragmentation, effectively balancing the internal and external dynamics of conflict-induced divisions.

The anthropological thesis, which brings the influence of intra- and inter-tribal conflicts into the analysis of divisions, provides a valuable contribution to the context of this issue. Many studies on Iraqi Kurdistan, spanning disciplines from history to political science, contain various interpretations of the anthropological thesis. Within these, it is important to distinguish between two distinct applications. The first use of the anthropological thesis involves analyzing specific historical cases. For instance, tribe-oriented analyses can be integrated into a wide range of analyses, from the revolts of the Baban Emirate in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century to the Sheikh Ubaidullah rebellion at the century's end, or from the collapse of the Mahabad Republic in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century to the clash between political parties in Iraqi Kurdistan during the 1990s. As can be seen from the examples, there is a second use of the anthropological thesis in which the chronological ordering of these cases becomes a meta-historical generalization. The most powerful aspect of this thesis is its ability to point to a historical continuity and ground it theoretically. However, this very reason, ironically, also introduces certain limitations. Its use emphasizes that fragmentations have been a persistent feature for centuries, due to tribal culture. Moreover, the concept of the tribe, which is open to the "implication of primitiveness," serves a critical role in framing these fragmentations as archaic tendencies. Most of the characterizations of the region, such as "feudal," "backward," and "traditional," are influenced by the anthropological thesis in various ways. Consequently, a fragmentation analysis of the recent past that predominantly relies on the anthropological thesis tends to assume that unification processes are modern, while fragmentation tendencies are traditional in nature. In this context, cleavages are 12. M. van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State...*, op. cit., pp. 50, 74, 77.

viewed as interruptions in history, or worse, as regressions. Such an analysis approaches the issue from the perspective that schisms represent inherently negative tendencies that disrupt the ideal process of statehood. Therefore, alternative approaches that the issue from different perspectives can help illuminate the dominant state-centric obsession within conventional analyses.<sup>13</sup> From this point of view, the possibility that fragmentation tendencies may be triggered by unification processes, that these fragmentations can transform and evolve throughout history, and that they may take different forms in the contemporary period lies beyond the purview of the anthropological thesis. These limitations not only affect analyses of fragmentation but also the historiography of the region's recent past.

onventional approaches frequently offer an analytical framework that integrates theses con-∠cerning both internal and external factors. It is important to emphasize once again the analytical nature of the aforementioned classification. However, there are instances where the overapplication of these theses reaches an extreme. This is most clearly exemplified in interpretations that depict Iraqi Kurdistan as fragmented by external powers while simultaneously grappling with archaic tendencies toward fragmentation. This should not be misconstrued as merely a retrospective assessment; rather, it also serves as a historical backdrop for numerous evaluations of the contemporary period. Throughout this long history, it should be remembered that Iraqi Kurdistan, which has experienced a form of statehood for a quarter of a century, has undergone significant changes that have transformed the socio-political landscape of the region. These changes include the replacement of emirates by sheikhdoms, the emergence of nation-states following the disintegration of empires, the population's shift from rural to predominantly urban settings, and the emergence of modern organizations such as political parties. Despite this dynamic historical background in which society has changed and transformed in almost every aspect, the stagnation of analyses that explain the local sources of contemporary divisions through a lens of "tribal archaism" constitutes a remarkable contradiction. Particularly in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the anthropological thesis has evolved into a kind of historiographical obsession in the study of Iraqi Kurdistan, especially concerning fragmentation, which tends to interpret local dynamics solely through the prism of tribalism. This period has fostered an analytical framework that insists on the theoretical explanation of a region that is, in practice, divided into political parties, all within the confines of the concept of tribe. In this context, the notable absence of any mention of party politics is an omission that warrants attention. The absence of reference to the concept of party represents a blind spot in analyses of division during the modern period.

13. For such an approach, see: H. Baris, *The Kurds: "A History of Deliberate and Reactive Statelessness"*, in: *Conflict, insecurity and mobility*, eds. I. Sirkeci, J.H. Cohen, P. Yazgan, Transnational Press 2016, pp. 89–100.

On the Concept of Party

t is difficult to find a word that better reflects the different modes of political thought regarding the L part-whole relationship than "party." The evolution of the term "party" into its modern meaning is interpreted through the roots "partager," meaning to share, which carries positive implications, and "partire," meaning to divide.<sup>14</sup> This term has a history of competing meanings of "factio" and "pars."<sup>15</sup> In the history of political thought, where the ideal society is envisioned through organic analogies based on the notion of "body politic," there exists a longstanding tradition that emphasizes the importance of harmony and balance among the parts of this political body. The negative connotation associated with the word in relation to "factio" or "part" stems from its incompatibility with this tradition. Its inherent association with "part" and "fragmentation" burdens the concept of party with a cursed legacy. The fundamental tendency to associate it with difference, division, conflict, and opposition allows it to carry negative implications within a political thought tradition that constructs the ideal society around "unity" and "harmony."<sup>16</sup> In many Western languages, the fact that one of its meanings is "side" reflects a common idea: taking sides in a political conflict, aligning with a particular camp.<sup>17</sup> The connotations of fragmentation embedded in the origin of the word form the basis for its application to groups or factions perceived as threats to the integrity of the political body. Notably, in Kurdish, the Arabic word *hizb*, which also translates to faction, is widely used to refer to a political party, alongside the term "party," which is phonetically almost identical to the word party in Western languages. Interestingly, the usage of the term "tribe" in fragmentation analyses within Kurdish studies and the etymologically burdened legacy of the word "party" appear to share a similar fate. In instances where the political and the part-whole relationship is envisioned through an idealized fantasy of integrity, the phenomenon that represents the part, whether it be a tribe or a party, becomes subject to a cursed designation. The relationship of political parties with fragmentation extends beyond this ethical debate on the etymology of the word "party," finding its place in academic studies on parties.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, political parties in the West sought to establish themselves in an intellectual environment that was largely unreceptive to their presence.<sup>18</sup> Foundational scholars in party studies, including James Bryce, Moisei Ostrogorski, and Robert Michels, offered sharp critiques of political parties as organizational models, pointing to the disruption they introduced within political society. Moreover, numerous studies on political parties have engaged with debates around divisions from multiple perspectives. These discussions are not limited to analyses of parliamentary competition but also encompass assessments of revolutionary party models, which aim to seize power through organized violence.<sup>19</sup> By the mid-20th century, Maurice Duverger, a pivotal figure in party studies, 14. G. Sartori, *Party and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis*, Cambridge University Press 1976, p. 4.

18

15. K. von Beyme, *Political Parties*, in: *Marxism, Communism and Western Society: A Comparative Encyclopedia*, ed. C.D. Kernig, Herder and Herder 1972, p. 343.

16. P. Ignazi, *Party and Democracy: The Uneven Road to Party Legitimacy*, Oxford University Press 2017, p. 1.

17. D.L. Seiler, *Parties*, in: *International Encyclopedia of Political Science*, eds.B. Badie, D. Berg-Schlosser, L. Morlino, Sage Publications 2011, p. 1791.

18. S.E. Scarrow, The Nineteenth Century Origins of Modern Political Parties: The Unwanted Emergence of Party-Based Politics, in: Handbook of Party Politics, eds. R.S. Katz, W. Crotty, Sage Publications 2006, p. 16.

19. É. Balibar, (The Right to) Tendencies, or the Right to Set Up Organized Groups Within the Party (1982), Viewpoint Magazine 2017, https://viewpointmag. com/2017/12/18/right-tendenciesright-set-organized-groups-withinparty-1982/, (access 21.05.2019).

articulated a key ontological argument about the nature of political systems, highlighting the inherent tendencies of two-party systems. According to Duverger, although there is not always a dualism of parties, there is invariably a dualism of tendencies; this means that a genuine center does not exist in politics. Although a centrist party may be established, there is no corresponding center tendency or doctrine. The center represents the intersection where moderate elements of opposing tendencies converge, yet all centers are inherently divided against themselves, often split into two halves. In this sense, the fate of the center is to be torn apart, buffeted, or annihilated. There is no real center except the superposition of dualisms, and all significant factional struggles throughout history are dualistic in nature.<sup>20</sup> To clarify Duverger's definition of the political, it is necessary to consult not his seminal work on political parties but another of his writings. In this latter work, while reflecting on the nature of politics, he mentions two tendencies: "politics as war" and "politics as unification." According to Duverger, the figure of Janus symbolizes both a literal representation of the state and the deepest political reality. One aspect of Janus symbolizes war, while the other embodies unification, with a complex dialectical relationship between the two. This is because every war contains a desire for fusion and unity, which corresponds to an effort to revive it. Consequently, distinguishing between the two faces of Janus becomes challenging. This is true for parties striving for genuine unification; from one perspective, politics for opposition parties corresponds to war, while for ruling parties, it aligns with unification.<sup>21</sup>

In the late 1960s, Seymour M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan introduced one of the most significant theories of party systems, known as the "cleavages model." Their theory centered on understanding the conditions necessary for the formation and stabilization of a system of intra-social antagonisms and divisions on a national scale, and how these divisions are reflected in a country's party system through electoral clusters. Lipset and Rokkan proposed a four-pronged configuration of cleavages by overlaying two axes, which broadly correspond to interest/ideology and center-periphery oppositions. The first axis refers to the functional aspects of divisions, while the second axis pertains to their territorial dimensions. This framework elucidates the lines of division, including state-church, land-industry, labor-capital, and center-periphery. These divisions form the sociological basis for the emergence of parties, aligning various groups of voters around these issues. Lipset and Rokkan argued that these lines of division persisted from the 1920s to the 1960s due to their institutionalization, leading to a tendency to "freeze" these divisions within the political landscape.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, Lipset argues that their theory has a dynamic character, despite the claim of freezing, as the four main sources of divisions continue to exist to some extent in the contemporary period, merging with 20. M. Duverger, *Political Parties, their* organization and activity in the modern state, transl. B. North, R. North, Methuen & Co. Ltd 1959, pp. 174, 215, 216.

