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**A case study of Political Corruption in Conflict-
Affected Societies**

(The Kurdistan Region of Iraq 2003-2013)

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy

By

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Abstract

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This thesis presents the analysis of a case study on political corruption in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The focus is on the democratic transition between 2003 and 2013 addressing three zones. The first area is associated with the ways the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) carries out public recruitment processes and allocates exceptional pensions. The second is about the ways in which media outlets are financed, and how this affects the position of the press in the fight against corruption. The final case is related to how political parties finance their activities, and how this process is linked to political corruption. The objectives of this study are to identify the traits and extent of political corruption, to determine potential reasons for the growing opportunities for it, and to provide possible recommendations to minimise corruption incentives.

The central argument of this thesis is that the two dominant ruling parties benefited from their positions, managed to abuse government positions and to appropriate public wealth to serve their own ends in a critical transitional period. This analysis essentially relies on primary data gathered from face-to-face interviews conducted with relevant elites and from official documents. The findings of this analysis suggest that the KRG has applied informal procedures to exclusively recruit members of the ruling parties to its institutions, offering them public positions and allocating them exceptional pensions. It is also argued here that both parties have established a substantial number of partisan and semi-partisan press networks, funded by the KRG, to deliver their political sentiments and attack their opponents. This thesis further asserts that the ruling parties abused two core sources of party funding, namely public subsidies and private financial resources, to strengthen their domination and challenge any political party that sought to unseat them. These conditions have laid the grounds for the emergence of different forms of political corruption, including party patronage, clientelism and state capture, which have together created a vicious circle. Faced with these findings, this thesis finally proposes some policy recommendations to strengthen public institutions and reduce opportunities for political corruption.

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List of Abbreviations

ACA.....	Anti-Corruption Agencies
ACC.....	Anti-Corruption Commissions
BP.....	Business People
CPA.....	Coalition Provisional Authority
CPI.....	Corruption Perception Index
CSA.....	Civil Society Activist
CSOs.....	Civil Society Organisations
CV.....	Curriculum Vitae
DPM.....	Deputy Prime Minister
GDP.....	Gross Domestic Product
GOs.....	Government Officials
GZ.....	Green Zone
HCDP.....	Human Capacity Development Program
ICAC.....	Independent Commission against Corruption
ID.....	Iraqi Dinar
IMF.....	International Monetary Fund
IRI.....	International Republican Institute
ISIS.....	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
KCP.....	Kurdistan Communist Party
KDP.....	Kurdistan Democratic Party
KIM.....	Kurdistan Islamic Movement
KIPI.....	Kurdistan Institute for Political Issue
KJS.....	Kurdistan Journalist Syndicate

KM.....	Kilometre
KNA.....	Kurdistan National Assembly
KP.....	Kurdistan Parliament
KPPC.....	Kurdistan Parliament Presidential Council
KRG.....	Kurdistan Regional Government
KRI.....	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
KSDP.....	Kurdistan Social Democratic Party
KTP.....	Kurdistan Tailor Party
MP.....	Members of Parliament
NRT.....	Nalia Radio and Television
NGOs.....	Non-Governmental Organisations
PM.....	Prime Minister
PRs.....	Party representatives
PUK.....	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
SAO.....	Sulaymaniah Auditory Office
TI.....	Transparency International
ULs.....	University Lecturers
UNDP.....	United Nations Development Program
UNSC.....	United Nations Security Council
US \$.....	United States of America's Dollar
USA.....	United States of America
WB.....	World Bank
YZ.....	Yellow Zone

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own research work, and has not been and will not be submitted for the award of any degrees at any academic institutions anywhere. Works of others presented in this thesis are duly cited and every effort is made to properly indicate perspectives of interviewed elites.

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First of all, I am very grateful to the KRG for the introduction of the HCDP Program, which enabled thousands of fortunate students to travel abroad and taste new academic experiences. If the HCDP had not been introduced, I would not have even dreamt of coming to the UK, still less of accomplishing my PhD here.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Background

This study argues that conflict leaves lasting impacts on the quality of governance almost everywhere. It, therefore, allows opportunities for corruption to take root, emerge and persist if the post-conflict setting is not carefully addressed. The purpose of this study is to examine a number of zones that reportedly laid the foundations for political corruption to emerge in the KRI during a critical period of transition from 2003-2013, and to address the extent of this phenomenon and the factors that facilitated its emergence. This topic is approached by scrutinising the procedures that the KRG has applied in providing various types of public services to people, and in allocating public money to media outlets and political parties. Exploring political corruption in Kurdistan is an important topic as a case of post-conflict or conflict-affected setting where the fragility of state institutions and the legacy of the former regime or period of war creates considerable opportunity for corruption to take root and emerge (see Bolongaita, 2005; Rose-Ackerman, 2008; Doig and Tisne, 2009). The literature suggests that such societies experience difficulties that undermine ‘sustainable tax bases...a functioning public service...a skilled workforce... [and] indigenous industry’ (Doig and Tisne, 2009, p. 377). The situation in the KRI has been unique to an extent because the KRI did not even have a strong and well-rooted bureaucracy before the civil war of the 1990s, nor a tradition of democracy, to help rebuild its institutions after the war (see chapter 4). Hence, the KRI started building its own institutions from scratch in 1992, then the civil war resumed, which resulted in administrative divisions and so on (see chapter 4).

Considering the politically and economically unstable status of the KRI since the establishment of its public institutions in 1992, the KRI has experienced a series of major changes, both positive and negative, from holding the first general election in 1992, to the civil war between rival parties, the polarisation of the volatile KRG into partisan administrations, and continuing to the events that followed the regime change of Iraq in 2003, which brought fundamental changes to the whole country. It is these post-2003 changes that are relevant to this study, when the polarised KRG administrations started

to reunify, the Kurdistan Parliament (KP) was reactivated, and the KRI began to receive a 17% share of the Iraqi national budget as its annual share (see chapter 4). Considering these vicissitudes, research into the opportunities and incentives that these post-conflict changes brought for the emergence of political corruption in a few specific fields is an interesting avenue to explore.

This subject is also a significant topic for study because it examines detailed specific areas related to the quality of governance and its implications in the KRI as a case of political corruption in a semi-autonomous regime that experienced extensive military struggle in its central government and amongst its local factions (see chapter 4), specifically after the events of 2003, which have not been subject to any scholarly work before. Looking at the literature on Kurdistan, local and foreign scholars have rarely showed interest in studying and examining the model of governance, nor has there been any particular focus on opportunities and forms of political corruption in the KRI. Instead, there are hundreds of books and articles on the history of Kurdistan and the Kurdish struggle for political rights and independence. This study seeks therefore to fill this gap and lay the foundations for future research on the types, causes and consequences of further cases of corruption in the KRI.

It is also noteworthy that, at least after 2003, scandals and cases concerning the abuse of public services and funds for political and personal advantage have been the focus of daily discussions amongst the public and intellectuals in the KRI. A few Kurdish scholars have published newspaper articles and books highlighting the signs of the abuse of public power and money by ruling parties and key office holders, and various private media networks have published hundreds of reports on cases of public wealth being channelled to serve political ends and for individual benefit (see for example Amedi, 2010; Kanie, 2012; and Ala'Aldeen, 2013). The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) gradually increased their domination over newly established public institutions, eventually preventing them from functioning impartially in favour of public interests (Ameen, 2009a). The literature of conflict-affected societies addresses these issues where powerful groups take over fragile institutions during transitional periods. In the KRI, this analysis argues that both dominant parties entirely politicised government institutions and turned them into bodies which would tolerate their abuse and remain unable to prevent their interventions in public affairs. This analysis also argues that this situation has led to the emergence of different cases of corruption where non-government

actors could channel public wealth and abuse public positions, facilitating the emergence of general corruption.

Local intellectuals argue that the continuous intervention of the ruling parties in government issues has gradually worsened situations. Jalal Sam Agha, who served as the former Head of the Sulaymaniah Auditory Office (SAO), asserted that ‘what is happening in Kurdistan is not simply just corruption, but it is plunder. If corruption means abusing public resources and power, plundering is a very serious issue. It only happens when there is warfare and instability’ (SpeeNews, 2013, p. 10). Sam Agha drew this conclusion about the KRI situation after he did his utmost at the SAO to bring corrupt office holders at the former PUK government¹ to account and to prevent further opportunities for corruption (see SpeeNews, 2013). This quotation suggests that corruption has been recognised to have reached dangerous levels in the KRI. Indeed, this official is not the only one who has warned of the danger of corruption, since on different occasions even the leaders of both parties and other key political groups have acknowledged that the KRI institutions suffer from corruption, and some have sought to address proposals to tackle it (see chapter 4). Despite this, corruption in the KRI has attracted the attention of relatively few local and foreign scholars for several reasons, including the sensitivity of the cases - in particular because key powerful figures are involved - and the lack of accurate data about it as a result of the absence of freedom of information. It is therefore hoped that this study will fill a gap in the literature on corruption in the KRI and will lay the foundation for further research on traits of political corruption and the means by which to tackle it in the KRI as a case of a conflict-affected society and a region in a transitional process leading towards statehood.

The existence of certain degrees of corruption in the KRI is not surprising if the cases of corruption are explored from the wider perspective of the context of Iraq, a country affected by a series of wars and conflicts. Given the fact that Kurdistan is still technically a part of Iraq, it has been affected to a large extent by the legal, political and economic structure of Iraq as a whole. Although Kurdistan has built its own institutions following the events that happened in 1991 (see chapter 4), these public institutions were not sustainable or functional enough to prevent corruption. Iraq, particularly following the new political era after the fall of Saddam Hussein’s regime in 2003, has been classified

¹ The SAO was only functioning in the PUK Green Zone during the KRG polarisation. The KDP government had its own Auditory Office too, but it was not as active as the SAO.

as one of the top ten corrupt countries worldwide by Transparency International's (TI) annual Corruption Perception Index (CPI)² (see Transparency International, 2015). Corruption is endemic in Iraq, and it is believed to have extended to a level that would undermine 'the survival of the state' (Borger and Pallister, 2006)³. These warnings should equally apply to the KRI, despite the fact that the latter, locally and practically, has held semi-autonomous status since 1991, and became a legally recognised federal region in Iraq after 2003. Incidents of the abuse of public wealth and services by political actors at different levels in the KRI do not seem to be noticeably different from the rest of Iraq.

Building on these arguments, this analysis does not simply seek to prove the mere existence of corruption in the KRI, as this has already become rather obvious since most of the key local politicians and political parties have made remarks to address it, and have also proposed initiatives to combat it (details in chapter 4). This thesis instead provides a detailed analysis of a few cases in order to understand the degree of pervasiveness of corruption, to examine its possible causes, and to suggest some possible policy recommendations to minimise opportunities for future political corruption in the KRI. To do this, this study conducted face-to-face interviews with local elites in relevant fields to obtain new insights and to source information in order to build its arguments (see chapter 3).

2. Aims, scopes, and limitations of the thesis

The aim of this analysis is to provide a comprehensive case study of political corruption in the KRI in order to explore its extent. It must be noted that this thesis focuses primarily on the interaction between ruling parties and public institutions, in particular in reference to dealing with public services and the management and allocation of public wealth. To do so, this analysis seeks to highlight corruption zones and opportunities that have allowed politicians and ruling parties to take advantage of their dominance over

² The CPI is used here for a general overview of the state of corruption in Iraq; otherwise the author is aware of the limitations and debates around it for understanding the levels of corruption. For more on the weaknesses and limitations of the CPI, see (Andersson and Heywood, 2009).

³ There are reports that corruption is endemic in a sensitive sector like the armed forces, as it is reported that there have been 'nonexistence troops' - appropriately called 'ghost soldiers' - who receive 'tens of millions of dollars in salaries' without being in service (Abdul-Zahra and Salama, 2014). The threat that this phenomenon is posing to Iraq is well described by a Commander of the Iraqi army, who stated that corruption is 'the biggest danger to the country, more dangerous than terrorism' (Engel, 2014). At the public service level, corruption is believed to be prevalent in both petty and grand types (UNODC, 2013). Iraqis pay bribes to receive almost every single form of public services (Cockburn, 2009).

institutions in the KRI, so as to abuse public wealth and services to serve their political and private interests.

Although this analysis follows in the legacy of the processes of building the KRI's public institutions after the 1991 Kurdish uprising against Iraqi regime, the scope of this thesis starts from 2003 when a new era began in Iraq following a regime change, and finish at the end of 2013 when a general election took place in the KRI (21st September 2013) that resulted in a new political equilibrium. This decade is significant as an era of transitional processes leading to the establishment of a new Iraqi regime after a series of local conflicts and war that took place during the presidency of the former Iraqi president, Saddam Hussein (see Wurmser, 1999 for details). This era has been intentionally chosen, because the events that happened in this period of time were remarkable and placed a considerable influence, both positive and negative, on the KRI as a political entity, not to mention the creation of a great deal of opportunities for corruption, as one might expect in post-conflict environments (see chapter 4). The main target of this study is therefore the above-mentioned decade, although sometimes the author refers to events that happened before 2003 or mentions follow up events after 2013, if they have a relevance to bring to bear.

It is also noteworthy to mention that this thesis does not explore petty corruption or other types of corruption, despite their levels of pervasiveness in the KRI. Instead it is primarily interested in examining specific cases in which political parties, key powerful public figures and politicians are engaged, which make them textbook cases of political corruption in transitional settings. These high-level cases have been chosen for exploration because such opportunities for political corruption appear to be prevalent, chronic and embedded; and they have arguably had severe and destructive impacts on the political competition, the functions of public institutions, the quality of public services, and the life of people in the KRI as a whole.

As the topic is challenging in terms of quantitative and qualitative measurement, and is highly sensitive with regard to open discussion, I am aware of the possible limits of this analysis. First of all, the lack of official documents and data available to the public, which would have strengthened arguments of this analysis otherwise, is a noticeable limitation. There are several published government documents that have been leaked to the press and that are relevant to the cases investigated in this thesis. However, as they were not

obtained officially from the KRG institutions, there are still limitations to their validity. This researcher made all possible efforts to check with interviewees the validity of such documents and unconfirmed data published by a few private outlets, but their reliability is still not as strong as if it were acquired from official institutions. While almost all interviewees, regardless of political background, did not seem to be surprised about the contents of leaked documents on party appointment, the allocation of public money to party media networks, and party funding, this thesis would have been able to present its arguments in much better and stronger way if there were freedom of information in the KRI and if the author had been able to gain documents and data from official sources. Therefore, it is better to address this limiting issue as a necessary precaution to the interpretations of this thesis, because the documents were not gained from official KRG institutions. Such difficulties pose considerable challenges that may have discouraged scholars from hitherto tackling cases of corruption in their research on Kurdistan. Nevertheless, this researcher has taken this opportunity to use local debates and leaked documents and data (as presented in chapter 2) as useful materials to lay the grounds for the empirical cases explored in more detail in chapters 5, 6 and 7; and to examine and enrich them with new and deeper insights stemming from interviews with local elites.

Secondly, the sensitivity of the issues around cases of corruption is another limiting factor that discouraged at least local scholars from pursuing their interests in studying corruption. This is, in particular, because most of the cases of political corruption are linked to the interests of powerful politicians and key political parties, and thus tackling them might cause real and serious security issues for the lives of scholars. It is relevant to mention that at least three journalists who reported on corruption and scandals in which key politicians were involved over the past ten years were later murdered by unidentified assassins (see CPJ, 2008; Assad, 2010; Kurdish Tribune, 2013). Both the general public and activists pointed the finger of blame at ruling parties, because the perpetrators have never been found. Given this condition, I have had to tackle the cases of corruption presented in this analysis carefully, and have made all efforts to depersonalise issues raised here that might cause problems in the future. This limitation unfortunately constrained the depth of the analysis to a certain degree in some areas, for instance in regard to the engagement of parties and politicians with the business sector explored in chapter 7. Although the author did gain the names of some key powerful figures and their companies that monopolise sectors and abuse public authority in order to exclude people

from establishing business or to extort money from local businesses, due to personal security I had to avoid mentioning them in this thesis.

3. Research Questions

This analysis intends to address the following research question:

Q1: What are the characteristics and extent of political corruption in the KRI?

It is clear that both politicians and the public are aware of the existence of degrees of different types of corruption in the KRI. This study explores cases of political corruption through scrutinising the interventions of ruling parties in the provision of public jobs, positions, and pensions; and in the allocation of public money to media networks and political parties. To explore the first case, this study examines the ways through which people are recruited to public institutions in the KRI, and the requirements that job seekers must meet to gain a job or hold a position at the Civil Service. It also looks at forms of exceptional pension salaries that the KRG has exclusively provided to members of certain political parties. In this case, the roles key political actors, i.e. political parties and political functionaries, have played in the provision process of these services are at the centre of the arguments that this analysis makes. This subject has been chosen in light of the arguments proposed within the literature, which suggested during a democratic transition time powerful groups are likely to use their positions to politicise public services and positions to reward their members in post-conflict settings, which facilitates the emergence of corruption (see Bolongaita, 2005; Le Billon, 2008). This analysis, therefore, questions the methods that the KRG employed to supply people with different types of public services, in order to investigate whether universalistic values were considered to fairly distribute services to people or whether particularistic norms were taken into account to exclusively enable certain people to benefit from the public services. This case serves to deliver answers to the first question on the characteristics and extensiveness of political corruption in the KRI (see chapter 5).

Secondly, this study focuses on the state of media institutions in the KRI and their roles in combating corruption. The literature suggests that the press has a leading role to play in revealing scandals, working as one of the effective watchdog institutions to prevent the emergence of corruption, and supporting anti-corruption activities. This analysis does not

study the media per se, but focuses on the ways media networks are funded and what their position is in the corruption cycle in the KRI in this critical era. This study seeks to explore the financial and political relationship between media networks and political parties, and their ties with the KRG as well. Local discourses argue that the ruling parties - the KDP and the PUK - have politicised most of the media stations in the KRI and have channelled public resources to establish and run a considerable number of outlets to serve their political interests (see chapter 2). This analysis scrutinises these claims to highlight levels of corruption in the media sector, in order to answer the first research question. It also seeks to study the role of media networks in covering and exposing corruption in the KRI. This case is significant considering the position that the media has gained in post-conflict environments. These have often played the role of an institutional guardian against corruption, as has been addressed by the studies of various scholars (see Bolongaita, 2005; Le Billon, 2008; Curtis and De Zeeuw, 2009; Hicken, 2009; Hoove and Scholtbach, 2008).

The third case examines party funding in the KRI. The literature considers party funding as a vulnerable area for corruption, and scholars suggest a list of conditions to encourage governments and political parties to regulate party funding in order to prevent the emergence of corruption in this sector. The vulnerability of this area increases in post-conflict settings where state institutions are weak and the system of checks and balances is either absent or dysfunctional in the prevention of any abuse of public wealth (see chapter 7). This study observes the model of the provision of public subsidies to political parties in the KRI as their main source of income. This focus has been chosen given the claims that the local discourses made in regard to the opportunities for corruption in this sector. This case also includes party engagement with businesses, particularly the ruling parties, as this is reported to generate further financial sources for the parties and key figures. The issue of powerful figures engaging in illegal activities is a salient topic in the case of a post-conflict setting. The aim of looking at this case is to highlight corruption opportunities in the political finance field, and thus to further address the first research question.

Exploring these three cases through primary data provided by interviewees will answer the first research question as to the degree of the extent of political corruption in these zones in the KRI. After this, this study addresses two further sub-questions to gain an in-depth analysis of opportunities for political corruption in these areas as follows:

1) What are the main causes of the emergence of political corruption in the KRI?

Looking at traits of post-conflict settings, in particular regarding the fragility of public institutions and the legacies of previous regimes that have created the opportunity for corruption to emerge, this analysis seeks to highlight the main factors that facilitate political corruption in targeted areas of the KRI.

2) What are the possible policies that leaders of the KRI could implement to limit and combat opportunities for political corruption in the identified cases?

Scholars suggest that fighting corruption is a difficult task per se. It becomes more challenging when it comes to post-conflict settings (see chapter 8). This study attempts to present some possible policy recommendations in chapter 8 to contribute towards minimising opportunities for corruption in the areas studied here. For this, alongside considering the environment of the KRI, the outlines presented by scholars who studied cases of post-conflict societies will guide this me to propose some specific policy recommendations to reduce opportunities for political corruption in the region.

4. Thesis structure

This study is divided into three sections, following an opening chapter (the present one). The opening chapter presents a general outline of study, highlighting the objectives, scope and limitations of the thesis, and the questions that this study aims to answer. After that, the first, introductory, section comprises three chapters - a literature review, the methodology, and a brief history of the turning points of the KRI. Section 2 comprises three chapters on the three major empirical cases investigated in this study. Lastly, Section 3 presents a chapter containing a conclusion and policy recommendations.

Looking at the thesis content in more detail, starting with the first Section, chapter 2 explores the relevant literature on widely circulated definitions, types, and common causes of corruption. It then focuses on political corruption and some prevalent forms, which are related to cases presented in the later empirical chapters. It also reviews some local discourses on signs and cases of corruption in the KRI that help to lay the foundations for the empirical chapters.

Chapter 3 presents the research framework that this study adopted to design the empirical research and, accordingly, to examine the degree of pervasiveness and possible causes of political corruption in the chosen cases in the KRI. This chapter also presents the research process by detailing the procedures for collecting, classifying and analysing primary data.

Chapter 4 presents a historical background of the KRI, shedding particular light on the turning points in the contemporary history of the region after 1991. It mostly offers a general outline of the main events that are assumed to have allowed ruling parties and key office holders to abuse public services and wealth. This chapter is important to enable the readers to contextualise the case studies examined in the empirical chapters more easily by providing them with a background summary of the events that have influenced the current situation of the KRI.

Section 2 contains the three case studies, which are presented in three chapters. Chapter 5 explores the provision of certain public services, including recruiting people to public jobs, appointing key public officials, and providing some types of pensions and salaries. This chapter highlights the ways ruling parties adopted methods to control and direct public job vacancies, positions and salaries to favour their political interests. Chapter 6 explores the ways in which media outlets in the KRI are established and funded. This chapter does not study media and its duties, but is mostly concerned with the financial relationships between media outlets and the KRG and ruling parties. These relationships have had a great influence on the way mainstream media outlets function in the KRI.

Chapter 7 is associated with opportunities for corruption found within party funding issues. It explores how the KRG has been distributing public subsidies to political parties, and how political parties are engaged with private businesses to generate financial support as another key source of revenue. This analysis seeks to explore levels of corruption, and identify the influences that the state of party funding in the region imposed on party competition.

Finally, Section 3 of the thesis, which consists of one single chapter, contains concluding remarks and presents recommendations. This chapter, chapter 8, restates the main arguments and gives a précis of the findings of the study in order to directly answer the research questions. It links the findings to the arguments of post-conflict cases in order to identify the pervasiveness and levels of political corruption in the KRI, and to address the possible causes behind the emergence of political corruption. This final chapter also

provides policy recommendations to assist policy makers to draw up different procedures and plans for carrying out a comprehensive anti-corruption campaign in the KRI.

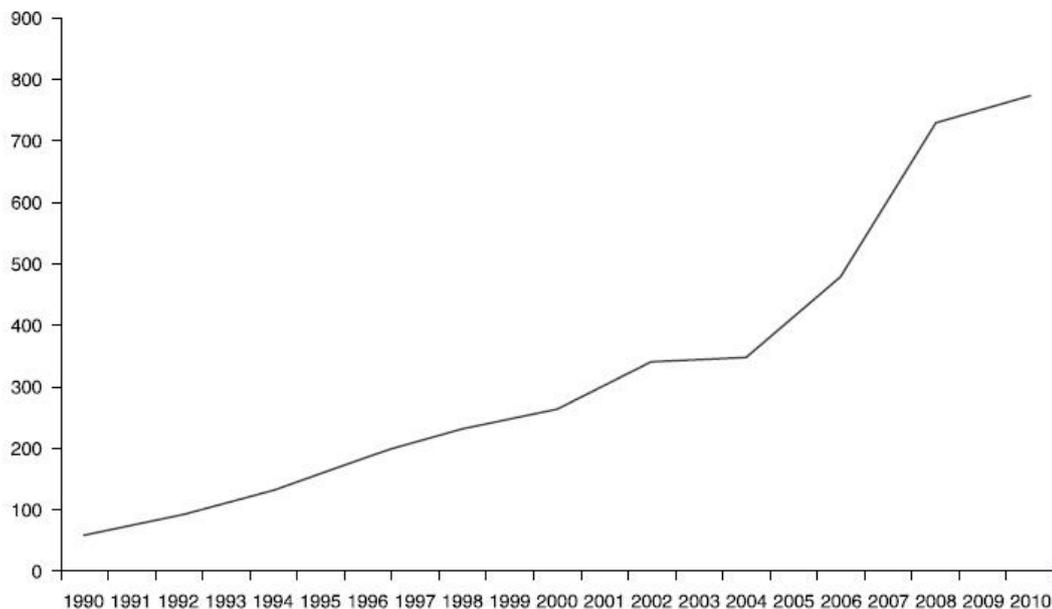
Section 1: Introductory Chapters

Chapter 2: Locating the research

Introduction

Corruption is a multifaceted phenomenon studied across different disciplines in academia and has been lately considered as ‘one of the most high-profile issues in the contemporary world’ (Heywood, 2015, p. 1). Recently, Paul Heywood (2015, p. 2) presented the dramatic increase of interest in studying corruption witnessed from 1990 to 2010 (see Figure 2.1, p. 13). However, there is a great deal of difference among scholars regarding this phenomenon starting from its definition to causes and consequences. Michael Johnston (1998, p. 89) pointed to this difficulty as follows ‘despite the fact that most people, most of the time, know corruption when they see it, defining the concept does raise difficult theoretical and empirical questions’. However, this is not surprising because, as Oskar Kurer (2015, p. 30) said, it is not realistic to expect that all scholars and international organisations come together and agree on a single definition. To find a way forward, Kurer (2015, p. 30) suggests that scholars must look for common patterns and understanding about what can be named as a corrupt act. In accordance with this perspective, this analysis, in Section 1, reviews some of the most circulated definitions, and focuses on political corruption as the central interest of this analysis. It also reviews the literature surrounding the causes of corruption, in particular those that seem to suit the research questions of this analysis. Section 2 reviews a few domestic discourses highlighting incidents and cases of corruption in the KRI, which helps to build the background of the empirical cases.

Figure 2.1: The increase of scholarly work written about corruption between 1990 and 2010



Source: (Heywood, 2015, p.2).

1. Defining corruption, types and causes

Corruption is not a new phenomenon as it seems to have existed since the establishment of public authorities, as an African observer Daryl Balia, put it ‘corruption is as old as government itself, and where there is a public rand there will always be a crooked hand’ (Grobler, 2002, Quotation page). However, Robert Williams suggested that it is a new topic of academia featured in the debates of social science in the ‘late twentieth century’ (Azubuike Amaraegbu, 2008, p. 14). The comparative timeline that Heywood (2015, p. 2) presented between the number of studies carried out about corruption from 1990 to 2010, which increased from around 50 to 800 scholarly works respectively, indicates that the current interest of corruption in academia is not only new but is also growing rapidly (see Figure 2.1, p. 14).

Starting with definitions of corruption, the most circulated is the one presented by the World Bank (WB), ‘the abuse of public power for private gain’ (Grobler 2002, p. 7). TI suggested a similar definition with slightly more explanation ‘the misuse of public power for private benefit, e.g. the bribing of public officials, taking kickbacks in public

procurement or embezzling public funds' (Heywood 1997a, p. 425). Prior to these general definitions, scholars grouped any definitions of corruption into three categories, those of 'Public-Office Centred Definitions, Market-Centred Definitions, and Public-Interest Centred Definitions' (Heidenheimer and Johnston, 2011, pp.7-9). This analysis will review these categories in this section.

The first category, 'Public-Office Centred Definitions', embraces the work of David H. Bayley, G. Myrdal, and J.S. Nye; it focuses on the duties of public offices, and how corruption can occur when these duties are abused. For instance, the American political scientist, Joseph S. Nye (1967, p. 419) defined corruption as follows:

A behaviour which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private-regarding (personal, close family, private clique) pecuniary or status gains; or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private-regarding influence. This includes such behaviour as bribery (use of a reward to pervert the judgment of a person in a position of trust); nepotism (bestowal of patronage by reason of ascriptive relationship rather than merit); and misappropriation (illegal appropriation of public resources for private-regarding uses).

Although this definition covered several forms and aspects of corruption, it has widely been criticized. Gardiner (2009, p. 26) argued that, in addition to personal and/or family advantages that corruptors gain, sometimes a political party becomes the main beneficiary from the corrupt act, which may receive greater advantage from the corrupted situation than the perpetrator. It appears that it is more realistic to mention more than personal beneficiaries in the corrupt exchanges as Elizabeth Grobler (2002, p. 7) highlighted that the recipients might be 'a particular political party, tribe, family, friends, or government department'. Looking at the corrupt incidents presented in the case of the KRI in chapters 5, 6 and 7, it is noticeable that beneficiaries of corruption in the KRI are political parties, key powerful public figures and politicians as well as party members and sometimes relatives and friends of corruptors. Nye's definition is also criticised for focusing primarily on legal measurement, as laws and regulations can be tailored to serve the interests of already corrupt holders of office (Johnston, 2005, p.11).

The second group of definitions is that of ‘Marked-Centred Definitions’ which concentrate on the income gained from abusing public positions. Within this category, Jacob Van Klaveren defines corruption as follows:

[C]orruption means that a civil servant abuses his authority in order to obtain an extra income from the public....Thus we will conceive of corruption in terms of a civil servant who regards his office as a business, the income of which he will...seek to maximise. The office then becomes a-maximising unit (Underkuffler, 2005, pp. 32-33).

Although this definition similarly implies the meanings that the general definitions of corruption (highlighted above) propose, it could be argued that the benefit that corrupt public figures gain from abusing their public position need not necessarily be fiscal, but might take other forms such as ‘a rapid promotion, and order, decorations, and the like’ (Friedrich, 1972, p. 15). It is also argued that the benefit is not always personal, but could also extend to family members, or political or other types of groups (Friedrich, 1972, p. 15). This thesis presents, in the empirical chapters, the idea that the beneficiaries of political corruption in the KRI vary from ordinary people to members of parties and ruling families, as well as the political benefit of parties themselves.

The third category is that of ‘Public-Interest Centred Definitions’, which includes the works of Carl Friedrich, and measures corruption by the amount of damage that an act can cause to the public interest, as cited from Friedrich who states:

The pattern of corruption can be said to exist whenever a powerholder who is charged with doing certain things, i.e., who is a responsible functionary or office-holder, is by monetary or other rewards not legally provided for, induced to take actions which favour whoever provides the rewards and thereby does damage to the public and its interests (Heidenheimer and Johnston, 2011, pp.7-9).

Similar to this grouping, John Gardiner (2009) presented various definitions of corruption by scholars who focus on ‘legal definition’, ‘public interest definition’, and ‘public opinion definition’. However, these grouping definitions are open to criticism because of the use of terms such as public office, duties, norms and public interests, all of which are the subjects of various interpretations (see Heidenheimer and Johnston, 2011, pp.7-9).

Michael Johnston (2005, p. 12) defines corruption as *'the abuse of public roles or resources for private benefit'*. This definition is close to that given by the World Bank and TI. However, Johnston (2005, p.12) continues to identify the limitations of such a broad definition, which include the use of general terms like ' "abuse", "public", "private", and even "benefit" ', all of which could be interpreted differently and 'are matters of contention in many societies and of varying degrees of ambiguity in most'.

In an attempt to expand on such limitations, which have caused considerable controversy among scholars and policy makers, Kenneth Gibbons presented the following explanation regarding the abuse of power, as cited by Gardiner (2009, p. 27):

1. 'Nepotism' is the abuse of public interests which occurs when a public position is offered to a family member or a friend by a governmental agent due to considering their social relationship instead of meritocratic criteria.
2. 'Patronage' is the violation of public power which takes place when a victorious party dismisses public servants from their jobs merely because they voted for other parties and candidates.
3. 'Legislative conflict of interest' is another form of misusing public authority when law makers support a proposal which eventually favours a company that they own.
4. 'Bureaucratic conflict of interest' is the abuse of government power when public officials use the knowledge acquired from their public position as advice given to private bodies to secure personal benefit, for instance by setting up a 'part-time consulting firm' for that purpose.

These are common traits of political corruption which stem from extorting public offices by government agents. Besides, Gardiner (2009, p. 27) added more forms of abusing public power as corruption including the provision of special opportunities, for instance 'government contracts', to selective friends and/or to followers of a political party, to make money. Gardiner also referred to the abuse of public funds for political campaigns, to support a certain political party and candidates against others, as a form of corruption. Looking at the corruption incidents presented in the empirical chapters of this analysis, it is clear that different forms of abuse of public authority and wealth can be identified in the context of the KRI.

This analysis does not intend to go further regarding the unsolved debates on definitions of corruption as it has already been facing series of problems presented by Gardiner (2009). Instead, it argues that the general definition of corruption, as the abuse of public position and wealth for private benefit, is upheld by senior anti-corruption scholars such as Michael Johnston (2005, p. 12), and considering the forms of abuse presented above by Gardiner (2009), provides sufficient understanding of corrupt acts.

Building on the common understanding of corruption, scholars divide corruption into 'petty' and 'grand' types. Petty corruption, which is also called bureaucratic or low-level corruption (Heywood, 2009, p. 363), is defined as an action whereby laws, regulations, and standards of public offices are violated by low-ranking office holders in order to gain mostly personal or private benefits (Kenny and Søreide, 2008, p. 5). Grobler (2002, p. 10) addressed that this type of corruption includes a variety of cases of corruption in which low-ranking public agents are involved and their actions are less likely to cause serious damage to the country. For instance, petty corruption occurs when a public servant receives a sum of money from a client as a bribe in exchange for deviating from a public responsibility such as issuing driving licenses, passports, or other official documents in an exceptional way (Nwabuzor, 2005, p. 122; Heywood, 2009, p. 363).

One the other hand, grand corruption, which is also called systematic, structural, or political corruption, is considered to be the serious type of corruption which severely affects society as a whole. It is defined as 'that aspect of corruption where social systems such as political, organisational, economic, cultural, and religious systems operate in such a way that power is abused for personal or sectional gain at the expense of a variety of victims. These victims could include most of a country's population, future generations, and even the environment' (Grobler, 2002, p. 10). The involvement of powerful officials is the central element of this type of corruption. Grand Corruption, then, is a corrupt act when key office holders extort formal rules and regulations and/or abuse public power and wealth to achieve private advantages for themselves and their parties or for other non-governmental associations (Gerring and Thacker, 2004, p. 300; Fleming and Zyglidopoulos, 2009, p. 5; Shleifer and Vishny, 1993, p. 3; Kenny and Søreide, 2008, p. 5). It is also highlighted that the implications that political corruption leaves on the society and lives of the public are more destructive and serious than those of petty corruption (see Grobler, 2002). This analysis upholds this definition of political corruption to explore

empirical cases of political corruption in the KRI to identify traits and levels of extensiveness in there.

Focusing more on political corruption, it addresses that the unique feature of grand corruption does not only generate personal enrichment but also protects power of corrupt officials and parties and retains their positions (Amundsen, 2006, p. 3). Mark Philp (2015, p. 22) attempted to present an experimental definition of political corruption by suggesting that there are three key parties in any political corruption transactions. Firstly, (A) parties that represent government agents fail to comply with norms and standards of their profession, the values that are expected to make them function in favour of public interests. Secondly, (B) parties that represent people who are intended to gain the advantages from the public services. Thirdly, (C) parties that represent a group of people who gain the actual advantages when the corrupt actions happen. According to Philp, political corruption is stimulated when the following transaction happens:

Where a public official (A), violates the rules and/or norms of office, to the detriment of the interests of the public (B) (or some sub-sections thereof) who is the designated beneficiary of that office, to benefit themselves and a third party (C) who rewards or otherwise incentivises (A) to gain access to goods or services they would not otherwise obtain (Philp, 2015, p. 22).

The arguments that the three case studies presented in the empirical section make, identify how the KRG decision makers violated public positions and wealth to selectively reward chosen people (C in Philp's formula) instead of distributing public services among the public (B in Philp's formula). It also highlights how by distributing the public wealth politically among media and political parties, serves to favour some and punish others. This goes in line with the arguments that Philp makes in the above explanation with regards to identifying incidents of political corruption.

1.1 Types of political corruption

Considering the main common features of political corruption, scholars suggest that political corruption appears in different forms such as 'rent-seeking machines', 'illegal campaign financing', 'kickbacks', 'purchase of laws and regulations', 'party patronage', 'pork-barrel politics' and 'state capture' (Heywood, 2009, p. 364). However, scholars like

Petr Kopecký and Peter Mair (2012) suggest that corruption is related to clientelism and patronage, but it theoretically and empirically differs from them. This analysis argues that Kopecký and Mair (2012, p. 8) drew a general conclusion that corruption is about gaining financial benefit through public decisions, while there is a broad section of the literature that suggests that the benefit of corrupt acts could be other than monetary (see Friedrich, 1972). This analysis, moreover, does not utilise these concepts interchangeably, but follows the path of scholars who argue that patronage, clientelism and state capture lay the foundations for political corruption and, in their absolute forms, they become types of political corruption. Therefore, this chapter will review the literature on party patronage and clientelism, state capture and illegal party funding as forms of political corruption in order to draw the attention of the reader to the traits of political corruption in the empirical chapters dealing with the case of the KRI.

Patronage is a method that political parties and politicians employ to empower their positions in society and, especially, in public institutions. Scholars suggest that patronage is used as ‘organisational resources... and electoral resources’ by political parties to establish their bases and strengthen their position in society (see Kopecký and Mair, 2012). It is generally defined as ‘the distribution of specific goods in exchange for political support’ or ‘as the staffing of public offices...on the basis of political criteria’ (Meyer-Sahling, 2006, p.275). It is also understood as follows:

...a form of particularistic exchange between the party on the one hand, and a supporter or a group of supporters on the other hand, in which state resources, or privileged access to those who control state resources, are traded for political support within the wider society (see Kopecký and Mair, 2012, p. 4)

Thus, patronage is a process of directing the services of public institutions and resources by political parties, usually via their representatives in public institutions, to a certain group of people to retain their political support (Weingrod, 1968, p. 379; Kopecký and Scherlis, 2008, p. 358). These services could be ‘jobs and other important public and semi-public positions’ such as ‘public sector companies, advisory boards, quangos, universities, and school and research institutions’ (Kopecký, 2006, p.258).

This term is used interchangeably with that of politicisation of public institutions (Meyer-Sahling, 2006). The latter is defined as ‘the substitution of political criteria for merit

criteria in the selection, retention, promotion, rewards and disciplining of members of the public service' (Guy Peters and Pierre, 2004, p.2).

Party patronage could be given for organisational or electoral purposes and can take various forms, as presented by Kopecký and Mair (2012, p. 4) as follows:

[W]hen a particular public industry is located in a particular district, when a public housing project is placed in a particular part of town, when teachers, or taxi drivers, or other groups of voters are offered particular benefits in exchange for political support or endorsement at a coming election, or when loyal party members gain en masse.

This procedure is mostly concerned with abusing the discretionary authority of public officials that enable them to allocate services selectively to party followers (Dagger, 1984, p. 518; Heywood, 2009, p. 364). It may also take other forms when a victorious political party dismisses the supporters of its opponents from their public jobs on account of their participation in electoral campaigns and their support to other parties and candidates (Gardiner, 2009, p. 27). Patronage, therefore, could mean the processes of rewarding loyal supporters of a particular political party or a group of people with exclusive public services such as positions, jobs, and salaries, and/or dismissing public employees from their jobs owing to their political allegiance. In both occasions, public authority is abused for private gains.

Parties and politicians aim to control society via interference in public recruitment; this is a result observed in new research conducted in 22 countries regarding party patronage. The study concluded that various motivations are behind such interference, as follows:

[A] desire to control state institutions (e.g., in order to ensure formulation and implementation of policies compatible with politician's aims); and a desire to reward party or politician's supporters, activists or even friends and family (e.g., for their electoral support or for their loyal service to the party) (see Kopecký et al. 2016, p. 423).

Party patronage is noticed to a different degree almost everywhere. Scholars stressed that it existed in the former Soviet Union and socialist countries (Willerton 1992), African nations (see Mohamed Salih, 2003; Sartori, 2005), post-communist democracies (Gwiazda, 2008; Nakrošis and Gudžinskas, 2012; O'Dwyer, 2004), developed European

nations (Kopecký and Scherlis, 2008; Kitschelt, 2000; Di Mascio et al., 2010), the USA (Scott, 1969; Folke et al., 2011), and countries of Latin America (Gordin, 2002). However, it seems that countries in transitional settings, such as post-communist countries and post-conflict societies with dysfunctional government institutions, are prone to experience extreme forms of political patronage (see Ten Hoove et al. 2008). Political parties play a key role in expanding scales of patronage when government and other institutions are weak. Interestingly, the literature suggests that public institutions become weak and volatile when they are established after the existence of strong political groupings, ‘whenever mass politics emerges prior to the establishment of an independent state bureaucracy, parties have the greater chance to resort to patronage as a viable strategy for political mobilization’ (Kopecký and Scherlis, 2008, p. 364). Most of the Kurdish elites interviewed for this study suggest a similar understanding, highlighting that the existence of powerful political parties, mainly the ruling KDP and PUK, prior to the establishment of the KRG and other KRI institutions prevented the newly founded institutions from growing normally (see chapters 4 and 5).

Political parties to a certain extent, almost everywhere, utilise their power and positions at national institutions to strengthen their organisational bases. This is carried out through rewarding their followers with public services to retain their loyalty, and to gain exclusive access to decision-making processes and policy implementation inside national institutions (Kopecký and Scherlis, 2008, pp. 357-358). This practice is applied in developed countries in a very limited scope where parties appoint top rank officials at the ministerial levels (Meyer-Sahling, 2006, pp. 1-2). However, it becomes much more extreme mostly in developing countries, with some exceptions in developed countries like Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain (see Di Mascio et al., 2010; Sotiropoulos, 2006; Sotiropoulos, 2004), where parties distribute jobs to a lower level of public bodies to gain votes and political support in return. The extreme form of patronage is called ‘bureaucratic clientelism’ when parties fill almost all top and normal job vacancies at government institutions with their followers (Kopecký and Scherlis, 2008, p. 365). This analysis suggests that this form of patronage was pervasive in the case of the KRI where alongside appointing top officials by ruling parties, almost all job vacancies at the public sector were provided to party followers (see chapter 5).

Although some scholars argue that corruption and party patronage are two different procedures, this analysis suggests that extreme forms of party patronage allow corruption

to persist, in particular, because those who are appointed via party intervention in bureaucracy feel obliged to recompense such favouritism, as it is suggested:

In many parts of the world, elected and appointed officials pay the political party for a place on the party list or for a political appointment, and payback time begins the day after the election or appointment (USAID, 2003, p.12)

In chapter 5, this study presents cases where political and apolitical positions, to a large extent, were provided to particular groups of people on the basis of political affiliation. The affected individuals make recompense for such favours by allowing the ruling parties to enjoy exclusive access to public institutions. This vicious circle continues as parties can maintain control over volatile public institutions, persist in directing public sources to strengthen their political positions, and allow key leaders and groups of office holders to continue enriching themselves and their families. Larry Diamond calls such a political setting a ‘bad or rotten governance’ where gaining personal advantages becomes the central aim of holding public office:

... individuals seek governmental positions in order to collect rents and accumulate personal wealth to convert public resources into private goods. There is no commitment to the public good and no confidence in the future. Every actor is motivated by the desire to get what can be gotten now, by any possible means (Diamond, 2003, p. 5).

Secondly, clientelism is defined as a ‘dyadic’ phenomenon happening when two socially uneven sides are interacting at the political arena. The first side is called ‘the patron’ representing a top rank position such as a politician or a public official. The second side, ‘the client’ comes from a lower level than the former in society, and could be an individual, a businessperson or even a lower office holder (Green and Ward, 2004, p. 22). The patron selectively supplies the client with privileges and facilities in exchange for their support (Amundsen, 1999, p. 9; Weingrod, 1968, p. 377; Hilgers, 2008, p. 125; Sundaram, 2009, p. 460; Green and Ward, 2004, p. 22; Kopecký and Scherlis, 2008, p. 356). It is understood as ‘a form of representation based on selective release of a wide variety of public material resources – contracts, housing, subsidies, ‘pork barrel’ legislation – on order to secure electoral support, either from individuals or from selected segments of society’ (Kopecký, 2006, p. 259). When this exchange happens at the

political level, as politicians offer favours to clients aiming at acquiring their political support in return, it is called political clientelism (Álvarez Rivadulla, 2012, p. 39; Hopkin, 2006, p. 2). Cristina Bicchieri and John Duffy (1997, p. 478) suggested that political parties retain political clientelism when they discriminate among people by directing specific resources and services to a particular group, especially to their voters.

Features of patronage and clientelistic practices are common in a ‘particularistic’ society (Sung, 2002, pp. 142-143). In this type of society, people are mostly classified on the basis of ‘their status or position’ (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2006, p. 88), and receive different forms of public services on the basis of their characteristics, including their ‘kinship, religion, ethnic or political similarities’, rather than any meritocratic criteria (Lumby, 2006, p. 10). There is a large amount of literature which suggests that whenever patterns of patronage and clientelism exist, they will pave the way for the emergence of political corruption (Gardiner, 2009, p. 27; Heywood, 2009, p. 364; Heywood, 1997a, p. 72; Sung, 2002, p. 152; Cruz and Keefer, 2015). This analysis does not perceive these phenomena as synonyms of corruption because there are occasions when patronage, for instance, is solely about appointing a few top officials of the executive by parties (Kopecký and Scherlis, 2008, p. 357; Di Mascio et al., 2010, p. 5). However, in extreme situations similar to the case of the KRI presented in chapter 5, patronage and clientelism create necessary conditions and stepping-stones to the emergence of political corruption.

Continuing with relevant forms of political corruption, scholars define state capture as a situation when state officials enable private firms to fulfil their interests in the public sector in return for illicit private advantages (Kaufmann and Hellman, 2001; Jensen, 2002, pp. 974-975). This exchange happens when state apparatus is dysfunctional, incapable to function impartially and also when government agents enjoy wide discretionary authority to interfere in economy (Graycar and Villa, 2001, p. 424; Sonin, 2008, p. 2). The ineffectiveness of some key institutions of checks and balances including ‘independent courts and media, grass-roots political parties, and an institutionalised civil society’, leads to the emergence of state capture (Sonin, 2008). The World Bank (2000, p. 3) presented a broader definition of state capture as follows:

State capture is the illicit provision of private gains to public officials via informal, non-transparent, and highly preferential channels of access. It can also occur through unclear boundaries between the political and business interests of state officials, which have been a

particularly prominent characteristic of many transition countries. In all its forms, state capture tends to subvert, or even replace, legitimate and transparent channels of political influence and interest intermediation, reducing the access of competing groups and interests to state officials.

Scholars (see Carlson and Walecki, 2006; Rose-Ackerman, 2008) argue that post-conflict societies are prone to state capture. As monitoring and law enforcement intuitions are usually weak at such times, this situation allows political figures, office holders, and even criminal groups to gain control over the political process in order to take advantage, economically and politically, of the fragile status (Carlson and Walecki, 2006, p. 7; Rose-Ackerman, 2008, p. 407). Thus, corruption emerges and places any post-conflict recovery under serious threat (Lindberg and Orjuela, 2014, pp. 723-724). State capture is forwarded as a form of grand corruption (Heywood, 2009, p. 364; Kaufmann and Hellman, 2001; Søreide, 2002, pp. 6-7; Hellman et al., 2000, p. 26). The captors are capable to shape laws and regulations in their own favour and direct policies unfairly towards their interests. They place their pressure on the policy-making procedures and bribe decision-makers to accomplish their dominance (Søreide, 2002, pp. 6-7).

State capture places a noticeable threat on society as captors control some significant institutions and areas such as ‘media ownership, huge campaign contributions, and direct participation in politics’ (Sonin, 2008, p. 7). Alongside undermining business and economic environment, as they are capable of threatening business people and their projects, captors can create a serious obstacle ahead of political reform, as they protect incumbents and maintain the status quo at any cost (Sonin, 2008, p. 3). Therefore, state capture is worsened the dysfunctionality of public institutions, as captors strongly challenge reform attempts that seek to alter any current status quo (Kaufmann and Hellman, 2001). The three case studies presented in chapters 5, 6 and 7 hold noticeable signs of state capture in the KRI. They present evidence that key public officials utilised public positions and wealth to favour private organisations including political parties, their members, their media networks and companies of their powerful figures.

Another form of political corruption that is of interest in this analysis is associated with party funding. There is plenty of literature regarding the exploitation of financial resources in politics (see Ohman, 2014b; Gakuo Mwangi, 2008; Fisher and Eisenstadt,

2004; Pinto-Duschinsky, 2004; Walecki, 2004; Nassmacher, 2003). This exploitation becomes more apparent in a post-conflict setting because these ‘societies lack state structures and institutions’ and procedures of checks and balance, which includes the fact that ‘transparency, accountability and fairness are weakly rooted’ (Carlson and Walecki, 2006, p.5).

Finance is an essential element to preserve the political system and its actors, specifically political parties, and keep them as viable elements in society. It is perceived as ‘an element of political power’ (Fisher and Eisenstadt, 2004, p. 619), ‘the mother’s milk of politics’ (Nassmacher, 2003, p. 5), which “buys the access, favours, skills, goods and services that are essential to effective party activity” (Williams, 2000, p. 1). Mark Hanna once said “[t]here are two things that are important in politics. The first is money, and I can’t remember what the second one is” (Bajovic and Manojlovic, 2013, p. 5). Nevertheless, organising the interaction between financial resources and politics to prevent corruption in a wider context is considered as one of the most crucial challenges that democratising countries and societies emerging from war and conflict in particular are facing (Carlson and Walecki, 2006, p. 5, Casas-Zamora, 2008, p. 3). In this sense, countries consider regulating this sector through introducing a functioning regulatory framework to prevent corruption and maintain a fair environment for political competition (see Ohman, 2014a).

As far as political party funding is concerned, financial resources are one of the three main pillars of political parties alongside an organizational base and volunteer members (Nassmacher, 2003, p. 3). The literature suggests that political parties are unable to accomplish their activities and democratically compete with each other without having access to financial sources (Gakuo Mwangi, 2008, p. 268; Ohman, 2014b, p. 1). To run their activities, political parties possess different sources of income, for instance membership dues, funds donated by different contributors, and state subsidies. This analysis presents an introduction to domestic private sources and state subsidies to political parties, because these two revenue sources appear to have created more opportunities and incentives for the emergence of political corruption in the case of the KRI (see chapter 7). Political parties in the KRI and elsewhere have further sources of revenues, but as other sources are not at the centre of this thesis, they are not covered.

Starting with the private sources of income, political parties are conventionally perceived as private associations that finance their activities by donations coming from private contributors (Van Biezen and Kopecký, 2001, p. 402). This is still one of the main sources of party funding in many countries (Vinuela and Aguilar, 2011, p. 8). For instance, the contribution of wealthy donors in countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) sometimes exceeds state subsidies (Walecki, 2003, p. 77; Smilov, 2007, p. 6). Beside the private donations, the literature suggests that political parties themselves, to different degrees, traditionally engaged in forms of businesses through running some forms of less beneficial businesses including printing and publishing companies. However, nowadays parties' own lucrative businesses including housing projects and marketing, which enable them to generate greater amount of money (Van Biezen, 2003, p. 19).

Party-owned businesses in the KRI are one of the cases that local observers are concerned about. It is argued that the KDP and PUK have extensively monopolised the business sector for their companies and the projects of their key leaders (explored in chapter 7). It is worth mentioning that this area is noted to be highly sensitive and prone to corruption worldwide (Van Biezen, 2003, p. 19). In this line, what does the literature recommend to minimise corruption opportunities in party funding?

The literature suggests that the regulation of the private donations to political parties helps to prevent the exposure of party funding to corrupt practices and protect the independence of political parties (Van Biezen, 2003, pp. 20-21). This claim is based on the assumption that private contributors acquire considerable influences over politics in return for their financial contributions to parties (Williams, 2000, p. 6; Vinuela and Aguilar, 2011, p. 8). This issue stimulates political corruption probably in the form of 'quid pro quo' as political parties must pay back contributors, and the compensation is mostly associated with exploiting public services in order to selectively provide preferential services to the donors (Bajovic and Manojlovic, 2013, p. 8). The literature provides a considerable number of cases and scandals in many countries worldwide where the private donation to political parties causes corruption (see Williams, 2000, p. 7; Walecki, 2003, p. 3; BBC News, 2003; Astier, 2003; Heywood et al., 2002, p. 195). To prevent the influence of private contributors on politics, many countries place ceilings on some types of private donations and introduce public subsidies to political parties (see Walecki, 2003, p. 7; Van Biezen, 2003, p. 21).

