Language as a Facet of Identity: The Cases of Catalonia & Kurdistan

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Defended: April 6th, 2022

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INTRODUCTION

In 2017, millions of citizens in Catalonia and Iraqi Kurdistan voted in regional referendums in favor of becoming independent nations. These events sparked worldwide debates about national identity, how it is created, and what it means in a political context. One facet of identity that was often overlooked is that of language. In an increasingly interconnected world with access to numerous translation services, it may not seem as though the language one speaks plays a huge role in how they identify. In both Catalonia and Kurdistan, the majority of people in each region prefer to speak a language other than the one preferred by the state. Decades of conflict between these regions and the state resulted in the oppression of both the Catalan language in Spain and the Kurdish language in Iraq. Political and social issues regarding language policy and practice play a role in the creation of a Catalan and Kurdish national identity, but the extent to which these issues are used to promote nationalist agendas are not always as clear.

This thesis seeks to analyze the role that language issues play in the independence discourse promoted by political parties. There is extensive research about the evolution of the Catalan national identity and the role that the Catalan language plays in this identity. In Kurdistan, the research on national identity often focuses on Kurdish people as a whole. This research is not just specific to Iraq, but rather Kurds living throughout the Middle East, in places such as Syria and Turkey. When research does focus exclusively on Iraq, it is in the context of political or economic factors that directly impact the Western world, such as actions taken by the Islamic State or oil policy. This leaves a gap in the research to discuss Kurdish national identity that is specific to Iraq and how language is used in that state to

promote it. This thesis seeks to address the following question: how do pro-independence political groups frame the issue of language within their platforms? Two sub-questions are explored to help answer the primary research question: Who is each independence movement for? What role does identity play in the decision to seek separation from an overarching state entity?

Through thematic analysis of rhetoric from prominent pro-independence groups, the results of this project show that the role of language within the discourse varies between cases. There is evidence to show that language is one of the most tangible and specific issues that Catalan independence groups and leaders deploy to discuss their platforms and goals. The long and heated debate surrounding the use of Catalan and Castilian in Catalan schools remains one of the most emphasized talking points in regard to Catalan independence. In Kurdistan, the emphasis on language independence is more subtle. The Kurdish language is more often seen as a reference to the unique culture and history of the Kurdish people, rather than a basis for independence in and of itself. By understanding the characteristics of national identity that pro-independence groups promote, the facets of identity that they deem most vital to their cause become apparent. The research in this thesis is intended to contribute to the overall understanding of the relationship between language and national identity.

<div align="center">CASE STUDY CONTEXT</div>

The Catalan Language & Catalonia

The Catalan language is the third most spoken language in Spain, behind Castilian Spanish and English (Ethnologue, n.a. -d). The language originated in Catalonia and is

spoken mainly in the regions of Catalonia, Aragon, the Balearic Islands, and Valencia (Ethnologue, n.d. -a). There are also smaller Catalan-speaking communities in France and Italy. While there are dialects of the language specific to different regions, they have extremely high levels of mutual intelligibility, around 90-95% (Ethnologue, n.d. -a). Catalan is written in Latin script and has a religious affiliation with Christianity (Ethnologue, n.d. -a). Of the 47.3 million people who lived in Spain in 2020, 16.3% or 7.72 million lived in Catalonia (Statistical Institute of Catalonia, 2021). Today, there are 8.8 million Catalan-speakers in Spain and a total of 9.2 million speakers globally (Ethnologue, n.d. -a).

The complex history of Catalonia and the Spanish state dates back centuries. The introduction of various groups marked life in this region of the Iberian Peninsula, from Roman conquest of the third century BCE to the arrival of the Visigoths in the fifth century CE. (Phillips, 205, p. 27). The marriage of two royal crowns, Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabel of Castile in the fifth century united the two ruling kingdoms to create the modern geography of Spain (Phillips, 2015, p.109). Each region retained its original governmental powers though the peninsula shared an army and economy (Government of Spain, n.a.). Political and cultural contention and violence between Catalan and Castilian entities took place over the following centuries. One of the most important moments in this period occurred on September 11th, 1714, when the city of Barcelona fell to Castilian and French troops after a long civil war (Smith, 2014, p. 16). Today, this day in September is a holiday in Catalonia which celebrates the perseverance and identity of the Catalan people and nation. September 11 marked the end of political independence for Catalonia and saw the centralization of power under Charles III. The event led to an increased sense of Catalan

nationalism throughout the region (Smith, 2014, p.16). Broader notions of Catalan nationalism emerged in the Enlightenment period the following century. (Smith, 2014, p.17).

In the beginning of the 20th Century, the first modern Catalan-specific political parties took power. "It was from that time when the idea emerged that Catalan should participate in Spanish political life only through strictly Catalan parties, not led from Madrid." (Sobrequés, 2007 p. 108). Representation of the Catalan identity increased in the discourse of political nationalism. Within a few decades, Catalan nationalist parties dominated the political sphere in the region (Sobrequés, 2007). In 1931, Luis Companys of the Republican Left of Catalonia declared Catalonia to be an independent republic, leading to harsh repression from the Spanish state and the revocation of the Catalan statute of autonomy (Sobrequés, 2007, p. 113). In 1936, Spanish nationalists staged a military junta against the Republican government, which sparked a Civil War that ended in 1939 with the victory of the Spanish nationalists (Sobrequés, 2007).

From 1939 to his death in 1975, Spanish nationalist Francisco Franco led a dictatorship that oppressed both the autonomous powers and language rights of Catalonia and promoted Spanish nationalism (Encarnación, 2017; Miller, 1996). Under his language policy, he prohibited Catalan language from being used in public, enforcing Castilian as the language of education in all schools and government publications (Encarnación, 2017; Miller, 1996). The regional perception of these restrictions was a cultural genocide, due to the Francoist effort to diminish identities he did not deem suitably Spanish. Sentiments of Catalan national identity increased as a result. Toward the end of the dictatorship, oppressive language policies relaxed minimally, allowing Catalan to be taught in schools in Catalonia

(Miller, 1996). A Royal Decree in 1978, three years after the death of Franco, granted the language legal status (Miller, 1996). The government established the modern Spanish constitution that same year, a vital moment for Catalonia for two main reasons. First, the Constitution formally established seventeen autonomous regions within Spain and their right to self-government. Chapter 3 Section 143 from "Spain's Constitution of 1978 with Amendments through 2011" states "provinces with common historic, cultural and economic characteristics, insular territories and provinces with a historic regional status may accede to self-government and form Self-governing Communities (Comunidades Autónomas) in conformity with the provisions contained in this Part and in the respective Statutes (2021, p. 36). This established, for the first time in centuries, legal autonomy for Catalonia within Spain.

The Constitution established Castilian as the statutory national language[1] and granted autonomous regions the ability to make other languages official in their region. The Preamble from "Spain's Constitution of 1978 with Amendments through 2011" states:

I. Castilian is the official Spanish language of the State. All Spaniards have the duty to know it and the right to use it.

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[1] According to the Ethnologue Database, there are 17 different distinctions regarding the official status of a language. They are determined by three factors; the language as it relates to being the language used in government business and publication of a nation or region, the language as it relates to being legally mandate as the language of government business or publication of a nation or region, and the language as it relates to the identity of the people in the nation or region. Castilian as a statutory national language indicates the legally mandated use of Castilian in Spanish government business and publication, as well as the distinct relationship between Castilian Spanish and the people of Spain.

II.   The other Spanish languages shall also be official in the respective

Self-governing Communities in accordance with their Statutes.

III.   The richness of the different linguistic modalities of Spain is a cultural

heritage which shall be specially respected and protected (2021, p. 5).

The 1983 Language Normalization Act required the inclusion of Catalan in education in

Catalonia (Miller, 1996). The act intended to make up for the linguistic culture lost during

the Franco years and promote its further development (Miller, 1996). It made Catalan the

llengua propia and *model de conjuncio en catala*, meaning Catalan is the language of the

regions and the "language of normal use in education" (Erdocia, 2020, p. 3).

The language of instruction in Catalan education is a highly contested issue today.

Education in the region is compulsory and all subjects are taught through the Catalan

language (Hawkey, 2014). Castilian is generally used as a foreign language. Because knowing

Castilian is required at the national level, this system is controversial (Erdocia, 2020). In

2014, the highest court in Catalonia ruled that Castilian needed to be used in 25% of

education. (Erdocia, 2020). The region did not unilaterally implement this ruling; the

amount of Castilian in schools is still largely left to the discretion of individual school

districts (Erdocia, 2020). The Catalan government argues their students leave school as

bilingual in Catalan and Castilian. The opposition disputes this. They argue that the laws

swing too far against Francoist ideals, impeding the ability of students to become bilingual

and learn the language used in official European Union affairs (Catalan News Agency

Barcelona, 2019).

This issue plays a significant role in the discourse surrounding Catalan independence. From 2012-2015, pro-independence parties brought the discussion of a referendum to the political table (Orriols, 2016). Spanish government institutions repeatedly dismissed this pressure from Catalonia (Orriols, 2016). Intense debate about independence marked the 2015 parliamentary elections and resulted in the victory of independence-based parties (Orriols, 2016).

By the early summer of 2017, the Catalan government announced a referendum on the matter of independence (Guntermann, 2020). They set the date for October 1st, 2017. While controversy remains over voter turnout, around 90% of those who did vote in the referendum voted in favor of Catalan independence (Guntermann, 2020). The Spanish constitutional court immediately deemed the referendum unconstitutional, which in turn, fueled intense and violent protests throughout the region (Guntermann, 2020).

The international community criticized the Spanish government for its handling of the situation (Reyes, 2020). The government deployed large numbers of police to dissuade people from voting and the protests left many injured. They jailed leaders involved in the organization of the referendum, causing others to flee the country to escape this fate (Reyes, 2020). Many viewed them as modern political prisoners, jailed for their right to speech and though controversial, their right to seek separation (Reyes, 2020). The referendum unveiled flaws in the democratic process in Spain. Though it did not result in independence, separatist parties still have significant seats in Catalonian and Spanish parliament and separatist sentiments remain strong throughout Catalonia (Parliament of Catalonia, 2021).

