Cover Page

Universiteit Leiden

Leiden University Repository

The handle http://hdl.handle.net/1887/18583 holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

**Author**: Nerwiy, Hawar Khalil Taher
**Title**: The Republic of Kurdistan, 1946
**Issue Date**: 2012-03-13

# CHAPTER II. ETHNIC GROUP

This chapter intends to offer concise descriptions of and discussions about notions of ethnicity, ethnic identity, ethnic group, nation and nationalism. Moreover, general theories about ethnicity are also discussed in broad lines within the framework of Kurds as an ethnic group. To this end, certain answers will be being begged of their questions, such as: What is a particular ethnic identity? In what ways do ethnic communities maintain their identities despite the presence of a dominant group?

## 1 Ethnic definitions

### 1.1. Ethnicity

Since there is no universally agreed-upon definition of ethnicity, social scientists have several distinct approaches to using this term. One of the reasons it remains undefined is that 'ethnicity seems to be a new term'.[54] The term 'ethnicity' was first used by the American sociologist David Riesman in 1953.[55] It was derived from the Greek word *ethnos*. The word 'ethnics' gradually became common in the United States around the time of the Second World War to identify people of non-Anglo race groups, such as Jews and Italians. This term has become more popular and was increasingly used after the 1960s. Ethnicity has something to do with classification of people and group relationships.[56] It refers to aspects of relationships among groups that regard themselves as culturally different and are considered by others distinct as well. Colloquially, the term 'ethnicity' evokes minority issues and race relations. In social anthropology, however, it refers to aspects of relationships among groups that consider themselves culturally distinctive.[57] In Iran, Kurds and Azeris play such a role. Their cultures and languages are distinct enough for them to be categorized as different ethnicities who live amid the dominant ethnic group of Persians.

---

[54] Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan (eds.), *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience* (Cambridge/Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), 1.

[55] Ibid.; Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives* (London/Colorado: Pluto Press, 1993), 3.

[56] Ibid., 4.

[57] Ibid.

Before the celebrated work of Fredrik Barth, ethnic groups were defined as social groups that are divided according to their shared origin, history, language and culture. As an alternative to this definition, Barth suggested the following:

Ethnicity is a matter of social organization and beyond questions of empirical cultural differences: it is about "the social organization of cultural difference".[58]

Barth claims that ethnicity stems from contact between two groups that are different from each other. He suggests that the self-definition of a group as an ethnic entity in a given geography provokes the definition from other groups also living within the concerned territory. Consequently the process constructs these entities as groups distinct from each other. In situations where there are no developed complementarities, groups tend to grow distant from each other and thus we get cultural variation without ethnicity.[59] Ethnicity, by definition, must arise either from a process of social differentiation within a population, which is divided into two or more groups, or by an expansion of system boundaries that create contacts with new groups.[60] Boundaries are relevant to ethnicity and can change and respond 'strongly to the political environment, particularly to the territorial frame in which groups find themselves.'[61]

Iraqi Kurds, both during the British mandate and since the independence of Iraq, have had to resort to armed struggle against the central government in order to take control of their territories. The struggle for autonomy in Iraqi Kurdistan originally stemmed from the tribal confederation and gradually reached a 'national unity' under the leadership of Mulla Mustafa Barzani.[62] Horowitz called this process of creating a large ethnic accumulation 'supertribalism' or 'artificial ethnicity'.[63]

Another example of supertribalism is the role of several tribes in the Republic of Kurdistan. An important component of the Republic of Kurdistan was the existence of and the

---

[58] Barth 1969, 6.

[59] Ibid., 6-38.

[60] Eriksen 1993, 79.

[61] Donald L. Horowitz, 'Structure and Strategy in Ethnic Conflict', (Paper prepared for the Annual World Bank Conference on Development Economics, Washington D.C., April 20–21, 1998), 25.

[62] Mulla Mustafa Barzani in 1961 (*shoresha eylole*, September uprising) has forged from different tribes a national unity against the Iraqi government.

[63] Horowitz 1998, 26.

interaction among its tribes. Typically, a Kurdish tribe, according to van Bruinessen, is a socio-political and generally also territorial unit based on descent and kinship, real or putative, with a characteristic internal structure.[64] Van Bruinessen claims that tribe is a 'social organization.'[65] Tribes are entities within which aspects of transformation scarcely occur. It is a social and cultural conservative. The collective character is an essential principle of tribes. They evaluate and decide collectively. There is no place for individual opinion, such as 'I believe' or 'I think.' The 'we-form' is the norm: 'we do this', 'we have said this.'[66] Tribes still play a vital role in the Kurdish society in some parts of Kurdistan. The use of the term 'ethnic group' implies namely the contact and relationships among these groups.[67]

Anthony D. Smith believes that there are two distinguishable broad trends in the study of ethnicity. The first is represented by the 'Primordialists' and 'Perennialists' and the second trend is Heraclitan.[68] The first offers answers to the perennial problems of life: the origins, destiny, and the meaning of life.[69] This refers to the objective definition of ethnicity that is based on the cultural commonness in language, historical background, religion and the common territory.[70] Smith remarks that the second trend, Heraclitan, is that ethnicity itself is a highly variable and disposable resource. He claims that while the masses may in some instances be charged by ethnic sentiments, in other cases they may be quite oblivious to any collective cultural attachments.[71] This second study of ethnicity uses the subjective definition of ethnicity that is based on the identity, belonging, solidarity and common interest.[72] The pioneering work on this definition of ethnicity was done by Joshua Fishman, who claimed that ethnicity is a matter of 'being', as well as 'knowing' and 'doing', and that:

> Ethnicity has always been experienced as a kinship phenomenon, a continuity within the self and within those who share an intergenerational link to common ancestors. Ethnicity is partly

---

[64] Van Bruinessen 1978, 40.

[65] Ibid., 39.

[66] My own surname, Nerweyi, is the name of a tribe in northern Iraqi Kurdistan, which may exemplify I - we form within a tribal setting.

[67] Eriksen 1993, 9-10.

[68] Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 210.

[69] Eriksen 1993, 45.

[70] Abdollah Ramezanzadeh, *Internal and International Dynamics of Ethnic Conflict: The Case of Iran* (Ph.D. thesis, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 1996), 9.

[71] Smith 1986, 210.

[72] Ramezanzadeh 1996, 9.

experienced as being 'bone of their bone, flesh of their flesh, and blood of their blood'. The human body itself is viewed as an expression of ethnicity and ethnicity is commonly felt to be in the blood, bones and flesh.[73]

The study of ethnicity can teach us about how ethnic groups relate to each other, as well as about their interactions with broad social organizations such as the nation and the state. This is especially relevant for the countries where more than one ethnic group resides. Iran is one of such countries with its mosaic of different ethnic groups. Several ethnic relationships have their own unique histories. Eriksen identifies some patterns of ethnicity, including the one called proto-nation, a term that is applied to Kurds. Eriksen claims that:

> Proto-nations (ethnonationalist movements) by definition [refer to] these groups (Kurds, Palestinians, Tamils) that have political leaders who claim that they are entitled to their own nation-state and should not to be 'ruled by others'. They are always territorially based, differentiated by class and education and are often large groups. It is a kind of 'nations without a state'.[74]

Ethnicity has long been understood as culture. Barth has offered a different perspective: ethnicity is a social organization of differences and similarities. Following Barth, ethnicity was studied in terms of situational interaction and transaction where boundaries occupy the highest priority for groups.[75]

---

[73] Joshua Fishman, 'Social theory and ethnography: neglected perspectives on language and ethnicity in Eastern Europe', in Peter Sugar (ed.), *Ethnic Diversity and Conflict in Eastern Europe* (Santa Barbara: ABC Clio, 1980), 84-5. For Eric J. Hobsbawm have also the 'kinship' and 'blood' obvious advantages in bonding together members of the group and excluding outsider. Hobsbawm 1993, 63.

[74] Eriksen describes four typical empirical foci of ethnic studies, these are: (a) urban ethnic minorities (b) indigenous peoples (c) proto-nations and (d) ethnic groups in plural societies. Eriksen 1993, 13-4.

[75] Maykel Verkuyten, *Etnische Identiteit: Theoretische en Empirische Benaderingen* [ethnic identity: theoretical and empirical approaches], (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 1999), 4.

## 1.2. Ethnic identity

During the last two decades of the twentieth century, the focus of discussion on ethnicity has gradually shifted towards the construction of ethnic identity. Barth describes ethnic identities as practical processes. In 1982, however, Anthony P. Cohen claimed that ethnic identities are ways of symbolizing community. Unlike Barth, who remains interested in cultural variation, Cohen delimits the field to political processes involving informal corporate groups.[76] In his 1993 criticism of Cohen's position, Eriksen claims that ethnic identity is created through political processes and that ethnic identity has a non-instrumental, non-political element. What Cohen does not discuss, according to Eriksen, is the nature of the stuff on which these groups feed. Eriksen argues that 'the shared identity of the individuals who eventually form an ethnic group is taken for granted in Cohen's model.'[77] Identity should no longer be considered as a 'given', as Barth claimed, but as a continuous process of social construction. Emphasis was placed on how identities, with the assistance of collective representations and ideological issues were defined and legitimized.[78]

Identity means, in anthropological discourse, 'being the same as oneself as well as being different.'[79] This is not a definitive definition, however. There is no consistency among social scientists regarding the definition of identity. Scientists have different answers, which often converge in a central theme. There are various distinct levels of identity, among which the personal and social levels are important. Personal identity refers to the self-concept by which a person makes a distinction between him or herself and other individuals or groups. Social identity concerns the status of the individual's presentation of him or herself in social interaction.[80] Samuel P. Huntington, whose work on identity is influenced by Eriksen, explains that identity is the self-image of an individual or a group. It is a product of self-

---

[76] Anthony P. Cohen (ed.), *Belonging: Identity and Social Organization in British Rural Cultures* (Manchester: University of Manchester, 1982). This book examines the nature of belonging, social association within localities, and how these may relate to wider appreciations of nation.