19

21. M. Duverger, *The Study of Politics*, transl. R. Wagoner, Thomas Y. Crowell Company Inc. 1972, pp. 20, 219.

22. S.M. Lipset, S. Rokkan, Cleavages Structures, Party Systems and Voter Alignments: An Introduction, in: Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives, eds. S.M. Lipset, S. Rokkan, Macmillan Company 1967, pp. 3, 5, 54.

new lines of division.<sup>23</sup> Both Duverger's and Lipset-Rokkan's assessments show that political parties can be associated with divisions in various ways, albeit through different lenses. However, they are similar in their interpretation of parties as reflections of societal divisions. While Lipset and Rokkan argue that parties form along the lines of cleavages and play an active role in their institutionalization, they view parties as epiphenomena of societal cleavages, whereas they are seen as epiphenomena of the dualism of tendencies. In addition, many concepts developed in the field of party studies emphasize the structuring effect or active character of parties on both the state and society. These concepts, which highlight the positive or negative impacts of parties on the political system, have a wide normative range. For example, the term "party-government" emphasizes the contribution of parties to the functioning of liberal democracy, while "party democracy" draws attention to the role of parties in the degeneration of democracy. While the concept of the "cartel party" emphasizes the damage caused to the party system by the increasing penetration of the state by parties with weakened representativeness, whereas "partitocracy" points to the corrupting influence of parties on the political system.

t can be said that the concept of "party-state" marks the extreme point of both the aforementioned Inormative spectrum and the relationship between parties and the state. In this context, it is ironic that in totalitarian regimes, where the party is at the center of the system, the revenge of holism and monism paradoxically returns as a form of the party, which is essentially its ontological enemy.<sup>24</sup> In addressing the issue of division, there are evaluations that point to the influential role of parties. Here, one can refer to the tradition of leftist thought, which views the party not only as an organizational form that reflects societal divisions but also as an entity that gives these divisions a political form and aims to transform them. Recent studies have suggested that parties often serve as effective agents in structuring social divisions, rather than merely being organizational manifestations of states, ambitious politicians, or voters.<sup>25</sup> The rich etymological and academic context surrounding the concept of "party" illuminates its relationship to political divisions in many respects. Firstly, a party serves as a type of organization in which various societal lines of division find expression in the modern sense. Consequently, social divisions manifest politically through party organization in the modern era. However, the party not only reflects and expresses divisions; it also institutionalizes and perpetuates them. Furthermore, it can be considered as a collective agent that plays a constructive role in structuring divisions. The etymological debate regarding the origins of the word "party" suggests that it carries a weight that is highly susceptible to being associated with ethically "malignant" tendencies toward fragmentation. Nevertheless, when examining how the concept has

23. S.M. Lipset, *Cleavages, Parties and Democracy*, in: *Party Systems and Voter Alignments Revisited*, eds. L. Karvonen, S. Kuhle, Routledge 2001, pp. 5, 8.

Volume 10 Issue 2 (2024) Special Issue

24. P. Ignazi, *Party and Democracy...*, op. cit., p. 3.

25. C. De Leon, M. Desai, C. Tuğal, Political Articulation: The Structured Creativity of Parties, in: Building Blocs: How Parties Organize Society, eds. C. de Leon, M. Desai, C. Tuğal, Stanford University Press 2015, p. 2.

Party Politics in Iraqi Kurdistan	acquired its modern meaning, one can argue that the party represents an intrinsic tendency towards political fragmentation in the modern period. Thus, the concept implies that divisive tendencies cannot be reduced to archaic deviations but recognized as contemporary phenomena. This does not imply a rigid determinism, that society is inevitably fragmented along deep lines of division, but rather highlights that the concept allows for an understanding of fragmentations as one of the contingent tendencies inherent in modern party politics. This etymological and academic framework surrounding the concept of "party" presents an alternative perspective for analyzing a social and political context fragmented into parties in the contemporary period. It is noteworthy that this etymological/academic framework is hardly touched upon in the analysis of political fragmentation in Iraqi Kurdistan. Because analyzing a society that an be said to have been clearly divided into parties since the last quarter of the 20 <sup>th</sup> century, without mentioning the concept of "party", which is inherently linked to political divisions in many ways, or to some theoretical attempts in party studies, constitutes a significant analytical gap. It is crucial to recognize that a political system characterized by active party politics and evident fragmentation is being analyzed within an analytical framework that overlooks the concept of "party" in relation to fragmentation. To address this point, it is important to highlight the trajectory of party politics in the region by recalling the critical turning points in the history of Iraqi Kurdistan.	<ul> <li>26. F. Tachau, I. Parties of the M Africa, ed. F. Ta Limited 1994, p</li> <li>27. J. La Paloml Origin and Deu Parties, in: Poli Development, e</li> <li>Weiner, Prince 1966, p. 3.</li> <li>28. R. Hinnebu and Trade Unio the History of t M. Choueiri, B 2005, p. 335.</li> <li>29. V. Durac, F. Governance in Macmillan 201</li> </ul>
---	---	---

Volume 10 Issue 2 (2024) Special Issue

26. F. Tachau, *Introduction*, in: *Political Parties of the Middle East and North Africa*, ed. F. Tachau, Mansell Publishing Limited 1994, p. xiii.

27. J. La Palombara, M. Weiner, *The Origin and Development of Political Parties*, in: *Political Parties and Political Development*, eds. J. La Palombara, M. Weiner, Princeton University Press 1966, p. 3.

28. R. Hinnebusch, *Political Parties and Trade Unions*, in: *A Companion to the History of the Middle East*, ed. Y. M. Choueiri, Blackwell Publishing Ltd 2005, p. 335.

29. V. Durac, F. Cavatorta, *Politics and Governance in the Middle East*, Palgrave Macmillan 2015, p. 117.

It is worth noting that Iraqi Kurdistan has experienced a political history since the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century where party politics and political divisions are closely intertwined and can be clearly traced. However, much like the scarcity of studies focusing exclusively on divisions, research on party politics in the region is limited, with only a few exceptions.<sup>30</sup> Similarly to the analysis of fragmentation, political parties are a key topic explored by numerous studies on the region from various perspectives. In fact, it is impossible to describe, let alone analyze, Iraqi Kurdistan since the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century without addressing the role of political parties. This stems from the pivotal role parties have played in the recent history of the region. To better understand the relationship between parties and political divisions, it is useful to recall the critical periods of this history, keeping the issue of political fragmentation in mind.

A fitting starting point for the history of party politics in Iraqi Kurdistan is 1946, the year the region's oldest party, the KDP, was founded. However, this starting point is rooted in a long and intricate historical backdrop. The modernization efforts in the Ottoman Empire play a significant role in this history. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, various platforms, such as clubs and political parties, emerged as new forums for negotiating authority.<sup>31</sup> In the following years, Iran underwent a similar modernization process.<sup>32</sup> During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Kurdish elites in both Turkey and Iran were active participants in party politics within these countries. Some of these elites even established nationalist cadre parties aimed at mobilizing the masses.<sup>33</sup>

The modernization process in Iraq under the British mandate, rooted in Ottoman modernization and in some ways continuing it, forms a crucial component of this history. By the 1930s, Iraqi Kurdistan began to see the emergence of collective actions and organizations with a modern character.<sup>34</sup> During this period, the Kurdish community in Iraq was introduced to different forms of party politics and began to integrate into them. Some Kurdish elites became involved in Iraqi parliamentary politics, while others on the one hand.<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, as the example of the newly organized Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) demonstrates,<sup>36</sup> the region experiences party politics inspired by leftist thought. The region became a field of activity for a number of modern organizations with ideological tendencies ranging from nationalism to Marxism.<sup>37</sup>

S mall Kurdish nationalist groups, whose stories are difficult to pin down and which emerge in various places, should also be added to the above picture.<sup>38</sup> As far as the establishment of the KDP in Iraq, the interaction of Iraqi Kurds with Kurdish movements in other countries must also be taken 30. I. Costantini, D. O'Driscoll, *Party Politics in Quasi-states: Iraqi Kurdistan*, in: *Routledge Handbook on Political Parties in the Middle East and North Africa*, eds. F. Cavatorta, L. Storm, V. Resta, Routledge 2021, p. 218.

22

31. J. Klein, *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone*, Stanford University Press 2011, p. 96.

32. M. Cabi, The Formation of Modern Kurdish Society in Iran: Modernity, Modernization and Social Change 1921-1979, I. B. Tauris 2021, pp. 101–102.

33. M. van Bruinessen, *Kürdistan Üzerine Yazılar*, transl. Nevzat Kılıç, et al., İletişim Yayınları 2013, p. 99.

34. J.T. Gorgas, Urban Mobilization in Iraqi Kurdistan during the British Mandate: Sulaimaniya 1918-30, "Middle Eastern Studies", 2008, Vol. 44, No. 4, p. 542.

35. C. Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, Cambridge University Press 2007, pp. 51, 63.

36. T.Y. Ismael, *The Rise and Fall of the Communist Party*, Cambridge University Press 2008, p. 21.

37. F. Halliday, *Can We Write a Modernist History of Kurdish Nationalism?*, in: *The Kurds: Nationalism and Politics*, eds. F.A. Jabar, H. Dawod, Saqi Books 2006, pp. 14–16.