The Kurdish Language & Kurdistan

The Kurdish people are an indigenous and ethnic group native to the Middle East region, specifically the land that is now Iraq, Syria, Iran, and Turkey (Gunter, 2018, p. 217). The macro-language of the Kurds is broadly known as Kurdish and includes three distinct dialects corresponding to the regions where they are most prominently spoken: Central (Sonari) Kurdish in Iraq, Northern (Kurmanji) Kurdish in Turkey and Syria, and Southern (Phelewani) Kurdish in Iran (Ethnologue, n.a. -c). The main focus of this thesis is Central/Sonari Kurdish, which is the dialect referenced when Kurdish is mentioned in the context of Iraq. Sonari Kurdish is written in the Naskh variant of Arabic script and has a historical religious affiliation with Islam (Ethnologue, n.a. -c). Today, there are 4.7 million speakers of Sonari Kurdish in Iraq and 5.3 million speakers globally (Ethnologue, n.a. -c). Recent estimates place the global population of Kurdish people around 45 million, with an estimated 8.5 million in Iraq (Institut Kurde de Paris, 2017). Within Iraq, 5.5 million live in Iraqi Kurdistan (Institut Kurde de Paris, 2017).

The relationship between the Kurdish people to the Iraqi state is long and complex. Tribal emirates led by emirs created the preliminary framework of Kurdistan. "Although the Kurdish emirates experienced varying degrees of autonomy, they continued to be vassals of successive Muslim overlords – the Abbasid, Seljuk, Turkmen, Ottoman, and Iranian (Safavid and Qajar) states and dynasties" (Gunter, 2018, p. 37).

The Ottoman Empire controlled the region of Iraq from the 16th century to the end of the first World War, when the Kurds were "promised the possibility of local autonomy" (Gunter, 2018, p. 217). From 1920-1932, Iraq was a British mandate and worked alongside

Turkey and Iran to suppress instances of Kurdish nationalism (Gunter, 2018, p. 217;

Bozarslan, 2021). The British officially recognized the Kurds as an ethnic minority, but

installed a government of Sunni Arabs, which furthered conflict between the Kurds and the

state (Bozarslan, 2021). Due to this decade of British influence, the Iraqi government

pursued policies of Arabization shortly after independence (Hussein, 2015). These programs

sought to protect and promote Arabic culture and language (Hussein, 2015). They included

government agencies dedicated to the standardization of the Arabic language and the

prominence of its use throughout the state (Hussein, 2015).

By the 1970s, the implementation of various Arabization policies forcibly relocated

Kurds to allow Arab Iraqis to settle and work in oil rich regions of Iraq the Kurds previously

occupied (Stansfield, 2017). In 1979, Saddam Hussein and the Ba'ath Party took control of the

state and pursued policies of extreme Arab nationalism in the region that "used educational

and judicial systems as well as police and security forces" in order to "ban Kurdish culture

and history" (Stansfield, 2017, p. 376). One of these prohibitions was of "study in non-Arabic

languages" which directly forbade Kurdish (Stansfield, 2017, p. 420). These policies "turned

into an ethnic cleansing operation, which means that there is a direct link between

arabization and genocide." (Stansfield, 2017, p. 376). This genocide, known as the Anfal

campaign, caused the death of 50,000 Kurds and the complete destruction of over four

thousand villages in the late 1980s (Beehner, 2006). During the 1991 Gulf War, the UN

Security Council passed a resolution demanding the "immediate end to the repression of the

civilian Kurdish operation" (Stansfield, 2017, p. 465). The United States led a reluctant

intervention, called Operation Provide Comfort, which established a no-fly zone in Northern

Iraq (Stansfield, 2017). Though this was not the intention of the United States, this was the first time the Kurds had a bordered region and self-rule.

The US invasion of Iraq in 2003 ousted Saddam Hussein from power and in 2005, Iraq established their constitution (Stansfield, 2017, p. 383-463). The Iraqi constitution, like the Spanish constitution, is important in both the establishment of an autonomous region and in the official status of the Kurdish language. Section 5 Chapter 1 of the Iraq Constitution of 2005 reads: "The federal system in the Republic of Iraq is made up of a decentralized capital, regions, and governorates, as well as local administrations. This Constitution, upon coming into force, shall recognize the region of Kurdistan, along with its existing authorities, as a federal region" (2021, p. 35). The Kurdistan Regional Government was established in 2005 as well, and Kurdistan became an official autonomous region of the state (Stansfield, 2017). While the term Kurdistan is used generally to describe the regions in which Kurds live throughout Syria, Turkey, and Iran, Iraqi Kurdistan is the only area where Kurds are recognized as such.

The constitution made the Kurdish language (Sonari dialect) a statutory national language of Iraq alongside Arabic. Section 1 of the Iraq Constitution of 2005 specifies what it means to be an official language. Provisions include:

A. Publication of the Official Gazette, in the two languages:

B. Speech, conversation, and expression in official domains, such as the Council of Representatives, the Council of Ministers, courts, and official conferences, in either of the two languages;

C. Recognition and publication of official documents and correspondence in

the two languages;

D. Opening schools that teach the two languages, in accordance with the

educational guidelines;

E. Use of both languages in any matter enjoined by the principle of equality

such as bank notes, passports, and stamps (2021, p. 4).

Arabic and Kurdish are constitutionally equal in Iraq. The main debate surrounding the

Kurdish language today lies in the standardization of all three dialects into a single,

mutually-intelligible dialect. This is explored further in the literature review.

Though the Kurdistan region was officially recognized less than two decades ago,

Kurdish nationalism dates back centuries and is still extremely prevalent today. In 2005,

when the constitution of Iraq was being drafted and ratified, there was a lesser-known

referendum in Kurdistan, wherein 98% of Kurdish people voted for independence of the

region (Berwari, 2008). This vote did not go anywhere, and the discussion died down in the

political sphere shortly after (Berwari, 2008). In 2017, the Kurdistan Regional Government

held a referendum on independence in which 92% of voters voted in favor of separating

(Bozarslan, 2021). The international community heavily questioned the timing of the

referendum, since one had not been formally discussed prior to 2017 by Kurdish political

groups (Charountaki, 2019). While Kurdish politicians argued they could no longer

withstand the unequal relationship they were dealing with in the Iraqi state, others argued it

was convenient timing for the two major political parties of Kurdistan (Charountaki, 2019).

The Iraqi state government deemed the vote illegal and much of the international

community opposed the vote, fearing the effect it may have on destabilizing the fight against

ISIS in the region (BBC, 2017). Other states, like Turkey, Iran, and Syria opposed the

referendum, due in part to the idea that their respective Kurdish populations may follow in

the footsteps of Iraqi Kurds (Berwari, 2008). The United States feared Kurdish independence

would destabilize the state of Iraq, potentially causing a civil war and highlighting the failure

of their mission in the region (Berwari, 2008). Despite the outcome of the referendum, the

separatist movement of Kurds in Iraq remains strong today.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Much of the analysis of this project exists within the context of some of the major

theories related to identity, the role of language and culture in identity, and how they all

contribute to a national identity. Many themes are present throughout the literature on these

topics. The first one revolves around the complex debate between scholars regarding how to

define certain terms. This debate exists about identity, in its most general sense, as well as

identity as it relates to nationalism and language (Wright, 2016; Koresetlina, 2007). The

literature discusses important differences between the in-group and out-group identities of

the people involved in both case studies (Korestelina, 2007). There is existing literature

surrounding nationalism and language planning independently (Smith, 1998; Korostelina,

2007), as well as research on the intersections between them (Nogué, 2003; Hussein, 2015).

There are even fewer case studies dedicated to the intersections of these topics as they relate

to modern separatist movements (Atkinson, 2018; Hassanpour, 2012), and seemingly, a gap

exists in the research when it comes to comparative case studies. The comparative analysis of

the Catalonia and Kurdistan cases contributes to the discourse of the intersection of these theories.

Although enough literature exists to conduct the research for this thesis, it is essential to acknowledge the disparity in the coverage of information between both cases. At no point in this process did a lack of information on language or the separatist movement in Catalonia inhibit the ability to research. This is not the case for Kurdistan. Some of this is attributed to the fact that much of the accessible material for this project comes from the West and Western scholars. Beyond this, however, there is a definite lack of sources relating to the Kurdish language itself and how it relates to Kurdistan nationalism.

Amir Hassanpour is a prominent scholar in the studies of the Kurdish language. Many of his pieces are foundational in modern studies of the language (Hussein, 2015; Hassanpour, 2012). Hassanpour, himself, acknowledged the lack of focus on the Kurdish language in 2012 when he wrote for an issue of the *Journal of the Sociology of Language*. In the introduction he wrote,

> Finally Kurdish has made it to the pages of the International Journal of the Sociology of Language. This is an event in the history of Kurdish language studies. There is no article about the language in thirty-six years of publishing since 1974. And IJSL is not alone in its omission of Kurdish. In fact, this is the first time in the West that a whole issue of a linguistics journal is devoted to its study (2012).

This is not to say that the literature review or thesis is more heavily focused on Catalonia because there is simply more information. However, it is important to acknowledge that

while a source on Catalonia is sometimes used for a single point, many points are taken from each source on Kurdistan.

Framing Identity

To understand how language plays a role within nationalism, one must first understand the definition of identity. One of the earliest accepted concepts of identity is Benedict Anderson's anthropological notion of a nation. According to Anderson, a nation "is an imagined political community- and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (1983, p. 6). Anderson derived the "imagined" aspect of a nation from the idea that "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson, 1983, p. 6). It is seen as a community,

> because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings (p. 7).

