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**SANCTUARY STATE – INSURGENCY RELATIONS IN
ETHNIC CONFLICTS: A NEW EXPLANATORY MODEL**

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Sanctuary State – Insurgency Relations in Ethnic Conflicts: A New Explanatory Model

Abstract: Guerrilla leaders from Che Guevara to Mao Tse-Tung have emphasised, and countless examples from Afghanistan to Nicaragua have evidenced the vital importance of a sanctuary in the near abroad for the success of an insurgency. Given this significance it is astonishing how under-studied and under-theorized the relations between insurgencies and the states that offer them sanctuary are in the literature. This paper offers the first schematic model to systematically analyse the relations between a sanctuary state and its affiliated insurgency, grounded in social theory and centralizing both the nature of identity as a performatively enacted socio-political construct and the complex dynamics of insurgency-sanctuary state relations. The value of the model in capturing the range and complexities of the dynamics between an insurgency and ‘its’ sanctuary state is then tested against the case study of the sanctuary of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Keywords: identity conflicts and civil wars, transnational insurgencies, sanctuary, PKK in Iraqi Kurdistan, Kurdish ethnonationalism.

Introduction

The leading commanders and minds of guerrilla warfare, from Che Guevara, to Mao Tse-Tung, to Vo Nguyen Giap to Walter Laqueur, have emphasized the vital importance of a sanctuary for any successful national liberation movement (NLM), a safe base beyond the target state’s reach. The most effective sanctuary lies within a neighbouring state, a state offering protection from as well as easy access to the target state, and whose elites are ideologically affiliated by virtue of a shared belief system and/or based on a common identity. Such sanctuaries in the near abroad have vitally contributed to the success of NLMs from the anti-colonial wars in Africa and Asia in the 1960s and 1970s, to the Vietnam War in the 1970s, to Central America’s Contras in the 1980s, the wars of the Balkans and Caucasus in the 1990s, to Central and Western Africa in the early 2000s encompassing several rivalling alliances of sanctuary states. Likewise, there is a strong emphasis in counter-insurgency strategies and manuals on the pivotal need for undermining, subverting, combating, and, if necessary and operable, directly intervening against an insurgency’s sanctuary abroad.

Given this complex and the impact of sanctuary on the duration, scope, and intensity of a war as well as on the ways to end the conflict, it is utterly perplexing that

a systematic analysis of the relations between a sanctuary state and the insurgency it hosts are almost completely absent from the literature on guerrilla warfare, counterinsurgency, security studies, conflict analysis, or peace building. This working paper aims to compensate for this omission by sketching and proffering for discussion the outlines of a new schematic model to systematically analyse the relations between a sanctuary state and its affiliated insurgency that is grounded in International Relations (IR) theory, sociology, and conflict and security studies. With the ultimate goal of its wider application to explaining the internationalisation of civil wars at large, the value of the model in capturing the range and complexities of these relations will subsequently be tested against the specific case study of the sanctuary of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in Iraqi Kurdistan. This case study has been chosen because, although Iraqi Kurdistan is not a state by definition in international law, the PKK sanctuary in Iraqi Kurdistan is one of the most widely cited examples of sanctuary in the post-Cold War era.

I. The Sanctuary/Solidarity Conundrum

This paper studies the internationalization of so called ‘identity conflicts’ (Kaldor, 2012), i.e. a sanctuary state hosting an ideologically affiliated insurgency on its territory. Most examples in the literature, in particular large n-studies quantifying the occurrence of internationalised identity conflicts, confine themselves to determining that sanctuary exists and to ascribing its existence to the prevalence of a shared ideology or identity and/or common interests. That is not enough to sufficiently comprehend the multi-layeredness of any conflict, neither to appreciate the motives, positions, and objectives of the parties, nor to understand the relations between them, and therewith the dimension of the conflict in question at large. This working paper has the objective of contributing to a more accurate and detailed analysis of the internationalization of identity conflicts by way of mapping the matrix of relations between a sanctuary state and the ideologically affiliated insurgency it hosts. Here, sanctuary is understood as an ambiguous and complex process whose scope, intensity, and duration is constituted by an interplay of external factors as well as shared identification and the self-interests of the parties involved. For further clarification, identity is here understood as a ‘performatively enacted’ (Butler, 2006) socio-political construct and an ideology (Malesevic, 2006 and 2010). This understanding of identity as an ideology allows us to put on the same level what is colloquially conceived as an ideology with religion and