38. C. Kutschera, *Kürt Ulusal Hareketi*, transl. F. Başkaya, Avesta Yayınlarıc 2013, pp. 163–164.

into account, especially during a time when the official borders of the Kurdistan region were often fluid for Kurdish movements. The Republic of Mahabad, founded in Iran under the auspices of the USSR,<sup>39</sup> and representing the transition from a tribal society dominated by face-to-face relations to a phase in which a society establishes itself as a nation or imagined community,<sup>40</sup> deeply influenced Kurdish movements in the region.<sup>41</sup> In the experience of the Republic, in which Iraqi Kurds were actively involved in its founding, a nationalist community first evolved into a political party, and then the party quickly transformed into a short-lived state. The creation of the Mahabad Republic in Iran had a significant impact on the formation of the KDP in Iraq. Sheikhs and chieftains remained the main political actors in the region, sometimes taking part in the leadership of these organizations, sometimes competing with them. However, the general view of the region described above reflects quite well the historical and sociological complexities behind both the transformation of the region's organizational practices and the establishment of the KDP in Iraq in 1946.

The founding of the KDP in Iraq represents a highly significant political transformation. In a classic work on parties in the region, Gareth Stansfield notes that many characteristics of contemporary Iraqi Kurdistan can be traced back to the founding of the KDP, both structurally and ideologically.<sup>42</sup> In Iraqi Kurdistan, where tribal and local forms of solidarity continued to dominate, the establishment of the KDP made the national movement, in the modern sense, the central force in society.<sup>43</sup> It provided the Kurdish movement with an organizational framework, an ideological program, and a political center.<sup>44</sup> With the establishment of the KDP, the Kurds in Iraq, for the first time, had a leading party that led the nationalist movement and defined its goals.<sup>45</sup> In this regard, the establishment of the KDP, whose emergence and development can be considered the most important political development of this period,<sup>46</sup> heralds the beginning of an era in which nationalist movements were organized and unified into autonomous political parties that could mobilize easily in rural areas and dominate the political sphere.<sup>47</sup>

The diversity of the social and ideological profiles of its members reflects the extent to which the founding of the party was able to unite various groups. The establishment of the KDP in Iraq brought together charismatic tribal chieftains like Mullah Mustafa Barzani, influential sheikhs like Latif Berzenci, members of nationalist organizations such as Hiwa, officials from the Iraqi branch of the KDP-Iran (KDP-I), and militants from revolutionary parties like Soresh, Rizgari, and the ICP. The dilemma arising from this diversity set the stage for factional struggles within the party in the years to come.<sup>48</sup> In fact, as factional struggles became more frequent, each phase of the

39. A. Roosevelt, *The Kurdish Republic* of Mahabad, in: A People Without a *Country: The Kurds and Kurdistan*, ed. G. Chailand, transl. M. Pallis, Zed Books 1993, p. 127.

23

40. F. Koohi-Kamali, *The Political De*velopment of the Kurds in Iran: Pastoral Nationalism, Palgrave Macmillan 2003, pp. 11, 123.

41. H. Tahiri, The Nostalgic Republic: The Kurdish Republic of 1946 and Its Effect on Kurdish Identity and Nation Building in Iran, in: Kurdish Awakening: Nation Building in a Fragmented Homeland, ed. O. Bengio, University of Texas Press 2014, pp. 257, 261.

42. G.R.V. Stansfield, *Iraqi Kurdistan...*, op. cit., p. 61.

43. M. Eppel, Historical Setting: The Roots of Modern Kurdish Nationalism, in: Kurdish Awakening: Nation Building in a Fragmented Homeland, ed. O. Bengio, University of Texas Press 2014, p. 62.

44. O. Bengio, *The Kurds of Iraq...*, op. cit., p. 13.

45. E. Ghareeb, *The Kurdish Question*, Syracuse University Press 1981, p. 36.

46. M. Farouk-Sluglett, P. Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958: From Revolution to Dictatorship*, I. B. Tauris Publisher 2001, p. 126.



 $\mathbf{24}$ 

KDP's strengthening and state-oriented institutionalization was accompanied by a discussion of fragmentation.

Party politics in Iraqi Kurdistan has a rich history of factionalism. The literature often explains intra-party factionalism in terms of the contrast between conservative elites and modernist intellectuals within the party ranks. However, party politics in the 1950s also witnessed rivalries that show that factionalism was not limited to this contrast. In his account of factional struggles in the 1950s, Kutschera highlights the intra-party struggle between the "progressive wing" and the "nationalist wing."<sup>49</sup> The return of Mullah Mustafa Barzani to Iraq after the 1958 revolution, when he became the undisputed leader of the Kurdish movement, significantly affected the divisions within the party. Fragmentation within the party was largely defined by the contrast between Mullah Mustafa, representing the conservative elite, and the party cadres influenced by left-wing ideologies.<sup>50</sup> In the early 1960s, uprisings by Kurdish tribes turned into a large-scale rebellion led by Mullah Mustafa, which became known as the "September Revolution." Beginning with this revolution, the party institutionalized and established itself as a shadow state, controlling certain parts of Iraqi Kurdistan reflects the party's growing influence in the region.<sup>51</sup>

H owever, this process of institutionalization and the strengthening of the Kurdish movement through the party was accompanied by significant fragmentation within the party itself. In some assessments, the region was effectively controlled by two separate armies: the tribal forces led by Mullah Mustafa stationed in the north, and the partisans controlling a smaller area.<sup>52</sup> These two factions operated with different political motivations.<sup>53</sup> The sharpness of the split is evident in the fact that both sides organized separate congresses under the name of the party and declared themselves the legitimate representatives of the KDP. This polarization quickly escalated into armed conflict.<sup>54</sup> In other words, during this period, the KDP split into two wings, each claiming to be the true party.<sup>55</sup> It was also during this time that the Kurdish term *jash*, meaning "donkey foal" was coined. This term would later be used to accuse communities that cooperated with the central authority of treason.

Bruinessen's use of binary opposition in describing the parties involved in the 1960s split emphasizes that, in addition to differing social classes, conflicting class interests, and political views, the parties also represented two distinct regions: Barzani and his allied tribes, and the urban, educated members of the KDP Politburo. This split also extended to geographic and linguistic divisions, 47. A. Rafaat, *Kurdistan in Iraq: The Evolution of a Quasi-state*, Routledge 2018, pp. 53–54.

48. D. Kinnane, *The Kurds and Kurdistan*, Oxford University Press 1964, p. 18. Volume 10 Issue 2 (2024) Special Issue

49. C. Kutschera, *Kürt Ulusal...*, op. cit., pp. 236–238.

50. H. Bozarslan, *Being in Time: The Kurdish Movement and Universal Quests*, in: *The Kurdish Question Revisited*, eds. G. Stansfield, M. Shareef, Oxford University Press 2017, p. 68.

51. For these assessments see: A. Rafaat, *Kurdistan in Iraq...*, op. cit., pp. 89–97; Y. Voller, *The Kurdish Liberation Movement in Iraq: From Insurgency to Statehood*, Routledge 2014, p. 47.

52. D. Adamson, *The Kurdish War*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1964, p. 148.

53. E. O'Ballance, *The Kurdish Struggle 1920-94*, Palgrave Macmillan 1996, p. 179.

54. C. Kutschera, *Kürt Ulusal...*, op. cit., p. 296.

55. O. Bengio, *The Kurds of Iraq...*, op. cit., p. 32.

with the Bahdinan region versus the Soran region, and Kurmanji dialect versus Sorani dialect, reflecting the complex nature of the split.<sup>56</sup> McDowall, on the other hand, notes that the region became fragmented after the split, with figures like Ibrahim Ahmad, Celal Talabani, and PDK leaders defending their ideological positions shaped over the past two decades. Meanwhile, Mullah Mustafa united conservatives, tribal leaders, and religious figures. From the perspectives of the two sides, the division was seen as a struggle between the religious and the secular, the primordial and the nationalist, and tradition versus atheistic Marxism.<sup>57</sup> In this context, many dualisms found expression in the internal factional struggles within the party, each side aiming to capture the center of the Kurdish movement.

A lthough the division is evident in the contrast between the party's politburo and the tribal chieftaincy, it is worth noting that the line separating the party and the tribe is sometimes blurred. On the one hand, Mullah Mustafa, whose authority was based on his dominance over the tribes, fully utilized the opportunities provided by the party organization. On the other hand, there was a political equation in which the politburo leadership, whose armed forces consisted of partisans, could occasionally form alliances with the tribes. In this context, the division between the tribe and the party, as well as the fusion of their organizational practices, should not be overlooked. This is because the divisive tendencies of the 1960s require consideration of the structuring effect of party politics on political divisions. The roots of contemporary divisions and conflicts in Iraqi Kurdistan can be traced back to this period.<sup>58</sup> The following decades represent a time when the tendencies of fragmentation, which accompanied the party's strengthening and institutionalization or its political integration strategies, became even more pronounced.

The 1970s began with the March 11 Agreement, which represented a compromise between the KDP and the Iraqi government. According to one of the negotiators representing the Kurdish side, it marked "the beginning of a golden age of de facto autonomy."<sup>59</sup> For the first time, the Iraqi regime recognized the Kurds' territorial autonomy.<sup>60</sup> However, this period, which lasted until the resumption of hostilities in 1974, can also be seen as a phase in which party cadres learned and practiced management and administrative techniques.<sup>61</sup> Given the party's dominance and organizational structure in the region during this period, it could be argued that the KDP functioned much like a de facto state.<sup>62</sup> In this sense, Rafaat's argument holds some merit: while Iraq's authority faltered, the regime can be considered a "recognized quasi-state," and the political entity in the Kurdistan region as an "unrecognized quasi-state."<sup>63</sup> During this period, the party faction led by Jalal Talabani and Ibrahim Ahmad also

56. M. van Bruinessen, Kürtlük, Türklük, Alevilik: Etnik ve Dinsel Kimlik Mücadeleleri, transl. H. Yurdakul, İletişim Yayınları 2009, p. 80.