Regarding the introduction of public subventions to parties, as another source of income and a mechanism to decrease corporate influence over politics, in 104 countries, classified as free or partly free nations according to Freedom House in 2004, 59% of them supply direct state subsidies to political parties and candidates (Pinto-Duschinsky, 2004, p. 8). The state subsidies have significantly altered the position and the identification of political parties from originally being ‘voluntary private associations’ to become a part of the ‘public utilities’ (Van Biezen, 2004, p. 702). The provision of public subsidies to political parties and candidates seems to have different reasons. In newly emerging and established democracies, the aim is to create a fair political environment for political parties and candidates to compete with each other and prevent dominance of incumbents (Ohman, 2014b, p. 1). This claim is based on the assumptions that incumbent parties are more resourceful than newly founded parties or oppositions, as the former have better chances to gain financial grants from the private sector and use the public wealth and services to fulfil their goals (Mair and Van Biezen, 2001, p. 411; Walecki, 2004, p. 6). Therefore, without a fair policy to provide state subventions, political parties outside the government would be unable to rely on minor sources of income to challenge incumbents (Walecki, 2004, p. 6). This implies that public subsidies were introduced to preserve fair political competition in society. However, how could this happen?

The literature suggests that it is vital to regulate party funding, particularly the organisation of the income and expenditure of political actors, in order to prevent the opportunities of corruption (see Casas-Zamora, 2008, p. 26; Van Biezen, 2010, p. 67). It is reported that at least 180 countries around the world have introduced forms of regulation to organise political financing (Ohman, 2014b, p. 3). Ewing (1992, p.14) described the deregulated political finance system as “inviting two people to participate in a race, with one participant turning up with a bicycle, and the other with a sports car”. This quotation is probably the best explanation with regards to how deregulated party funding jeopardises fair political competition in society.

Therefore, scholars suggest three main areas that are vital to promote integrity in party funding, which are legal framework, transparency, and subsidisation (Van Biezen, 2010, p. 67). Codifying party funding is significant to classify legal and illegal sources of revenue, putting a limit on expenditure, and caps on some suspicious sources of funding (see Casas-Zamora, 2008, p. 5; Van Biezen, 2010, p. 67). This opens the door to the second pillar, which is transparency. Scholars suggest that to avert corruption in party

funding, this process must be transparent because this makes the sources of income of political parties subject to official and public scrutiny. Therefore, monitoring institutions could assure that there are no opportunities for illicit financing and may prevent political parties and candidates from enjoying suspicious financial contributions, which negatively influence their functions (see United Nations, 2004, p. 11; Fisher and Eisenstadt, 2004, p. 621; Van Biezen and Kopecký, 2007, pp. 239-240). For this, political parties must be required to disclose details of their sources of income and their expenditure reports and make them available for the public (Van Biezen, 2010, p. 67). However, if the requirement for transparency appears to be essential in ordinary circumstances, scholars highlight the limitations that need to be considered in conflict-prone societies. It has been suggested that meeting international standards of transparency in post-conflict settings can be counterproductive:

The tensions and ever-present threat of violence make it difficult to attain international standards of transparency. Full disclosure of the source of private contributions can put donors at risk and limit their willingness to contribute to the funding of parties and campaigns (Boneo and Dahl, 2006, p. 13)

The maintenance of other standards is problematic in post-conflict situations as state structure is generally weak and there is generally disorder within the political system. In this situation, regulating party funding, and seeking transparency and accountability faces serious challenges, ‘local players are not committed to international democratic standards and thus remain sceptical of regulating the political finance system’ (Carlson and Walecki, 2006, p. 5).

Furthermore, it is suggested that the introduction of public subsidies is vital to financially empower political parties to afford running their daily activities and their electioneering costs (see Walecki, 2004, p. 8; Fisher and Eisenstadt, 2004, p. 621; Ohman, 2014a, p. 22; Ewing and Issacharoff, 2006, p. 4). Chapter 7 explores this issue in detail, focusing mainly on the public subsidies and party engagement with private businesses in the KRI.

1.2 Causes of Political Corruption

Scholars suggest that searching for causality in social science per se is a problematic issue that generates controversies, ‘social scientists do not have a common understanding of

what should count as a causal explanation' (Rothstein and Teorell, 2015, p. 79). Regarding causal factors of corruption, it is concluded that as the phenomenon is multi-dimensional, it is difficult to come up with a set of causal factors (see Heywood, 1997b, p. 426; De Graaf, 2007, p. 42). Furthermore, there is controversy and confusion regarding how causes and effects of corruption can be classified as it is suggested that 'researching on corruption is difficult because many causes of corruption also seem to be consequences of corruption' (Lambsdorff, 2006, p. 4).

In the search to find underlying causes of corruption, an interesting formula was forwarded by the American economist Robert Kiltgaard, suggesting that 'Corruption equals *Monopoly* plus *Discretion*, minus *Accountability*' (Kiltgaard, 2008, p. 2; Johnston, 2005, p. 25). Kiltgaard (2008, p. 2) explains his formula as '[i]f a system gives an official monopoly power over a good or service, the discretion to decide how much a particular client receives, and is not accountable, then the system will be prone to extortion or bribery'. Although these variables play a significant role in facilitating the persistence of corruption, it is argued that accepting this formula as a 'generally true' equation to understand corruption could be considered a mistake because it is difficult to find theories and empirical studies that actually back this position (see Stephenson, 2014). As this debate is highly unsolved and it is beyond the scope of this study, this analysis presents a general introduction to three major factors that have drawn the attention of a large number of scholars.

Starting from the institutional factor, firstly, scholars explore some areas associated with the formal institutions and political system in a given society to find their roles in causing corruption for instance the lack of functioning public institutions can generate opportunities for political corruption. According to a 'theory of redistributive corruption' (see Amundsen, 1999, p. 6), when governmental institutions are incapable of managing society, other informal associations including clans, interest groups and political parties would take over the role of state institutions and control their power to make decisions, distribute public sources, and implement regulations instead of public offices (Andvig et al., 2001, p. 38). These features are clearly apparent in conflict-prone societies where public institutions are inevitably weaker than they are in stable societies, which leaves them less capable of preventing corruption, as Emil Bolongaita (2005, p.2) highlights in that 'public institutions are to a large extent dysfunction[al]' and accordingly there are 'extraordinary high opportunities and low punitive risks for corruption activity'. Further

literature supports this claim, suggesting that ‘[t]he main obstacle to post-conflict democratic development is the fragility of the state. Weak state institutions are the key element of state fragility’ (Hoove and Scholtbach, 2008, p. 7).

In such circumstances, while public officials are a part of the corrupt transition, unofficial bodies and agents are the main beneficiaries (Amundsen, 1999, p. 7). The theory invents a term called ‘feudalisation’ to describe the state of this type of society where government loses control over some key areas including economy and even military to informal arrangements, and in the long term it may also lose its unity (Amundsen, 1999, p. 7). Further literature suggests that in this type of society, in which the political system is un-institutionalised, the implementation of the system of checks and balances is inadequate; also, officials are less accountable to the public (Acemoglu et al., 2004, p. 163). In addition, what guides key politicians and office holders is not laws and regulations, but it is a discretionary power and forms of informality that they enjoy, and this would generate corruption as Susan Rose-Ackerman (1978, p. 78) addressed “[w]henver an agent is given discretionary authority, corruption provides a way for the objectives of the higher authority to be undermined”. This understanding has considerable support amongst political economists as it is suggested that the ‘key factor behind corruption is the discretionary power of bureaucrats and the demand for the resources they control’ (Warner, 2015, p. 123).

This analysis suggests that similar features of the societies described by this theory can effortlessly be found in the KRI. It could be suggested that there is a large amount of institutional problems in the KRI (see chapters 5, 6 and 7) as a region that has been significantly affected by a series of continuous conflicts.

Besides, there is another theory called ‘the theory of extractive corruption’, which looks for causes of corruption by trying the aforementioned theory the other way around (Amundsen, 1999, p. 7). Accordingly, the state is the most powerful actor in society and the most noticeable beneficiary in corrupt activities. In this situation, in addition to abusing public bodies, powerful political figures are able to use state power and institutions to extract benefits from society (Amundsen, 1999, p. 7). In this type of society, monitoring institutions, civil society organisations, and other informal groups are weak and unable to enforce checks and balances in society.

Interestingly, both theories imply that in order to minimise corruption, all countries are in need of a well-balanced and institutionalised government, which is responsive and under the scrutiny of an effective civil society. In post-conflict settings, alongside the need to develop the capacity of public institutions, there is a necessity to introduce a system of checks and balances, known as institutional guardians (Sung, 2002), which include free media, an independent judiciary, effective and independent civil society, and political pluralism. These institutions are, to a large extent, absent in post-conflict societies:

In fragile states, all formal accountability mechanisms are weak or even absent... this is reflected in the lack of free and independent media, of an active and participatory civil society, and of an independent judiciary. Civil society is too weak to act as a watchdog of the state and public mistrust of state institutions is high (Hoove and Scholtbach, 2008, pp. 7-8)

These requirements seem to be reached in a consolidated democratic system, which makes several scholars suggest that democracy can become an effective constraint against corruption.

Building on this claim, scholars suggest that there is a negative correlation between democracy and corruption, counts from a high level of democracy to a low level of corruption (Amundsen, 1999, pp. 17-18; Lambsdorff, 2006, p. 10). Johnson (2009, p. 778) argued that from a general picture, it is true that ‘most low-corruption countries are democracies, and highly corrupt countries tend to be undemocratic’, but the claim of positive influence of democracy on the level of corruption does not seem to always be true and that simple, particularly as there are several exceptions to this. The case of Italy is presented as a very noticeable exception, ‘it is an established democracy with a strong economy but has a long tradition of corruption’ (Johnston, 2009, p. 779). Scholars like Rothstein and Teorell (2015, p. 84) question this correlation. Further, the situation in East Asia and Africa tells another story about this correction, for instance the Singapore’s authoritarian political system functions effectively against corruption (Sindzingre, 2009, p. 446). These, and further exceptions, suggest that the level of democracy matters, as consolidated democratic systems increase the level of accountability of the public officials, which, it is suggested, enables the public to use their votes to ‘throw the rascals out’ (Rothstein and Teorell, 2015, p. 84). In other words, democracy has tools that enable

the public to supervise the political system and prevent widespread corruption. For instance, it is suggested that ‘elections should give voters the means to do away with their corrupt leaders’ (Kunicová, 2006, p. 140).

However, it still cannot not be suggested that any democratic system, even the consolidated ones in advanced European countries, is a corruption-free model, ‘Indeed, advanced Western democracies are evidently corrupt to varying degrees, and the nation-states which have democratised have demonstrated that new forms of corruption may arise or old forms may be reinforced’ (Moran, 2001, p. 379). The difference seems to be in the degree of corruption in democratised and democratising societies. So, as reaching a stable and consolidated level of democracy is challenging, scholars suggest that corruption appears mostly to be widespread across less powerful authoritarian and transitional states (Amundsen, 1999, p. 18). Hence, countries that are transitioning to democracy including ‘transition from authoritarian rule; transition from communism; decolonisation; and the emergence of new nation-states’ (Moran, 2001, p. 379) are considered most prone to corruption.

Another variable that scholars use within institutional factors to identify causes of corruption is the role that political parties play in society. Considering the controlling status of political parties in societies with dysfunctional public institutions highlighted by the theory of redistributive corruption, political parties are generally seen as corrupt actors as follows:

Discourse on corruption and anti-corruption strategies have identified parties as key actors who abuse their powerful position in the political system, among else, to extort bribes, to supply their members and followers with lucrative positions in the public sector and related corporations, or to shape political and economic institutions to the benefit of affiliated interest groups, or to channel public resources into the hands of party leaders, members, or supporters (Blechinger, 2002, p. 3).

The position of political parties is critical when it comes to conflict-prone societies. A broad amount of literature exists on the importance of building systems for political parties in transitional societies which could function to develop democratic institutions (see Le Billon, 2008; Curtis and De Zeeuw, 2009; Hicken, 2009). Their position is essential because parties ‘have the capacity to bridge or worsen cleavages in societies’ (King and De Zeeuw, 2006, p. 5), particularly if we consider that some such parties function in such environment where they existed as armed movements, and they

accordingly become ‘a decisive factor in the success or failure of peacebuilding’ after the war or conflict comes to an end (Curtis and De Zeeuw, 2009, p. 1). There is a necessity to transfer these armed groups into civil political parties after any conflict has ended because otherwise the possibility of the resumption of conflict is high, similar to the situation that arose between the KDP and PUK in 1994, as each had armed forces (see chapter 4).

The literature suggests that ‘[i]f armed groups are not integrated into a new national army, transformed into political parties, or disbanded, the recurrence of violence is likely’ (Curtis and De Zeeuw, 2009, p. 1). So, working on party engineering and party development in post-conflict societies in order to develop them as positive actors in supporting stability within the new regime and, more importantly, in becoming a part of the anti-corruption mission is a critical task (see Le Billon, 2008; Curtis and De Zeeuw, 2009; Hicken, 2009). Allen Hicken (2009, p. 1) considers building an effective party system in a transitional period as a challenging task ‘among the numerous tasks involved in the transition to and consolidation of democracy, the building of an effective and supportive party system has arguably proved the most difficult and elusive’. Bearing this challenging move in mind, some scholars consider functioning opposition parties and a pluralistic party system as an obstacle to corruption because the task of monitoring the ruling parties and preventing them from abusing their positions is vastly simplified (Sung, 2002). However, Conor O’Dwyer noted that political competition and political pluralism is not enough per se to minimise corruption opportunities. It is suggested that political competition can play a marked role in enabling voters to change the political equation against corrupt figures only when it is ‘robust and institutionalised’ (O’Dwyer, 2004, p. 521). It is furthermore explained, that ‘robust competition implies that no party is dominant. Institutionalisation means that elections present voters with the choice among a manageable number of stable parties with familiar coalition-building preferences’ (O’Dwyer, 2004, p. 521). In addition, Johnston (2009, pp. 777-778) supported the idea of the effective role of ‘high-quality, well-institutionalised political competition’ in diminishing corruption incentives. While supporting the notions of robustness and institutionalisation presented above, Johnston (2009, p. 782) suggested that political competition ‘must be fair and well-structured’. This perspective stands against the domination of a few parties and any types of exclusion over the political sphere which mostly exists in post-conflict settings.

This thesis pays considerable attention to the role that ruling parties have played in the KRI over the past ten years. As is shown in chapter 4, the KRI has experienced a series of conflicts both before and after 1991. Parties have been a critical element in almost all of these conflicts and have been highly engaged in violent and non-violent conflicts with both successive Iraqi governments and amongst themselves as pro-freedom armed movements. Alongside their struggle to build a nation-state for the Kurds in Iraq, the parties have played a critical role in widening the scale of political corruption after the 1991 uprising by abusing their dominant positions in the KRI to turn public positions and wealth to tools serving their narrow political interests, as is argued in the empirical cases presented in chapters 5, 6 and 7. Given the aforementioned criteria, this thesis argues that the party system in the KRI has been neither institutionalised nor robust. It has been dominated by two strong and controlling parties with a list of volatile and fragmented minor parties, which have been until very recently divided into two fronts to support either ruling party. In chapter 7, where this analysis presents how parties financed their activities, it is noticed how ruling parties controlled the public subsidies and private sector to financially empower their organisations and to weaken any possible political rivals that might unseat them.

Bearing the key role of institutions in mind, the literature pays considerable attention to the role of economy in corruption. Scholars refer to the state of the economy of a society as another variable that might facilitate or impede opportunities for corruption. Cited from the German sociologist Max Weber, a key precondition for establishing ‘rationally organised, legally driven bureaucracies that exhibit little corruption’ is ‘economic development’ (Xin and Rudel, 2004, p. 298). Different examples and findings of empirical studies highlight the position of the economic factor in the emergence of corruption. For instance, a negative correlation between wealth and corruption is presented, ‘there are no examples of rich countries with high level of corruption...and no poor countries with low levels of corruption’ (Haque and Kneller, 2009, p. 346). However, the position of the economy in the corruption equation should not be simplified to the degree of the wealth of a certain country because it could still be argued as to whether corruption leads countries to poverty or impoverishment lays the foundations for corruption. Case studies such as that of South Korea provide a better understanding of the relationship between corruption and economic development. Jhungsoo Park presented an

interesting study on the emergence of corruption during the unprecedented economic growth that South Korea witnessed from the 1960s to the 1990s (see Park, 2004).

The position of the government in the economy is another variable that is highlighted by several researchers (see La Porta et al., 1999). It is argued that as long as the state is interfering in the economy, there will always be opportunities for corruption to emerge (Budak and Goel, 2004, p. 4; Montinola and Jackman, 2002, pp. 149-150). Furthermore, Sung (2002, p. 144) viewed the intervention of the state and its monopolisation of goods and services as 'risky policy' that stimulates corruption. This perspective seems to put forward privatisation as a mechanism to minimise chances for corruption and to increase the level of efficiency of the government (see Boycko et al., 1996). However, other scholars argue that the negative relationship between corruption and privatisation is not that straightforward, as it is argued that 'corruption might just be shifted from the public to the private sector. The bribes formerly taken by public servants would then be requested by the private firms' staff' (Lambsdorff, 2006, p. 5). Furthermore, the literature supports this claim and seeks regulation, '[p]rivatization must be accompanied by a good regulatory framework' otherwise, like the case of Philippine, corruption in public institutions will spread to the private sector as well (see Gonzalez and Mendoza, 2004). This limitation seems to be reasonable during the transition process to market economy (Sung, 2002, p. 144; Lambsdorff, 2006, p. 5). In this line, it is suggested that 'downsizing the public sector does not help to reduce corruption, at least not during the transition period' (Lambsdorff, 2006, p. 5).

The literature also draws a negative correlation between the financial status of the public and levels of corruption, which is presented to count from high income to low level of corruption (Cheung and Chan, 2008, p. 223; Amundsen, 1999, p. 15). Empirical studies show that inadequate salaries would lead to the emergence of corruption as office holders would find themselves in a desperate need of finding extra sources of income to support their livelihoods (Haque and Kneller, 2009, pp. 349-350; Fan, 2006, p. 58). However, this perspective does not make sense when corrupt cases of high profile leaders and public officials are considered, who do not have wage problems as they receive the highest salaries, for instance in the case of the KRI.

The literature on post-conflict societies presents cases where the economy of a country and the financial status of people was left in a serious condition when war and conflict

erupts. Economic growth stops and a large proportion of the public budget goes to fuelling the conflict, which directly affects education, health, and people's day-to-day lives. Recovering an economy from such a situation and preventing corruption in a post-conflict setting is a challenging task and can be affected by a wide range of factors (see Del Castillo, 2008). As the empirical cases of this analysis do not primarily explore the role of the economic factors of the emergence of political corruption in the KRI, it is not worthy to further the debates of economists with regard to causes of corruption (see Blackburn and Forgues-Puccio, 2010; Deringil, 1993; De la Croix and Delavallade, 2009; Blackburn et al., 2006).

Besides, there are several scholars who pay attention to the traits of societies as motives behind the quality of governance (La Porta et al., 1999, p. 224). Supporters of this line of causality suggest that causes of corruption in traditional society seem to be different, as they are mostly entrenched in cultural values. James Scott (1972, pp.10-11) addressed that some actions might be seen as corruption in developed countries, for example, but they could be viewed as a part of the cultural values in traditional societies. For instance, 'gift-giving practices' are parts of the social contexts even though they are viewed as bribes in other contexts. Further, it is suggested that particular practices like patronage, clientelism and nepotism, which are seen as forms of political corruption in the literature, are forms of typical informal policies in traditional societies. Scott (1972, p. 11) noted that males in traditional societies have a range of obligations, for instance, they are obliged to serve their 'close kin and then to lineage, clan, or ethnic group'. Building on these entrenched values, it could be suggested that this mentality affects the role of office holders to provide special treatments to relatives and friends. Scott (1972, p. 11) supported this line of causality with examples, such as 'when the brother of a personnel official asks his relative for a clerical post or when the cousin of a transport official asks for a taxi licence, the strength of kinship bonds makes it difficult to refuse. A refusal would be seen as a betrayal of family loyalty'. These norms give justification to public officials to treat relatives and friends at public bodies in a special way in traditional societies.

Scholars refer to another side of societal factor for corruption when people lose trust in public officials and reach a stage where they see no point in being the only one who speaks up against corruption (Rothstein and Teorell, 2015, p. 87). This understanding is called a 'social trap' (Rothstein, 2005, p. 3). It is a social state when people realise that

individual action against corruption does not change anything when other people continue to act in a corrupt way. People in such a state will come to the conclusion that there is ‘no point in being the only honest actor in such a rotten game’ (Rothstein 2005, p. 4), or ‘if everyone else is doing it, why shouldn’t I?’ (Xin and Rudel, 2004, p. 298). In such a situation, it is suggested that the corrupt behaviours of some bureaucrats encourage others to join the corrupt circle (Haque and Kneller, 2009, p. 350).

With reference to the case of Nigeria, Daniel Jordan Smith refers to the lack of leadership and the pervasiveness of corruption at the societal level. Smith concludes that corruption becomes part of citizens’ everyday lives and is thus entrenched in society in a complicated way:

Everything from obtaining birth and death certificates, to registering a company, to applying for a passport, to renewing a motor vehicle registration normally requires some sort of payment in addition to the official fee. Generally, the only way around paying extra money for routine government services is if one has a personal connection to someone with influence—a patron who will use their power to push on behalf of their client. But even then, a relationship of reciprocity exists; the patron is helping with the implicit expectation that their act contributes to retaining and strengthening the loyalty of their client (Smith, 2010, p. 91)

This line of causality appears to be interesting and requires more study and empirical research to enrich it. However, this analysis argues that this understanding of attitudes of the public toward corruption does seem to be less related to social norms. It instead appears to be more associated with the low level of the responsiveness of public institutions toward corrupt acts of office holders. Put differently, if the public institutions are effective and responsive enough to discover corrupt agents, arrest them and bring them to justice, other public officials will less likely act corruptly. Therefore, this seems to be a consequence of public institutions weaknesses and the problem of leadership and governance. Linking this argument to the cases of the KRI, this analysis presents the ways people resorted to acquire public services from the ruling parties in an exceptional way on the basis of their political affiliations. Some local observers might argue that this is a cultural value. However, this analysis suggests that these informal procedures were applied because the public institutions were weak and controlled by ruling parties.

2. Political Corruption in the domestic literature

As a term, corruption is apparently a new vocabulary in the Kurdish political literature. It comes to be widely used merely in the post 1991 Kurdistan (Kanie, 2012, pp. 357-358). In other words, stories about corruption have become ubiquitous since the Kurdish local authority came into existence following the establishment of the KRI institutions after 1992. The outbreak of the Kurdish civil war (1994-1998), which resulted in the division of the KRI geographically and administratively into two sub local authorities, had a huge impact on the process of building national institutions to run the liberated areas of the KRI (Ala'Aldeen, 2013). This has consequently paved the way for the emergence of different forms of politicisation of the public institutions and corruption (as presented in chapter 4). Local observers highlight that corruption has become one of the most talked-about topics among the public and stakeholders in the KRI. Kanie (2012, p. 57) suggested that corruption has featured in 'daily topics of educated and non-educated public. Headlines of newspapers and websites are bombarded with news and cases of corruption. It is even debated among friends and social groups'. This shows the significant position of this phenomenon in the public sphere. This section presents some key debates about corruption from the perspective of the public and intellectuals presented in a few publications written by local scholars, and reports covered by a few Kurdish media outlets. This section also refers to some data and official documents either leaked to the press or uncovered by MPs and other officials which are relevant to this analysis.

Bringing the discussions in the literature about causes of corruption to the context of the KRI, political observers in the KRI mostly focus on the institutional causes of corruption. Given the insights that Amundsen (1999, p. 6) presented on the theory of redistributive corruption, cited above, Kurdish scholars such as Dlawar Ala'Aldeen (2013), Mariwan Kanie (2012), and Muhammad Amedi (2010) suggest that public institutions can be fragile during the civil war and in its aftermath because of administrative division, and political parties have kept their dominant positions and controlled both society and government institutions. Their dominance prevented fragile public institutions from growing and functioning impartially, and this eventually enabled the ruling parties to guide public services to their own ends. Looking at the arguments that these scholars made in their works, the dominance of the initial parties over government and other institutions have stimulated different forms of political corruption and slowed down the functions of newly established governmental institutions. These scholars looked at the

socio-political structure of the key parties of the KRI to understand their functions. It is suggested that the long history of political conflict and, from time to time, civil war between the KDP and PUK placed a significant influence on their performances within the KRI's institutions since 1991. This made the situation more vulnerable with regards to the fact that both parties retained their armed forces and did not integrate them into one national army, as suggested by the literature.

Amedi (2010, pp. 117-118) addressed that the lack of administrative experiences of the cadres of both parties and other political parties after the Kurdish uprising in 1991, with a heritage of political disagreements between key parties, resulted in civil war resuming in 1994. This eventually ended by polarising the KRI society and dividing institutions into two local administrations (discussed in chapter 4). From this stage on, both parties started politicising government institutions, media outlets, judiciary bodies and civil society institutions (Ala'Aldeen, 2013; Amedi, 2010). These practices did not only delay the process of state-building started in 1992 (Ala'Aldeen, 2013) but also enabled ruling parties to appropriate public services and wealth to strengthen their political positions in the KRI, and accordingly widen opportunities for various forms of corruption.

It is suggested that the legacy that the Ba'ath Party⁴ left in Iraq has placed its influences over the way Kurdish parties run the region. This understanding is apparent in the literature on post-conflict societies as presented above. Amedi (2010, pp. 176-177) presented a range of evidence to show how ruling parties in the KRI followed the path of the Ba'ath party in regard to politicising public institutions. For instance, the Ba'ath party did not allow anyone to hold any public position if the person was not trusted by the party. Both Kurdish ruling parties did the same to a large extent as they monopolised almost all public positions to their loyal followers. The Ba'ath party allocated seats at public universities for its loyal members without respecting entry requirements; both parties did the same, as they allocated undergraduate seats at some desirable departments and seats of post graduate degrees at public universities to their loyal members, irrespective of admission conditions (Amedi, 2010, pp. 155-156). These points show that the legacy of the totalitarian regime of Iraq left its influence over the performance of the KRI

4. The official name is 'The Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party' ruled Iraq from 1968 to 2003 (see Dawisha, 2009; Bengio, 1998).

governance model at least in the first two transitional decades of 1990s and 2000s, which paved the way for the emergence of different forms of corruption.

The dominance of the ruling parties has greatly affected the performance of Independent monitoring boards, if they have ever existed as Independent bodies in the KRI. It is suggested that the judicial system and the police, as two important institutions for implementing laws and regulations, have been politicised for many years in Iraq as a whole (Amedi, 2010). While the KRI has started new governance experience outside the control of the central government of Iraq since 1991 (see details in chapter 4), local observers argue that the intervention of the ruling parties did not allow the newly established judiciary and police bodies to function and enforce order in an impartial way (Ala'Aldeen, 2013, pp. 203-206). Ala'Aldeen (2013, p. 204) provided examples that there are a large number of people who committed serious crimes but they are still free because the ruling parties back them. The KRG Deputy Home Minister, Jalal Karim, presented several cases when judges freed criminals and trouble makers after they found themselves under several forms of informal pressure (see Awene, 2012, p. 6). This should not be surprising considering the series of violent and non-violent conflicts that the KRI has experienced since the establishment of its institutions in 1992 which, of course, negatively influenced the growth and development of all its institutions.

The political dominance of the ruling parties over national institutions has further implications. For instance, it has caused the KP to perform its role ineffectively, particularly in regard to monitoring executive bodies and bringing them to account. Ala'Aldeen (2013, pp. 229-231) suggested that informal institutions outside the KRI public institutions, the politburo of the KDP and PUK as obvious examples, have been able to impose their will over the KP to introduce laws to secure their positions and their interests. Therefore, the KP has played a very minor role in monitoring public institutions and officials and preventing opportunities for corruption. The most recent incidence that shows the upper hand of political parties over national institutions is the incidence of preventing the current KP Speaker Yousif Muhammad Sadiq from entering Erbil, the capital city of the KRI, by security forces of the KDP since October 2015 after the KDP Politburo decided to dismiss the Change party from the current KRG cabinet, and this has resulted in shutting down the sessions of the KP for several months (see Karem, 2015).

This thesis suggests that these interventions prevented governmental institutions from developing and functioning outside the lines drawn by both parties to preserve their own interests. This has laid foundations for the emergence of different forms of political corruption. Features of political patronage and clientelism could easily be noticed in the provision of public services. The ruling parties found themselves able to selectively provide different types of public services to their followers and members, and exclude people outside their circle from their rights. It is suggested that since the administration division, both ruling parties have started employing their members to public institutions (Amedi, 2010, p. 69; Ala'Aldeen, 2013, pp. 92-107). As the government was the only provider of services during the critical transitional period, the people of the KRI prefer working at public institutions as this sector provides better facilities in comparison to the private sector. Gaining a job at government is depicted as bringing joy to people, 'when someone gets a government job, it is a huge cause for celebration because it means a monthly salary for life, and every few years a pay rise. Maybe down the road they will be eligible for a piece of land or even a promotion' (Mandalawi, 2014).

The desirability of public jobs among people, and the absence of a fair regulatory framework to recruit people into public institutions on the basis of a merit-based procedure enabled the ruling parties to use it as a tool to widen the circle of their supporters. Therefore, the ruling parties could interfere in this sector in a wide scope as Amedi (2010, p. 157) suggested that the ruling parties "appoint all employees from ministers to cleaners, from their members". Likewise, Nawsherwan Musfata (2009a) depicted the situation as follows:

We have the legislative, executive and judiciary branches in Kurdistan. These authorities exist and perform their daily routine. However, they were created and are guided by the ruling parties. They are functioning within the constrained framework that the ruling parties have drawn for them. To gain a public job, whether it is a servant of a hospital or a Director General, a Minister and others, loyalty to parties not to country is a key. Parties are using these mechanisms to retain their power.

There has been a lack of official data about the numbers of employees that gained public jobs through this informal procedure. However, local commentators assert that until 2011 almost all public employees must have been nominated and supported by offices of the KDP and PUK, otherwise they would not have chances to obtain public jobs. Providing

an estimated number, Ala'Aldeen (2013, p. 210), who served as a minister in the KRG (2010-2012), addressed that during the election campaign in 2009, only the PUK provided public jobs to more than 20,000 people. Further in 2010, on the request of the KDP and PUK leaders, more than 20,000 new employees were appointed to different government institutions on the basis of partisan and family loyalty and localism (Ala'Aldeen, 2013, p. 210). This partisan practice sparked public outrage and forced the KRG to set up an open and relatively fair recruitment procedure (see chapters 4 and 5). The politicisation of the provision of public jobs has taken other forms, as local observers noted. The KDP and PUK did not only appoint people to run public offices but they also appointed thousands of their members at public institutions without showing up at their work places. This type of public employee has a variety of names among local Kurdish people. For instance, some call them '*Bin Diwar*'⁵ implying that these people receive salaries without providing anything to society. Kanie (2012, p. 204) called them 'illusive public employees'.

The KRG has not provided actual figures of this type of public employees. However, commentators from time to time reveal some informal numbers that might have been leaked to them from public officials. Kanie (2012, p. 204) suggested that according to what the local media published, in 2006 there were around 32,000 public employees receiving salaries without showing up at any public institutions. In addition, Ali Hama Salih, a Change Movement (Gorran) MP, suggested that there are around 100,000 public employees who are either illusive employees or receive more than one salary from the KRG at the same time (Ahmad, 2014; NRT TV, 2014b). These exceptional privileges have created interest groups inside the KRG that protect each other and fight to undermine any reform attempts which might change the status quo (Ala'Aldeen, 2013, pp. 226-227). Furthermore, these services and their financial implications on the KRI budget have also drawn the attention of MPs and competent authorities to consider urgent actions (Saleh, 2014). Farsat Fosfi, a KDP MP, addressed that 'these practices are complications of the KDP-PUK civil war and administrative divisions in the KRI. They paved the way for the emergence of a great deal of corruption. To eradicate negative traits of these practices,

⁵ The Change MP Ali Hama Salih defined '*Bin Diwar* employee' as someone who receives salaries of public employees without showing up at any public institutions to perform any public duties (NRT TV, 2014b). Salih stated that they asked the KRG Minister of the Trade and Industry when he was in the KP to provide them with data about *Bin Diwar* employees at his ministry, the minister replied 'these people come to collect their salaries at the end of months wearing suits without doing anything. These people are party cadres backed by their parties and therefore we have not been able to do anything to suspend their salaries' (NRT TV, 2014c).

the KP and monitoring institutions must speed up and take actions immediately' (Rudaw TV, 2014). Further, some special committees of the KP, the Commission of Integrity (COI) and the General Prosecutor have made statements highlighting that they have started working on these cases (NRT TV, 2014a).

Another form of the exceptional public service that is reportedly provided to party cadres is a particular pension provided by the KRG mainly to cadres and key leaders of the KDP and PUK, and to a few minor parties. Based on numbers and documents reported by a few media networks and MPs, it could be suggested that these services have different forms and titles and that they are less organised. For instance, Lvin Magazine (2008) published a list of politicians, mostly key leaders of the PUK, who have been awarded with a ministerial pension, yet some of them had never served in the ministerial position. With respect to the KDP, the Kurdistan National Network (KNN) channel (2013a), which belonged to the Change Movement, aired a list of the key figures of the KDP who have also been provided with a ministerial pension since 2013. This analysis noted that the salary for such a position is the highest⁶ in the KRI. Actions against this phenomenon seems to have slowly begun. More recently, a Kurdistan Islamic Group (KIG) MP submitted a claim to the Kurdistan Parliament Presidential Council (KPPC)⁷ attaching a list of names of politicians who are receiving pensions of ministerial and director general positions. The MP asked the KPPC to create a special investigative committee to find out whether these people are eligible to receive such pension or not (see Appendix B.1, p.224). This thesis noted that the KRG did not only offer this exceptional pension to high ranking politicians, but that it opened doors to lower ranks who also benefitted from the public wealth.

According to reports published by a few Kurdish media outlets, the KRG benefited lower level cadres of both ruling parties from exceptional pensions too as they receive pensions under different titles. While an accurate data about this sector is not available either, it is obvious that the KRG rewarded party members in a disorganised way. It is estimated that there are around 10,000 party cadres who receive the salaries of Executive Directors at the Ministry of Finance without showing up at the public offices (Sbeiy, 2014a). This

⁶ Salaries of each of these key politicians are around 6 million Iraqi Dinar (ID) monthly (approx. £ 3,000) (KNNC, 2013a) while ordinary government workers receive less than ID 400,000 (approx. £ 200) monthly after serving around 30 years.

⁷The KPPC includes the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker and the Secretary of the KP. For their responsibilities and authorities (see Bazaz, 2013).

figure can be classified as the second beneficiary among members of the ruling parties after those who receive ministerial pension if their salaries are considered. Further, it is reported that the number of other cadres who receive lower rates of salaries is much higher than who receive high salaries. The KNN Channel (2014b) aired a report providing an overall number of retired cadres of both ruling parties and a few minor parties, which is estimated at around 100,000 cadres. While this number has neither been proven nor rejected by any official sources, a PUK MP Izzat Sabir, who is an economist and a member of the financial committee at the KP, announced that ‘the KDP has 63,377 retired cadres and the PUK and other parties have 29,953’ (Rudaw TV, 2014). These unconfirmed figures show how the KRG has used public wealth to reward party cadres.

More recently, a government document leaked to the press revealed that 404 women retired with some titles of high rank militaries while some of them turned out to have been working as journalists to some partisan press institutions (see Appendix B.2, p229). This is another example to prove that the KRG has been disorganised in the provision of these exceptional services to reward members of the ruling parties. This scandal sparked public outrages followed by widespread discussions at the public and official levels on the necessity of conducting comprehensive reform in this sector (Rudaw TV, 2014). Monitoring institutions like the Auditory Office and the COI have spoken up and opened an investigation into exceptional pension phenomenon (Mahmud, 2014). However, these outrages and formal and informal discussions have not been followed up and have not produced any positive outcomes as the ruling parties are still the only party who can solve these problems as they are in control of almost all public institutions.

The provision of exceptional pension to party cadres extended to some minor parties. Lvin published a list of the KIG high profile cadres awarded with a pension and the title of the Director General. A high-ranking leader of the KIG confirmed this information stating that ‘among 112 retired politicians, there are just 17 members of the KIG presidential council, others are lower levels of cadres of the party’ (Kurdi, 2010). It seems that the ruling parties managed to drag some of the other parties to become involved in these exceptional procedures probably to keep them quiet. This analysis noted that there are leaders of the Change Movement, who used to work for the PUK, who have been awarded a high pension salary while their new party has started campaigning against this procedure per se. These privileges outraged the public and encouraged citizens to take to

the streets several times to campaign for political reform in 2005, 2006 and 2011 (see details in chapter 4).

Considering the public's reaction against rewarding party cadres, the sixth KRG cabinet set up a recruitment system, which accordingly people could apply for public jobs announced by the KRG openly for the first time. This procedure applied to 2011 and 2012. However, the seventh KRG cabinet suspended this system despite the fact that it was widely welcomed by people and offered a degree of equality to them. The KP announced 15,000 new job vacancies in the KRI budget act of 2013 (see Kurdistan Parliament, 2013b). The new cabinet did not follow the same procedure of the 2011 and 2012 appointment system as it is reported that both the KRG PM Nechervan Barzani (from the KDP) and his deputy Emad Ahmad (from the PUK), clandestinely and due to requests of their parties, appointed 7,000 new employees to government institutions without any announcement (KNNC, 2013b). This action was seen as a sign of suspending new public recruitment procedure. A few days prior to the end of 2013, a Kurdish media outlet interviewed Saad Khalid, the then KRG Minister of the parliamentary affairs to comment on the mechanisms that the KRG had applied in respect to the 2013 public appointments, the Minister responded as follows:

Our government has a new recruitment plan, which differs from the past two years. We give priority to those people who have been working for the government under temporary contracts for more than three years. We have shifted their provisional contract to a permanent appointment status. Beside this, we have appointed a large number of people to the education and health sectors (Samad, 2013).

Exploring this case further, this analysis suggests that the 2013 appointments took place in a non-transparent manner contrary to 2011 and 2012. Most recently, a formal government document that reveals more information about the 2013 public appointment signed on the 17th of November 2013 by the former KRG Minister of the Finance was leaked to the press (see appendix B.3, p.230). This document uncovers that the KRG appointed 15,228 new employees to the public sector in 2013 without advertising the vacancies similar to what happened in 2011 and 2012 (Sadiq, 2014). The content of this document contrasts what the aforementioned KRG Minister stated in regard to giving priority to workers in temporary contracts with the KRG (Samad, 2013).

The document shows that authority was given to the Ministers of Education, Health, and the Higher Education, to appoint 3,350, 1,162, and 990 new employees, and the KRG PM and DPM appointed 9726 new employees to other public institutions (Sadiq 2014). This procedure was against the budgetary act of 2013 as a KIG MP mentioned in a claim made to the KPPC about this matter (see appendix B.4, p.231). This analysis comes to the point that as the aforementioned Ministers were members of the KDP and PUK, the KRG opened their hands to appoint more than 15,000 new public employees in 2013 according to requests of both ruling parties after their chances to gain exclusive job opportunities were restricted in 2011 and 2012. This assumption turned out to be realistic particularly when the KRG reportedly did not consider applications of thousands of new graduates who had applied for public jobs according to the budgetary act of 2013, as highlighted in the KIG MP claim (see appendix B.4, p.231).

Linking the aforementioned practices to the literature, it could be suggested that these politicised practices are clear signs of clientelistic practices and patronage-ridden procedures applied by the KRG to reward members of both ruling parties to eventually protect the domination of both parties over the KRI institutions. According to the literature, these practices are forms of political corruption. These areas are not the only public zones that the ruling parties monopolised for their interests. This analysis noted that the parties expanded their domination to further zones such as the media.

Reviewing some local discourses on the relationship between parties and the press, it could be suggested that political parties began establishing their own media stations even before the establishment of the KRI institutions. Major parties had a few radio stations and publications during the conflicts with successive Iraqi regimes before 1991. However, the party-owned media became common after 1992, in particular during the intra-conflict among parties that led to civil war and administrative division within the KRI in the 1990s. Ruling parties used their media outlets to broadcast their political messages to people and to attack and demean their rival parties (Ala'Aldeen, 2013, pp. 238-243). There are documents proving that ruling parties have been using public money to establish their media stations and finance them without having any regulatory framework in place to support this procedure (Ala'Aldeen, 2013, p. 242). The question was to what extent could the ruling parties exploit public resources as they actually did?

Starting with the legal foundation of the press, the KP enacted two significant laws to organise media outlets in the KRI. However, neither of them entitled the KRG to fund media stations of the ruling parties. The first law was the Act of Publications No. 10 of 1993, which did not oblige the KRG to fund any media outlets. The second law was the Journalism Act No. 35 of 2007, which did not entitle the KRG to finance any press outlets either (Kurdistan Parliament, 2008). Focusing on the recent act No. 35, international organisations including the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX)⁸ and the Reporters without Borders⁹ praised this law for improving the environment and removing some unnecessary constraints to set up new media stations (see IREX, 2009, p. 143; Reporters without Borders, 2010, p. 10). However, these two laws are accused of introducing some vague concepts that are reported to have been used against journalists (Abdulla, 2014).

Despite the criticism that these two laws have been facing, they seem to have laid the legal foundation for the emergence of a considerable number of news outlets. Up to April 2013, around 850 various media institutions were functioning in the KRI. The Kurdistan Journalist Syndicate (KJS), according to Act No. 35, registered 653 newspapers and magazines. In reference to broadcasting press, the KRG Ministry of the Culture in the light of Act No. 10 issued a permit to around 25 satellite channels and 200 local televisions and radio stations (Ahmad, 2013). These laws have allowed the emergence of a noticeable number of media stations. However, considering the intervention of the ruling parties in this sector, the quantity should not be taken as a sign of growth in the media performance in particular as most of the media networks are somehow linked to the incumbents and funded by the public wealth.

The relationship between media and political parties produced three main types of media stations: (1) the partisan press; (2) the private press; (3) the shadow press. This polarisation will be broadly discussed in chapter 6 (see also IREX, 2009; Reporters without Borders, 2010; GCHR, 2014). Looking for traits of corruption in this polarisation, there are reports which illustrate that ruling parties guided public money to set up their

⁸ IREX defines itself as “an international non-profit organization providing thought leadership and innovative programs to promote positive lasting change globally”. One of the areas that they work on is building and supporting independent media (see IREX, n.d).

⁹ Reporters without Borders is another international non-profit organisation defends freedom of expressions and reports and denounce violence against journalists across the globe (see Reporters without Borders, 2014).

media empire and allocate public money to establish thousands of semi-partisan press, which is called the shadow media among people in the KRI.

There is evidence that some media networks received direct public financial support. Lvin Magazine published a report referencing a formal KRG document No. 4916 signed in 19/03/2008 by Bayz Talabani, the then KRG Minister of the Economic and Financial Affairs, about financing media stations of both ruling parties by the KRG. Lvin (2010, pp. 10-11) cited from the document that the PUK-owned Kurdsat and Al-Hurriah satellite channels received ID 900 billion monthly, and the KDP-backed Zagros satellite channel received ID 500 million monthly. This massive amount of money was allocated to partisan press, yet there have been no formal regulations about funding media outlets by the KRG. It is evident that the KRG made this decision for political reason as they are the media of the ruling parties.

This process took other forms as reports show that the KRG funded some partisan press in an indirect way. For instance, the PUK has an office called ‘the Finance Bureau’ that funds most of the PUK news outlets. The Bureau received ID 11.5 billion monthly directly from the KRG in 2008 (Lvin, 2010, p.13) and eventually spent it on financing the PUK media stations. This analysis noted another way that public money is spent to partisan media, for instance the KRG granted a large amount of public money to help the PUK to set up some local television stations. According to secret reports of the SAO in 2005 that were leaked to the press, the previous KRG–Sulaymaniyah Administration paid ID 35,560 billion to buy some communication equipment for the PUK Dohuk and the PUK Rania local television stations, and spent ID 191,697 billion to renew the PUK Kirkuk local television station (Sbeiy, 2013a). These are only the documents that were unveiled by the press and it is still unknown how much more public money has been allocated to set up and fund other media stations of the ruling parties. It appears that the KRG has provided another privilege to the media outlets of the incumbents. Reports uncover that an unconfirmed number of the KDP and PUK journalists were secretly appointed to the public institutions while they performed their media duties at their partisan press offices. More recently, the KRG Minister of Finance ¹⁰ carried out some procedures to reform this sector. The Minister decided to close an institution called

¹⁰ The Minister of the Finance has been run by members of either the KDP or the PUK over the past twenty years. In the recent coalition cabinet, Rebaz Hamlan from the Change Movement has been appointed to this position. Hamlan has started a list of reform in the finance sector of the KRI, the aforementioned procedure is one of them.

‘Sulaymaniah Office of Organisations’ linked to the Ministry of the Finance where most of the PUK journalists received their salaries while they have been working for their party media stations. Also, some KDP journalists were appointed to another office of the ministry called ‘Ganjina office in Erbil’ (Sbeiy, 2015). The Ministry sought to reallocate these people in order to work for the KRG as they receive their salary from public institutions (Sbeiy, 2015). However, this step drew political attention as the targeted people are members of the ruling parties. Therefore, the decisions of the Minister of Finance were rejected by the KRG PM.

Although it is unclear how much public wealth has been channelled to establish and run partisan press, given the leaked documents cited above, it could be suggested that the KRG directed a considerable amount of money to finance party-owned media while the quality of basic public services like electricity and portable water require more attention and support. Linking these practices to the literature, the KRG offered public money to partisan and semi-partisan media in order to secure their loyalty to ruling parties. This form of exchange is patronage and clientelism in particular as this reciprocity took place by abusing public wealth to serve private interests. Political parties, mainly the incumbents, have been the main beneficiary in these processes as they rewarded their members with jobs, positions and pension; and established and run their media outlets too. In addition, they could also interfere in the area of party funding and guide it to their interests as well.

Political parties played a key role in the contemporary history of Kurdistan, as they were the main organisation that could lead the fight against successive Iraqi regimes (see Ameen, 2009a). Major political parties in the recent KRI political landscape were established a long time prior to the establishment of the KRI institutions (see Stansfield, 2004, p. 92). This analysis argues that this revolutionary background of political parties has placed a huge influence on the performance of the KRI institutions later on after the events that followed the first general elections in 1992 (see chapter 7 for this discussion). The KP enacted law No. 17 of 1993 to codify activities of political parties (Perlaman, 1993). This law guides the KRI into pluralistic political system as it allows the establishment of political parties (Article 3) and obliges the KRG to provide public subventions to them (Article 14) (Perlaman, 1993, pp. 7-8). This law has practically paved the way for the emergence of numbers of political parties, as 23 parties were registered by the KRG Home Ministry by the end of 2013 (see appendix B.5, p. 232).

The KRI political parties have different sources of income. Their main source of revenue is relatively the amount that the KRG has been providing to almost all parties since 1992. The law No. 17 paved the legal ground for the provision of direct state subsidies to political parties (Article 14). Although public subsidies to political parties remained unregulated for two decades, this study underlines that almost all of the registered parties received different amounts of public subsidies (see chapter 7). The corruption opportunities in this sector are mostly associated with the model of the provision of public subsidies to political parties. This analysis argues that the unregulated public subsidies enabled the KRG to use the public wealth as a political tool to favour ruling parties and the parties that support their dominance over society (details in chapter 7). While any regulatory framework for party funding was absent before 2013, Ala'Aldeen (2013, p. 209) revealed that each of the KDP and PUK received US \$ 35 million monthly until the establishment of the sixth cabinet. This thesis also argues that the share of other parties was distributed without any institutionalised procedure which allowed the ruling parties to use their discretion to reward their allies and punish any parties that might oppose them.

Another issue that is financially linked to financing political parties is associated with the engagement of political parties and key leaders in private businesses. First of all, Kanie (2012, pp. 313-317) presented an interesting analysis on the relationship between politics and business in the KRI and suggested that there are signs of 'crony capitalism'¹¹ in this relationship. Key politicians are engaged in business and create strong ties with business people. Kanie (2012, p. 316) stressed that "the unique feature of the KRI model of crony capitalism is that the politicians themselves have become strong business people and monopolised key areas while they are still running key public positions. This makes the KRI form of crony capitalism to appear as the most corrupt model compared to other countries". Local commentators point out that the two parties have widely engaged in businesses and trade; and extensively abused their dominant positions in the KRI institutions to generate wealth. They have monopolised key areas including telecommunication, trade of oil and gas, medicine, and infrastructure projects (Amedi, 2010, pp.155-156; Ala'Aldeen, 2013, p. 210).

¹¹ Crony capitalism is defined by a former US Federal Reserve Chairman, Alan Greenspan as "a condition in which... public officials are giving favours to people in the private sector in payment of political favours" (see BBC News, 2013). It is pervasive in some Asian countries including South Korea, Philippines and countries of Latin America (see Kang, 2002; Haber, 2002) and probably elsewhere.

They are not only monopolising key areas, but it is reported that they force other business people to share the benefits of their projects with them. Amedi (2010, p. 121) suggested that ‘business people understand that if they want to set up a project and be successful, they are unable to do it without gaining the support of a key leader or a member of either ruling family, Talabani and Barzani families. This support is important to gain the KRG permit and the party support’. There is evidence that the ruling parties, their key leaders and sometimes people close to them have been extracting money from other projects and investors, otherwise the latter would not be able to set up their businesses (see chapter 7). Ala’Aldeen (2013, p. 210) used a new term called ‘*Shareky Nustu*’ meaning ‘sleeper partner’ to describe people among the ruling parties and interest groups who extract bribes from investors to enable them set up their businesses, ‘people must find a sleeper partner and give him a share of the interest in order to be able to start a business’ (Ala'Aldeen, 2013, p. 210). Some of these businesses are personal and some are directly linked to the ruling parties. These circumstances made a Kurdish commentator suggest that working in politics appears to be the most lucrative opportunity:

The quickest way to get rich in Kurdistan is to become a politician. Many of PUK and KDP senior politicians have never ran successful businesses in the past as they were mostly in the resistance or abroad. Nevertheless, the richest people in Kurdistan Region right now, are those politicians. It is not a secret that many of them are involved in different businesses now have been accused of using their political influence to gain advantage. On top of that, there are hundreds of claims and allegations against politicians from all creeds of corruption, misappropriation government property, embezzlement, accepting kickbacks, misusing their position and market manipulation (Zulal, 2011).

The engagement of political parties and their key leaders in business, despite the form of engagement, provides another source of revenue to the ruling parties. These are clear signs of state capture as a serious form of political corruption.

These three areas, which includes party intervention in the provision of public jobs, positions and pension; allocate public wealth to media networks; and party funding, explored in detail in the empirical chapters 5, 6 and 7.

Conclusion

This chapter presented some salient discussion on corruption, mainly on definitions, types and causes featured in the literature. The main focus was on political corruption, which key public figures are involved in to gain personal and private interests through abusing public positions and wealth. Features of some forms of political corruption including party patronage, clientelism and state capture were highlighted which link to the empirical cases explored in chapters 5, 6 and 7. This analysis also highlighted some noticeable causes of political corruption, particularly considering the status of post-conflict or conflict-prone societies, in which the KRI could be classified due to the series of conflicts experienced in its history. Despite the unresolved discussions over the definitions of corruption and its causes, this analysis employs the frequently circulated definition of corruption that is partly enriched by Michael Johnston as “*the abuse of public roles or resources for private benefit*” to understand acts of corruption. It also argues that corruption in transitional and conflict-affected settings is the result of the convergence of a set of political and socioeconomic factors that do not exist to any great extent in stable societies. Then, local discourses on corruption and major characteristics as it is perceived by the public and local observers were presented.

Considering political corruption as an act of key public figures that misuse public wealth and abuse public positions to favour private figures and institutions at the expense of public interests, there are many signs of different forms of political corruption in the KRI. The ruling parties, through their key leaders in the KRI public institutions, have managed to provide public job opportunities to thousands of their members exclusively, set up and then extract public money for their media stations, not to mention guiding a huge amount of money as public subsidies to their parties and their allies.