ethnicity, in so far as these forms of identity constitute what is perceived as a group in conflict with another group. Perceiving and ascribing ourselves to a certain group set apart from other groups through lines of common descent, i.e. kinship, political or spiritual belief systems, i.e. religion or what is generally understood as ideology such as liberalism or communism, is not the state of nature, though. The difference that constitutes our identity is not only constructed but utilised and essentialised by elites for their own ends, a process Gayatri Spivak calls ‘strategic essentialism’ (1987), that is the use of an essentialised version of oneself – individual or group – while not without internal and external controversy for the sake of self-representation in order to achieve political gains. The group we study then, based on shared identity/ideology, is not factual but only exists as an ideologised discourse; it is therefore, in the words of Rogers Brubaker, a ‘category of [ideologised] practice’ and must not be taken by scholars as our ‘category of social analysis’ (2004: 10), i.e. in our case the presence of an insurgency’s sanctuary accounted for by an alleged group solidarity tells us something about the prevalence of an ideologised discourse and conflict but not about the factuality of that group, whether ideological, religious or ethnic.

Notwithstanding the case in which a state is too weak to fend off an insurgency establishing sanctuary on its territory, granting sanctuary to an insurgency operating in a neighbouring state is the most significant show of solidarity short of direct military intervention a state can demonstrate. Although often sought to maintain a shred of deniability, the host state nonetheless commits itself to a certain extent to the cause, aims, and means of the insurgency. Determined by circumstance it not only makes the NLM’s struggle its own, it allocates to the NLM what modern states consider their most precious asset, it shares, to varying degrees, what the international system and IR theory considers a defining criteria of the modern state: its territory. And while the host state still remains sovereign over this territory, this sovereignty comes with a qualification – a qualification, as we will see, that can accrete to the extent that the host state’s sovereignty gets challenged by the insurgency.

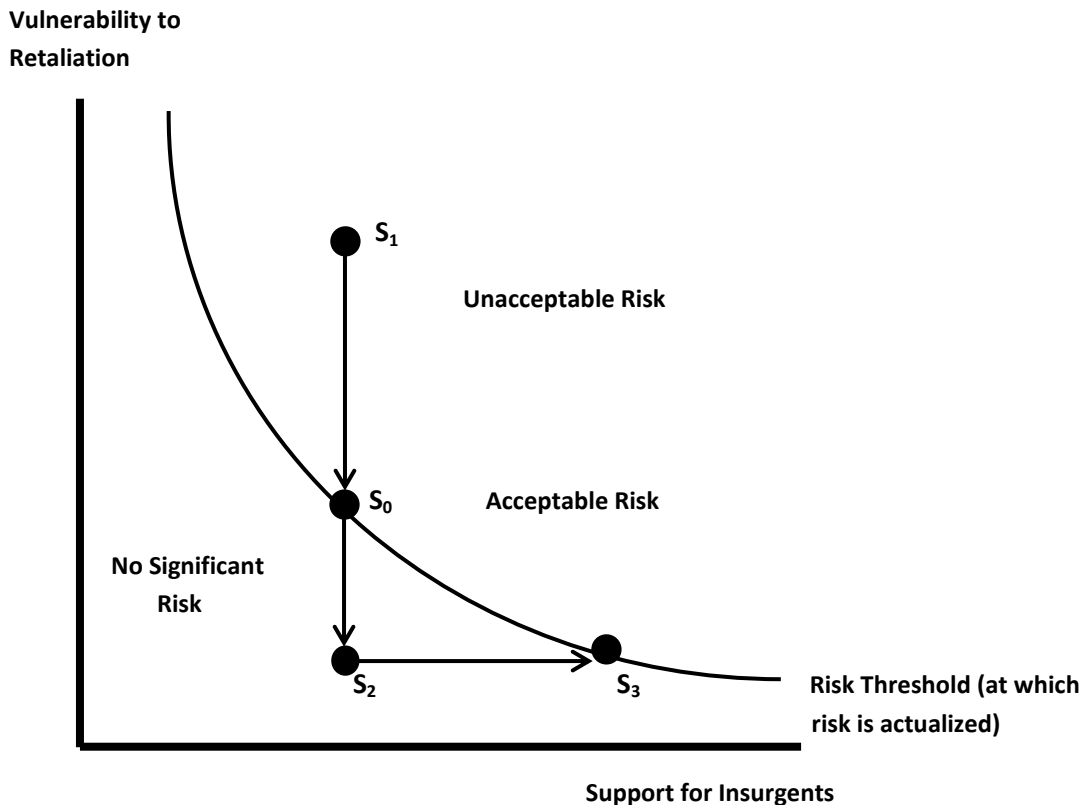
For the insurgency the blessings of sanctuary are obvious. Idean Salehyan (2007, 2008, 2009) is the latest in an array of political scientists who have highlighted the importance of international borders to shelter insurgencies from the jurisdiction of their target states. If we conceptualise the international system as a conglomerate of sovereign states that, as neo-realists would have it, exercise absolute power and control within their border but have little or no legal basis to prosecute subversive elements

