

MEDIA NARRATIVES AND MODERN, TRANS-BORDER, CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF THE KURDS, KURDISTAN AND KURDISH IDENTITY IN KURDISTAN

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Abstract: *This research will identify in the realm of Kurdish media studies a conceptualisation which is generally less remarked upon in order to explore potential novel epistemological interpretations and seismic shifts conspicuously noticeable in redefined understandings of self and trans-border national unity . Technological developments have helped a large community who subscribe to the Kurdish identity to explore the farther corners of Kurdish planet. Kurdish people, with the aid of media and technology, are re-imagining the dimensions of their identities, similarities, differences, cultures, geography and homelands with the hope of eradicating obscurities that might obliterate the unique feelings of unity and nationhood. Proliferation of media and its availability to the masses of people in Kurdistan has dramatically transformed the cultural and political scene in Kurdistan. Kurdish Media and the drastic political shifts in Iraq and the Kurdistan region of Iraq since 2003 have largely transformed the Kurdish to learn more about their brethren in other parts of Kurdistan*

Keywords: *Media, Kurdish, Conceptualizations ,Kurdish Identity*

Background of study

In this research, Media Multiplexity Theory (MMT) is employed to assist in analysing the reality of Kurdish Media phenomena. Multimodality has established ample grounds to have facilitated communication globally: Kurds have shown a strong will to join the global communities by utilising the latest technological modes of communication. Immediacy and promptness of delivery of the news are earmarks of sophistication in professional workers involved in Media jobs. H(Z. Kaya, 2020) however, this is not the only role that Kurdish media have shown that they can play. While there are studies that suggest the mapping of Kurdistan by the “international media” (Z. N. Kaya, 2020, p. 182), the present study sheds light on the function of Kurdish media in creating national identity among the Kurds.

Policies decided in the countries where Kurds reside can have echoing oppositions not only in their respective countries but in the countries with noticeable Kurdish diaspora, i.e., Europe, USA and the UK. The role of Kurdish media in creating “imagined transnational ethnic communities that become transnational actors in international relations” and feelings of nation and national unity has been very important (Keles, 2014, p. 2).

The Problem of this study

Media narratives can function at different levels in social structures and organizations. Media has a conspicuous role in shaping and reflecting people’s opinion in given societies. Edmund Burke properly given the title of the “Fourth Estate” to the press in the Medieval Era (Gentzkow et al., 2006, p. 187). Old media, including traditional press media, and their pre-internet capabilities, however, can now be extended to include different means of communication that are employed by mass media. Mass media help “actualize” democracy as it is largely responsible for the creation and the quality of bonds between the “governments and the governed” (Amodu et al., 2014). The power that underlies the existence of the press (mass media as in our days) has been indispensably recognized by Thomas Jefferson (the third US president): “were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate for a moment to prefer the latter” (Jefferson & Randolph, 1830, p. 85).

However, a review of literature shows that the role of Media Multiplexity in disseminating awareness about the situation of the Kurds and solidifying the common bonds in Kurdistan and diaspora has been less investigated. The Arab spring, revolutions and the ongoing conflicts that afflict the Middle East “have mitigated the chronic tendency towards tribalism, internal wars, and factionalism” (Jefferson & Randolph, 1830, p. 273). Kurds now have their own TV and radio channels that are mostly based in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). Foreign Service of state TVs in Iran and Turkey have Kurdish TV channels and Radios (i.e., SAHAR KURDI and TRT KURDI). However, the latter are not mostly Kurdish in the sense. Kurdish Media (the ones owned and run by the Kurds themselves) have largely covered and narrated the past and contemporary events and topics that concern the Kurds. They advocate common causes and feelings of unity. However, the role of Kurdish media in creating feelings of unity and common causes have not been seriously investigated. There are certain inquiries that need to be launched into the nature of the Kurdish media narratives with the hope of identifying the underlying national and historical myths that are woven into the collective unconscious of the people who subscribe to the Kurdish identity.