This analysis cited local discourse on these three cases, as most visible forms of political corruption in the KRI, and it is believed that these types of corruption have left a huge negative influence on the quality of services that the KRG has been providing, the functions of public institutions, and the quality of political competitions among political actors. For several years, people of the KRI have been treated based on political affiliations. Without being members of either ruling party, it has been difficult to gain any opportunity to work at public institutions or to acquire any forms of public financial support, which has been provided to members of ruling parties in the different forms of pensions and salaries. There is no doubt that this must have affected the level of political

trust between these people and the public institutions. Furthermore, allocating huge amounts of public money to set up and finance large numbers of partisan and semi-partisan press, and to finance ruling parties and a list of political parties, have been at the expense of basic public services including electricity, drinking water, and schooling and public health services. Therefore, these cases must not only be seen as rewards to ruling parties and their members, but also as serious challenges to the public and to the public services.

Chapter 3: Presenting the research framework

Introduction

This analysis is a qualitative inquiry that uses a case study approach to consider political corruption in the KRI during its transitional period from a series of conflicts and war to the stabilisation of its institutions. This chapter presents the research method, the framework of analysis and the ways in which the empirical cases were chosen. It is divided into two main sections. Section 1 presents the research method employed in this thesis, which is the case study approach, and discusses the advantages and weaknesses of this method; then, it presents elite interviews as one of the tools applied to conduct the case study research. This section also addresses details of the research procedure including sampling, data collection and analysis, as well as the difficulties experienced in conducting elite interview research for this thesis. Section 2 presents the design of the cases of this analysis, which were selected on the basis of arguments made by several post-conflict studies.

Scholars highlight a number of zones vulnerable to corruption in conflict-prone societies. Considering the literature and domestic discourses on three areas vulnerable to political corruption in the KRI, this analysis selected the cases at hand. This section, therefore, firstly addresses particularistic and universalistic procedures applied to distribute and provide public services worldwide. It then highlights the procedures that lay the foundations for corruption to emerge. This background helps this analysis to build the first case on particularistic procedure in the KRI regarding the allocation of jobs of the KRG, positions of public institutions and pensions. Secondly, it addresses the position of media in post-conflict societies, in particular regarding the issue of corruption. It is suggested that the media could play an important role as a ‘whistle-blower’ against corruption, a task which is critical in post-conflict countries. This analysis aims to address the position of media outlets regarding corruption in the KRI and the opportunities and incentives that prevent the press from playing such a role. The third case is associated with the funding of political parties as critical actors in transitional societies. Building on arguments of post-conflict studies, this analysis considers two main sources of income of political parties, which are public subsidies and funds gained from the private sector and through engagement with businesses. Studying these three zones allows this researcher

to consider the characteristics and extent of political corruption in the KRI and helps to identify the factors that facilitated the emergence of corruption. In light of these findings and by considering cases of post-conflict societies, this author aims to contribute to the process of fighting corruption in the KRI by making further recommendations in chapter 8.

1. Case Study research

It is suggested that to draw a line between ‘the academic study of politics’ and ‘political journalism’, researchers of political science must follow a method of conducting a particular research (Burnham et al. 2008, p. 1). To do so, I have employed case study research to conduct this thesis on political corruption in the context of the KRI as a case of a transitional society. Case study is used in different disciplines. In political science, it is employed to study ‘dominant political unit of our time, the nation-state...’ and ‘smaller social and political units (regions, cities, villages, communities, social groups, families) or specific institutions (political parties, interest groups, businesses)...’ (Gerring, 2006, p.19). To begin this section, I pose and seek to answer some basic questions regarding case study research, such as what is case study research and to what extent can it offers scientific value to knowledge? Further, to what extent can it serve our understanding of the case of the KRI?

Case study is defined from various angles. The Dictionary of Sociology defines it as follows:

The detailed examination of a single example of a class of phenomena, a case study cannot provide reliable information about the broader class, but it may be useful in the preliminary stages of an investigation since it provides hypotheses, which may be tested systematically with a larger number of cases (Abercrombie, 2006, p. 45).

This definition is considered part of the conventional wisdom about case study, which underestimates its values in the scientific research arena. Bent Flyvbjerg (2006, pp. 2-3) questions this definition by commenting on some of its components that criticise the case study approach. For instance, it is said that ‘it is not true that a case study ‘cannot provide reliable information about the broader class’, and ‘it is also misleading to see the case

study as a pilot method to be used only in preparing the real study's large surveys, systematic hypotheses testing, and theory building'. It is also defined as 'an attempt to understand and interpret a spatially and temporally bounded set of events' (Levy, 2008, p. 2). John Gerring (2006, p. 20) defines case study and points out the difference between a single case and cross-case studies, as follows:

The intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that study is – at least in part – to shed light on a several cases, that is, multiple case studies. However, at a certain point it will no longer be possible to investigate those cases intensively. At the point where the emphasis of a study shifts from the individual case to a sample of cases, we shall say that a study is cross-case.

As an approach to conduct qualitative and quantitative inquiries, case study has been used for a long time. Some scholars suggest that traits of case study date back to 'works of Aristotle, Herodotus, Thucydides, and others' (Elman, Gerring, and Mahoney, 2016, p. 375). In the early years of the twentieth century, conducting a good case study was highly praised as follows:

Men who can produce good case studies, accurate and convincing pictures of people and institutions, are essentially artists; they may not be learned men, and sometimes they are not even intelligent men, but they have imagination and know how to use words to convey truth (Waller, 1934, pp. 296-297).

Despite the criticism that it has faced, case study is acclaimed for its large contribution in enriching empirical data over a wide range of disciplines: 'much of what we know about the empirical world has been generated by case studies, and case studies continue to constitute a large proportion of the work generated by the social science disciplines' (Gerring, 2006, p. 8). Major contributions have been made to various fields such as 'anthropology, archaeology, business, education, history, medicine, political science, psychology, social work, and sociology...economics and political economy' (Gerring, 2006, p. 2).

For some, case study should only be used when a researcher intends to undertake qualitative inquiry. Morton (1999, p. 134) argues that case studies are unable to test hypothesis and cannot be used as a tool to serve the quantitative research method because

‘they do not constitute an in-depth empirical evaluation of the theory’. Rather, they can serve as ‘a useful first step toward building a connection between a formal model and the empirical world’ (Morton, 1999, p. 134). However, other scholars suggest that case study can be employed to serve qualitative and quantitative research alike: ‘case study research may be either quant or qual, or some combination of both...there is no reason that case study work cannot accommodate formal mathematical models’ (Gerring, 2006, pp. 10-11).

The traditional view on the case study approach underestimates its value in different ways. It is suggested that case study research is uncontrolled and lacks ‘scientific values’ (Flyvbjerg, 2006, pp. 2-3). It is also criticised for being unable to generate theories and test hypotheses, and for not being able to generalise its results (see Abercrombie, 2006, p. 45; Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 13; Della Porta and Keating, 2008, p. 210). Arend Lijphart (1971, p. 691) claims that ‘science is a generalisation activity’ and as case study lacks this feature, then it ‘can constitute neither the basis for a valid generalisation nor the ground for disproving an established generalisation’. Proponents of case study respond to this claim by arguing that the goal of research is not only generalisation but ‘the most precondition for science is that researchers possess a wide range of practical skills for carrying out scientific work. Generalization is just one of them’ (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 8). Flyvbjerg further comments on this limitation:

Formal generalisation is only one of many ways by which people gain and accumulate knowledge. That knowledge cannot be formally generalised does not mean that it cannot enter into the collective process of knowledge accumulation in a given field or in a society...phenomenological case study without any attempt to generalise can certainly be of value in this process and has often helped cut a path toward scientific innovation (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 10).

Despite this, Flyvbjerg (2006, pp. 9-10) cites works of several scholars in both humanities and natural sciences who sought to generalise the results of their works by employing case study work. Another criticism that case study research faces is that of subjectivity and bias. Proponents of case study suggest that degrees of subjectivity exist in other methods also: ‘the question of subjectivism and bias toward verification applies to all method, not just to the case study and other qualitative methods’ (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 17). Moreover, there are scholars, such as Campbell, Ragin, Geertz, Wieviorka, and Flyvbjerg,

who revised their ‘preconceived views’ as a result of conducting case studies that showed that their ‘hypotheses were wrong’ (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 17). Despite its limitations, scholars suggest that case studies might still provide deeper understanding of a subject:

Sometimes, in-depth knowledge of an individual example is more helpful than fleeting knowledge about a larger number of examples. We gain better understanding of the whole by focusing on a key part (Gerring, 2006, p. 1).

Scholars divide case study into different typologies. Lijphart (1971, p. 691) categorised case study research into six types as ‘(1) atheoretical case studies; (2) Interpretative case studies; (3) Hypothesis-generating case studies; (4) Theory-confirming case studies; (5) Theory-infirming case studies; and (6) Deviant case studies’. Citing and discussing this and other categories, Levy (2008, p. 3) recently presented another category, dividing case study into ‘idiographic case studies..., hypothesis generating case studies, hypothesis testing case studies..., and plausibility probes’.

The analysis herein falls into the ‘idiographic case studies’ model, which seeks to ‘explain, and/or understand a single case as an end in itself rather than as a vehicle for developing broader theoretical generalization’ (Levy, 2008, p. 4). This type of case study, per se, is divided into the two subtypes of ‘Inductive Case Studies’ and ‘Theory-Guided Case Studies’. The former is often used by historians and it is considered to be ‘highly descriptive and lacking an explicit theoretical framework to guide the empirical analysis’ (Levy, 2008, p. 4). The latter, of which this analysis seeks to be a part, aims ‘to explain and/or interpret a single historical episode rather than to generalize beyond the data... they are explicitly structured by a well-developed conceptual framework’ (Levy, 2008, p. 4).

This analysis is an idiographic case study about political corruption in the KRI in a decade of transition to develop fragile existing public institutions, to eliminate war and civil conflict and generate a stable peace, and to unify a polarised government on democratic basis. The KRI is a single unit of study in this analysis. Three zones are chosen as subcases and as independent variables in light of several studies on political corruption in conflict-affected societies.

Case study research is conducted using some of the techniques and strategies that might be used in other research methods such as ‘direct observation of the events being studied and interviews of the persons involved in the events’ (Yin, 2003, p. 8). Gerring (2006, p. 34) cited works of a number of senior scholars in different disciplines who have employed interview as a tool to conduct their case studies. This analysis used the elite interview method to gain a deeper insight into the cases at hand.

1.1 Elite Interviews

The complexity and sensitive nature of corruption makes it difficult for researchers to lay their hands on accurate data almost everywhere (Transparency International, 2007, p.352). This becomes a critical and risky task when it comes to studying corruption in a region like the KRI, where there is no freedom of information to easily obtain reliable and valid documents and data that are necessary for a particular area. Moreover, where the national institutions are not strong enough to protect researchers and journalists, who address corruption, from corruption networks. Given that, while corruption is admitted to be pervasive in the context of the KRI (see chapter 4), it has not gained considerable attention in the Kurdish academia. What can be found in the Kurdish discourses on corruption are a few books and investigative reports published by a few Kurdish media stations highlighting various types of exploitation of public wealth and services by the ruling parties and key leaders. There are also a few surveys conducted by a few international and local NGOs measuring perspectives of citizens of the KRI about corruption. These secondary sources are reviewed in chapter 2 to provide a general understanding about core cases explored in empirical chapters of this thesis.

The primary data of this study is official documents leaked to the press or provided to me by interviewees offering information and data about politicised acts of the KRG as well as face-to-face interviews conducted with relevant elites. I cross-checked the sources for instance by showing documents and discussing their contents with interviewees. Elite interviewing is seen as one of the most popular approaches that social and political scientists use to conduct their studies (see Holstein and Gubrium, 2004). Elites in this thesis are not chosen on the basis of their high political, social or economic positions, but based on their high level of knowledge of the topic of political corruption in the KRI. The literature suggests that the elite interview is a useful method when a researcher reaches a point that “there are people out there who know more about your subject than you do” (Peabody et al., 1990, p. 425). In accordance with this perspective, I realised that there

are plenty of people who can be treated as experts or elites in their fields due to their insider-knowledge of corruption and their experience in the KRI, and can provide valuable insight about the cases that concern this thesis.

The literature provides three main types of interviews that researchers could rely on to gather data to their projects, which are structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews (Peabody et al., 1990, p. 425). This thesis adopts semi-structured interviewing, as it is perceived to provide the researcher with opportunities to explore the cases and control them in a better way as well as offering interviewees broader chances to widen their perspectives on the topics at hand (Peabody et al., 1990, p. 425). I prepared a list of questions regarding each of the three cases of this thesis prior to conducting interviews. During the interview, these main questions were covered, allowing interviewees to express their thoughts on the topics of discussion.

The literature highlights that selecting respondents to be interviewed in a particular project is not an easy task (Peabody et al. 1990, p. 453). I intentionally selected elites from different sectors, expecting that they could enrich this analysis with new and valuable insights from different angles and different political backgrounds, which allowed me to cross-check answers. Firstly, I interviewed leaders of the five key political parties¹² and a few minor parties assuming that they are well aware of opportunities of corruption in almost every single sector in the KRI, and some of them have witnessed incidents that are critical to support cases of this thesis. Party Representatives (PRs) offered their understanding about the ways that public jobs, public positions, pensions and salaries have been distributed. They provided insightful thoughts that enabled this researcher to come to some valuable conclusions about this case and others. They have also offered considerable knowledge on how media outlets in the KRI are funded and how political parties finance their activities as two core cases of chapters 6 and 7. Therefore, their perspectives and the incidents that they witnessed are used to build the arguments of chapters 5, 6 and 7.

The second phase of data collection involved interviewing legislators from different parliamentary blocks in the KP to also discuss these cases. They shared their attempts to institutionalise the KRI recruitment and pension system, to identify how media outlets are funded from the public budget, and to regulate party funding. Their perspectives

¹² The KDP, the PUK, the Change Movement, the Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU), and the KIG.

enriched discussions made in three empirical chapters. Thirdly, I interviewed journalists of different media stations, civil society activists (CSAs), university lecturers (ULs), a few government officials (GOs) and a couple of business people (BP), who are related to the cases at hand. Journalists shared their understanding on the relationship between media and political parties in the KRI, how media stations are funded and how their performance is linked to the state of political corruption. Other respondents were a rich source of information too as they provided a valuable insight into each case, which enabled this researcher to develop arguments of the cases and examine the claims that party representatives raised.

Scholars suggest that building trust with interviewees is a functioning factor that enables the interviewer to gain as reliable data as possible (Harvey, 2011, pp. 433-434). In this line, this researcher sent out a headed letter called participant form. This form was written in Kurdish as all the interviewees speak the Kurdish language (see a translated English copy of the form as appendix A. 1, p. 219). This letter was designed to offer interviewees some core information on the identity of the researcher, the university, the department, names of supervisors, and an introduction to the main themes of this thesis. It also addressed the role of interviewees in this thesis, where and when their perspectives will be employed, and how they will be addressed. All the interviewees received another form called consent form, also in the Kurdish language, that included a couple of bullet points confirming that the interviewee is fully aware of the themes of this thesis after reading the first participant form and that their participation was voluntarily (see a translated English copy of the form as Appendix A. 2, p. 221). After this process I made phone calls to the willing participants in order to schedule a suitable time for conducting a face-to-face interview with them. Times and venues were carefully administrated and almost all interviews were successfully conducted face-to-face as planned. This all served to build trust between the researcher and the interviewees, and made the interview-process and the future use of the collected data from interviewees transparent.

Conducting interviews is a significant method of gathering data, but it has a variety of limitations. Part of the limitations is associated with the practical and technical obstacles that a qualitative researcher is facing during the interviews. For instance, interviewing requires a great deal of time for preparation, making appointments, particularly if key elites are involved, and then transcription (Boyce and Neale, 2006, pp. 3-4). It also has technical challenges regarding how the interviews are recorded, which type of tape

recording is used, how the gathered data is stored, and then how they are transcribed (Bryman, 2012, pp. 482-485). The second part of the limitation is associated with the quality of data gathered from the interviews. It is reported that people have doubts about reliability issues associated with this method of research. There are possibilities of biased result from research conducted via interviews. The fear of bias appears in different stages of the interview, for instance, questions might be prepared in a biased way, and the position of the interviewer in the discussion might be biased. The position of the interviewees and how they express their ideas might also be biased (see Bleich and Pekkanen, 2013).

In this analysis, I sought to minimise both the practical limitations and the difficulties associated with the quality of data. Most of the interviews were successfully conducted on time, as the majority of the interviewees were punctual. However, the researcher did face time problems with a few of them because of their busy schedules. The technical preparation was successful, but as the interviews were conducted in Kurdish, more time was required for data analysis. I made the utmost attempt to stay unbiased and to decrease the levels of subjectivity in gathering and analysing data. I tried my best to retain an objective attitude during the interviews. Regarding the levels of biased data provided by interviewees, I sought to minimise it and increase reliability by interviewing elites from different professions and different political backgrounds to gather data from different sources of information.

1.2 Sampling

Scholars argue that the sampling process in a qualitative project differs from that of a quantitative approach. In the former, what guides the researcher is not the numbers of respondents, but it is mostly associated with the suitability and satisfaction of the opinion and insights that the targeted sample will be providing (O'Reilly and Parker, 2012). I chose elites from a variety of fields to discuss the topics concerned with my study. The sample consists of 10 PR from major parties and a few minor parties, 7 journalists from various media outlets, 5 MPs, 3 BP, 5 GOs, 2 CSAs, and 4 ULs (see Appendix A. 3, p. 222). The difference in numbers does not have any intentional meanings, but it is associated with the availability of these people to take part in this study, and their relevance to the topics. For instance, I interviewed a considerable number of PRs, MPs,

journalists, and ULs, as the cases of this thesis are linked to their professions and their positions. The GOs and CSAs were interviewed to check on some themes, and gain more of an overview on the cases at hand and an insight into the topic of corruption in Kurdistan. With regard to the BP interviewees, this researcher was keen to persuade more BP to take part in this study, but the sensitivity of the issues around business, particularly regarding the involvement of the ruling parties and key political figures in businesses, discouraged them from participating. This researcher could only gain the consent of two BPs and a representative of the KDP businesses on condition of anonymity and rejecting the procedure of recording the interview, which was carried out with all other interviews. That is why I ensure their anonymity and have anonymised their answers in the thesis.

Regarding the adequate number of interviewees, qualitative researchers suggest that reaching a saturation point is vital to gain validity and appropriateness in a chosen sample. However, there is a lack of properly defined guidelines which researchers can use to test their levels of saturation (see Bowen, 2008). This analysis views data saturation as a process of “bringing new participants continually into the study until the data set is complete, as indicated by data replication or redundancy” (Bowen, 2008, p. 140). After interviewing PRs and MPs, assuming that they represent biased political stances as a first group of interviewees, I then brought in elites from other sectors including journalists, CSAs, ULs, GOs and a few BP to discuss the topics that have already been discussed with aforementioned interviewees. The insights that the second group of interviewees provided were not very much different from perspectives of the first group. This can be seen as a sign of data saturation, as presented by several scholars (see O'Reilly and Parker, 2012; Bowen, 2008).

1.3 Data analysis

Analysing qualitative data is a critical and challenging task for qualitative researchers. Scholars divide data analysis into some stages, for instance there are four core steps including ‘immersion in the data, coding, creating categories, and the identification of the themes’ (Green et al., 2007, p. 546). These processes are vital given the fact that there are problems of ‘data overload’ and ‘data retrieval’ (see Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 56), which qualitative researchers experience after finishing their field work. Interviewees must immerse themselves in their data via reading their notes, transcripts and listening

over and over to the interview audios to apprehend the ideas and explanations correctly. Then, the processes of coding, categorising units and establishing themes follow (Green et al., 2007, pp. 547-549).

I conducted all the interviewees in the Kurdish language, this made the data analysis process more difficult. The majority of interviews were recorded, however, for some, only notes were taken. Therefore, the first step was to listen to the audio files and transcribe them to written texts. During the transcription process of the audio files, I gained a general sense about the cases. Following this, I read through the Kurdish manuscripts of the interviews several times to identify and note the issues that mattered to the topics under investigation. Then, I revisited the text focusing primarily on the marked and highlighted points to categorise them and eventually use them in the empirical chapters.

2. Designing the case of the KRI

This section presents the way subcases of this analysis are designed. Each case represents a vulnerable zone in conflict-affected environments. To design this case study research, this analysis employs some relevant theoretical frameworks to support the cases studied in this thesis including the framework presented by Sung (2002) called convergence approach.

Sung (2002) presented a framework to study political corruption applying data from 99 countries and territories. The framework is interesting because it mostly considered a great variety of elements that could play an influential role in creating and/or preventing opportunities for corruption in post-conflict societies and elsewhere. Most of the factors presented here are also covered by other scholars. However, the convincing and the unique feature of this framework is related to the way it linked the elements together as it is argued that the convergence of these factors “in time and space creates opportunities for widespread and systematic corruption” (Sung, 2002, p. 137). This is one of the conclusions that most of scholars who have studied corruption in conflict-prone societies ultimately reach. The model per se is designed on the basis of three main components. It is suggested that each of the factors explored in each component paves the way for the emergence of corruption. However, when they exist together in time and place, they

generate political corruption. Benefiting from Sung's framework and works of other scholars, in this section I only present the three main factors that I have found it helpful to select as subcases of this analysis.

2.1 Particularistic procedure

Scholars suggest that there are two forms of cultural standards of approaching ethics and norms in a particular society, which are 'universalism and particularism' (Sung, 2002, pp. 142-143). It is argued that the latter is much more vulnerable to corruption than the former. Universalistic culture, on the one hand, treats the populace considering their merit, and applies values of impartiality and fairness (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2006, p. 88). It is defined to be 'a virtue, a rule, a principle, or a moral perspective that is valid under most circumstances for most people most of the time' (Callahan, 2000, p. 37). Sung (2002, p. 142) provided further explanations in this respect as follows:

Universalistic values hold that the formal duties of a public role should be clearly formulated and remain independent of who occupies the position. Trusting relations in the public sphere are based on a contract that communicates the terms of an agreement (which in turn define the relationship between the parties) and the confidence in the effectiveness of formal control mechanisms. The state apparatus in the universalistic societies is institutionalised. This prevents ruling elites from easily achieving their private gain at the expense of the public interests. This also enables everyone to have a right to access to the public sector without providing privilege to any particular groups (Mundo, 2011, p. 3).

On the other hand, particularism is associated with a type of society where people are treated on the basis of 'their status or position' (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2006, p. 88). This evidently implies that personal characteristics including the 'kinship, religion, ethnic or political similarities' of people are preferred to be taken into account to gain public services rather than considering their merit or their citizenship rights (Lumby, 2006, p. 10). In addition, the linkage of people to dominant groups in particularistic society is much more important than their abilities. In this respect, it is stressed that 'the closer an individual is to the source of power, be it a charismatic leader or a privileged group, the better positioned he or she is to enjoy a superior status, and therefore more influence' (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2006, p. 88). People have little access to the public bodies in this type

of society, and ruling elites are significantly unaccountable and have a wide range of discretion to distribute public services among people (Mondo, 2011, p. 3). Further, national institutions are ineffective and a certain group dominates the spoil of the government (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2006, p. 90).

It is believed that corruption is pervasive in the political system of particularistic societies and illicit behaviours of the citizenry are encouraged by the ‘unaccountable behaviour of rulers’ (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2006, p. 90). Common features of particularistic societies presented below, which are directly quoted from Alina Mungiu-Pippidi (2006, p. 92), could help to better understand how a political system performs its tasks in these societies and how people commonly perceive government and corruption:

Persistence of widespread popular perceptions of government corruption despite changes in government; Influential jobs being held by the same individuals or groups regardless of the outcome of elections; High political migration from opposition parties to the party in government; A widespread perception that politicians are above the law; A situation in which access to nearly every resource is intermediated by oligarchic networks; Failure to take legal action against even the most notorious corruption members of high-status groups.

These factors appear to truly represent societies where institutions are weak and the rules are more based on relationships rather than rational and institutionalised grounds. In addition to that, it is cited from Max Weber that in particularistic societies unaccountable leaders monopolise power and sources of revenue (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2006, p. 88), and their power is mostly derived from ‘kin ties, patron-client relations, personal allegiances, and combinations thereof, with few formal rules and regulations’ (Charrad and Adams, 2011, p. 7). Signs of particularism are apparent in conflict-prone or transitional societies where public institutions are fragile, and instead of universalistic norms other forms of informality works regarding the provision and allocation of public services.

This analysis asserts that there are signs of aforementioned traits of particularistic conditions in the context of the KRI. For instance, firstly, there is a wide range of local discourse about the existence of corruption in the KRI and for several years fighting corruption has been the main demand of people according to results of a series of surveys conducted by local institutions, including the Kurdistan Institute for Political Issue

(KIPI)¹³ (see Sdiq et al., 2006; Ali et al., 2006; KIPI, 2008; KIPI, 2011; KIPI, 2012; KIPI, 2013). Secondly, there are a few key figures who have been running the KRI since 1992, and they managed to abuse their positions in order to employ their family members and relatives in high critical positions within the public sector. Thirdly, it is a common sense among people of the KRI that laws are only implemented when it comes to ordinary people while powerful figures and ruling elites are above laws, and can freeze laws and regulations and tailor them to suit their interests. There is a broad scale of discourses on the weaknesses of the rule of law when it comes to prosecuting corrupt figures and high profile office holders despite thousands of uncovered scandals and cases against them (see SpeeNews, 2013; Kanie, 2012; Awene, 2012; Ala'Aldeen, 2013). These are definite signs of the particularistic politics in the KRI.

To position the role of this element in the political corruption in the KRI, this analysis presents a case study in chapter 5 to examine to what extent the KRG applies universalistic or particularistic values and standards to provide a few forms of public services to people. Chapter 5 primarily focuses on two dimensions. Firstly, it looks at the processes of selecting public employees and appointing high-ranking civil servants, highlighting the actual requirements that people should have met to become the KRG employees and hold a public position. This allows this researcher to find out whether professional requirements or political criteria have been taken as preconditions for gaining jobs at the public sector. This also enables the researcher to examine how far political actors have intervened in the process of shaping the KRI bureaucracy. Secondly, this analysis explores the ways through which financial privileges, such as some types of pensions and salaries, are selectively distributed to the public of the KRI.

2.2 Capturing media outlets

The media, similar to other sectors, experience a considerable number of problems during a transitional period. Media in some post-conflict societies become a source of propaganda for government and/or dominant groups and parties, whilst in others journalists resort to 'self-censorship' as 'a survival strategy' to keep themselves working (Zeeuw, 2005, p. 493). Media in stable and democratised societies are suggested to be

¹³ The KIPI is a Kurdish local non-governmental institution carries out surveys on a regular basis on political issue in the KRI (see Sdiq et al., 2006; Ali et al., 2006).

functional guardians against corruption. They are supposed to work as a ‘watchdog’, alongside other institutional guardians, ‘for keeping government and other public figures accountable for their actions’ (Zeeuw, 2005, pp. 493-494). There are a few prerequisites that are vital to allow the press to play such a fundamental role. Some of these requirements are associated with press stations per se including being free, ‘an active investigative journalism’, and ‘having a principled and competitive profession’ (Sung, 2002, pp. 146-147). Other conditions are linked to the ways state institutions deal with the press, ‘a regime can effectively curb the preventive power of the press either by repressing dissident journalists or by developing unhealthy personal friendships and ideological affinities with the press’, not to mention the legal basis that protects the media from being constrained by officials ‘media are in better position to unmask corrupt dealings when they are legally protected from revealing sources of information and criminal charges when they release inaccurate information unintentionally’ (Sung, 2002, p. 147).

The freedom of the press is an essential prerequisite for its watchdog role among other institutions. The degree of this freedom is measured through assessing some key areas in a particular society. Looking at the methodology applied by Freedom House, which annually publishes an index to evaluate global press freedom, it calls three key areas into question to produce its annual free press indices. The first area is ‘the legal environment’. Freedom House examines laws and regulations that might exert direct or indirect influence on the media operation. It also assesses all possible negative and positive impacts that legal databases as a whole, the status of the judiciary, and some key legislations related to security, crime and flow of information might place on the status of media institutions and its performance in a given society. The second area is ‘political environment’. Freedom House assesses the degree of political control and acts of violence performed by states and other political actors within society over the content and performance of the local and foreign journalists. The last area is ‘economic environment’. In this regard, Freedom House mostly assesses issues related to media ownership, degree of transparency, models of providing subventions and advertisement to the press by the government and other dominant actors, and the degree of influence that corrupt deeds might exert on the performance of the press (Freedom House, 2014, p. 2). I argue that these areas are crucial and that considering the state of the media in the KRI, these factors have impacted clearly on the performance of the press.

It is suggested that the media in post-conflict societies ‘is poorly equipped, inadequately trained and largely controlled or owned by the state or dominant political and/or economic elites’ (Zeeuw, 2005, p. 493). This dependency negatively affects its position in society. This thesis examines the conditions of the media outlets in the KRI. The aim is not to study the press, but, instead, it explores opportunities and incentives that the relationship between media and political parties, mainly the ruling parties and their coalition cabinets over the past ten years, created for the emergence of political corruption.

The literature suggests that political parties have a critical position when it comes to the performance of media outlets as a guardian against corruption. Baron (2006) defined the partisan bias, as a type of media bias, as a news reporting style that favours a political party. In such a situation, political parties are capable to decide which type of events need to be reported and which should not. Political parties, in such a troubling circumstance, capture news providers to direct news reporting into their political interest. The partisan bias appears in another form of unbalanced reporting called ‘party colonisation’ (Bajomi-Lázár, 2013, p. 69), which are common in most post-communist countries. In both situations, political parties are widely accused of capturing news organizations “to suppress critical voices and to gain favourable coverage so that they can influence voting behaviour” (Bajomi-Lázár, 2013, p. 69). These features can be easily noticed in chapter 6, particularly in relation to the mainstream media station in the KRI, which is directly or indirectly linked to the ruling parties and secretly funded by public institutions.

Thus, chapter 6 presents an analysis of the state of the media outlets in the KRI. It explores the way media stations are established and funded to find out whether there are opportunities for corruption in this sector or not. It then examines the position of the media outlets in the fight against corruption in the KRI to explore whether the media plays a watchdog role against corruption or if they are part of the problem. Chapter 6 explores three types of media outlets in the KRI, the partisan media, the private media and the shadow media. Each of these types has its own characteristics, which reflect on their coverage. This analysis is aware of the models that the literature presents about media outlets, such as the model presented by Fred S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm (1971) called ‘Four Theories of the Press’, and the second well-known media typology presented in a book titled ‘Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics’ by Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini (2004).

This analysis argues that none of these models seems to perfectly fit in the case of the KRI for several reasons. Given the limitations that these typologies have per se, the first model seems to be rather ideological and the second is clearly designed to represent the media status in different parts of the European continent. So that they are not suited to examine the case at hand. Moreover, I contend that there is no meaningful comparison between the KRI and countries that are presented in these models as the KRI is a non-state actor which is still facing a great deal of challenges in its transitional period to consolidate its institutions. Furthermore, the aim of chapter 6 is neither to compare the state of the press to existing models nor to study media per se, but rather it strives to identify opportunities and degrees of extensiveness of corruption in this sector in line with the first research question, and to position the existing press outlets in the fight against corruption.

2.3 Party funding and pluralism

The quality of governance in democratic societies is affected by the way in which political parties function, per se, and the ways in which they interact with each other. The literature suggests that ‘systematic checks and balances weaken if a single party or a stable coalition controls the government for a long period of time’ (Sung 2002, p. 147). Although this argument seems to be convincing in a general sense, the literature suggests that this relationship is not straightforward but it is rather a ‘two-dimensional phenomenon’, and the impact that party competitiveness has on the level of corruption is associated with ‘the number of parties and the relative dominance of the governing party’ (Schleiter and Voznaya, 2012, p. 684). In other words, the role of political contestation among political parties in declining the scope of corruption is not always positive, as argued:

While some of this literature argues that the entry of effective opposition parties into a party system raises competitiveness and helps constrain corruption, other authors suggest that larger numbers of parties hamper effective accountability and give greater scope to corruption (Schleiter and Voznaya 2012, p. 675).

Sung (2002, p. 147) considered this point and suggested that ‘while multiparty systems are not immune to corruption, the existence of organised opposition forces certainly makes it more difficult for corruption to go unnoticed’. Linking this debate back to the

literature, O'Dwyer (2004, p. 521) stressed that political competition must be robust and institutionalised to play its role in the fight against corruption. These debates highlight the following questions: what is the state of political competition in the KRI? Could we consider the political pluralism advocated in the KRI as robust and institutionalised to play its role against corruption?

There are a list of political parties functioning in the KRI. Despite their numbers, this analysis examines the state of political competition among them through exploring one of the main pillars of political parties, which is party funding. Given the fact that financial resources have a great impact on the attitudes of political parties, chapter 7 presents the ways that the public subsidies, as the key source of party revenue, have been allocated to political parties. It also sheds light on the ways political parties find other sources of income to finance their activities from societal sources, particularly through engaging in businesses. By exploring party funding in the KRI, this analysis highlights the position of political parties in the political landscape of the KRI, the relationships between them, which reflect on the condition of political contestation in the region, and eventually the influence of party competition on the scale of political corruption in the KRI.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the research framework and process carried out to conduct this analysis. It addressed the case study research, applied here, and all arguments around its values and its weaknesses as a method of inquiry. Despite its limitations, this analysis employs case study approach to offer an original research on political corruption in the KRI. It also presented elite interview as a tool of conducting case study and some form of document analysis of official documents I obtained from the interviewees or from media outlets. This researcher chose elites from relevant sectors including PRs, MPs, ULs, and journalists, GOs, CSAs and PB to provide their understanding of the cases at hand. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather the data. The first section also presented sampling and data collection and analysis procedures. The raw data was originally in the Kurdish language, which made the data analysis process a somewhat harder and time-consuming. Most of the interviews were recorded, and the audio files were then transcribed into text files. The texts were categorised in applicable patterns, and themes were applied to make the insight useable and relevant to the cases. The data

gathered for this analysis via elite interview provides deep insights into zones which facilitate the emergence of political corruption.

The second section is associated with selecting cases for this analysis. It presented three zones amongst those which are vulnerable to corruption in conflict-prone societies. The particularistic procedure to allocate public services, the media position in society and party funding are the three zones that this chapter has considered in order to frame the subcases presented in the empirical chapters, chapters 5, 6 and 7.

Chapter 4: Introducing the KRI

Introduction

This chapter is imperative to this thesis as it provides readers with a logical timeline with regards to the KRI, particularly on the turning points that are linked to corruption in terms of widening opportunities and/or initiatives introduced to tackle corruption. This chapter does not intend to cover the whole history of the KRI, it instead sheds light on the critical events that appear to help readers to better apprehend empirical cases. This analysis intends to examine the KRI as a conflict-prone or conflict-affected society, as a proper post-conflict situation has not yet started. At the regional, national and local levels, the KRI has been stuck in a series of conflicts¹⁴ which placed their influence on almost everything in the region. This chapter starts by providing an introduction to the events that followed the uprising of the KRI people in 1991 against the former regime of Iraq. In this phase, a first step toward building a nation-state was taken when the first general election took place in 1992, and which resulted in the establishment of the first KRG cabinet. However, the conflict resumed when rival parties went back to their traditional disagreements, which resulted in a four-year civil war and the polarisation of the KRI public institutions. The second phase began following the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003. Although there were still tensions among rival parties, after 2003 a form of post-conflict state building process started that brought a great deal of changes to the KRI. This section presents events that have placed dual influences on the KRI. On the one hand, the regime change in Iraq assisted the KRI politically and financially to develop its institutions. On other hand, it widened opportunities for corruption while public institutions were weak and could not protect themselves from the dominance and interventions of the ruling parties and elites.

I also highlight some of the obstacles that the local observers perceived as they have hindered reform attempts and allowed corrupt figures to continue in abusing public offices and wealth. The final section is an introduction to the current political landscape

¹⁴ As a reminder for the readers, there were a series of wars and conflicts that affected Kurdistan. The Iraq-Iran war (1980-1988) as a regional war affected Kurdistan in several ways (see Van Bruinessen, 1986). The conflicts with successive Iraqi regimes since the establishment of Iraq and intra-conflicts among political parties and factions locked this society in a cycle of conflicts (see Stansfield, 2003; Anderson and Stansfield, 2004; Natali, 2007; Natali, 2010).

south (Shia majority populated cities) of Iraq to rise up against the regime of Baghdad and to change the local political equilibrium (Goldstein, 1992, p. 169; McDowall 2004, p. 371; Jabar 1992). People of Kurdistan liberated most of the Kurdish populated areas within less than a month (Galbraith, 2003, p. 4; McDowall, 2004, p. 371). The liberation did not last long as the Iraqi government managed to brutally quell rebellions of the southern cities as well as the KRI cities of the north. Consequently, more than one million civilians of different cities and towns of Kurdistan fled to the Turkish and Iranian borders by the end of March 1991 (Etheredge, 2011, p. 169). The severe weather conditions at the time and a lack of adequate food, water and shelter caused a great deal of humanitarian catastrophe to refugees which resulted in the death of tens of thousands of civilians (McDowall, 2004, p. 373). To ease the situation and stop the advancement of the Iraqi government, which may have caused a further humanitarian crisis, France, Turkey and Iran sent letters to the UNSC requesting immediate intervention. The UNSC, in response to the request of the aforementioned states, passed resolution No. 688 in April 1991 condemning ‘the repression of the Iraqi civilian population in many parts of Iraq, including most recently in Kurdish-populated areas...’ and demanding the Iraqi government to ‘...immediately end this repression’ (UN, 1991). This resolution served the people of the KRI in a number of ways. The UN, accordingly, set up a ‘no fly zone’ for people to stay safe away from the Iraqi airpower (Gunter, 2004, p. 202). This eventually resulted in the birth of the KRI institutions, as a political entity.

The only institution that people and politicians of the KRI had at the time was the Iraqi Kurdistan Front (IKF)¹⁵. The IKF took on the responsibilities of the new situation and decided to hold elections to establish national institutions, and to fill the legal and administrative vacuums that the withdrawal of Iraqi executive bodies caused to the liberated areas (see Stansfield, 2004, pp. 124-126). People cast their ballots to elect 105 members of the Kurdistan National Assembly (KNA), which later on has become the Kurdistan Parliament, and to elect the Leader of the Kurdistan Liberation Movement, for the first time, on 19 May 1992 (Stansfield, 2004, pp. 124-128). The election held like a national carnival showing unprecedented enthusiasm of Kurdish people for self-governance. The turnout was about 90% of eligible voters and the process was seen to be

¹⁵ The IKF was established in 1988, as a party umbrella consisting of eight key political parties aimed to ‘coordinate opposition activities against government of Iraq’ (Stansfield, 2004, p. 92). After 1991 uprising, it enacted law Nos. 1 and 2 of 1992 to elect 105 members for the newly established KNA for the KRI and a Leader (see Stansfield, 2004, p. 124).

‘one of the most democratic to be held in the Middle East’ (Stansfield, 2004, p. 129). The results of the general elections turned out mainly in favour of the KDP¹⁶. Regarding the election of the Leadership of the Kurdistan Liberation Movement, none of the candidates could reach 50+1 of the votes to win the seat of the leader (Gunter, 1993, p. 299). It is worth mentioning that the KDP and PUK had already undergone historical disagreements and had been in several rounds of internal conflict in the 1970s and 1980s (Stansfield, 2004, pp. 88-92; Harris, 2014). It was unfortunate for the people and the newly emerging KRI entity that both rivals could not manage to reconcile in that critical moment of the history of the KRI.

The results of the first general elections of 1992 were announced, and the rivals, particularly the PUK, refused to accept them. To avoid another round of civil war, both parties came to an agreement to run the region on the basis of a new formula called 50-50, which accordingly each party gained 50 seats of the KNA and the 5 remaining seats were allocated to Christian representatives, and established the first KRG cabinet on the same equal basis (see Stansfield, 2004, p. 126; Gunter, 1993, p. 299). This formula enabled both parties to divide high positions of ministries and almost every single public position down the ministerial level between themselves; even ‘hospitals, police departments and checkpoints’ were divided between both parties (Natali, 2010, p. 33). This was the first step to politicise newly formulated government institutions. From this cabinet on, both parties started applying patronage policy to appoint public officials on a wider scale.

Nawsherwan Mustafa (2009b) suggested that this formula was in a way abnormal, it looked like two governments operating inside an administrative body:

Both parties divided the ministries equally between themselves and gave other parties some ministries to silence them. The Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister, ministers and deputy ministers had similar administrative, legal and financial powers. In reality, there were two Prime Ministers for the KRG and two ministers for each ministry.

This formula did not work well and was unable to run the region efficiently, as it eventually resulted in the outbreak of a four-year civil war (1994-1998) between both

¹⁶ The results forwarded differently by both dominant parties, the KDP claims that they gained 50.88% of the votes, and the PUK 49.18% while the PUK forwarded a slightly different results claiming that they gained 49.73% and the KDP 50.27% (Stansfield, 2004, p. 202).

aforementioned parties. While this model of governance was a form of power-sharing government, the mistrust between two key parties and their rival background did not help it to continue.

As both parties had their own military forces¹⁷, in May 1994, a clash between their forces broke out (Katzman, 2008, p. 2). As the situation was highly volatile, the fight swiftly spread to almost every city. Meanwhile, several local and foreign actors made fruitless attempts to ease the tensions and reach a ceasefire between both rivals (see Osman, 2001a). When regional powers like Iran engaged in the fight to back the PUK, the situation was exacerbated. This gave a justification to the KDP to claim support from the Iraqi government on 31 August 1996 to retake Erbil, captured by the PUK in 1995, and force militants of the PUK to leave the city (Katzman, 2008; McDowall, 2004). The fragile Kurdistan institutions started to divide into two forms of partisan administrations¹⁸ in the aftermath of this war (Ala'Aldeen, 2013, pp. 71-103; Ameen, 2009b).

This analysis stresses that during this period of polarization, both parties have widened the scale of politicization of the public institutions by providing public jobs and positions exclusively to their members by building two highly politicized administrative bodies and two separate financial statuses (Al-Zaidy and Sadiq, 2012, p. 8). Nevertheless, this enabled the rivals to build a form of institutions to run their areas. Stansfield (2004, p. 145) argued that this period was a starting point of building 'a system of government which was able to operate more effectively, if not more efficiently, than the previous 50:50 government'. While both parties established their own partisan government, a tentative process of establishing monitoring institutions commenced. The SAO¹⁹ in the former Green Zone is an example of the existence of commitment among the elites of the KRI to work for integrity. Nevertheless, the core problem of the anti-corruption efforts of the KRI has always been associated with the implementation of laws, regulations, and

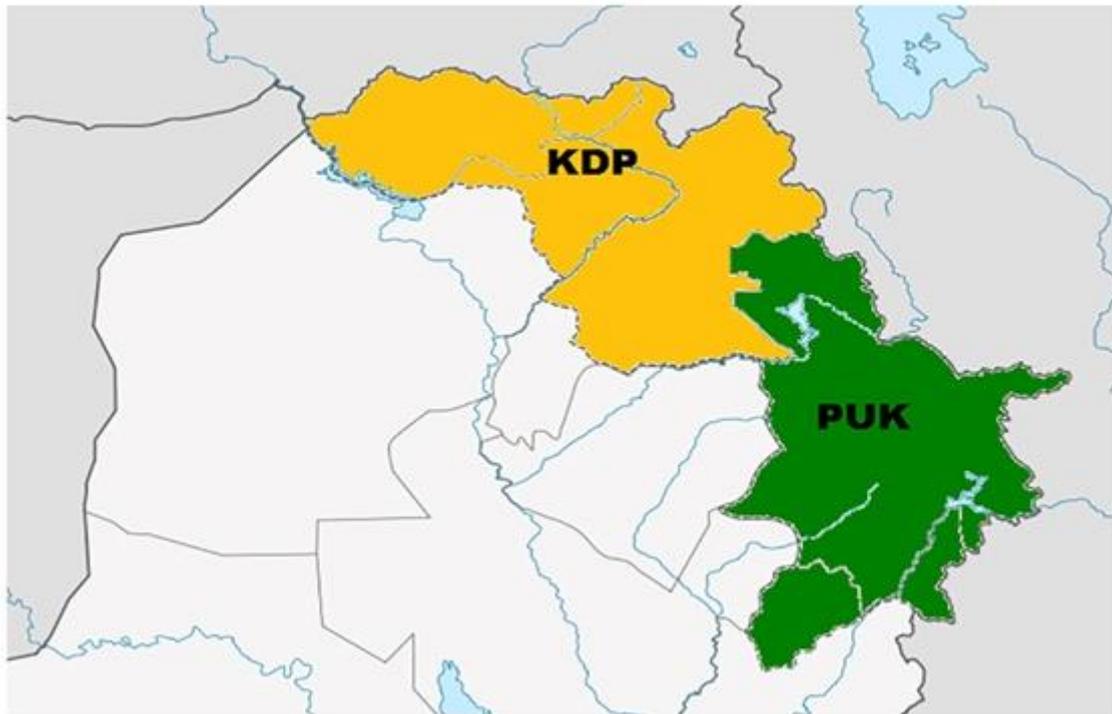
¹⁷ The Kurdish military forces called Peshmerga. This term literally means those who face death or 'those who do not fear death' (Knights, 2014). Although more than 20 years have passed since the 1991 uprising, the process of institutionalising and unifying Peshmerga as a national army has been slow and uncompleted yet. Both parties still have control over most of the Peshmerga fighters (Knights, 2014).

¹⁸ The first partisan administration was based in Erbil covered Dohuk province and most of the northern part of the KRI, led by the KDP and informally called Yellow Zone (YZ) referring to the KDP yellow flag; and the second administration was headquartered in Sulaymaniah province covered most of the southern part of the KRI led by the PUK and informally named Green zone (GZ) referring to the PUK flag (see Figure 4.2, p. 81). Each administration had 'its own government' and 'claiming to represent the Kurdish people' (Stansfield, 2003, p. 133).

¹⁹ This Office was established in 1997, managed to monitor public institutions effectively, and could prepare around 2500 reports from 2004 to 2008 on different forms of mismanagement and corruption of the PUK government (Abdulrahman, 2009).

promises. The SAO submitted its reports to the PUK government, and after 2005 to the KP. However, it seemed that the competent authorities ignored most of the reports (Mahmud, 2013; SpeeNews, 2013). This analysis argues that, similar to other cases of conflict-affected societies, the KRI institutions have been incapable of prosecuting any of the key leaders of the ruling parties and implementing laws on them, despite there being numerous reports and documentation on their illegal activities regarding the abuse of their positions in order to exploit public institutions and money. Of course, many former fighters and key leaders have enjoyed informal impunity if one considers their background. This has made public institutions inefficient and dysfunctional, despite their duties. This helps readers to understand why thousands of reports made by the SAO have been effectively ignored.

Figure 4.2: A map of the former KDP and PUK zones



Source: The Kurdish Project

To normalize the KRI situation after several years of wars and administrative divisions, a series of peace talks inside and outside the KRI took place, and the rivals eventually reached the peace accord in 1998 under the supervision of the USA named the Washington Agreement (Osman, 2001b; Katzman, 2008). The process of the reintegration of the KRG administrations into one unified cabinet was one of the essential points of this accord. The normal session of the KNA resumed on 5 October 2002 as a first significant step toward a normalization process (Katzman, 2008, p. 2). The 2003 US-led coalition war of Iraq, which toppled the regime of Saddam Hussein, coincided with the commencement of the normalization process of the two KRG administrations (Anderson and Stansfield, 2004, p. 101). This new political landscape of Iraq has exercised a great influence over the political and legal statuses of the KRI, as it granted the KRI a constitutionally recognized political entity inside Iraq.

2. Gaining constitutional status, and widening scales of corruption

The regime change of Iraq in 2003 opened the door to a new political experience in the whole country. Regarding the KRI, it has brought a new phase of governance in terms of new political, legal and economic opportunities to build on what has already been achieved since 1991. In 2004, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA)²⁰ passed the Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the transitional period²¹ (Dobbins, 2009). This law recognised the KRI as a federal region of Iraq by legalising all of its institutions built and regulations passed since 1992 (UNHCR, 2004). This has transformed the de facto status of the KRI to a legally recognised entity, which brought a new political status, and offered an additional source of income to the KRI. In this period, the CPA poured a sum of approximately US \$595 million into the KRI, allocated to reconstruction projects and capability building programs for public servants and civil society organizations (RRT, 2009). This analysis argues that this amount played a critical role in widening the corruption opportunities in the KRI, as monitoring institutions were absent to check how the KDP and PUK administrations were spending it. The allocation of such an amount of money was suspiciously viewed as it was reported that ‘in a region where corruption is endemic, the unpublicized delivery of such a large amount of cash might seem an invitation to embezzlement’ (Paddock and Miller, 2005).

The permanent Iraqi constitution²² was written and ratified in 2005. It legalised and maintained the existence of the KRI as a region, recognising its laws, regulations and institutions, and organising the relationship between the federal authorities in Baghdad and regional and local governments (Katzman, 2008, p. 3; Jawad, 2013, pp. 10-18). This transformation offers the elites of the KRI a new opportunity to participate effectively in the process of running Iraqi national institutions, and to better govern the KRI. Economically, this new phase provides the KRI with a new critical source of income, as a 17% share of the Iraqi national budget has been allocated to the KRI. This has helped the KRG to make a wide range of career opportunities at the public sector, and to establish a great deal of construction projects. On the other hand, it has also created opportunities

²⁰ The CPA was a USA body created to run Iraq after the invasion in 2003 and to help Iraqis to rebuild their country and establish a new democratic political system (see Dobbins, 2009)

²¹ It is also called the transitional administrative law (TAL). It was the first provisional constitution written in 2004 after the sovereignty of Iraq was transformed from the CPA to the newly established interim government. It guided and reorganised new political atmosphere in Iraq after 2003 toward the establishment of a new permanent constitution. To access to the document, (see UNHCR, 2004).

²² See the text of the constitution in (Iraqi General Director for Nationality, 2005).

for political corruption, as public institutions have been dysfunctional enough to be exploited by the ruling parties, so that they could direct a considerable amount of the KRI share to serve their political interests. These issues are the core content of empirical analysis presented in chapters 5, 6 and 7.

This new era pushed forward the peace process between the KDP and PUK. Leaders of both parties, Jalal Talabani (PUK) and Masoud Barzani (KDP), met to sign an agreement which would form an outline for a new phase of the KRI. According to the agreement signed on the 1st December 2004, both parties jointly decided that as allies they would participate in the upcoming Iraqi and Kurdistan elections. Key positions of the KRI and the Kurdish share of Iraqi governments were accordingly distributed, as follows:

Both parties shall support the head of the KDP Masoud Barzani to stand as a candidate of both parties in the KRI presidency election, and a key Kurdish share of the Iraqi sovereign positions (be the President or the Prime Minister of Iraq) shall be given to the PUK Secretary-General Jalal Talabani. The KP speaker shall be chosen from the PUK and the KRG Prime Minister from the KDP (Ameen, 2013, pp. 3-4).

Based on this arrangement, both parties with a group of minor parties ran on a joint ticket called Democratic National List to the second KRI parliamentary elections, which took place on 30th January 2005, and their block won 104 seats out of 111 seats of the KP (Kurdistan Parliament, 2014a). It took the KRI one year to establish a new cabinet owing to a list of pending issues regarding the law of the KRI presidency and shares of each of the KDP and PUK in the new upcoming united cabinet (Ameen, 2013, pp. 9-18). This agreement played a great role in starting the processes of unification of the KRG administrations, but it has also negatively widened opportunities for political corruption by preventing any effective political opposition as well as sharing power and wealth between both parties, which enabled them to exploit the public bodies and institutions in a broader scale.

After a series of meetings, both parties reached an agreement and brought it in to the KP to be approved by the MPs. In a meeting held on 21st January 2006, the KP ratified the agreement and leaders of both parties, Talabani and Barzani, put their signatures on it to reunify the divided KRG administrations (Kurdistan Parliament, 2006). According to this new agreement, the leadership of the KRI shall be equally run by both parties in a new form of 50-50 formula with a slight difference compared to the 1992 system. The fifth

KRG cabinet was established from unifying the partisan administrations, and the KRI President was given to the leader of the KDP with a wide range of executive power while the PUK gained the position of Iraqi President to its Secretary-General, Talabani. In the first phase of this process, some key institutions remained divided because both parties suggested that these are critical areas and require better preparation. The agreement stated that ‘ministries of the Finance, Peshmerga (Defence), Justices and Home shall be unified within less than a year. Until it happens, each of these ministries shall have a minister and a regional minister for the relatable affairs, and that is to run the issues of divided ministries in their former zones’ (Kurdistan Parliament, 2006). For this reason, this cabinet had 42 ministers.