abroad, it is plainly clear why protest movements, NLMs or insurgencies find it attractive to evade persecution, imprisonment or torture by relocating most of their operations into the territory of a neighbouring state well-disposed to their cause – geographical proximity being an additional factor in their favour, as insurgencies usually cannot project force across long distance. By going abroad, insurgencies thus not only successfully dodge the judicial, policing, and military powers of the target state, they also significantly raise the stakes of the conflict by internationalising it. They not only win a material and logistic supporter for their cause but also a potent patron in international fora and bodies that are in most cases ‘states only clubs’. The insurgencies therewith also make it more costly for the target state to prosecute them: doing so would violate the sovereignty of the neighbouring state and the condemnation in international bodies that comes with it, hazard an inter-state confrontation between two regular, more or less well-equipped armies, and even if the target state is willing to take that risk and intervene abroad, in most cases it would result in a lengthy and costly occupation to extirpate the insurgency and the neighbouring state’s support of it (Salehyan, 2009). Erin Jenne (2006) and Clayton Thyne (2006) demonstrate how the assistance of foreign governments and the higher costs resulting for the target state to combat them, significantly increases the bargaining position of the insurgents and may induce them to raise and radicalise their demands. ‘Thus, the inclusion of additional parties to the bargaining environment can make it more difficult to find an acceptable settlement because external patronage alters expectations about the domestic balance of power’ (Salehyan, 2009: 49).

More prosaically, from classic studies of (counter-)insurgencies (Thompson, 1966; McColl, 1969; Galula, 2006 [1964]), to the short-lived heyday of liberal-interventionism, the ‘New World Order’ of the 1990s (Joes, 2006; O’Neill, 2005), to the proliferation of tomes on insurgent warfare and counterinsurgency in the course of the ‘War on Terror’ and questionable ‘lessons learnt’ from Afghanistan and Iraq (Hashim, 2005; Cassidy, 2006; Kilcullen, 2006 and 2010), to the inevitable and expectable contributions from security think tanks such as the *RAND Corporation* and the *Strategic Studies Institute* of the U.S. Army War College conflict analysts and Security Studies experts have provided us with a vast library on the minutiae of the immense opportunities for organisational, financial, logistical, material, and technical support for insurgencies from well-disposed, neighbouring states.

While what is to be gained from sanctuary for the insurgency thus is easily identifiable, the interests of the sanctuary state in hosting the insurgency are more nebulous in the literature. After all, in the worst case, the host state runs risk of retaliation by the target state or of being dragged into the military confrontation, as has happened when the U.S. decided to broaden the Vietnam War to Laos and Cambodia to stamp out Vietcong bases there. Even if direct military confrontation does not occur, the host state is seen as a violator of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the target state in international fora that may impose sanctions or other political and economic leverage to alter its behaviour. Consequently, in the literature the relations between the sanctuary state and the insurgency it hosts are mostly seen as a function of the international pressure exerted on the host state. This explanatory model is depicted in what is to my knowledge the only model that attempts to systematically analyse the relations between sanctuary state and insurgency, the ‘Sanctuary Behaviour Model’ by Douglas Anglin and Timothy Shaw (1979) – and adopted by Rex Brynen (1990) – for describing the policy circle of Zambia’s support for insurgencies operating from its territory against Apartheid Rhodesia and South Africa:

Fig. 1 - ‘Sanctuary Behaviour Model’ as devised by Douglas Anglin and Timothy Shaw (1979) and adapted by Rex Brynen (1990) for the PLO – Lebanon relationship



The ‘sanctuary state’ is vulnerable to the military superiority of the insurgency’s ‘target state’, which negatively affects its support for the insurgency. Whenever the activities of the insurgency operating from the ‘sanctuary state’ threatened to invite unacceptable retaliation (S_1), the ‘sanctuary state’ is forced to restrict those activities in order to reduce the risk to an acceptable level (S_0). Conversely, with the subsequent decline in vulnerability to retaliation, i.e., the potential cost of the insurgency’s presence (S_2), reins were slackened and the support for the insurgency increased again (S_3) (Brynen, 1990: 6-7).

Naturally, this vacillation and volatility in support is one of the major sources of friction between the sanctuary state and the insurgency, as the former often feels betrayed and dropped like a hot potato when it needs its patron’s devotion most.