This take on nationalism is one of the most influential theories within the academic discussion of identity, and many modern conceptualizations of identity evolved from it. While the idea that nations are based upon imagined communities is important to the understanding of national identity, it alone does not tackle the specific elements that go into the creation of a national identity.

Because there are many elements with which people associate identity, the importance of each one depends on the discipline of the scholar and their unique

perspective. The process of choosing a definition of identity for this study is significant as it frames the piece. Choosing to frame the piece with a political science definition, linguistic definition, or even sociological definition, felt too narrow to be able to discuss the intersection of all of these things. Because the case studies focus on regions where separatist sentiments are strong, the most overarching definition of identity came from literature on conflict theory (Gallo, 2013; Korostelina, 2007). Conflict theory broadly deals with the sociology behind any situation of multiple parties having diverse objectives that hinder them from "the construction of a lasting peace" (Gallo, 2013, para. 1). It is essential to note that in this way of understanding conflict, violence is not always included. (Gallo, 2013). In the cases of Catalonian and Kurdish independence, the current conflict is most commonly found within political discourse and personal and group values (Byrne, 2019; Hussein, 2015).

One of the most comprehensive assessments of conflict and identity comes from Karina Korostelina's 2007 book *Social Identity and Conflict: Structures, Dynamics, and Implications.* It explores topics such as the development of personal and national identity through socialization (Chapters 1, 4, 8), identity as a driver of conflict (Chapters 6 & 7), and the implications of these conflicts (Chapter 9). This source speaks to social identity theory, which is the main theory through which national identity is examined. Korostelina defines social identity theory as "a feeling of belonging to a social group, as a strong connection with social category, and as an important part of our mind that affects our social perceptions and behavior" (2007, p. 15). This definition is general enough that it does not define for the reader the components of identity, and allows me to input language as the component with

which to measure. This is important as there are endless factors that influence one's identity, and it is not feasible to analyze them all within this one project.

While it is difficult to isolate a single factor of identity without accounting for compounding variables, it is still valuable because, within each individual or collective identity, there is often one dominant identity or a trait of identity that is chosen to be more salient than others (Korostelina, 2007). Korostelina states "dominant identities take the form of a mobilized collective identity and contain ideologies and attributed intentions" (p. 6). When applying this idea to this thesis, it creates the potential for a single dominant identity to be the driving force behind separatist sentiments and political action. Establishing if the factor of language is a dominant identity in either case study is the crux of this thesis.

National Identity & Separatism

One question essential to understanding nationalism asks: what does a national identity look like for a place that is not officially recognized as its own nation, like Catalonia and Kurdistan? Though nationalism was originally thought of as strictly tied to a defined nation, its modern existence encapsulates a broader scope of political geography. Political geographer Joan Nogué describes how the nation is now "conceived as a geography of power, of an economic, ideological and political power capable of organizing and transforming the territory, at every level, following specific interests and action strategies that are often hard to discern" (2003, para. 3). With this understanding, one can prescribe a national identity to Catalonia and Kurdistan because their governments are "organizations endowed with political power that can be inscribed in space" (Nogué, 2003, para. 3).

When the literature focuses on national identity, the issue becomes determining the brand of nationalism that defines a group. In this case, the debate lies in civic versus ethnic nationalism (Santos, 2021). Civic nationalism is based on a citizenry and shared political values (Santos, 2021). Using Kurdistan as an example, a civic nationalist perspective would seek independence for people who live in the Kurdistan region and have the same desires for the future of the Kurdistan Regional Government. Ethnic nationalism is based on shared ethnic ties (Santos, 2021). Using Kurdistan again, an ethnic nationalist perspective would seek independence for ethnic Kurds, not necessarily including ethnic minorities in an independent Kurdistan. Santos (2021) argues Catalan that nationalism forces the literature to look beyond one of these distinctions and look at the intersection of them. For many modern separatist movements, the foundation of the movement is based on numerous compounding factors and years of these factors building up. The Catalan identity, for example, is not just marked by language or geography or ethnicity alone. When the political argument for secession is made, it is often derived from a combination of these things (Santos, 2021).

It is also worth noting there is another type of nationalism based on language itself, called linguistic nationalism. This is based on the idea one's language should be promoted and developed over others (Patten, 2006). This brand of nationalism is less common in the literature and in both cases (Patten, 2006). While it does not play a huge role in the analysis of this thesis, it is important because it played a role in the histories of both cases. Both Franco's suppression of anything other than Castilian, and Iraq's programs of Arabization, are rooted in the notion that those languages were the most dominant in each state (Atkinson, 2018; Hussein, 2015). The reasoning behind the perceived urgency of language

promotion becomes intertwined with civic and ethnic nationalism. Does the language need to be promoted because it is already widely used and would be practical to promote one nation, one language? Or is its urgency promotion necessary because it is tied to a certain group, ethnic or civic? Or, is the language promoted as a form of opposition to another language?

Theories of separatism describe three groups with varying properties for developing separatist ideologies: groups that are currently autonomous, groups that have never been autonomous, and groups that have once held autonomy that was revoked (Siroky, 2015). The groups who currently hold autonomy are not likely to develop separatist ideologies, but the group is included as it is used as a measure against the other two (Siroky, 2015). Throughout the histories of both regions, autonomous powers were promised and revoked repeatedly. For centuries Catalonia fought in a power struggle with the centralized Spanish state, over autonomy. Language rights were diminished under Franco and regional powers were centralized (Miller, 1996). The desire for Kurdish independence dates back thousands of years and includes Kurds from all over the Mideast in addition to those in Iraqi Kurdistan (Qayyum, 2021). Arabization tactics and the genocide of the Kurds in Iraq were both methods of revoking any sense of political, cultural, or personal autonomy of the Kurdish people in Iraq (Hussein 2015; Salih, 2019). Political scientist David Siroky (2015) stated one of the factors that led to Kosovo's separatist movement was the replacement of Albanian language textbooks and education by Serbian textbooks and education. This, along with other factors, pushed Kosovo into seeking independence (Siroky, 2014). This example is used

to show that, though they might not be the sole grounds for separatism, language policies do play a role in a region's sense of autonomy.

Linguistic Identity & Language Planning

These language-specific perspectives of this debate are determined by the perspective one group has on the theory of linguistic authority: either linguistic authenticity or linguistic anonymity (Atkinson, 2018; Byrne, 2019). Authenticity is acknowledged as an expression of a community and is tied to a singular specific group (Atkinson, 2018; Byrne 2019). In this way, language is inherently connected to identity. Anonymity on the other hand, argues language does not belong to anyone and is ethnically and culturally neutral, which aligns most with the idea that the relationship between language and identity is socially constructed (Atkinson, 2018; Byrne 2019). The importance of language in policymaking is often overlooked in the discourse of popular media. However, that importance is widely studied and written about in the field of linguistics and language planning (Wright, 2016; Nogué 2003). Sue Wright's (2016) *Language Policy and Language Planning: From Nationalism to Globalization* is one of the major studies of the role of language policy in nation-building. It defines the three main types of language planning: status, corpus, and acquisition. For the purposes of this thesis, status, which is planning based on which level of official recognition a language receives, is most important. This is because of the differences that can be drawn between the cases.

In Spain, the Catalan language is not an official language outside of the autonomous region of Catalonia and a few other smaller regions (Ethnologue, n.a -d). It is not an official language of the state (Ethnologue, n.a -d). In Iraq, the Kurdish language is equally official on

the national level, and it is also official within the Iraqi Kurdistan region (Ethnologue, n.a.
-c). This difference might be able to give insight as to how official status plays a role in
nationalism. *Corpus planning* regards how the linguistic elements of a language are officially
evolved over time, and this is relevant to Kurdistan and their attempt to standardize Kurdish
into a singular language (Wright, 2016; Hassanpour, 2012). *Acquisition planning* relates to
how schools offer and teach different languages, and is important for both cases (Wright,
2016).

An argument exists across the literature that demonstrates that equality in language
status does not mean equality in language development (Hussein, 2015; Nogué, 2003). This is
because the efforts to promote, standardize, teach, and protect the language are not always
the same. Many argue both the Arabic language, and recently English, have influenced the
Kurdish dialects (Hassanpour, 2012; Hussein, 2015). Where Iraq implemented Arabization
measures to protect the Arabic language, measures have not been taken for Kurdish by the
Iraqi state government (Hussein, 2015).

One interviewee in Hussein's piece on the standardization of the Kurdish language
said, "given the political and economic situation in Iraqi Kurdistan and the problems there
are, the Kurdish language and its development have not been given much importance"
(Hussein, 2015, para. 37). There are reports showing certain news outlets in Kurdistan cater
their dialogue to use language that is mutually intelligible between the major dialects of
Kurdish, so their programs can be viewed by anybody in Iraqi Kurdistan (Hussein, 2015).
This is a stride towards standardization, but poses few long-term effects and exists in only
one area of Kurdish society. The distinction between dialects makes it so schools are

teaching with languages that are not always mutually intelligible (Hussein, 2015). Another interviewee stated, "the Academy and other Kurdish organizations have not been able to establish a standard Kurdish language, they have not succeeded in unifying the Kurdish language into a single language that can be taught everywhere, in Kurdish education systems" (Hussein, 2015, para. 38). This directly impacts the ability of a language to serve as a measure of national identity, as many Kurds feel they do not have a singular language that represents the Kurdish people.

In Catalonia, the disparity between official status and development comes from the perceived lack of normalization, rather than standardization (Atkinson, 2018). The Catalan language itself is solid in its standardization and does seem to come across the same issues of Kurdish, in terms of influence within the language itself (Atkinson, 2018; Hussein, 2016). However, Catalan activists have worked towards normalization of the language since language rights were reappointed in Catalonia following Franco's death (Atkinson, 2018). The argument here is, since Catalan is not the sole official language in the region, it cannot become the prominent language of the region in the way in which they want it. Catalan is the primary language of instruction in school in Catalonia, and Spanish is taught as a secondary language (Atkinson, 2018). For Spanish nationalists, the lack of Spanish-only education in Catalonia is reminiscent of Franco policies that removed Catalan-only education. They also accuse Catalonia of indoctrinating nationalist hate in their education system (Wong, 2017).

