★ カリリ・モスタファ 特定助教
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研 究 課 題： Understanding Ethnonationalistic Mobilizations from Below: Identity Politics Above and Beyond Ethnicity
専 門 分 野： Political Anthropology, Ethnicity and Nationalism, Cross-border Conflict
受 入 先 部 局： Center for Southeast Asian Studies
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Understanding Ethnonationalistic Mobilizations from Below: Identity Politics Above and Beyond Ethnicity

Since my childhood, the most meaningful moments of my life have been dedicated to thinking deeply about various issues involving mankind, including his beliefs, and his social life. To fulfill my curiosities, I started my university education in electrical engineering at Bachelor's level. Later on, my great enthusiasm for humanities and social sciences led me to change my field of study to Society and Culture at the master's level and complete dual doctoral programs in Global Studies and Global Resource Management.

My primary research interest is exploring ethnicity and minority nationalism from an anthropological angle, particularly in the context of politically unstable regions. The main objective of my project at Hakubi center is to develop a conceptual framework to understand ethnonationalistic mobilizations from an anthropological angle. By taking the long-lasting Kurdish conflict in the Middle East as a case study, I aim to challenge the predominant approach that regards ethnic background as the main cause for the spread of conflicts. Alternatively, in my research, ethnicity is considered as one among several other equally influential socio-political factors that shape identity politics in the local field of power.

Different Approaches to Studying Minority Nationalism

In the highly interconnected world, the spread of minority nationalism in various countries of the global North and South has been one of the significant challenges to achieving international peace and regional developments. In order to come up with a sustainable solution for such challenges, it is critical to understand under what circumstances ethnic groups are mobilized in a regional and transnational context.

The conventional macro-level analysis of ethnic conflicts often rests on the culturalist assumption that the ethnic background and cultural proximity are the main factors for the mobilization of an ethnic group and its cross-border spread among the ethic-kins (Salehyan, 2011). However, the substantialist and groupist nature of such a tendency contributes to the shaping of a fixed and dichotomic understanding of an ethnonationalistic conflict by reducing it to a struggle between the agents of a suppressive state and a unified ethnic group. Such an approach blocks our way of understanding why different ethnic sub-groups on the ground occasionally make contested alliances with the states or militia groups in specific times and spaces.

The recent theoretical developments in the field of ethnicity and nationalism suggest that the way out of the substantialist and reductionist approach is to study the nation and nationalism not only from above but also from below, that is, among the ordinary people who are the main subjects of such movements (Brubaker 2004; Wimmer 2013). In line with such theoretical advancements, the primary objective of my research is to develop a conceptual framework that suggests the way out of a dichotomic understanding of ethnonationalistic mobilization by taking a relational, comparative, and bottom-up approach. My project aims to challenge the predominant approach that regards ethnic background as the main cause for the spread of conflicts. Alternatively, in my research, ethnicity is considered as one among several other equally influential socio-political factors that shape identity politics in the local field.

The Kurds' Struggle for Self-determination as a Case Study

The case study which I consider is the long-lasting Kurdish struggle in the Middle East. Spread in the four countries of Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Syria, a century-long Kurdish struggle for self-determination is one of the most notable instances of cross-border ethnonationalism. (MAP 1)

The scarcity of an anthropological approach to analyzing the root causes of Kurdish nationalism has prepared the ground for equating the Kurdish political activist's perspective with that of the ordinary Kurds, resulting in a lack of true understanding of the internal differences in identity politics among various Kurdish sub-groups. In order to fill such a gap, my research trajectory in the last six years has followed a bottom-up approach and suggested that for examining the constructing elements of the Kurd's ethnonationalistic sentiments, one needs to shift the focus of analysis to ordinary people and the influential factors in the local political fields. In this perspective, ethnicity is seen only as one factor, among several other socio-political elements influencing the Kurdish subjects' political preferences.