Indeed, herein lies the heart of the insurgents’ dilemma. For while sanctuary provides important, perhaps indispensable, benefits for an insurgent movement, the granting of sanctuary may involve considerable costs for the sanctuary state and the regime that rules it. This in turn adversely affects insurgent-sanctuary relations – and hence threatens the availability of sanctuary itself (Brynen, 1990: 7).

Such a clash of ‘the insurgents’ *raison de la révolution* and the sanctuary’s *raison d’etat*’ (*ibidem*: 9, italics in original), with the very survival of the sanctuary state threatened if the target state and the international community’s coercive pressure becomes overwhelming, is a direct function of the latter’s response to sanctuary. Without exception, at least none I am aware of, the sanctuary state in such a scenario will adopt an ‘every man for himself’ policy and prioritise its survival over the insurgency’s – as highlighted by the case of Syria, where mounting Turkish pressure led to the expulsion of Abdullah Öcalan in 1998 (Artens, forthcoming a and b). There is however a second source of friction in these relational dynamics that, with the exemption of Brynen’s study, is not discussed comprehensively in the literature: the case in which the insurgency becomes so strong that it challenges the sanctuary state – ideologically, politically, militarily, etc. – on its own account and poses a security threat and challenge to its sovereignty without much involvement from the target state. This occurrence – not as rare as one may think given how little it is discussed in the literature – is crucial to our understanding of the inherent complexities and ambiguous dynamics of the relations between sanctuary state and insurgency and leads us back to questioning

the motivations of the host state to grant sanctuary to the affiliated NLM in the first place.

The literature distinguishes between ‘instrumental’ and ‘affective’ motives for group solidarity (cf. Komter, 2005). While the former follows too strict a utilitarian approach to solidarisation, as exemplified in the Rational Choice Theory (RCT) of a Michael Hechter (1987) or Russel Hardin (1997), the latter advances an essentialist understanding of identity that treats the group constituted by the respective identity not as a socio-political construct but as factual. For these reasons and since in most cases solidarity between a state and an affiliated insurgency is, as detailed below, motivated by a combination of both factors (cf. Cordell and Wolff 2010), I think this distinction, based on a separation of both, is not very substantive in its explanatory value; in fact, I argue, employing it as an analytical tool is grounded in an epistemological and ontological fallacy and therefore highly counterproductive.

Likewise, while realists in IR theory ascribe material and objective qualities to interests, social constructivists contradict this classic view by arguing that interests are constituted by identities (cf. Fierke, 2010: 80). Yet Bill McSweeney (1999) in his sociology-grounded discussion of security and European integration has convincingly argued that neither the realists’ strict positivism nor the singular perspective of social constructivists correspond with the complexities of reality. Rather than a one-way street where A clearly leads to B, the interdependence of identity and interest resemble a fluid matrix with each element feeding into the other in ever changing constellations, reconstituting each other in varied circles of re-creation, prone to the shifting tides of context, the tension between past, present, and future, yet at the same without stable hierarchy or direction (*ibidem*). As Karin Fierke maintains, ‘identity and interests cannot be separated and dealt with in a causal relationship’ (2010: 81), nor does it seem prudent to analyse their interplay by allocating independent and dependent variables.

Yet it is precisely this traditional mode of analysis most scholars of identity conflicts pursue. Whether they refer to them as dependent or independent variables, instrumental and affective motives of group solidarity, whether they essentialise identities by ascribing them with a primordial character or trivialise them as mere ex-post attempts at justification for the interests of power-mongering elites, they simplify the complexities and diversities of socio-political action – and, in our case, the motives that lead a state to grant an insurgency sanctuary. Drawing on Fierke’s analogy (*ibidem*) of discourse analysis as an attempt at mapping the interdependencies of identity and

interests, I understand the model introduced here as a first step in cartographically capturing this matrix in the specific context of the relations between sanctuary state and insurgency. It is insofar a first step as it puts identity/self-interest of the sanctuary state to support the insurgency (or to deny support) in the context of relations between the sanctuary state and the insurgency, of the former with the target state as well as with the international community. This, I argue, serves as a basis to then, in a second step, identify how specifically identity and self-interest of the sanctuary state re-constitute each other. However, I maintain that this cannot be done by way of generalising models or large n-studies but requires a case-specific approach that scrutinizes each case individually. In this sense the subsequent case study of the PKK sanctuary is not only understood as a test site to determine the value of the new model but also as an illustration of how to conduct this second part of the analysis.