For Catalan activists, the use of the language in just schools fails to bring Catalan to the level of dominance and normalization desired. A person interviewed in Atkinson's 2018

study said they "live in an area [presumably of Catalonia] which is 99% Spanish speaking. I only speak Catalan with my children and very badly, and I can't write it. My children aren't learning Catalan in the schools, only to read and write [it]." The person said they would prefer the Basque model of learning, where they separate the children based on the language they want to learn. This allows for supervision of language use, even at lunch or on the playground. Only learning the language in school obscures the "human voice of the language" (Atkinson, 2018, para. 32). This highlights the argument that the marriage of education instruction and prominence of the language in public discourse is the only route to normalization, as "playful and transgressive registers and resonances of lightness and humor that are repressed in formal school use were not replenished for Catalan through mass-mediated popular public culture" (Atkinson, 2018, para. 32). The debate on language in education in Catalonia is still one of the most highly-contested issues in the region today.

The Intersection of Language, Identity, & Separatism

Korostelina's social identity theory involves the importance of one's identity as it relates to others (2007). It accounts for how an individual's social identity becomes collective when we discuss nationalism and accounts for in-group and out-group mentalities (Korostelina, 2007). Korostelina alludes to the notion that language can be a factor in collective identity: "It concerns the native language(s) of an in-group, other commonly spoken languages, and the influence of worldview and perception on individuals and groups through specific grammatical orders and linguistic structures" (Korostelina, 2007, p. 75). Broadly, this is the idea that certain groups measure their identity not just by a sum of the factors with which they identify, but also against the factors with which they do not. Using

Catalan as an example, this theory also relates to language identity. A person who identifies as Catalan does so because they view themselves as somebody whose first and preferred language is Catalan (in-group language), but also because their first and preferred language is not Spanish (out-group mentality). This is not always the case for every group or individual, as there are people in Catalonia who identify as both Catalan and Spanish.

There is also debate about and among the people in each region. This is exemplified through different pieces of literature. A quote from an interviewed subject in Santos' piece said, "my mother tongue is Catalan, but that doesn't make me less Spanish," adding "just as speaking Spanish doesn't make you less Catalan" (2019, para. 18). However, not four years prior, an expert and scholar in the Catalan Independence Movement said "it's basically a language movement. We are Catalans because we speak Catalan" (Frayer, 2017, para. 9). This highlights how nuanced and multifaceted the conception of identity can be. In the context of a separatist movement, this concept is key in understanding some of the reasonings behind the desire for separatism. It begs the question: how salient is language as an element of nationalism, if not compared to another language? It is also important to note that nationalism is unique in these cases because it is seen within regions that are not nations, but self-governing regions within a nation.

In Kurdistan, much of the dialogue is focused on the maintenance of the Kurdish language within the Kurdish community (Hassanpour, 2012; Hussein, 2015). Many scholars credit this to the fact there are three dialects within the umbrella term of Kurdish languages which are not mutually intelligible (Hassanpour, 2012; Hussein, 2015). In addition, due to the many years of Arabization policies in Iraq, there are Arabic influences in the Kurdish

language itself (Hussein, 2015). Many Kurds in Kurdistan are in favor of standardizing a single language and promoting the Sonari dialect of Kurdish, an in-group mentality (Hussein, 2015). The standardization process also involves removing influences from both Arabic and the other Kurdish dialects, an out-group mentality (Hussein, 2015). The same theory can be applied to Catalan. Catalan is often thought of as a dialect of Spanish when, in actuality, it is a separate language from a different language group. The idea that Catalan is seen in this way diminishes the individuality and uniqueness of the region that the Catalan Independence Movement promotes, thus reinforcing identities composed of strong out-group mentalities. In both cases, the influence of Spanish and Arabic within their respective regions have an impact on the worldview and identity of those who speak Catalan or Kurdish (Hussein, 2015).

All of these conflicting terms and debates on how things are defined is important in understanding the lack of consensus that comes to these individual cases. Atkinson addresses another gap in many of these definitions, in that they only exist in opposition to each other. If anonymity is just the antithesis of authenticity and vice versa, how much weight does it hold to focus on one if you leave the other out of the conversation (2019)? This also unveils a distinct perspective based on the scholar: it is not necessarily a bias, but it does matter in how they describe their case. For a scholar who believes identity is socially constructed and Catalan people view their language with linguistic anonymity, the result of their research is different from a scholar who frames a study with the viewpoint of linguistic authenticity. In all, there is consensus on the importance of language in nationalism, but why it is important, in what manner, and how it is used in nationalist movements, is still contested. The

combination of all theories discussed in this section are continuously applied to each case in the analysis.

METHODOLOGY

Why Catalonia & Kurdistan?

While the themes studied in the literature provide a solid theoretical framework for the project, they alone do not answer the research question. To do so, these theories must be applied to modern contexts. The marriage of theory and context is what truly accesses the relationship between identity and language, through providing sociological explanations for modern phenomena. For this project, the most suitable method to provide context for the research question is through case studies.

The choice to look at cases of places with current separatist movements came from the idea that this is where the hypothesized relationship would be most visible. The average person probably has not spent much time pondering their personal and national identity, and how their language behaviors fit within them. But for those involved in separatist movements, and for those who are living in places where they are strong, identity is important. A distinct or different identity from the majority often provides the foundation, or at least acts as part of the rationale, for independence (Korostelina, 2007).

The choice to compare Catalonia and Kurdistan was made for two distinct reasons. First, there are an incredible number of factors that play into one's identity. Though these factors must be acknowledged to provide an accurate understanding of identity, they cannot all be accounted for in a senior thesis. To mitigate some of these compounding variables that come from researching a topic as complex as identity, the cases needed to have at least one

major variable in common, while being different enough to have information to compare. The basis for the choices of Catalonia and Kurdistan come from their regional relationship to their state governments. This became particularly important following the decision to focus on separatist movements, because they do not all follow the same timelines or structures. Catalonia was a foundational choice because it is one of the most discussed and documented cases of modern separatist movements (Atkinson 2018; Byrne, 2019). A preliminary idea was to compare the Catalan language to the Kurdish language in Turkey due to the many oppressive laws that surround it today (Salih, 2019). However, there were almost no similarities in these cases other than the fact that language was a variable. When the idea shifted to the Kurdish language in Iraq, the comparison became clearer.

Both cases included self-governing regions within a state who were seeking independence and held referendums on the topic in the same year (Bozarslan, 2021). The relationship between the self-governing regions and the state were more similar than many other cases. This is not to say that they were more similar than other examples of separatist movements, or that the politics between the regions and states are the same. But part of the reasoning for these cases was the difference in location. One case from the West and one from the East seemed as though it would garner globally-focused results, rather than a strictly Eurocentric or Western analysis.

In addition to the similar regional-state relationships, it was necessary to focus on at least one case that did not have a plethora of existing information. As stated in the literature review, there is enough information written about Catalonia to write a thesis on the region alone. It did not provide, however, much room for any original research or even a particularly

nuanced analysis. When researching Kurdistan, it became clear the amount of accessible information on the topic was disproportionate to that of Catalonia. This makes it harder to find information, but also allows for more original ideas to be written with less regurgitation of what has already been said. Choosing two cases that have seemingly nothing in common and varying levels of accessible[2] coverage creates the potential for a more nuanced conversation.

Process, Timeframe, & Groups

The analysis of the thesis synthesized information from pro-independence political groups in both regions. The data collected revolved around the group history, platforms, and members, and came from party manifestos, foundational declarations, political statements, and interviews. When a group discussed national identity or their reasonings for seeking independence, the data was flagged. It was then systematically labeled by topic, first broadly, then narrowly as trends appeared. In Catalonia, the initial labels were: inclusion of all languages, unique identity, rejection of constitution, language in education, identity against Spain, cultural oppression, unequal partnership, right to autonomy, and political imprisonment. From these labels came the overarching themes of: civic nationalism, promotion of Catalan, and a perceived pattern of oppression. For Kurdistan, the original

[2]The "accessibility" is repeated when speaking about what is written for Kurdistan, to acknowledge the limitations that exist to accessing from Iraq and the east in general. Databases at CU Boulder are heavily focused on the west and on Catalonia over Kurdistan. Because of language barriers and a barrier to access, one cannot say the same level of information does not exist in Kurdistan. While it has not shown up in this research, it is essential not to discredit any scholarly work that was written in recent years that was not accessed for this thesis.

labels were: unique ethnicity and culture, inclusion of ethnic minorities, failure of implementation of constitution, failed partnership, lack of international support, fight against ISIS, historical oppression, and preservation of Kurdish. These turned into the main themes of: a distinct identity, preservation of Kurdish, and a pattern of oppression.

The history of certain groups dates back almost a century, but the vast majority of data in this analysis is derived from the past 15 years. This time frame shows which parties spoke about issues of nationalism, independence, and language, before, during and after the 2017 referendums. The past 15 years included two major developments in each case. In 2009, a Constitution of Kurdistan was drafted that conveys how independence leaders envisioned an independent Kurdistan. In 2010, the Spanish Constitutional Court made the decision to repeal the Catalan Statute of Autonomy. This resurrected the independence discourse and resulted in the 2017 referendum. The time frame allowed the data to show the transformation of national identity before the referendums were announced, while parties were campaigning for "yes" votes, and in the aftermath of the votes.