[77] Ibid., 55-6.

[78] Verkuyten 1999, 4.

[79] Eriksen 1993, 60.

[80] Jacobson Jessica, *Islam in Transition: Religion and Identity among the British Pakistani Youth* (London: Routledge, 1998), 9; Wasif A. Shadid, *Grondslagen van Interculturele Communicatie: Studieveld en Werkterrein* [Foundations of intercultural communication: Studyarea and workfield], (Houten/Diegem: Bohn Stafleu Van Loghum, 1998), 173-5. Ramezanzadeh claims that collective identity is also one of the distinct levels of identity. Ramezanzadeh 1996, 10-1.

consciousness, where I or we have the disposal of certain qualities which distinguish 'me' from 'you' and 'us' from 'them'.[81] The systematic application of identity is the distinction between insiders and outsiders and the boundaries between us and them. Two groups can be relatively equal and treat each other with respect or they simultaneously are more aware of their otherness. Eriksen described these two interethnic relationships complementarisation and dichotomisation.

According to Eriksen, complementarisation refers to ethnic differences as a fact and through a process of respect for each other. Dichotomisation on the other hand essentially expresses a form of us-them relationship in which cultural differences are emphasized leading to repression and often violence. In Eriksen's words, complementarisation can have two directions with relation to power. The subordinate group may use it to acquire a similar position with regard to the dominant group or the dominant group can use discrimination and assimilation.[82] The interethnic interaction within the first option is usually valid for democratic states. The relations between Sami ethnic minority and Norse dominant group in Norway may be presented as an example of complementarisation. In case of boundary conflicts or cultural competition between these groups, a solution is usually achieved without resorting to violence.[83]

However, if there is dichotomisation, as mentioned above, the dominant group resorts to discrimination and forced. This situation is often seen in Africa and Asia. During the post-World War I period, especially following European decolonization from the 1940s and 1960s, a multitude of new states in were formed in Africa and Asia with a markedly and visibly multi-ethnic character. Internal ethnic conflicts in many new states in these continents were often protracted and violent.

Following the creation of new boundaries in the Middle East after the First World War, Kurdish territories were redistributed among Iraq, Turkey and Syria. Consequently, Kurds have carried out a number of secessionist uprisings[84] or movements for autonomy to

---

[81] Samuel P. Huntington, *Who are we? The Challenges to American National Identity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004), 21.

[82] Eriksen 1993, 26-8.

[83] Relations between Sami ethnic group and Norse, see Arja Koskinen, 'Language policy towards ethnic minorities in Northern Norway and on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua', *International Journal of Educational Development* (Vol. 15, Is. 3, July 1995), 221-30.

[84] Secession is a distinct and specific kind of ethnic-based political mobilization. The term secession is most often used to refer to a declaration of intent by a minority to pursue independence. David Carment, 'Secessionist

attain cultural and political rights. A similar example is the conflict between the Sinhalese dominated central government and militant Tamil groups fighting for Tamil rights in Sinhalese controlled Sri Lanka.[85] In order to understand the ethnic conflicts experienced by certain proto-nations (Kurds in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, Tamils in Sri Lanka, the Kashmiri Muslim separatists in India), Heraclides describes three characteristics of violent separatist conflicts, two of which are: 1., all separatist wars have occurred in settings where power is highly centralised and democracy is weak or non-existent; 2., separatist wars involve minorities at risk of political and economic discrimination and/or military repression.[86]

There are three main approaches to examining the protracted conflicts among various groups in the process of defending their economic, political, and social group-interests: Socio-Political approach, Psycho-Social approach, and Cultural approach.

The socio-political approach asserts that culture is not the only element that holds groups together. According to this approach, the social balance of power within a given society is also a significant factor. The socio-political approach regards ethnic groups as group-interests and also as political phenomena.[87]

Secondly, based on the psycho-social concept of ethnic identity, Huntington claims that socio-biology and the theories at the end of the twentieth century about distinctiveness, social identity and attribution support the conclusion that at the root of hatred and rivalry is the need for enemies. Accordingly, individual and group violence and the tendency toward war are inescapable aspects of human nature.[88] The social and individual interactions within ethnic groups are the components of the psycho-social approach.

The third approach is the cultural approach, which was originated in early twentieth century as a method for studying the population composition in the United States. It became known as the cultural approach because it categorized distinct ethnic communities that made up the US population as cultural groups. It was utilized as an integral component of the melting-pot doctrine, which aimed to assimilate groups over time within the culture of the

---

ethnic conflict in South and Southeast Asia: A comparative perspective', in Rajat Ganguly and Ian Macduff (reds.), *Ethnic Conflict and Secessionism in South and Southeast Asia: Causes, Dynamics, Solutions* (New Delhi etc.: Sage Publications, 2003), 25.

[85] For about the conflict between Tamil and central government, see Chelvadurai Manogaran and Bryan Pfaffenberger (reds.), *The Sri Lankan Tamils: Ethnicity & Identity* (Boulder etc.: Westview Press, 1994).

[86] Carment, Secessionist ethnic conflict 2003, 27-8.

[87] Shadid 1998, 170-2.

[88] Huntington 2004, 41.

dominant Anglo-Saxon group.[89] Eriksen calls this process of assimilation the 'melting-pot metaphor.' Following the 'ethnic revival' of the 1960s and 1970s, it has become commonplace to criticise the notion of the melting-pot. The different ethnic groups do not amalgamate with each other. Social mobility of an ethnic group leads to tension in relation to another group. If an individual moves through different social strata, it may be due to changes in the relative importance of his or her ethnic membership.[90]

## 1.3. Ethnic group

An ethnic group is can be defined as a collectivity within a larger society with a real or supposed common descent, shared historical memories of a past and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements[91], such as kinship, religious affiliation and language. Barth's definition of ethnic group is clearer. He states that an ethnic group (a) is largely biologically self-perpetuating, (b) shares fundamental cultural values, realized in overt unity in cultural forms, (c) makes up a field of communication and interaction and (d) has a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order.[92]

Eriksen and Barth are the most prominent authors concerned with the definition and characteristics of ethnic groups. For both authors ethnic group is a social interaction. For Eriksen ethnic group is a social differentiation within a population or by an expansion of system boundaries bringing hitherto discrete groups into contact with each other.[93] He claims that 'it would therefore be misleading to argue that ethnic boundaries contain 'cultures'. Cultural differences relate to ethnicity if and only if such differences are made relevant in social interaction.'[94] The social interaction between various ethnic identities is an important way to stipulate ethnic boundaries. When the social interaction between two ethnic groups take place then the second element, cultural differences, become relevant.

Barth however focuses on something other than the cultural content of an ethnic group. The matter of ethnic groups' boundaries is the focal point of Barth's theory. He suggests that

---

[89] Cheko H. Gülşen, *De Koerden: Een Verbeelde Natie? Kirmanc Identiteit en Medya-tv* [the Kurds: an example of nation? Kurmanji identity and media-tv], (Utrecht, 2002), 28.

[90] Eriksen 1993, 19-20.

[91] Anthony D. Smith and J. Hutchinson (eds.), *Ethnicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 17.

[92] Barth 1969, 10-1.

[93] Eriksen 1993, 79.

[94] Ibid., 38.

the determining element of ethnic group is its 'boundary' and that research on boundaries is necessary to define a group.[95] Ethnic groups are heavily dependent on maintaining their boundaries. For the following three reasons, according to Barth, an ethnic group boundary maintaining mechanisms must be highly effective:

> The complexity [of poly-ethnic systems] is based on the existence of important, complementary cultural differences. These differences must be generally standardized within the ethnic group […,] so that inter-ethnic interaction can be based on ethnic identities. The cultural characteristics of each ethnic group must be stable, so that the complementary differences on which the systems rest can persist in the face of close inter-ethnic contact.[96]

For Barth, the term 'boundaries' goes beyond physical boundaries. It also includes social and invisible boundaries between two groups. According to him:

> Ethnic groups are not merely or necessarily based on the occupation of exclusive territories. The ethnic boundary canalizes social life – it entails a frequently quite complex organization of behaviour and social relations.[97]

In 1998, about thirty years after Barth's theory on the social interaction of boundaries between ethnic groups, Jacobson declared that ethnic boundaries have three dimensions: Conceptual dimension, social dimension, and cultural dimension. The conceptual dimension refers to individuals' desire to belong to a group or their consideration of themselves as members of a minority group. The social dimension includes the patterns of social relationships among the members of an ethnic group. These relationships strengthen their sense of belonging to the group. The cultural dimension covers the actions of an ethnic group's members. These actions are related to their culture, tradition, language, social class and status. Phenomena such as music, language and dress, which can act as the symbols of an ethnic group, help to differentiate members of a minority ethnic group from the majority.[98]

By definition, an ethnic minority is numerically fewer than the rest of the population in a society. As an ethnic category, they produce identifications for outsiders and insiders of

---

[95] Barth 1969, 15.