This study is thinks of Kurdish Media as an important player in creating social and political change and paradigm shift across territories that are geographically connected in a continuum

known to its Kurdish inhabitants as Kurdistan. The results of this research redound to the Media, social, cultural, futurist, and political students and analysts, for it largely demonstrates the influence of modern national histories and myth-making and myth-breaking in Kurdish Media narratives. This is test of the influence of such narratives within and across the Kurdish borders. It is especially important for this study takes to understand the split identities of the Kurdish individuals who are mostly mass educated in the countries they reside: split because the Kurds have lived different lives in the countries, they were born in. That is, Kurds could have dual identities that bear proof of their allegiance to their nation-state dominant hegemonic culture, even unwilling, and their obligation, ethically and nationalistically, to Kurdish identity and culture.

Contributions of Study

This research contributes to the identification of the influential functions of Kurdish Media in creating social, political, cultural and even educational awareness and changes among the Kurds beyond the current borders in the middle east that differentiate between the Kurds based on their central state identities. The nation-states might provide incentives for assimilation of the different others within their area of influence. This can be misleading for the Kurds and other different *others* within the nation-states that share Kurdish territories as part of their sovereign states. The overarching mega narratives fails to extinguish or even hold dual identity binaries created by the in-position state media. The gatekeeping processes and digital culture of new media sphere leaves no space for monolithic state identities in modern nation-states, leaving them susceptible to new media influences. This research evaluates the existing narratives that might have historically been suggestive of the nationalistic codes among the Kurdish people. This study also tries to understand the nature of the narratives presented by the Kurdish Media. The results can inform the narrative creators' decisions by contributing to a clear understanding of the narratives, the reality and the myths that help shape the state of reality as it is among the Kurds.

The present study recognizes the importance of the use of traditional press and media next to multimedia convergence of new media in constructing trans-border nationalistic feelings among the Kurdish communities. Kurds are an invisible nation (Lawrence, 2009) not recognized by the international community. This study tries to draw map routes for Kurdish connections facilitated by the use of the Kurdish Multimedia. More specifically, this study explores new avenues of research in Kurdish nation building and media studies where media content report to the *other* Kurds of and about their fellow Kurds in the neighbouring countries of Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Syria and Armenia. Mapping out Kurdish construction of unified identity through media networks can help understand the role of multimedia in changing nationalistic landscapes and redefining Kurdish identity through reimagining the Kurdish borders and identity. According to Haythornwaite, "a medium" is "the intersection of channel and social context" (Braithwaite & Schrodt, 2014, p. 367). This study delves into the narratives brought to the Kurdish audiences through a variety of media modes to understand how the media narratives have changed the Kurdish nationalism landscape. Kurdish media narratives, this study hypothesizes, help with the creation of a transnational identity among the Kurds in the Middle East and in diaspora. The post 2003 Middle East has brought much investment and development into at least the Kurdistan region of Iraq has "created a sense of a promise of brighter prospects for the Kurds"(Novak & Javanmiri, p. 119). Moreover, proliferation of the use of the Internet has promoted Kurdish national discourse locally and globally. This scaffolds revolutionary momentum in Kurdish nationalistic discourse among the Kurds who seek salvation in statehood and self-rule. Nationalistic feelings among the Kurds have been revisited

by the Kurds and have probably found new ways of expression. The latter is aided by media Multiplexity. The nationalistic ties among the Kurds have accordingly undergone transformations inevitably. They have grown stronger, for the Kurdish media have helped the Kurds be known more to each other. This has been made possible by Media Multiplexity for the Kurds consume more time learning about the brethren transnationally. Kurdish media content producers, activists and users have experimented with new media possibilities. The positive outcome has served primarily as a trajectory to promulgates the mainstream media owners' monotonous uncoiling of state identities. For example, the conflicts in Jojava (Kurdistan in Syria) echoed with the Kurds in Iran and Iraq as Kurdish people in these countries showed support for the Syrian Kurds in Efrin, Kobane, etc.

Therefore, this study is preoccupied with the role played by the Kurdish media in transforming the narratives, be them mundane or serious, as long as they concern the Kurds, into nationalistic discourse which serves the purpose of nation building and strengthening trans-border and transnational ties. These are realized as nationalizing common causes among the Kurdish societies. To make this happen, Kurdish media highlight the archetypal Kurdish heroic for myths of bravery and freedom dominate Kurdish consciousness. Finally, this study explores the role of media in identifying the importance of modern political discourse and contextualizing Kurds, Kurdistan and Kurdish nationalistic feelings in views that seek international recognition and support.

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