25

57. D. McDowall, *A Modern History*..., op. cit., p. 316.

58. K.S. Waisy, *The Roots of the Iraqi Kurdish Rivalries, Conflicts and Peace Process 1964-2000,* "American International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences", 2015, Vol. 10, No. 3, p. 220.

59. G.R.V. Stansfield, *Iraqi Kurdistan...*, op. cit., p. 75.

60. O. Bengio, *The Kurds of Iraq...*, op. cit., p. 49.

61. G.R.V. Stansfield, *Iraqi Kurdistan...*, op. cit., p. 75.

62. I.S. Vanly, *Kurdistan in Iraq*, in: *A People Without a Country: The Kurds and Kurdistan*, ed. G. Chailand, transl. M. Pallis, Zed Books 1993, p. 152.

63. A. Rafaat, *Kurdistan in Iraq...*, op. cit., pp. 89–97.

26

Volume 10 Issue 2 (2024) Special Issue

joined the KDP under Mullah Mustafa's leadership. Compared to the 1960s, the KDP appeared more unified under Mullah Mustafa's strong leadership.

H owever, some assessments of the 1975 defeat of the Kurdish movement at the hands of the Iraqi regime, a defeat caused by many global and regional factors, attribute part of the responsibility to the leadership structure within the party. These evaluations suggest that the KDP, overshadowed by a parallel leadership making decisions at the top, ceased to function as a true political party.<sup>64</sup> They argue that the party had become synonymous with Mullah Mustafa Barzani himself,<sup>65</sup> or that elitism within the upper echelons had created a rift between the party's leadership and its grassroots.<sup>66</sup> In reality, these critiques point to the negative effects of the oligarchic tendencies that had grown stronger within the party. What makes 1975 particularly significant in terms of the shape that the party politics of the region would take in the years to come is the fact that the factional struggles within the KDP resulted in the founding of a new party, the PUK. The year 1975 represents the transition from a phase in which political fragmentation manifested in intra-party factional struggles to one in which it was framed by inter-party divisions.

A fter the defeat of the Kurdish movement by the Iraqi regime in 1975, the Kurdish movement retreated to Iran, creating a vacuum of authority in the region. The large-scale, organized struggle that had previously been directed from a single center was replaced by small, disconnected actions. In the areas under Iraqi control, small groups of fighters resorted to guerrilla tactics.<sup>67</sup> During this period, when the partisans took up arms without coordination from any political organization, rival political groups identifying as Marxist-Leninist attempted to fill the authority vacuum in the region by assuming a sort of *maquis* role.<sup>68</sup> The vacuum of authority created by the collapse of the KDP leadership resulted in the transformation of many factions into parties. One of the most important consequences of this transformation for party politics in the region was undoubtedly the founding of the PUK. Perhaps the most complex guerrilla movement in Iraq, the PUK appears as a semi-front formed by the merger of several movements.<sup>69</sup> In fact, factionalism within the PUK, whose founding components were made up of factions, is as old as the party itself.<sup>70</sup>

During this period, the KDP split into several factions within its party cadres, each aligned with different leaders, unlike the PUK, which was formed by the unification of factions.<sup>71</sup> Apart from these two parties, which form the axis of party politics, Iraqi Kurdistan saw the founding of many other parties during this period, while various parties founded outside the region, such as the Kurd-

64. C. Kutschera, *Kürt Ulusal...*, op. cit., p. 367.

65. D. McDowall, *The Kurdish Question: A Historical Review*, in: *The Kurds: A Contemporary Overview*, eds. P.G. Kreyenbroek, S. Speri, Routledge 1992, p. 21.

66. I.S. Vanly, *Kurdistan in Iraq*, op. cit., p. 175.

67. D. Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement: Opportunity, Mobilization and Identity*, Cambridge University Press 2006, p. 197.

68. I.S. Vanly, *Kurdistan in Iraq*, op. cit., p. 187.

69. G.R.V. Stansfield, *Iraqi Kurdistan...*, op. cit., pp. 80–84.

70. H.H. Hama, *Factionalism wit-hin Patriotic Union of Kurdistan*, "Journal of Asian and African Studies", 2019, Vol. 54, Issue 7, p. 17, DOI: 10.1177/0021909619854111.

71. E. Ghareeb, *The Kurdish Question*, op. cit., p. 181.

istan Workers' Party (PKK), KDP-I, ICP, began to organize there.<sup>72</sup> Bruinessen notes that the areas dehumanized by the regime became bases for the parties, and during this period, a valley north of Sulaymaniyah became known as the "valley of the parties." As evidenced by organizational practices such as the *komelayeti*, parties not only controlled these areas militarily but also took on the responsibility of socially and economically organizing the regions they dominated.<sup>73</sup> Iraqi Kurdistan has a political geography where states, tribes and political parties claim dominance. This geography was the scene of many conflicts in which these organizations claimed dominance in various forms. In this respect, it can be said that all Kurdish movements except the KDP, which was founded in 1945, were born on the battlefield.<sup>74</sup> With the onset of the 1990s, the conflicts between parties became the most important part of the struggle for sovereignty in Iraqi Kurdistan. The most prominent of these conflicts, in which many parties were involved, was undoubtedly the clashes between the KDP and the PUK.

The beginning of the KDP-PUK conflict can be traced back to the establishment of the KDP. However, the events of 1978 occupy an important place in the history of this conflict. The assessment that the 1978 conflict was "the biggest internal conflict in modern Kurdish history up to that time" shows its importance in the history of the KDP-PUK struggle.<sup>75</sup> However, it cannot be said that this period consisted entirely of uninterrupted conflict between the two parties. The 1980s also saw periods of cooperation and alliance formation between the KDP and the PUK, depending on the changing circumstances.<sup>76</sup> The KDP and the PUK's involvement, along with other parties, in the establishment of the Iraqi Kurdistan Front (IKF) in the aftermath of the Halabja Massacre in 1988 represents one of the key moments when their relationship shifted into an alliance.<sup>77</sup>

In the following years, the Gulf War erupted, marking one of the most important developments in the region's history. Many developments in Iraqi Kurdistan following the Gulf War confirmed that the region's primary political actors were the parties. After the war, the Kurdistan region, like the rest of Iraq, saw spontaneous popular uprisings, known locally as *Rapareen*. Although political parties initially had a limited presence at the start of the uprisings, which took different forms in various parts of the region, they eventually became the main organizations that filled the authority vacuum in the period following the uprisings. In this regard, the uprisings in northern Iraq were distinct from those in the southern part of the country, particularly in terms of party leadership and organization.<sup>78</sup> In the early 1990s, when the central authority withdrew from the Kurdistan region, the KDP and the PUK, despite their flaws and history of fragmentation, appeared to be the parties best positioned to

72. M. van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State...*, op. cit., p. 39.

27

73. A. Sherzad, *The Kurdish Movement in Iraq*, in: *The Kurds: A Contemporary Overview*, eds. P. G. Kreyenbroek, S. Speri, Routledge 1992, pp. 108–109.

74. K. Karadaghi, *The Two Gulf Wars: The Kurds on the World Stage, 1979-1992, in: A People Without a Country: The Kurds and Kurdistan,* ed. G. Chaliand, transl. M. Pallis, Olive Branch Press 1993, p. 219.

75. F. Dağlı, Birakuji: Kürtlerin İç Savaşı, Belge Yayınları 1994, p. 21.

76. O. Bengio, *The Kurds of Iraq...*, op. cit., p. 173.

77. J. Bulloch, H. Morris, *No Friends But Mountains: The Tragic History of the Kurds*, Oxford University Press 1992, p. 6.

78. P. Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq*, Westview Press 2012, p. 230.



Otiti		
	take over the government. This was due to their military strength, the mythology they had built, the ideologues they had developed, and their established base. <sup>79</sup>	79. B. O'Leary, K. Salih, <i>Denial, Resurre</i> -
Era of Political Parties	The 1990s saw the establishment of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), one of the most significant developments in the region's political history. In 1992, the IKF's decision to organize parliamentary elections, which acted as a de facto constitution for a de facto state, marked the first step in this process. <sup>80</sup> Thus, elections became one of the competitive methods used by political parties that had been in conflict for a long time. After the elections, a governance system emerged in which smaller parties that failed to pass the threshold were excluded from institutional politics, in contrast to the IKF, where many parties were stakeholders in the decision-making process. The division of both the legislature and the government between the KDP and the PUK, which had passed the threshold, is referred to as the "fifty-fifty" arrangement. <sup>81</sup>	<ul> <li>79. B. O'Leary, K. Salih, Denial, Resurrection, and Affirmation of Kurdistan, in: The Future of Kurdistan in Iraq, eds. B. O'Leary, J. McGarry and K. Salih, University of Pennsylvania 2005, p. 24.</li> <li>80. G.R.V. Stansfield, Iraqi Kurdistan, op. cit., p. 129.</li> </ul>
	From its foundation, KRG was established in a fragmented manner, both territorially and institu- tionally, characterized by the KDP-PUK duopoly, which aligns with the cartel party model. How- ever, soon after, a new phase of conflict between the two parties emerged, involving regional states, global actors, Kurdish parties in neighboring countries, and tribes, and Iraq. In terms of regional dynamics, this conflict is largely rooted in the intensifying competition for resources, influence, and prestige between the two parties. <sup>82</sup> A major cause of the dispute is the sharing of revenues from bor- der trade. Additionally, the alliances formed by the KDP and the PUK with smaller parties, which impact electoral arithmetic are also among the factors that trigger conflicts. <sup>83</sup> Tribal tensions are also a factor in the evaluation of these conflicts. <sup>84</sup>	<ul> <li>81. Ibidem, pp. 146–147.</li> <li>82. L. Anderson, G.R.V. Stansfield, <i>The</i> <i>Future of Iraq: Dictatorship, Democracy,</i> <i>or Division?</i>, Palgrave Macmillan 2004, p. 173.</li> </ul>
	In analyses of the political fragmentation of the 1990s, the concept of tribe is reintroduced in vari- ous forms and with differing intensities. Alongside assessments that simply list tribes as one of the factors contributing to the emergence of conflicts, there are also arguments that tribal culture played a dominant role in the local sources of fragmentation. For instance, in what has become a seminal work in the field of modern Kurdish history, McDowall argues that after the decline of tra- ditional tribalism, which was the first form of socio-political organization, the struggle for hegemony between two major tribal unions in the 1970s led to the rise of neo-tribalism in the 1990s. According to McDowall, both the KDP and the PUK resemble traditional tribal confederations in that they have a core of leader loyalists at their center. <sup>85</sup> Tahiri makes a similar observation, stating that the revival	<ul> <li>83. M. Gunter, <i>The KDP-PUK</i>, op. cit., p. 232.</li> <li>84. D. Romano, <i>Social Movement Theory and Political Mobilization in Kurdistan</i>, in: <i>The Kurdish Question Revisited</i>, eds. G. Stansfield, M. Shareef, Oxford University Press 2017, p. 23.</li> <li>85. D. McDowall, <i>A Modern History</i>, op. cit., pp. 16, 387.</li> </ul>