[96] Ibid., 19.

[97] Ibid., 15.

[98] Jacobson 1998, 89.

an ethnic group. Identification is seen and accessed by others as a member of an ethnic group. Verkuyten claims that identification is a link between individual and group. He believes that ethnic identification is discussed in relation to self-esteem, the perception of discrimination and cultural differences, intergroup differentiation and interethnic relationship.[99]

Ethnic minorities are not dominant groups but in some countries they play a dominant political position, such as the religious Alevite Nusayri minority in Syria under the leadership of Al-Asad family. In Syria, the majority of the population is actually composed of Sunni Muslims. Eriksen has ascertained that the concepts of minority and majority are relative and relational. They exist only in relation to each other. He argues that the relationship between minority and majority is contingent upon the relevant system of boundaries. Today, this system of boundaries is nearly always state boundaries. Eriksen claims that contemporary states use one or several of three main strategies in their dealings with minorities. These three strategies are: 1- The state may insist on the assimilation of entropy – resistant elements. Although such policies of assimilation are often believed to help their target groups to achieve equal rights and social status, they often inflict suffering and loss of dignity on the minorities. 2- The state may opt for dominance, which means segregation for the minority group. In this case, the minority is physically removed from the majority. This is justified by referring to the presumed cultural inferiority of the former. 3- The state can transcend ethnic nationalism and adopt a policy of multiculturalism, where citizenship and equal rights are independent of cultural identity, or the state may implement a decentralized system in which a high degree of local autonomy is made possible.[100]

Minorities have their own approaches to object to the dominant group within a society where generally this dominant group is associated with the state. Minorities have three principal ways to respond to state dominance: 1. Assimilate. In some cases this is not an option because they are prevented from assimilating by the other group. Such ethnic minorities have often low position in the labour market and they are the victims of ethnic segregation. 2. Cooperate with the state to seek some form of peaceful co-existence. 3. Seek cessation, which is always against the will of the state.[101] According to Handelman, groups that are willing to separate are always ethnic communities.[102]

---

[99] Verkuyten 1999, 53.

[100] Eriksen 1993, 121-4.

[101] Ibid., op. cit., 123.

[102] Handelman 1987, 35.

The state strategies to deal with minorities and the minority's self-defense approaches will usually lead to a combination of assimilation and segregation, and ethnic incorporation. Incorporation, where one group may lose its identity by merging into another group, is one of the principal varieties of assimilation. The second variety of assimilation, according to Horowitz, is amalgamation. Horowitz defines amalgamation as the unification of two or more groups to form a new group.[103] Today, the combination of incorporation and amalgamation is termed as 'integration'. It refers to the participation of a minority in the institutions of a society and a reproduction of group identity and ethnic boundaries. As it noted above, boundaries are one of the important principals of ethnic groups. Boundaries are also one of the basic ideological principles for nations and nationalism. The following section is formulated to substantiate this statement.

## 1.4. Nation and nationalism

Most celebrated masterworks of the theories of nation and nationalism use Europe as a their frame of reference. The most important academic authorities on contemporary theories of nation and nationalism include Ernest Gellner, Anthony D. Smith, Benedict Anderson, Eric J. Hobsbawm and Thomas Hylland Eriksen. Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1991) and Gellner's *Nations and nationalism* (1983), refer mostly to developing countries, where the agro-industrial society (Gellner) and print-capital (Anderson) have measured effects on nation and nationalism.

Before a group creates a nation and eventually declares a nation-state, there is the presence of strong movement and that is nationalism. Nationalism is a powerful weapon of the proto-nation. As Hobsbawm explains, 'nationalism comes before nations. Nations do not make nationalisms but the other way round.'[104] Smith claims that 'nationalism is an ideology that places the nation at the centre of its concerns.'[105] And if nationalism takes place before nation, then it would be logical to first study nationalism and then nation.

Nationalism is a new subject for anthropology. It became one of its topics of study mostly during the 1980s and 1990s. The central determinant of the origin of nationalist movements is the definition of the term nationalism. There is no consensus among scholars on the definition of nationalism. Smith suggests that nationalism is 'an ideological movement for

---

[103] Horowitz in Glazer 1975, 115.

[104] Hobsbawm 1990, 10; Smith 2001, 10.

[105] Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), 9.

attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity for a population which some of its members deem to constitute an actual or potential "nation".'[106] From the above definition of nationalism, we can deduce that there are three elements that empower the ideological movement of nationalism: 1. National autonomy, 2. National unity, and 3. National identity. It is necessary to offer descriptions for these three elements as well as for the ideological movement of nationalism.

In the beginning of his famous book on nationalism, Gellner gives the following definition:

> Nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unity should be congruent.[107]

He begins a new paragraph and continues with the definition of nationalism:

> [Nationalism] as a sentiment, or as a movement, can best be defined in term of this principle. Nationalist *sentiment* is the feeling of anger aroused by the violation of the principle, or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfilment. A nationalist *movement* is one actuated by sentiment of this kind.[108]

According to Gellner, political and national unities are essential to create a concept of nationalism. Gellner sees the national unity as synonymous with the ethnic group. He observes that 'nationalism is a theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones.'[109] He further clarifies that there is a link between ethnic group and the state. Nationalism is an ethnic ideology to attain territorial unity or that their group should dominate a state. Hobsbawm does not attempt to go beyond Gellner's definition of nationalism and concludes that nationalism is 'primarily a principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent.'[110]

---

[106] Ibid.

[107] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 1.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Ibid., 1-2.

[110] Hobsbawm 1990, 9.

For Anderson nationalism is 'an imagined political community, and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.'[111] For a large part, Anderson's perspective on nationalism is compatible with Gellner's. Both Gellner and Anderson argue that nations are ideological constructions that create a link between a cultural group and a state, and thus are different from a dynastic or kinship-based community. Unlike Gellner, however, and other scholars that concentrate on the political aspects of nationalism, Anderson focuses on the force and persistence of national identity and sentiment, and underlines three paradoxes that often obscure a clear definition of nationalism. Anderson argues that for theorists the definition of nationalism is a problematic one due to the following paradoxes:

(1) The objective modernity of nations to the historian's eye vs. their subjective antiquity in the eyes of nationalists. (2) The formal universality of nationality as a socio-cultural concept […] vs. the irremediable particularity of its concrete manifestation. (3) The 'political' power of nationalisms vs. their philosophical poverty and even incoherence.[112]

Eriksen sees the intensive research and study of ethnic boundaries and identity as a means to shed light on paradoxes that are identified by Anderson. The dialog that took place through academic articles of Gellner and Anderson on the theory of nationalism inspired Eriksen's work on the topic of nationalism. Eriksen draws parallels between the works of Gellner and Anderson. He claims that studies of ethnicity and nationalism demonstrate that ethnic or national identities are constructions and are not 'natural'. Eriksen explains that at the political organization level nationalism is ethnic in character and represents the interests of a particular ethnic group. Furthermore, according to Eriksen, the state is a form of political legitimacy for convincing the popular masses that they represent a cultural unity. The state also has an emotional force, which is derived from symbols, because they give people a sense of loyalty. In Eriksen's words, symbols are multifocal and that they have an 'instrumental' and a 'sensory'.[113]

Symbolism and language together compose one of the three main factors to understanding the term nationalism. The other two factors are the socio-political movement

---

[111] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities – Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (2nd ed., London/New York: Verso, 1991), 6.

[112] Ibid., 5.

[113] Eriksen 1993, 100-1.

and the ideology of the nation.[114] Nationalism uses symbols that are extracted from cultural contexts, such as kinship, which are important for people in everyday life. Therefore, nationalism can be seen as a form of symbolic kinship. Smith observed that the symbols and language of nationalism are the main elements to awaking the ideals of the nation. The descriptions of other the two main factors of nationalism are as follows:

> The goals of the socio-political movement are defined not by the activities or the personnel of the movement, but by the basic ideals and tenets of the ideology. The ideology of nationalism serves to give force and direction to both symbols and movements. [I]t is the ideology that must supply us with an initial working definition of the term 'national*ism*', for its contents are defined by the ideologies which place the nation at the centre of their concerns and purposes.[115]

If there is one point on which there is agreement among some scholars, it is that the 'ideology' is the foundation of nationalism. Nationalism as a political ideology uses the idea of 'the nation' to achieve political goals. It is not easy to locate nationalism on a left-right 'ideological spectrum.' As Eriksen claims, by placing an emphasis on the equality among citizens, nationalism may be an ideology of the left. But by emphasising vertical solidarity, it may as easily belong to the right.[116] According to Michael Freeden, nationalism is concerned with creating or maintaining the very political unit that the left-right ideologies need to achieve their political rights.[117] When discussing the goals of nationalist ideologies, Smith is the prememinent scholar. He claims that nationalist ideologies have 'collective self-rule, territorial unification and cultural identity, and often a clear political and cultural programme for achieving these ends.'[118] Smith sees ideology as a 'belief-system' that is based on three components: (i) a set of basic propositions to which most nationalists adhere, (ii) some fundamental ideals which are present in every nationalism and (iii) a range of cognate concepts that give more concrete meaning to the core abstractions of nationalism.[119]

The ideological movement of nationalism will be understood as referring to one or more of the last three aspects: national autonomy, national unity and national identity.