The focus on independent groups comes from the idea that they are, in theory, those with the strongest sentiments of nationalism and desire to separate from their state, and therefore have a strong obligation to promote a sense of national identity to both their own constituents, their state government, and the international community. Pro-unionist parties would probably not specify a distinct identity from their state government, and if they did it would probably not garner enough information to be able to determine the role that language plays within that identity. The chosen groups demonstrated a pro-independence stance through promotion of their 2017 referendum or whose current mission statements

clearly maintained nationalist ideologies. Another practical choice behind each group was access to their information. While data is included for more Catalan groups than Kurdish, the majority of the analysis ended up being based on the two main independence groups from each region.

In Catalonia, those two main groups are The Republican Left of Catalonia and Together for Catalonia, referred to throughout the analysis as the ERC and Junts. The ERC was founded based on principles of republicanism and independence in 1931, making it one of the oldest political organizations that exists today in Catalonia (Humanitat, 2019). Today they hold 16 Catalan seats in the Spanish senate and 33 of 135 seats in Catalan Parliament, making them the largest independence group in the body (Senate of Spain, n.a; Parliament of Catalonia, 2021). ERC member Oriol Junqueras served as the Vice President of the Government of Catalonia (referred to as Generalit) from the beginning of 2016 until his imprisonment following the 2017 referendum (Humanitat, 2019; Republican Left of Catalonia [ERC], 2022b). In 2021, ERC member Pere Aragonès became elected president of the Generalit (ERC, 2022b).

Junts was registered in 2018 as a merger of an electoral alliance, Junts Per Si, from the 2017 referendum (Masreal, 2020). It was established formally in 2020 by Carles Puigdemont. Puigdemont served as president of the Government of Catalonia from the beginning of 2016 to the end of 2017, when he self-exiled after the referendum (Together for Catalonia [Junts], 2022a). He currently serves as the president of the party from overseas. (Junts, 2022a). Catalan independence serves as the ideological foundation for Junts. Today, it holds 6

Catalan seats in the Spanish senate and 32 of 135 seats of the Parliament of Catalonia (Senate

of Spain, n.a; Parliament of Catalonia, 2021).

The Popular Unity Candidacy, or CUP, is the third most prominent independence

party in the region. They are a municipality party and currently hold 9 of 135 seats in the

parliament of Catalonia (Parliament of Catalonia, 2021). The National Assembly of

Catalonia, referred to as Assemblea, is an independence-based NGO founded in 2011

(National Assembly of Catalonia [Assemblea], 2011). Prominent members include Jordi

Sanchez i Picanyol, independence activist and Assemblea president from 2015-2017, until he

was imprisoned for sedition following the referendum (Assemblea, 2020). The current

president, Elisenda Paluzie took over his position (Assemblea, 2020). Òmnium Cultural,

referred to as Òmnium, was originally founded as a means to protect and promote Catalan

language and culture during the Franco dictatorship (Òmnium Cultural, n.a). In recent years,

the group has shifted to include the protection of pro-independence ideologies and

leadership (Òmnium Cultural, n.a). Òmnium president Jordi Cuixart was also imprisoned for

sedition after the referendum (Òmnium Cultural, n.a).

In Kurdistan, the main pro-independence parties are also the main parties of the

region: The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK).

The KDP was founded in 1946 in Iranian Kurdistan and is now the most prominent party in

Iraqi Kurdistan (Kurdistan Democratic Party [KDP], 2021). The party is based on ideals of

Kurdish nationalism and were the main proponents of the 2017 referendum on

independence (KDP, 2021). Since 1979, Masoud Barzani, the son of the original founder of

the party, leads the party. (KDP, 2021). Barzani also served as president of the Kurdistan

Regional Government (KRG) from 2005-2017. Today, the KDP holds 31 of 329 seats in the Iraqi Council of Representatives and 45 of 111 seats in the KRG parliament (Iraqi Council of Representatives, 2022; Kurdistan Parliament, n.a). The PUK is the second largest party in the KRG, founded in 1975 on the basis of Kurdish Nationalism and secularism (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan [PUK], 2022). The PUK currently holds 17 of 329 seats in the Iraqi Council of Representatives and 21 of 111 seats in the KRG parliament (Iraqi Council of Representatives, 2022; Kurdistan Parliament, n.a). The PUK and KDR share a long and contentious history, but in 2005 the two parties agreed to unify to rule the KRG. The PUK was split in its support of the 2017 referendum, mainly due to the choice of timing, though they do support the ideological basis for Kurdish independence in the region.

The Movement for Change Party, also referred to as the Gorran (meaning "Change") party, was founded in 2009 as a fraction of the PUK. (Gorran Movement, n.a. -a). Gorran popularity has decreased dramatically in recent years and no longer holds any seats in the Iraqi Council of Representatives, though it maintains 12 of 111 seats in the KRG parliament (Iraqi Council of Representatives, 2022; Kurdistan Parliament, n.a.).

ANALYSIS

Catalan National Identity: A Promotion of Inclusion

From an outside perspective, Catalonia enjoys economic prosperity, European Union membership via Spain, and relative freedom through limited self-governance. Because of this, many of the questions asked in interviews explore *why* Catalonia needs to be separate. In answering this question, the idea of identity is inevitably intertwined. The line of questioning turns to, what makes a Catalan person different from a Spaniard? One of the most consistent

themes throughout this discourse was the idea that the movement is for anybody who wants

to be a part of it. This is repeated in party platforms, group value statements, and interviews.

There is also an emphasis on the uniqueness of the Catalan language and culture and the

ways in which the Spanish state has diminished it. This creates a complex reality where the

discourse promotes a civic form of nationalism, while simultaneously promoting the Catalan

language and culture to the borderline of a view of linguistic authenticity and linguistic

nationalism. The convergence of these issues is explored in this section.

The idea that the Catalan independence movement is based on civic nationalism is

built into each party's main ideological platform. The Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC)

has three main ideological foundations listed on their website, including social progress,

republicanism, and independence. Within the section of independence, ERC explicitly aligns

itself with a civic mindset, in how it "conceives the Catalan nation as a civic space which

bases its bonds on its peoples' will and identities, and on the project of a shared future."

(ERC, 2019). The shared future is for "all those living in Catalonia and who want to be

Catalans" and "their place of birth, the language they speak, their family background, ethnic

group or religion" does not supersede the Catalan identity (ERC, 2019). This is a broad

definition of who is considered Catalan and is explicitly non-exclusionary. In 2021, Pere

Aragonès spoke about the future of the Catalan identity during his presidential inauguration

address. Reports of the speech noted he "wanted to move away from the idea of exclusionary

independence and 'historical reminiscences' to focus on the 'Catalan nation' as an option for

the future" (Noticias Financieras, 2021, para. 8). He stated that "today, being Catalan, it is

based on the strength of the construction of a project that largely goes through the search for

the common good" (Noticias Financieras, 2021, para. 8). The Popular Unity Candidacy party (CUP) shares the same message, stating: "We want to build a Republic where everyone, no matter where they come from, can enjoy the same rights. We want to build and will build a livable future for ourselves, for our people and for all who will come" (Popular Unity Candidacy, n.a -b, para. 4).

Together For Catalonia (Junts) follows a similar methodology in promoting civic nationalism. Their Manifesto refers to the party as one "born of the sum of the people, with all the cultural capital and baggage of a democratic sovereignty and its plural ideological traditions." For Junts, "everyone who wants to work for the country, its freedom and the defense and improvement of the common good has its doors open (Junts, 2021, para. 15). Upon the registration of the party in 2018, Carles Puigdemont was questioned about the difference between Catalan and Spanish people. He responded that "if we try to understand the Catalan movement from the starting point of identity, or in the framework of the classic debate of nation states at the end of the 19th century, then obviously it's not possible to understand it." (Euronews, 2018, min. 2:00).

To point out the historical basis for Catalan independence, he notes that the "questions of identity, the reasons behind this were already present forty years ago when there were no elected supporters of independence in the Catalan parliament (Euronews, 2018, min. 2:00). Perhaps seen as an evasion of the question, the interviewer later asks again, "for you, what is it to be Catalonian?" Puigdemont responded by simply saying, "for me, to be a Catalan, is to be a democrat." (Euronews, 2018, min. 7:38). This answer also does not suffice for the interviewer, who says that anybody can choose to be a democrat, implying that being

a democrat does not alone explain the desire for independence. Puigdemont reiterates the manifesto of Junts in saying "to be Catalan is not a question of blood or territory, which are more traditional ways of believing or living citizenship" (Euronews, 2018, min. 8:11). Instead, he said it is a fact, "a voluntary act, to adhere to a set of values. Who can be Catalonian? It's not a question of who is Catalan, but who can be Catalan, that's what it is about." (Euronews, 2018, min. 8:11). He says Catalonia is a melting pot and has been for centuries. "70% of us have a mother or father or both with roots elsewhere and we want to continue like that" (Euronews, 2018, min. 8:11). This exchange highlights a few key ideas. First, it is an example of the way in which Catalan leaders are challenged to explain the unique identity of a Catalan. This creates an awareness of how those outside of the movement view it. When they are pressed to define it, it remains within the definition of a civic movement.

National Assembly Catalana, at the end of their foundational declaration, says "all Catalans, regardless of their origin or political or ideological affiliation, join the process for the constitution of the National Assembly Catalan, the first step in forging a free, just and advanced nation" (Assemblea, 2011, para. 26). The president of Assemblea, Elisenda Paluzie was asked about her conception of nationality in an interview in 2018. She called it "very inclusive" and reiterated that anybody who wants to be Catalan can be. "In the case of Catalan nationalism, it has always been very civic, very democratic, very inclusive, and open." Her conception of nationalism is "open to integration of different cultures, not at all ethnical, not at all based on the origin, but in the will to be a citizen of this republic that we want equal for everybody" (Lirb, 2018, min 3.30).

This data exemplifies the desire of Catalan independence groups to promote a narrative based on inclusivity. There are no sentiments of linguistic nationalism or an identity based in opposition to Spain. There is just being Catalan because you believe in the values of the region and appreciate the culture. The answers to what makes you Catalan are not, "you are Catalan because you speak Catalan" nor "you are Catalan because you are not Spanish." In all, knowledge of the Catalan language is not essential to acquiring a Catalan identity within these definitions.