of tribalism within Kurdish parties is the most formidable obstacle to Kurdish nationalism, as it has caused divisions in Kurdish society for centuries.<sup>86</sup> Bengio's account of the period, in which he states that separation was the Achilles' heel of the Kurds, effectively reflects how the divided Iraqi Kurdistan was perceived at the time. He reports that the KRG, which became known as *Barzanistan* and *Talabanistan*, epitomized the image of a fragmented nation.<sup>87</sup>

**C**onsidering that many tribes, both large and small, remain active in Iraqi Kurdistan, that the KDP is largely dominated by the Barzanis, and the presence of Talabani chieftains in the leadership of the PUK, it is clear that the concept of tribe partially explains the political divisions. However, the region's two most influential political parties have organizational structures, membership compositions, and governance practices that cannot be reduced solely to the influence of two powerful tribes. At this point, it is important to recall Bruinessen's caution, one of the foremost authorities on Kurdish tribes, that it would be an exaggeration to reduce the parties to a "tribal confederation" during this period.<sup>88</sup> The undisputed influence of the Barzanis on the leadership of the KDP and the Talabanis on the leadership of the PUK makes it implausible to reduce the two parties ruling the region to mere tribal entities. Therefore, explaining party fragmentation in the contemporary period solely through an anthropological lens is insufficient.

There are many aspects of political parties that neo-tribalism does not fully explain. While tribal affiliation can account for some of the diversity in the profiles of KDP members, the concept of tribalism becomes less and less explanatory when it comes to the PUK, which was formed by the merger of various political movements. Although the parties' creation of dependent groups involves factors beyond tribal affiliation, which need to be analyzed through the concept of patronage,<sup>89</sup> the analysis of their strong leaderships must also consider both tribal patrimonial tendencies and modern party techniques, such as democratic centralism, even if it is often argued to function poorly.<sup>90</sup> It is important to recognize that the parties of this period were organizations with both modern and traditional characteristics, encompassing both positive and negative aspects. Additionally, it should not be overlooked that party leaders, who owe part of their position to their tribal chieftaincy, were able to use many modern party political techniques.

There is ample reason to consider both the KDP and the PUK as modern parties in terms of their purpose, function, organization, base, and decision-making mechanisms. In this regard, it is important to recognize that the primary organizational form defining the sides of the fragmentation is

86. H. Tahiri, *The Structure of Kurdish Society and Struggle for a Kurdish State*, Mazda Publishers 2007, p. 344.

29

87. O. Bengio, Autonomy in Kurdistan in Historical Perspective, in: The Future of Kurdistan in Iraq, eds. B. O'Leary, J. McGarry, K. Salih, University of Pennsylvania Press 2005, pp. 180, 273.

88. M. van Bruinessen, *Kürtler, Devletler* ve Aşiretler, in: Aşiretler ve İktidar: Ortadoğu'da Etnisite ve Milliyetçilik, eds. F.A. Jabar, H. Dawod, transl. Ö. Öğünç, Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları 2013, p. 169.

89. M. Leezenberg, Urbanization, Privatization, and Patronage: The Political Economy of Iraqi Kurdistan, in: The Kurds: Nationalism and Politics, eds. F.A. Jabar, H. Dawod, Saqi Books 2006, p. 155.

90. L. Anderson, *The Role of Political Parties in Developing Kurdish Nationalism*, in: *The Evolution of Kurdish Nationalism*, eds. M. Gunter, M.M.A. Ahmed, Mazda Publishers 2007, p. 136.

Volume 10 Issue 2 (2024) Special Issue

the party, not the tribe. What divided Iraqi Kurdistan in the 1990s was not only tribal fragmentation, but also political party schisms, where tribes were just one of the factors contributing to disintegration. During this period, many tribes began to align themselves according to the political divisions represented and constructed by the parties. In fact, as seen in institutional practices such as *mektebî komellayeî*, parties began to assume the role of arbitrators in conflict resolution.<sup>91</sup> Considering their role as arbitrators in disputes, as well as their role as intermediaries between Kurdish society and the states, it can be argued that political parties began to play a role similar to that of the emirates and sheikhdoms in the history of the region during the modern period. In this sense, it could even be said that the 1990s marked the emergence of a new era, one in which political parties took on a central role, succeeding the earlier phases dominated by emirates and sheikhdoms.

The 1990s reveal limitations not only in the anthropological cleavage thesis but also in the geopolitical cleavage thesis. Global and regional actors were, of course, influential in the onset of the conflicts during this decade, as well as in their subsequent course and the fragmentations they caused. However, this period also saw local, regional, and international pressure on political parties to bring an end to the conflict.<sup>92</sup> In this context, it is worth recalling the decisive influence of the United States in the 1998 reconciliation, after several other states had attempted to mediate.<sup>93</sup> This shows that the political division in Iraqi Kurdistan also has an aspect that can be sustained by the will of the parties, through internal dynamics, despite external pressures for unification. In this context, Michel Leezenberg's observation is particularly insightful. He notes that analyses attributing the conflicts of this period to irrational personal rivalries between leaders, archaic tribal rivalries, dialect and regional differences, and the cynicism of international power politics fail to account for the considerable autonomy that political parties gained through political conflict.<sup>94</sup> In this respect, the 1990s also demonstrate that existing cleavage theories do not provide a universally applicable explanation for all cases.

The anthropological thesis plays a critical role in labeling divisions as archaic in analyses that emphasize the opposition between tribalism and nationalism. In this line of reasoning, fragmentation is reduced to tribalism, while integration is identified with nationalism. However, such an analysis relies too heavily on the ideological presuppositions of nationalism, in which society is presented as an ideal unity from the very beginning. It assumes that the fiction of the nation as an imagined community is a practical reality. For this reason, analyses that rely solely on the anthropological thesis to explain political divisions shed light on the idea of an ideal society, or the fantasy

91. K. Lalik, *The Continuity of Settlement of Social Feuds among Kurds in the Kurdistan Region*, "Anthropology of the Middle East", 2017, Vol. 12, Issue 2, p. 102, DOI: 10.3167/ame.2016.120207.

30

92. A.M. Noory, Making Sense of Iraqi's Kurdistan's Civil War of 1990s, in: The Kurds in the Middle East: Enduring Problems and New Dynamics, eds. M. Gurses, D. Romano, M.M. Gunter, Lexington Books 2020, p. 185.

93. M. Gunter, *The KDP-PUK*..., op. cit., pp. 233–238.

94. M. Leezenberg, *Urbanization, Privatization...*, op. cit., p. 151.



of political unity, behind the dominant historiographical tendency, rather than addressing contemporary divisions.

This notion of ideal unity is also reflected in the characterization of the party wars of the 1990s as *brakuji*, which means fratricide in Kurdish. This framing of the conflict as a war between brothers feeds into a fantasy of unity in which all Kurds are imagined as political relatives. In this context, the criticism that the conflicts of the 1990s should be regarded as a civil war rather than *brakuji*, a term inspired by the strategic essentialism of nationalist discourse, in which society is conceived as a homogeneous unity, holds some merit.<sup>95</sup> Given that the war took place between different parties, it would be more accurate to characterize the conflicts of the 1990s as a *war of parties*. In fact, instead of condemning Iraqi Kurdistan as a political geography unable to integrate due to divisions, it should be considered as a region where every political integration strategy triggers new lines of fragmentation. The fragmentation tendencies in Iraqi Kurdistan, which accompanied the major turning points of the statehood process in the subsequent years, confirm the necessity of viewing the region from this perspective.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Iraqi Kurdistan remains a region marked by ongoing party politics, alongside debates about integration and fragmentation. The KRG's *de facto* sovereignty, which was transformed into a federated state defined by the Iraqi Constitution, became *de jure*. In the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the region displayed a much more stable outlook than the previous century, which had been overshadowed by wars. Both the negotiations with the central authority and the war against ISIS showcased a much more unified approach from regional parties compared to the previous century. However, with this process of institutionalization, the region's divisions between the KDP and the PUK in terms of administration, economy, and military operations became entrenched. The divisions within party politics, however, have shifted from armed conflict to parliamentary competition. While the KDP and the PUK continue to cooperate in many areas, their historical divisions persist. The fragmentation of party politics in this period not only followed the old cleavage lines of the KDP-PUK split but also saw the establishment of many new political parties.