---

[114] Smith 2001, 6.

[115] Ibid., 8-9.

[116] Eriksen 1993, 107.

[117] Michael Freeden, 'Is nationalism a distinct ideology?', *Political Studies* (vol. 46, No. 4, 1998), 751.

[118] Smith 2001, 21.

[119] Ibid., 22.

National autonomy refers to self-regulation and self-determination, having one's own internal laws and free of external constraint. Self-determination can be in the form of a sovereign territorial state or it can refer to the internal form of federal self-government. By national unity, the group does not seek some objective of cultural uniformity, but rather a social and cultural unification of the members of the nation. Feeling an intense bond and solidarity is central to the national unity.[120] Nationalism and other ethnic ideologies hold that social and cultural boundaries should be unambiguous. They should also coincide with political boundaries.[121] Distinguished from collective character and its historical-cultural basis is the ideal of national identity. For the collective character of national identity, Smith refers to the Rousseau's and Herder's claim that: 'the first rule which we have to follow is that of national character: every people have, or must have, a character.' As for cultural character, Herder claims that each nation possessed, and had to follow, its own peculiar national 'genius'.[122]

Political ideology, for Smith, was the first step to understand the concept of nationalism. Of course, there are some other basic elements of nationalism. Smith claims that religion is the second element of nationalism. Smith used the Durkheim's definition of religion for understanding the surrogate religion of nationalism. Namely that religion is 'a unified system of beliefs and practices […] which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them.' Smith says this is particularly evident when a great leader dies in the battlefield. For a nationalist group this represents martyrdom wherein the 'glorious dead' sacrifice their lives for their country. The group or nation as a 'sacred communion of citizens' is a characterization that accords with an interpretation of nationalism as 'surrogate religion.'[123] As Anderson suggests that in some ways nationalism is historically the 'successor' of religion. Anderson sees *religious community* and the *dynastic realm* as cultural systems and suggests that nationalism must be understood within these cultural systems. Further, Anderson states that Christianity and *Ummah* (community) Islam were highly imaginable through the medium of a sacred language and a Scripture.[124] Both Eriksen and Hobsbawm point out a strong relationship between religion and nationalism. According to Eriksen, nationalism lays claim to religious symbols which have great significance for

---

[120] Ibid., 25-6.

[121] Eriksen 1993, 114.

[122] Smith 2001, 27.

[123] Ibid., 33-5.

[124] Anderson 1991, 12-3.

people and represent the nation-state.[125] Hobsbawm used Poland and Ireland as two examples of countries who demonstrate the close relationship between religion and nationalism. Hobsbawm claims that this relationship seems to grow closer where nationalism becomes a massive force rather than a phase as a minority ideology and activists' movement.[126]

The industrial social organization is not the only factor impacting nationalism. As Gellner points out, other developments, such as the fascinating relationship between nationalism and religious reformation, too, have consequences for nationalism. According to Gellner, certain aspects of the reform movement laid the groundwork for the nationalist period that came afterwards. They include reformers' emphasis on literacy and adherence to the letter of Scripture, an attack on the monopoly of priesthood, celebration of individualism and its links with mobile urban populations. He argues that Protestantism has played a major role in the development of industrial society. The developments and reforms in the Islamic world of the past one hundred years are largely the same story of the progress and victory of reform. Gellner calls this a kind of Islamic Protestantism with a strong emphasis on adherence to the Scripture.[127] The religious echo in nationalism, as well as reformers political, reinforces the concept of a nation as a sacred community.

The third element of the development of nationalism, according to Smith, is cultural nationalism or, more broadly, cultural identity. There is a strong link between cultural nationalism and the issues of cultural identity, such as solidarity and moral purpose. Smith believes that cultural and political forms of nationalism often succeed each other, and nationalism may oscillate between these two forms. In case the political nationalism falters in its aims, the cultural nationalism muscles in and builds or prepares the community's common cultural assets. Representative cultural nationalism depends on certain techniques to consolidate the position of a group or, as Smith points out, to mobilize 'the people' to engage in the regeneration of the nation, such as by using the ethnic symbols, myths and memories. However, there must also be a number of strong institutions behind the cultural nationalism. These institutions play a crucial role within a group on its way to becoming a nation. Some of such institutions are: rituals and festival organizations, armies, linguistic code,[128] schooling and education. As Gellner observed, complex and long-standing schooling and education is an

---

[125] Eriksen 1993, 107.

[126] Hobsbawm 1990, 67-8.

[127] Gellner 1983, 59-60.

[128] Smith 2001, 73-8.

important factor within a cultural-industrial community. Gellner also states that the common economic infrastructure of the advanced industrial society and its inescapable implications will continue to ensure that people depend on culture. Culture requires standardization in very broad subject areas and must be preserved and maintained by centralized bodies.[129]

Language is one of the most important aspects of cultural nationalism. Scholars are unanimous on this point. Hobsbawm points out that languages used by communities of the educated became central to the European nationalism of 1880-1914.[130] Language is also the main focus point of Anderson's research on nationalism. He argues that nationalism is an invention of the print-languages, not of a particular language per se. These print-languages, according to Anderson, laid the basis for national consciousnesses in three distinct ways. Firstly, they created unified fields of exchange and communication in a language below scholarly Latin and yet above the common daily spoken language. These fellow-readers, who were connected through print, formed the base of the nationally imagined community. Secondly, print-capitalism gave the language a tangible form, which in the long term was a factor in the development of that image of antiquity so central to the subjective idea of the nation. Thirdly, print-capitalism created languages-of-power of a kind different from the older administrative vernaculars.[131] For example, the Turkish language became a catalyst for the modern Turkish state upheld by the new Turkish nationalism, although *Türkiye* was not a term used before 1914.[132] At the expense of any wider Islamic identification, Atatürk imposed compulsory Romanization. Atatürk ordered in 1928 a commission to develop a phonetic Turkish alphabet using the Latin alphabet in place of the existing Arabic one. In 1932 legislation, Atatürk made the issuing of the call to prayer in Turkish, instead of Arabic, obligatory.[133]

---

[129] Gellner 1983, 155-6.

[130] Hobsbawm 1990, 102.

[131] Anderson 1991, 44-5.

[132] More details on the Turkish language and nationalism, see Aaron Scott Johnson, *The Road to Turkish Language Reform and the Rise of Turkish Nationalism* (Montreal: Institute of Islamic Studies MgCill University, 2004); T. Atabaki, 'Pan-Turkism and Iranian Nationalism', idem (ed.), *Iran and the First World War: Battleground of the Great Powers* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006).

[133] For more on the reform and secularization processes of Atatürk in modern Turkey, see T. Atabaki and Erik J. Zürcher, *Men of Order: Authoritarian Modernization under Atatürk and Reza Shah* (London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004).

Language is one of the objective factors involved in the definition of nation. Other major factors are religion, customs, territory, and institutions. As Hobsbawm has observed, language and ethnicity are associated closely with the definition of nation.

As can be seen below, another central component of the definition of nation is sovereignty, which is defined by most scholars as having one's own state. Nationhood then is a 'community of sentiment that would adequately manifest itself in a state of its own; hence, a nation is a community which normally tends to produce a state of its own.'[134] In this regard, can we categorize Kurds as a nation? If asked, most Kurds without hesitation will give an affirmative answer. It may thus be interesting to consider a Kurdish scholar's take on the matter. Hassanpour defines a nation as a:

> Historically formed community of people bound together by common language, culture, homeland, and community of economic life (i.e., existence of division of labour among various parts of the territory, and especially the existence of a middle class)… national development in the process of consolidation of 'ethnic peoples' or tribal/rural societies into modern nations.[135]

Interestingly, some Kurdish scholars, such as Hassanpour's, concept of nation are based on Marxism-Leninism, which has had great influence in the Kurdish autonomy movement. Stalin claimed that a nation 'is a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture.'[136] According to van Bruinessen, Kurdish nationalist movements, claiming to represent a nation by this definition, attempted to secure Soviet support for their cause.[137] It ought to be noted that Stalin insist on sovereignty as a prerequisite for nationhood, which contrasts starkly with some European scholars who consider sovereignty as a fundamental component of the definition of nation.

One of the main characteristics of a nation, according to Anderson, is sovereign statehood. Anderson's definition of the nation is formed on four terms or characters:

---

[134] Smith 2001, op. cit., 25.

[135] Amir Hassanpour, 'The Making of Kurdish Identity: Pre-20th Century Historical and Literary Sources', in Abbas Vali (ed.), *Essays on the Origins of Kurdish Nationalism* (Costa Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers, 2003), 143; Hassanpour 1992, 44.

[136] Hobsbawm 1990, 11; Smith 2001, 11.

[137] Martin van Bruinessen, 'Kurdish Nationalism and Competing Ethnic Loyalties', Original English version of: 'Nationalisme Kurde et ethnicités intra-Kurdes', *Peuples Méditerranéens* (No. 68-69, 1994).