The KDP-PUK new agreement drew a roadmap to unify the remaining areas. A high commission under a supervision of the Kurdistan regional presidency was established to institutionalise and unify the security forces and the police of the KRI. The commission was tasked to nationalise institutions within two years and prevent further partisan intervention in them (Kurdistan Parliament, 2006). While this process started in 2005 and ministries unified, the KRI army, police and security forces still have not been properly unified and institutionalised. Very recently, Mala Bakhtyar a high-ranking leader of the PUK addressed these issues and presented a list of the KRI’s major problems stating ‘we have not unified Peshmerga yet, and it is not the only issue. What is about the Home Ministry, the Finance Ministry, and what is about the Security Agencies, and the KDP and PUK’s dominance over governorates, provinces and local authorities?’ (Mala Baxtyar, 2015).

The first unified cabinet, called the fifth cabinet, was set up in 2006 and almost all victorious blocks and parties became part of it. Critics address that neither of the key ruling parties accepted to become opposition due to a list of issues. For instance, there was a lack of trust between them, and they have controlled the KRI security forces, the armed forces, the budgetary, and the administrative bodies. To keep this equilibrium, they decided to jointly run the KRI (Al-Zaidy and Sadiq, 2012, p. 12). It is also pointed out that other parties felt almost obliged to participate in this cabinet as it seemed that both dominant parties did not accept any party to oppose them:

In this period, the political freedom and political contestation outside the circle of both parties were unobtainable. For instance, when the KIU decided to take part in the 2005 Iraqi general election with a separate

list from a coalition block of other Kurdistan parties, a group of the KDP followers attacked their offices in Duhok city on 15th December 2005 which resulted in murdering three high-profile members of this party and burning their offices (Al-Zaidy and Sadiq, 2012, p. 13).

This incidence shows that despite the number of political parties registered and having their own offices, the KDP and PUK have been dominating the KRI political landscape, and their domination has placed marked influence over the ways other parties function.

This newly established coalition government received better support when both ruling parties signed another agreement called the strategic agreement of the KDP-PUK in July 2007. This agreement has been very controversial. On the one hand, both sides of the agreement perceive it as a vital step was taken at the time to bring an end to the civil war and cure its consequences. That is by working for unifying previous partisan administrations as well as bringing about a form of reconciliation among members and followers of the rivals (Fayaq, 2013). Nevertheless, both parties do not deny that they have not been able to unify some key sectors so far (Mala Baxtyar, 2015). On the other hand, critics argue that this agreement has enabled both parties to exclusively share the power and wealth of the KRI among themselves and turn a blind eye to a great deal of corruption that has been occurring in different fields by their officials.

As the region has not had its own constitution yet, both parties are accused of imposing this agreement over political landscape of the KRI as a 'de facto constitution' (Fatah, 2012). Further, the strategic agreement is also viewed as a tool in the possessions of both parties to retain their political hegemony over the KRI, 'this agreement is a marriage of convenience to share the oil income and wealth of Kurdistan between themselves and their families and cronies' (Abdulla, 2012). It is also seen as 'a source of monopoly of power and wealth of the KRI' (Abbas, 2014), and that is in order to 'tolerate corruption and expand and serve party interest' (KNNC, 2014a). This agreement is also seen as an obstacle ahead of a peaceful circulation of power among political parties (Mala Farman, 2014). Critics point out that this agreement has been used to abuse the public wealth and direct it to the political interests of ruling parties 'this agreement allows both parties to extract a huge amount of money from the public wealth to their parties. The case of extracting US \$35 million monthly from the KRI budget for each party was agreed on in the aftermath of this agreement' (Abbas, 2014). Sung (2002, p. 147) called this form of

agreement between ruling parties as ‘stable coalition’, which is seen as an incentive to corruption. The question that needs to be raised here is how did both parties manage to use their strategic agreement to widen their dominance over the KRI?

These series of agreements prevented any form of effective oppositional voices for several years. The vast majority of the seats of the KP were reserved by the dominant coalition block that includes both parties and other minor parties. This constrained the KP to perform its monitoring role in terms of questioning the KRG officials, and discussing and ratifying the annual KRI budget (Ameen, 2009b). It has also silenced a few existing checks and balances institutions, which were to different degrees operating to monitor public institutions. For instance, Jalal Sam Akha, a resigned Director of the SAO accused the ruling parties of deactivating the office after the strategic agreement was signed, ‘when both parties reunified their partisan administrations, they did reunify Erbil Auditory Office and the SAO as well. The new Chair of the Auditory did a very good job for them by deactivating the SAO similar to the one in Erbil’ (SpeeNews, 2013, p. 13).

When any challenging opposition or monitoring institutions were absent, both parties managed to allocate public services and wealth exclusively to their members. Most of the exceptional rewards provided to party followers and presented in chapter 5 are believed to have been mostly given within these years. In addition, the KRG has deliberately started to provide public money to establish and fund a large number of partisan and semi-partisan media stations belonging to both incumbent parties (see chapter 6). Also, both parties managed to have almost uncontrolled and unmonitored access to the public wealth. This allowed them to selectively fund political parties to strengthen their dominance over society, by rewarding those parties that support their dominance and punishing any parties that opposed their policies (details in chapter 7).

The favouritism policy that applied in this period was in a way obvious. People took to the streets several times to protest against ‘injustice and wasting public wealth’, and to ask the KRG to provide basic services including water and electricity to people (Ali et al., 2006, pp. 9-10). In this period, the KRI faced a series of public demonstrations including protests of the cities of Kalar in September 2005, Akre in October 2005, and Halabja in March 2006, which took place almost for the same reasons raising their voices for better basic public services. A Kalar protestor stated that ‘there was a widespread public outrage against our political system. In particular, people are furious that the KRG

is captured by political parties. The latter controls everything and places their dominance over governmental affairs... people have a right to protest against corruption and shortcomings' (Ali et al., 2006, p. 23). This implies that while at first glance the protestors claimed basic services, they held essential political messages campaigning against corruption and mismanagement of power and wealth of the KRI.

This outrage was not just sparked among the public, but also spread to people among the parties. In 2006, a group of veteran PUK high-profile leaders called themselves the reform wing of the PUK including the then Deputy Secretary-General of the PUK Nawsherwan Mustafa and some members of the PUK Politburo and the PUK presidential council resigned from their party to establish a media company called 'Wisha Media Corporate' led by Nawsherwan Mustafa (Al-Zaidy and Sadiq, 2012, pp. 18-19). This group has started campaigning against corruption by targeting the legacy of both incumbent parties (Kutschera, 2008, pp. 12-13). Their campaign took place through their media channels including Sbeiy website, Rozhnama Newspaper, and the KNN television station in the first place, then they established a new political party called the Change Movement to take part in the 2009 general elections (Al-Zaidy and Sadiq, 2012, pp.18-19). These were in addition to a few initiatives designed to address corruption introduced by key leaders and minor parties.

For instance, in late 2008, the Secretary-General of the PUK, Jalal Talabani, initiated a reform package entitled 'Organising the relationship between the KRG and political parties, the PUK in particular' (Kurdistani New, 2008). The aim was to reorganise the relationship between national institutions and political parties. Talabani urged political parties to stop interfering in governmental affairs and allow national institutions to perform their duties impartially:

Members and cadres of political parties must not directly interfere in governmental affairs...organs of the PUK in major cities and districts must not impose their demands over public officials through threatening them...they must not intervene in business sector, governmental projects and market...they must not impose favouritism over public institutions. The organs and the PUK cadres must not put themselves in places of public officials. Members of the PUK in the public bodies must not allow partisan interventions from party organs. Organs of parties must not intervene in academic affairs and universities. Officials of the universities and academic institutions must be appointed on professional bases not partisan affiliations. The

independence of the judiciary must be respected and members of the parties must not be allowed to intervene in daily issues of the courts. Judges and judicial investigators must be appointed on the professional bases not partisan measurements (Kurdistani New, 2008).

While Talabani's initiative did not provide any applicable mechanisms and workable road maps to prevent political parties from interfering in governmental affairs in the first place, it did widely attract the attention of observers. Analysing the context of this initiative, it can be concluded that how wide and serious the political control of parties had been over governmental institutions at the time. In this respect, at first glance, this initiative must be counted as a form of confession made by a high-profile leader like Talabani, who admitted that there were serious problems in the KRI that would require immediate solution. In particular, it was the first time that a prominent leader of either dominant party was shedding light on the sensitive internal affairs of the KRI in such a candid way.

This initiative attracted a wide range of attention in the KRI. Some observers perceived it as a painkiller used to appease anti-corruption activists and to procrastinate in finding solutions for the structural problems of the KRI until a longer possible time, 'this is not a project, but it rather looks like some advice that a father offers to his children. Talabani seeks to achieve several goals through this initiative, including reorganising his party and giving some new hopes to people of the KRI who are disappointed in their government' (Sbeiy, 2009a). While people did not put too much hope on this initiative in the first place, Kurdish academicians like Latif Mustafa offered a great deal of guidelines that could help Talabani to implement his initiative (see Mustafa, 2009). As it was predicted by critics, the initiative was not successful and was not implemented for several reasons. Najmaddin Karim a PUK politburo member suggested that this initiative failed 'because it would hurt interests of many politicians and powerful figures' (Saddulla, 2011). This analysis suggests that protecting powerful corrupt figures has been problematic for other reform initiatives as well.

This initiative failed to stop ruling parties from providing favours to their followers and treating people on a political basis. The intervention of the ruling parties in the government affairs continued and the implications of this phenomenon expanded to different sectors. It is suggested that as the ruling parties carried on favouring their members at the expense of the public, they widened the scale of the economic inequality

among people and increased levels of social injustice. The consequences of these preferential treatment were in a way obvious, people could notice it effortlessly:

When ordinary people could not afford to buy basic commodities, politicians and people around them were sharply getting richer. Ruling parties, their leaders and companies kept interfering in economy and market, this declined the quality of basic public services including drinking water, electricity, health service, and roads. People were fed up and resorted to raise their voices via demonstrations, criticising government through media and finally voting for opposition parties at the 2009 election (Al-Zaidy and Sadiq, 2012, p. 27).

Given this situation, four parties²³ announced a report in January 2009 claiming that the KRI institutions needed a comprehensive reform (Four Parties, 2009). This report contains several points concerning mitigating the hegemony of the KDP and PUK over judiciary, legislative and executive branches as well as presenting proposals to empower watchdogs via the establishment of an independent integrity office and strengthening other checks and balances bodies such as the Public Prosecutor and the Auditor (Four Parties, 2009). Both dominant parties were furiously irritated by this report, yet they did not pay any formal attention to it. An interesting point about the position of the four aforementioned parties is that they were parts of the coalition government. The question is how did they come to request reform from a government which they are already a part of? Also, why in lieu of complaining and publishing reports, they did not start carrying out reform in their coalition government in the first place?

Answering these questions requires recalling the conditions of robust and institutionalised political competition presented by Conor O'Dwyer (2004, p. 521). To discuss this issue, it is vital to address how the state of party participation in the political system of the KRI has been. How much power aforementioned parties had when they were parts of the coalition KRG cabinets before 2009? This could potentially be examined in further avenues of research; therefore, it is difficult to provide an adequate answer to it in this thesis. However, local observers have doubts with regard to any effective participation that parties outside the KDP and PUK might have had in the former KRG cabinets. Despite the fact that act No. 17 of 1993 of political parties permitted political pluralism,

²³ The parties were the KIU, KIG, Kurdistan Social Democratic Party (KSDP), and Kurdistan Toilers Party (KTP) and their report 2009 entitled 'a report of the four political parties to the Kurdistan public opinion'(Four Parties 2009).

and accordingly the KRG Home Ministry registered around 37 political parties by 2013 (see appendix B. 5, p. 232), commentators stress that in fact there has been very limited opportunities for other parties to properly exercise politics.

Adnan Osman (2009), a former Change MP stated that ‘there was a great deal of power concentration in the KRI. Both dominant parties have been exercising political pressure and sometimes economic embargo over other parties in order to retain political dominance and preserve the status quo’. Osman (2009) suggested that ‘both dominant parties have been reserving all key positions for themselves and rarely allow other parties to exercise an appropriate engagement in the decision-making process of the KRI’. Osman (2009) pointed out how key decisions are made in the KRI, ‘most of important decisions of the KRI have been discussed and drafted among Talabani and Barzani first, and then the politburos of the KDP and PUK uphold them prior to becoming a law or a regulation by the KP and KRG’. This circumstance is seen as a consequence of the power struggle in the KRI since 1991, or even before. Observers note that in the wake of civil war and administration polarisation, almost all political parties had to choose to back either political blocks led by the KDP and PUK over the past twenty years, which has affected their political stance (Al-Zaidy and Sadiq, 2012, pp. 10-11). Under these circumstances, people accuse other parties of ‘remaining silent while the region has been going through serious problems that required speaking up for reform’ (Sbeiy, 2009b).

Building on these discussions, it could be suggested that while former KRG cabinets were the coalition of a list of parties before 2009, other parties apart from the KDP and PUK were side-lined. As the KRI went through civil war and administrative division, the KP was almost dysfunctional. The KP has resumed its normal meetings since 2002 and the second general election to elect a new round of MPs held in 2005. However, the agreement of both parties and their joint participation in the 2005 elections did not allow the KRI political system to spawn political opposition inside the KP (Al-Zaidy and Sadiq, 2012, p. 13). Prior to the 2009 general elections, Nawsherwan Mustafa and his colleagues at Wisha started campaigning for a new political platform (Al-Zaidy and Sadiq, 2012, p. 20). Nawsherwan mobilised people, or like some people of the KRI say he used already mobilised people, for political change under a new political platform called ‘Listy Gorran- the Change block’ (Sbeiy, 2009c). This new block claimed prioritising reform to the KRI political system and administration, and made an anti-corruption slogan as one the main themes of its electoral campaign (Sbeiy, 2009c). Nawsherwan highlighted that

he and his fellows are keen ‘to mitigate the hegemony of political parties over national institutions, and that they fight for the rule of law and institutionalisation of the KRI’ (Aziz, 2009). The block started campaigning for building an effective Kurdistan parliament which can exceed the hegemony of the KDP and PUK politburos. It also campaigned for a sustainable and independent judiciary branch, and preventing the ruling parties from intervening further in academia and economy, and the separation of political parties and government, and creating greater transparency in the KRG budget (Zawiti, 2009). These themes and goals, in their detailed and attractively persuasive nature, drew the attention of a considerable number of people in the KRI.

Table 4.1: Seats of the five main parties in the third term of the KP (2009-2013)

Party Names	KDP (seats in a coalition list)	PUK (seats in a coalition list)	The Change	KIU (seats in a coalition list)	KIG (seats in a coalition list)
Seats in the KP	29	28	25	6	4

Source: (Kurdistan Parliament, 2009)

The parliamentary and presidential elections took place on 25th July 2009, and the results have fundamentally changed the political map of the KRI (see Table 4.1, p. 90), as the Change and two Islamic parties, the KIU and the KIG, won a considerable number of seats forming three opposition blocks in the KP for the first time (Kurdistan Parliament, 2009). A Kurdish Intellectual Burhan Yassin named the results of this election as a ‘political earthquake’ (Yassin, 2009). I would argue that although the results of the 2009 general election redesigned the parliamentary seats and enabled other parties to have stronger positions than they had before to challenge the dual political monopolisations of the KDP and PUK, they could not unseat both parties as they could easily establish another coalition government as they still had a simple majority to pass their cabinet in the KP. The Kurdistan List, which represented a coalition block of two main parties, the KDP and PUK, managed to set up another coalition government with the participation of

a few minor parties. According to their 2007 strategic agreement, this government ran jointly, and accordingly the PUK nominee Dr Barham Saleh served as the KRG PM for the first half term (2009-2012), and the KDP nominee Nechervan Barzani led the second half (2012-2014) (Ala'Aldeen, 2013, pp. 71-103; Ameen, 2009b).

Nevertheless, the opposition blocks could challenge the KDP-PUK coalition government to take some first-time steps toward a new form of governance, for instance by bringing in the annual budget to discussion in the KP. Nawsherwan Mustafa addressed that their party as one of the opposition parties presented the following policies to institutionalise the KRI bodies and limit corruption opportunities:

Our platform presents an alternative in regard to how the KRI must be run, how we must fight economic, administrative, political and moral forms of corruption, lay the foundations of social justice in the KRI, maintain transparency in the KRI budget, limit the partisan intervention in daily routine of the public offices, in market, universities, courts and mosques, and how to change security forces and army from being partisan units to become professional units and part of governmental institutions that are not interfering in elections and political conflicts (Shexani, 2010).

Further, the opposition blocks began discussing cases of corruption of the public officials and bodies inside the KP and through their media outlets to raise public awareness and encourage people to speak up against corrupt settings. Their campaign was unprecedentedly intensive targeting the legacy of both parties. They exposed hundreds of scandals, corrupt and politicised deals of the ruling parties. Their campaign is believed to have provoked widespread outrage among the public particularly when the majority of people had already seen corruption as a serious obstacle ahead of their region²⁴. However, their campaigns were unable to make noticeable changes, as both ruling parties managed to use their simple majority of the KP seats as a legitimate ground to pass several fundamental laws without any collaborations with opposition blocks, such as the protest law No. 11 of 2010 (Al-Zaidy and Sadiq, 2012, p. 29). The KRG appeared to be less responsive in a very critical time while people of some Arabic countries including Tunisia

²⁴ In 2010, the US International Republican Institute (IRI) published results of a survey conducted in the KRI. One of the questions was 'do you think that corruption is a serious problem in the Kurdistan region?' 80% in Dohuk and 88% in Erbil and Sulaymaniah cities answered yes (see IRI, 2010).

and Egypt were taking to streets harshly protesting against their regimes and claiming freedom, comprehensive reform and change.

The Change Movement in the KRI, meanwhile, after they found themselves unable to beat the ruling parties through the KP, issued a seven-point statement on 29th January 2011 welcoming the waves of change in the Arab countries and ‘eagerly anticipating the positive development as they unfold’ on the one hand, showed their disappointment about ‘the apathy and indifference of the current authorities of Kurdistan toward the demand of the people’ on the other (Kurdish Media, 2011). This statement, which is perceived as an ‘adventurous attempt to propose a radical solution to endemic problems of the KRI’ (Kanie, 2011), consisted of 7 key points essentially calling for dismantling the KRG cabinet and the KP, and establishing a caretaker government to prepare an early general election. The statement also demanded the immediate end to the intervention of the KDP & PUK, their intelligence agencies, and security and armed forces in governmental affairs and political activity (Kurdish Media, 2011). This statement shook the political landscape in the KRI and irritated the ruling parties.

The responses of the ruling parties and the KRI institutions to this statement were furious. The KRI presidency, in a quick statement, viewed the statement of the Change Movement as a ‘plot that aims to undermine our achievements’, and urged people of the KRI to take necessary precautions to protect themselves from it (KRP, 2011b). A day after, the KRI President Massoud Barzani held a meeting with 17 parties including two Islamic opposition parties, the KIU and KIG. In a statement following their meeting, indirectly refusing the radical solution forwarded by the Change Movement, they reiterated on needs for reform in light of political and legal legitimacy of the recent institutions that are the outcomes of elections and the will of the KRI voters (KRP, 2011f). However, the Change’s statement seemed to have stimulated appetite of the KRI people for reform and galvanised them, particularly in the Sulaymaniah province, to take to the streets and call for change and radical reforms.

The KRI leaders appeared to only mention the existence of corruption and avow it without showing any genuine commitment to crack down on it. This seemed to dissatisfy people particularly when very little convincing practical steps and actions followed their rhetoric about corruption. Under these circumstances, the public discontent with the performance of the KRG and the quality of the services that were provided was growing. People assumed that the KRG did not have intention to step up against corruption, ‘our politicians

have been admitting and addressing corruption for ages with doing very little in practice against it' (Salar, 2011). This feeling, inspired by the aforementioned Change's statement and continuous Arab upheaval, fomented people of the Sulaymaniyah city and surrounding towns to take to the streets in February 2011, for about 60 days, in the event now known as the 'Sulaymaniyah protests or Kurdish Spring' (Watts, 2012). The public gathering ended up protesting against corruption and the lack of services with reference to the KRG and the KDP-PUK's interventions in government matters (Sbeiy, 2013b).

Figure 4.3: A side of the public demonstration in Sulaymaniah, March 2011



Photo: Bestun Muhammad for www.sbeiy.com

The two-month-long demonstrations appeared to have put further pressure on the KRG and decision makers of the KRI at the time to step up and carry out some reforms (Abdulla, 2011). In particular, while opposition media stations became the mouthpiece of the protestors largely amplifying their daily activities and remarks. The Sbeiy online newspaper of the Change Movement highlighted the role of opposition media outlets, their party as an example, stating that 'while the Change Movement did not directly encourage people to take to the streets and protest, it dedicated its media channels to cover daily events of the demonstrations' (Sbeiy, 2014b). Until now, the Sbeiy website is a great

archive of the daily activities, photos, and remarks that were presented by the different groups and individuals in the 2011 protests.

The KRI national institutions stepped up to calm the protestors and convince them to go back home by making some promises as well as introducing some reform initiatives. The President of the KRI Masoud Barzani turned up to make some promises on 11th March 2011²⁵. Among a crowd of the supporters of the KDP and PUK in Erbil, Barzani promised the demonstrators of the Sulaymaniah province that he would introduce reforms to the region. Barzani said:

We have started a comprehensive reform process and you will notice the results within three to four coming months...we have discussed the shortcomings and corruption many times with the KRG. We are not running away from the responsibility. We are shouldering this responsibility (KRP, 2011e).

Less than two weeks after this, Barzani appeared on the Kurdish New Year event (Nawroz Celebration) to provide more details on his reform plan. In a televised statement, Barzani promised people to reform the KRI institutions, and highlighted the importance of the system of checks and balances for the public institutions. The President also reiterated that the KRG is implementing this package immediately and people will notice the results within three to four coming months:

... we are working for the establishment of the Council of Service to organize appointment of people to public jobs on equal and fair bases and to stop appointing people via *tazkia* (party support letters) ... the auditory must be activated to spot all types of violations. The COI must be established quickly. For this, I recommend the Kurdistan Parliament to enact the law of this Commission in order to be able to start working soon. The Public Prosecutor must be activated. Public projects must be announced and fairly given considering competition among people. In this regard, no one is allowed to use his position of power in order to extract public projects to people on the kinship or political basis... all political parties and media institutions must reveal their income sources. To organize and unify armed forces, we have been discussing this issue with the KRG Council of the Ministers and we hope we can

²⁵ 11 March is a special day in the Kurdish history. It is the remembrance of the national events of 11 March 1970 the announcement of the autonomy for Kurdistan by the Iraqi government, and 11th March 1991 the liberation day of Erbil during the 1991 uprising against the Iraqi regime.

get this duty done by the end of this year. We must have one government and one unified Kurdish army...(KRP, 2011d).

To implement this initiative, Barzani established a high-profile committee from judges and university lecturers from law, politics and economy directly linked to the office of the KRI presidency and some sub professional committees for the same purpose (KRP, 2011a). In June 2011, Barzani revealed the outcomes of the first phase of his reform. In a statement, Barzani referred to the new laws that passed in relation to unifying security forces and establishing the commission of Integrity, the importance of the rule of law and independent and effective judiciary, regulations to dismiss a couple of public officials and cabinet amendment. Barzani also urged scholars, civil society activists, and political parties to contribute to his attempts to plan a strategy for reform for the KRI (KRP, 2011c).

The high-profile committee was an ad hoc committee with advisory and investigative responsibilities while national institutions were not performing their duties properly. It had authority to investigate cases brought to it by the Presidency Office and consequently provide recommendations to the KRI President. In their first report published after 11 months of work, this committee highlighted their authority and the scope of power that they had to perform, 'we are an investigative and consultant committee not an executive body'. Their report also addressed that the KRI President established this high committee because of 'the gap that has been available while the monitoring institutions are dysfunctional' (KRP, 2012). The committee admitted that the system of checks and balances of the KRI had not been functioning, and this enabled corrupt leaders and office holders to abuse public offices and wealth.

The committee clearly suggested that corruption is rampant in most of the KRI institutions, and because it has favoured politicians and key office holders, the KRG officials have indifferently dealt with it and have made very little attempts to effectively tackle it, 'corruption in several administrative and economic fields has reached a level that annoyed everyone. Officials have been admitting it, but the practical steps that is required to combat it have not been efficient so far' (KRP, 2012). This report implies that practical steps to fight corruption in the KRI have been rare. Politicians have talked about corruption occasionally without taking efficient steps to eradicate it. The collective action theorists talk about such circumstance where corruption is almost everywhere and it is

expected behaviour. Besides, nobody seems to be doing anything effective to fight against it because people lost trust, and think their individual action does not make any change. From the other side, there is a lack of political will to make any noticeable change because the status quo serves their interests.

The report of the presidential high profile committee addressed a wide range of cases where corruption occurred and public money was badly wasted. In particular, they addressed bringing expired and low quality medicine in to the region, allocating public lands to projects and abusing it by business people, overstaffing the KRG institutions because of the absence of a proper administrative system and appointing too many people to the public sector. It also refers to the shortcomings of the system of checks and balances of the KRI as effective monitoring institutions, which were almost unavailable. It therefore provides a wide range of recommendations to set up new institutions and reactivate the existent ones (KRP, 2012).

A few months after Barzani's initiative, opposition parties proposed joint comprehensive reform packages to bring about changes in several sensitive and essential sectors of the KRI (see Sbeiy, 2011). Opposition parties presented a list of social, economic, political, and legal problems and called upon national institutions to tackle them properly. They adopted a few points from Barzani's reform initiative and the demands of Sualymaniah protestors. These packages provided reform guidelines about several essential institutions such as the KP, the judiciary system, and a few ministries including the Home Ministry, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Peshmerga, and the Ministry of Finance, the Police, and Security Forces. For each of these institutions, opposition parties suggested preventing ruling parties from intervention, institutionalising ministries, and appointing the right people to the right places. They also proposed essential amendments to the KRI constitutional draft and a few key laws such as the protest law, and the law of the KRI provinces. The packages provided suggestions on how to establish the COI, Commission of Elections and Referendum, and how to reactivate the existing institutions including the Public Prosecutor and the Auditory (Sbeiy, 2011).

Given these projects and reform initiatives, the KP became the institution that embraced several discussions and arguments about different topics and projects. Eventually, the KP passed some significant laws including law No. 3 of the 2011 of the COI (Kurdistan

Parliament, 2011), which, accordingly, the COI²⁶ was established. Also, the KRG took some noticeable steps to limit favouritisms, particularly in the sector of public appointment, by introducing a recruitment system, which people could apply for announced public job vacancies and gain a job according to their qualifications. This system was able, to a large extent, to freeze the use of party support letter as a de facto requirement to gain public jobs (see chapter 5). To consolidate this step of the KRG, the KP introduced law No. 7 of the 2011 establishment of the Council of Service (Kurdistan Parliament, 2011). However, despite the fact that the establishment of this Council was one of Barzani's promises, and after around five years of the introduction of its law, it has not been established yet. This Council could have helped the KRG to institutionalise the appointment process and develop the bureaucracy. The critical question that everyone must ask, after presenting these reform initiatives, is to what extent points of Barzani's initiative, recommendations of the presidential committee, and packages of opposition parties have been implemented? To answer this significant question, it is vital to address some factors that challenge reform attempts in the KRI.

3. Obstacles ahead of reform

Given the local discussions at the public and official levels on corruption and the weaknesses of the government institutions to prevent it, and in light of the arguments of post-conflict studies, corruption exists in a widespread level in the KRI. The domination of the ruling parties over public institutions makes the vicious circle of corruption continue, and it is also a main reason why practical action against corruption has been rare. How?

Firstly, local commentators suggest that the ruling parties have dominated political competition in the KRI. While political pluralism has been theoretically allowed in the KRI, and practically the KRG Home Ministry registered dozens of political parties, both ruling parties have in fact blocked any real political pluralism for several years that may lead to challenges against their dual monopoly. They have abused public position and wealth to secure the votes of people at election time, and they used everything available

²⁶ This commission has four main departments including 'the Bureau of the Chairman, Legal and Investigation Department, Financial and Administrative Department, and Prevention and Transparency Department' (see Despaky, 2014). The COI has started building its ability by recruiting staff and empowering them to start its critical tasks.

to rig the election and gain the majority to stay in power (Omar, 2016). Further, the ruling parties used force to settle political disagreement against any parties that might have acted as opposition to their policies. Setting fire to the offices of the KIU in Dohuk province in 2005 and 2011, and the offices of the Change Movement in 2011 in Erbil and Dohuk (see Wing, 2011; IWPR, 2009; The Kurdistan Tribune, 2011; EKurd Daily, 2011) could be seen as signs of attacking any party that could place a serious challenge to the way both governing parties run the region.

Secondly, the domination prevents public institutions from functioning impartially. It is evident that the ruling parties have abused public offices widely to favour their political interests (see chapters 5, 6 and 7). They prevented institutions of the law enforcement to function their tasks when it comes to prosecuting corrupt political figures despite the fact that there are cases of corruption against them (see KRP, 2012; Zulal, 2011). This has even undermined the initiatives of the leaders of both parties, Talabani and Barzani, and made people lose trust in any attempts that they claimed to have taken against corruption.

Considering the arguments of post-conflict studies, it does make sense that the political will to change the status quo and combat corruption has been absent. This is because shifting the current situation by improving public institutions to function impartially do not favour the ruling parties and elites. Therefore, they do not see any point in challenging themselves voluntarily to do so. Especially considering the fact that both ruling parties still have far stronger positions in the KRI compared to their rival parties, as they are still in control of key institutions of the public sector, army and security forces, and the public budget. They are able to channel laws and regulations to serve their domination by implementing some and suspending others. They can also disable any monitoring institutions that seek to limit their dominance. There are examples to prove this claim, for instance the KP introduced a list of good laws that can promote transparency in the KRI such as the law of oil and gas No. 22 of 2007 (see Kurdistan Parliament, 2007a), which urged the KRG to establish a list of national companies to run the oil sector and its revenue in the KRI, but none of the companies has been established yet, simply because these companies at least will decrease the discretionary power of key leaders to allocate and spend oil revenue according to them and their parties' intentions. Also, the KP enacted law No. 7 of 2011 to establish the Council of Service (Kurdistan Parliament, 2011), but the law has not been implemented yet although the KRI President promised people in

2011 to establish this Council. The reason simply is this council will diminish the intervention of the ruling parties in the public recruitment process.

This analysis argues that without a comprehensive change in the political equilibrium in the KRI, carrying out proper reform and anti-corruption policy will be destined to fail. This goes in line with what the Collective action theorists called ‘revolutionary change’ (see Persson, Rothstein and Jan, 2013). This issue is discussed in details in chapter 8.

4. The 2013 Election and future of the KRI

In September 2013, the KRI held a new general election. The results shook the monopoly of the two-party system by dropping the PUK down to the position of the third popular party in the KRI and promoting the position of the Change Movement to the second stage after the KDP (see Table 4.2, p. 99). None of the victorious parties or coalition blocks won an outright majority to set up a new KRG cabinet alone. Observers point out that even if any of the parties could reach the required level to do so, it was impossible to create such a government for many reasons. Burhan Yassin (2013) highlighted that none of the two major parties would accept establishing a government without the other. The reason is simply because of their dominance over the army and having a large number of employees and institutions, which is not easy to be run if one of them is in opposition. This suggests that both ruling parties may still abuse the public wealth to run their parties.

Table 4.2: Seats of the five main parties in the current term of the KP (2013 – 2017 expected)

Party names	KDP	PUK	The Change	KIU	KIG
Seats	37	18	24	10	6

Source: (Kurdistan Parliament, 2014a)

The process of sharing control of appointment at high positions has changed and the dominant ruling parties could no longer manage to reserve all key positions for themselves. Eventually, the KDP, as the first most voted, reserved the KRG Prime Minister (PM) and the KP Speaker became a share of the Change and the PUK is given

the position of the Deputy Prime Minister (DPM). Other ministerial and key positions are allocated according to the political agreement among five main winners²⁷. The KRI presently has a coalition government, which contains the five main political parties and some of the minor parties that could gain seats in the KP. While an effective opposition is absent in the recent KP, the KP's committees and other national monitoring institutions including the COI, the Auditory, and the Public Prosecutor have slowly started their duties. MPs from different blocks have started unveiling corrupt files and scandals of former cabinets calling the COI to sue violators and corrupt officials. At the beginning, the recent four-year election term seemed to bring fundamental changes to the KRI and push the process of building institutions forward. However, the emergence of ISIS, which captured a large swath of Iraq and Syria in 2014 and advanced to invade the KRI, changed almost everything (see World Bank Group, 2015). In particular, the KRI is also facing an unprecedented economic crisis since its 17% share has been suspended by the Iraqi Government since 2014 due to disagreements over oil export between Baghdad and Erbil (see Al-Hassoun, 2014). These two major problems alongside the internal political crisis following what happened in October 2015 when the KDP politburo ordered the KDP forces to prevent the KP Speaker, from the Change share, to enter to Erbil, which resulted in shutting down the parliament sessions, changed almost everything. The main task at the moment is to focus only on the fight against ISIS and exporting oil independently to afford paying at least the salaries of a huge number of public employees. These events have opened new doors toward the future of the KRI politically and economically, as the new round of debates on independence has begun and the KRI has started to import oil independently. These debates and events are evolving and updating, and it is difficult to expect what is happening even in the very short term.

Conclusion

The process of building national institutions in the KRI has experienced several turning points. The internal affairs of Iraq, the political background of prominent Kurdish elites and parties did not assist the people of the KRI, who rose up against the Iraqi regime in 1991, to build their institutions and run their new liberated region without experiencing unwanted trouble.

²⁷ The KDP, Change Movement, PUK, KIU and KIG.

The 1991 uprising happened for a better life, the huge turnout at the 1992 general election showed how people of the KRI were enthusiastic for self-governance. However, people ended up with a new round of internal war when the dominant parties could not manage to overcome their traditional disagreements. Their four-year civil war (1994-1998) and nine years administrative polarisation (1997-2005) left a huge legacy which requires strong will and determination to overcome. The war did not only result in the death of tens of thousands of people, but it has also brought a great deal of long-term social, economic, and administrative problems to the KRI and the people.

Moreover, it undermined the hopes of people when each party established its own partisan government separately and divided the liberated region geographically and administratively into two partisan zones. Each zone established its own cabinet and institutions, which has not been easy to unify until now. Furthermore, each zone developed its armed forces, intelligence and security bodies, which still belong to both parties separately while the process of unification has officially started since 2005.

This polarization destabilised the efforts of institutions. Each party kept its dominance in its former zones even after the commencement of the reunification process. This has managed to weaken national institutions further and politicise, almost an entire society. This chapter showed that while the system of checks and balances has been absent or weak, ruling parties managed to guide the public wealth to sustain and develop their political roots in the KRI.

The KRI parties and leaders did notice and understand the negative implications of the political interventions of the ruling parties in the government's affairs. This chapter highlighted a great deal of initiatives for reform forwarded by top leaders of both parties and other political parties as a sign of their awareness of the destructive nature of their politics. However, it is obvious that most of these initiatives have been all talk when it comes to translating them to applicable policies and regulations. Even when some of them become laws and regulations, they have never been implemented easily. This analysis argues that the lack of political will and ineffectiveness of the public institutions compared to the domination of the ruling parties played significant roles in preserving the status quo without implementing reform packages.

Arguments regarding post-conflict studies help to understand why the ruling parties kept politicising public bodies and why there have been no effective political will to stop the corrupt elites from abusing public wealth and bodies. The lack of trust between both ruling parties has pushed them to seize available opportunities to gain as much political

interests as possible for the party and its followers. As the system of checks and balances has been absent, similar to other cases of conflict-affected societies, both parties agreed according to their strategic agreement to share power and wealth equally among themselves. Corruption has already been the expected behaviour and the agreement of both parties left no choice to other minor parties to either join their corrupt polity to have a piece of the cake or stay outside of the circle to criticise the current situation and wait to be punished by the ruling parties.

The changes of the political equilibrium happened after 2009 and 2013 have not generated new political equation. Therefore, as the ruling parties still have control over power and wealth. It is expected, according to post-conflict studies, that there is a lack of political will to crack down on corruption as the corrupt behaviours serve interests of the incumbent and ruling elites. The current political, economic and security problems facing the KRI after the rise of ISIS would strengthen the position of corruption and undermine the expected attempts for political reform in this cabinet because the priority is no longer its reform as the KRG is desperately concentrating on the battlefield on the one hand, and on finding money to pay salaries of its employees on the other.

Section 2: Empirical Chapters

Chapter 5: Corruption zones at the recruitment and pension systems

Introduction

This chapter explores aspects of political corruption in the provision of some forms of public services in the KRI, including jobs and positions at government institutions, and some types of exceptional pensions and salaries. Post-conflict studies highlight the importance of building a functional governance in the aftermath of war that is capable of representing people and gaining their trust and support (see Blair, 2007). Building this type of inclusive government becomes difficult when dominant groups such as political parties and warlords engage in polarising the community on the basis of people's political, ethnical or religious beliefs. This polarisation take place mostly when power-sharing strategy is employed to divide the spoils of war under the theme of building peace, as it is stated 'power-sharing arrangements give warlords a place at the table and guarantee their ability to 'eat' in exchange for peace' (see Dininio, 2009) This happened in the case of the KRI, to a large extent, in the first phase of developing fragile public institutions following the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq in 2003. This chapter seeks to explore a few zones that have allegedly been prone to corruption over the past ten years when both governing parties started controlling a number of critical public zones such as public recruitment, political and non-political positions and pensions. This case is imperative because it is associated with building and developing public institutions after conflict as a critical task in post-conflict settings. This case was also an essential part of the attention of the reform initiatives that were introduced to carry out reform in the KRI (see chapter 4).

To understand the cases presented in this chapter better, it is vital to recall the positions of both ruling parties, the KDP and PUK, in the political landscape of the KRI at least over the past twenty years. As the KDP and PUK have been dominant parties since the establishment of the first KRG cabinet in 1992, as they had 50-50 seats in the KP out of 105 seats and the majority of the KP seats ever since, they managed to successfully interfere in the distribution and allocation of public services provided by volatile KRG institutions. Given the fact that the KRI experienced a series of conflicts in the 1990s and 2000s that shook the already volatile government institutions, the ruling KDP and PUK

were in a strong position to abuse public bodies and make absolute decisions regarding the provision of public services.

Since the existence of incentives for political corruption in these areas is unquestionable, this analysis does not aim to enquire whether there is corruption or not, it rather looks for the levels of extensiveness in line with the first research question, and aims to identify possible factors that enabled political corruption to emerge in these areas. To do this, this chapter is divided into four sections. Section 1 explores the actual ways that job vacancies of public bodies have been filled. It argues that the KRG applied informal procedures to provide public job opportunities selectively to supporters of the ruling parties for several years excluding people outside this political circle from accessing job vacancies in government. Section 2 presents the ways that the KRG followed to appoint people to public positions, both political and non-political positions. It argues that although a few ministries were given to other parties in return for their participation in cabinets, the key ministries and almost all essential positions down the ministerial levels in all government bodies were given to members of both incumbent parties. This section also highlights that even non-political positions in sectors like education and public higher education institutions were politically monopolised for members of both parties. Section 3 focuses on some forms of exceptional pensions introduced without a regulatory framework by the KRG to favour members of the ruling parties and a few minor parties. It discusses the pensions allocated to high ranking leaders of both parties equivalent to pensions of ministers; pensions provided to cadres of both parties and a few other parties with some high administrative titles and military ranks without holding any of these titles; pensions and salaries offered to ordinary people mostly at election times in return for their support to the ruling parties. This analysis concludes that public services and privileges provided to people on the political basis have been offered on a reciprocity basis. The KRG, which has been led by leaders of both parties on a coalition basis, offered services and privileges to people from a particular political group in return for their support at election time. The favour has also been returned by enabling ruling parties to have further exclusive access to public institutions and affairs. These findings prove the extensive existence of patronage and clientelism as two forms of political corruption in the KRI.

Section 4 looks for the factors that enabled political corruption to emerge in these zones in the KRI. Considering the key factors highlighted in post-conflict studies that facilitate corruption, this analysis argues that the KRI leaders, who are mostly warlords, lack the

political will and determination to identify corruption as a risk and tackle it. Besides, the lack of institutional capacity to carry out political and economic reform has been another key factor, in particular when the dysfunctional position of public institutions and powerful hands of the party politburo in the political game in the KRI are considered. When there is no accountability, no functioning system of checks and balances, and when there is power and public wealth available to be abused, so then is fertile ground for political corruption to persist available.

1. Politicising public job opportunities

The KRG has been the main provider of goods and services over the past twenty years. People are very much interested in obtaining jobs within public services because of the privileges that the public sector secures for them and also because there are no other better options available to them. Interviewees addressed that most people from different groups including farmers, villagers, taxi drivers, shopkeepers, university graduates and almost everybody seeks to grab any opportunities available for a job in the public sector. As I was conducting this research, the status of public employees drew my attention to it as one of the incentives that attracts people to seek government jobs. I found that all public employees after one year becomes a permanent employee, the job status is called '*Damazrandni hameshaee*' in Kurdish. This status makes people feel that their future is secured within the public bodies. Interviewee 4 counted several incentives for me that the permanent public employment offers to job seekers. Firstly, the status implies that gaining a public job can provide stability in future perspective. Secondly, as the appointment is a permanent contract, people do not expect that they will be dismissed easily, and this offers them more future security. Thirdly, public jobs guarantee a list of exclusive privileges that attract people, such as the lack of proper career assessments, the availability of job security, flexible working hours, sick and holiday leave, and guaranteed retirement benefits (Interviewee 4).

Related to this issue, it is vital to mention that the series of wars that happened in Iraq with Iran and with Kurdish forces prior to 1991 destroyed almost all villages and displaced their people. This, as a result, damaged agriculture and displaced farmers and villagers and they eventually lost their jobs. Besides, other sectors like industry and tourism were already ignored and were not a significant source of income for many

people. These factors made people mostly look at the KRG as the main sources of income. Interviewee 8 described the situation as follows:

Most of the KRI villages were destroyed by the former Iraqi regime and villagers were displaced and forced to migrate to major cities and districts. Following the events of 1991, the KRG did not have clear plans for villagers and the agriculture sector. The attention of the ruling parties has been on appointing people to public institutions and opening doors for their members and followers to join their armed forces. There have been no incentives to encourage people to work at the private sector.

Most of the PRs and PB addressed that the private sector has been to a large degree underdeveloped. Therefore, people have been desperate and have had no better job opportunities. In such a situation, the option available to them has been the public sector. Given this high level of desire among people, this author sought to explore how people were treated when they applied for public jobs and other government services. The aim was to underline whether the procedures that the KRG applied were universalistic and the public bodies treated people equally or if there were particularistic standards, which helped the emergence of political corruption in several countries around the world. To explore this case, this author discussed this issue with the majority of interviewees, mostly PRs, MPs, and ULs. The first question was associated with the ways people could successfully gain jobs at the public institutions. After recognising the desirability of public jobs for the majority of people, it is vital to address the procedures that the KRG has followed to provide public jobs to people.

Data gathered from the interviews show that an institutionalised procedure for public appointment has been absent to recruit public employees in the KRI. The PRs and MPs could not identify a formal application system that people could follow to gain jobs at the KRI institutions, with the exception of the one introduced in 2011. Most of the interviewees shared stories that indicate the existence of a form of informality that the KRI institutions have been following to fill their job vacancies. For instance, most of the PRs, MPs, and ULs referred to the direct and obvious intervention of both ruling parties in selectively allocating job opportunities to their members and followers through an informal procedure called *tazkia*. Interviewee 4 further explained this informal procedure as follows:

Tazkia refers to a support letter issued by offices of the KDP and PUK for someone to obtain a job and other forms of public services at the KRI institutions. This letter could be a formal headed letter from a party office to a public officer or a simple note given to someone as a support letter. This letter, in any forms, has been considered as the main document for securing jobs at the public sector for several years.

Through *tazkia*, the KRG enabled the KDP and PUK to exercise the maximum level of political dominance over the KRI institutions and accordingly most of the new public employees were chosen from ranks of both parties. During the interviews, I ascertained that both parties had started appointing public employees by *tazkia* since the KRG polarisation, but this practice reached its peak following the processes of unifying former KDP and PUK administrations. Some interviewees addressed that while the unification processes were undergoing during the first unified cabinet (2006-2009), both parties employed a large number of their members to the KRI institutions in their former zones. Interviewees addressed that as the KRI started receiving its 17% share of the national budget of Iraq, which was billions of US dollars annually, the KRG accordingly managed to introduce tens of thousands of public job opportunities and exclusively offer them to followers of both parties through the *tazkia* procedure (Interviewees 8, 17 and 30). I realised that each party appointed its members in its zone or in its administration before the unification and during the government unification which started in 2005. The ruling parties were capable to abuse their domination over their zones and their former administrations to favour their members as much as possible. As there were no effective public institutions to function impartially, none of the ruling parties found any incentives in acting in favour of the public interest while there were opportunities to secure favours for their members.

This analysis could not find any accurate data in regard to the numbers of public employees appointed through *tazkia* practices during the unified cabinet or before it. However, interviewees asserted that public appointment was exclusively monopolised for members of the KDP and PUK. Therefore, almost all public employees appointed before 2011, according to the majority of interviewees from PRs, MPs, and ULs, were filtered through the *tazkia* procedure. Given the fact that a proper recruitment system was unavailable, both parties used their party offices to put forward their candidates for public

job vacancies. Interviewee 30 described the appointment process through *tazkia* as follows:

Both parties used their party offices in cities and towns, and their youth, students, and women units to create lists of their members and submit them to the KRG key officials, who were from their parties, to appoint them to the places that parties and candidates themselves had assigned. Therefore, it has been a common sense for all people that party offices are the first place to start from any appointment procedure (Interviewee 30).

Adding to this, other interviewees stated that people were well aware that there was no point in applying directly to government institutions, because it was obvious that the application or the request would not be processed unless it was supported within a list from a party office or by a single *tazkia* letter. Interviewee 30 commented on this issue as follows: ‘people had no choices apart from becoming members of either ruling parties because without their *tazkia* people would not have chances to acquire public job opportunities’. This author wanted to cross-check these insights with representatives of the KDP and PUK themselves and asked them to comment on the *tazkia* procedure. They openly talked about it and did not deny its existence. A PUK leader acknowledged that ‘prior to 2011, all job vacancies of the KRG were provided to party followers via *tazkia* by the KDP in the YZ and the PUK in the GZ’ (Interviewee 34). Likewise, A KDP leader addressed that ‘both parties used their control over the KRG to employ their followers into the public bodies... and it was a way to appease their followers’ (Interviewee 27). After learning that the *tazkia* was a key, I was keen to pinpoint how this informal procedure worked and how the ruling parties managed to convince the KRG decision makers to exclusively appoint their members?

It is important to mention that the key KRG figures have always been powerful politicians, former warlords, of the KDP and PUK over the past twenty years. Building on this fact, it seems clear that they have easily managed to respond to claims of their parties to provide public jobs to possible numbers of members of their parties. In particular, if we consider the fact that there was no appointment system and monitoring institutions were ineffectual. Furthermore, given the insights from interviewees and having looked at official documents provided by interviewees, this author argues that the recruitment process through the *tazkia* practice has been informally organised between

the ruling parties and the KRG officials. From the KRG side, this procedure appeared to be centralised, as a few KRG key officials including the PMs, the DPMs and sometimes the Chief of Staff to the KRG Council of the Ministers, exercised discretionary authority to appoint thousands of people to public institutions. The leaked KRG documents about appointment carry signatures of either of these officials. From the side of the ruling parties, the process had different measures. For instance, local offices of the parties submitted their lists to party city offices, and from these offices to the politburo of the party or directly to the offices of the KRG PM, DPM or the Chief of Staff to make the decision. According to insights given by the interviewees, people had to visit party offices to register themselves for work at any public institutions. The first step was to check the affiliation of the applicants to the party, and after confirming the membership, the applicant could gain a direct *tazkia* letter or their names could be registered with other applicants in a list, and then the list was submitted to the offices of the aforementioned key KRG officials for the appointment decision. Outside this organised informal procedure, interviewees asserted that if applicants sought jobs from public institutions, they were directly being told that there were no vacancies or they were clearly advised to have a *tazkia* letter and start from party offices (Interviewees 4, 8, 15, 17, 20 and 30).

These findings are signs of the existence of an extreme form of particularistic standards with regards to the distribution of public services, which according to the literature, paves the way for the emergence of corruption. This politicised procedure of the provision of public jobs was not only a form of reward to followers of the ruling parties but it was also a way to punish other political parties. This author sought to shed light on this corner of practice by raising questions about the position of people outside the KDP and PUK circles in the *tazkia* appointment practice. Stories that interviewees shared about people outside the KDP and PUK indicate how unfair and disappointing the *tazkia* practice had been for a large number of people for several years. The PRs addressed that this politicised measure deprived followers of other parties and apolitical people of their essential rights as citizens of the KRI. Interviewee 8, who is the Secretary General of a political party, talked about the implications of the *tazkia* on other parties as follows:

It was up to either ruling party to let people outside their circles gain public jobs or not... and it is undoubtedly true that any request of other parties for public jobs had political consequences on them. The ruling parties did not appoint members of other parties for nothing, they wanted favours from other parties in return.

In a situation where public vacancies were the most attractive job opportunities and people had no alternatives rather than joining the ruling parties, other political parties must have been in a critical position. Interviewee 8 provided further comments on this state as follows:

The *tazkia* appointment was a very common phenomenon before 2011. The main feature was people could not gain anything from government institutions without going through party offices. If someone wanted to gain a job and directly handed in his or her job request to any public offices, he or she would have been told clearly that they should try to apply from a party office or bring a *tazkia* letter, otherwise there was no chance to be appointed. Friends and members of our party were asking us to find them jobs at the public sector similar to members of the KDP and PUK. We could do nothing to them if we did not ask either ruling party for a *tazkia* letter. I know it sounds weird because we are members of another party, not their offices, but sometimes we had to do it for the sake of our members.

These insights indicate that the ruling parties sought to control other parties through this procedure. This was one of the tools that the KRG made exclusively available at the ruling parties disposal to control society and the political landscape. It is argued that ‘in an environment where everyone is believed to be engaging in corruption, there are few incentives for individuals to abstain’ (Marquette and Peiffer, 2015, p.10). As members of the ruling parties were enjoying public jobs through the *tazkia* policy, it was expected that other parties were seeking to secure favours for their members, which were not dissimilar to what the ruling parties were doing for their members at all costs.

This politicised procedure did not only politically influence the position of other parties but it also affected their members. Apolitical people and members of other parties encountered discriminations only because of their political stance or affiliations; particularly if their party was proposing itself as a challenge against the ruling parties. The KIU was one of the parties that the incumbents, particularly the KDP, had been viewing as a rival; especially as the KIU has been noticeably growing in Dohuk province, the strong zone of the KDP. A KIU leader, interviewee 15, argued that for several years the KDP did not allow KIU members to gain any public jobs in Dohuk city because of the hostile relationship between the two parties as rivals in this city:

The KIU has been brightly growing in Dohuk province and Bahdinan area as a whole, these areas that are considered among people as a significant part of the

KDP influence zone. Our party has recently become the second popular party coming after the KDP there. Nevertheless, our members have been rarely able to gain governmental jobs. Even graduates have been deliberately excluded from the public institutions (Interviewee 15).

In such a politicised circumstance, the ruling parties dealt with appointment procedure as a political tool to reward their members and friends, and punish their opponents. If other parties had a good relationship with either of the incumbents and agreed to remain quiet about their way of governance, then their members could have a share in the public services and vice versa. Despite this, this analysis pinpointed that in some public institutions people outside the circle of the governing parties could gain jobs.

Although the appointment procedure was politicised to a large extent, there were still limited opportunities for other people without holding the *tazkia* letters. A high-ranking representative of the KIG addressed that while most of key positions in the fundamental KRI institutions have been given to members of both parties, other people could gain jobs for instance at the education sector:

When both dominant parties were unable to meet needs of a particular institution such as the education sector, they gave chances to other people to apply for jobs. For instance, the Ministry of Education has been recruiting a large number of teachers every year for primary and secondary schools across the country. Both incumbents have never been able to meet needs of this ministry on their own. Hence, other relevant graduates have had chances to become teachers despite their political affiliations (Interviewee 5).

These findings show that the KRG was distributing its services on the political basis and the ruling parties were deciding who was eligible for services and who was not without having any institutionalised procedure. This indicates that the universalistic standard was absent and the public bodies were applying particularistic measures to provide people with public job opportunities. This finding, according to the convergence approach, enables corruption to emerge.

Seeking to identify implications of this issue on the KRI, it could be addressed that the ruling parties did not consider the bureaucratic and financial consequences of their interventions in the public recruitment practices. They did not seem to understand the

negative consequences of overstaffing public institutions and allocating a large amount of the national budget to pay salaries of public employees. Interviewee 4 illustrated the current state of public bodies as follows:

All government institutions are overstaffed. The interventions of the both ruling parties in appointment policies was extreme for instance if a room in a public institution needs two employees to run its tasks, the KRG appointed ten people from members of the KDP and PUK. People are receiving public salaries for providing nothing because most of them in fact are not needed.