Role of Language in Identity: Preservation & Promotion

The Catalan identity becomes increasingly complicated when groups promote the idea that Catalan culture and language is so distinct from Spain that it is oppressed. And, oppressed to the point that it creates a need to separate. This sort of oppression is discussed in many different forms, though this section focuses on the language specific grievances that Catalan discourse discusses. The first is a general notion that there was historically, and remains today, a consistent effort to diminish and ridicule the Catalan language by the Spanish government. The second is the highly controversial debate about the language of instruction of schools in Catalonia. From these issues, we can see the role that language plays in each group's promotion of a Catalan national identity.

The Preservation of Catalan in Spain

While the Catalan independence movement seeks to remain inclusive of all cultures and languages, there is a pattern of leaders reminding their constituents of the importance of the Catalan language. In 2014, Oriol Junqueras wrote a piece calling out the Spanish state for "another show of mockery towards Catalan speakers throughout the linguistic domain"

(Junqueras, 2014). He spoke about the Balearic Islands and their "exemplary mobilization in defense of Catalan as a common language and medium of instruction, admirable in their tenacity to bring about a strike that became a show of dignity." He also spoke to the region of Aragon, which has a significant Catalan-speaking population. In Aragon, the parliament passed a language act that changed the name of the Catalan language in the region to the acronym LAPAO. According to Junqueras, this was an "attempt by Spain's institutions to legislate that Catalan is only spoken in Catalonia, whereas the undisputed scientific view of linguists and academics worldwide is that Catalan is also spoken in the Balearics, Valencia, Andorra, southern France and, indeed, Eastern Aragon" (Junqueras, 2014). This statement references the perceived attack on the Catalan language outside of Catalonia.

Pere Aragonès stated "Catalonia as a nation is a minimum common denominator that cannot be lost" (Noticias Financieras, 2021, para. 8). Catalan, he has stated, "must regain the central role as a meeting language," intertwining both the importance of Catalonia as a nation and Catalan as the language that represents it (Noticias Financieras, 2021, para. 8). In early 2022, Jordi Puigneró announced the launch of a campaign to create easier methods for people to learn Catalan (Junts, 2022b). The campaign is called 'La nostra llengua és la teva veu' which translates to "Our Language is Your Voice" (Junts, 2022b). In promoting the project, Puigneró "emphasized the preservation of the Catalan language and warned of its health: 'if we don't take care of Catalan, no one else will'" (Junts, 2022b). Thus, emphasizing the sentiment that Catalan was unprotected, if not under attack, by Spain.

These sentiments about protecting the Catalan language are furthered in conversations about the legal status of the Catalan language in Spain and in Catalonia. In a

recent interview, Carles Puigdemont discussed the prohibitions he faces using his native tongue. "I can't use my own language in the Spanish parliament, for example. I can't use my own language in the eyes of the judge. One judge who works in Catalonia is not forced/fortunate to understand Catalan" (Room for Discussion, 2018). Here Puigdemont refers to the fact that state judges and government officials are not required to speak or use Catalan in the region, because the state government does not require it. While this issue is discussed, the majority of the debate about language is centered around the language of instruction in education. The importance of this issue within the platforms for independence in Catalonia is seen in each separatist oriented group.

The Promotion of Catalan in Schools

The debate surrounding language of education resurged in the past decade due to the implementation of the linguistic immersion model in Catalan schools. In 2014, Oriol Junqueras wrote a piece for Catalan newspaper Ara, which examined the importance of the immersion model. He speaks against the People's Party of Catalonia, a Spanish Unionist party that opposes this model of education. Junqueras spoke to the interests of the majority who "want a good education for our children and for them to learn and master as many languages as possible" (Junqueras, 2014). This, he noted, "can only be guaranteed through Catalan-medium language immersion schooling" (Junqueras, 2014). To emphasize the success of this system, he mentioned "awards and recognition from Europe" and "remarkable results." On the superiority of the model over others, he noted "today Catalan schoolchildren -any one of them, actually- speak more languages than any of the presidents that Spain has

elected since the Transition, who only happened to speak one language: Spanish (Junqueras, 2014).

A 2018 interviewer asked Assemblea president Elisenda Paluzie about the recent growth of the independence movement. Though she lists many reasons, she specifically cites the "attacks on the use of Catalan in schools" (Lirb, 2018, min 3.30). The foundational declaration of Assemblea Nacional states that the current model of Spanish rule has "not been based on respect for a plural national and plurilingual reality" (Assemblea, 2011, para. 2). Noting a "cultural genocide" within Catalan civil society, the group declares it will support any other independence movement that arise within the state (Assemblea, 2011, para. 5). Particularly for "other countries with which Catalonia have shared, for eight centuries. The same nationality, expressed especially in the community of language, culture, law, traditions, and a similar social and economic structure" (Assemblea, 2011, para 11). A section of the manifesto of the ERC party states that one of their main objectives is:

> An ambitious public intervention on the cultural front, with the defense and promotion of the Catalan language as a fundamental axis of the republican construct, with a single, public, secular, inclusive and excellence-oriented model of Catalan schooling, is another pillar of the document, which warns that the repeated, constant attacks on the language and culture call for an "urgent, massive, coordinated and uninhibited" response (Junts, 2021).

These declarations demonstrate that language is a matter which has pushed the Catalan people further into separatist ideology.

In 2018, ERC leader and Spanish congressional member Joan Tardà, spoke about Article 155 of the Spanish constitution, which anti-language immersion groups have threatened to use to end the immersion system. Tardà stated, "if the government uses Article 155 to blow up linguistic immersion, it will be evident that it wishes to continue hurting Cataluña. It will also evidence our own irresponsibility in failing to form a government," again intertwining language policy issues with issues of self-governance (Alvarez, 2018). In 2020 ERC member and spokeswoman for education, Montse Bassa discussed important milestones in the process of education reform. This reform regarded the repealing of the Wert Act, which allows the Spanish government increased oversight of education in the autonomous communities, including how often co-official languages are used in schools. One of the milestones Bassa mentions is the "safeguarding" of the Catalan language immersion programs in schools (ERC, 2020). "We have pressed for Catalan to be the vehicular language in Catalonia in state regulations," she said (ERC, 2020). Junts 2021 election manifesto states its dedication to ensuring that "Catalan is the true vehicular and educational language at all levels of school, from preschool, primary, secondary and vocational education to university studies" (Lasalas, 2021).

Recent discourse shows a further intensification of the issue. In 2022, a member of the PP party likened the Catalan immersive language system to the actions of the Nazis. She said of the system, "we will see those who ask to study in Spanish made to wear an armband so that they can be identified in the street, just as the Nazis did with the Jews" (ERC, 2022a). ERC member Jordi Sole responded by saying it trivialized the Holocaust and Nazism (ERC, 2022a). He explained that the Council of the European Union "has repeatedly called on all

member states to consider it a criminal offense, which is why the fact that the heinousness

that we have had to hear from the mouths of the most rancid Spanish nationalism can go

unpunished is incomprehensible for Europe" (ERC, 2022a). This is not the average rhetoric

that accompanies this issue. It is included to emphasize the degree to which the debate is

about identity. One side suggests that the other will make physical distinctions of who

speaks what language, as the Nazis did. The other cites "rancid Spanish nationalism" as the

basis for such a suggestion. In this way, nationalism, identity, and language are decisively

joined.

This highlights the idea that the Catalan identity becomes confounded with the idea

that Catalan is in fact the language representative of Catalonia. It creates a dichotomy

between a movement based on civic nationalism which consistently promotes the use of

Catalan against Spanish oppression. This in turn promotes the Catalan language over other

languages. To be a vehicular language is, in theory, to be the language that connects many

people of many languages. But when you choose one language as the vehicular language in

every level of education and public life, you diminish the use of all other languages, including

Castilian.

It is difficult to assess whether or not the Catalan language is viewed with an

authentic or anonymous lens, according to nationalist groups. To say that Catalan is the

language of the Catalonian nation leans towards the side of authenticity. However, many

sentiments are responses to the Spanish state. There is no evidence to show that it truly is an

authentic lens and not just a factor of an identity that is based in opposition to an out-group.

This is evidence enough, to show that the movement is not singularly based in civic

nationalism. If you are a Catalan person who is of the idea that the linguistic immersion model is either wrong or ineffective, you would not fit into the mainstream discourse of Catalan nationalists. In this way, exclusion to the nationalist movement does exist, but again, for those who lean towards a distinct Spanish and Castilian side of the argument.

Identity as a Source of Nationalism & Cause of Separatism

Looking at how parties explain the necessity of independence, the relationship between identity, language, and nationalism is more clearly understood. This section looks at some of the most often discussed reasons behind the desire for independence. These reasonings are not based solely on language, but on a conflict between the region and state, based on identity.

A Pattern of Political Oppression

The oppression of Catalan language and culture by the Franco regime is still sometimes referenced by independence groups. This is one way the political parties emphasize the hardships faced by Catalan people throughout history and their lasting consequences. The background section of the ERC's platform states that the "history of 80 years ago has paralleled recent history" and likens the ERC to Catalonia itself in how it has "suffered defeats, repression, and imprisonment, but in spite of everything, it has always risen from its ashes and continued working to defend its ideals and the country" (Humanitat, 2019).

The crux of this argument is the history of repression and imprisonment of pro-independence political leaders. ERC was founded in 1931 as a "confluence of nationalist and left-wing sectors" with the original intent to "form a common form against a Spanish

state that defended interests contrary to those of the Catalan lower classes which had been stymied in the past" (Humanitat, 2019). With the recognition of an independent Catalonia being one of the founding principles of the group, leaders faced severe political repression from the Franco dictatorship (Humanitat, 2019). Though the group gained extensive political power by winning all major Catalan elections in 1931, throughout the Franco years, half of the ERC's 70,000 members were exiled and one-fourth were killed in the war or executed (Humanitat, 2019). Luis Companys, a leader of the party during these years and who was executed in 1940 for declaring Catalonia a state a few years prior, serves as a major symbol of Spanish oppression. (Humanitat, 2019).