*imagined*, *limited*, *community* and *sovereign*. The nation is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members. Secondly, the nation is limited because even the largest of them has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lay other nations. Thirdly, the nation is a community because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail therein, it is always understood as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Finally, the nation is sovereign because the concept originated in a time when the Enlightenment and revolution destroyed the legitimacy of the God-given and hierarchical dynastic realm. The result of this liberation from dynasty is the sovereign state.[138] According to Daniel Philpott, the modern sovereign state began at the Peace of Westphalia (1648)[139] and formed a system of interstate relations that was based on mutual recognition of the principles of sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs. For Philpott, the Westphalia Peace Agreement was a watershed in European history as it marked the beginnings of the forming of modern state dominance.[140]

Although the previous sections attempted to clarify certain major elements used in defining the concept of nationhood, it must be noted that, in Smith's terms, nationhood is the most problematic and contentious term in the field, because there is disagreement among scholars about the definition of nation. Smith defines the concept of the nationhood as 'a named human community occupying a homeland, and having common myth and a shared history, a common public culture, a single economy and common rights and duties for all members.'[141] Here, the term 'occupy' is approximately the same as Anderson's 'sovereignty' for the definition of the nation. Hobsbawm defends the position of Adam Smith who claims that nation 'means no more than a territorial state.'[142] Hobsbawm decidedly claims that there are only three criteria which allow a people to be firmly classed as a nation: 1. A link between

---

[138] Anderson 1991, 6-7.

[139] For a more detailed reading on Westphalian system, see Benjamin Kaplan J., *Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2007); for a discussion of some important elements that lead to the creation of the Westphalian Peace, see Leo Gross, 'The Peace of Westphalia' *The American Journal of International Law* (Vol. 42, Is. 1, 1948), 20–41; see also my unpublished article on my website, Hawar Nerweyi, 'Hoe het Westfaalse systeem is ontstaan', How the Westphalian system was created (Utrecht University, March 2009). http://nerweyi.blogspot.com/

[140] For a detailed discussion on sovereignty, see Daniel Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped Modern International Relations* (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001).

[141] Smith 2001, 10-3.

[142] Hobsbawm 1990, 26.

historic association and current state. 2. The existence of long-established cultural elite, possessing a written national literary and administrative vernacular. 3. Proven capacity for conquest. By the third point, Hobsbawm means that conquest must be provided as Darwinian proof of evolutionary success as a social species.[143]

The historical influential route for a nation to attain a sovereign state is based on two main elements: territorial nation and legal concept of the nation. In Smith's words "the terms 'territorial nation' and 'legal concept of the nation' also signify a route for attaining nationhood, for creating or forming nations."[144] Although Kurds have a homeland and compose the majority population in their regions, they do not have a sovereign state of their own and are dominated by others. As Gellner points out, it is a great injustice for a culturally homogenous population not to have their own state. Its members are required to live in one or more states that are ruled by other foreign cultural groups.[145]

The core concepts of the nation, which relate to practical, cultural, and political programmes, are authenticity, continuity, dignity, destiny, attachment and the homeland. Each of these aspects examines and evaluates the past and the present state of the nation. For Smith, authenticity means to find the 'authentic' elements of our being and it refers to the originality of the nation. Smith claims that the concept of authenticity overlaps with that of autonomy. As for continuity, a nation must have a history that lends itself to the nation's future as well keeps its interests and ideals in sight. It can, according to Smith, also signify a gradual movement of transformation or an accumulation of layers of past states, without necessarily opposing changes that occur over time. Dignity refers to a nation's continuous effort to find and maintain an inner worth, to realize the dignity of the authentic self. Smith believes that dignity can also come from noble pedigree and antiquity, which attract reverence and piety. Destiny, for nationalism, always signifies glorious future. Rather than return to the glorious past, however, the destiny of each nation is oriented towards recreating its glory in modern terms. Attachment essentially refers to a feeling for one's country or the place where one is born, such as falling in love with something special. The final core concept of the nation is homeland. One of the main elements of this concept is the need of nations to re-root and re-

---

[143] Ibid., 37-8.

[144] Smith 1986, 135.

[145] Gellner 1983, 172.

attach themselves to their pristine origins, their authentic self even if they are already residing in their homelands.[146]

In terms of nationalism, homeland refers to a political claim over an area of land in the name of a nation. Nationalism strives to bind the national group together and define its members as citizens. It involves more than a simple hyphen between nation and state and is often mediated through the idea of homeland. As Alexander C. Diener recently noted, homeland itself remains a slippery subject for many reasons. In his view, the subject eludes sustained and focused academic inquiry partially due to the prosaic, accepted nature of homeland, and partially because of its multivalent definition.[147] There is a strong relationship between homeland and diaspora nationalism. Homeland is a central symbol of transnationalism. One of the most important political reasons that strengthen the feeling for a homeland is the 'diasporas nationalism.' Myths about return and imaginings concerning ancestors, birth, root and soil all contribute to the power that homelands exert over people who live in diasporas around the world. One of the best examples of diaspora nationalism is that of the Jewish communities across the world, which eventually succeeded in creating a homeland in Palestine in 1948.

Therefore, the notions of 'territory', 'community', 'cultural unity', 'language' are crucial elements in defining the term 'nation' with the provision that some nations still do not have their own state. Many states can be called a nation-state, while other states which contain more than one nation within them are appropriately named 'multinational states'.[148] Can a nation without a state be categorized as a 'nation' or should it be categorized differently, such as an ethnic group? A stateless ethnic group, such as Kurds, feels compelled to stake out claims for self-determination as an aspirant 'nation'. Smith uses the term 'triple movement' in reference to such ethnic groups. The term indicates movements 'from isolation to activism, from quietism to mobilization, and from culture to politics.'[149] Complementing the above discussion about the concept of nation, the following section contains a comparative review of ethnic group and nationhood.

---

[146] Smith 2001, 28-31.

[147] For recent detail about diaspora nationalism and relations with homeland, see Alexander C. Diener, *One Homeland or Two? The Nationalization and Transnationalization of Mongolia's Kazakhs* (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2009).

[148] Ramezanzadeh 1996, 14.

[149] Smith 1986, 154.

## 1.5. Differences between nation and ethnic group

In place of the English term ethnic group, Smith uses the French term *ethnie*[150] to indicate communities that are not only connected to a homeland and possess common myths of ancestry, shared memories, and other elements of shared culture, but also have a measure of solidarity, at least among the elites.[151] Using this definition of ethnic group we can conclude that there is no fundamental difference between nations and ethnic groups. As Smith points out, 'both belong to the same family of phenomena (collective cultural identities).'[152] But a nation is not an ethnic community. In both Anderson's and Smith's definition of nationhood, sovereignty composes an important characteristic feature. This is one of the basic differences between ethnic groups and nations, for an ethnic community usually has no sovereignty. Even if it has territory it is stateless. Smith claims that ethnic community has no political referent, whereas a nation must occupy a homeland of its own to constitute itself as a nation.[153]

As another major difference between ethnic communities and nations, Smith points to the lack of 'common public culture' in ethnic communities.[154] However, recalling Barth's take on this matter, cultural differentia is a strong determinant of the boundaries of an ethnic group. In cultural terms, there are also differences between the personal status of individuals according to membership in an ethnic group or a nation. Membership in an ethnic group is defined in hereditary terms and is a matter of self-definition, whereas membership in a nation is defined in terms of citizenship and political rights.[155] Similar to ethnic groups, nations also have collective names, common myths, and shared memories. Conversely, nations diverge from ethnies by affording their citizens common public culture, homeland, common rights and duties, and a single economy.[156] In the case of the Kurds, although there is a claim over a common history and a large territory as a homeland, van Bruinessen points out that the Kurds' opponents have deprived them of a common economic life. Furthermore, he points to the fact that the unity of Kurdish language and culture were also disputed issues.[157]

---

[150] On the development of the term ethnic from ancient Greek to the modern European language see ibid., ch. 2.

[151] Smith 2001, 13.

[152] Ibid., 12; Ramezanzadeh 1996, 15.

[153] Smith 2001, 12.

[154] Ibid., 13. For largely overlapping and yet subtly distinct descriptions of ethnic communities and nations, see Ibid., 10-5.

[155] Ramezanzadeh 1996, op. cit., 15.

[156] Smith 2001, 14.

[157] Van Bruinessen 1994.

For some countries that are comprised of different ethnic groups, or certain specific regions where different ethnic groups live in close proximity, William H. McNeill uses the term polyethnicity.[158] Smith, on the other hand, expands the definition of 'polyethnic nations' by introducing two important components: 1. Forging of a common history, and 2. sharing of a political memory.[159] Many countries, on some level, are examples of polyethnic nations, such as Canada, Switzerland, Spain, and Belgium. In Canada, where English and French are the official languages, many political debates have taken place between Anglophone and Francophone citizens, who mainly live in the province of Quebec.[160] There are four official languages in Switzerland: German, French, Italian and Rumantsch or Romansh. However, the national identity and political horizon have inspired the Swiss population to define for themselves a public culture, a unitary homeland, a single economy and common rights.[161] The Basque and Catalan national movements, which developed in opposition to the dominance of the Castilian Spanish state, are two of the few ethnic groups in Europe who have resorted to violence in order to obtain certain political rights. Belgium is divided roughly as north and south between its Dutch (Flemish) speakers in Flanders and its French speakers in Wallonia, respectively. Consequently, Belgium hosts a parliamentary democracy that is ethnically polarized. According to Arend Lijphart, members of the Chamber of Representatives are reserved to the Walloons and Flemish. In addition to ideological divisions, political parties in Belgium have been divided linguistically and ethnically as well.[162] Under what circumstances are the harmonization and cohabitation of a polyethnic nation peacefully maintained within a state and when is the state torn apart, such as Ex-Yugoslavia?