The general public did not notice the side-effects of this problem when the KRG was receiving the 17% share of the Iraqi annual budget before 2014. However, nowadays, as the KRG is struggling to pay salaries of public employees, the obvious negative implications of the overstaffing are unfolding. In addition, it is noticeable that this overstaffing, despite its financial consequences, resulted in job inflation and has had some serious challenges to the public institutions. Interviewees agreed that public appointments have mostly been on a political basis. This implies that skills and qualifications have not been conditions to appoint the best applicants. In such a circumstance, the right people have not been appointed to the right places, and this placed considerable influence on the functions of government institutions. Further, as official job assessments and competition have been absent, and the ruling parties have always interfered to protect their members from being fired, improving the performance of public institutions and making the KRG institutions more responsive have not been a case of attention. These show that to a large degree appointing people according to their political affiliations have negatively affected their performances and the effectiveness of public institutions, and eventually enabled the ruling parties to have further accesses to public bodies as these people feel that they owe their parties.

The vicious circle made the *tazkia* procedure for appointment widespread and noticeable everywhere. People spoke up against it in several public demonstrations which took place in 2006 and widely in 2011. Key politicians acknowledged its continuation and urged the KRG to shake up its institutions and prevent party interventions. Recalling the project of the PUK Secretary General Jalal Talabani in 2008, for separation between the KRG institutions and political parties mainly their PUK, Talabani clearly advised the PUK members and leaders to stop interfering in government affairs from appointing public

employees to interventions in universities, business sector and courts and judicial affairs (Kurdistani Nwe, 2008). Likewise, the KDP President Masoud Barzani, who is also the KRI President, initiated a reform package during the 2011 public protests where Barzani promised people to institutionalise the KRI bodies and prevent political parties from interfering in the government any longer. In regard to the appointment procedure, Barzani promised to ‘establish the Council of the Service to organise recruitment issue, and accordingly the *tazkia* procedure should not be allowed for appointing people any longer and all appointment opportunities should be provided according to meritocracy’ (KRP, 2011). Other parties bombarded the KRG with reform packages without realising that carrying out such reform requires commitment and honest political will and institutional capacity (see chapter 4). This analysis argues that as the political will was absent from taking such a step forward, these reform initiatives remained warm words and have left little impact on the actual politics in the KRI.

Nevertheless, the KRG sixth cabinet, in an unprecedented move, introduced a system for public appointment in 2011. The system opened opportunities to all people despite their political affiliations and enabled them to apply for announced public job vacancies. The system was widely welcomed. Most PRs, MPs and ULs praised and viewed it as a significant step toward institutionalising public sector and diminishing party control over public recruitment. The KP enacted the budgetary laws of 2011 and 2012 announcing public job vacancies for the public for the first time. The KRG introduced an application procedure, in line with the budgetary laws, to allow people to apply for public jobs in several public institutions. A KIG representative commented on the system as ‘it brought signs of justice into the KRI society as it was the first time that the KRG was treating citizens equally without considering their political affiliations, and was offering them equal chances to enjoy public services’ (Interviewee 5). Nevertheless, this analysis contends that the newly established recruitment system could not reach some key institutions and only worked effectively in some public institutions.

Interviewees argued that the system worked successfully in some key public institutions, as one of the PRs suggested that ‘the implementation of the recruitment system was effectively successful in education and health sectors’ (Interviewee 34). However, the ruling parties could still exclusively appoint their people to key public institutions on the basis of their political affiliation. The new system was unable to open doors of vital institutions to people outside the incumbent parties such as the Kurdistan presidency

institution, the KRG Council of the Ministers, the KP, and the Ministries of the Home Affairs, Finance, and Peshmerga, and the offices of the security forces and national intelligence, which have thousands of employees. These institutions are politically critical and the incumbents did not allow people affiliated to other parties to have a position in these bodies.

Most of the interviewed PRs and MPs claimed that the *tazkia* was still required to acquire a job at these institutions (Interviewees 8, 15, 17, 27, 27 and 34). This exception is believed to be significant for incumbent parties as these institutions are considered as 'vital parts of party security' (Interviewee 9). This analysis noticed that in 2011 and 2012 the KDP and PUK could interfere in appointment procedures in a very limited way, therefore, the cabinet change at the end of 2012 helped them to compensate the past two years. As part of the strategic agreement between the KDP and PUK, at the end of 2012, the PUK nominee Barham Salih, the leader of the KRG sixth cabinet, resigned and a new cabinet led by the KDP nominee Nechervan Barzani was established for two more years. As the cabinet changed, the newly established recruitment system started to fade away.

Although the KP announced 15,000 job vacancies in the 2013 budgetary law, as presented in chapter 2, the new KRG cabinet did not follow the appointment system despite its success. At the time of conducting interviews for this thesis, which was in July and August 2013, it was not obvious how the KRG was going to deal with the aforementioned number of public job vacancies. Interviewees were sceptical about the ways key officials of the KRG were commenting on the delay in implementing the 2013 budgetary law and enabling job seekers to apply for public jobs. Government officials were stating that the KRG had another plan for recruitment, for instance giving priority to those people who have been working for government bodies under temporary contracts (see chapter 2, p. 37). However, it turned out that the KRG suspended the recruitment system in 2013 and instead the KRG PM and DPM were giving discretionary authority to some ministers, and appointed 15,228 new employees without considering the applications that new graduates submitted to gain public jobs (see Appendix B. 3, p.230).

Although the appointment system partly played a role in overstaffing the KRG because in 2011 and 2012 the KRG accordingly appointed 25,000 and 17,000 new employees to the public institutions respectively, it is worth mentioning that this system brought a form of justice back to people in the KRI because before that people were appointed on a

political basis. This system also declined the intervention of the ruling parties in the appointment procedure to a noticeable degree. This analysis argues that even if this system was not created, the KRG would have appointed these numbers of new employees regardless, but without announcing the vacancies to the public, similar to what the then new cabinet did in 2013.

Despite the establishment of the recruitment system as a good step forward, the sixth cabinet could not control the ruling parties from abusing public positions to punish other people for political reasons. Although it enabled people to gain jobs through an application system, interviewees addressed that after the result of the 2009 elections, the KRG office holders dismissed lists of public employees in Sulaymaniah city, the then stronghold of the PUK, because they campaigned and voted for the then newly established Change Movement. Interviewees 4 and 30 from the Change Movement asserted that around 300 members from their party was dismissed from their public jobs and several public position holders stepped down from their positions after they campaigned for their party in the 2009 general election. This is another sign of the control of the ruling parties over public institutions in the KRI.

To conclude, it could be argued that the KRG did not have a system to recruit people to its institutions until 2011. The recruitment process to public institutions was almost completely monopolised for several years only for members of the KDP in the former KDP zone and also for the PUK members in its former zone. Political affiliation to the ruling parties was the only requirement to obtain jobs at the KRG institutions. Even the ruling parties did not allow members of each other to gain jobs at the other zone. Put differently, the public job vacancies in the KDP zone were only for the KDP members and in the PUK zone were only for the PUK's. Linking this finding to the literature of political corruption, it is clear that the KRG was applying particularistic standards to distribute job vacancies exclusively among followers of the ruling parties. They also abused this form of public service to punish other parties by excluding their members from gaining public jobs, and that would eventually increase the pressure of the excluded people on their parties to ask the ruling parties for favours for their members. The findings of this study show that some parties eventually engaged in the corrupt procedures introduced by the ruling parties, and asked the latter to offer their members similar services.

As particularism is seen to assist corruption, this analysis argues that this form of particularism in the KRI enabled the ruling parties to abuse public institutions to preserve their position of power by appeasing their members and attracting more people to join them in return for providing them with exclusive access to public services. These incidents according to the literature are signs of different forms of political corruption such as party patronage and clientelism. It is vital to note that this was not the only way that the ruling parties could politicise the provision of the public services to people, but this analysis addresses more ways such as the provision of public positions at different levels and some forms of exceptional salaries and pensions.

2. Politicising public positions

This analysis investigates the procedures applied to appointing public office holders from ministries to non-political positions down the ministerial levels. It particularly seeks to identify whether the KRG has been applying particularistic standards or universalistic ones to fill its positions, and that is to explore degrees of the abuse of public power and wealth for political interests of the incumbents. This section does not examine all public positions but it unpacks the appointment of ministers, deputy ministers and key senior staff including director-managers and advisors of ministries and other public institutions. These positions are mostly considered as political positions in the KRI. It also explores the procedures applied to fill non-political positions in the public service particularly at the public education and higher education institutions.

Starting with the appointment procedures regarding high public positions, interviewees addressed that ministers, deputy ministers, director generals, directors, and advisors, those who receive the highest salaries among non-elected office holders, are mostly nominated by political parties and have been appointed by the KRG PMs over the past twenty years. The unique feature is that only a few positions at the ministerial level were given to other parties who participated in the KRG cabinets, reserving the rest of the positions to the ruling parties. It is worth recalling the political structure of the KRI at this point as the majority of the cabinets since 1992 have been coalitions of most of the functioning political parties. However, based on the insights provided by the interviewees, this thesis argues that the participation of other parties apart from the KDP and PUK in the government affairs have not been effective. This is because parties show

that they have been allowed to be part of the government in order to show the outside world that there is pluralism and democracy in the KRI while both ruling parties have been dominant to a large degree.

This analysis interviewed a former KRG minister from one of the five major parties to shed light on the participation of other parties and the procedure of appointing high profile officials. The minister commented on this issue as follows:

Most of the KRG cabinets have been coalitions. However, the KDP and PUK have been dominant parties when the KRG was divided and also during the unified cabinets after 2005. Most of the other parties have felt like they were not an active participant in the government because their participation was very limited and symbolic. For instance, when a party was given a ministry to run, it was only allowed to appoint the minister and a few officials in the minister's office while the rest of the positions down the ministerial levels were given to members of the KDP and PUK (Interviewee 32).

This claim was cross-checked with other interviewees and as a result this analysis proves that the political participation has been rather constrained. The KDP and PUK kept their domination over positions down the ministerial levels in their former zones and agreed to reserve key ministries and the majority of positions in ministries to their members in the unified KRG cabinets after 2005. Most of the PRs and MPs, for instance Interviewees 5, 8, 9, 15, 17, 20, 30 and 34, pointed to the high level of politicisation of the public positions by both ruling parties and stressed that although other parties participated in the former KRG cabinets, they did not obtain their shares in positions down the ministerial levels. This exclusion also included people with no partisan affiliations. Interviewee 4 addressed that 'if you are not affiliated to any political parties, you will have no chances to hold any public positions despite your qualifications and skills'. Therefore, the other parties have had limited access to public positions while independent people have had no access at all. Besides, this analysis noted that the political affiliation to the ruling parties has not been the only criteria to gain key positions in the KRG, but that family relationships and personal ties have played a considerable role as well.

According to lists of names of the current office holders at different positions provided by interviewees, it could be suggested that personal elements and ties to key figures have played an influential role in appointing public officials. For instance, interviewees 4 and 30 provided names of several office holders who are members of the Barzani (KDP) and

Talabani (PUK) families and close relatives of key ministers and high profile politicians of both parties. This analysis argues that these people are not in these positions by accident particularly considering that the positions of most of them are critical in terms of security and decision making processes in the KRI. Due to the sensitivity of this issue, this analysis does not refer to any names. Owing to the lack of public awareness, several people in the KRI, according to interviewees, may think that this phenomenon is normal as these people are close relatives of the rulers. However, it is obviously a form of political corruption which is called nepotism because leaders and powerful figures clearly abused their position of authority to reward their family members without allowing other qualified people the chance to compete for these positions.

Interviewees asserted that professional standards have rarely been considered to fill public positions particularly for positions that the ruling parties considered as political appointees. For instance, it is reported that there are several advisers at different public institutions who receive a high salary while they do not have any qualifications at all. Interviewee 34 from the PUK frankly acknowledged that ‘these people are basically in high positions because their titles are given to them only as rewards by their parties. Therefore, they are not expected to provide any advice to anyone’. It is significant to notice that the politicisation of the public positions is one of the implications of the civil war and administrative divisions. This thesis reveals that both ruling parties commenced the personalisation and politicisation of public positions since they had almost absolute control over their former zones.

Given the insight provided by interviewees, it could be contended that nearly all positions of the former GZ and YZ were given to nominees of the PUK and KDP respectively. This polarization was not normalised at the local level by the end of 2013 notwithstanding the commencement of the reunification process since 2005 resulted in establishing three coalitions. A KDP cadre stated that ‘it is a truism that the KDP and PUK are still exercising their hegemony over every single position of their former administrations although the government is officially united’ (Interviewee 36).

These findings stress that there were procedures outside the KRG framework and outside the institutionalised appointment process to appoint public office holders. Political parties were responsible for nominating their candidates and submitting for appointment. Put differently, ministers had no power to appoint and/or dismiss key office holders in their ministries apart from those who worked in their offices. Besides, interviewees asserted that there were no competitive and official appointment procedures like job opportunity

announcement, Curriculum Vitae (CV) submission, shortlisting and identification of the best possible candidates. The actual practice was, as interviewees 4 and 30 addressed, as simple as this: party offices were nominating their loyal members to the politburo of their party, then the politburo was submitting a list of their best nominees among party candidates to the offices of the KRG PM or the DPM to make decisions and appoint them. So the *tazkia* was key in the process of appointing public office holders, too, as people outside both parties could rarely gain any positions.

As these positions were given on political or personal bases without considering qualifications and without allowing other people to apply for these positions, the ruling parties must have asked for favours in return. This thesis noted that there were forms of reciprocity in this procedure. Interviewee 30 addressed that most of the office holders in the KRG have been working as ‘their parties’ eyes and ears at public institutions’. In other words, as these people gained their positions through their parties without fair competition with others and not due to their skills, they found themselves in a critical position, which required them to pay their parties back for their positions. Interviewee 15 described the situation as follows:

As most of the public office holders appointed by either ruling party, or they probably are not the best candidate for their positions among people around them even inside their parties, therefore, most of them must protect their positions by following requests of their parties. This mentality has widened the intervention of the ruling parties in public institutions.

This quotation is a clear sign of how the ruling parties switched the public sector to a network of patronage and clientelism, where they can effortlessly abuse public services to reward their members in return for gaining further access through them to other corners of public institutions, and to eventually keep the continuation of the vicious circle. Interviewees asserted that the ruling parties could gain further access to public services through their people inside government who run key offices, for instance tens of thousands of pieces of housing lands were exclusively distributed among followers of both parties through their contacts in government.

Furthermore, the politicisation of public positions has negatively influenced the accountability issue. As office holders were not appointed by their ministers, the latter

could not hold them accountable. As the appointment was finalised by the ruling parties, the position of the office holders were influenced, as interviewee 17 addressed:

Public office holders had to follow orders of the ruling parties to keep their positions protected because they were appointed by them. This widened the scale of party intervention in government affairs as directors had no incentives in preventing party interference in government. They actually could not do that because it would have resulted in dismissing them.

These findings show that the absolute form of particularism applied to appoint civil servants in the KRI during the critical transitional period. This analysis suggests that the process of building national institutions was highly politicised in the way the ruling parties allowed other parties to have very limited access to government positions in return for participation in their cabinets, while apolitical people have had almost no opportunity. Key ministers, deputy ministers, all positions down the ministerial hierarchy were monopolised by the KDP and PUK. The appointment of these office holders has never been a merit recruitment system as it has been highly politicised and personalised. The literature suggests that this politicised and personalised form of appointment breeds corruption. The literature also suggests that abusing public positions to favour family members and to reward party members in a reciprocity formula, assists forms of political corruption such as nepotism, patronage and clientelism to emerge.

The second type of public positions this thesis is interested in scrutinising is non-political posts in education and higher education institutions. The reason for choosing these positions is because they are less political in their nature while there are allegations against the ruling parties about politicising them, too. This author asked interviewees to explain the procedures applied to appoint key office holders down the ministerial level within education sector, for instance directors, inspectors, head and deputy head teachers. Also, positions of public universities and academic institutions, particularly chancellors, deputy chancellors, deans of schools, heads of departments, and directors of other academic and administrative units. The aim is to identify degrees of particularism in the provision of these positions to eventually highlight characteristics of political corruption and its causes as main research questions.

This analysis contends that the ruling parties have also politicised these positions to a large extent. Most of the MPs and PRs, including representatives of the KDP and PUK,

provided similar descriptions in regard to the aforementioned positions. Starting with positions in the field of public education, interviewees addressed that since the administration polarization, both ruling parties started reserving almost every single education position from the ministry of education, education branches, and positions of head and deputy head teachers at schools to their members in their former zones. A PUK leader addressed that ‘there are 402 public schools in Erbil and their head teachers and deputies are exclusively chosen by the KDP from its followers. The situation is the same in Dohuk city’ (Interviewee 21). A KDP representative asserted that the situation is almost the same in the former PUK zone where ‘all positions are offered to members of the PUK’ (Interviewee 36). These claims were not surprising as this author is well aware that even the ruling parties excluded each other’s members to gain any public position in their zones. In such a politicised situation, apolitical people and followers of other parties have been dealt with as outsiders, who are deprived of holding any of the aforementioned non-political positions. To check these claims with representatives of other parties, this author asked a KIU leader to provide his understanding. In his words, ‘you cannot find one member of the KIU in a position of a head teacher around the country, neither in the former GZ nor in the YZ’ (Interviewee 15). A leader of the KIG, interviewee 5, claimed the same discrimination occurs against members of his party.

This analysis suggests that the ruling parties generated illegal advantages from appointing their loyal members in the education sector. For instance, monopolising positions of head teachers of schools has provided the governing parties with further electoral favours²⁸, thus it maintains and controls the situation and retains their power. As almost all head teachers are appointed on the basis of their loyalty to the KDP in the YZ and the PUK in the GZ, as presented above, observers argue that their positions at election time have been critical to facilitate electoral fraud and vote rigging in favour of the incumbents, ‘both dominant parties place pressure on head teachers at election time to let their representatives rig the results of the elections and guide it to their favours’ (Interviewee 4). It is difficult to prove this claim as there is a lack of hard evidence. However, this researcher noted that people talk about this accusation almost everywhere. It is also noted that the politicisation is widespread across public higher education institutions as another area of interest in this analysis.

²⁸ To understand the role that head teachers play in election, we must provide a quick introduction to the way elections carry out in the KRI. The KRG uses schools as the main voting stations. The Electoral Commission appoints head teachers as the head of voting stations at their schools.

This issue was raised with MPs and PRs and a few ULs to cross check the claims with them. As a result, it could be argued that this area is highly politicised too as the majority of academic and administrative positions in public universities were exclusively offered to members of both parties and people without their support would not have any chances to hold any positions despite their academic achievements and qualifications. A UL depicts the situation as follows:

All tenure of chancellors of universities and their deputies, deans of colleges and schools, heads of departments, and even lower administrative positions of universities such as managers and directors of units were offered to followers of the KDP and PUK. People without *tazkia* letter of either party would have been dealt with as an ineligible candidate and could never gain any positions (Interviewee 10).

This author sought to identify the favours that the ruling parties were gaining in return for selectively appointing their members to the positions within public academic institutions. It could be argued that there were forms of reciprocity in this process too. The ruling parties could gain further exclusive access to these institutions through these people and eventually could exercise their political control over them and obtain further advantages for their members. Interviewees addressed that providing public services on political grounds rather than institutionalised standards have placed negative influences on the performance of the receivers. For instance, by appointing university chancellors, deans of schools, and heads of departments at public academic institutions, the KDP and PUK could monopolise seats of postgraduate degrees to their members for several years. The interviewed ULs contended that these high-ranking officials at public universities and academic institutions facilitated the ruling parties to offer masters and doctoral places to their members even when they were not meeting minimum entrance requirements. Interviewee 31 commented on this issue as follows:

The ruling parties appointed almost all key figures at public universities. Through these decision makers, both parties managed to exclusively allocate offers to their loyal members at public universities to study Master's and PhD degrees without considering the essential entry requirements over the past ten years. They also managed to obtain public university seats for their loyal members who did not have genuine qualification to gain submission.

Interviewees also referred to a phenomenon that the ruling parties introduced through their agents at public universities, which was called '*qubul khas*'²⁹. Interviewee 10 argued that the ruling parties could access universities through *qubul khas* because their loyal members were holding key positions at public universities. Interviewee 11 presented further examples of party intervention in academia as follows:

The ruling parties could control the scholarship opportunities that foreign universities and programs were allocating for students of the KRI. Key figures in the public universities hide these chances from the public. Instead, in coordination with the party offices at the universities, they only put forward loyal members of both parties as candidates to study abroad. This monopolisation carried on until the announcement of the Human Capacity Development Program in the Higher Education (HCDP)³⁰.

These findings assert that non-political positions in the KRI were highly politicised and the ruling parties excluded members of each other in their former zones and members of other parties and independent people from holding any positions in education and higher education institutions.

To conclude, this section showed that the ruling parties monopolised the vast majority of political and non-political public positions for their members. In doing so, they allowed other political parties very limited access to public positions at the ministerial level in return for their participation in the cabinets. However, key ministers and almost all significant positions down the ministerial level have been reserved to members of both parties. This monopolisation was more extreme in non-political positions. Positions of public education and higher education institutions were exclusively given to members of both parties excluding members of other parties and independent people from holding any position. These extreme forms of politicisation widened the intervention of the ruling parties in government institutions and enabled them to seek favours from their members in government in return for keeping them in office. This reciprocity assisted corruption

²⁹ Interviewee 10 defined *qubul khas* as a process of accepting members of the KDP and PUK at public universities for taking undergraduate and postgraduate degrees without considering essential entry requirements. For several years both parties could gain exclusive access to public universities through their members who were holding key decision-making positions at these institutions.

³⁰ The HCDP is one of the bright achievements of the sixth KRG cabinet accounted in 2010 to openly and without considering political affiliations create opportunities for distinguished students of the KRI to study abroad. The HCDP has enabled and financially supported more than 2,000 students from the KRI to take Master's and PhD degrees abroad. This researcher is one of the winners of this program.

to grow and persist. Thus, this analysis argues that the intervention of the ruling parties in government affairs was not only in the provision of public job opportunities and positions but it has also been financial in nature. The next section explores the exceptional provision of different forms of salaries and pension to followers of the ruling parties and a few parties by the KRG.

3. Cash for political support

This section explores the provision of some types of exceptional pensions and salaries for party followers. It does not intend to study the KRI pension system, which is somehow a part of the changeable and complicated Iraqi retirement system (see Robalino, Bogomolova and Sluchinsky, n.d), but the main focus is on the ways that pensions are exceptionally provided to followers and members of parties. A few questions were raised with PRs and MPs to explore how many types of exceptional pensions are available and how parties managed to convince the KRG to provide pensions to their members. It also sought to find out whether these exceptional financial rewards are linked to corrupt practices or not. Therefore, this analysis classifies these exceptional pensions into three categories: (1) exceptional pensions provided to high profile political leaders; (2) exceptional pensions offered to lower level of cadres of parties; and (3) exceptional pensions and salaries given to ordinary people for political reasons.

3.1 High pension for key politicians

Starting with the first category, domestic discourses have been debating about the ways the ruling parties provided pensions to their high-profile politicians and to leaders of a few political parties. In chapter 2, this analysis cited local media outlets, which referenced a few unconfirmed official documents regarding providing a pension equivalent to ministers to members of the politburo and presidential councils of the KDP and PUK. MPs and monitoring institutions have lately spoken out to bring these cases to light. This analysis crosschecked this claim by interviewing PRs and MPs and discussing these privileges with them. Based on insights of the interviewees and official documents provided by them, it is true that the KRG provided a high ministerial pension to leaders of both ruling parties and a limited circle of people outside them. This section seeks to provide detailed information about this issue and how it is linked to corruption.

First of all, after confirming the existence of this exceptional privilege, this researcher sought to establish whether there is any legal basis for the provision of this ministerial pension to political leaders or not. MPs from different political blocks asserted that there is no legal foundation for this practice. Instead, the KRG PMs and DPMs used discretionary authority to allocate exceptional pensions to their high-ranking political leaders similar to ministerial pensions (Interviewees 15, 17, 20, 24 and 30). A Change representative provided deeper insight into why the title of minister is afforded to political leaders when most of them have not served in this position:

According to laws and regulations, ministers are retired with the highest figure of salaries among public servants after leaving their positions despite their ages. This is introduced as an exceptional regulation to secure future of key political parties. As the KDP and PUK have been running most of the former KRG cabinets, most of the retired ministers were leaders of both parties. In order to expand this service to include other leaders who have not had chances to run a ministry, the KRG provided exceptional pension to high profile leaders of both ruling parties to secure their future too (Interviewee 4).

This analysis noted that despite the absence of any legal basis for this exceptional pension, the KRG does not have any particular procedure or regulation that can provide a description about this service and illustrate the eligibility requirement. When PRs and MPs were asked to provide any laws or regulatory frameworks that the KRG resorted to in order to introduce this service, they failed to do so. However, representatives of both parties stated that the KRG provided this exceptional pension as a form of compensation to freedom fighters³¹ (Interviewees 12, 21 and 27). In this line, a PUK politburo member strongly supported this service and did not see any problems in it, stating ‘rewarding those people who fought for their countries must not be negatively viewed’ (Interviewee 21). From this quotation and insights from other interviewees, this analysis argues that both parties view this policy as a form of compensation to former fighters. However, this claim is a form of justification because even compensating former warriors requires particular regulations to cover all eligible people without offering any political privilege to some and excluding others for political reasons, and this form of institutionalised regulation is absent. Another PUK leader was not happy with providing this service in an unregulated way claiming that it has been abused, as follows:

³¹ They meant former warriors, Peshmerga, who fought against successive Iraqi regimes before 1991.

If the aim of retiring politicians was to compensate former Peshmerga fighters, then nobody would disagree. However, in its current form, this practice is very doubtful. The KRG should have introduced a regulation and established an ad hoc committee to openly register people who claim this compensation, and then to investigate all applications to eventually only reward those who are eligible to have it. This must have been done once and for all because the revolution finished in 1991 and all parties know how many fighters they had during the revolution time (Interviewee 34).

Adding to the arguments of interviewee 34, the lack of an institutionalised framework enabled key KRG leaders to have a wide discretion to classify people to have a different figure of pension as compensation while it is reported that there are several people who did not have any participation in revolutions and now receive high pension. Reasons for introducing this pension seem only to be associated with appeasing those high-profile leaders who do not have opportunities to serve as ministers. Therefore, this analysis considers this form of exceptional pension as a form of abusing public authority and public wealth, which is a basic definition of political corruption.

3.2 Pensions for party cadres

The second category of exceptional pension is the one offered to party cadres down the presidency committees. This analysis noted that the KRG provided different forms of pensions to cadres of the KDP and PUK, and a few minor parties without having any regulatory framework either. This issue debated widely in the Kurdish media and several unconfirmed KRG documents leaked to the press about it reporting that both parties rewarded a large number of their cadres through this policy, which estimated an unconfirmed number of 100,000 cadres (see chapter 2). To establish better understanding and trace links of this issue with corruption, this researcher raised this issue with PRs and MPs. Interestingly, this analysis gained exclusive access to information about this topic through interviewing two cadres of the KDP and PUK, who receive forms of exceptional pension.

In reference to the conditions of eligibility for these pensions, a PUK cadre, interviewee 35, provided essential information about who are eligible to receive this pension among both parties and why this pension was introduced in the first place. According to him ‘the KRG provided exceptional pensions to cadres of both parties who were born in 1971 and

before, and in 2013 it provided pensions to those who were born in 1972 too' (Interviewee 35). This researcher was not able to find any rationale for why these years were chosen for the eligibility for this pension. It appears that the age of 41 was chosen as the minimum age of eligibility. However, a KDP cadre, interviewee 36, challenged this age group by providing examples that exceeded this condition 'there are people who receive this pension while they are much younger than the age group that our party claims, I know people receive this service while they were born for instance in 1982'. Without prejudging this form of the public service to party cadres, this researcher sought to understand the justification for rewarding party cadres with high exceptional pensions.

Representatives of the KDP and PUK addressed that the KRG provided pensions to cadres of both parties and other parties who were fighting against successive Iraqi regimes before 1991 (Interviewees 12, 21, and 27). This implies that the core justification is to reward former warriors similar to the exceptional pensions provided to the aforementioned high profile politicians of both parties. This justification raises many questions, for instance, does the KRG have any institutionalised procedure for this purpose? Having interviewed PRs and MPs and seen relevant secret formal documents, this analysis argues that the KRG provided pensions to party cadres in secret decisions without explaining any reasons or having any official procedures that describe this figure of pensions and conditions of eligibility.

Firstly, in regard to the framework of this service, the PRs and MPs failed to provide any legal and regulated bases for this exceptional reward. Most of them suggested that this pension and the aforementioned ministerial pension to high profile politicians could be classified as political decisions that the KRG introduced to mainly favour targeted groups of members of the KDP and PUK as well as a few minor parties. Interviewees stated that the pension law or any relevant laws enacted by the KP or by the Iraqi Parliament do not entitle the KRG decision makers to introduce any forms of exceptional pensions to party members. Instead, key KRG leaders, mainly the PMs and DPMs, used discretionary authority to allocate these services to members of their parties (Interviewees 5, 8, 17, and 20). This analysis suggests that as there is no institutionalised procedure for these types of exceptional services, even though the aim is claimed to be rewarding the former Peshmerga, there are possibilities that other people outside the targeted group would have benefited from it. Given the fact that the monitoring institutions were either absent or controlled by both parties, which made the KRG and its key leaders unaccountable, the

latter found it easy to allocate public positions and financial sources to their parties. This implies that this service was fully political despite its justifications.

Secondly, regarding the forms of this pension, interviewees conveyed that there are two methods through which cadres of both parties were rewarded. (1) The KRG provided a pension equivalent to some high administrative titles such as director general, consultants and experts to the KDP cadres. (2) The KRG offered a pension equivalent to high military ranks such as major general, brigadier, colonel, and lieutenant colonel to the PUK cadres (Interviewees 4 and 35). This practice begun when the KRG administrations were divided, and has continued following the reunification process. This analysis could not find any rationale why the KDP members retired with administrative titles while the PUK's received the pension of military titles and interviewees from both parties did not have any clue about the reason for choosing these titles in these different ways. As the process started during the government polarisation, it is likely that this is a reason why there is no unified procedure to regulate this service and each party has applied a model to allocate this pension to its cadres. In respect to these titles, this analysis noted that almost all cadres in this figure have been working at party offices and their party titles and positions do not have any links to the aforementioned military and administrative titles and positions. This again proves the political and unorganised nature of this service provided to favour followers of the ruling parties.

Thirdly, rewarding veterans is the only understandable justification that members of the KDP and PUK rely on to back themselves up when this exceptional pension is criticised. This analysis gained deep insight into this issue by interviewing some party cadres who receive this privilege. A KDP cadre, who receives a director general pension while he serves at a KDP office in Erbil, viewed this service positively as he stated that 'this pension is the least that the KRG must do to compensate those people who spent their youth serving their country' (Interviewee 12). This KDP cadre shared his story to justify that this practice must not be seen as a form of mismanagement or corruption:

I got accepted to study road engineering in Iran when my family was immigrant there. I could not attend the university, because I had to join the Kurdish revolution. There are many people like me who left their private lives and became fighters for their country. We are now about 50 years old. At this age, we are unable to resume our studies or to start working as an employee from scratch. There are two options ahead us, either our life must be supported by our government or we should go and sell cigarettes on the streets (Interviewee 12).

This implies that for this form of pensioner, this service is a type of compensation for their past efforts during revolutions. However, as this process did not take place within an institutionalised procedure with clear regulations and eligibility requirements, it is possible that people might have been included or excluded for political reasons. This assumption was also noticed while some interviewees commented on this issue. For instance, a KDP cadre, interviewee 36, stressed that there are violations of laws and regulations in the provision of this exceptional service as political and personal measures were considered where an institutionalised procedure was absent:

There has been an age condition to select eligible people for this privilege among followers of both parties but because there is no system to run this process, I have seen many people who are very young, for instance were born in 1982, and receive exceptional high pension. There have been loopholes that powerful leaders could intervene and reward people regardless of their age group. Besides, as there is no system to classify right people for this service therefore there are people who do not deserve this service but they gained it because of their relationship with powerful leaders. I can confirm that there are lots of people who are not eligible for this but they receive it.

The unanswered question remains, if the service aims to reward honourable freedom fighters, then why did the KRG not introduce any regulation to openly reward them? Most of the interviewed PRs and MPs showed similar concern and argued that the KRG left this issue unregulated in order to leave key officials with discretionary authority to politicise this service to favour ruling parties and exclude other people. A PUK cadre, who receives this pension while he is a journalist at one of the PUK media stations, viewed this policy as a political tool being abused in order to please supporters of the ruling parties:

Alongside compensating former warriors, both parties utilised this policy to ease the financial pressure over their treasury. They have, as a result, provided this pension to too many members of their parties who have never been fighters. They claim that this service is only to former fighters but in practice they have put in too many people to reward them with public money and buy their political support (Interviewee 35).

This is other evidence to show that this service has been politicised and abused for political ends despite officials' justifications. Interviewee 35 also acknowledged that although pensioners in this figure receive salaries in different military and administrative titles, they have never had these titles:

We, those who receive this exceptional pension, are still working for our party in different institutions and with different party positions. Our pension comes from the public treasury and we have different official titles in there. The KDP pensioners have civil titles and the PUK pensioners have military titles (Interviewee 35).

This analysis noted that lists of cadres of a few minor parties receive forms of exceptional pension too. A KDP cadre argued that this pension is not only provided to cadres of the KDP and PUK, but it includes other parties who had fought during the revolutions prior to 1991, including the Kurdistan Islamic Movement (KIM), the Kurdistan Communist Party (KCP) and the KCDP. It is noted that some cadres of these parties receive another form of pension provided by the Ministry of Peshmerga, which is somehow institutionalised. However, lists of cadres of these parties receive a pension equivalent to administrative titles after their leaders claimed this pension from the KRG PM secretly. This implies that although cadres of a few more parties receive this service, it does not make any difference because the service is still provided secretly and without any regulation. This makes this author assume that cadres of other parties might have been rewarded to silence their parties and buy their political support too. This assumption is mirrored in perspectives of some of the interviewees. For instance, a Change Movement MP provided his opinion as follows:

Both parties have tried their best to engage other parties in their corrupt deeds. Dragging a few parties to this scandals by providing retirement pension to a very limited number of their cadres is a sign of their attempts. It is evident that the KRG provided pension to cadres of these parties in return to their support to the ruling parties and to silence these parties as well (Interviewee 30)

This analysis noted that the provision of this exceptional pension has treated as a political tool to make political deals among parties. A KDP MP addressed that during the negotiations to establish the new cabinet after the general election of 2009, one of the Islamic parties asked the KRG PM to provide a pension equivalent to pensions of the title

of director generals to its members, similar to what has been done to cadres of the KDP, in return for their participation in the cabinet (Interviewee 24). Linking this claim to what Lvin Magazine published about providing pensions to around 100 cadres of the KIG cited in this thesis (see chapter 2, p.45), this researcher raised this issue with a high-profile leader of the KIG, and here is his comment:

I am a lawyer, in the legal perspective, this pension is corruption and illegal. Whoever is the receiver, I refuse this pension in its current form and I can only view it as a political privilege that ruling parties use to reward their members and buy loyalties of other parties and silence them (Interviewee 5).

This shows that the KRG did not only reward cadres of both ruling parties with different amounts of high pension compared to what civil servants³² received after being retired, but it has also used this privilege to attract other parties and engage them with corrupt deals to silence them. It appears that other parties, without attempting to stop this corruption and compel the KRG to regulate this service if it is necessary to reward former fighters, got engaged.

To sum up, it is evident that the KRG has been allocating exceptional pensions to an unconfirmed number of cadres of the KDP and PUK and a few minor parties with a justification of rewarding former freedom fighters. This service has been widely provided under different titles without any legal basis and without any regulatory framework. This analysis argues that this service remained unregulated to enable key leaders of the KRG to exercise discretionary authority to allocate a pension to some and exclude those who oppose the ruling parties. Although it seems that people do not have problems with the idea of compensating former freedom fighters, the unregulated nature of the provision of this service made even cadres of both parties sceptical about it. In particular, they stressed that there are people among this figure who do not deserve this service. The current formula of pensions for former fighters is proved to be rather suspicious and has broadly been politicised to favour the ruling parties. This practice alongside appointing too many people to public bodies has placed a considerable financial pressure on the KRG budget; and the consequences have been much clearer since 2014 as the KRG has not been able

³² According to government documents cadres who receive pensions of director generals receive amounts between ID 1,200,000 to ID 2,600,000 (see appendix B. 1, p. 224), and those who receive pensions with military titles receive around ID 1,000,000 (see appendix B.2, p. 229). This analysis noted that most of the public servants will not receive more than ID 500,000 after serving around 30 years in public institutions.

to pay the salaries of its employees on time. As the KRG is overstuffed as a result of interventions of the ruling parties, and it allocates a large amount of its budget to pay salaries and pensions, it is time to start carrying out a comprehensive reform (see chapter 8).

3.3 Pensions for ordinary people

The final category of exceptional pension is forms of salaries and pensions offered to ordinary people on the grounds of political affiliations. As it is presented in chapter 2, local commentators provided different names to those people who receive salaries from public offices without showing up there to perform any public duties. Some call them *Bin Diwar* in Kurdish, and a Kurdish observer called them illusive public employees (Kanie, 2012, p. 204). Having raised this issue with MPs and PRs, it is a fact that the KRG has been providing cash privileges to an unconfirmed number of people to buy their loyalty to both ruling parties. Interviewee 4 suggested that both parties, particularly at election times, abused public positions and wealth to reward as many people as possible to convince them to vote for them:

There are tens of thousands of people who receive public wage without showing up at any public institutions. There is no accurate number about it as the KRG has been preventing MPs and journalists from gaining any reliable insight into this issue. However, it is obvious for everybody that both parties have been applying favouritism aiming at rewarding people with public position and salaries in return to their support to the ruling parties (Interviewee 4).

Interviewees from other parties asserted that the ruling parties have been using everything available to widen their political circles and to stay more in power. A high-profile leader of the KIU commented on this issue as follows:

Both parties appointed thousands of people to public institutions since the KRG was divided to two zones. Members of the PUK, who were living at the KDP zone, were receiving salaries from the PUK government without showing up at any institutions, and the case was almost the same with the KDP members. By doing this, both parties have destroyed the public bodies to appease their members (Interviewee 9).

This kind of policy overstaffed the public institutions as it was recently revealed that the KRG pays salaries of 1,400,000 people. This rate for a region with around 5,000,000 populations is too high and placed a heavy pressure on the KRI annual budget. Although a confirmed number of *Bin Diwar* employees is still unavailable, recently, some tentative attempts were made by some MPs to investigate these cases. Suspending the salaries of these people requires courageous political will, particularly from the ruling parties as it may turn these people against them because they have been rewarded with these exceptional salaries for their political support. However, given the current financial crises, the KRG seems to have no choice but to carry out reforms in these areas (see chapter 8). The presentation of the aforementioned cases of public services politically provided to party followers shows the extreme level of patronage and clientelistic practices in the KRI. These forms of political corruption persist, and accordingly the ruling parties could widen the circle of their support at the expense of public interest. These cases show the extensiveness of political corruption in the public sector as key types of public services were provided on the political basis, and this is an answer to the first research question. The next section seeks to explore key factors that assisted political corruption to emerge in this case.

4. Factors facilitated political corruption in this area

Post-conflict literature highlights several factors that laid the ground for political corruption. The power-sharing strategy among rivals to put an end to violence and make peace might well bring that peace, but it also paves the way for corruption to emerge (see Cheng and Zaum, 2008). The primary aim of power-sharing after the end of conflict is to make the peace amongst the warring factions. Therefore, whatever it might take to maintain the peace will be welcomed, even if it is at the expense of the quality of government. Those who gain public positions after war are usually leaders of rival parties and military groups, warlords, who 'tend to have less education, less experience in government and less interest in pursuing a public agenda than other citizens' (Dininio, 2009, p. 27). This was also the case in the KRI. Leaders of both parties, who rarely had any experience in running government institutions, became government leaders. These people started utilising public positions and wealth to reward their family members, party members and friends, as shown in the case of this chapter. The rationales that those

government leaders, according to interviewees, rely on to govern the KRI is not those of laws and regulations but their revolutionary background, which makes them unaccountable to any institutions.

A KIU politburo suggests that the ruling parties still apply ‘revolutionary legitimacy’ to run the KRI and select who deserves public services and who do not:

Incumbent parties use their revolutionary background to justify the politicised practices of the KRG. Their ways to run the region has been unusual because the revolution finished in 1991. This mentality divided society into two categories: the first includes people who participated in the revolution and as a result they are eligible to enjoy exceptional services like jobs, titles, pensions, housing lands and etc. The second contains people who did not have chances to join the revolution for whatever reasons, and consequently they are excluded from spoils of revolutions (Interviewee 9).

This claim had supporters among interviewees from different backgrounds. A KDP MP criticised his party and the PUK for not institutionalising themselves and their governments over, at least, the past ten years:

Our political parties must have institutionalised themselves and stopped relying on their revolutionary background, at least after 2003. As they did not do so, they have allowed themselves to allocate public services exclusively to their members. Whatever their justifications are, their interventions in government affairs divide society and undermine social security (Interviewee 24).

Another interviewee argued that the glorification of their pasts chained the KDP and PUK in their past and prevented them from letting the newly established KRI institutions to function impartially:

When the KDP, PUK and other parties came down from mountains to run the newly liberated Kurdistan after 1991, the leaders did not have clear vision to how run the region. They introduced a model to favour their political interests and divide people on the political basis. Since then, key institutions have been run by key members of either parties and the institutions have prioritised interests of their parties. In such a circumstance, we should not expect public institutions to function impartially (Interviewee 30).

As warlords have been governing the KRI, backed up by their revolutionary background, they did not allow public institutions to grow and become functional institutions for which they can be held accountable. Post-conflict literature backs this claim as it suggests the following:

The very presence of corrupt warlords in government can impede standard approaches to fight corruption. Efforts to increase transparency and accountability in public financial management, for example, depend of the political will of leaders.... (Dininio, 2009, p. 27).

So, there has been an almost absolute absence of accountability in the KRI. All these politicised procedures to recruit people, provide public positions, and exceptional pensions to members of the governing parties were carried out without any institutionalised procedure or regulatory framework. None of the key KRG leaders who signed these informal procedures has ever been held accountable. Post-conflict literature suggests that the absence of a functioning system of checks and balances to hold public institutions accountable is a key factor that promotes the persistence of corruption (see Boucher et al., 2007).

As it has shown, the KRG has been the popular provider of services which made public institutions and key leaders have exclusive monopoly and intervention in most of the areas. People have had no choices besides turning to public institutions for jobs and other services. As public institutions were politicised and an impartial procedure was absent to treat people equally, the dominant ruling parties abused this opportunity, through their leaders in the KRG, to favour their members and drag other parties into corrupt practices to buy their political support. This practice became easier when a proper system of checks and balances was absent.

This analysis contends that the role of official monitoring institutions such as the KP, the public prosecutor, the judiciary and the auditory were absent regarding the provision of the aforementioned public services on the political basis including public job opportunities, public positions and different types of pensions. This author could not find any challenging attempts made by any of the monitoring institutions to stop the KRG leaders to politically provide these services. Although, for instance, the KP introduced a law for the establishment of the Council of the Service in 2011, the KRG has not

implemented this law yet and the KP has not been able to compel the KRG to do so. This is only an example among several other cases. There have been a few private media outlets that have revealed scandals and corruption cases and sought to play a watchdog role (as presented in chapter 6), but as their coverage and stories have not been followed up by official institutions, their role has remained fruitless. This finding shows the dysfunctionality of the system of checks and balances as the monitoring bodies have only been functioning in line with the interests of the ruling parties. Thus, they were unable to prevent the KRG leaders from politicising public services in the ways presented in this chapter.

To sum up, it could be argued that most of the factors explored in post-conflict cases appear to have played their roles in assisting political corruption to emerge in the KRI too. These factors facilitated the KRG to function politically in favour of the ruling parties and eventually distribute forms of public services presented in this chapter among people on the political basis.

Conclusion

This chapter explored the ways a few forms of public services were distributed in the KRI during the targeted transitional period (2003-2013). It highlighted how the ruling parties could turn the KRG bodies to institutions which could apply informal procedures through their support letter- *tazkia* to recruit people to public jobs, appoint public office holders, and provide different forms of exceptional pensions to high profile leaders, cadres and even to ordinary members of both parties and a few minor parties. It also presented the favours that the ruling parties gained as a *quid pro quo* for channelling public services selectively to their members.

This analysis presented evidence that key leaders of the KRG, who have always been leaders of the KDP and PUK, used their discretionary authority to direct public services selectively to members of the ruling parties and apply an absolute model of particularism to treat people. The KRG leaders managed to successfully appoint too many people, mostly among followers of the KDP and PUK, through the *tazkia* procedure, and to exclude apolitical citizens and members of other parties from this public privilege for several years. While the sixth KRG cabinet made an attempt to institutionalise this sector

by introducing the application recruitment system in 2011, which was applied in 2012 as well, the then next cabinet left the system behind and returned to the partisan appointment procedure in 2013. This shows that there has been no official recruitment procedure to appoint people to public institutions for several years, and both ruling parties instead used their dominance to fill public institutions with their members in a very obvious politicised mechanism. These procedures are obvious signs of party patronage, particularly what the literature calls bureaucratic clientelism (see Kopecký and Scherlis, 2008, p. 365), which eventually breeds political corruption.

Furthermore, the ruling parties monopolised key administrative positions and posts, be it either political appointees or positions down the ministerial level, for their loyal members. They reserved key ministries for themselves and gave a few ministries to other parties who participated in the former cabinets. Other parties were only allowed to appoint a few officials in the office of their ministers while the remaining positions in the ministries and related bodies were exclusively given to members of the KDP and PUK. The ruling parties even interfered in the appointment of non-political positions, for instance school head and deputy head teachers, public university chancellors, deans of colleges and heads of departments as well as managers of all units who were exclusively appointed from those who could carry the support letter of the KDP in the YZ and the PUK in the GZ. These practices have been somewhat widespread, there were not many differences between public institutions and partisan offices of both incumbents. This is also another obvious sign of an absolute form of particularism given the fact that political affiliation to the ruling parties has been the only key condition to hold positions at the KRG institutions.

This analysis comes to a conclusion that the ruling parties applied these politicised measures to gain further exclusive access to public institutions through their members. By holding key political and non-political positions in government, their members have protected the interests of their parties and sometimes granted their parties some illegal favours in return. For instance, key officials in government appointed by their parties returned the favour by allocating different services to members of their parties, for instance housing lands. Further, officials of the public universities granted offers to members of their parties to study undergraduate and post graduate degrees without considering entry requirements. These are forms of corrupt reciprocities taken place at the expense of laws and regulations and public interests.

This analysis also pointed out that there are forms of exceptional pensions and salaries provided to politicians, key cadres of the KDP and PUK and a few political parties without any regulations. Politburo members of the ruling parties retired as ministers, cadres of them and of a few parties receive salaries of high profile administrators like consultants and director generals, and high military ranks without ever being in these positions at all. The KRG also provided pensions and salaries to thousands of followers of both parties without showing up at any public institutions. Most of these privileges are distributed at election times to retain their support to the ruling parties. These practices have been carried out in a clear violation of public service laws and regulations. Interviewees argued that the only justification that the ruling parties have shown to legitimise these exceptional services is that the KRG has been rewarding former freedom fighters. In fact, alongside supporting veterans, both ruling parties abused this title to reward thousands of their cadres and followers because this service is not regulated and does not have an institutionalised procedure to classify those who deserve it.

This analysis concludes that these practices are extreme forms of political corruption and they have been extensively widespread in the way the KRG leaders could turn public institutions to a field where the ruling parties could effortlessly enjoy and achieve their political ends violating public positions and wealth. The cases presented in this chapter are forms of political patronage and clientelism where parties offered public jobs, positions and even cash to their members in return for securing their support and gaining further access to public bodies. These cases show that political corruption has been the rule of governing these cases as people outside the KDP and PUK could hardly have opportunities to enjoy discussed public services. This shows how extreme and extensive political corruption has been over the past ten years, and this is an answer to the first research question.

This analysis also sought to address factors that contributed to enabling the ruling parties to abuse public bodies and wealth to serve their own interests. Considering studies on post-conflict societies, some factors laid grounds for political corruption to persist such as the weaknesses of the public institutions which enabled the KRG leaders to use discretionary authority to provide public services without introducing any regulatory procedures. Almost all the exceptional services presented in this chapter were provided for party members without any regulation. The key KRG officials basically decided to do so via secret procedures to favour their members and retain their support in return. This enabled them to apply particularistic standards on the basis of political affiliations instead

of treating people equally and giving them fair access to public services, as universalistic norms. This would not have been easy if the role of government institutions in society was not critical.

As it is presented, people have had few chances apart from turning to government institutions for jobs and salaries in particular because the KRG cabinets did not have plans to improve other sectors and the ruling parties attracted people to government institutions by providing different privileges to their members. This fact maintained the KRG as the central source of goods and services. This dominant position of government regarding services and given the fact that government institutions were not functioning impartially, enabled the ruling parties to have better chances to abuse public services for their political interests.

Nevertheless, politicising public services would have been challenging if there was a functioning system of checks and balances. For instance, the KP was not effective enough to hold the KRG leaders accountable. The KDP and PUK and their allies have always had more than a simple majority of the seats of the KP to stop any attempts that might challenge their governments. This implies that there has been a lack of political accountability which allowed key officials to abuse their positions without being afraid of any forms of official questioning. These findings show that official accountability in the KRI was to a large extent absent and monitoring institutions were ineffectual, which could constrain the KRG leaders from abusing their positions. These findings mirrored arguments of post-conflict studies that have focused on the dysfunctionality of public institutions and the system of checks and balances, a lack of political will to reform, and dominant positions of political figures over fragile public institutions who turn the latter into tools to serve their own ends.

Chapter 6: Corruption zones in the media sector

Introduction

The media is perceived to be a part of the checks and balances that can play a significant role in the process of diagnosing and curbing corruption. The literature on post-conflict settings considers the media as an important element in maintaining peace after conflict and in fighting corruption. It is viewed to ‘discover illegal actions and protect people from corruption through the so-called watchdog function’ and it can also be used as a tool of propaganda ‘to spread rumours and incite hatred’ (Orgeret, 2016, pp. 15-16). In this chapter, the author explores the role of the media regarding corruption in the context of the KRI, particularly as the mainstream media is widely accused of being a part of the corruption circle in the region. This analysis does not study media as a field of knowledge, and does not explore the position of the media in the peace-building process in Kurdistan, nor its role in conflicts and wars. It is instead interested in exploring the opportunities that make the media a part of the cycle of corruption, and indeed weaken its position as an element in fighting corruption. To do so, this chapter is divided into two sections. Section 1 explores the ways media outlets finance themselves, and this is to examine to what extent sources of income affect the position of the press in the fight against corruption. For this reason, this author explores the existing types of media outlets that are classified on the basis of their financial resources and political attitudes to three types: partisan, private and shadow media. Section 2 assesses the watchdog role of the press by exploring the factors that challenge this process in the KRI.

This analysis argues that the dominant parties and key leaders of the KRG abused their positions in the critical transitional period of the KRI in order to direct public funding to hundreds of media stations without establishing any associated regulatory framework. The aim of the provision of public subsidies to media stations does not seem to have been to create functioning media stations, which can operate in favour of public interests, support developing post-conflict institutions and help maintain peace and stability in Kurdistan. Rather, this looks like an attempt to strengthen the position of the ruling parties by empowering their media outlets to continue providing politically biased coverage and information to society, and to demean their political opponents.

The findings of this thesis suggest that the mainstream press in the KRI is unable to impartially cover corruption because they are politically biased and economically too dependent. Although a few private media stations have spoken up against exploitation of public treasury and the misuse of public positions, this group of press is fading as their financial state becomes volatile in comparison to strong political and economic positions of media of governing parties. This analysis also argues that the watchdog role of private press has not brought any considerable positive change in degrees of corruption because their stories do not usually follow up by competent authorities. Considering the fact that the system of checks and balances has been weak and politicised, the watchdog role that some private press and former opposition media stations performed might have been counterproductive. In other words, they might have encouraged other people to take part in corruption when people realise that there is no effective monitoring system to punish corrupt figures. This chapter serves to answer the main research questions regarding the traits and extent of political corruption and its causes in the KRI. It concludes that political corruption persists in the media sector as most of the media stations become a part of the corruption cycle through receiving public funds secretly from the KRG in return to beautify images of public figures and highlight the achievements of government. This has turned the position of the press to become a part of corruption instead of fighting against it. This chapter also identifies factors that have facilitated political corruption in the media sector and made the attempts of a few private and partisan press belong to former opposition parties to play watchdog appear fruitless.