The Islamic movement, including factions opposed to the establishment of a party, has also experienced a shift towards party formation.<sup>96</sup> The split of the Kurdistan Islamic Movement in the second half of 1980s<sup>97</sup> led to the establishment of the Kurdistan Islamic Union in the 1990s,<sup>98</sup> followed by the Kurdistan Islamic Group in the early part of the following century.<sup>99</sup> This process, which resulted in the emergence of the region's three main Islamist parties, demonstrates how the divergence

95. H. Černy, Iraqi Kurdistan, the PKK and International Relations: Theory and Ethnic Conflict, Routledge 2018, pp. 186, 188.

31

96. T. Gade, P. Kamaran, *The Hybridisation of religion and nationalism in Iraqi Kurdistan: The Case of Kurdish Islam*, "Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal", 2020, Vol. 5, Issue 3-6, p. 227, DOI: 10.1080/23802014.2022.2070269.

97. D. Romano, *An Outline of Kurdish Islamist Groups in Iraq*, The Jamestown Foundation 2007, p. 8.

98. M. Leezenberg, *Religion Among the Kurds Between Naqshbandi Sufism and IS Salafism*, in: *The Kurdish Question Revisited*, eds. G. Stansfield, M. Shareef, Oxford University Press 2017, p. 45.

99. E. Szanto, Islam in Kurdistan: Religious Communities and Their Practices in Contemporary Northern Iraq, in: Handbook of Contemporary Islam and Muslim Lives, eds. R. Lukens-Bull, M. Woodward, Springer 2021, p. 366.

between organizations with different integration strategies is reflected in party politics. Similar to nationalist parties that operate an integration strategy centered on the idea of the nation, the divergence between Islamist organizations, which base their integration strategy on the ideal of the ummah, is also expressed in party divisions. During this period, the region saw vibrant party politics, marked by the founding of various types of parties. Among these were small niche parties like the Donkeys' Party, medium-sized parties such as the New Generation Movement, which resembles the business-firm party type, or broad-based mass parties like Gorran, which was founded as an antisystem party. This diversity illustrates how many societal divisions continue to manifest in party politics into the 21st century. Among the newly founded parties, Gorran is particularly significant in terms of its impact on political divisions.

**G**orran is a party that was founded after the reformist wing, led by Nawshirwan Mustafa, who advocated for transformation within the PUK, left the party.<sup>100</sup> In this respect, Gorran is a new party born out of internal party divisions. Despite being a newcomer in politics, it quickly became one of the largest parties in the Kurdistan Parliament, gaining significant electoral success shortly after its establishment. Founded on criticism of the PUK-KDP duopoly,<sup>101</sup> the party's opposition period, during which it advocated for radical economic and political reforms to combat corruption, can be considered its golden age.<sup>102</sup> However, Gorran's opposition extended beyond the parliament; the party was also active in various protests against the KRG in the 2010s.<sup>103</sup> In this way, Gorran played a crucial role in shaping the new lines of cleavage that emerged, particularly leading up to the referendum decision. During the period of intensified ISIS attacks, Gorran strongly opposed KRG President Massoud Barzani's request to extend his mandate.

In this process, the KDP blamed Gorran for the demonstrations in Sulaymaniyah, where the president's resignation was demanded and KDP offices were attacked. As a result, the KDP took a series of decisions that effectively ended Gorran's influence in both the cabinet and the parliament.<sup>104</sup> Therefore, it can be said that after 2015, the region was effectively governed by an outgoing president, without a functioning parliament or representative government.<sup>105</sup> These developments were followed by Gorran's alliance with the PUK, creating a strong coalition that challenged the KDP's dominance over the government and the region.<sup>106</sup> During this period of political crisis, in 2017, with ISIS weakened, Masoud Barzani called for a referendum on independence. The referendum decision was adopted in the Kurdistan Parliament, which convened for the first time in two years, in a session boycotted by Gorran and the Kurdistan Islamic Group (which adopted the name Kurdistan Justice Group in 2021) 100. H.H. Hama, *The rise and fall of movement for change in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (2009-2018)*, "Asian Journal of Comperative Politics", 2020, p. 4, DOI: 10.1177/2057891120905902.

32

101. H.A. Azeez, *Gorran: A Party of Words, Not Deeds,* Fikra Forum 2018, <u>https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/</u> <u>policy-analysis/gorran-party-words-</u> <u>not-deeds,</u> (access 30.10.2018).

102. H.H. Hama, *The rise and*..., op. cit., pp. 6–13.

103. N.F. Watts, *Democracy and Self-determination in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq*, in: *Conflict, Democratization, and the Kurds in the Middle East: Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria*, eds. D. Romano, M. Gurses, Palgrave Macmillan 2014, p. 161.

104. F.H. Abdullah, *The Political System in Iraqi Kurdistan: Party Rivalries and Future Perspectives*, "Asian Affairs", 2018, Vol. 49, Issue 4, p. 612, DOI: 10.1080/03068374.2018.1521120.

105. D. O'Driscoll, B. Başer, *Referendum* as a Political Party Gamble: A Critical Analysis of the Kurdish Referendum for Independence, "International Political Science Review", 2020, Vol. 41, Issue 5, p. 660, DOI: 10.1177/0192512119858367.

106. M.A. Salih, *Will Unity Deal Deepen Rivalries in Iraqi Kurdistan?*, Al-Monitor, <u>https://www.al-monitor.com/</u> originals/2016/05/iraq-kurdistan-gor-

on the grounds that it was illegal. One third of the PUK parliamentarians, who were the KDP's coalition partners at the time, did not attend the session. In these circumstances, a referendum called by an outgoing president and not by the parliament was seen by other parties as a move by the KDP, which was facing political and economic crises, to regain legitimacy and consolidate its power.<sup>107</sup> In this respect, the referendum process was accompanied by a series of cleavages in party politics that became evident before the vote. These political divisions continued to shape developments even after the vote.

The fragmentation debate in Iraqi Kurdistan did not end with the vote. On the contrary, it reached L its climax days after the vote, with the return of Kirkuk to the control of the central government. During this process, the Peshmerga units followed different operational plans based on partisan lines, rather than acting as a unified army.<sup>108</sup> In the aftermath, KDP officials accused the wing of the PUK responsible for the retreat of betraying the Kurdish people by colluding with Iraq and Iran, as Peshmerga units abandoned their positions without resistance. The PUK, the target of this treason accusation, appeared to be divided into two factions on the issue. One wing of the party accused those who decided to withdraw of treason, much like the KDP, while the other argued that the withdrawal was a military necessity. According to one view, the decision to withdraw was influenced by concerns that the losses incurred during the defense of the city would weaken the PUK in its struggle against the KDP forces. In this regard, the PUK spokesperson's reminder of the KDP's invitation to Iraqi tanks in Erbil after fighting the PUK in the 1990s<sup>109</sup> is significant as it highlights the role of past fragmentations in shaping the political memory of the region. When evaluating the referendum, it is important to take into account the history of party rivalry behind the developments.<sup>110</sup> The developments of the 2010s reveal the structuring effect of contemporary party politics on political divisions. The modern fragmentation tendencies inherent in party politics help answer the question "How can even a common political ideal, such as the declaration of independence, be subject to fragmentation in practice?" Additionally, the political divisions that have been widely analyzed in relation to the referendum have been interpreted through various cleavage theses.

The independence referendum is a multidimensional issue that requires consideration of both the internal dynamics within Iraqi Kurdistan and the external dynamics at the international relations level. This characteristic is also reflected in the analysis of fragmentation. Geopolitical cleavage theses are prominent in evaluations that approach fragmentation from the perspective of international relations. On the other hand, analyses focusing on internal dynamics tend to concentrate on the power struggle within Iraqi Kurdistan.<sup>111</sup> As discussed earlier, in addition to approaches that interpret this

ran-puk-kdp-agreement.html, (access 09.01.2017).

107. D. O'Driscoll, B. Başer, Independence Referendums and Nationalist Rhetoric: The Kurdistan Region of Iraq, "Third World Quarterly", 2019, Vol. 40, Issue 11, p. 2017, DOI: 10.1080/01436597.2019.1617631. Volume 10 Issue 2 (2024) Special Issue

108. S. Aziz, A. Cottey, *The Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga: Military Reform and Nati-on-building in a Divided Polity*, "Defence Studies", 2021, Vol. 21, Issue 2, p. 236, DOI: 10.1080/14702436.2021.1888644.

109. H.H. Hama, F.H. Abdullah, *Kurdistan's Referendum: The Withdrawal of the Kurdish Forces in Kirkuk*, "Asian Affairs", 2019, Vol. 50, Issue 3, pp. 374–380, DOI: 10.1080/03068374.2019.1636522.

110. S.D. Mustafa, *Iraqi Kurdistan Independence Referendum: Political Parties, Opportunity and Timing,* "British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies", 2021, Vol. 48, Issue 5, p. 906, DOI: 10.1080/13530194.2020.1724077.