---

[158] William H. McNeill, *Polyethnicity and National Unity in World History* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1985), 85.

[159] Smith 2001, 15.

[160] Claude Bélanger, (August 2000). "The Rise of the Language Issue since the Quiet Revolution". Marianopolis College. Retrieved 2009-11-22.

[161] Smith 2001, 15.

[162] Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 39.

## 2 Theoretical review of ethnicity

The previous subsections reviewed different approaches to the definition of the concept of nation. The following three subsections will analyze three different theoretical approaches to ethnicity: *Primordialism*, *Instrumentalism* and *Structuralism*. Just as in the definition of the concept of nation, these theories are quite heterogeneous.

### 2.1. Primordialism

Until recently, according to Eriksen, two fundamental theoretical approaches dominated the debates within the study of ethnicity. These are: 'primordialism' and 'instrumentalism.'[163] According to some other scholars, however, such as Crawford Young, there is another theoretical approach to the definition of ethnicity: 'constructivism' or structuralism, which focuses on the contingent nature of identity and the dynamic of its construction.[164] This debate is mainly shaped around the question of whether ethnic identity has a primordial or more situational, also referred to as instrumental, character. Both primordial and instrumental approaches were largely a reaction to the assimilation processes in the United States. The essence of the assimilation policy was the idea that ethnic-cultural differences are temporary and over time these differences disappear in the melting-pot.[165]

More recently, according to Smith, there is discussion of two kinds of primordialism: socio-biological and cultural givens. The first refers to the fact that 'nations, ethnic groups and races can be traced to the underlying genetic reproductive drives of individuals and their use of strategies of 'nepotism' and 'inclusive fitness' to maximize their gene pools.'[166] The evidence that genes incline people to prefer others who are genetically similar to themselves comes from studies of social assortment, differential heritabilities, and the comparison of identical and fraternal twins, blood tests, and family bereavements. [167] In this circumstance, culture and cultural symbolism (language, religion) served as biological affinity and played an important role for a group network. The second kind of primordialism, cultural givens, holds

---

[163] Eriksen 1993, 54.

[164] Crawford Young, 'Nationalism and ethnic conflict in Africa' in Montserrat Guibernau and John Hutchinson (eds.), *Understanding Nationalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), 173-4.

[165] Verkuyten 1999, 50.

[166] Smith 2001, 52.

[167] Philippe Rushton J., 'Ethnic nationalism, evolutionary, psychology and Genetic Similarity Theory', *Nations and Nationalism* (11 (4), 2005), 489.

that ethnic groups and nations are formed on the 'basis of attachments to the cultural givens of social existence.'[168] As examples of scholars who favour this form of primordialism, Smith mentions particularly two names, Clifford James Geertz and Edward Shils.

According to Geertz, the primordialist view maintains that the participant perceives ethnic ties collectively, as an externally given, even coercive, social bond. Geertz argues that humans generally attribute an overwhelming power to primordial human 'givens' such as blood ties, language, territory, and cultural differences. In Geertz's opinion, ethnicity is not in itself primordial but humans perceive it as such because it is embedded in their experience of the world.[169] In developing countries, ethnic groups are superimposed on the primordial realities. Primordialists believe, according to Josep Llobera, that ethnic identity is deeply rooted in the historical experience of human being to the point of being practically a given.[170] The history of ethnic groups sometimes conjures up emotions in it members and these emotions are the reasons that members maintain their identity. Verkuyten points out that the feelings of commitment and connectedness to their own ethnic group, which members believe they are descended from, give people a strong and emotional foundation to the question of who and what one is.[171]

Authenticity and originality of an ethnic group is one of the important elements of primordialism. Groups that are formed on the unity of common language, territory and culture will be able to keep their authenticity. These groups are created by neighbourhoods and families, which Shils called 'primary groups'. Shils observed that the role of primary groups in the society includes three elements: (a) the affinity between political or ideological enthusiasm and a tendency to organize into primary groups, (b) the role of the mediating or liking person in binding the primary group to the corporate body and (c) the dependence of corporate efficiency on primary group morale.[172] The main emphasis of primordialists is on

---

[168] Smith 2001, 53.

[169] Clifford J. Geertz is seen as one of the most important scholars behind the explanation of the cultural theory and his ideas had a strong influence in later twentieth century anthropology. One of his important works is: *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Free Press, 1973).

[170] Josep R. Llobera, 'Recent Theories of Nationalism', *Institut de Ciències Polítiques i Socials* (WP núm. 164, Barcelona 1999).

[171] Verkuyten 1999, 51.

[172] Edward Shils, 'Primordial, Personal, Sacred and Civil Ties: Some Particular Observations on the Relationships of Sociological Research and Theory', *The British Journal of Sociology* (Vol. 8, No. 2, Jun. 1957), 133-7.

the reproduction and modification of society through primary groups. Horowitz also claims that the family is the unit that constantly replenishes ethnic group members. It is the first group to which individuals belong and, because of the long period of human maturation, its influence is extraordinarily durable.[173] History and ancestors thus play important roles in the primordial community. The primordialist approach argues that ethnic ties are 'natural', that they are recorded under the same principles as the links that people have with their families and other primary groups. Shils remarks that in family attachments there is a significant 'relational quality' that can only be called primordial. And this is because there is an ineffable attribute to the ties of blood.[174]

This feeling of commitment may be the result of personal affection, practical reasons and common interests. Brown refers to the argument that one is born into a particular linguistic, racial or homeland community as the 'primordial bond'.[175] Reed C. Eller summarizes the primordial bonds in the following three key ideas: 1. Primordial identities or bonds are 'given'. They are fixed, even before any experience of interaction. Primordial social ties have no sources. 2. Primordial sentiments are overwhelming and compelling and cannot be analyzed in relation to social interaction. When an individual is a member of a group, then he necessarily feels of that group. 3. Primordialism is essentially a matter of emotion. Primordial identities are qualitatively different from other kinds of identities.[176] The accumulative influence of community ties based on blood, language, religion, tradition, and homeland is strongly felt not only by the members of a given group but also by other groups.

In the Middle East and most of the developing countries during the 1950s and 1960s, the primordialist explanations of ethnic assertions were largely dismissed. The ethnic groups that relied on these explanations to build cases for their national liberation movements meet with state violence. Especially in the Middle East, this period is highlighted by a secular nation-building pattern and by the efforts of ethnic groups, such as the Kurds, to manifest and proclaim their identities, which was often brutally repressed.[177] Primordialists argue that ethnic conflicts and the desire for independence or autonomy stem from the systematic denial

---

[173] Horowitz 1998, 17.

[174] Shils 1957, 142.

[175] Brown, 'The conceptual language of nationalism' and 'New nations for old?', 2000, 6.

[176] Reed C. Eller, 'The Poverty of Primordialism: the Demystification of Ethnic Attachments', In J. Hutchinson, A.D. Smith, *Ethnicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 45.

[177] For multi-ethnic societies and the congruence between the nation and the state, see Walker Conner, 'Nation-building or Nation-destroying?', *World Politics* (Vol. 24, No. 3, 1972), 319-55.

of minority aspirations. Self-determination is the most fundamental aspiration of the ethnic minority. Stephen Ryan writes that 'structural incompatibilities between the ideology of state-building and minorities are a key determinant of whether a group will pursue organised violence.'[178] One of the ten alternative descriptions of ethnic conflicts proposed by Horowitz is that ethnicity is a primordial affiliation. Horowitz explains that:

> Ethnicity is a primordial affiliation, in the sense that it is connected to the things people cannot live without, among them, traditionality, the persistence of the past into the present, and a sense of collective self-consciousness. A sense of community of this sort—*Gemeinschaft* rather than *Gesellschaft*—necessarily generates awareness of other communities, and this spills over (by mechanisms unspecified) into conflict and violence. Ethnic affiliations are highly charged and, on some accounts, non[-]rational. It seems futile to gainsay the emotive power of ethnic affiliations, and a good explanation will have to come to grips with the thick, compelling character of group membership.[179]

A strong emphasis on the responsiveness of ethnic groups to the deep needs of group members is not at odds with a keen sense of the variability of ethnic phenomena, as Horowitz notes:

> It follows that group members may entertain sentiments so intense that theorists identify them as primordial, even though group identities are socially constructed, recently constructed, founded on relatively little in the way of palpable differences, and mutable as environmental conditions change.[180]

There are many factors that may cause an ethnic conflict to erupt and an ethnic group to claim self-determination or self-government. The primordialist approach offers the following three explanations: 1 - Ethnic conflicts and the desire for independence stem from the systematic denial of the aspirations, goals, and values of minorities by the state. 2 - A transition to violence takes place after negation of the separate identities, the absence of security for

---

[178] Cited in Carment, 'Secessionist ethnic conflict', 2003, 29.

[179] Horowitz, 'Structure and Strategy in Ethnic Conflict', 1998, 5.

[180] Ibid., 19.

minorities and the absence of effective participation for this minority. 3 - A lack of confidence in the intentions of the state leads minorities towards open conflict by gradual escalation.[181]

In general, the control of the territorial resources of the indigenous population by the majority also creates potential for conflicts. Many ethno-political movements are struggling to protect their rights to these resources. In Iraq, the Kurds provide an example such a struggle. They have lost a good deal of territory during the Arabization-politics. Between 1921 and 2003, from the establishment of the Iraqi state until the occupation of Iraq by the US, and especially during the period of the Ba'th regime (1968-2003), hundreds of thousands of Kurds as well as Turkmens and Assyrians were forced to leave their homes by governmental actions notoriously known as the 'Arabization campaigns'.

