

Contemporary Iraqi Kurdistan can be described as an de facto state - internally independent entity, that has a monopoly on the use of force on its own territory. Since the adoption of the new constitution by Iraq in 2005, it has got the status of a legal entity, a 'federal region' functioning officially within the scope defined by this document. Despite this, their actual scope of competences exceeds the framework defined by the Iraqi law.

Because Iraqi Kurdistan has not announced secession, the international community does not isolate it like other de facto countries (eg Transnistria or Somaliland) and maintains various types of relations with many international entities. Thanks to this, it can perform several international roles, such as a partner in the fight against terrorism, a trade partner, a mediator or a security provider. Kurds in Iraq, after over 150 years, regained the political subjectivity, which they lost in the mid-XIXth century due to the centralisation of the Ottoman Empire.

For most of the nineteenth and almost the entire 20th century, the Kurdistan population did not rebuild a permanent territorial subjectivity to a degree similar to that of the Kurdish Federal Region in Iraq. For almost two hundred years, various Kurdish political entities, tried to obtain the form of territorial subjectivity, agreed to play the role of an actor (agent) implementing the strategic interests of states (patrons), that were parties to various regional conflicts, e.g. on the Ottoman-Persian border, or later the Iraqi-Iranian rivalry. The role of the agent during the US-led international interventions in Iraq turned out to be a breakthrough.

The literature on the subject does not explain to what extent contemporary roles and practices of interaction with other entities may be related to the experience of asymmetric interactions from the past. It is also difficult to find convincing explanations regarding the premises and benefits guided by states entering relations with Kurdish political entities. It also does not provide a precise answer to the specific premises and benefits guided by Kurdish political entities entering this type of asymmetric relationship and what was the strategy used by both the patron and the client to ensure the achievement of the assumed aim of cooperation. We also do not know how the Iraqi Kurdistan population perceives the premises and benefits of the asymmetric relationship between Iraqi Kurdistan and Turkey and the United States nowadays. These fundamental questions have yet to be answered based on a consistent theoretical and methodological framework.

This project aims to fill a serious gap in science by proposing a new practice of perceiving and explaining the phenomenon of transforming the international role of a community aspiring to full self-determination. It departs from the narrow definitions of de facto states, which only qualify entities isolated by the international community and thus ignore Iraqi Kurdistan. The study proposes an innovative, coherent theoretical framework that considers the key factors initiating a transformation of the international role and proposes a conceptualisation of the cause-and-effect mechanism. In order to analyse rational and benefits and the course and context of performing role of proxy actor, a qualitative analysis of the source material will be conducted. On this basis, Principal Investigator (PI) will create a theoretical model that will be verified through triangulation of qualitative (interviews) and quantitative (survey) studies. The theoretical and methodological framework developed under this project will refer to the theory of asymmetry in international relations, the theory of international roles and the latest research in the fields of studies on de facto states and proxy wars.