It was not just the actions of the Franco regime, but the Spanish reactions to them following his death that are discussed in connection to Catalan oppression. The ERC states that the Spanish democratic institution did not make efforts to condemn Franco for his actions or persecute anybody for the "breach of individual and collective human rights" (Humanitat, 2019). The oppression has not been repaired or acknowledged by the Spanish state according to the ERC (Humanitat, 2019). "The disregard for historical memory was one of the basic features of the agreement on transition to democracy in Spain, unlike the processes of historical review conducted in Germany, Italy, and South Africa" (Humanitat, 2019). In their political strategy paper, Junts wrote that the "parliamentary monarchy approved by the Spanish Constitution of 1978 is a continuation of the practices used by the Franco regime" (Junts, 2020). They defend the unity of Spain "since denying that Catalonia is a nation has unleashed a political, police and judicial reaction in violation of the human and political rights of the citizens of Catalonia" (Junts, 2020).

In 2017, the Spanish government used article 155 of the Constitution to impose direct rule on the region of Catalonia in response to the referendum. This article addresses the course of action taken if a regional government acts in a manner which "doesn't comply with the obligations of the Constitution or other laws it imposes, or acts in a way that seriously undermines the interests of Spain" (Newton, 2017). If this happens, the Spanish government can hold a vote to overrule the regional government (Newton, 2017). This shows the state as the dominant power over the autonomous communities like Catalonia. According to ERC, when this occurred in 2017 "state civil servants with no knowledge of the country or any sensitivity for the needs of the people" became in charge of making important decisions for the region (Humanitat, 2019). Moreover, half of the Catalan government was forced "into exile and the other half were taken into pretrial detention" (Humanitat, 2019) Pro-independence leaders like Jordi Cuixart and Oriol Junqueras were jailed and charged with sedition, and others, like Carles Puigdemont fled the country in exile.

The continuation of Franco practices can have many interpretations, though two stand out. One, is the continuation of separatist leaders being jailed for their stances or actions. While this is not an explicit attack on the Catalan language, it is seen as a denial of the right to sovereignty, which is seen as a denial of the distinct Catalan identity, within which the element of language resides. The other interpretation is as a direct attack on the ability of Catalan people to use their language in the way in which they would like. Catalans argue they should have full authority to use Catalan in every aspect of life in the region, without pushback from the Spanish state to include or prioritize Castilian.

Kurdistan National Identity: The Question of Inclusion

The discourse around identity in the Kurdistan independence movement differs from that of Catalonia. The manifestos and objectives from major independence groups do not always explain who is part of the movement. They mention language less often and reference culture more often. This difference is perhaps a result of how Kurds are discussed and treated in the press and the international community. The Kurdish people are more widely understood as a distinct ethnic group from Arab Iraqis, and therefore people are less inclined to assume similarity as in the case of Spain and Catalonia.

Yet, the result of this analysis shows a similarly complex creation of nationalism, this time more founded in civic and ethnic nationalism, rather than linguistic. This comes from statements about the legal and social rights of ethnolinguistic minorities in an independent Kurdistan. The civic form of nationalism is inherently intertwined with ethnic nationalism due to the violently aggressive history of Iraqi state violence against the Kurdish people. And, the fact that the Kurdish people exist as a group both within and outside of Iraq. This adds another layer to the separatist movement in Kurdistan. The discussion of identity is both about Kurdish people throughout history, and those in Northern Iraq before, during, and after, the creation of the autonomous community of Kurdistan.

The Question of Civic Nationalism

The Kurdish people compose the ethnic and linguistic majority in Iraqi Kurdistan. But ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity exists among the minority groups within the region. These groups are often mentioned in conversations about an independent Kurdistan. Similar to Catalonia, they are consistently included in the hypothetical conditions

of the new state. And at the same time, the Kurdish language is the only one promoted throughout the region.

In 2009, the KRG Parliament drafted a constitution of Iraqi Kurdistan. Though it remained deadlocked and was never ratified, it gives insight as to who is considered to be a part of Kurdistan. Article 6 states that "the people of Iraqi Kurdistan consist of Kurds and other nationalities (Turkomans, Chaldeans, Assyrians, Armenians and Arabs) and according to law, they are all citizens of the Region" (Kelly, 2010). Article 14 made Kurdish and Arabic the two official languages of the region and Turkmen and Syrian the official languages, the administrative units where those are the majority languages (Kelly, 2010). Though dated, this constitution is the most recent full draft to come from the Kurdistan region, after an attempt to draft failed in 2019. The current KRG agenda cites the "aim to emphasize the peaceful coexistence between various ethnicities in the Kurdistan region, build upon it and strengthen it" (KRG, n.a. -a).

In the general objectives of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the seventh one expresses "commitment to the constitutional rights of all other ethnic and religious groups such as Turkmens, Arabs, Armans, Chaldeans, Assyrians, Ezidies, Christians, Saebi-Mandani, Kakeyees, and Shabak people in Kurdistan and Iraq" (PUK, n.a. -b). The section specific to Cultural objectives, declares to "Respect and help to maintain the cultures and traditions of other ethnic groups such as Arabs, Turkmens, Chaldeans and Assyrians and other existing religious groups and sects such as Christians, Ezidies, Saebi-Mandani, Shabak and Kakayis" (PUK, n.a. -b). The KDP lists one of their chief objectives as "ensuring the nation, cultural,

and administrative rights of Turkmen, Chaldeans, Syrians, Assyrians, and Armenians" (KDP, 2021).

The ethnic minority groups of the Yazidis and Shabats are not included in this list. Since the KRG is largely composed of KDP party members, this absence created a debate on who is included both in an independent Kurdistan, but also into the Kurdish category itself. The same year the Constitution was drafted, KDP member Kharro Giran argued the groups were not listed separately because they were Kurds and spoke Kurdish (Human Rights Watch [HWR], 2015). He said, "Yazidis and Shabaks are Kurds; 90 percent of them agree with this" (HRW, 2015). About Yazidis specifically, he says they "are the real Kurds because they never converted to Islam, but we did. They are the original Kurds. The only important issue for every nation is language—the only language they speak is Kurdish" (HRW, 2015). Of the Shabaks, he said "I know why [the Shabak] are telling you they are not Kurds—they are under a lot of pressure since they live so close to Mosul. If they say they are Kurds, then they are attacked" implying they said they were not Kurds for safety reasons (HRW, 2015).

This distinction arose again in 2017, in regard to the city of Kirkuk, a point of extreme contention between Kurdistan and the Iraqi state. Then-president Barzani said that his "'Kurdish state' would give full assurances to ethnic minorities including Christians, Yazidis, and Shabaks" (Nakhoul, 2017). Interpretations about the categorization of Shabats and Yazidis as Kurds are controversial. One is that the KRG considers them to be ethnically Kurdish and therefore protected equally. Another is that they are strategically placed within the Kurdish group so they do not have to be explicitly protected in the Constitution. Or in other laws based on ethnic, cultural, or linguistic freedom. Again, this analysis seeks not to

decide which is true but to emphasize the aspects of identity included in the discourse. An angle of ethnic nationalism arises in either interpretation, as the Kurdish people are listed separately from the other ethnic groups.

In regards to the disputed territories between Kurdistan and Iraq, Barzani said that an independent Kurdistan would include "only those territories where the people overwhelmingly want to be part of Kurdistan" (Apostolou, 2017). This discourse promotes the idea that everybody is included in an independent Kurdistan, while still recognizing those in disputed territories who wish to remain part of Iraq. This highlights an even more complex layering of identity for Kurdistan nationalists. There is a Kurdish national identity based in solidarity between all Kurdish people throughout the Middle East. There is also Kurdish national identity based on a shared citizenry of all those who live in the Kurdistan region. In all, there is an overarching theme of civic nationalism promoted by independence leaders, by including any ethnolinguistic community wanting to be part of the Kurdish state..

Role of Language in Identity: Standardization & Implementation

The understanding that the Kurdish people have a distinct identity and a corresponding distinct language allows for the focus of independence to be other issues. Economic disputes around oil and the struggle against ISIS in the region come to the forefront of the conversation. The declaration of who is included in an independent Kurdistan, seeps through these topics rather than be its own conversation. There are, however, moments where independence groups and leaders emphasize the linguistic identity of the Kurdish people.

In 2017 Masoud Barzani spoke about the bid for independence by saying "we have our geography, land and culture. We have our own language" (Choluv, 2017). The same year, the head of the KRG's department on foreign relations talked about the referendum. Musafa Bakir said, "there may be some factors which have played a role in [foreign relations], but what is significant is the fact that the [Kurdistan Region] has [the] population, territory, language, culture, civilization, and history that define a state" (Zadeh, 2017). He noted that the "Kurds' historical, cultural and social background is diverse, and our national heritage is being preserved and ready to be shown to the world" (Zadeh, 2017). These show the moments when the distinct Kurdish identity needs to be emphasized in a way that shows its uniqueness as a basis for independence and the role that language and culture play in this making Kurdish identity distinct.