The Arabic government of Iraq used Arabization to gain the full control of oil fields and fertile lands in northern Iraq, especially in Kirkuk region. This campaign changed the demographics of certain areas in favour of Arabs by forcefully displacing other ethnic groups from these areas. Furthermore, the Ba'th regime continually increased the political violence and persecution of local residents in Iraqi Kurdistan. It must be noted that since the 1970s, Kirkuk oil revenues represented approximately more than half of the total oil income of Iraq. Even, after the formation of the 'New Iraq' under the US occupation in 2003, retraction of the Arabization-politics has remained one of the main diplomatic issues between the central Iraqi government and the Kurdish Regional Government. Additionally, Kurds claim that Kirkuk belongs to Kurdistan and Iraqi government constantly raises obstacles before the Kurdish efforts to reclaim the city.[182]

---

[181] Brown, 'The conceptual language of nationalism', 2000, 6-12.

[182] For Arabization-politics in Kurdistan under the Ba'th regime see Human Rights Watch, 'III. Background: Forced Displacement and Arabization of Northern Iraq', (October 2004). For Arabization of Kirkuk region, see Nouri Talabany, *Arabization of the Kirkuk Region* (Uppsala, Sweden: Kurdistan Studies Press, 2001). For a detail and general history of Iraq, see Charles Tripp, *A History of Irak* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

## 2.2. Instrumentalism

Instrumentalism, according to Abner Cohen, argues that ethnicity is essentially as an ad-hoc resource to be used strategically by interest groups for achieving secondary goals such as increasing their wealth, power or status. Cohen sees ethnicity as a stipulated form of informal political organization, which creates cultural boundaries to insure the resources and the symbolic capital of the group.[183] Eriksen criticized Cohen's position with the argument that, 'if ethnic identities are created wholly through political processes, then it should have been possible to create any identity at all. Ethnicity must have a non-instrumental, non-political element.'[184]

The prominence of instrumentalism came from the results of the melting-pot processes in US in the second and third decennia of the twentieth century. With respect to certain ethnic groups, the melting-pot ideology of the US government has not produced its expected results. Afro-Americans and Native Americans, for example, have not melted within the pot of the dominant culture. Moreover, in certain circumstances, the efforts to suppress certain ethnic groups have ultimately benefited the oppressed groups.[185] As Smith pointed out, there was debate throughout the 1970s over the degree to which ethnic groups in the US should be seen as interest groups behaving instrumentally in the political marketplace. Afterwards, however, generations increasingly shed their cultural distinctiveness. Smith points out that the concept of melting-pot in the US has been promoted by certain ethnic groups and underlines the following:

---

[183] Cohen 1982, 27-32.

[184] Ibid., 55.

[185] When about two million Iraqi Kurds fled to the mountains in 1991, after all-out attacks of Saddam's regime, this forced exodus led the UN to intervene on humanitarian basis, which was followed by the UN resolution 688, which guaranteed a 'safe-haven' for the Kurds. Since this period, the Kurdish society has sustained strong economic, social, political and otherwise developments. For a detailed debate on the humanitarian intervention in Iraqi Kurdistan in 1991, see Gordon W. Rudd, *Humanitarian Intervention, Assisting the Iraqi Kurds in Operation Provide Comfort, 1991* (Ph.D. thesis, Washington D.C.: Department of the Army, 2007). For more general discussions on humanitarian intervention, see Duco Hellema and Hilde Reiding (eds.), *Humanitaire Interventie en Soevereiniteit: de Geschiedenis van een Tegenstelling* (Humanitarian intervention and sovereignty: history of a contradiction), (Amsterdam: Boom, 2004).

> The implication was that ethnic leaders and elites used their cultural groups as sites of mass mobilization and as constituencies in their competition for power and resources, because they found them more effective than social classes.[186]

Instrumentalism is an ethno-political instrument which makes use of the benefits associated with belonging to a particular ethnic identity. Instrumentalism allowed group demands to be shifted away from cultural and religious realm toward political, material and territorial gains, which subsequently created the demand for self-determination. From the instrumentalists' perspective, the ethnic identity is a collective action or, as Joane Nagel calls it, the 'competition theories'. According to this view, the interpersonal and intergroup relations occupy a central role in classical and contemporary social theory. The central definition of competition theory is that the collective action of an ethnic group takes place when distinct groups compete with each other for the access to relatively scarce resources, such as status, jobs, political or economic positions, etc.[187] In Carment's words the 'political dimensions of ethnic group behaviour, including protest, rebellion and non-violent action are either as a way of protecting entitlements previously enjoyed or as a way of gaining access to new entitlements.'[188] Some instrumentalist approaches are based on the suggestion that ethnic groups are the product of political, economic and social processes. For example, according to Llobera, ethnic groups have no fixed boundaries; they are a collective and change their size depending on circumstances. Here ethnicity is seen as dynamic. In other words, not only are individuals not assigned permanently to an ethnic group, but they can also be members of more than one ethnic group at the same time.[189]

Instrumentalists emphasize on the instrumental, pragmatic, situational and variable aspects of ethnicity. According to the supporters of instrumentalism, ethnic identity is a rational reaction to a stipulated situation or to social pressure within a community or between communities. In the instrumentalist perspective ethnicity is sometimes used in reference to communities making claims for cultural autonomy, whereas nationalism is used when territorial homeland claims are being made. However, since both refer to the political defence of rational attachments to the interactive community, the distinction is an unconvincing

---

[186] Smith 2001, 55.

[187] Joane Nagel, 'Resource Competition Theories', *American Behavioral Scientist*, (Vol. 38, No. 3, January 1995), 442.

[188] Carment, 'Secessionist ethnic conflict', 2003, 31.

[189] Llobera, 'Recent Theories of Nationalism', 1999.

one.[190] For example, the political rationality and cultural and institutional framework of the Muslim elite in Pakistan, before partition from India in 1947, mobilized the population to create a country based on Islam. According to Paul Brass, Pakistan was created by Muslim elites who manipulated Islamic symbolic resources in order to mobilize the Muslim masses of northwest India. This is a cultural approach, but using a more political approach, Francis Robinson claims that the existing Muslim attachments and ideologies (*ummah*) persuaded the Muslim elites of the need to safeguard the Muslim community and culture by seeking greater autonomy for Muslims in India.[191] In the first twenty-five years of its existence as a modern Muslim state, Pakistan aspired to attain a leadership role in the Islamic world. Subsequently, it organized international conferences about Islam and several meetings with Muslim leaders.

Politics and rationality, for Smith, compose the most significant feature of instrumentalism. Politically, Pakistan is seen as an example whereby national units lead by Muslim elites, afford convenient instruments for generating mass support in the universal struggle for territory, wealth and power. According to this view, Smith proclaims that ethnicity is fundamentally 'instrumental' because it serves purposes other than the 'cultural goals which its spokesmen proclaim to be its *raison d'être*, but it does so by combining economic and political interests with cultural affect.'[192]

As to political aspect of instrumentalism, to a large degree Verkuyten also agrees with Smith. He described two different aspects dimensions of instrumentalism, the background of ethnicity and the interests that people have. In the first case, ethnicity depends on existing principle orderings in society. The external circumstances and condition which shape ethnic boundaries are important. Within this approach ethnic groups were studied as the product of political, social, economic and legal conditions. The second accent, interests, focuses on the interaction and group relationships in the struggle for such as: goods and position. For Verkuyten, the starting point is the socio-cultural conception of the contrast of interests and the balance of power.[193]

Rationality is the second significant feature of instrumentalism. Some authors consider this feature to be a distinct theory and call it the rational choice theory. Within this method, an individual's preferences of ethnic affiliation are more effectual. According to instrumentalists,

---

[190] Brown, 'The conceptual languages of nationalism', 2000, 15.

[191] Smith 2001, 55.

[192] Smith 1986, op. cit., 9-10.

[193] Verkuyten 1999, 52.

the affiliation of an individual with a particular community has little to do with emotions and it is rather related to its possible practical advantages, which is to say that the connectedness of an individual with a community derives from a rational choice. The community is for individuals an instrument to achieve their personal goals. This theory, according to Llobera, is based on two assumptions: 1) individuals behave with a view to maximise their benefits (in term of economic gains and prestige); 2) present actions restrict future choices.[194]

## 2.3. Structuralism

Structuralism or constructivism is considered by many as a third alternative, next to primordialism and instrumentalism. This third theory is broadly similar in principle to instrumentalism, such as its emphasis on elites' role in the society. According to both theories, ethnic or nationalist elites attempt to mobilize the masses, mostly for the pursuit of their own private interests. This usually happens when social contacts are broken by the state and the repression by the state is weakened. However, Brown pointed out that constructivists pay more attention to the concept of the language of a community; to the ways in which identities and boundaries are historically arbitrary; to how these identities and boundaries are often the structures of members of the elite in a group, who seek political power. For constructivists, ethnic phenomena do not actually exist but are rather promulgated by nationalist-elites with aims to further their personal goals.[195] According to John Comaroff, the history shows that there are no arbitrary inventions. Further, historical causality not only limits the potential option for the construction of identities but also the form of these identities. Ethnicity is always created by specific historical forces that are both structural and cultural.[196] As Gellner argues, constructivists view national and ethnic identities as the product of historical forces, often recent, even when the identities are presented as old.[197]

The positive or negative 'interpretations' of important historical events, that took place within a community are necessary for structuralism. By means of interpretation frameworks, events and experiences receive significance. As Verkuyten claims, for the extreme constructivist approach, the reality is equal to the order of the interpretive framework.