1. The types and financial sources of the media in the KRI

Following is the information presented in chapter 2 regarding the illegal and secret provision of public money to certain media outlets, a number of PRs, MPs and Journalists were interviewed to cross-check these claims and gain a deeper insight into this issue. This author asked the interviewees to talk about the media classification that local commentators and some international organisations highlighted in the KRI (as presented in chapter 2, p. 48). Interviewees 1, 2, 7, 16 and 33 asserted that there are three main types of media stations, namely those of the partisan, private and shadow media outlets. These classifications were mainly drawn through considering the source of income of the press and their relationship with the ruling, and other, parties. In this section, this author explores these types of media networks individually to understand their statuses, their financial sources, opportunities for corruption, and to assess the watchdog role of the press against corruption in the KRI.

1.1 Partisan Media Stations

Almost all political parties, in particular the five main parties³³, possess some news networks including satellite channels, local televisions, radio stations, websites, and some newspapers and magazines. Interviewees 1, 6 and 7 addressed that political parties mostly use their press to manifest party rhetoric, and to cover what politically suits their interests in the KRI. Regarding their sources of income, the partisan press has different financial sources. Both ruling parties have managed to gain advantage of being incumbents to direct public money to establish and run their media outlets while other parties fund their press from the budget that they receive from the KRG as public subsidies and other sources of income. It is true that eventually the sources of income for both sides is mainly the public budget but this analysis noted that some media outlets of the ruling parties have been funded directly from the KRI budget without any regulations.

Starting with the media of the KDP and PUK as two predominant ruling parties in the KRI, this analysis noted that most of the media of these two parties have benefited from the public budget either directly to buy their equipment or to receive wages for their journalists and employees. Journalists of the KDP, interviewees 3, 6 and 7, confirmed

³³ The KDP, PUK, Change Movement, KIU, and KIG.

that media outlets of their party gain direct funding from the KRG. The following is a quotation of Interviewee 3:

I do not know the details because there is a lack of financial transparency in my channel, and probably in other media stations, but I am sure that the channel for which I work financially benefits from the KDP and from the KRG too. I am sure because I have heard it from my colleagues who are close to key figures in our institution saying that part of our budget comes directly from government.

This claim shows that there are discussions among journalists about the source of income of media networks, although they seem to have less chances to see the financial reports of their institutions including their financial sources. Therefore, journalists do not possess accurate data about it. Interviewee 6, who had a key position in one of the KDP media networks at the time of the interview, provided more insight into this issue as follows:

Most of the partisan press, even the press of the KDP and PUK, are primarily financed by their parties. However, there are some exceptions as some channels are funded directly by the KRG. As far as I am concerned, the relationship between the directors of the media stations with key officials in the KRG decides whether the media can receive public funds or not. This means that allocating public funding to partisan press or to any other types of media stations is more personal than institutionalised and regulated procedures.

This journalist asserted that the KRG does not have an institutionalised procedure to finance media outlets and if any media station gains grants from the KRG, it is probably provided due to a personal relationship. This implies that there are probabilities that public wealth is abused by key decision makers considering their personal relationships with people including editors and managers of press institutes. At this point, it is obvious that the media of the ruling parties receive forms of public funding. The question here is how this funding is provided?

This author sought to explore the official roots of these claims by discussing this issue with MPs, and tried to pinpoint the official position of media financing by the KRG in the annual budget. In other words, this author pursued this line of thought through the MPs to find out how the KRG justifies allocating public budget to media outlets in its

annual budget. The MPs confirmed that there is no official allocation of any amount to media in the annual budget. However, they argued that there are loopholes in the KRI financial system that the KRG key leaders might have used to fund press outlets. So, there is no official allocation of public money to media in the annual budget and there is no legal foundation or institutionalised procedure in this regard. Some MPs provided assumptions and allegations and some claimed that they have seen a secret KRG document about this topic. For instance, a KIG MP referred to some possible ways through which the ruling parties would direct public wealth to their media stations:

Until now the KP and its MPs have no idea on how the KRG has allocated the allegedly large amount of public money to partisan press, given the documents that leaked to some media outlets. I personally think of two ways: first, as the KRG deals with the oil revenue in a very non-transparent manner, and we, as MPs, have got no idea about the oil revenue, so many of us believe that a part of this revenue goes to fund media stations of both parties. The second allegation is that there are a few ambiguous sectors in the annual budget, which we think that the KRG officials could use their discretion to move amounts of allocated money from these sectors to finance partisan media (Interviewee 17).

This accusation turned out to be a common perception among some of the other parties. A KIU MP provided a similar understanding by focusing on the secrecy of the oil revenue, which is believed to be abused to favour the ruling parties including their media outlets (Interviewee 15). These insights suggest that there are ways that key powerful figures inside the KRG could abuse it to channel public money to media outlets or to their other favourite sectors. The oil revenue is one of the dark sectors in the KRI that MPs have very limited information about it. Although this case is beyond the scope of this analysis and could be suggested as a subject of investigation for future research, given the unaccountable and non-transparent state of this sector, MPs and PRs argued that there are possibilities that a share of the revenue might be used to fund media outlets of the ruling parties.

This analysis noted that questioning whether media of both parties receive public funding does not seem necessary for local observers, as a KDP MP stated ‘media of both parties are undoubtedly funded from the public budget because otherwise how these parties could feed an army of media and journalists (literally)!’ (Interviewee 24). Considering the fact that both parties have possessed hundreds of different types of publishing and

broadcasting networks, it is difficult to finance them with their employees without receiving grants from the KRG. A Change Movement MP similar to interviewee 24 questioned the financial power of the ruling parties to fund their media stations stating that ‘the incumbent parties direct a large number of media stations including several satellite TV channels, local TV and radio stations, newspapers and magazines. The question is how they can afford running these institutions if we consider the tremendous amount of money that establishing and running these media channels require?’ (Interviewee 30).

This analysis could find an official document to prove that the partisan media of the incumbent received government funds without explaining the amounts. According to an official document signed by the then KRG PM Barham Salih, as a part of a process to institutionalise the public institutions and decline the party interventions in government affairs made by the sixth KRG cabinet, the KRG PM decided to suspend funds provided to all media outlets including partisan press (see appendix B.6, p. 234). The decision also asserted that the KRG is under no legal obligation to allocate public wealth to media outlets; therefore, they have decided to suspend these funds to all types of press. This document is definite evidence that partisan press has received funds from government without any legal foundations or any government regulations that could describe this service. This analysis argues that the grants must have been allocated for political or personal reasons which simply mean abusing public wealth and authority for non-public interests, and this is a basic definition of political corruption.

This analysis could not obtain any official document to prove how much money has been allocated to fund partisan media stations, apart from the numbers that Lvin Magazine published in 2010 regarding the amounts that the KRG allocated to establish and run some channels of both parties (see chapter 2, p. 49). This author sought to cross-check the referred document with interviewees to identify degrees of credibility. Interviewee 4 asserted that the document is accurate and signed by the then KRG minister of finance:

The document published by Lvin is one of the KRG official documents which were signed by Bayz Talabani the former Minister of the Finance that proves the allocation of public wealth to partisan press. However, there are still more corners of this issue needs light because the document only refers to a few press networks in a specific time. The question is what about other media outlets, before and after this document? Who has funded them? (Interviewee 4).

So, although there are documents to prove that the KRG has funded media outlets of both parties, there is still a lack of accurate information about the amounts allocated for this purpose. Attempting to acquire information from different sources to clarify this picture better, this author raised this issue with interviewee 33, who used to be one of the key figures in the KDP media compound. Interestingly, this journalist did not only confirm that most of the KDP and PUK's media outlets were secretly funded by the KRG, but also provided detailed information about how this process has been taking place. Here is a quotation from Interviewee 33:

To apprehend how partisan media stations are funded, we need to understand the financial status of the KRI. As the KRG was divided into two partisan administrations as a result of the civil war, the financial files of both former zones remain divided so far. The KDP and PUK have agreed on dividing the 17% share of the Iraqi budget allocated to the KRI to two shares when it arrives to the KRI. A share of 52% is allocated to the former KDP zone and 48% to the PUK zone based on the geographical factor. We all know that public institutions and monitoring process are weak in the KRI. Therefore, both parties have had chances to use their control over the KRI institutions to allocate sums from the aforementioned shares to fund their media stations or other sectors.

This important acknowledgement does not only end the discussion of doubt about financing partisan press by the KRG, mainly the incumbents, from the public budget but it also identifies the loopholes that the ruling parties used to finance their press. It proves that while the KRG has been a united government officially since 2005, the finance of the region is politically divided and the ruling parties have exercised degrees of discretion regarding the allocation of amounts to different sectors. This author crosschecked this claim with a PUK leader, Interviewee 34, and noted that the financial division to two shares as put forward by Interviewee 33 is a reality.

This politicisation of the public wealth would not have been easy if there was a functioning system of checks and balances because the government seems to have been under no official scrutiny. The KRG has been politically dominated by the KDP and PUK. The KP could not be able to hold the cabinet and key public figures accountable because

it has been also dominated by at least a simple majority of the KDP and PUK MPs³⁴, who have been representing strategies of their political parties and have not been ready to challenge their governments and hold it accountable. Given this politicised circumstance, a question needs to be raised here is when each of the ruling parties has been in charge of half of the KRI budget, then why is it surprising if they direct the public budget to their media stations? Considering the fact that they were sure that there was no systematic procedure to stop them.

Exploring this sector further, this analysis also noticed that the KRG has not only been allocating public money to help the ruling parties to buy essential broadcasting and printing materials to set up their media stations, but it has also been feeding their journalists. Without having an accurate number in hand, there is definite evidence to argue that there are partisan journalists who receive their wages from government without working for the latter. Interviewee 1 addressed that journalists of both parties publicly acknowledge that they receive their salary from the KRG without showing up and providing anything to the government institutions:

I have got many friends in the KDP and PUK media networks. We always discuss things related to our carrier. Some of them told me that they receive their salaries from the KRG while they work at their party media. I do not know how this works but I assume that their salaries come directly from the KRG while we, in other partisan media stations, are paid by our parties.

In order to gain more insight into this claim, this author asked related questions to other journalists. Interviewees 3, 6, and 7 overheard similar claims inside their media stations without having any hard evidence to prove or reject it. This author had recourse to other groups of interviewees to gain further information to check the findings of this case. Interviewee 4 from the Change Movement reiterated that there are some official KRG documents that prove these allegations:

³⁴ I would like to remind the readers that the seats of the KDP and PUK in the past four general elections were as follows: 1992: the KDP (50 seats) and the PUK (50 seats); 2005: the KDP (40 seats) and the PUK (39 seats); 2009: the KDP (30 seats) and the PUK (29 seats) and 2013: the KDP (36 seats) and the PUK (18 seats).

We have obtained some secret official documents which show that the KRG has been allocating substantial amounts of money to establish, renew, buy technical material, and finance monthly expenditure of partisan media stations. We also noted that the government even pay salaries of partisan journalists belong to both parties. There are credible KRG documents signed by the Ministry of the Finance prove that the public budget, which is supposed to be spent on improving public services, is abused to finance media of the ruling parties and to provide wages of their journalists (Interviewee 4).

During the interview time, this author could not gain any official document to prove that journalists of both parties receive their wages from the KRG. However, most recently, in 2015, documents leaked to the press uncovered that the KRG appointed tens of thousands of party members to public institutions without showing up at work places, as they are locally called *Bin Diwar* employees or some of them were retired with administrative or military titles. Among these people, there are hundreds of journalists of the KDP and PUK, who collect their salaries at public institutions and perform their duties somewhere else in one of their party's media branches (see Appendix B.2, p. 229).

Following this, the analysis argues that there have been reciprocal relationships between media of both parties and the KRG. Put it differently, the partisan press has returned the favour to the government in different ways. For instance, the press networks of both parties have been acting like state media as their parties have been running government over the past twenty years. Interviewee 1 stated that 'the press outlets of the KDP and PUK have been covering the daily activities of the KRG institutions and its leaders as state media'. This implies that the fund seems to be a type of exchange for covering government activities. Adding to this, this analysis contends that this relationship breeds further implications. For instance, firstly, this illegal funding proves that the economy or the financial sector of the KRI was politically controlled. The KRG officials treated the public wealth as a part of their party's properties enabling the ruling parties to establish a large compound of different types of media networks at the expense of other sectors. Recalling the KRG documents (appendix B.6, p. 234), the government was under no obligation to finance any media outlets, therefore the decision makers channelled public wealth to the media of both parties in order to empower them.

Secondly, the provision of public funds to partisan media empowered them and made them hold the upper hand over media of their rival parties and private media stations. In

particular, this enabled the former to buy the most advanced technology and modern equipment to boost their media performances. Furthermore, they do not need to be concerned about selling their publications as it is not their main source of income. Hence, it is noticeable that newspapers and magazines of both parties sell for a very symbolic price or some of them are being distributed free of charge. Thirdly, it could be suggested that forms of personal advantage are involved in the allocation of the public budget to the partisan press. Interviewees argued that some key public figures obtain personal favours in return for allocating public money to media stations. Interviewee 1 provided the following perspective about this issue:

Media of opposition parties and private media target the corrupt public figures and uncover their secret scandals and illegal deals. The latter, on the other side, allocates more public money to fund particular media stations of their parties to feature them and cover their activities, and to embellish their public images. Some government figures even pour public money to several semi-partisan presses for the same reason.

This is not a surprise given the fact that monitoring institutions have been absent to scrutinise these claims, and the financial sector of the KRI has been controlled by the ruling parties. Plus, the key powerful KRG figures have exercised a wide range of discretionary authority to allocate public money over the past ten years at least.

These findings show that the media stations of the KDP and PUK have been acting to a large degree as state owned media. Their main financial source has been the public treasury and their political stance has been guided to serve the incumbents and support their governments. In such a situation, it is not realistic to ask this type of media to fight corruption of the incumbents while they themselves are a part of the circle. An MP of the Change Movement commented on the position of the media of ruling parties in the corruption circle as follows:

The media stations of both incumbents have been primarily shedding light on the shiny side of the KRI as a type of propaganda for the achievements of the KRG, and turning a blind eye to corrupt activities of office holders. They do not cover scandals and corrupt deals of incumbents, neither the politicised services that the KRG has allocated to some and deprived others of it (Interviewee 30).

This analysis suggests that it is expected that the role of media outlets of the incumbent in spotting and exposing political corruption is limited given the position of their parties in the KRI over the past twenty years. However, funding them from the public budget is not justifiable and could be seen as a sign of political corruption, which makes these media stations a part of the corrupt circle in the KRI. If this is the state of the media of the incumbents, then what does the media of other parties look like?

The second type of the partisan media is the press of other parties. Media stations of the Change Movement, the KIU and KIG³⁵ are mostly known as opposition media. Other minor parties have a few media stations but they are not as effective as the press of the aforementioned three parties. This author interviewed journalists and leaders of these three parties to shed light on the financial sources of their media networks. It is suggested that the KRG does not provide any direct funding to the press of these parties similar to what has been available for the KDP and PUK press. The parties themselves allocate sums from their budget to finance their media stations. Interviewee 1 addressed that ‘the press outlets of the Change party are financed by our party, and we do not receive any amount directly from the KRG’. In regard to other parties, a KIU leader referred to the sources of income of their media stations:

We finance our media outlets by ourselves. Our party allocates a sum of its budget to the media, and there are a few fundraising campaigns taking place a few times a year to raise financial support to our media. Leaders of the party, our MPs and our ministers and our high profile public officials in the KRG, business people who are members or friends of our party and our members take part in the campaigns and support our media (Interviewee 9).

Linked to this discussion, it is noteworthy to mention that the major income source of these media outlets is eventually the budget provided to political parties by the KRG as public subsidies, which makes them benefit from the public treasury as well. However, the core difference is that these press networks do not gain any direct funding from the KRG secretly similar to what has been available for outlets of both ruling parties. This

³⁵ These three parties are mostly known as opposition parties as they served as opposition blocks inside the KP after the general election of 2009 until the establishment of the recent KRG cabinet in the early of 2014. These parties have become a part of the current coalition government that commonly called ‘eighth cabinet’ led by the KDP nominee Nechervan Barzani (see KRG Austria, 2014)

makes these media stations more independent from pressure from the government both politically and financially.

Although these press networks represent the position of their political parties in the KRI political landscape, which makes them politically biased, they have played a great role in exposing corrupt deals of the key leaders of the KRG, in particular from 2009 to 2013 when their parties were in a strong opposition battle with the ruling parties. Interviewee 4 addressed that their media outlets represent the political program of their parties, and therefore the fight against corruption is one of their aims:

Fighting corruption is one of the principles of the Change Movement. We guide our media stations to serve this aim. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that our press focuses on exposing scandals, reporting on abusing public money and positions for political and personal gains. We have added very much to the fight against corruption discourse in the KRI through media coverage. Our media stations have the honour of showing the dark side of the dual monopolisation of the KDP and PUK of the KRI institutions and its negative consequences on the public, which both parties have never wanted to be shown.

Despite their political bias to their parties, these media stations enriched the local literature on corruption in the KRI. They have sought to show another form of media coverage of political events by playing a form of surveillance. On this task, they have published official documents showing the misallocation of public wealth and abusing public offices by officials to politically provide services to people. Despite their political stance, their role in this regard has added to the role that a few private media outlets have started at least since the 2000s. A question that needs to be asked here is has their coverage regarding scandals and corrupt cases left any positive change on the attitudes of corrupt figures? This analysis answers this question in section 2 of this chapter.

1.2 Private Media Stations

The dominance of the partisan press over the media landscape of the KRI encouraged some journalists to think about establishing a new form of the press outside the domain of the political parties. In 2000, the first issue of Hawlati Newspaper as the first continuous private newspaper published in Sulaymaniah city marking a new era of private

media in the KRI (Interviewee 16). Some Interviewees addressed that private media outlets³⁶ finance themselves through income flows from advertisement, selling their publications, and donations provided by private sector and international organisations. Interviewee 16, who was one of the Hawlati co-founders, asserted that there are a few number of press stations which could be named private media associations as they are financially independent and private, ‘I am well aware of the financial sources of Hawlati and a few more private media outlets like Awene newspaper and Lvin magazine. These three press institutions are private and do not have any political or financial links to any political parties or to the KRG’ (Interviewee 16). However, Interviewee 33 questioned the degree of independence, politically and financially, of these media stations arguing that the political disagreement inside the PUK paved the way for these forms of media to emerge in the former PUK zone, as follows:

If you notice, all private media stations established and headquartered in Sulaymaniah, the city where used to be the centre of the PUK government. I personally believe that a political wing inside the PUK has been responsible for creating, and then funding these media institutions from the 48% of the share of the PUK zone that I mentioned before. So I do not think that this type of press is private. The nature of the PUK, as a party of different wings and platforms, enables its leaders to allocate sums from the public budget to establish these media stations mainly to attack each other and their rivals, primarily the KDP (Interviewee 33).

In the first glance and considering the nature of PUK, this argument seems to be interesting. However, if there were any documents regarding links between these press outlets and leaders of the PUK, the press of the KDP would have been publicised regularly to demean these media stations. As there is a lack of strong evidence to back these types of allegations, it is difficult to believe that the private media stations, mainly the three mentioned outlets and the Nalia Radio and Television station (NRT), are linked to the PUK. In particular, also given the fact that they have uncovered scandals and illegal

³⁶ There are a few terms used among people to describe this form of media outlets in the KRI such as independent press, free press, and private media. This analysis prefers private media over other terms in order not to become a part of the debates about other terms as the critics question their independence and freedom.

interventions of the KDP and PUK in government affairs which have placed a great negative impact on the reputation of the PUK too.

The Hawlati co-founder refused claims of existing political links between private media and any party, as follows:

I used to work for Hawlati. As I am not a member of the staff and have no links with it, there is no point in misguiding you as a researcher. When I was working there, the newspaper was private and had no links with any parties. The income was coming from the owner of the publishing company. Even after I left the newspaper I have kept my relationship with the staff and through that I feel like I am well aware about their financial status and their political stance. They are private and do not politically operate in favour of any political agenda, and do not have politically slanted coverage in favour of or against any political platforms (Interviewee 16).

Beside the lack of any accurate document to prove that these few private media outlets receive funds from government or political parties, recently in 25th February 2016, and due to the financial crisis that the KRI is suffering, the Hawlati owner decided to shut down the newspaper and its website because he could not afford to finance it any longer (see Hawlati, 2016). This shows that if Hawlati was funded by the PUK, it would not have been closed similar to organs of the PUK and KDP and their shadow media networks.

There is more way to challenge the allegation of links between the PUK and private media. Having accessed the archives of Lvin magazine, as a popular private media, it can be suggested that their main focus has been on the ruling parties and the legacy of their governance. This researcher could not find any clue to support the claim of Interviewee 33 on linking these press outlets to a wing of the PUK as these media have exposed politicised actions of the PUK as much as they have done against the KDP. This researcher argues that if there was any financial relationship between the PUK and any other party with these private institutions, then there would have been documents or hard evidence to prove it. If this claim had been genuine, other outlets, for instance the KDP's, would have been uncovering them. The KDP media stations would have been publishing relevant documents against the private media in a similar way as the latter has done against the partisan outlets. Interviewee 16 also highlighted that these private media,

Awene for instance, publish their financial reports annually, therefore, competent authorities could start to investigate and check them.

In regard to their role in the fight against corruption, these media stations have been playing a role in exposing the corruption of public officials and parties. Interviewee 1 commented on this issue as follows:

As the media of the ruling parties are only covering activities of the public figures and only feature their achievements, people of the KRI did not know anything about the hidden side of the lives of key office holders and their illicit behaviours until private media were born. Since then, these new media outlets started familiarising people with what their officials and leaders are doing for themselves behind their backs.

The way private media outlets have been covering events and exposing scandals and politicised deals that the KRG and both ruling parties have been secretly doing, has frustrated incumbents. A few journalists were murdered by unidentified assassins because they exposed scandals that key figures were involved in or because they criticised public figures. Interviewee 16 stated that the ruling parties started to attack private media when they realised that these media outlets are posing a serious threat to their uncontrolled and unmonitored abuse of the public sector:

The ruling parties have employed several tools and mechanisms to silence private media and prevent them from exposing their corrupt deeds. For instance, by harassing and threatening their journalists, placing economic embargo on them by preventing government institutions to do their advertisement in any of these private media. Also by establishing hundreds of semi-partisan media, this is locally called shadow press to confuse people.

Although the ruling parties have sought to demean private media by different means and question their economic and political stances, this analysis argues that this type of press does not have lucrative sources of income. Interviewee 16 suggested that ‘given the lowest wages of journalists working at private media, the quality of technology and their publishing machine, it could be suggested that in contrast to the economic state of partisan press, the private media outlets are experiencing serious financial problems’. Nevertheless, this analysis suggests that the private media has commenced forms of

watchdog reporting in the KRI over the past ten years. Having accessed the archive of Lvin Magazine, hundreds of investigative reports on different forms of exploitation of the public budget and the misuse of public offices have been published. Lvin could support most of its reports on corruption by KRG documents leaked to them. Interviewee 30 suggested that public employees assist private media to obtain secret documents:

There are public employees who are disappointed in their government and unhappy with the amount of corruption happening right in front of them. When they cannot change anything, the least they could do is to leak a document to private media or publish it on the social media to let the public know about what is happening. Private media stations have played noticeable role in encouraging people to speak up and uncover scandals and corrupt acts of office holders.

Even though the tangible achievements of their watchdog reporting are open to doubt, journalists draw some marks that the private press has left on politicians and the ordinary populace alike. Interviewee 16 suggested that the private media has compelled politicians and ruling parties to make themselves slightly familiar with criticism, and to be ready to hear what they did not want to be listening to before:

Public officials and key politicians used to only hear and watch good things about themselves and their public roles. Private media has shaken them by shedding lights on their self-interested policies and their wrongdoings. It was a little bit shocking for them at the beginning to meet journalists and media institutions that do not praise their role, but instead they seek to reveal their scandals and their actions that do not serve public interests. Therefore, private media have awakened people and office holders alike.

These achievements have not been accomplished easily. The private media has heavily paid the price and encountered serious difficulties caused by the dominant parties and key powerful figures.

To sum up, there are a few media outlets in the KRI which can be called private outlets. These media networks do not receive funds from either the KRG or any political parties. Although they have been facing economic hardship since their establishment, they could keep their financial status independent from pressure of any outside actors. They played forms of watchdog journalism by reporting on corrupt activities of public institutions and actors. These media stations have contributed in establishing and enriching local

discourse on political corruption and other types of illegal activities in the KRI. In section 2 of this chapter, their role in the fight against corruption will be assessed.

1.3 Shadow Media Stations

The shadow media³⁷ represents a substantial number of newspapers, weekly and monthly magazines, websites, some satellite channels, local television and radio stations that are secretly financed by the KRG, key public figures and politicians of both dominant parties (Interviewees 1, 2, 6, and 16). There are a few questions that can be raised about this type of the press to better understand its nature. For instance, it is reported that the shadow media outlets are funded by the KRG; does this mean that they are state owned media? Furthermore, what is their official relationship with the KRG, and with the political parties? What is the purpose of their existence? This analysis raised these questions with some journalists; interestingly one of them used to lead a media institution classified among shadow outlets, and a few PRs and MPs.

Interviewees addressed that the main source of income of these media outlets is the public treasury although they are not public media or what is called state owned media. The relationship between this type of media and the KRG is neither official nor institutionalised but it is secret and personal. Interviewee 2, who used to lead one of the media institutions that were classified as a shadow media institution, provided deep insight into this type of the press and their linkage with the KRG and political parties.

Starting with their relationship with the KRG and how they receive funds from the public treasury, below is a direct quotation from the interview:

The majority of shadow media stations are created in the KDP zone while there are a few media outlets that are indirectly linked to the PUK and supported by it. The KDP administration started to fund newly established media stations led mostly by journalists near to the KDP. The fund was directly coming from the office of the KRG PM and sometimes from the KRG Ministry of the Finance (Interviewee 2).

³⁷As a concept, shadow media is a direct translation to what is called '*Mediay Sebar*' in the Kurdish media literature.

This acknowledgement proves that the public wealth has been used to establish and fund this form of the media stations. The financial division that interviewee 33 addressed and cited above could be the way that possibly enabled the key public officials to allocate sums of public budget to these media stations without any regulations. In particular, given the fact that leaders of the KRG in both divided administrations and after the unification process have been powerful figures of the KDP and PUK, who have exercised a wide range of discretionary authority to allocate public wealth to serve their personal and political interests. More specifically, considering the lack of checks and balances institutions that could monitor the usage of public wealth and bring about accountability when the public wealth and power are abused for any purposes outside the public interests. So almost all the key factors that facilitate corruption in other post-conflict societies have also played roles in the case of the KRI.

Moving to the relationship of these media networks to parties and their purposes, interviewees addressed that these press outlets are semi-partisan media, ‘they are established and guided by either ruling party to deliver the messages that they do not want to be sent out by their organs and official channels’ (Interviewee 23). These media outlets eventually represent interests and political programs of the ruling parties, and sometimes represent interests of key figures inside these parties. The below quotation sheds light on this argument:

The ruling parties use shadow press to fight each other, their opponents and other rival parties, and even key leaders inside one party attack one another through shadow media. Therefore, it could be suggested that shadow media is the place where rivals attack one another with masks, and in a way they find it difficult to do it in their own media stations (Interviewee 2).

Presenting examples from his own media station, Interviewee 2 addressed that key public officials and leaders of the KDP sought to attack others inside their party or outside through his newspaper:

Government officials and politicians of the KDP tried several times to use our newspaper as a platform to attack their rivals inside and outside their parties. Sometimes we could stop them and we did not follow their orders, and sometimes their wish was stronger than our positions.

In addition to settling political disagreements among parties and politicians, the ruling parties have used the shadow press as an effective tool to weaken private press, as the latter has caused troubles to the way the incumbents have been running the region and that is by exposing their corrupt actions. Interviewee 16 provided the below explanation about this argument:

The ruling parties have established thousands of shadow media to undermine the performance of the private media. For instance, they have been successful in confusing people and distracting them by pouring too much information through these shadows into society about several political cases among parties and inside parties. These debates distracted people's attentions from corrupt cases that private media have been usually uncovering. They have successfully made people lose interest in what the private media was working on.

This analysis suggests that the ruling parties used more mechanisms to weaken private press and to ease the pressure that they have made over them by uncovering their illicit and corrupt deeds. One of these mechanisms was to attract journalists working in private media to move to shadow media outlets:

The shadow press has also been successful in attracting a list of good journalists who used to work either to the media of opposition parties or to the private press, and that is by providing much higher salaries and better facilities to work with them (Interviewee 16).

There are numbers of journalists who used to work with other private or opposition media outlets but they work for shadow media outlets nowadays because they receive better wages, as the latter is funded either by the KRG or the ruling parties. This for sure placed a negative impact on the performance of private media outlets. Going back to interviewee 2 to gain some exclusive insight about shadow media, this analysis noted that public money was poured by key government officials to shadow media to gain political and personal benefits, as it is suggested that:

Key government figures allocate public budget to shadow media to gain several advantages. They attack their rivals by publishing reports on their wrongdoings and sometimes propaganda against them. In

addition, they use shadow media to beautify their images by reporting on their lives and their achievements (Interviewee 2).

This journalist made it clear that the budget of his shadow outlet came from the KRG without any regulation and without any monitoring in respect to how this institution spends its budget, ‘our budget was coming directly from the office of the KRG PM and we had to provide our financial report to them. The Ministry of the Finance or any monitoring institutions did not have anything to do with us or power over our budget’ (Interviewee 2).

These findings show that the KRG key leaders abused public wealth to set up shadow outlets for political and personal reasons. These media institutions do not only function to achieve political and individual interests of the ruling parties and key powerful figures but they are also established to weaken the position of the private media in the KRI political landscape. These aims are achieved at the expense of public interests because the public budget was used to set up and run these media stations while the public budget was expected to be spent on improving public services for people.

The changes that the general election of 2009 brought placed a negative influence on the position of the shadow media outlets. The sixth KRG cabinet cracked down on shadow and partisan media and suspended their budget for a while. Interviewee 2 referred to an official resolution No. 2606 made on 3 March 2011 and signed by the former KRG PM Barham Salih (see Appendix B. 6, p. 234), which accordingly the KRG held the budgets allocated to all types of the media outlets. In the introduction of the resolution, the KRG PM announced that the reason for making this decision was ‘to reorganise the expenditure of the public budget for the sake of the public interest and public service projects’. It also identified the position of the KRG in reference to funding media outlets stressing that ‘the KRG is under no legal obligation to provide the media channels with monthly allowances’. The resolution made two important decisions about financing media outlets by the KRG as follows:

- 1) To cut the monthly funds of all media types including partisan media outlets (newspapers, magazines, televisions, and websites...etc.), which have been funded from the public budget.

- 2) To decide that the provision of public funding to any media outlets must be made under the authority of the Council of the Ministers and in light of regulations of the Ministry of the Finance and Economy (see appendix B. 6, p. 234).

As it was highlighted before, this document is definite evidence to prove that the KRG allocated public wealth to media outlets of the ruling parties and semi-partisan press without being under any legal obligations. It also proves that the KRG was allocating public wealth to institutions that do not serve public interests because the resolution identified cutting the public funding of media stations as a process of reorganising the public budget for the sake of public interests. Furthermore, the resolution authorised the KRG Council of the Ministers in light of existing regulations of the Ministry of Finance to be the only institution that can decide on issues related to funding media outlets. This indicates that before this resolution, the provision of public funding to media was personal and un-institutionalised.

Interviewee 23, who used to be one of the key figures in the KDP media offices, referred to the procedure of implementing the aforementioned KRG resolution as follows:

The KRG Minister of the Culture headed a high committee to implement this resolution. Eventually, the KRG temporarily suspended the budget of almost all government-funded media outlets from different figures for six months until the final decision to be made. Consequently, some media outlets were shut down, and budgets of others that seemed to have had a strong political support have resumed.

Interviewee 2 praised this courageous step by the KRG although it did not implement fairly as it was expected, ‘our institutions was one of the shadow media stations that closed down as a result of this resolution. However, powerful figures could exclude some shadow press from this resolution and eventually could resume their public funding’. While, as mentioned in the resolution, the KRG is still not legally obliged to finance any media outlets, this analysis argues that it does provide some printing and broadcasting press with financial support still without any regulations. This shows that the KRG is still abusing public wealth to favour the interests of a few political parties and key public or political figures.

After the introduction of the three main types of media outlets in the KRI, what is their role in the fight against corruption? Have they left any tangible influence on the level of political corruption in the KRI? Section 2 addresses these questions.

2. Assessing the watchdog role of the media

The findings presented in Section 1 of this chapter prove that a few media outlets have sought to play a watchdog role by investigating corruption allegations and reporting them. These outlets have been a few private media stations and outlets of the former opposition parties. It is true that their coverage added to the corruption literature and discourse in the KRI. It is also true that these outlets showed the untold side of the KRI governance model where the press of the KDP and PUK have only been presenting the achievements of their governments. However, these do not necessarily mean that they have left a good impact on the level of corruption. This analysis presents some points to argue that the role of the media outlets in the fight against corruption in the KRI might have been counterproductive. This section sheds light on a few challenges which limited the press to function as an effective guardian against corruption and produce the positive influence as it is expected by the convergence approach.

Starting with the quality of the media outlets per se, it could be argued that the lack of professionalism among journalists in the KRI is a challenge. This analysis stresses that the sharp quantity growth of media outlets mentioned in chapter 2 over the past ten years does not necessarily imply the improvement of the media performance in the KRI. In reference to the media professionalism³⁸, interviewed journalists addressed that the majority of media outlets and journalists in the KRI are not professional, and do not apply codes of professional conduct and ethical orientation during their profession (Interviewees 1, 2, 3, 6, 23 and 35). Linking the current status of the media outlets in the

³⁸ Professionalism is a debatable concept that brings a great deal of confusion. Hallin and Mancini (2004) present some core patterns of professionalism in the media including being autonomous stating that 'professionalization exists where journalism is developed as a distinct field with significant autonomy from other social fields, including the political field'. The second pattern is called 'distinct professional norms' which consists of some values and codes of practice of journalism, including 'obligation to protect confidential sources or to maintain a separation between advertising and editorial content' (Hallin and Mancini, 2004, p. 35). The last pattern is about 'public service orientation', which clearly means that the essential aim of the media should be serving the public interests (Hallin and Mancini, 2004, p. 36).

KRI with what Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini (2004) presented about preconditions of the media professionalism, it is clear that the vast majority of media outlets in the KRI function are similar to other units of political parties, and therefore they do not function as independent institutions from political parties, but they have obviously been used as a tool to serve political agendas instead. In such a politicised circumstance, what guides media outlets and their journalists is the interests of their parties rather than codes of conducts or public interests. The lack of professionalism in the media sector in the KRI is associated with several factors including their political position and their sources of revenue.

In regard to the political stance and the income sources of media outlets, which place a great influence on their performance, the majority of media stations in the KRI are politically biased. Media of the political parties broadcast in light of the interests of their parties; the shadow media represent interests of the ruling parties and powerful figures; and the private media despite their role in revealing corrupt actions clearly hold anti-incumbent sentiments. So there is a degree of political bias in regard to the ways the press outlets tackle issues in the KRI. This placed a significant impact on the way they tackle cases of corruption as an interest topic of this analysis. For instance, the media outlets of the ruling parties and shadow media networks tried their utmost to only highlight the achievements of government and excused themselves from revealing any corrupt scandals that the incumbents and key figures are involved in. Media of other parties treated cases of corruption in light of the positions of their parties in the KRI landscape. For instance, media of the Change Movement concentrated on corruption when the party was one of the opposition blocks (2009-2013) and the press of other parties were affected by the position of their parties. Furthermore, the private media networks have been working on uncovering corruption of the incumbents because they do not have any particular political direction although they are accused of being anti-incumbents and serve as another arm of the opposition parties. These arguments show that the political linkage of the majority of the media outlets in the KRI has influenced their positions toward cases of corruption.

In reference to financial basis, this analysis argues that the lack of sustainable financial sources seems to have challenged the watchdog role of the press. It could be suggested that the media industry is almost a new phenomenon in the region. Firms and businesspeople are rarely ready to invest their money in the media sector. Observers note

that private media stations which received their funding from local firms and international donors are less likely to survive in the long run, particularly as they do not have sustainable economic resources while partisan and shadow press are getting stronger economically (Interviewee 16). This situation has paved the way for political parties, in particular the ruling parties, to take advantage of their dominance over the KRG to finance a large number of news organizations. In this situation, the KRG has been the main donor for media stations while it does not have a fair policy for this purpose. The KRG has been allocating amounts of money to selectively finance some media outlets of parties and shadow press stations. That has undoubtedly affected the performance of these news outlets especially when it is evident that this funding is associated with some political and personal requirements and not with any institutionalised regulations and frameworks.

This situation has generated economic inequality among these three types of media stations in the KRI, which placed a considerable impact on their performances. It could be suggested that party and shadow press have been to a large extent economically sustainable so far. Most of the outlets of the ruling parties and shadow press receive public financial support from the KRG secretly and without any regulation in return for their positively biased attitudes toward the government achievements and its leaders. This made these press networks become a part of the corruption problem instead of playing a role to combat it. In other words, the majority of the press outlets has become part of a corruption circle by receiving illegal funds from government and corrupt figures in return for beautifying their images and turning a blind eye to their corrupt deeds. This analysis argues that this linkage is a corrupt reciprocal relationship which would not have been easy if there were functioning monitoring procedures in the KRI.

The ineffectual nature of monitoring processes in the KRI is linked to the political structure of the country as a challenge. It could be suggested that the complexity of the power structure of the KRI presented in chapter 4 has left marked impacts on the structure and the performance of public institutions. The KDP and PUK have exerted almost an absolute control over national institutions and wealth over the past ten years. Their domination has prevented public institutions to grow and become impartial bodies to function in favour of public interests. Therefore, the public institutions including the KP, the KRG, the judiciary, the public prosecutor, the police and other institutions have not been able to prevent the ruling parties from interfering in public affairs and eventually

abusing public wealth and power for non-public advantages. As this form of institutionalised checks and balances has been almost absent, the ruling parties have been openly able to design the media landscape of the KRI to suit their political interests and dominance using the public wealth. In such an unmonitored situation, this analysis found out that both ruling parties have used the KRG cabinets over the past ten years as a financial tool to allocate amounts of money to set up their media stations and feed their journalists. The allocation of public wealth to partisan press is an obvious evidence of the violation of public interests for political reasons. This not only widened the scale of political corruption but it also encouraged other parties to establish their own media stations and this eventually made the partisan press as a predominant type of the media in the KRI.

The absence of functioning monitoring procedures enabled the ruling parties and their powerful figures inside the KRG to widen the scale of violation of public wealth to direct it to establish hundreds of shadow networks. Accordingly, there has been a large number of shadow media stations functioning not only to provide the public with biased coverage in favour of the ruling parties and the KRG figures but also more often to attack other parties, political figures, and to undermine private media as well.

Mostly funded from the public budget, these two types of the media stations, the partisan and shadow press, have been predominant media outlets in the KRI. As presented in chapter 1, around 850 media outlets were registered by April 2013. Among this considerable number there are less than 10 private media stations while the rest are either partisan or shadow press. This analysis suggests that this overwhelming number of the partisan, mainly the incumbents' and shadow press have played a negative role when it comes to exposing corrupt deeds and monitor public officials to maintain integrity in the public sector. Plus, they also played an active role in diverting people's attention away from corrupt cases. In particular, they have been successful in mobilising the public to support a particular political interest and to guide them to pay attention to some unimportant issues related to disagreements between political figures and parties.

The absence of checks and balances placed a negative role in the performance of other media outlets, mainly the private and opposition press networks and on the level of corruption as well. Archives of Lvin, Hawlati, Awene (as three popular private outlets) and archives of the press of the Change Movement, as an active former opposition party,

mainly the former Rojnama newspaper, Sbeiy website, and the KNN TV programs, consist of hundreds of reports about different types of illegal actions and corrupt cases when public authority and wealth were guided to serve political and personal interests. However, to the knowledge of this author, none of these reports have been followed up by the existing monitoring institutions including the KP, the auditory office, the public prosecutor, and the newly established integrity office. These media networks have continued to report on corruption cases via supporting their reports with leaked KRG documents and interviewing relevant elites such as party leaders and MPs in order to promote accountability and bring corrupt figures into justice. However, as the tangible outcome of their endeavour is not noticeable, their role might have been counterproductive. In such a situation, journalists do not only waste their time and their energy reporting on corruption but they may also unintentionally encourage people to become engaged in corrupt activities. How?

According to arguments of collective action theory, in countries with rampant corruption, corruption becomes a normal activity and an expected behaviour. When monitoring institutions can not follow up news and reports on corruption, they signal to other people to have less incentive to report and fight corruption (see Marquette and Peiffer, 2015). In this type of critical situation, reporting on corruption by media outlets does not bring about positive changes in the behaviours of corrupt figures because there are no effective institutions to hold them accountable and punish them. Therefore, this analysis argues that reporting on corruption might be counterproductive because the more the press uncovers corrupt cases and deals, the more non-corrupt actors realise that the costs and risks in engaging in corrupt activities are lower than they might have expected. This eventually gives incentives to non-corrupt actors to become involved in the corruption circle.

Having interviewed elites and observed the political landscape of the KRI over the past decade, and given the fact that the private media, Hawlati as an example, has started uncovering corrupt deals of the incumbents since 2000 and the media of the other parties since at least 2009, the year of the establishment of the Change Movement, I confidently argue that their coverage has not brought any noticeable positive changes regarding levels of corruption and behaviours of corrupt figures but it instead has widened the scale of political corruption. This thesis suggests that without effective system of checks and

balances, talking about corruption and uncovering scandals and actions are likely to produce more corruption.

Finally, corruption itself as a sensitive topic is another challenge to the media outlets to play a watchdog role. This analysis is aware that there is a considerable amount of hesitancy in regard to reporting on cases of corruption due to the sensitive nature of these cases in the KRI. Therefore, reporting on cases of corruption requires precautions. Journalists in the KRI consider corruption cases as a burdensome task and one of the red lines that they must not cross (Interviewees 2 and 16). This hesitation increased while a wide range of acts of violence has been taking place against journalists in the KRI documented in reports of leading international institutions³⁹. In particular, concerns grew after the incidents of assassination of three journalists who reported on different forms of corruption by unidentified murderers. This analysis found out that as the law enforcement bodies, police and security forces, as examples, are politicised and dominated by the ruling parties, journalists find it difficult to rely on them for their safety, when they report on corrupt activities of powerful public figures and politicians. Therefore, it requires too much risk to be able to expose scandals and corrupt activities in the KRI. Interviewee 1 addressed that ‘the safety of journalists is not protected, and security forces are easily using violence against journalists’. If this is the case for all journalists, then what would the situation like for those who go further and unveil scandals in which powerful figures might have engaged? Interviewee 2 depicted the situation as ‘powerful figures can use security forces to harass those journalists who expose their corruption cases and become obstacles in their corrupt deeds. Therefore, it is not easy in our society to report on corruption and stay safe’. This is particularly easy considering the fact that military and security forces in the KRI still have links to the KDP and PUK.

Considering what Freedom House (2014) explored to identify degrees of free press around the world in its annual reports, which are political, economic and legal requirements, this analysis argues that most of the media outlets in the KRI could not be classified as a free press outlet. Free press plays an institutional guardian against corruption (see Sung, 2002, pp. 146-147). The majority of media outlets in the KRI played a negative role in widening the corruption circle and becoming a part of the problem instead of playing a watchdog role. Even those which have played forms of monitoring,

³⁹ See (Reporters without Borders, 2010; HRW, 2013; GCHR, 2014; Abdulla, 2014).

they could not generate any tangible outcomes on the level of corruption because of the absence of functioning checks and balances process to investigate and hold corrupt figures accountable.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the current status of the media outlets in the KRI by exploring their sources of income and their political stances. Through this, this thesis aimed at identifying potential corruption opportunities in this sector and the position of the press in the fight against corruption in the KRI. Given their political affiliations and financial sources, the press is classified into three main types in the KRI: the partisan, the private, and the shadow media outlets. This analysis noted that the vast majority of media outlets in the KRI are directly or indirectly linked to political parties. The latter generally allocates a sum from their budget, which mostly comes from the KRG as public subsidies, to fund their press. However, most of the KDP and PUK media stations have received financial support from the KRG regularly or from time to time. It is suggested that both parties abused their dominance over public institutions to direct public budget to establish and run their large media networks. In return, their media outlets have been covering activities of the KRG and key office holders similar to state owned press. Therefore, their media outlets have played little role in monitoring public officials and exposing potential opportunities for corruption. They generally avoid reporting on weaknesses of government but mostly shed light on the achievements. In addition, the press of other parties, mainly the three former opposition parties, are financed by their parties, and worked to play a form of monitoring role by reporting on corruption and illicit actions of the incumbents, at least between 2009 and 2013, although their coverage was constrained in light of the position of their parties in the KRI politics.

In regard to private press, this analysis learnt that they finance their activities through incomes generated from selling their publications, advertisement fees, and grants donated by local companies and international organisations. This makes this group of media outlets more independent, politically and economically, than partisan press. Given this, they have commenced considerable attempts to play a surveillance role via reporting on potential incentives of corruption, cases of exploitation of public wealth and misuse of

government offices. However, this figure of the press has been facing a tremendous political and economic pressure from the KRG and the ruling parties, which have weakened their positions day by day.

The ruling parties also created a considerable number of shadow outlets to serve narrow political and individual interests while their funds come from the public treasury without any regulations. The shadow media have played destructive roles in deepening political disagreements among parties and political figures, and also in undermining the roles that a few private media have played in regard to exposing corruption. This analysis noted that abusing public position and wealth has become an easy task as key public figures in the office of the PM or in the Ministry of the Finance could effortlessly allocate funds to establish a shadow outlet to attack others and to take personal credits.

This has taken place because the KRG officials have been abusing their positions and therefore using discretionary authority to allocate the public budget to partisan and semi-partisan press. This phenomenon clearly carries signs of state capture as political parties have successfully managed to appropriate public budget to activities that favour their political interests. It also carries signs of clientelism as the media outlets receive public funding in return for publicising the KRG activities and beautifying its achievements and images of key public officials as well as distracting people from focusing on the corrupt and illicit activities mostly exposed by other types of the media outlets. These findings provide an answer to the first research question on the traits and extent of political corruption in the KRI. These findings show that corruption plays an exclusive role in establishing and running the vast majority of media outlets in the KRI, and these media outlets keep the vicious circle going by avoiding reporting on corrupt acts of office holders in return for flowing illegal money to their coffers.

The literature on post-conflict societies suggests that the media is among a number of institutions that could become prone to corruption. Powerful political or military figures and groups take advantage of their positions, as well as the fragility of public institutions, to abuse public wealth to strengthen their own positions of authority. What the KRG key leaders have been doing regarding the establishment of hundreds of media stations mirrors other cases of conflict-prone societies. The challenges that the media in the KRI face in performing the role of whistle-blowers are varied.

First of all, the political linkage of the media with political parties could be seen as a challenge because this turned the press to function as a unit of the party body not as an independent actor. Therefore, it does not matter much to be professional to work in the press if you are a good member of the party. This is particularly true of the media of the five major parties. This has made the quality of media performance low and their coverage politically biased. This type of media station could not play an effective watchdog role. Most of the press networks are financially dependent. They are either financed by the KRG without any regulation, such as media of the KDP and PUK and shadow networks, or by their parties including some outlets of the ruling parties and other political parties. The KRG has been interfering in establishing and running media outlets of the incumbents and shadow press. The government has been the main financial supplier to these outlets without any institutionalised procedures and regulation. This has brought degrees of financial inequality among media outlets in favour of the ruling parties because their media outlets have secured their income source from the public treasury while other types of the outlets, particularly the private press, have been suffering from financial problems.

The private press played a great role in unveiling the corruption and scandals of corrupt figures. However, the lack of a functioning monitoring system made their attempts fruitless. Although they may have raised public awareness about corruption, they indirectly widened the scale of corruption through their continuous coverage of corruption. This analysis argues that revealing scandals and cases of appropriating public wealth and abusing public positions in situations when follow-up procedures are not applied to investigations of published cases and punishing corruptors will only bring more corruption. As the system of checks and balances has been almost dysfunctional, reporting on corruption by some media outlets could only encourage non-corrupt figures inside public institutions to have the incentives to take part in corruption.

The absence of a functioning monitoring process is the result of the political domination of the KDP and PUK over the KRI's institutions over the past twenty years of transition. These two parties have interfered in almost all institutions and public affairs aiming at designing and directing them to widen their political domination over the region and secure their political interests. In such a situation, when the ruling parties are powerful and unmonitored within an institutionalised procedure and the checks and balances

system is dysfunctional, corruption per se becomes a serious challenge. Journalists consider corruption as a risky topic to cover in particular if the case is related to powerful figures. Some journalists have given their lives after reporting on such cases. Therefore, the topic itself in the context of the KRI is very much challenging to the media outlets.

To sum up, the vast majority of media networks in the KRI instead of functioning as watchdog journalism to report on corruption, they have become a part of the corruption circle and therefore have widened fertile grounds for corruption in the KRI to expand. They have existed and continued on funds provided illegally and at the expense of public interests by the KRG. These situations expanded grounds for corruption because the fund reciprocated by the press through turning a blind eye on corruption and even attacking each other to move the public attention away from corrupt cases. This troubling situation has undermined the monitoring role of the press as the mainstream media stations have been obliged to fabricate news in favour of dominant parties, and ignore cases of corruption in return for the continuous flow of public money. Even though the sixth KRG cabinet sought to reorganise the financial relationship between the KRG and media outlets, it eventually could only pull the plug on a few news organisations. The hegemony of the ruling political parties over the government and the strong support from high-ranking leaders to the government-funded press made the KRG's attempt to redesign this sector almost fruitless. The question that this analysis raises is what can be done to improve the watchdog position of the press in the KRG and minimise corruption opportunities in its relationship with official institutions.

This analysis proposes the establishment of a professional national council of media to improve the position of the media and diminish some of the current corruption opportunities. Having looked at experiences of several countries including the Australian Press Council, the Media Council of Kenya, the Media Council Hawaii, the Media Council of Tanzania, and elsewhere, this analysis encourages the KP to study examples of this institution worldwide to formulate a law to establish an independent and self-regulating council of media in the KRI. This council is important because it can work as a principal body to organise the press field and decrease the political dominance over the media. It can organise the financial sources of the media by working with the public institutions including the KP and the KRG to regulate public funding to the press. By doing this, public officials will lose their discretionary authority to direct public wealth

to some media stations for personal and political benefits. This step will eventually decrease corruption opportunities in this sector, and will bring a form of justice and equality to the media sector. This Council can also play a considerable role in safeguarding freedom of speech and widening public access to information by monitoring the implementation process of the laws and regulations associated with the freedom of expression in the KRI. This Council will promote the professionalism in the press sector by working with media outlets to improve codes of conduct and bring about ethical journalism. Besides, the watchdog role of the press is also associated with the existence of a functioning monitoring system which can promptly follow up news and reports on corruption to investigate and identify corrupt figures and bring them to justice. Therefore, improving the role of the press as an institutional guardian against corruption is linked to a wider picture of an anti-corruption strategy. This analysis proposes some recommendations in chapter 8 about introducing a comprehensive anti-corruption strategy in the KRI to carry out reform.

Chapter 7: Corruption loopholes in party funding

Introduction

This chapter explores the state of party funding in the KRI as a critical area in conflict-affected societies. This case is vital considering the incredible role that finance plays in the political party's life. The literatures suggests that money enables political parties to deliver their messages to society in order to widen the scale of their activities. However, it may also undermine a fair environment for political competition, and eventually pave the way for the emergence of political corruption if it is not regulated. This thesis looks into the state of party funding in the KRI to understand how money has influenced the position of political parties in political competition and their attitudes toward corruption in the region. By doing that, it aims to find out to what extent political corruption is extensive in the party funding field.