111. B. Park, et al., *Field Notes: On the Independence Referendum in the Kur-distan Region of Iraq and Disputed Territories in 2017*, in: *Kurdish Studies Archive*, ed. M. van Bruinessen, Vol. 5, No. 2, Brill 2017, pp. 239–257, DOI: 10.1163/9789004506176\_008.

	power struggle in terms of party rivalry, some analyses continue to incorporate the anthropological cleavage thesis. The characterizations of divisions as "anachronistic," "primitive," "archaic," "feudal," "premodern," or "traditional" often indicate the analysis's connection to the anthropological thesis. <sup>112</sup> Evaluations that emphasize the "immaturity" or "backwardness" of the Kurdish movements in the region often reference the anthropological thesis. These assessments are consistent in recognizing political divisions as an anachronistic tendency, incompatible with the spirit of the age. It should not be overlooked that political fragmentation is often reduced to a chronic, regionally endemic issue that hinders the ideal state-building project. This analytical framework, which prefers to explain the issue through an anthropological difference, overlooks the fact that divisions are a common feature of many political integration processes. In analyses of fragmentation that place such a strong emphasis on "difference," the importance of "similarities" is ignored. It is precisely at	112. For an the refere logical cle in the com aves, Unit Transcence Sovereign Federaliss Recognitic ed. A. Dan pp. 53–71.
	this point that the need to include the concept of party in the assessment of political divisions in Iraqi Kurdistan becomes apparent. The alternative perspective that the concept of party offers sheds light on the gaps left by traditional fragmentation analyses. Introducing a new party-oriented sociological cleavage thesis into the analytical context provides a valuable tool for critically engaging with aca- demic studies on Iraqi Kurdistan.	
Conclusion	I raqi Kurdistan is a region that has experienced vibrant party politics since the second half of the 20 <sup>th</sup> century. It is from this practical reality on the ground that any political analysis of the region must incorporate the concept of party. This necessity becomes even more pressing when analyzing contemporary political divisions. Analyses of political schisms in a region that has been divided between two dominant parties for nearly half a century often overlook the concept of party and the associated debates on division within party studies. The fact that a society practically divided into political parties is theoretically analyzed through cleavage theses that do not include the concept of a political party is something worth considering. At this point, it is important to remember that division is an intrinsic aspect of the concept of party and a topic extensively discussed in party studies. In this context, the valuable contribution that a nuanced discussion of division, framed around the concept of party, can offer to the analysis of fragmentation in Iraqi Kurdistan should not be overlooked.	
	T he concept of party, much like tribe, is often associated with the malevolent tendencies of division. Any situation where the term, which semantically denotes a part, is associated with divisive	

. For an example of an evaluation of referendum in which the anthropoical cleavage thesis in included the contex of analysis, see: N.M. Grees, United We Stand, Divided We Fall: unscending the Obstacle to Internal vereignty in Iraqi Kurdistan, in: deralism, Secession and International cognition Regime: Iraqi Kurdistan, A. Danilovich, Routledge 2019, 53–71.

## of Polish Journal Science

tendencies is typically based on an ethically idealized notion of political unity within society. However, the concept also carries an aspect that political fragmentation and integration can coexist, with political divisions being an inherent part of integration processes. The frequent association of parties with political divisions in various regions and historical periods points to a shared characteristic in party politics. In modern times, the term "party" has been the primary label for the sides in the struggle for power, whether through elections or violence, under a variety of circumstances. In this regard, when considering divisions, the party reminds us of a sociological commonality that manifests in different forms across many societies. In many cases, this commonality is the fact that political integration processes are susceptible to tendencies toward fragmentation. The rich debate surrounding the concept of party suggests that divisions are not a deviation from integration, but rather one of the contingent tendencies triggered by the integration process itself.

This relationship between integration strategies and fragmentation tendencies is also reflected in the evolution of party politics in Iraqi Kurdistan. From the founding of the KDP onwards, every phase of the party's transformation into a state has been accompanied by either factional struggles or the intensification of inter-party conflicts. The fact that this tendency is framed within the context of party politics shows that political divisions cannot be reduced to an archaic aberration, but rather are a contemporary trend. In this regard, splits do not represent a pause in the flow of political time or a regression to the past. Instead, divisions evolve and transform over time, meaning that political divisions have a history, and this history is an integral part of the political history of Iraqi Kurdistan. Political parties play a crucial role in this history. In this respect, the recent history of the region contains many facets that must be addressed through the concept of the party. The idea of the party provides a perspective that facilitates the understanding of the forms that cleavages take in the contemporary period. Moreover, it underlines that contemporary political divisions in Iraqi Kurdistan are not archaic, but modern; not an anachronism, but a contingent tendency. This challenges the use of the concepts of state and nation in the historiography of the region, which often present these notions in a sterilized form, free from divisions. It calls for further reflection on how both the concept of the nation and the process of state-building are often based on an idealized design of political unity.

Shifting the perspective from an "anthropological difference" to a "sociological commonality" in the treatment of divisions through the lens of the concept of party constitutes another contribution to the understanding of fragmentation. This shift illuminates the limitations of approaches that reduce political fragmentation to an "endemic problem specific to the region," which focus solely on local



	dynamics through the lens of "difference." Beyond the question of "why Iraqi Kurds failed in state- building," it encourages us to consider the broader question of "why state-building also failed in Iraqi Kurdistan." Incorporating the concept of party into the analysis of cleavages not only provides a valu- able theoretical contribution to the study of Iraqi Kurdistan but also introduces Iraqi Kurdistan, with its rich field of observation on the relationship between divisions and party politics, to the broader field of party studies. In other words, a party-oriented sociological cleavage thesis points to the po- tential for expanding the conceptual frameworks commonly used in Kurdish studies, as well as those in the field of political party studies, which have traditionally been anchored in Western societies.
Bibliography	Abdullah F.H., The Political System in Iraqi Kurdistan: Party Rivalries and Future Perspectives, "Asian Affairs", 2018, Vol. 49, Issue 4, pp. 606–624, DOI: <u>10.1080/03068374.2018.1521120</u> .
	Adamson D., The Kurdish War, George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1964.
	Anderson L., Stansfield G.R.V., The Future of Iraq: Dictatorship, Democracy, or Division?, Palgrave Macmillan 2004.
	Anderson L., The Role of Political Parties in Developing Kurdish Nationalism, in: The Evolution of Kurdish Nationalism, eds. M. Gunter, M.M.A. Ahmed, Mazda Publishers 2007, pp. 123–148.
	Azeez H.A., <i>Gorran: A Party of Words, Not Deeds</i> , Fikra Forum 2018, <u>https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analy-</u> sis/gorran-party-words-not-deeds, (access 30.10.2018).
	Aziz S., Cottey A., The Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga: Military Reform and Nation-building in a Divided Polity, "Defence Stud- ies", 2021, Vol. 21, Issue 2, pp. 226–241, DOI: <u>10.1080/14702436.2021.1888644</u> .
	<b>Balibar</b> É., (The Right to) Tendencies, or the Right to Set Up Organized Groups Within the Party (1982), Viewpoint Maga- zine 2017, <u>https://viewpointmag.com/2017/12/18/right-tendencies-right-set-organized-groups-within-party-1982/</u> , (access 21.05.2019).
	<b>Baris H.</b> , <i>The Kurds: "A History of Deliberate and Reactive Statelessness</i> ", in: <i>Conflict, insecurity and mobility</i> , eds. I. Sirkeci, J.H. Cohen, P. Yazgan, Transnational Press 2016, pp. 89–100.

# Volume 10 Issue 2 (2024) Special Issue



**Bengio O.**, *Autonomy in Kurdistan in Historical Perspective*, in: *The Future of Kurdistan in Iraq*, eds. B. O'Leary, J. McGarry, K. Salih, University of Pennsylvania Press 2005, pp. 173–185.

Bengio O., *The Kurds of Iraq: Building a State within a State*, Lynne Reinner Publishers 2012.

**Bozarslan H.**, *Being in Time: The Kurdish Movement and Universal Quests*, in: *The Kurdish Question Revisited*, eds. G. Stansfield, M. Shareef, Oxford University Press 2017, pp. 61–76.

Bulloch J., Morris H., No Friends But Mountains: The Tragic History of the Kurds, Oxford University Press 1992.

**Cabi M.**, The Formation of Modern Kurdish Society in Iran: Modernity, Modernization and Social Change 1921-1979, I. B. Tauris 2021.

Černy H., Iraqi Kurdistan, the PKK and International Relations: Theory and Ethnic Conflict, Routledge 2018.

**Costantini I., O'Driscoll D.**, *Party Politics in Quasi-states: Iraqi Kurdistan*, in: *Routledge Handbook on Political Parties in the Middle East and North Africa*, eds. F. Cavatorta, L. Storm, V. Resta, Routledge 2021, pp. 218–228.

Dağlı F., Birakuji: Kürtlerin İç Savaşı, Belge Yayınları 1994.

**De Leon C., Desai M., Tuğal C.**, *Political Articulation: The Structured Creativity of Parties*, in: *Building Blocs: How Parties Organize Society*, eds. C. de Leon, M. Desai, C. Tuğal, Stanford University Press 2015, pp. 1–36.

Durac V., Cavatorta F., Politics and Governance in the Middle East, Palgrave Macmillan 2015.

**Duverger M.**, *Political Parties, their organization and activity in the modern state*, transl. B. North, R. North, Methuen & Co. Ltd 1959.

Duverger M., The Study of Politics, transl. R. Wagoner, Thomas Y. Crowell Company Inc. 1972.

**Eppel M.**, *Historical Setting: The Roots of Modern Kurdish Nationalism*, in: *Kurdish Awakening: Nation Building in a Fragmented Homeland*, ed. O. Bengio, University of Texas Press 2014, pp. 37–62.



