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Fluidity and dynamics of de facto statehood: the case of Iraqi Kurdistan
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**Fluidity and Dynamics of De Facto Statehood:
The Case of Iraqi Kurdistan**

PhD thesis

Kamaran Palani

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explains the dynamics and nature of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq's (KRI) de facto statehood since its inception in 1991, in particular the vicissitudes de facto independence since then. This dissertation characterises de facto statehood in Kurdistan, and uncovers the dynamics of de facto statehood in Iraqi Kurdistan at internal, national and international levels. Kurdistan's de facto statehood (such as territorial control, monopoly on the use of violence, and engagement with the international community) is shown to be inherently characterised by fluidity. In this thesis, fluidity is defined as a highly unstable nature of de facto statehood in the relational context of non-recognition. The dissertation reports on interviews with a number of high profile politicians and policy makers from the region to provide unique insights, among others the three main factors at play in the fluidity of the de facto state of Iraqi Kurdistan: the balance of power between the regional capital of Erbil and the Iraqi national capital of Baghdad; the level and form of internal fragmentation; and the change of strategies to gain international recognition.

To my dad

Mohammad Aziz Mustafa

01-07-1940 - 25-02-2021

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LIST OF PAPERS

Paper 1

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Paper 2

Palani, K., Khidir, J., Dechesne, M., & Bakker E. (2019). Strategies to gain international recognition: Iraqi Kurdistan's September 2017 referendum for independence. *Ethnopolitics*, 1-22. doi: 10.1080/17449057.2019.1596467

Paper 3

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Paper 4

Palani, K., Khidir, J., Dechesne, M., & Bakker, E. (2020). Fragmentation within de facto states: The case of Iraqi Kurdistan. Submitted to *Journal of Civil Wars*.

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ACRONYMS

DFR	Department of Foreign Relations
EU	European Union
GCD	The Global Coalition against Daesh
IDP	Internally Displaced Populations
IS	The Islamic State
ISF	The Iraqi Security Forces
KDP	The Kurdistan Democratic Party
KRG	The Kurdistan Regional Government
KRI	The Kurdistan Region-Iraq
MERI	The Middle East Research Institute
PUK	The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States