This chapter is divided into two sections. Section 1 presents a detailed analysis on the provision of public subsidies to political parties, which is considered as their main source of income. This author, in this section, on the one hand, argues that public subsidies have enabled the emergence of numbers of new political parties in the KRI. On the other hand, as the public funding has been provided to parties politically and without any institutionalised procedure, it has been abused as a political tool in the hands of the incumbents to guide the political competition into their favours. Therefore, the provision of state subventions to parties generated some negative outcomes. For instance, firstly, it facilitated the ruling parties in gaining unsupervised and almost unlimited access to the public wealth. Secondly, it compelled the KRG to finance other parties according to their political attitudes toward the ruling parties as there was a lack of guidelines to rely on. Thus, this analysis argues that the provision of public subsidies to parties without any regulation was used to maintain the political dominance of the ruling KDP and PUK, and eventually widen the scale of political corruption in the KRI.

Section 2 explores the party engagement with businesses as another source of income for some parties. As this issue is not regulated in the KRI by law No.17 of political parties and other laws and regulations, the ruling parties and their key leaders have engaged broadly in establishing their own businesses and monopolizing lucrative public projects

for themselves via abusing their domination over government institutions. This analysis argues that the ruling parties and their powerful figures as well as controlling beneficial government projects for their companies, even managed to abuse their power to extract money from other people. This author could gain information about incidents when non-political business people were forced to share benefits of their projects with key leaders or relatives of powerful figures in return for granting the former work permit. These incidents do not only add to corruption in the party funding field but they are also signs of criminal activities.

1. Public subsidies and corruption

Prior to analysing the provision of public subsidies to political parties and its linkage with political corruption, it is important to provide a quick introduction to the legal basis of political financing in the KRI. The law No. 17 of 1993 enabled political parties in the KRI to have a wide range of sources of revenue to finance their activities. Political parties are accordingly given the right of holding ‘...moveable and immoveable properties to achieve their goals’ (Article 13/2). Further, they have rights to ‘collect contributions and accept internal grants and donations’, and ‘accept cash or in kind money from any foreign sources after informing the KRG’s Council of the Ministers’ (Article 13/5, 6). Moreover, this law grants public subsidies to political parties as another source of income, ‘a grant from the annual budget of the region will be allocated to fund political parties, and that is according to a guideline that will be prescribed by the Kurdistan National Assembly’ (Article 14). Accordingly, political parties have enjoyed a variety of sources of financial support over the past twenty years.

This analysis discussed issues related to the provision of public subsidies to political parties and how it might have affected the political contestation among parties in the KRI with PRs and MPs. Although in light of law No. 17 the KRG has offered different amounts of public subsidies to almost all registered parties, interviewees criticised this process for not been regulated as the law itself mentioned. Plus, the law overall was criticised for not providing sufficient details about how political parties can organise their financial sector, and which sources of revenue is permitted and which is not. Interviewee 26, who is a scholar in the field of political party, commented on this issue as follows:

The law No. 17 addressed political finance in a very general sense. It did not provide any sufficient details about terms and conditions of been eligible for public subsidies and how parties can generate income from other sources. Because of these gaps, this law was amended twice in 1997 and 2002 by the KP to make it more applicable although it still did not regulate public funding to parties (Interviewee 26).

The post-conflict literature suggests that leaders and parties emerging from conflict have no intentions of regulating party funding as this limits the scope of their influence (see Carlson and Walecki, 2006). The first step taken by KRI parties and leaders toward regulating the party was the aforementioned party law No.17. As this law was initially ambiguous regarding party funding, it has subsequently been amended twice. The major amendment took place in 2002 (see Kurdistan Parliament, 2002) adding two points to article 14. Firstly, the amendment obliged political parties to manage their capital through introducing an annual budget system organised in light of the existing accounting system of the KRG (Interviewee 26). This shows that the KP considered the negative impacts that unregulated finance would bring to party system per se and through that to the political system as a whole. Secondly, the amendment made financial accounts of political parties to be subject to auditing by the financial control system of the KRI, and all political parties must accordingly inform competent authorities about any amount of money that they own abroad or intend to bring in to the KRI (Interviewee 26). This point also makes political parties be accountable to the public authorities in regard to their sources of income and the way they spend them. The question is to what extent these amendments have been implemented? This analysis argues that none of these points have been implemented yet. The process of building effective monitoring institutions to bring accountability and transparency to fragile public institutions has been slow and faced a great number of challenges. As these institutions have almost been absent, parties do not reveal their sources of income to any institutions.

Considering article 14 of law No.17, this analysis noted that key points of this law regarding introducing a system to public subsidies, holding political parties accountable for their budget and expenditure have rarely been implemented. Starting with the provision of the public subsidies to political parties, this analysis argues that this issue was highly affected by the internal political problems in the KRI similar to other cases of public appointment and media politicisation covered in chapters 5 and 6. Although law

No. 17 urged the KP to introduce a framework to regulate public funding to political parties, interviewees asserted that the KP did not enact any regulation, and nevertheless the KRG kept on allocating amounts to political parties over the past ten years. This analysis knows that the 17% share of the Iraqi budget was the main source of income for the KRI after 2004 and it was divided into two shares, 58% and 42% to the former YZ and GZ respectively when it arrived at the KRI. Considering this financial status and the fact that the system of checks and balances has been almost dysfunctional and the ruling parties have had high degrees of control over national institutions, it comes as no surprise if the ruling parties used public subsidies as an effective political tool for their benefit. As the KP did not enact any law to regulate government subsidies to political parties, the KRG had provided political parties with amounts of subsidies in an un-transparent way from 1992 to the birth of opposition blocks after the 2009 general elections. Regarding this time period, PRs and MPs addressed that there was very limited information on the amount that the KRG was allocating annually to political parties, and the factors which were taken into account to decide eligibility for this service. A KIG leader stated that the lack of transparency and unavailability of information about party funding in this critical period of time was a salient feature of abusing public subsidies for the benefits of the ruling parties:

When the KRG was divided into two partisan administrations, political parties were divided to separately support the political zones too. For instance, parties which were close to the KDP stayed in the YZ and took part in the YZ cabinet, and in return they gained their financial support from the KDP government in Erbil; and others that backed the PUK, they moved to Sulaymaniah city and joint the GZ government, and they received their funding from the PUK government in Sulaymaniah. The amount each party was receiving was based on their relationship with either ruling party (Interviewee 5).

Within this party dominated circumstance, relationships with either ruling party was the key to gain a considerable number of subsidies from the KRG rather than other conditions applied in the developed world, including party seats in the parliament or votes gained at the latest elections. Interviewee 8 reiterated this claim stating that ‘the amount that each party has received so far is based on their relationship with either the KDP or the PUK in their dominant zones’. Besides the absence of regulation, there was also almost an absolute absence of any sign of transparency in this field. The KRG did not officially

reveal the share allocated to both dominant parties neither to the public nor to the KP and MPs. Interviewees from different parties claimed that the public financing as a whole has been a mysterious topic to officials and to the public alike. They addressed that other parties have been somehow revealing their budget received from the public funding while the shares of the KDP and PUK have been officially unknown even to their own MPs (Interviewees 5, 8, 9, and 17). A KIG leader commented on this issue as follows:

We know how much most of other parties received from the KRG because they either revealed their budgets themselves through the press or we discussed among ourselves as members of parties. However, no one knew how much both parties were receiving. We argued that they had unlimited access to the public budget as they had an absolute power over public institutions and wealth without any checks and monitoring procedures over the past twenty years (Interviewee 5)

Despite the lack of officially publicised data on this issue, this analysis could gain some presumably accurate data on the share of the ruling parties as well. The aim is not only to know their share but it is to prove that the provision of public subsidies to parties was unregulated and it was distributed on the basis of political agreements. A Change representative, who is an MP in the current KP round, offered some significant insights into shares of KDP and PUK from the public subsidies as follows:

Both parties since 2004 agreed between themselves on allocating US \$ 35 million monthly for each party from the 17% share of the Iraqi budget allocated to the KRI without any regulation. This figure was revealed by some key PUK leaders including Mala Bakhtyar, the head of the PUK presidential council; Adnan Mufti, the former Speaker and the PUK Politburo member, and Omar Said Ali, the former PUK Politburo member and one of the key leaders of the Change Movement at the moment (Interviewee 4).

This researcher crosschecked this claim with representatives of the KDP and PUK, and they did not deny it. The question is, what were the conditions and legitimate grounds for distributing different amounts of public funding to political parties? With reference to article 14 of law No. 17 on prescribing regulations for shares of parties, PRs and MPs confirmed that the KP did not introduce an outline to enable the KRG to provide parties with public subsidies on a clear basis. In such a situation, the KRG did not have a clear procedure to provide subsidies to parties but it instead financed political parties under the

full pressure of the ruling parties. For instance, according to the representative of the KIG ‘political parties receive financial support from the KRG on the basis of their relationships with two incumbent parties’ (Interviewee 5). Another interviewee went further to accuse the KRG of taking political credit for the ruling parties from the provision of public subsidies, as follows:

The KRG provided public funding to any party that support the dominance of both ruling parties without considering the popularity of recipients among people and their actual position in the KRI politics. The situation is as simple as this: do not argue and do not criticise the domination of both ruling parties, then secure your budget, and vice versa (Interviewee 20).

This perspective seems to be linked to anti-incumbent sentiment because it is clear that over the past ten years, the KRG financed all registered parties without any exceptions. However, all of them did not support the KDP-PUK dual dominance. The case is probably related to the amounts of subsidies and how these amounts were measured to each party. In other words, the KRG might have allocated more or less amounts to parties on the basis of their relationship with ruling parties while any institutionalised procedure was absent. The following quotation is a comment of a leader of one of the minor parties:

If one of the ruling parties noticed that a party accepts its policies and does not place any serious threat to its position, the KRG will provide the party with a huge amount of money as public subsidies, and vice versa. For instance, there is a party that does not have any seats in the KP while it receives ID 500 million, and there is a party that has a seat but receives only ID 100 million. It is clear that the KRG has been allocating these amounts in light of interests of the ruling parties (Interviewee 8).

Representatives of the KIU, KIG, and the Change Movement, Interviewees 4, 15, and 17 respectively provided similar explanations to the way they perceive the provision of public funds to political parties. Interestingly, a member of the PUK presidential council partly supported claims of other parties as follows:

The KRG has been under control of both incumbents for more than two decades. The ruling parties have used their positions to have the final say on the shares of themselves and other parties. In particular, when

there have been no laws and regulations to regulate this sector. In this circumstance, it is expected that other parties might have felt compelled to get along with the ruling parties and not to question their domination in order to secure their budget (Interviewee 34).

Representatives of the ruling parties perceived the situation in another way. They highlighted that there were some factors that the KRG took into account to decide on shares of political parties, although, the KDP and PUK have had control over public institutions. A KDP leader claimed that the KRG has distributed a sum of the public budget among political parties on the basis of some factors such as ‘the history of the party, its participation in the Kurdish national movement against successive Iraqi regimes, and its grassroots support’ (Interviewee 24). However, these points cannot be perceived as conditions because they cannot be found in any existing laws and regulations in the KRI. Moreover, Act No. 17 entitled the KP to prescribe regulatory procedures for party funding and not the KRG. Therefore, even if the KRG has been distributing public subsidies on the basis of factors addressed by interviewee 24, it has been exceeding its authority and this procedure could still be counted as an illegal action.

From what has been presented above, it is evident that there has been a great deal of secrecy and irregularity in the provision of the public subsidies to political parties in this period. The KP failed to abide by the law No. 17, which entitled it to introduce regulations to the provision of public subventions to political parties. Nevertheless, the KRG kept on providing political parties with public subsidies without having any clear procedure to rely on to distribute the subsidies. In this circumstance, the KRG is accused of abusing the unregulated status of party funding to enable the ruling parties to have unlimited access to the public wealth, or at least each gain US \$ 35 million monthly, and allocate sums to other parties on the basis of their relationship with them. The question that was further asked referred to the reasons why regulations were not introduced.

MPs addressed that the KP made some endeavours in the second round (2005-2009) and the third round (2009-2013) to regulate the provision of public funding to political parties. However, due to the lack of commitment to take this step forward by the ruling parties and disagreement among parties on a model of public subsidies, their attempts failed. Interviewees 5 and 8, former MPs, addressed that in 2007 some MPs attempted to abide themselves by law No. 17 to codify the party funding. According to them, for the first

time, more than 50 MPs out of 111 signed a draft of a bill, and according to existing procedures, they submitted it to the KPPC to schedule it to the KP meetings for official discussion, but their attempt bred nothing tangible because the KPPC did not want this step to be taken. Both former MPs suggested that there was a lack of political will among the ruling parties for such a step at the time. This analysis suggests that this step was seen as a serious threat to the incumbents because regulating public subsidies to parties would have limited the access of the ruling parties to the public wealth and constrained them from using it as a political tool to direct other parties to their interests. This finding mirrors the arguments that scholars such as Carlson and Walecki (2006) were making regarding the lack of commitment towards the regulation of party funding in post-conflict settings because this does not favour the interests of the more powerful groups.

The former KIG MP, Interviewee 5, witnessed an incidence when an MP raised this issue and asked the former KP Speaker why they do not support regulating public subsidies. The Speaker's response was as follows:

The KDP and PUK consider codifying party funding as a way to financially strengthen their opponents because accordingly the latter will gain more financial support than they do now, and that will empower their positions in the region, which eventually weaken the position of the ruling parties.

Analysing the response of the Speaker, who was the key leader of the PUK, it could be noted how the ruling parties managed to use key public institutions like the KP and their key leaders in public institutions to preserve their interests. If we only consider the amounts that the KDP and PUK received from 2004 to 2009, which was US \$ 70 million monthly for both, it would be obvious how huge the sum allocated to both parties was. If the KP could cut that amount to half through regulation, it would have saved the KRI more than US \$ 2 billion within 6 years. This amount could have been spent on improving key public services like education and healthcare. However, because the KP did not function impartially in light of public interests when interests of the ruling parties were at stake, it left the public subsidies unregulated in order to be allocated at the discretionary of key figures of the KRG, who have always been key leaders of the KDP and PUK. Therefore, the KP failed to regulate public subsidies until the general elections of 2009, which changed the political equilibrium, particularly because of the emergence of the three functioning political opposition blocks, for the first time, in the KP (explored in

chapter 4). As far as party funding is concerned, the question is, what did this new equation bring to this issue?

The new political equation brought more discussions about party funding as the then three opposition parties, the Change Movement, the KIU and the KIG prioritised regulating party funding in their electoral campaigns. MPs of opposition blocks addressed that they began challenging the KRG to bring the case of party funding to light and provide adequate information to the KP about it. While their attempts did not result in the introduction of the regulatory framework for party funding in the (2009-2013) round of the KP, it did redesign the amounts given to political parties. Particularly it sharply decreased the sum that both incumbents had received before, as it is stated 'after 2010, the amounts that the KDP and PUK received decreased from US \$ 35 million to US \$ 5 million monthly each. The Change Movement received US \$ 0.5 million and other parties received their shares somewhat similar to what they were receiving before' (interviewee 4).

In this period of time, it seemed that the KRG and KP came together to take a further step forward to regulate party funding. MPs addressed that, for the first time, the KP created a section in the KRI annual budget for the amount that was allocated for political financing. Interviewees 5, 15, and 30 referred to this issue and stated that the KP allocated a sum of ID 200 billion (estimated at US \$ 200 million) to a section of the 2010 KRI annual budget, which was called the political development section, in order to finance political parties and civil society organisations. It is noteworthy that there is not accurate data about the average amounts allocated to parties and NGOs before 2010. However, if we only calculate shares of the KDP and PUK, each US \$ 35 million monthly since 2004, they yearly received US \$ 840 million. Comparing this amount with the new figure allocated to all registered parties and NGOs after 2010, which was US \$ 200 million, it is noticeable how much public money could have been saved to other sectors if political financing was regulated at least since 2004. The 2010 budgetary law took a significant step toward bringing transparency to this sector and regulating it. However, it did not solve the essential problem of party funding in the KRI, which was associated with the absence of a regulatory framework that law No. 17 addressed to be subscribed by the KP.

A KDP MP blamed all parties for viewing this issue in a narrow self-interest based window, and not helping the KP to regulate party funding:

The unregulated circumstance favours all parties and all of them do not want the KP to pass a law to regulate party funding. All parties now receive different amounts of public subsidies according to their history, position in the KRI politics and their grassroots support. They are happy with what they receive. However, when it comes to regulating this sector, they propose models that suit their circumstance to keep their current subsidies coming in or to increase it. In such a situation, when each party, particularly five major parties, sticks to its potential favourite model and do not compromise to come to agreement, the KP could do nothing (Interviewee 24)

On the other hand, MPs of other parties reject this claim and accuse both ruling parties of delaying party funding regulation. Representatives of other parties suggested that they have been calling for more transparency around the distribution of this budget among parties, but the ruling parties managed to fail them by keeping the status quo in their favour through national institutions. To put it differently, these MPs accused the KPPC of overlooking attempts of opposition blocks to regulate party funding, and they also accused the KRG of not providing the KP with accurate data on the amounts that were allocated to each political party and the procedure that the KRG applied to distribute public subsidies among political parties (Interviewees 5, 15, and 30). MPs addressed that, from 2010 to 2013, yearly, during the budgetary discussion at the KP, they challenged the KRG Minister of the Finance to inform the House as to how the public subsidies are distributed and what the criteria are that the KRG apply to provide funds to political parties (Interviewees 15, 17 and 30). However, the Minister seemed to have attempted to deflect the attentions of MPs away from this issue through providing almost a similar answer each year to their questions. Interviewee 15 addressed that the answer of the Minister was always the same ‘you need to ask the Council of the Ministers about party funding not me’ (Interviewee 15).

Although the structure of the KP changed following the 2009 general election⁴⁰, the KP could do nothing tangible in reference to regulating party funding. MPs collected signatures and prepared drafts of bills in light of law No. 17 but the KPPC did not schedule their projects for formal discussions inside the KP and did not direct the proposals to the KP Committees for discussion. It is noteworthy that until 2013, the three

⁴⁰ New parties like the Change Movement gained 23.72% of the votes while the KDP and PUK together only gained 57.37%. For more see (Kurdistan Parliament, 2009).

members of the KPPC were from the KDP and PUK. This Council, according to the KP domestic regulation, has a wide range of authority and it is responsible for scheduling the KP meetings and ordering projects and law proposals for discussions (see Bazaz, 2013). The MPs of the opposition parties accused the three members of the KPPC of abusing their positions to appease their parties and preserve their political interests:

The KPPC was not serious about regulating party funding. While many MPs raised their voices and submitted bill proposals about party funding, the KPPC did nothing to respond them. We also asked the KRG to provide official data about the way they deal with public subsidies but they did not inform the KP about their procedures, and the KP did nothing serious to hold the government accountable for ignoring MPs' questions. We believe that the KP failed to abide itself by the law No. 17 to regulate party funding, and perform its task to question the KRG and back MPs. The KPPC must be blamed for this as they did not follow the law because it would have undermined political interests of the ruling parties (Interviewee 30).

A senior journalist and political commentator, who worked in different KDP media outlets for several years, provided a similar explanation for leaving party funding unregulated in the third round of the KP while it was a salient topic among MPs and blocks:

It is obvious that the ruling parties and their allies have been benefiting from unregulated party funding. This circumstance has brought a large amount of public money to them without any accountability. Therefore, regulating party funding at this stage of the KRI political landscape favours opposition parties. Hence the KDP and PUK will not allow this step to be taken easily (Interviewee 23).

This analysis argues that the ruling parties managed to use the unregulated state of public subsidies not only to reward their allies with considerable amounts of subventions but also to punish their opponents. Interviewed MPs and PRs from non-ruling parties addressed that the opposition parties backed the demands of public protestors of Sulaymaniah and surrounding towns in 2011, which demanded basic public services and held some political messages regarding reforms and decreasing the political domination of the ruling parties over public institutions. Therefore, the KRG suspended their public subsidies for six months. Interviewee 5 viewed this procedure as a political punishment

‘the KRG was under the pressure of the ruling parties to punish opposition parties for supporting protestors’. Interviewee 30 perceived this procedure as political punishment too:

We knew that the ruling parties did not want to regulate party funding, and that is to keep it as a political tool at their possessions to reward those minor parties that support their dominations and punish any party that dare to challenge them and question their policies. The suspension of budgets of opposition parties for six months is a proof to our claims.

Considering these discussions, this analysis suggests that although some steps were made toward regulating party funding in the third round of the KP (2009-2013), it did not reach passing a regulatory law to organise this sector. Even though the KP has started allocating a sum of ID 200 billion yearly to political development, including party funding since 2010, since an institutionalised procedure to distribute this amount was absent, the KRG continued to provide public subsidies to all parties without having any clear procedure at hand until the new general election of 2013. Following the latest election, the new round of the KP introduced law No. 5 of 2014 called the Act of the provision of political parties’ budget in the KRI (Kurdistan Parliament 2014). Due to the economic crisis that the KRI has been facing since 2014, this law has not been implemented yet.

So, the KRG has been providing public subsidies to almost all political parties without any regulation. The amount allocated to each party was agreed on by the ruling parties, the KDP and PUK, due to their political relationships with other parties. Although law No. 17 of political parties urged competent authorities to regulate this process, this has never been done because it would have negatively affected the domination of the ruling parties. As both parties, the KDP and PUK, have had almost absolute control over all public institutions, the latter have had no choice but to functioning in such a manner as to favour these parties. The KP could not introduce laws to oblige the KRG to provide parties, through a transparent procedure, with subsidies on a non-political basis. Hence, both governing parties enjoyed almost unlimited access to the 17% share of the Iraqi budget allocated to the KRI since 2004 and, according to their interests, gave other parties arbitrary sums. It is apparent that public wealth and authority has been abused to secure the political interests of the ruling parties within the party funding sector. This abuse has not only been undertaken with regards to public subsidies but parties have also abused

their public positions to secure funding from the private sector, as discussed below in this chapter.

2. Parties and businesses

The engagement of political parties and leaders with business is perceived to be sensitive and prone to corruption almost everywhere (see Van Biezen, 2003, p. 19). This sensitivity becomes more likely when it comes to cases like the KRI, where political financing as a whole and the relationship between political parties and businesses is vague and less institutionalised. This analysis is confident in its suggestion that leaving this topic unregulated has negatively influenced the political competition amongst parties in the KRI and laid the ground for political corruption and other, different types of crime.

Following local discourses on the relationship between political parties and businesses, this author interviewed three people working in business sector to gain deep insight into this issue and brought some MPs and PRs into this discussion to explore relevant issues with them. Based on information gathered from interviewees, it could be argued that the business sector in the KRI has been under significant influence from the KDP and PUK. These two parties are not only running their own businesses, but they are interfering in the projects of others and seeking shares and benefits through force. Interviewees asserted that both ruling parties have been exercising monopolisation in the business sector, and as a result of that they used their power and positions of their key leaders in the KRG to allocate almost all lucrative government projects to their own companies (Interviewees 4, 9, 15, 17, 19, 25, 27, 29, and 30). It is vital here to remind the reader that the KRG has been allocating a considerable amount of the funding coming from Iraqi national budget to different sectors, and this analysis argues that companies of both parties have enjoyed monopoly access to their projects.

I noted that almost all key political parties run businesses to different degrees and this issue has not been regulated yet. However, the political domination of the KDP and PUK over public institutions has secured their exclusive accesses to various public projects. This monopoly has reflected on a wide scale of businesses. First of all, the administrative division of the KRG into two political zones enabled both the KDP and PUK to exercise political influence over businesses in their former zones. To make it clearer, the KDP has been exercising monopolisation in businesses in the YZ and the PUK in the GZ. Interviewee 4 provided detailed information about this issue. According to him, the PUK

owns a group of companies called Nokan Company, which runs the businesses of the party, and the KDP owns a group of companies called the Dabin Group, which runs the KDP's businesses (Interviewee 4).

This analysis learned that the KRG offers all lucrative projects in the former YZ and GZ to the companies of the KDP and PUK respectively, and do not let any companies outside the circles of both parties and their leaders gain any projects:

The companies are implementing projects on behalf of the KRG. The ruling party or their powerful figures own most of the key companies. For instance, almost everyone knows that sectors like importing medicine to the KRI, and oil industry are monopolised to both parties. Tenders for vital and profitable projects are never given to companies outside these two parties. They gain the tenders directly without competition even if they are unable to implement them, they will resell the project to second companies for amounts of profit (Interviewee 15).

This claim was crosschecked with BP interviewed in this analysis and they confirmed the fact that the KRG exclusively provides public projects to companies of the ruling parties and their powerful leaders. This analysis sought to gain deeper insights into party engagement in businesses. It noted that the PUK is more centralised in running businesses than the KDP. The former owns Nokan Group that monopolises almost all key projects in the former GZ to the party while most of the key projects in the former YZ are owned by key leaders of the KDP and not by the party itself. A representative of the KDP Office of the Investment confirmed that the party only possesses the Dabin Group that controls a few projects while its key leaders are in charge of the rest of monopolised key projects in Erbil and Dohuk:

People may believe that the KDP monopolises projects in its zone, but this is not all the story. Most of the projects that people think that they are controlled by the KDP but they are in fact businesses of politicians. Our Investment Office raised this issue with the KDP presidential council, but they have told us that the projects run by companies of individuals inside the KDP are personal and do not have links with the party (Interviewee 25)

During the interview, this author raised this issue with a member of the KDP presidential council to gain more insight into it. Accordingly, it is true that most of the projects in the

former YZ are monopolised by companies of powerful politicians inside the KDP, but their benefits somehow go back to the party, as the KDP leader said ‘the key politicians that own businesses in the former YZ are ready to share their own financial accounts with their party if there is any need because they are the owner of the party too’ (Interviewee 27). The last few words of this party leader regarding party ownership by a few politicians⁴¹ are a topic for another study as signs of personalisation of politics. On the other hand, the PUK Nokan Group monopolises projects in the former GZ for the party. However, this analysis noted that this distinction is proportional, because there are key leaders of the PUK who owns monopolised businesses while their party owns Nokan Group, as Interviewee 4 put it ‘while the PUK Nokan is in charge of most lucrative projects around the Sulaymaniah province, key powerful figures of this party have their own businesses as well’. This analysis argues that both parties and their key figures are engaged with businesses to different degrees and they have abused the power of the KRG to monopolise beneficial projects exclusively for themselves.

The party intervention in the business sector is not limited in monopolising lucrative projects for their companies, but they also interfere in the businesses of other people. Other business people are forced by powerful figures to share the benefits of their projects with them in return for allowing them to set up their businesses. Interviewed BP shared stories on circumstances when powerful figures did not allow BP to set up their businesses without sharing their benefits:

People with unique knowledge come back from abroad to Kurdistan to set up a business project. They follow the formal procedure but they will eventually find themselves in a position that their project will not gain permission if it is not backed by a member of the ruling family, Barzani or Talabani, or a powerful politician. In such a situation, the investor should either step back and cancel the project or share around 30% to 50% of the benefits of their projects with the political supporters. I personally know a family came back from a European country to set up a private hospital, but they could not achieve their aim

⁴¹ Personalisation of politics and leadership is not a new phenomenon as there is a wide range of literature on this issue about different cases of politicised politics (see Blondel and Thiebault, 2009; Campus, 2010; Garzia, 2011). At first glance, it is obvious that politics and leadership among most of the key parties is to a large extent personalised despite the names and themes held by their parties. If we only look at the KDP and PUK, we can easily notice the existence of this phenomenon as the KDP President Massoud Barzani has been the leader of the party after his father since 1979 until now, and the Secretary General of the PUK Jalal Talabani has been in his position since the establishment of the party in 1975. Members of both families are occupying key positions in their parties and in the KRI institutions as well. This phenomenon exists in other parties to different degrees.

because they were not ready to share the benefits of the project with those who asked for a share in return to permission (Interviewee 19).

Interviewee 8 shared a similar story highlighting the monopolised authority that the ruling parties and their key leaders exercise in the business sector:

A friend of mine from Jordan came to Kurdistan to set up a company to produce cooking oil, but the powerful figures asked for 30% share of the benefits of the project in return to issuing a permit and letting him work without trouble. The investor did not accept this corrupt deal and went back home.

Another business person confirmed the wide scale of intervention of ruling parties, their key leaders, and even relatives of powerful figures in the process of distributing projects and establishing businesses in the KRI:

If you do not have someone powerful to back you, even a relative of key figures, you will not be able to set up a business. It is weird that brothers, cousins and other relatives of powerful public officials and politicians have become millionaires through abusing public positions to gain lucrative projects exclusively or charge other businesspeople through forcing them to share benefits with them (Interviewee 29).

These stories show the extreme monopolisation that the ruling parties and their leaders have been exercising over the business sector and projects. Although there is a lack of accurate data in regard to the amount of income that these parties and leaders roughly make from monopolising businesses, interviewees suggested that this monopolised engagement with the business sector is one of the factors which has enabled the ruling parties to pay monthly salaries to a huge number⁴² of party cadres and feeds a large number of media outlets.

As the engagement of key public figures and powerful leaders of the KDP and PUK and their companies is obvious, some representatives of both parties tried to justify the current situation and view the monopolisation as a normal phenomenon. A PUK leader suggested

⁴² Each party has a certain number of members. However, the ruling parties pay salaries to reportedly large number of their members or people work with them as their employees. Interviewee 24 suggested that a party pays salaries to around 50,000 members.

that ‘there are a considerable number of foreign business people who are doing businesses in different sectors in the KRI according to existing laws. If it is permissible for outsiders to set up businesses, why should it not be viewed as normal for political parties and their companies to gain projects?’ (Interviewee 21). This author noted that according to the existing laws, political party engagement with business is not illegal. However, their monopolisation of lucrative projects and the intervention of public figures and members of the powerful families in distributing projects and establishing businesses are the problems. Plus, abusing public position and party power to extract money from people in return for issuing them with a work permit or allowing them to set up a business project is not just a clear sign of political corruption but it is a definite criminal activity.

To sum up, this analysis suggests that party engagement with businesses in its current unregulated status in the KRI is a worthwhile source of income for political parties, especially for the ruling parties and their key leaders. It creates a considerable deal of opportunities for corruption and criminal activities as the ruling parties and elites abuse the power of government to monopolise projects for their companies and exclude whoever wants to invest in any projects outside their networks. The monopolisers also managed to induce other business people to share benefits of their projects with them without spending any amount on the projects. What is happening does not only cause a great deal of corruption but also paves the way for the commitment of a wide range of criminal offences.

Conclusion

This chapter explored party funding in the KRI focusing primarily on the public subsidies and the incomes generated from party engagement with the business sector. It is presented that although the KP enacted the significant law No. 17 to regulate political parties, the party funding remained unregulated for more than two decades. According to this law, the KP shall prescribe a guideline to regulate the public subsidies to political parties. However, the KP did not take this step forward until 2014 and that is as a result of the internal tensions between parties including civil war and administrative polarisation presented in chapter 4. This analysis stresses that the transitional period in Kurdistan has therefore generated a great deal of opportunities for corruption in the area of party financing. The KRG started providing public subsidies to political parties after law No.

17 of political parties was enacted in 1993, although there were no regulatory frameworks that could be relied on to prevent corruption, and instead dedicate public subsidies to party development, as an important actor of a democratic society. The unregulated provision of public subsidies resulted in the birth of several dependent parties which could only gain government support by not posing any serious threat to the domination of the KDP or PUK. In such an unregulated circumstance, the ruling parties managed to turn the public subsidies to a political tool to control the political landscape.

This analysis noted that the existing institutions have been under almost full control of the incumbents including monitoring institutions. This situation left the provision of public subsidies to political parties under the discretion of key government figures⁴³ without any checks. As the system of checks and balances was absent, these government leaders managed to abuse their public position to channel public subsidies to preserve the dominance of their parties over the KRI.

Although all registered political parties received public subsidies, there has been a great deal of secrecy in this process. Until 2009, shares of the KDP and PUK were secret even to the KP and MPs. It then revealed that both parties agreed to each take US \$ 35 million monthly from the public budget without any regulation. This analysis learned that shares of other parties were selected on the basis of their relationship with the incumbents while official regulation was absent. In other words, the KRG decision makers were allocating public subsidies on a political basis aiming at preserving the status quo in favour of the KDP and PUK by financially empowering them and their allies, and pressuring their opponents. When the KRG suspended subsidies of the then three opposition parties in 2011 during the public protest in Sulaymaniah city, this act was understood as a political punishment against opposition parties by the government of the KDP and PUK. Therefore, this author noted that the public subsidies provided to political parties used to preserve the domination of the incumbents.

This analysis also argues that leaving party engagement with businesses unregulated in the KRI facilitated political corruption to expand in this sector. It is addressed that the ruling parties and their key figures are broadly involved in businesses and managed to abuse their position to monopolise beneficial projects for themselves. They could then

⁴³ For instance, the KRG PM and DPM have always been leaders of both parties. Most of the decisions regarding finance were made by either of these figures.

financially enrich themselves and their parties to keep having the upper hand in the political domain. This author also pointed out that key figures of the ruling parties, their relatives and public officials abused their positions or the position of their party to extract money from other business investors in return for enabling them to establish their businesses and issuing them with a work permit. They not only benefited financially from these illegal activities but they controlled other businesses by becoming their partners. These activities widened the scale of political corruption and criminal activity in this area.

The literature suggests that codifying party funding, introducing fair and regulated state subventions, insuring transparency in this sector, and having effective and functioning implementation agencies are key factors by which countries must operate in order to diminish opportunities for corruptions in the field of political financing (see Casas-Zamora, 2008; Ewing, 1992; Ohman, 2014b; Van Biezen, 2010). These steps are usually taken slowly in post-conflict settings as they reduce illicit opportunities for self-enrichment by dominant groups, and therefore the latter usually delay them. Regarding the case of the KRI, this analysis learned that there has been an absolute absence of a regulatory framework for party funding since 1992. Although the law No. 17 drew some lines to regulate this issue, it has not been properly implemented. Thus, parties argued that the distribution of public subsidies has not just been unfair on them but it has also been used to maintain political control of the incumbents. This analysis also concluded that the provision of public subsidies to political parties without regulation turned this service to a tool in the hands of the incumbents. Plus, leaving party involvement in businesses without regulation laid grounds for the ruling parties and key leaders to enrich themselves illegally and widen the scope of corruption and criminal activities.

Linking these findings to the research questions, this analysis argues that political corruption has been extensively functioning in the field of party funding. Leaders of the KRG abused their positions to preserve interests of the ruling parties and to extract money from BP in return for issuing them with a work permit. These activities undermined fair political competition among political parties because the ruling parties were benefiting broadly from the public subsidies and their monopolised engagement with businesses. Other parties had no choices apart from supporting policies of the incumbents in return for securing their share in the public budget. This politicisation delayed the emergence of political opposition in the KRI and to a large degree prevented parties from presenting themselves as alternatives and oppositions to the incumbents. The ruling parties are

dominant and they control government, national institutions, army, and finance, leaving limited chances to other parties to work in order to shift the status quo.

Section 3: Conclusion and recommendations

Chapter 8: Concluding remarks

1. Summary of the thesis arguments and originality

Countries emerging from conflicts experience different levels of corruption. The post-conflict situation, per se, and the procedures that dominant groups apply to deal with the implications of war, decide whether corruption will persist in the longer term or if it can be quickly eradicated. Kurdistan, as a case of a conflict-affected setting, has been experiencing a series of conflicts with successive Iraqi governments, alongside internal conflicts amongst various armed groups and political factions. This continuous circle of conflicts have considerable implications for the political process in Kurdistan. However, I used the term post-conflict to refer to a specific time following the peace agreement between KDP and PUK, in particular the decade that this thesis is focused on (2003-2013).

The literature reviewed on different post-conflict cases suggests that corruption occasionally emerges when the power structure prevalent during times of war continues in another form within the post-conflict setting (Boucher et al., 2007, p. 12). The governmental structure of the pre- and post-civil war settings in Kurdistan has increased opportunities for corruption. Both dominant parties, the KDP and PUK, came to a political arrangement to share power and wealth equally without considering corruption as an associated implication. Their power-sharing model generated the incentives for corruption, and both parties not only turned a blind eye to it but exacerbated it by abusing government positions and wealth within their unified cabinets. The post-civil war governance brought degrees of peace amongst the parties, but widened incentives to politicise fragile public institutions and slowed the processes of building effective state institutions. This analysis studied three cases showing that the post-conflict environment in the KRI enabled the ruling parties to abuse public positions and national wealth to secure political and individual favours at the expenses of the public interest.

Corruption in the case of the KRI has been a controversial topic at least over the past ten years. Key figures of the KRG, leaders of the ruling and non-ruling parties, journalists, and civil society activities mentioned the existence of this phenomenon to different extents in different occasions (as presented in chapter 4). Their acknowledgement should

not be taken as a surprise considering the fact that Iraq, in which the KRI is a part, has been classified by international institutions like the TI as one of the ten top corrupt countries in the world over the past decade. Bearing this fact in mind, despite the debates around the indices of the TI, this analysis sought to unpack cases of corrupt activities in the KRI to understand levels of its extensiveness and to diagnose possible factors facilitating corruption to persist.

The literature suggests that powerful groups in post conflict-settings tend to control any recovery process and direct it to secure their own favours. In the case of the KRI, political parties played an incredible role in building the existing public institutions following the uprising of people against the then Iraqi government in 1991. However, these parties have not been successful in the transitional period to empower these institutions to become impartial bodies to serve the public interests and protect themselves from corruption. Instead, this analysis argues that the ruling parties have worked to turn the public institutions to tools to serve their political interests by different mechanisms. In chapter 5, for instance, I explored the processes of appointing people to public jobs, public positions and the provision of forms of salaries and pension. It turned out that these processes have been highly politicised and monopolised to people with certain political affiliation. For several years, people could gain public jobs if they only held a support letter, the *tazkia*, of either the KDP or PUK. This process was endemic while the KRG was divided into two political zones controlled by the KDP and PUK. Following the unification process started in 2005, the two parties seem to have agreed on distributing public job opportunities selectively to their followers in their former zones. In particular, after the allocation of a 17% share of the Iraqi national budget to the KRI since 2004, which brought several billion US dollars annually to the KRI and accordingly enabled the KRG to create thousands of new public job vacancies. The public wealth was then available, and monitoring institutions were absent to verify the process of spending it. This allowed the dominant parties to take advantage and direct it to their ends.

I argued that public job opportunities were created to become a tool to compel people to affiliate to ranks of the ruling parties in order to gain jobs. It was also used to punish people affiliated to other parties and apolitical people by excluding them from this service for several years. This process transpired to serve as a mechanism to politicise public institutions via occupying them with members of the ruling parties, and it has helped them to gain more access to public services through these people. This circle of politicisation

and abusing public bodies and wealth has not taken place only through ordinary public employers but also mostly through key public figures.

This analysis asserted that, in chapter 5, the vast majority of key public positions were given to loyal members of the KDP and PUK from key ministers to all executive positions down to the ministerial level. Despite the fact that all former KRG cabinets were coalition governments of several parties, the participation of other parties was symbolic as the key positions were only given to members of both parties. I presented that even positions of non-political bodies including head teachers and deputy head teachers of all public schools, positions of public universities such as the Chancellors, vice Chancellors, deans of colleges and schools, heads of departments and almost all managers of all units have had to be chosen from members of both parties in their former zones. As these people were backed and chosen by the ruling parties to gain their jobs, they felt obliged to follow orders of their parties. This circle of political interference in public affairs politicised public institutions further and prevented them from functioning impartially for the public interests.

My findings suggest that these privileges are not only provided to reward party followers, but they are dealt with as elements that enable the ruling parties to gain access to further services at public institutions in return. For instance, people who gained jobs and positions by party support letters or those who receive pensions and salaries because of these parties feel that they owe favours to their parties. Hence, they supported their parties at election time by voting for them and pay them further favours back in further ways. My findings suggest that for instance head teachers who worked as directors of voting stations at their schools at election times provided the ruling parties with some illicit facilities to rig elections. Furthermore, key officials at universities enabled members of the ruling parties to gain postgraduate offers at public universities even when they were unable to reach admission requirements, and they excluded candidates outside their parties even when they were qualified to gain offers. These are some forms of favours that members of the ruling parties provided to their parties in return for exceptional services that they received because of their parties.

I need to emphasise that the KDP and PUK have been holding key positions in the decision-making circle in the KRI over the past twenty years. For example, all the KRG PMs, DPMs, and essential ministers and figures around these key officials, and the

Speakers and the Deputy Speakers of the KP have been leaders of both parties who used to be warlords. They also appointed judges and figures of the judiciary and officials in other public institutions including the auditory officers. These figures, particularly the executive leaders, could appoint people, allocate salaries and pensions exceptionally to followers of their parties (as highlighted in chapter 5), and allocate exceptional public funding to media outlets of the ruling parties and other press networks close to them as presented in chapter 6. They also managed to politicise the provision of public subsidies to political parties presented in chapter 7 by allocating different amounts to parties without any institutionalised basis. I assert that these cases are linked to each other and participated in expanding the scale of corruption in the KRI particularly because a functioning system of checks and balances has been absent to break the corruption chain and hold office holders accountable for their deeds, and also because other existing parties have not been able to democratically unseat the incumbents to bring about the political change.

Returning back to cases of corrupt activities, in chapter 6, I explored the position of the media outlets in the fight against corruption in the KRI, considering what the literature suggests about the watchdog role of the press in this process. I noted that whilst media appears to be diverse in the KRI in terms of their political stance, the vast majority of them are controlled by political parties. The partisan and shadow press represent political interests of different political parties and key leaders. Although all key parties possess media outlets, the ruling KDP and PUK possess and guide their media and shadow press outlets as well. On the other hand, there are a few media outlets which do not have links to political parties, at least as obvious as other types of media do, and are known as private associations among people. This analysis noted that the KRG has been allocating public wealth to outlets of the KDP and PUK and shadow press in return for beautifying its achievements among people. The allocation of public wealth to media has never had any legal basis. The key KRG leaders used their discretionary authority to do so for the interests of their parties and themselves.

This analysis argues that there is a link between findings of chapters 5 and 6. Key KRG leaders, who have mostly been appointed because of their affiliation to the ruling parties (as argued in chapter 5), return the favour to their parties by directing public wealth to media outlets of their parties and shadow press networks, which indirectly represent interests of the ruling parties and powerful politicians and public figures. In return for the

exceptional public funding, these media outlets provide politically biased reports to the public in favour of their funders. Hence, the press loses its watchdog role and becomes a part of the political domain of the incumbents and makes the corrupt vicious circle continue. Although media outlets of other non-incumbent parties and private press have unpacked corrupt deals of the incumbents, their coverage has not generated any tangible change in the corruption circle. Why?

This analysis argues that most of the key public institutions have been, to a different extent, under the control of the ruling parties. In chapter 5, I noted that the ruling parties appointed personnel of almost all public bodies. This circumstance has weakened the performance of key monitoring institutions like the judiciary, the public prosecutor, the auditory offices, and the police, as the key law enforcement bodies. As these bodies of the system of checks and balances could not perform their duties impartially, the watchdog role of a few media outlets in uncovering scandals and reporting on corrupt deeds of officials might have been counterproductive. In other words, when media unpack scandals and report on corruption activities of office holders in a certain area, and it is not accompanied by prosecution and official investigation, the coverage might invite non-corrupt figures in these areas to take part in corruption. This claim has support among scholars like Persson, Rothstein and Jan (2013), and Marquette and Peiffer (2015).

In chapter 7, I explored the provision of public subsidies to political parties in light of law No. 17 of political parties, and the state of party engagement with the business sector as another area which local commentators perceived to be a corruption zone. It turned out that the KRG provided government funding to political parties without any regulations. It is true that law No. 17 introduced the provision of public subventions to parties but it entitled the KP to introduce a guideline for this process. However, the latter did not issue any framework until 2014 leaving this process under the discretion of the key KRG leaders. Meanwhile the KRG kept allocating sums to parties in an un-transparent way, allocating relatively large amount to both parties, US \$ 35 million to each since 2004, and different sums to other parties. I argue that when there is no institutionalised procedure and clear regulation for such a process, other parties have points to claim that this process has been running under the control of the ruling parties and the amounts offered to each party are decided according to their relationship with either of the incumbents. I could not gain any convincing answers from representatives of the KDP and PUK to argue that there has been no corruption in this process. Instead, I noted that the KRG allocated a

considerable amount of public wealth to the ruling parties and other parties to keep the status quo in favour of the incumbents. Allocating large amounts to parties close to the incumbents and suspending budgets of the then three opposition parties in 2011 is a sign of abusing public wealth for political interests, which is a basic understating of political corruption.

It is noteworthy that the KRG and KP, mostly controlled by the KDP and PUK, did not take serious steps to regulate party funding until 2014 because unregulated state was in favour of the incumbents. This enabled the KRG to channel enormous amounts of the public wealth to both parties, only considering their shares since 2004 (as presented in chapter 7), while the quality of basic public services to people including electricity, drinking water, schools and health services were low and needed more financial supports. This finding shows that the interests of the incumbents were priorities of the KRG leaders and they were ready to abuse their positions to take advantages in favour of their parties. The literature on cases of post-conflict societies supports this claim and argues that in post-conflict settings, warlords prioritise their interests over the public interest; they have no intent to regulate party funding as this would limit their power.

I also argue that leaving party funding unregulated enabled the incumbents to broadly engage in the business sector and expand scales of corruption in this sector. According to existing laws, parties are not prohibited from establishing businesses. However, what the KDP and PUK and their key leaders have been doing over the past ten years exceeds all regulations and laws. They have monopolised lucrative projects and businesses in some key areas for their companies and companies of their leaders. I learned that the monopolisation of the business sector was, to a large extent, absolute. If people outside these two parties wanted to set up their projects in an essential area, they have had to find a support among either party or powerful figures in the KRG. In return for issuing a work permit for them, the investors have had to share a rate of their interests, for instance 30% to 50%, with these key figures. In other words, positions of office holders, incumbent parties, and even social ties with them were used to extract money from business people. This corrupt activity brought illegal money to the ruling parties and their key leaders. I suggest that party funding in its current nature in the KRI breeds a considerable deal of corruption, which affects the design of political contestation among political parties as the incumbents are getting stronger financially and other parties remain under their control because of their public subsidies. This situation prevents political parties to

propose themselves as legitimate alternatives to the incumbents and challenge them in general elections.

To link these findings with the research questions, I argue that the way the KRG and the ruling parties exchanged goods and services illegally and dealt with public positions and wealth bred different forms of political corruption including political patronage, clientelism, and state capture. Features of each of these types of political corruption, as presented in chapter 2, can easily be noticed in each of the three case studies explored in chapters 5, 6 and 7. In each empirical case I clearly highlighted the corrupt activities that the ruling elites carried out to strengthen the position of their parties in the KRI politics. To answer the first research question: *What are the characteristics and extent of political corruption in the KRI?* I argue that corruption has been the key to distribute and receive public services. It is widespread in different traits and forms including patronage, clientelism, and state capture. Without corruption, people could not gain public jobs, positions and exceptional salaries and pensions. Media outlets could not gain public funding and political parties could not fairly benefit from public subventions. Therefore, corruption is widespread to a large extent and substituted regulations and laws. The ruling elites bypassed the existing laws and regulations to continue their corrupt deeds in studied areas. For instance, the KRG leaders have suspended all regulations and laws about appointing skilful candidates to public positions, and instead they followed their politicised procedure through the *tazkia* letter of the ruling parties to exclusively appoint people with certain political beliefs. They offered public funding to media outlets of the ruling parties and their shadow networks without any regulations. They directed public subsidies to interests of the ruling parties bypassing Law No. 17 of political parties. These cases show that political corruption has been extensively rampant in the KRI in the studied period (2003-2013).

In regard to the second research question: *What are the main causes of the emergence of political corruption in the KRI?* As argued previously, diagnosing the underlying causes of corruption in a particular context is not a straightforward task because there is often a grey area between the causes and the consequences of corruption (Lambsdorff, 2006, p. 4). When it comes to a society like Kurdistan, which has been under a series of conflicts, economic embargo and crisis with no sovereign institutions to hold society together, the task is further complicated. However, having looked at the literature on societies that have experienced similar challenges, to a certain extent, and recovered, partly or fully, from

war and internal conflicts, and having interviewed local elites and analysed formal documents of the KRG, this analysis has tried its utmost to diagnose the potential factors that facilitated the emergence of corruption and its persistence in Kurdistan. This attempt assists us in proposing recommendations to competent authorities to deal with corruption more effectively.

I argue that a collection of factors played roles in allowing corruption to arise and spread effortlessly. Firstly, considering the long-term conflicts that Kurdistan experienced before the birth of the KRI institutions in 1992 and thereafter, as presented in chapter 4, I would argue that the lack of stability for any significant period of time has prevented public institutions from properly growing. If we only focus on the conflicts that arose in the 1990s and 2000s until the recent war against ISIS that started in 2014, it is difficult to find a decade of peace and stability. This is a major factor that has trapped the KRI in a circle of continuous conflicts.

Secondly, the dominant position of the two major parties, the KDP and PUK, generated side effects regarding the quality of their governance. I presented that public institutions have been weak in comparison with the political parties. In such a situation, according to the theory of redistributive corruption (discussed in chapter 2), the parties would control public institutions including the government, the parliament and the judiciary and other monitoring institutions. The governing parties existed as two former guerrilla groups with a long history of hostile relationships before 1991. They resumed civil war afterwards (1994-1998), which resulted in the division of the newly established public institutions. These events added to the instability and allowed these two parties to design public institutions to suit their interests, and to direct public wealth accordingly. The three cases presented in this thesis showed that both dominant parties interfered extensively in the recruitment process to public institutions, and for several years they used government institutions to reward their members. They also monopolised the vast majority of public positions, and political and non-political positions, to give to their members, and allocated different forms of exceptional pensions to their members (see chapter 5).

So, the ruling parties dealt with government and public wealth as spoils to widen their political support amongst the populace. They have further been able to broadly abuse public wealth and their positions of power in government to direct public funds to media outlets and to political parties, as explored in chapters 6 and 7. Hence, the powerful

position of the ruling parties did not allow government institutions to grow and function in an impartial manner. As these parties had the final say regarding the recruitment of individuals to almost all public institutions, how could these institutions function independently? This politically controlled environment has led to the emergence of dependent institutions, which includes the bodies responsible for checks and balances. Following the reunification process, which resulted in the first unified KRG cabinet in 2006, fighting corruption and institutionalising public institutions have not been the central focus of the KRG. Therefore, the transitional period, as shown in the three cases considered, merely generated more opportunities for corruption, in particular as both parties appear to have agreed to share power and wealth equally, and to turn a blind eye to the corrupt activities of their figures as long as it serves the domination of both parties.

Thirdly, the absence of functioning monitoring institutions that could hold public officials accountable and limit the abuse of public wealth and positions is another key factor to study. The KRI has the parliament, the judiciary, the auditory offices, and the public prosecutor, but their roles in monitoring executive institutions and preventing parties from interfering in public affairs have been rather limited and toothless. These institutions have been built by both parties with only slight participation by other parties. Both ruling parties have had the power to appoint their loyal members to these institutions, and thus they have controlled them. As these bodies have had limited independence to function, they have been unable to properly undertake their watchdog roles of safeguarding the public interest and preventing corruption.

Fourthly, I would like to emphasise the critical position of leadership in a transitional period and the fight against corruption. The literature clearly focuses on the role that a committed national leadership can play in preventing corruption and maintaining integrity (see UNDP, 2010). In the case of the KRI, leaders of both the KDP and PUK proved that they were prepared to prioritise the interests of their parties, their families and their fellow members over the future of the country, and the quality of governance and services provided to the populace. This thesis has shown that the leaders of the KRG did not hesitate to use their discretion to guide public wealth and services to enrich themselves, and reward their party members and friends. Until now, key positions of the KRI have been occupied by leaders in both parties who used to be warlords, and that their family ties with longstanding leaders or their political connections with the dominant parties have entitled them to govern. This analysis highlighted the fact that the governing parties

and leaders still consider revolutionary legitimacy sufficient to justify their rule and to distribute public wealth and services. This mentality has prevented public institutions from growing and functioning impartially.

Finally, additional factors such as social structure, education and an underdeveloped economy may well have added to institutional and political factors in laying the foundations for corruption. However, I would argue that the aforementioned key factors played an essential role in the misuse of public positions and wealth.

Moving to the contribution that this thesis makes to knowledge, this study claims originality because it is the first attempt to examine case studies of political corruption in Kurdistan as an example of a conflict-affected setting, of a society that has experienced cycles of guerrilla warfare with successive national government and domestic conflicts, and a case of a nation that has struggled for a long time to build its own state institutions. This analysis has explored the opportunities that this transition has created for the emergence of corruption. It links the role that the KRI parties played in the process of building public institutions following the first general elections in 1992 with the existence of political corruption. This attempt constitutes a contribution to knowledge because most of the studies carried out about Iraqi Kurdistan before, which I reviewed, focuses on historical background of the fight of Kurdish parties against successive Iraqi regimes and domestic problems among traditional figures and recently among parties. However, this study provides three in-depth cases where the main focus is on the attitudes of factions and parties toward governance in a transitional period and how the interaction of political parties with public institutions lays the foundations for corruption. This analysis adds a case study to the literature of corruption in conflict-prone settings, in particular regarding cases of non-state actors. This thesis presents detailed analysis regarding the interventions of dominant political parties in the process of building public institutions and the allocation of public wealth to different sectors.