Ignazi P., Party and Democracy: The Uneven Road to Party Legitimacy, Oxford University Press 2017.	Volume ]
Ismael T.Y., The Rise and Fall of the Communist Party, Cambridge University Press 2008.	10 Is
Jwaideh W., The Kurdish National Movement: Its Origins and Development, Syracuse University Press 2006.	sue 2 (20
Karadaghi K., The Two Gulf Wars: The Kurds on the World Stage, 1979-1992, in: A People Without a Country: The Kurds and Kurdistan, ed. G. Chaliand, transl. M. Pallis, Olive Branch Press 1993, pp. 214–230.	Volume 10 Issue 2 (2024) Special Issue
Kinnane D., The Kurds and Kurdistan, Oxford University Press 1964.	al Issue
Klein J., The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone, Stanford University Press 2011.	
Koohi-Kamali F., The Political Development of the Kurds in Iran: Pastoral Nationalism, Palgrave Macmillan 2003.	
Kutschera C., <i>Kürt Ulusal Hareketi</i> , transl. F. Başkaya, Avesta Yayınlarıc 2013.	
La Palombara J., Weiner M., The Origin and Development of Political Parties, in: Political Parties and Political Develop- ment, eds. J. La Palombara, M. Weiner, Princeton University Press 1966, pp. 3–42.	
Lalik K., <i>The Continuity of Settlement of Social Feuds among Kurds in the Kurdistan Region</i> , "Anthropology of the Middle East", 2017, Vol. 12, Issue 2, pp. 92–107, DOI: <u>10.3167/ame.2016.120207</u> .	
<b>Leezenberg M.</b> , <i>Religion Among the Kurds Between Naqshbandi Sufism and IS Salafism</i> , in: <i>The Kurdish Question Revis-</i> <i>ited</i> , eds. G. Stansfield, M. Shareef, Oxford University Press 2017, pp. 33–46.	
<b>Leezenberg M.</b> , Urbanization, Privatization, and Patronage: The Political Economy of Iraqi Kurdistan, in: The Kurds: Nationalism and Politics, eds. F.A. Jabar, H. Dawod, Saqi Books 2006, pp. 151–179.	
Lipset S.M., Cleavages, Parties and Democracy, in: Party Systems and Voter Alignments Revisited, eds. L. Karvonen, S. Kuhle, Routledge 2001, pp. 1–8.	



Lipset S.M., Rokkan S., Cleavages Structures, Party Systems and Voter Alignments: An Introduction, in: Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives, eds. S.M. Lipset, S. Rokkan, Macmillan Company 1967, pp. 1–64.	
Marr P., The Modern History of Iraq, Westview Press 2012.	
McDowall D., A Modern History of The Kurds, I. B. Tauris 2004.	
McDowall D., The Kurdish Question: A Historical Review, in: The Kurds: A Contemporary Overview, eds. P.G. Kreyenbroek, S. Speri, Routledge 1992, pp. 8–25.	
<b>Mustafa S.D.</b> , <i>Iraqi Kurdistan Independence Referendum: Political Parties, Opportunity and Timing</i> , "British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies", 2021, Vol. 48, Issue 5, pp. 890–907, DOI: <u>10.1080/13530194.2020.1724077</u> .	
Noory A.M., Making Sense of Iraqi's Kurdistan's Civil War of 1990s, in: The Kurds in the Middle East: Enduring Problems and New Dynamics, eds. M. Gurses, D. Romano, M.M. Gunter, Lexington Books 2020, pp. 185–204.	
<b>O'Ballance E.</b> , <i>The Kurdish Struggle 1920-94</i> , Palgrave Macmillan 1996.	
<b>O'Driscoll D., Başer B.</b> , Independence Referendums and Nationalist Rhetoric: The Kurdistan Region of Iraq, "Third World Quarterly", 2019, Vol. 40, Issue 11, pp. 2016–2034, DOI: <u>10.1080/01436597.2019.1617631</u> .	
<b>O'Driscoll D., Başer B.</b> , <i>Referendum as a Political Party Gamble: A Critical Analysis of the Kurdish Referendum for Inde-</i> <i>pendence</i> , "International Political Science Review", 2020, Vol. 41, Issue 5, pp. 652–666, DOI: <u>10.1177/0192512119858367</u> .	
<b>O'Leary B., Salih K.</b> , <i>Denial, Resurrection, and Affirmation of Kurdistan</i> , in: <i>The Future of Kurdistan in Iraq</i> , eds. B. O'Leary, J. McGarry and K. Salih, University of Pennsylvania 2005, pp. 3–43.	
Palani K., Client Agency in a multiple patron setting: The case of Iraqi Kurdistan, "Territory, Politics, Governance", 2024, pp. 1–18, DOI: <u>10.1080/21622671.2024.2390526</u> .	
Palani K., Khidir J., Dechesne M., Bakker E., <i>The Development of Kurdistan's de facto statehood: Kurdistan's September 2017 referendum for independence</i> , "Third World Quarterly", 2019, Vol. 40, Issue 12, pp. 2270–2288, DOI: 10.1080/01436597.2019.1619452.	



Palani K., Kurdistan's De Facto Statehood: A New Explanatory Framework, Routledge 2023.

41

Vol

r ann R, Rarassans De Facto Statenoou. II Rea Explanatory Francuori, Roulleuge 2020.	ume
Park B., Jongerden J., Owtram F., Yoshioko A., Field Notes: On the Independence Referendum in the Kurdistan	9 10 Is
Region of Iraq and Disputed Territories in 2017, in: Kurdish Studies Archive, ed. M. van Bruinessen, Vol. 5, No. 2, Brill 2017, pp. 239–257, DOI: <u>10.1163/9789004506176_008</u> .	ume 10 Issue 2 (2024) Special Issue
Rafaat A., Kurdistan in Iraq: The Evolution of a Quasi-state, Routledge 2018.	24) Sp
Romano D., An Outline of Kurdish Islamist Groups in Iraq, The Jamestown Foundation 2007.	ecial Is
Romano D., Social Movement Theory and Political Mobilization in Kurdistan, in: The Kurdish Question Revisited, eds. G. Stansfield, M. Shareef, Oxford University Press 2017, pp. 17–32.	sue
<b>Romano D.</b> , <i>The Kurdish Nationalist Movement: Opportunity, Mobilization and Identity</i> , Cambridge University Press 2006.	
Roosevelt A., <i>The Kurdish Republic of Mahabad</i> , in: <i>A People Without a Country: The Kurds and Kurdistan</i> , ed. G. Chailand, transl. M. Pallis, Zed Books 1993, pp. 122–138.	
Salih M.A., Will Unity Deal Deepen Rivalries in Iraqi Kurdistan?, Al-Monitor, <u>https://www.al-monitor.com/origi-nals/2016/05/iraq-kurdistan-gorran-puk-kdp-agreement.html</u> , (access 09.01.2017).	
Sartori G., Party and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis, Cambridge University Press 1976.	
Scarrow S.E., The Nineteenth Century Origins of Modern Political Parties: The Unwanted Emergence of Party-Based Politics, in: Handbook of Party Politics, eds. R.S. Katz, W. Crotty, Sage Publications 2006, pp. 16–24.	
Seiler D.L., Parties, in: International Encyclopedia of Political Science, eds. B. Badie, D. Berg-Schlosser, L. Morlino, Sage Publications 2011, pp. 1791–1803.	
<b>Sherzad A.</b> , <i>The Kurdish Movement in Iraq</i> , in: <i>The Kurds: A Contemporary Overview</i> , eds. P. G. Kreyenbroek, S. Speri, Routledge 1992, pp. 105–111.	



Sosnowski P., Path Dependence from Proxy Agent to De Facto State: A History of 'Strategic Exploitation' of the Kurds as a Context of the Iraqi Kurdistan Security Policy, "International Journal of Conflict and Violence", 2022, Vol. 16, pp. 1–13, DOI: 10.11576/ijcv-5688.

Stansfield G.R.V., Iraqi Kurdistan: Political Development and Emergent Democracy, Routledge Curzon 2003.

Szanto E., Islam in Kurdistan: Religious Communities and Their Practices in Contemporary Northern Iraq, in: Handbook of Contemporary Islam and Muslim Lives, eds. R. Lukens-Bull, M. Woodward, Springer 2021, pp. 361–376.

Tachau F., *Introduction*, in: *Political Parties of the Middle East and North Africa*, ed. F. Tachau, Mansell Publishing Limited 1994, pp. xiii–xxv.

Tahiri H., The Nostalgic Republic: The Kurdish Republic of 1946 and Its Effect on Kurdish Identity and Nation Building in Iran, in: Kurdish Awakening: Nation Building in a Fragmented Homeland, ed. O. Bengio, University of Texas Press 2014, pp. 253–268.

Tahiri H., The Structure of Kurdish Society and Struggle for a Kurdish State, Mazda Publishers 2007.

Tripp C., A History of Iraq, Cambridge University Press 2007.

Vali A., The Kurds and Their 'Others': Fragmented Identity and Fragmented Politics, in: The Kurds: Nationalism and Politics, eds. F.A. Jabar, H. Dawod, Saqi Books 2006, pp. 49–78.

Van Bruinessen M., Agha, Shaikh and State: The Social and Political Structure of Kurdistan, Zed Books 1992.

Van Bruinessen M., *Kürdistan* Üzerine *Yazılar*, transl. N. Kıraç, B. Peker, L. Keskiner, H. Turansal, S. Somuncuoğlu, L. Kafadar, İletişim Yayınları 2013.

Van Bruinessen M., Kürtler, Devletler ve Aşiretler, in: Aşiretler ve İktidar: Ortadoğu'da Etnisite ve Milliyetçilik, eds. F.A. Jabar, H. Dawod, transl. Ö. Öğünç, Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları 2013, pp. 159–176.

Van Bruinessen M., Kürtlük , Türklük, Alevilik: Etnik ve Dinsel Kimlik Mücadeleleri, transl. H. Yurdakul, İletişim Yayınları 2009.



Vanly I.S., Kurdistan in Iraq, in: A People Without a Country: The Kurds and Kurdistan, ed. G. Chailand, transl. M. Pallis, Zed Books 1993, pp. 139–193.

Voller Y., The Kurdish Liberation Movement in Iraq: From Insurgency to Statehood, Routledge 2014.

**Von Beyme K.**, *Political Parties*, in: *Marxism, Communism and Western Society: A Comparative Encyclopedia*, ed. C.D. Kernig, Herder and Herder 1972, pp. 343–361.

Waisy K.S., *The Roots of the Iraqi Kurdish Rivalries, Conflicts and Peace Process 1964-2000*, "American International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences", 2015, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. 220–232.

Watts N.F., Democracy and Self-determination in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, in: Conflict, Democratization, and the Kurds in the Middle East: Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, eds. D. Romano, M. Gurses, Palgrave Macmillan 2014, pp. 141–168.