There are promotions of the Kurdish language from nationalist groups. The PUK, as previously noted, has a section in their objectives dedicated to the cultural protection of ethnic minorities. In the same section there is a dedication to the promotion of certain Kurdish-based language initiatives. The PUK seeks to "establish a scientific center tasked with combining the various Kurdish dialects to formulate a standard Kurdish language, promote the media, fine arts, cinema and Kurdish literature, preserve and document the Kurdish folklore and traditions." (PUK, n.a. -b). There is not enough evidence to show that language alone accounts for a sentiment of ethnic nationalism in this case. Yet it is worth noting that the Kurdish language is the only language specifically mentioned by independence groups. Listed in the "services" section of the government's official website is The Kurdish Academy. This is a government project dedicated to the promotion and

preservation of the Kurdish language in Iraqi Kurdistan. The language goals of the academy are based on "protecting and reviving the Kurdish language and its various dialects, promoting Kurdish culture and history, unifying the vocabulary of the Kurdish language between dialects and developing a scientific dictionary for all fields." In addition, the Academy seeks to unify "the national position on the official government language in the Kurdistan Region" (KRG, n.a. -b). There are no updates on the Kurdish Academy beyond this, but its importance lies in the fact that there is distinct promotion of the Kurdish language coming from the major independence groups.

In a 2012 interview, Al Jazeera asked Barzani the following question: "In the Kurdish region these days, young people don't speak Arabic, they don't learn it in school, you have your own economy, your own services and you even pretty much control the borders. What is there that still ties the Kurdish region to Iraq?" (Arraf, 2012). The implication that Arabic is no longer prominent in Kurdistan prompts Barzani to respond: "Of course, Arabic is the official language in the country and in the region and it is studied here in the region, a continuation of the policies of the past 30 years" (Arraf, 2012). Though this might be reading too deeply, he states Arabic as the official language, rather than one of the official languages or a co-official language. "Policies of the last 30 years" implies a timestamp of almost two decades before the Iraqi constitution that granted Kurdish co-official status. This perhaps implying the benefits that had come with co-official status had not been genuinely implemented. The Gorran Movement backed this up, in their "election platform." It seeks to "confirm the Kurdish language as an official language of the first degree in Iraq, as stated in Article (4) of the Iraqi constitution" (Gorran Movement, n.a. -b). There are statements from

interviews with locals that the language has not been implemented in the way it was promised in the constitution, however this was not found to be a prominent talking point in any of the nationalist groups.

There is one example of the mixture of ethnic and civic nationalism in the context of language in Kurdistan. In 2021, Hamay Hama Saeed of the PUK made a statement on behalf of the KRG's Ministry of Culture and Youth. It was in regards to UNESCO's International Mother Language Day. He said, "on this occasion, we congratulate the speakers of all the languages all over the world. We hope that no language fades away or faces extinction because of the influence of a dominant language or language of the 'majority'" (Saeed, 2021). He stated that the KRG's Ministry of Culture and Youth "has always tried to provide the basis for the preservation and promotion of all the languages and dialects. We believe the loss of any of those is a major hit to our heritage of diversity (Saeed, 2021). This addresses the idea that languages are sometimes diminished by a dominant or majority language, perhaps insinuating the relationship of Arabic to Kurdish. It also promotes the idea that the KRG is committed to preserve and promote all languages in the region, not just Kurdish, adding to the complexity of the Kurdish national identity.

Identity as a Source of Nationalism and Cause for Separatism

While there are issues between the Kurdish region and the current Iraqi government, more often the references are to the historical struggles of the Kurds in Iraq, specifically the oppression and genocide carried out by the regime of Saddam Hussein. Many of these issues arose during the 2017 referendum. Speaking about why the Kurdish people would show up to vote in the referendum, KDP member Ari Nanakali said "the Kurdish people have suffered

so much destruction," and added "when we are a country, we will make international trade agreements. It will make us stronger" (Murdoch, 2017). KRG head of Foreign Relations Falah Mustafa expressed a similar view, saying "it's a fact of life that the Middle East region in the last hundred years had not seen stability and prosperity because of the wrongdoings of the past, denial of identity, and lack of social justice" (Al Tamimi, 2017). Former President Barzani said "over many generations of conflict, every family in Iraqi Kurdistan has suffered a personal loss. We can no longer relinquish solidarity, or squander the sacrifices made by so many, through returning to the squabbling that plagued relationships between parties and neighbors" (Barzani, 2019). This denial of identity and generation trauma is what interlocks the past violence against Kurds with the current political conflict.

The Failed Partnership with Iraq

Perhaps the most repeated theme is the idea that the KRG tried to develop a mutual relationship with Bagdad at the ratification of the Constitution, which the Iraqi government dismissed. This stage of conflict began with the post-Hussein government and continues today. In the period leading up to the referendum, there was a consistent rhetoric that the KRG could no longer wait for relations to improve with Bagdad. At the announcement of the referendum in the early summer of 2017, Masoud Barzani said "for 14 years we have been waiting and we have been discussing this partnership but we have always been told it's not a good time and it's not acceptable timing so my question is, when is the right time?" (Nakhoul, 2017). In the same interview where he was asked about the role of Arabic in modern Kurdistan, he addressed the question about the tie that holds Kurdistan to Iraq. Barzani stated that "this is exactly the reality and the truth that we want to be considered

and we want people to be convinced of: Iraq has Arabs and Kurds and we have decided this on the basis of a voluntary union. The moment we are recognised and accepted there will be no problem" (Arraf, 2012).

A few months before the referendum, Falah Mustafa was quoted saying "the referendum is necessary to establish a healthy relationship with Bagdad" (Al Tamimi, 2017). When asked what he defined as "healthy relations" he answered, "our definition of a healthy relationship is a partnership where the actors in question are equals" (Al Tamimi, 2017). This is an example of how the discourse was developed throughout the referendum process. Barzani backed this up further by saying "the people of Kurdistan can no longer repeat failed experiments, they will go their own way given that the experience of voluntary unity has failed and the concept of power sharing has been undermined for a century" (BBC Monitoring, 2017).

Other issues between Kurdistan and Iraq include the role of Kurdish forces and leadership in the fight against ISIS in the region as well as a lack of support from the international community. Mustafah pointed out that the "KRG has been denied presence in the anti-ISIS coalition international conferences that are of high importance and relevance to the region's stability and its future" (Zadeh, 2017). He also emphasized the disappointment of the international community's response to the referendum, as they "have shown the international community that we are a partner for peace; we have been a great partner in the fight against ISIS; we have been a great partner in hosting refugees and IDPS [internally displaced persons]; and in the protection of minorities. Where does that stand now?" (Besheer, 2017).

In a rally for support for the referendum, Barzani emphasized the idea that "Kurdish peshmerga fighters had earned the right to self-determination by battling ISIS" (Hawkins, 2017). He said, "they praise peshmerga sacrifices but don't let peshmerga and our martyr's families determine their destiny" (Hawkins, 2017). This was in part a reaction to the international community. Many accused the KRG of capitalizing on the weakened state of the Iraqi government, due to their ongoing issues with IS. They also insinuated that Barzani held the referendum to solidify his legacy as a leader for the independence of the Kurdish people. These issues between the KRG and Iraqi government highlight the perceived unequal partnership. This contributes to the distinct identity of the Kurdish people, within which the Kurdish language lies.

Discussion

Even when the circumstances in a region differ significantly, the methods used by political groups to garner support for independence can be extremely similar. This speaks to the research question in the context of how groups use national identity as means to garner support for independence. In both cases, there were clear decisions to declare that each nationalist movement as inclusive. The idea of inclusion became muddier when the element of language was introduced or discussed in any detail. In Catalonia, the discourse shifted from one based entirely on equality and inclusivity, to one with a strong emphasis on one language. The primary language of all education and the nation itself needed to be Catalan. In Kurdistan, the discourse shifted from the explicit inclusion of ethnic and linguistic minorities in an independent Kurdistan, to the Kurdish language being the only one being actively preserved and promoted.

There was a use of both historical and modern instances of oppression to emphasize the unique regional identity and how it contributes to the necessity for independence. In Catalonia these instances primarily included attacks on the language immersion model and the imprisonment of separatist leaders. In Kurdistan, the major issues revolved around the oppression from multiple Iraqi regimes and the lack of partnership in issues related to ISIS. While language in education and the fight against IS are different topics, they are both used to show the overall failed relationship between each region and state. This failure, particularly when emphasized during the period of referendum, was used to promote to the people that independence was necessary to affirm the uniqueness of their national identity.

In terms of language, the answers are different in each case. In Catalonia, language is one of the distinct features of the Catalan independence platform, due to the debate on language in education. In Kurdistan, language is not often talked about specifically, and when it is, it is talked about in terms of how it should be standardized. Language comes into the discourse in Kurdistan more through the discussion of the unique identity of the Kurdish people and how various Iraqi regimes have oppressed it. Language plays a role in the national identity discourse, but it is more subtle than that of Catalonia.

CONCLUSION

In all, this thesis sought to explore the ways political groups promote language as a facet of national identity. The process and results highlighted the complexity of national identity, as well as the ways one is crafted by political entities. It is important to acknowledge certain limitations to this research that became evident as it progressed. Though the importance of language in national identity is a necessary subject to study, it was difficult to

do justice within the confines of a senior thesis. First, this was due to a lack of access of Kurdish sources. Translation services like Google Translate are unreliable for languages like Arabic and practically nonexistent for Kurdish. The most common sources on the Kurdish issue either came from Western sources on the One Search database. There was enough information to complete this thesis, though it could be a stronger and more balanced comparison with being able to access more information. Next, this thesis took a different approach when it became clear the IRB would not, in sufficient time, approve human subjects research on Catalan and Kurdish people. The completion of the analysis revealed that many prominent themes discussed in the literature come from the people, rather than political entities.

Despite any limitations, this research does contribute to the discourse of language as a facet of identity. This relationship will always exist and is important in these instances. The debate around language in schools in Catalonia is not settled, and the Kurdish language is not standardized. The same is true for nationalist and separatist sentiments. So long as these two regions remain part of another state and do not feel themselves to be equal partners with the central government, there will be groups who promote nationalist ideals and see separatism as a necessary path for ensuring the protection of national identity. The themes and issues researched in this thesis are central to the ongoing issues in Catalonia and Kurdistan and will continue to be so for the foreseeable future.

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