Another unique feature of this study is associated with its attempts to conceptualise corruption activities in the KRI in light of arguments of the literature. In other words, although a few media outlets covered cases of corruption, and political figures have acknowledged the existence of forms of corruption, they did not explain this in a broad context, for instance as a phenomenon in post-conflict settings or in societies with weak institutions or a dysfunctional system of checks and balances. This thesis sought to label

corrupt activities such as patronage, clientelism and state capture in light of the literature, find links between them and to diagnose the factors that have facilitated their persistence. As another sub-question of this thesis, what can be done to minimise opportunities for corruption and start a new era that will genuinely fight corruption in Kurdistan?

2. The way forward

The literature of post-conflict settings lacks a successful unique strategy that other cases can follow to fight corruption. Therefore, each country needs to draw its strategy by considering its own context. Scholars (see Hough, 2013, p. 29) assert that the one-size-fits-all approach to confronting corruption is not functioning. Moreover, seeking to copy and paste a model from a particular country into another context has been proven to fail, as '[m]easures that worked in some countries have proven to be ineffective, if not counterproductive, in others' (Bolongaita, 2005, p. 11). I would argue that there has been a lack of clear vision among longstanding political figures regarding corruption in the KRI. This claim is based on their failure to crack down on this problem after announcing a few initiatives over the past decade. Therefore, this analysis argues that the KRI is in need of a comprehensive strategy to confront corruption. Emil Bolongaita (2005) proposed three principal tasks that should be considered to effectively tackle corruption in post-conflict settings, namely: (1) identifying corruption as an underlying challenge to development, (2) proposing a workable anti-corruption policy, and (3) guaranteeing the effective implementation of the proposed anti-corruption policy. I would argue that, to date, corruption has not been tackled as an existential threat to development in Kurdistan. Previous power-sharing deals and agreements among parties did not consider corruption to be a serious challenge. Therefore, a genuine political interest in controlling corruption, and developing functioning anti-corruption policy and implementation bodies have been absent in Kurdistan. I suggest that the first step toward fighting corruption in the KRI is to introduce a comprehensive anti-corruption strategy that can address corruption properly as a threat, assess the situation and propose appropriate short- and long-term policies, and then assess the capacity of law enforcement bodies and propose further policies to empower them. As most of the public institutions in the KRI have been broadly politicised, the best institution to hold the responsibility of preparing this strategy, according to this author, is the COI.

I am well aware of the challenges that these new type of new anti-corruption agencies (ACA) or commissions (ACC) face in terms of addressing corruption, as presented by Alan Doig and David Norris (2012). However, the crisis that the KRI has been experiencing since 2014 has left no choice for KRI leaders but to reform the public institutions and draw a line on corruption. To achieve this aim and start genuine political and economic reform, the COI has considerable potential to lead this process. Considering

the characteristics that Doig and Norris (2012, p. 260) provided for an effective ACA, I would argue that the COI could play a significant role in this regard because it began as an independent institution, a permanent body specialising in fighting corruption, and is publicly funded and accountable to the KP according to its law. However, the concerns that several scholars, as cited by Doig and Norris (2012, pp. 261-262), expressed regarding the drive behind the establishment of an ACA and the environment in which it functions must be taken into consideration. In the KRI, the COI is a new institution, but it functions in a complicated environment with dysfunctional and controlled public institutions, a corrupt government, and powerful and controlling parties. Therefore, the COI should find a way to establish a pro-integrity coalition to gain friends and supporters among key actors and strengthen its position in order to be able to play any significant role.

Although this analysis does not aim to assess the COI, as it has only recently started functioning in a critical time, it is well aware that this institution is similar to other public institutions in the KRI in that it is suffering from financial and other administrative crises. It is difficult to expect a newly founded institution to function in a society with such weak or controlled public institutions as those in the KRI. Scholars such as Robert Williams and Alan Doig (2007, p. 1) argue that anti-corruption bodies only rarely make noticeable achievements in such troubling situations. Ahmed Anwar, the President of the COI, addressed the fact that the COI faces administrative and financial challenges as the KRG seeks to decrease its independence through controlling its budget and interfering with its administrative matters (Wische, 2016). I argue that it is idealistic to imagine that the COI can challenge powerful figures and companies of the KDP and PUK on its own, as the latter possess money, military forces, and administrative power. Therefore, without an inclusive plan to fight corruption, the COI would become just another example of the failure of anti-corruption agencies. The recommendations that this thesis makes could be useful when the KRG passes its current financial, political and security challenges, as highlighted previously.

Researchers address the fact that the existence of a national integrity plan as a factor facilitates the success of ACAs. The COI should plan this procedure in partnership with domestic actors including political parties, MPs, government leaders, judges and public prosecutors, the media and civil society activists, and academics, with support from relevant international organisations and donors such as the IMF, TI, UNDP, WB and other

leading organisations set up for this purpose. Scholars support building such a coalition to formulate anti-corruption strategies, as it is argued that ‘successful anti-corruption programs rely on politicians building broader coalition of support’ (Hough, 2013, p. 4). Additionally, this coalition is vital in changing the status quo against dominant corrupt actors ‘to build a broad coalition of anticorruption forces, both international and domestic, to shift the balance of forces against corrupt elements’ (Bolongaita, 2005, p. 15). It is also argued that improvement strategies directed by governments, rather than agencies such as the COI, are more likely to fail (Pope, 2000, p. 1). In post-conflict settings, executive bodies are often engaged in corruption and thus cannot be trusted to lead anti-corruption strategies on their own (Bolongaita, 2005, p. 15). Therefore, inviting diverse groups to take part in drafting a national anti-corruption strategy and building a broad coalition against corruption is a significant elementary step that the COI should take.

Inviting these institutions to help the COI to plan such a holistic strategy aims to achieve some key goals. It can engage political parties with this task, mainly the KDP and PUK, who are accused of abusing their domination to channel public positions and wealth to their ends. Without help of these two parties, at least considering the current KRI political landscape, any anti-corruption endeavour will disappointingly fail to produce positive change. Inviting other actors will broaden the support circle of the COI to pursue an effective plan to fight corruption. This coalition of different partners with the COI can scan and assess internal and external factors, which facilitate corruption to persist, and factors can constrain corruption. It can then propose effective policies and reform packages to close gaps and opportunities for corruption.

The COI can apply what Hough (2013, p. 4) called an “under-promise and over-perform” strategy in order to tackle traits of corruption and counteract them without naming them too often. This procedure is significant for avoiding using an anti-corruption strategy as a political tool to attack some parties and figures. It is also important to talk less and act more because politicians and public figures in the KRI have promised and talked too much about confronting corruption while they have rarely acted effectively to fight it. Therefore, they have raised public expectation and often did not stick to their promises, which has made the public lose trust in anti-corruption rhetoric in the KRI. Therefore, I suggest that the COI apply an under-promise and over-perform mechanism to work on developing the quality of governance, the rule of law, institutionalization of public

services, and enhancing the capacity of monitoring institutions without necessarily sounding laudable about fighting corruption.

I argue that individual initiatives to fight corruption never generate positive outcomes in cases like the KRI where monitoring institutions and bodies of law enforcement are either broadly politicised or are to a large extent dysfunctional to effectively function against corruption. In such a situation and without working within an inclusive plan, reform packages of key leaders, I argue, are used as a political tool to beautify their images among people or to respond to a particular event at a particular time. The situation of the individual anti-corruption attempts in the KRI looks like the anti-corruption initiatives in South Korea some decades ago. Hough (2013, p. 80) depicted that “[t]he point of these initiatives was less to tackle the corruption that the government was very much at the core of, and much more a symbolic attempt to placate a restive population and a very practical way of removing political opponents”.

Looking at the time when initiatives of key leaders of both incumbent parties, Talabani and Barzani, were announced, I argue that they appear more as political mechanisms to draw public attention rather than an anti-corruption agenda. For instance, Talabani announced his initiative to decrease party interventions in governmental affairs in 2008 when the political disagreement inside his party between his wing and the rival wing of his then deputy Nawsherwan Mustafa, the current leader of the Change Movement, was reaching its peak. Additionally, the KRI was preparing for a new round of general elections, which took place in July 2009. Talabani urged his party to stop interfering in governmental affairs (as discussed in chapter 4, pp. 86-87) without explaining the mechanisms that must apply to achieve these goals. I argue that Talabani’s initiative was more a tool to build new bridges with Nawsherwan and his group after their resignation from the PUK in 2006, than a plan to institutionalise the KRI bodies. The evidence is that his party continued to monopolise public services to its members in the former GZ for several years after the initiative. Moreover, they have until now, alongside the KDP, continued to politicise public services, and channel government and public wealth to their ends as discussed in chapters 5, 6 and 7. Therefore, this personal initiative failed to prevent party intervention in the KRG and institutionalise public institutions because it suffered from any workable procedure in the first place. Furthermore, considering the

complicated political landscape⁴⁴ at the time, it was not in the KDP-PUK favour to refrain from enjoying exclusive access to public services when there were no effective monitoring institutions to compel them to do so, and they were able to use the public services as tools to appease their members.

Furthermore, Barzani's first attempt to address corruption was made during the two-month public protest in Sulaymaniah city in February-April 2011 (as discussed in chapter 4, pp. 97-98). Although his initiative was more detailed than Talabani's, it disappointingly failed in placing a tangible impact on corruption, especially as Barzani promised people, twice, that they would notice outcomes of his endeavor within three months. Barzani appointed an ad hoc committee to investigate certain cases and to propose recommendations to him about cases of corruption. A few laws were enacted accordingly including law No. 3 of 2011 of the establishment of the COI and law No. 7 of 2011 of the Council of Service. The COI was established in 2013 while the Council of Service has yet to be established. Nevertheless, as the public institutions are entirely politicised and there is a lack of impartial monitoring institutions, the actual expected outcomes were rather limited. Therefore, I recommend the COI to hold a series of workshops, seminars and conferences to introduce a comprehensive reform strategy to the KRI.

The national reform strategy could prioritise the following tasks:

1. The COI is a very new institution with limited capacity and sources. The first task that this institution must undertake before examining the steps required to build an anti-corruption strategy is to assess itself. The COI can apply the 7S strategy to assess its capability, motivations and constraints ahead of its anti-corruption missions. The seven factors are System, Staff, Skill, Structure, Style, Strategy, and Shared Values (see KWOK Man-Wai, 2013), and work on empowering and developing its capacity. This is the only institution that is less politicised in the KRI, although its President has complained several times that the KRG seeks to limit its power, and that competent authorities do not provide enough help to the COI to carry out its responsibilities. I argue that even if the COI is effective enough to hold seminars, workshops and conferences to discuss strategic plans to tackle corruption in the KRI,

⁴⁴For instance, there were still tensions between the KDP and PUK over several issues regarding the way they run the KRI, and military and security forces. It was also the time when the Change Movement was born and led by former powerful figures of the PUK as a new party theming anti-corruption remarks and challenging the incumbents by unfolding their scandals and corrupt cases.

genuine political commitment to implement their strategies and prevent political parties from interfering in governmental affairs remains key to any success.

2. Assessing the condition of the COI and other monitoring institutions in terms of their staffing, their institutional capacity, their independence and degrees of party and executive intervention, and their integrity and accountability issues inside these institutions. Then, relevant policies should be proposed to empower them.
3. Assessing public institutions in terms of their employees and conducting reforms to reduce the heavy overstaffing in KRG institutions. It was recently revealed that at least 1.4 million people receive different types of salaries from the KRG; this same figure was 130,000 in 1992, and 450,000 in 2000, respectively (Fayaq, 2016). This figure, for a region with a population of around 5 million, must be perceived as a serious warning call. The COI can work with the KRG on a plan to decrease this number and find jobs for people in other sectors. This step is politically critical because the KDP and PUK have provided jobs for most of their members at public institutions in return for their support. Shrinking public institutions and decreasing this large number will affect these people and they may eventually blame their parties. For this reason, the KRG is very reluctant to take steps at the moment although it suffers from a serious economic crisis which has made it unable to pay employees monthly wages. This step requires careful consideration to come up with a plan that does not generate political disagreements. For this, I recommend the COI with the help of other institutions to work on implementing law No. 7 of 2011 to establish the Council of Service by bringing MPs, GOs and ULs to discuss the importance of this Council for the KRI. This institution can conduct bureaucratic reform in the KRI and take responsibility of the recruitment process. Without this Council, key powerful figures of the KRG will keep their discretionary power to politicise public recruitment. The COI can work with its partners to encourage the KRG and political parties to support this step in order to decrease opportunities for politicising public services. This step may require new laws to identify the power of the PM and DPM considering the wide range of discretion which they have been exercising over the past twenty years. This council cannot decrease opportunities for corruption in public sector in a straightforward manner. It requires genuine support from the KRG, KP and key political parties.
4. The COI can work with its partners to establish a form of national agreement among parties aimed at supporting national institutions in their attempts to reform and refrain

from interfering in public affairs. This step, of course, requires a strong commitment and political will among parties, mainly the KDP and PUK, to go forward because it decreases their chances of enjoying exceptional access to public services.

5. The lack of accountability is a serious challenge that most post-conflict settings will face. The KRI has already been affected by the long tradition of unaccountability in Iraq. In addition, in its model of governance after 1992, the KRI did not have a clear vision to enhance political accountability. Instead, the ruling parties kept interfering in public institutions, and accordingly the KRG continued in providing public services on a political basis without being held accountable for its politically biased actions by any monitoring institutions. The COI can work to develop accountability in the KRI by working with key institutions to empower their performance such as the KP, the auditory, and the judiciary and public prosecutor to function impartially according to the appropriate laws and regulations. This could be achieved by holding seminars and workshops on the importance of these institutions and training MPs and government figures to raise their awareness about the importance of the system of checks and balances. This step requires political commitment and time. The will of political parties decide to what extent they are ready to develop the quality of governance in the KRI, and it also requires time to achieve these goals.
6. I would argue that fighting corruption also has social and educational roots. The COI can work with the Ministry of Education and Academic institutions to review the education curriculum in order to insert appropriate values of integrity and equality that will allow children to be raised with universal values. The NGOs, CSOs and universities can play their roles in spreading universalistic values of anti-corruption, integrity, honesty, and equality regardless of race, religious and political affiliation in society. These steps could change people's attitudes toward corruption and make corrupt actions less tolerated (KWOK Man-wai, 2013).
7. The COI could include institutions of civil society and the media in the anti-corruption coalition in the KRI. Starting with the CSOs and NGOs, firstly, I suggest that the COI can work with the KRG Department of NGOs to empower NGOs and enhance their impartial role in society. These two institutions can work together to decrease party control over NGOs by preventing the KRG from supporting any NGOs directly favouring certain political interests. The Department of NGOs can assess these institutions and make them effective to support anti-corruption initiatives and

mobilizing people to take part in anti-corruption projects to raise their awareness. Secondly, in regard to the free media, the COI can hold a conference for the issue of media and corruption. It can propose the establishment of the council of media considering successful stories (as suggested in chapter 6, p. 171). This Council can be a principal institution to organise the media sector in the KRI. This institution can reduce political influence over press and decrease discretion of public officials to allocate public wealth secretly to some partisan press. The COI can work with media networks and the KP to formulate a proposal after studying successful cases to establish this Council. Then this council can work with the media networks and political parties to organise the media sector to function more as watchdog institutions that unfold cases of corruption. Disclosing scandals and corruption cases do not result in decreasing corruption if there is no effective rule of law to follow up corruption stories and bring corruptors to justice. Therefore, the role of the press in fighting corruption can generate positive outcomes when monitoring institutions are impartial and functioning and law enforcement agencies are implementing laws and regulations without considering any political influences. This development requires a comprehensive institutional, bureaucratic, legal and political reform to create an environment where media coverage of corruption is not tolerated and ignored by competent authorities.

8. Reforming political finance could be another essential issue that the COI could prioritize in its steps to enhance the political diversity and competition among parties, as an essential tool in democratic society. I argue that there are two dominant parties, the KDP and PUK, which have control over military, security forces, administration, local authorities, universities and schools, and also the public wealth. Their control over these sectors is pending issues and implications of civil war and administrative polarisation (as presented in chapter 4). This domination contradicts what O'Dwyer (2004, p. 521) mentioned as requirements for effective political competition, which are robust and institutionalised political party system. In other words, although elections are held almost regularly to elect the KP, there is no fair competition among parties. I studied party funding in chapter 7 and argued that party funding is abused to, financially, preserve the domination of both parties. I also argued, in chapters 5 and 6, that the ruling parties have abused their domination to channel public positions and wealth to their members and their media outlets. In such a controlling political situation, political competition among political parties in the KRI looks like the race

between a bicycle and a sports car as Ewing (1992, p.14) depicted while he was addressing the importance of regulating party funding. A vital institutional and political reform is needed in the KRI to lay a fair environment for political competition among parties. The COI can help the KRG and political parties to step toward, and institutionalise, the KRI institutions and diminish party control over public wealth and authority. I do not possess a checklist to provide to these parties in order to carry forward this process. However, I suggest it requires deep consideration regarding key institutions like the army, the security forces, the police, academic institutions, and the KRI sources of income. For instance, the COI could hold workshops and seminars to MPs, PRs, military officers, and ULs to talk about models and mechanisms that can be applied to institutionalise army and security forces in order to free them from the control of political parties. Discussions can be held to propose reform packages to other sectors too.

9. Enhancing the performance of the judiciary is another key issue. I argue that the judiciary in the KRI has started stepping toward independence recently. In their current state, the judges and their institutions are not strong enough to challenge powerful corrupt figures. The incumbent parties have exercised their domination over the judiciary similar to other institutions. In response to Barzani's⁴⁵ recent attempt to tackle corruption⁴⁶, Latif Mustafa, a former MP and a senior judge wrote an article about the status of the judiciary system in the KRI. Mustafa stated that the judiciary is unable to confront corruption and take its responsibility accusing both incumbent parties of weakening judiciary and controlling power, as follows:

Corruption has become an organised crime more powerful than the government and law... corrupt figures act like mafia groups protecting their illegal interests in the status quo. Despite the fact that I doubt Barzani's intention to fight corruption, not only me but also most of people because he did not keep his previous promises to fight corruption, I would like to inform him that the judiciary system cannot

⁴⁵Barzani is the de facto President of the KRI nowadays, his rivals for instance the Change Movement call him illegitimate President, because his term, which was extended for two years by the KP in 2013 after serving two terms since 2005, ended in 19 August 2015. The KP attempted to amend the 2013 law to elect a new President but it failed because of the political disagreement among parties. Barzani's party, the KDP, has shut down the parliament by preventing its Speaker Yusuf Sadiq from entering to Erbil, the KRI capital city, to peruse his work since October 2015.

⁴⁶Despite the disagreement over his position, Barzani announced a new round of initiative to fight corruption. For this purpose, he has started meeting with key monitoring institutions including the COI, the judiciary, the auditing offices and public prosecutors to encourage them to effectively act against corruption (see Zaman, 2016).

hold this task in its current status. Not because we do not like this task but because we do not have power, which is controlled by Barzani's party and the PUK. The judiciary is controlled and divided between two political zones and the key powerful figures have control over them (Shekh Ameen, 2016)

In such a circumstance, I recommend the COI to work with the judiciary authority to train and empower its employees and judges, by holding seminars and workshops to discuss ways and methods that can help this important institution to enhance its ability to function against corruption. This process requires scanning the state of the public prosecutor and the condition of the rule of law. This step is vital to identify the areas that need empowerment to make the judiciary an independent and effective institution to investigate corruption cases. Enhancing the rule of law and empowering the judiciary as a tool to fight against corruption has a wide support among scholars. Pope (2000, p. 64) proposed a negative relationship between corruption and judiciary '[a] primary indicator that corruption is spiralling out of control is a dysfunctional judicial system'. It also mirrors the findings of research on cases of Bangladesh and Kenya. Hough (2013, p. 53) proposed that to improve their situations, these two countries should 'take steps to deepen and expand the rule of law and the importance of legal objectivity...' and 'introduce, or increase, the independence of the judiciary from the legislature and primarily the executive'. In addition, in successful cases like Singapore, strong judiciary plays a critical role as it is argued that '...the tough law, the judiciary successfully created a regime of punishment that is deterrent enough to hammer home, loud and clear, the message that corruption does not pay' (Hin, 2013, p. 126).

This step should also include reviewing the legal database of Iraq and KRI to identify laws and regulations that can be employed to decrease opportunities for corruption. I argue that this issue requires more consideration and the COI should discuss this issue in a broader scale to include all forms of corruption as presented in more circulated literature. This step is particularly significant because I noticed during the interviews conducted for this thesis that some people, even elites, do not view illicit acts of the incumbent parties (presented in chapters 5, 6 and 7) as cases of political corruption.

The COI can generate recommendations to strengthen the rule of law by empowering the judiciary system and maintaining the clear separation of power between legislature, executive and the judiciary with checks and balances between them. I also assert that

there are a few vital points to the judiciary system to function independently and effectively, which the COI can emphasise. These include the appointment of judges based on their professional qualities without interference from any outside actors including the political parties; the codes and standards of conduct must be reviewed to maintain the judicial function in high standards of Judicial conduct without allowing political parties, leaders of the executive or any other external factors to interfere in their performance. As political parties have been the strongest political actors in the KRI with the ability to control and interfere in almost all sectors, I recommend that judges must refrain from any political activities including membership in any parties after being assigned, and that is to avoid bias and conflict of interests. These points can be highlighted in the code of conduct for the KRI judges.

The politics in the KRG at the moment is rather complicated due to the political, economic and military challenges that the KRI is facing since 2014. The key political parties are pursuing their narrow interests and pushing forward despite the fight against ISIS and economic crisis. The KP has been shut down by the KDP since October 2015. There are concerns over the possibility of dividing the KRI again into two former zones, the GZ and the YZ due to political disagreements between the KDP on one side, and the PUK-Change⁴⁷ on the other. Conducting reform is a demand and almost all parties claim it while a clear vision to carry it out is still absent. It is difficult to imagine that currently the parties are ready to support the COI to pursue such a step toward formulating a national anti-corruption strategy. If the key parties and leaders do not come together to show genuine political will to rescue the KRI and people at this critical point of history, talks and promises generate nothing as it is argued that without political will 'governments' statements to reform civil service, strengthen transparency and accountability and reinvent the relationship between government and private industry remain mere rhetoric' (Bayramov, 2008, p.6).

As representatives of the major parties become partners of the COI through the proposed workshops, I recommend that the parties must sign an agreement among themselves under the supervision of the COI as the host showing their readiness to support the COI and other monitoring institutions to combat corruption. This agreement could compel

⁴⁷ The PUK and Change Movement signed a new political agreement on Tuesday 17 May 2016 to normalise their relationships and work together in the KRI politics and Iraq to fight corruption, maintain transparency in oil and gas revenue, and consolidate parliamentary system in the KRI (see NRT, 2016; Rudaw, 2016).

parties to refrain from interfering in public affairs and develop political will to support anti-corruption policies. Without such a step, it is difficult for the COI to make fruitful moves against corruption. To make this step achievable, the COI must not take sides and make the ruling parties feel like they are offenders and that these activities will eventually go against their interests. Instead, these activities must embrace all parties, NGOs and other partners. Without working with political parties, it is difficult to improve the quality of governance and public institutions, accountability, transparency, and the performance of media and NGOs because political parties, mainly the KDP and PUK have control to different degrees over all these institutions.

3. Direction for future research

This analysis suggests that there are a number of desirable topics that might be further explored. The first topic would be the role of judiciary and civil society organisations as two important institutional guardians in the context of political corruption in the KRI. Local discourses argue that the KDP and PUK have controlled these two institutions to different extents. However, unpacking them and their links with parties, government and political figures require more research and consideration.

Another significant topic, which seems to be of interest to study, is the relationship between the revolutionary background of political actors and levels of corruption. There are claims among political observers in the KRI that the KDP and PUK have used their revolutionary background to abuse public positions and wealth to serve their political interests. It would be interesting to explore these cases at the theoretical and empirical levels. Another area that I would suggest to be explored by future research is the relationship between the politicisation of armed forces and security and levels of corruption. The KDP and PUK so far have absolute control over army, security, intelligence agencies and police in their former zones. While steps have been taken to institutionalise these bodies at the top, they are still divided on the ground and guided by their parties. It would be critical to study this case and its implications, particularly if there is anything linked to the existence and levels of political corruption in the KRI.

To close the remarks, political corruption is almost everywhere in the KRI and the ruling parties use it as an effective tool to preserve their position of power. Corruption is clearly decaying the fragile political system and economy of the region day by day. Although the negative implications of abusing public power and wealth are unfolding as the KRG is unable to pay salaries of public employees, the ruling parties and elites still find it difficult to carry out reform and change the status quo. My supervisor Simona Guerra once said ‘they do not do it because it looks like shooting their feet’.

Appendices

Appendix A.1: A translated participant form (was Kurdish) sent out to interviewees to gain their consent to take part in my research project



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The Participant information form

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Title and researchers: The title of this research is '**Political corruption in Kurdistan region of Iraq**'. The researcher is **Hemn Namiq Jameel** from the University of Leicester, Department of Politics and international Relations. The research is a PhD project and it is supervised by **Dr Simona Guerra** and **Dr Oliver Daddow**.

Reason for the research:

Corruption has been discussed widely since 2003 amongst politicians and elites in various realms in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. Since that time, a few good initiatives to deal with various types of corruption have been announced and signs of improvements could be noticed. This topic has not been studied before, that is why I have decided to look at this issue through an academic perspective. Therefore, this research studies various types of political corruption, and the policies and initiatives to combat this phenomenon in the region. The main aims of this research are to highlight the characteristics of political corruption, select and find out reasons behind that, and to propose possible policies to minimise opportunities for corruption in the KRI.

Details of participation:

There is not enough accurate information and sources about this topic either in English or in Kurdish or other languages. So, to solve the lack of information, the main method of this research is elite interview. My informants are cadres of various political parties in both ruling and opposition parties, members of parliament, academicians, civil society activists, journalists, officials in various governmental institutions. Your role in the research is to present your understanding about topics raised in this thesis. Several questions have been drafted about familiar cases to everyone in the region and those questions are the general framework of the interviews.



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Participants will be anonymised to protect their safety. I will record the interviews if you do not mind. Otherwise, I will just take notes.

Your identity and information will not be released to anyone else apart from my supervisors and would only be used in this research. I promise to transfer your knowledge and understanding with responsibility and in an honest and cautious way to my research.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Hemn Namiq Jameel".

Signature:.....

Researcher:

Name: Hemn Namiq Jameel

Phone: 00447864235328

E-mail: hj2@le.ac.uk

Appendix A.2: A translated consent form (was Kurdish) sent out to interviewees to sign it off after accepting to take part in my research project.



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CONSENT STATEMENT

1. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the research at any time, without giving any reason.
2. After reading the participant information form and speaking to the researcher, I am fully aware about the framework of the research and my role as an informant.
3. All questions that I have about the research have been satisfactorily answered.

I agree to participate.

Participant's signature: _____

Participant's name (please print): _____

Institution: _____

Date: _____

Appendix A.3: A brief description about the interviews conducted for this thesis

NO	Names	Position	Time	Place
1	Interviewee 1	A Journalist in the KNN TV	14/07/2013 at 10 AM	The Erbil office of KNN TV
2	Interviewee 2	A Journalist	14/07/2013 At 3 PM	Family Mall
3	Interviewee 3	A Journalist in the Kurdistan TV	14/07/2013 at 4:30 PM	Family Mall
4	Interviewee4	A Change representative and an MP	14/07/2013 At 6 PM	The Erbil office of the Change Movement
5	Interviewee 5	Former MP and a KIG representative	15/07/2013 At 10 AM	The main office of the Parliamentary Union of Kurdistan- Erbil
6	Interviewee 6	A Journalist in Khebat daily newspaper, organs of KDP	15/07/2013 at 11:30 AM	The Media Centre
7	Interviewee 7	A Journalist in Hawler daily newspaper	15/07/2013 at 1 PM	The Media Centre
8	Interviewee 8	The General Secretary of a political party	17/07/2013 at 10 AM	The Main office of YNDK
9	Interviewee 9	A Politburo member of KIU	17/07/2013 at 12	Politburo of KIU
10	Interviewee 10	A University Lecturer	17/07/2013 at 3 PM	The KUPI office
11	Interviewee 11	A University Lecturer	17/07/2013 at 5 PM	The KUPI office
12	Interviewee 12	A member of Erbil presidency office of the KDP	18/07/2013 at 10 AM	The main office of the KDP in Erbil
13	Interviewee 13	High Officer of the security forces	20/07/2013 at 10 AM	The office of the General Security Forces in Erbil
14	Interviewee 14	A civil society activist	20/07/2013 at 12	Erbil
15	Interviewee 15	An MP	20/07/2013 at 10 PM	The Italian Village in Erbil
16	Interviewee 16	An advisor of The KP Speaker	21/07/2013 at 10 AM	The Kurdistan parliament
17	Interviewee 17	An MP	21/07/2013 at 12	The Kurdistan parliament
18	Interviewee 18	An officer at the Ministry of Peshmerga	22/07/2013 at 10 AM	Erbil

19	Interviewee 19	A business person	24/07/2013 at 10 AM	The KIPI office
20	Interviewee 20	An MP	27/07/2013 at 6 PM	Erbil
21	Interviewee 21	A politburo member of the PUK	27/07/2013 at 10 PM	Erbil
22	Interviewee 22	A member of the Presidency Reform committee	28/07/2013 at 3 PM	Unidentified place
23	Interviewee 23	Senior journalist and a member of the Media office of KDP	28/07/2013 at 4 PM	The KIPI office
24	Interviewee 24	An MP	31/07/2013 at 5 PM	The Italian village in Erbil
25	Interviewee 25	A member in the Investment body in KDP	01/08/2013 at 3 PM	Unidentified place
26	Interviewee 26	A University Lecturer	04/08/2013 at 10 AM	Salahaddin University
27	Interviewee 27	A member of the KDP Presidency office	04/08/2013 at 1 PM	A KDP branch in Erbil
28	Interviewee 28	A judge and member in the Public prosecutor institution	06/08/2013 at 4 PM	Erbil
29	Interviewee 29	An engineer	07/08/2013 at 10 AM	Unidentified place
30	Interviewee 30	An MP	13/08/2013 at 5 PM	The Italian village
31	Interviewee 31	A university lecturer	14/06/2013 at 10 AM	Salahaddin University
32	Interviewee 32	Former minister	18/08/2013 at 10 AM	Erbil
33	Interviewee 33	A high profile KDP Journalist	18/08/2013 at 1 PM	The Italian village
34	Interviewee 34	Former MP and a member of the presidency council of the PUK	20/08/2013 at 11 AM	Erbil
35	Interviewee 35	A senior cadre of the PUK	21/08/2013 at 4 PM	Alpedo cafe shop in Family Mall
36	Interviewee 36	A KDP cadre	22/08/2013 at 4 PM	Erbil

Appendix B.1: A claim of the KIG MP Soran Omar submitted to the KPPC asking them to start investigation in the attached list of people who retired as ministers and general director without been in such positions.

Kurdistan Parliament– Iraq

Committee

No . :

Date : / /

پەرلەمانی کوردستان – عێراق

لیژنەیی :

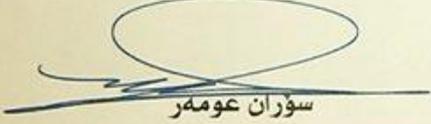
ژمارە : ١٤ / ٨ / ٢

ریکەوت : ٢٠١٤ / ٨ / ٢٨

بۆ بەڕێز: سەرۆکایەتی پەرلەمانی کوردستان

بابەت/ لیکۆلینەوه

بەمەبەستی لیکۆلینەوه لەلیستی ناوی ئەو کەسانەی کە بەپەلەیی وەزیر و بریکاری وەزیر و بەرپۆوەبەری گشتی و ڕاویژکار خانەنشین کراون بەبێ ئەو ئەو بەڕێزانە لەو پۆستانەدا دەوامیان کردبێت، داوا دەکەم لیژنە تاپبەتەمەندەکانی پەرلەمان ڕابسپێردرێن بۆ کارکردن لەسەر ئەو دۆسییە، لەماوەی ڕابردوشدا ھەرمانگەیی داواکاری گشتی سلیمانی بەنوسراوی ژمارە (29/ڕاپۆرت/2014) لە (2014/3/17) لەو پەرسە بەدەنگ ھاتوووە داوای لیژنەیی لیکۆلینەوهی کردوووە.


سۆران عومەر

ئەندامی پەرلەمانی کوردستان

ھاوبێج:

- لیستی ناوی خانەنشینکراون.
- وێنەپەکی بۆ:
- بەرپۆوەبەری پەرلەمان.
- بەرپۆوەبەری جێگرای سەرۆکی پەرلەمان.
- بەرپۆوەبەری سکرتێری پەرلەمان.
- بەرپۆوەبەری کاروباری لیژنەکان.

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ناوی نهو وزیرانهی که نهو یوسته بیان نه بیستیه

موجه	ژماره/خ	ناونیشان	ناوی خانه نشین	زنجیره
۶,۰۰۰,۰۰۰	۴۱۷۵/م	ومزیر	[Redacted]	۱
۶,۰۰۰,۰۰۰	۵۴۳۹/م	ومزیر	[Redacted]	۲
۶,۰۰۰,۰۰۰	۵۵۳۹/م	ومزیر	[Redacted]	۳
۶,۰۰۰,۰۰۰	۵۶۶۳/م	ومزیر	[Redacted]	۴
۶,۰۰۰,۰۰۰	۵۷۲۳/م	ومزیر	[Redacted]	۵
۶,۰۰۰,۰۰۰	۵۷۲۰/م	ومزیر	[Redacted]	۶
۶,۰۰۰,۰۰۰	۵۷۳۹/م	ومزیر	[Redacted]	۷
۶,۰۰۰,۰۰۰	۵۷۴۳/م	ومزیر	[Redacted]	۸
۶,۰۰۰,۰۰۰	۵۷۴۵/م	ومزیر	[Redacted]	۹
۶,۰۰۰,۰۰۰	۵۷۷۰/م	ومزیر	[Redacted]	۱۰
۶,۰۰۰,۰۰۰	۵۷۸۱/م	ومزیر	[Redacted]	۱۱
۶,۰۰۰,۰۰۰	۳۴۸۰/م	ومزیر	[Redacted]	۱۲
۶,۰۰۰,۰۰۰	۵۸۵۳/م	ومزیر	[Redacted]	۱۳
۶,۰۰۰,۰۰۰	۶۳۷۶/م	ومزیر	[Redacted]	۱۴
۶,۰۰۰,۰۰۰	۵۸۶۹/م	ومزیر	[Redacted]	۱۵
۶,۰۰۰,۰۰۰	۴۳۲۰/م	ومزیر	[Redacted]	۱۶
۶,۰۰۰,۰۰۰	۵۸۸۹/م	ومزیر	[Redacted]	۱۷
۶,۰۰۰,۰۰۰	۴۱۹۴/م	ومزیر	[Redacted]	۱۸
۶,۰۰۰,۰۰۰	۶۳۴۹/م	ومزیر	[Redacted]	۱۹
۶,۰۰۰,۰۰۰	۶۳۴۸/م	ومزیر	[Redacted]	۲۰
۶,۰۰۰,۰۰۰	۶۳۴۷/م	ومزیر	[Redacted]	۲۱
۳,۶۰۰,۰۰۰	۶۳۵۲/م	ومزیر	[Redacted]	۲۲

٦,٠٠٠,٠٠٠	٦٢٤٠/٦	وزیر	[REDACTED]	٢٣
٦,٠٠٠,٠٠٠	٦٢٤٠/٦	وزیر	[REDACTED]	٢٤
٦,٠٠٠,٠٠٠	٦٢٤١/٦	وزیر	[REDACTED]	٢٥
٣,٦٠٠,٠٠٠	٦٢٤٢/٦	وزیر	[REDACTED]	٢٦
٦,٠٠٠,٠٠٠	٦٢٤٣/٦	وزیر	[REDACTED]	٢٧
٦,٠٠٠,٠٠٠	٦٢٤٤/٦	وزیر	[REDACTED]	٢٨
٦,٠٠٠,٠٠٠	٦٢٤٥/٦	وزیر	[REDACTED]	٢٩
٦,٠٠٠,٠٠٠	٦٢٤٦/٦	وزیر	[REDACTED]	٣٠
٣,٦٠٠,٠٠٠		وزیر	[REDACTED]	٣١
٦,٠٠٠,٠٠٠	١١٢٤٤/٦	وزیر	[REDACTED]	٣٢
٦,٠٠٠,٠٠٠	٨٠٠/٦	وزیر	[REDACTED]	٣٣
١٨٩,٦٠٠,٠٠٠			کوی گنتی	

١٥٩٥٦٧

٥١٥

لیستی ناوی بهر نومبره گشتیه کان که یوستیان نه بینووه

موجدی مانکانه	شخ	پله	ناو	ش
۱,۲۰۰,۰۰۰	۳۵۲۵/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۱
۲,۴۰۰,۰۰۰	۳۰۵۷/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۲
۲,۴۰۰,۰۰۰	۵۶۶۱/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۳
۱,۲۰۰,۰۰۰	۶۲۸۸/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۴
۱,۲۰۰,۰۰۰	۶۲۸۹/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۵
۱,۲۰۰,۰۰۰	۶۲۹۸/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۶
۱,۲۰۰,۰۰۰	۶۳۱۵/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۷
۱,۴۴۰,۰۰۰	۵۵۱۱/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۸
۹۰۰,۰۰۰	۶۵۴۲/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۹
۹۰۰,۰۰۰			[REDACTED]	
۱,۲۰۰,۰۰۰	۵۷۲۰/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۱۰
۲,۶۰۰,۰۰۰	۷۶۱۴/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۱۱
۲,۶۰۰,۰۰۰	۷۶۲۸/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۱۲
۱,۲۰۰,۰۰۰	۷۶۴۶/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۱۳
۲,۶۶۶,۴۰۰	۷۶۵۸/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۱۴
۴۰۰,۰۰۰			[REDACTED]	۱۵
۴۰۰,۰۰۰		ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	
۲,۴۰۰,۰۰۰	۸۰۷۵/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۱۶
۲,۶۰۰,۰۰۰	۸۵۲۲/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۱۷
۴۰۰,۰۰۰	۸۵۲۲/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۱۸
۴۰۰,۰۰۰			[REDACTED]	
۴۰۰,۰۰۰			[REDACTED]	
۳۰۰,۰۰۰	۱۲۰۸۰/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۱۹
۳۰۰,۰۰۰			[REDACTED]	
۳۰۰,۰۰۰			[REDACTED]	
۳۰۰,۰۰۰			[REDACTED]	
۲,۴۰۰,۰۰۰	۹۲۹۲/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۲۰

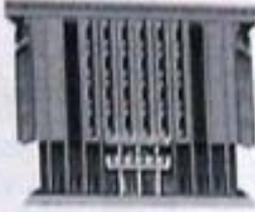
۲,۶۶۵,۶۰۰	۹۲۰/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۲۱
۲,۴۰۰,۰۰۰	۹۲۴/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۲۲
۲,۴۰۰,۰۰۰	۹۲۴/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۲۳
۸۰۰,۰۰۰	۳۰۴۸/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۲۴
۸۰۰,۰۰۰			[REDACTED]	
۸۰۰,۰۰۰			[REDACTED]	
۱,۲۰۰,۰۰۰	۳۷۰/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۲۵
۱,۴۴۰,۰۰۰	۹۳۶/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۲۶
۲,۴۰۰,۰۰۰	۹۵۶/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۲۷
۱,۲۰۰,۰۰۰	۹۷۲/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۲۸
۲,۷۹۸,۴۰۰	۹۷۳۸/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۲۹
۲,۹۹۷,۶۰۰	۹۷۳۷/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۳۰
۲,۴۰۰,۰۰۰	۳۵۳/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۳۱
۱,۲۰۰,۰۰۰	۹۷۸۹/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۳۲
۴۰۰,۰۰۰			[REDACTED]	۳۳
۴۰۰,۰۰۰	۱۰۵۷۷/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	
۴۰۰,۰۰۰			[REDACTED]	
۱,۲۰۰,۰۰۰	۱۰۴۴۶/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۳۴
۶۰۰,۰۰۰	۱۰۶۳۳/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۳۵
۶۰۰,۰۰۰			[REDACTED]	
۶۰۰,۰۰۰			[REDACTED]	
۶۰۰,۰۰۰			[REDACTED]	
۲,۴۰۰,۰۰۰	۱۰۷۴۵/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۳۶
۲,۵۳۲,۸۰۰	۱۰۷۹۵/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۳۷
۲,۵۳۲,۸۰۰	۱۰۷۹۶/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۳۸
۱,۲۰۰,۰۰۰	۱۰۸۱۴/م	ب.گشتی	[REDACTED]	۳۹

Appendix B.2: a list of hundreds of women retired with military ranks without holding such ranks in their lives. Some of them are journalists.

بیری مووچه	پلهی سمریازی	مولید	ناوی چواری	ن
1333000	عقید	1961	[REDACTED]	1
1638000	عمید	1954	[REDACTED]	2
1638000	عمید	1965	[REDACTED]	3
1333000	عقید	1951	[REDACTED]	4
1333000	عقید	1968	[REDACTED]	5
1333000	عقید	1952	[REDACTED]	6
1333000	عقید	1961	[REDACTED]	7
1333000	عقید	1961	[REDACTED]	8
1333000	عقید	1966	[REDACTED]	9
1333000	عقید	1965	[REDACTED]	10
1333000	عقید	1969	[REDACTED]	11
1333000	عقید	1970	[REDACTED]	12
959000	نقیب	1962	[REDACTED]	13
1333000	عقید	1972	[REDACTED]	14
355000	جندی	1955	[REDACTED]	15
1181000	مقدم	1954	[REDACTED]	16
1181000	مقدم	1961	[REDACTED]	17
1054000	راند	1972	[REDACTED]	18
1054000	راند	1965	[REDACTED]	19
1054000	راند	1959	[REDACTED]	20
1054000	راند	1966	[REDACTED]	21
1054000	راند	1972	[REDACTED]	22
1054000	راند	1971	[REDACTED]	23
1054000	راند	1972	[REDACTED]	24
1054000	راند	1959	[REDACTED]	25
1054000	راند	1954	[REDACTED]	26
1054000	راند	1964	[REDACTED]	27
1054000	راند	1967	[REDACTED]	28
1054000	راند	1967	[REDACTED]	29
1054000	راند	1966	[REDACTED]	30
	راند		[REDACTED]	31

Appendix B.4: Another claim of the KIG MP Soran Omar submitted to the KPPC concerning the appendix B.3 and explaining the appointment of more than 15,000 outside the newly founded appointment system of 2011.

Iraq_Kurdistan parliament
Kurdistan-Hawler
Human committee



پەرلەمانی کوردستان - هێزار
کوردستان - ههولێر

No:
Date:

ژماره ٥
٢٠١٤/٧/٢٠

بۆ بهێژ / سهروكایهتی پەرلهمانی کوردستان
پ / یاداشت

پاش نهوهی بنوسراوی ژماره (١٥٢٤/٢/٤) له (٢٠١٤/٦/٢٦) پرسپارم ئاراستهی وهزیری دارایی و نابوری حکومهتی ههرێمی کوردستان کردبوو دهبرایهی دامهزراندنی نمو (١٥) ههزار ههرمانبهره نوێیهی گهلهپاسای ژماره (١) ی سالی ٢٠١٢ ی بودجهی گشتی ههرێمی کوردستاندا بهرپاری لاسهر درابوو.

بهێژ وهزیری دارایی بنوسراوی ژماره (٤٣) له (٢٠١٤/٧/٩) وهلامی داوهموو هاوبهێج نوسراوی بهێژوهبهرایهتی گشتی بودجه، ژماره (٧٢٤١/٢/٢) ی ناردوووه لهگهڵ نوسراوی ژماره (٢٢٤/٢/٢) له (٢٠١٣/١١/١٧) ی وهزیری دارایی پێشوو (بهێژ باهز سعید محهمهد) گهتێیدا وردهکاری دامهزراندنهمکهی خستۆته روو که کۆی گشتی دامهزراندن بۆ سالی ٢٠١٣ گهشتۆته (١٥٢٢٨) ههرمانبهر جگهلهسهروكایهتی ههرێم و سهروكایهتی پەرلهمان و نهنجومهنی دادوهری.

نهم دامهزراندنانه سهروكایهتی نهنجومهنی وهزیران ههرمانی بۆ دهکردون و دسهلاتی نهداوته بهرێژگانان تاكو لهپێگهی بهرکردنهوهی هۆرم و بههێی خال و نهستهیحقاق بێت، بۆیه دهرحووبهکی زۆری زانکۆو بهیمانگانان و خوار نهوانیش ماوهی ٢ ساله هۆرمیان بهرکردۆتهوه لهپارێژگانان و چاوهروانی دامهزراندن بوون بهلام نهم شیواری دامهزراندنانه بێچونهوهی پاسای ژماره (١) ی سالی ٢٠١٣ په گهله بهشی چوارهم (میلاکات) بهرگهی سێبهدا هاتوووه، بۆیهسته لاسهر وهزارت و نمو لایهنانهی گریئ نهداون بهوهزارت نهو پهله ههرمانبهرتییه تازانهی نیو میلاکی (٢٠١٣) راگهیهنیت بۆ نهوهی میکانیزمی دامهزراندن و بهرحهکانی پهکخراو بن و لهپهک کاتدا راگهیهنراوین تاوهکو بێگهیهنانی نهنجومهنی خزمهتی گشتی لهههرێمدا.

سههرجای بێگهیهنانی (نهنجومهنی خزمهتی گشتی لهههرێم) ناکریت لهما زیاتر نهم نهنجومهنه بێگهیهنتری و دامهزراندن بهم چۆره بێت کهزۆرینهی دانههزراوان هۆرمی دامهزراندنیان بهرکردبێتهوه بهلام لهدهرهوهی نمو رێکارو میکانیزمانه (١٥) ههزار ههرمانبهر دامهزراپیت.



سهروان عومهر
نهمدایه پەرلهمانی کوردستان
٢٠١٤/٧/٢٠

لهگهڵ رێژدا...

نوسراوی بهرێژوهبهرایهتی گشتی بودجه
نوسراوی وهزیری پێشووی دارایی و
نابوری

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Appendix B.5: A list of the registered political parties in the KRI by the end of 2013

پارته‌کان

ژ	ناوی پارته مۆلّهت پی دراوه‌کان
۱	پارتی دیموکراتی کوردستان
۲	حزبی شیوعی کوردستان
۳	حزبی رزگاری کوردستان
۴	حزبی سۆسیالیستی دیموکراتی کوردستان
۵	حزبی زه‌حمه‌تکێشانی کوردستان
۶	یه‌کیتی نیشتمانی کوردستان
۷	بزوتنه‌وهی دیموکراتی گه‌لی کوردستان
۸	پارتی کرێکاران و رهنجده‌رانی کوردستان
۹	یه‌کیتی نه‌ته‌وهی دیموکراتی کوردستان
۱۰	بزوتنه‌وهی ئیسلامی کوردستان
۱۱	یه‌کگرتوی ئیسلامی کوردستان
۱۲	بزوتنه‌وهی ئیسلامی نه‌ته‌وهی کورد
۱۳	حزبی دیموکراتی تورکمانی کوردستان
۱۴	پارتی یه‌کیتی تورکمانی عیراق
۱۵	پارتی رزگاری نه‌ته‌وهی تورکمان
۱۶	پارتی برابته‌تی تورکمان
۱۷	پارتی بێت نه‌رین
۱۸	بزوتنه‌وهی دیموکراتی ناشوری
۱۹	پارتی یه‌کیتی دیموکراتی کلدان
۲۰	پارتی پارێزگاران کوردستان
۲۱	بزوتنه‌وهی دیموکراتی تورکمانی له کوردستان
۲۲	بزوتنه‌وهی چاکسازی تورکمانی له هه‌ریمی کوردستان
۲۳	پارتی نیشتمانی ناشوری
۲۴	حزبی التجمع الترمکمانی المستقل

٢٥	بزوتنه‌وهی تورکمانی بی لایه‌ن
٢٦	حزبی ئه‌نجومه‌نی نه‌ته‌وه‌یی کلدان – المجلس القومي الكلداني
٢٧	حزبی بزوتنه‌وهی گۆپان
٢٨	حزبی کۆمۆنیستی کرێکاری کوردستان
٢٩	کۆمه‌لی ئیسلامی کوردستان / عێراق
٣٠	حزب الشعب التركماني العراقي
٣١	حزب عصبة القومين الكورد
٣٢	حزب التزامن التركماني الكوردستاني
٣٣	بزوتنه‌وهی ناشتی خوازانی کوردستانی / عێراق
٣٤	کۆنگره‌ی ئازادی کوردستان
٣٥	حزبی پێشکه‌وتنخوازی دیموکراتی کوردستان / عێراق
٣٦	پارتی سه‌ربه‌خۆی کوردستان
٣٧	حزبی ناپنده‌ی کوردستان

Appendix B.6: The KRG official document signed off by the then KRG PM Dr Barham Saleh regarding the suspension of public subsidies to media outlets selectively provided before to some partisan media stations.

اقلیم کوردستان - العراق رئاسة مجلس الوزراء رئاسة الديوان	 Kurdistan Regional Government Council of Ministers	هه‌ریمی کوردستان - عێراق سه‌ڕۆکایه‌تی نه‌نجومه‌نی وه‌زیران سه‌ڕۆکایه‌تی دیوان
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No : ٢٦٠٦
 Date: ٢٠١١ / ٣ / ٣

ژماره : ٢٦٠٦
 رێکھوت : ١٢ / ٣ / ٢٠١١

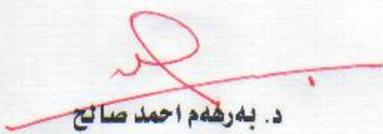




فهرمان

به‌مه‌به‌ستی رێکخستنه‌وه‌ی خه‌رجکردنی پاره‌ی گشتی بۆ مه‌به‌سته‌کانی به‌رژوه‌ندی گشتی و پڕۆژه خزمه‌تگوزاریه‌کان، وه‌ نه‌بوونی هه‌یج پابه‌ندبوونیکی یاسایی حکومه‌تی هه‌ریم بۆ خه‌رجکردنی منحه‌ی مانگانه بۆ که‌ناله‌ میدیایه‌کان، بریارماندا :

١. برینی به‌خشینی مانگانه‌ی که‌ناله‌ میدیایه‌ حکومه‌ی و ناحکومه‌یه‌کان به‌ میدیای جێبێشه‌وه‌ له (رۆژنامه و گوڤار و ته‌له‌فزیۆن و سایه‌تی ئه‌له‌کترۆنی... هتد) که له‌سه‌ر بودجه‌ی گشتی بۆیان خه‌رج ده‌کرا .
٢. وه‌زاره‌تی دارایی و ئابووری به‌رپرسیاریه‌تی جێبێجێکردنی ئهم فهرمانه‌ی ده‌که‌وته‌ ئه‌ستۆ له‌ به‌رواری ده‌رچوونیه‌وه .
٣. هاوکاریکردنی هه‌ر که‌ناله‌یکی میدیایی به‌ بریاری نه‌نجومه‌نی وه‌زیران ده‌بێت و له‌به‌ر رۆشنایی مه‌رج و ضوابطه‌کانی رێنمایی وه‌زاره‌تی دارایی و ئابووری په‌سه‌ندکرا و له‌لایه‌ن نه‌نجومه‌نی وه‌زیرانه‌وه .
٤. ئهم فهرمانه‌ له‌ رۆژی ده‌رچوونیه‌وه‌ جێبێجێ ده‌کریت.



د. به‌رهم احمد صالح
سه‌ڕۆکی نه‌نجومه‌نی وه‌زیران

وێنهدک بۆ /

- نووسینگه‌ی تابه‌تی سه‌ڕۆکی نه‌نجومه‌نی وه‌زیران / له‌گه‌ڵ رێژدا .
- وه‌زاره‌تی دارایی و ئابووری / نووسینگه‌ی تابه‌تی / بۆ جێبێجێکردنی کاری پێویست / له‌گه‌ڵ رێژدا .
- وه‌زاره‌تی رۆشنایی و لاوان / نووسینگه‌ی تابه‌تی / بۆ جێبێجێکردنی کاری پێویست / له‌گه‌ڵ رێژدا .
- قه‌رمانه‌ی کارگیری و دارایی / له‌گه‌ڵ به‌رایه‌یه‌کان .
- ژمه‌ریاری بۆ کاری پێویست .
- ووردبینی .
- خولاو .

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