While my Ph.D. project and previous works depict an alternative approach toward Kurdish mobilization by ethnographic investigation of everyday ethnicity among the Kurds in Iran, my Hakubi project aims to go beyond the regional characteristics of Kurdishness by looking for its constructing elements in a cross-border and transnational context. Through multi-sited extensive ethnographic fieldwork, I aim to highlight the differences in the political preference of the rural Kurds living in the tri-border region of Iran, Iraq, and Turkey compared to that of the Urban Kurds of Mahabad, Erbil, and Van cities, respectively. (MAP 2)

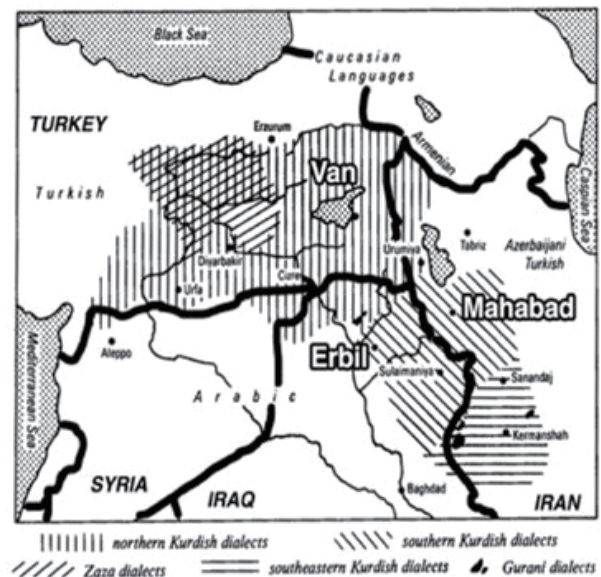## The Broader Implications of My Research

The main hypothesis of my research is that the (de-)politicization incentives for group mobilization cannot be simply explained by reference to ethnic identity. Instead, it is contingent on the conditions of the local political field, wherein the individuals want to preserve their interests and emancipate themselves from the domination of the states' authority and ethnic activists' discourse. The comparative and bottom-up approach taken by this research will provide the ground for analyzing identity politics above and beyond ethnicity.

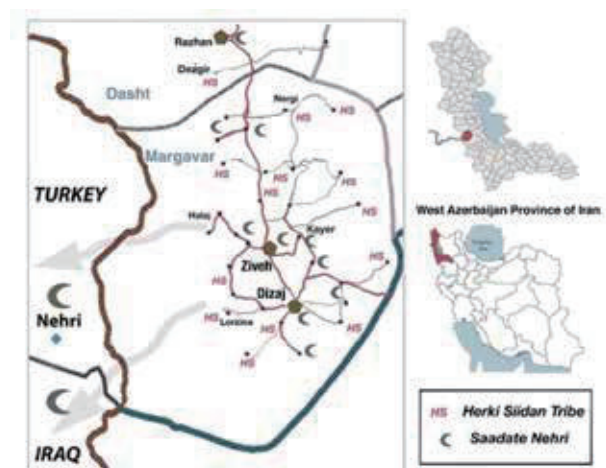The broader contribution of my research is to promote the idea that in order to prevent the rise and spread of ethnonationalism, citizenship rights should not be constitutionally group-differentiated, rather, ethnic rights should be secured under a universal citizenship rights system. Such a worldview, although it seems to be far off and infeasible at the moment, can be a way out of the reproduction of ethnonationalism based on othering.

References

Brubaker, R. (2004). *Ethnicity without groups*. Harvard University Press

Salehyan, I. (2011). *Rebels without borders: transnational insurgencies in world politics*. Cornell University Press

Wimmer, A. (2013). *Ethnic boundary making: Institutions, power, networks*. Oxford University Press

Map 1. Distribution of the Kurds and their languages.

Map 2. Cross-border interactions of the Kurds in the tri-border area of Iran, Iraq, and Turkey.