---

[194] Llobera, 'Recent Theories of Nationalism', 1999.

[195] Brown, 'The conceptual languages of nationalism', 2000, 20-2.

[196] John Comaroff, 'Of Totemism and Ethnicity: Consciousness, Practice and the Signs of Inequality', in R.R. Grinker, *Perspective on Africa: A Reader on Culture, History and Representation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 70.

[197] Gellner 1983, 132-3.

Language, however, is not the only medium for the formation of experience. Moreover, according to Verkuyten, every situation and experience allows multiple interpretations. Some interpretations, for example, are more consistent with the social reality, and actual changes in a situation are not always sufficient to change the language.[198] Whether the language changes or not is an essential question within the structuralist approach.

For Verkuyten, however, there are three interrelated reasons that make language an important factor in ethnic identity. Firstly, verbal expressions form one of the key aspects of everyday life. Specification and discussions of situations in the community play an important role in how that life is seen and experienced. Nevertheless, language belongs to the social reality and is used as a main instrument to shape it. The second reason is the connection between language and behaviour. Words have not only a representational or expressive function but often also a practical one. Communication among individuals is mainly carried out through language and its proceedings have significant impact on social life of a community. Finally the notion of ideology itself puts a significant weight on language. The functions of language are not limited to interpersonal domain but have wider social implications. Language is the main diffuser of ideology.[199]

A combination of these three approaches to ethnicity, primordialism, instrumentalism and structuralism, helps to address the question of separatism or autonomy movements by focusing on the political and economic disparities between minorities and the state centre. At least four elements are of crucial importance to the mobilization of a minority against a state: 1. The degree of economic, social and political differences among groups – highly disadvantaged groups are more likely to resort to political activism. 2. Clarity of group identity and the degree of cohesion within a group. 3. Regional concentration and organizational skills throughout the development of political activism. 4. The degree of reaction elicited by the ethnic mobilization against the dominant group or state.[200]

---

[198] Verkuyten 1999, 10.

[199] Ibid., 106-8.

[200] For more general discussions on minority rights, see Marc Weller (ed.), *Universal Minority Rights: A Commentary on the Jurisprudence of International Courts and Treaty Bodies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

## 3 Reflection on the theoretical understanding of ethnicity among Kurds

Kurdish nationalism views the Kurds mostly through two main lenses of the primordialist theory: socio-biological and sociological. The first asserts that ethnicity is an extension of kinship and that kinship is the normal vehicle for the pursuit of collective goals in the struggle for survival. The second regards language, religion, race, ethnicity, and territory as the basic organizing principles and bonds of human association throughout history.[201] Although Kurdish nationalism preceded more complex political formations, the question still remains whether it is truly primordial. Abbas Vali observed that the 'mainstream Kurdish nationalist, hailing from Diyarbakir, Mahabad or Arbil, is a "primordialist".'[202] Kurdish nationalists stress that modern Kurds are descendents and historical representatives of the Medians (Meden). Some even go further to claim that the Guti and the Lullubi are among the Kurds' distant ancestors.[203] The magnum opus *Mam û Zîn* of Kurdish scholar Ahmedî Khanî is considered by nationalist Kurds to be a national epic in pre-modern history. Many Kurds claim that Ahmedî Khanî had a Kurdish 'nationalist' agenda.[204]

The formations of pre-modern and modern Kurdish semi-autonomous principalities were considered by some Kurdish intellectuals as fundamental political events in the history of Kurds and Kurdistan. Amir Hassanpour criticized the argument of Ferhad Shakely that the Persian and Ottoman Empires established the Kurdish principalities to the maintain security of their borders. According to Hassanpour, from the rise of the Kurdish semi-autonomous principalities in the sixteenth century began an important history of Kurdistan: the period of the formation of the political organization known as *dewlati Kurdi* (Kurdish government).[205] Vali criticized the opinion of Hassanpour and believed that the political Kurdish movement

---

[201] Verkuyten 1999, 12.

[202] Vali 2003, 59.

[203] For the role of Kurdish elements in history, see Amir Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan 1918-1985* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992); and for a wider discussion, see Mehran Izady R., *The Kurds: A Concise Handbook* (Washington: Crane Russak, 1992).

[204] For details on this claim, see Ferhad Shakely, *Nationalismi Kurd la 'Mam û Zîn' Ahmedî Khanî da* [Kurdish nationalism in Mam û Zîn of Ahmedî Khanî], (Brussels: Kurdish Institute of Brussels, 1991). According to van Bruinessen, it is justified to call Ahmedî Khanî a Kurdish nationalist, see van Bruinessen, 'Ahmedî Xanî's Mam û Zîn and Its Role in the Emergence of Kurdish National Awareness', in Vali 2003, 40-57.

[205] Amir Hassanpour, in *Gzing*, Journal on Literature and Culture, No. 9, spring 1995, 5.

was exploited by the Kurds after the fall of the two Middle Eastern empires, Persian and Ottoman.[206]

The First World War put an end to the highly developed dynastic empires: the Ottoman, Qajar, and Habsburgs. In place of the Congress of Berlin, came the League of Nations, in which included non-Europeans. From this moment on, nationhood became the legitimate international norm. After the Second World War, there was an increase in the number of nation-states existing in the world.[207] After the First World War, the emergence of new nation-states in the Middle East, such as Turkey, Iran, and Iraq, created the political identity of the Kurds.[208] The formation of these states usually meant the suppression of other cultures and ethnic groups and consequently, the Kurds suffered terribly from these policies. To defend their identity and state-building aspirations, Kurds organized and established several political movements in the twentieth century. Their demands for cultural and political were refused by the dominant group in the nation-states of the region.

According to Vali, the identity politics of the Kurds was formed in the twentieth century.[209] Identity politics is the political activity of various ethnic groups with the goal of gaining economic, social and especially political rights or self-determination. Identity politics represents and seeks to advance the interests of particular groups in society, the members of which often share and unite around common experiences of actual or perceived social and economic injustice, relative to the wider society of which they form a part and exist in. In this way, the identity of the suppressed group gives rise to a political basis around which they then unite and begin to assert themselves in society.[210] Vali stated, those who believed in territorial Kurdish nationalism in Iran wanted to have a national identity in the form of rights and recognition of a Kurdish nation. Conversely, those who believed in Kurdish autonomy but sought rights within the territorial and sovereign political state of Iran, wanted to maintain an

---

[206] For a discussion on the remarks in which Vali criticized the arguments of some Kurdish scholars, such as Hassanpour, see Vali, 'Genealogies of the Kurds: Constructions of Nation and National Identity in Kurdish Historical Writing', in Idem 2003, 73-97.

[207] Anderson 1991, 103.

[208] Abbas Vali, 'masaleyi Kurd u qayrani siyasi le Iran' [Kurdish question and political crisis in Iran], *Gzing,* No. 21, winter 1998, 7.

[209] Ibid, 'modernist we nationalism' [modernity and nationalism], *Gzing*, No. 22, winter 1999, 35.

[210] Joan W. Scott, 'Multiculturalism and the Politics of Identity', in John Rajchman (ed.), *The Identity in Question* (New York, 1995), 3-11.

ethnic identity.[211] Self-identification with a political framework based upon identity is exemplified by the Kurdish movements in the twentieth century in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, where the ethnic question of the Kurds has continuously flared up and acted as a source of internal conflict. Identity politics was instrumental behind the Iranian crisis of 1945 and 1946, with different ethnic groups, Kurds and Azeris, demanding political rights.

The Kurdish ethno-nationalism can be understood within the framework of ethno-symbolic approaches and it encourages a socio-historical and cultural study of nationalism. According to Smith, the use of this approach is an important to understanding the relationship of the ethnic past to the modern nation. This approach is, according to Smith, a subjective element which focused more on the past: memory, sentiment, myth; and it seeks the inner world of ethnicity and nationalism. Using this approach, Smith tried to explain that nationalism was rooted in the pre-modern and modern history of ethnicity.[212] Van Bruinessen wrote an article titled 'Kurdish Nationalism and Competing Ethnic Loyalties', in which he used Barth's definition of ethnicity and analyzed the concept of ethnicity utilizing Smith's ethno-symbolic approach. He did so because, for him, Smith's work is important for a thorough understanding of the Kurdish question.[213] Van Bruinessen's article concentrated on Kurdish nationalism in the early twentieth century and after the First World War. Van Bruinessen argues that in the early twentieth century there were no distinct boundaries between Kurds and non-Kurds since the boundaries were defined more on the grounds of religion and tribes. He also finds that after the period of nation-building and the subsequent repressive policies towards the Kurds in Turkey, Iraq and Iran during the second decade of the twentieth century, an interactive movement toward Kurdish nationalist movements.[214] The following chapter will focus more on the question of whether the Kurdish nationalist movements, after the First World War, were ethno-nationalist or not and on the question of when the Kurdish political national identity was created.

---

[211] Abbas Vali, 'masaleyi Kurd u qayrani siyasi le Iran' *Gzing,* No. 21, 7.

[212] Smith 2001, 57-60.

[213] Van Bruinessen 1994, 25.

[214] Ibid., 11-37.