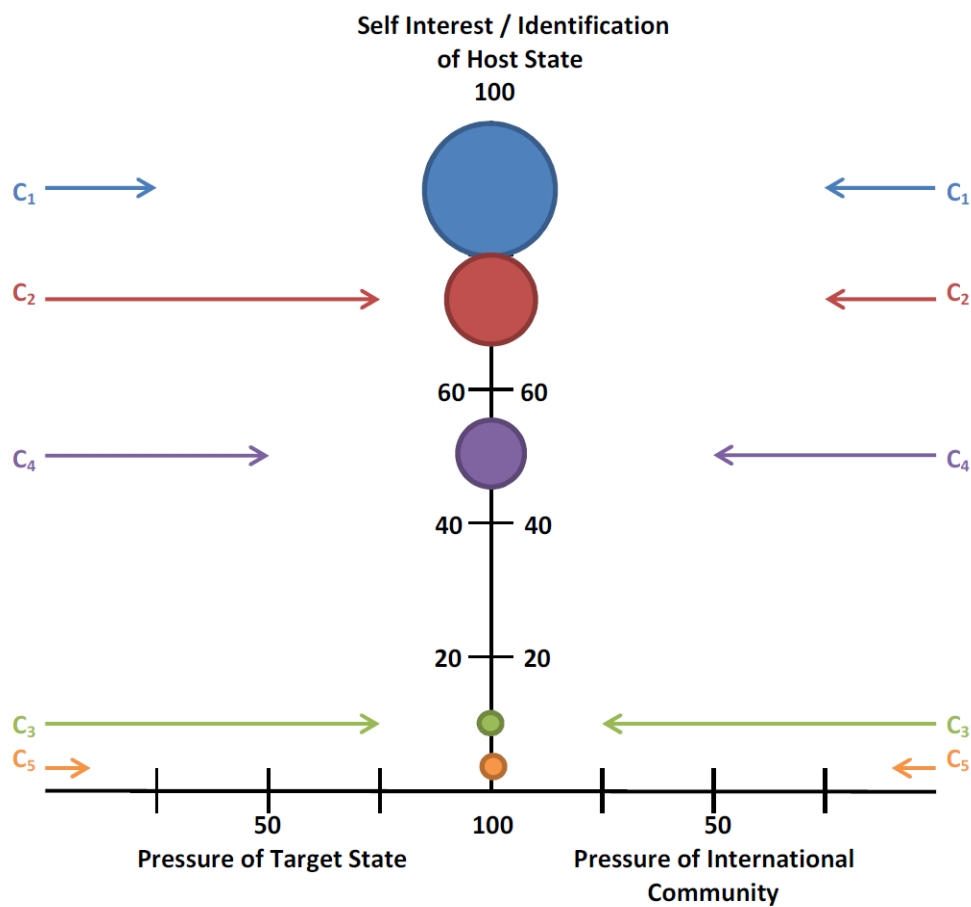
II. A New Sanctuary State – Insurgency Model

The ‘Sanctuary State – Insurgency Model’ I propose below aims to take the discussed complexities and ambiguities in the relations between a sanctuary state and the insurgency it hosts into account. It also addresses another shortcoming of the Anglin/Shaw model that has been adopted by Brynen for his ground-breaking analysis of the PLO in Lebanon: the missing differentiation between the target state and the international community when trying to quantify the external pressure exerted on the sanctuary state. That those cannot be treated as one is attested by numerous examples in which the international community sided with the NLM and its sanctuary rather than the target state. The international community’s stance against Apartheid Rhodesia and South Africa is a good case in point, which makes Anglin and Shaw’s failure to factor it in their very own model all the more perplexing.

In line with the critique by Cordell and Wolff (2010) of Brubaker’s discussion of the triangular matrix of ethnic/nationalist conflict (1996) consisting of minority, nationalising state, and external, national homeland, I add to my model a fourth dimension, the international factor. The resulting model thus operates on four levels, measuring the self-interest of a state to host an insurgency, then the pressure on the sanctuary state by the target state as well as by the international community and, as a function of these three factors, the amount of support the insurgency receives from the sanctuary state. Its main purpose is to demonstrate that, unlike the Anglin/Shaw model where the amount of support is solely conditioned by the reaction of the target state, the

policies of a sanctuary state via the insurgency it hosts and as a result the relations between both are more complex and dependent on various factors, i.e. the self-interest of the sanctuary state and the stance of the international community, which the literature has yet to take into account. My ambition for this new ‘Sanctuary State – Insurgency Model’ is that it may serve as a template in the analysis of cross-border insurgencies and sanctuaries in internationalised conflicts of identity at large, be they subsumed under the label ‘ethnic’, ‘ideological’, or ‘religious’:

Fig. 2 – ‘Sanctuary State – Insurgency Model’



In this model the y-axis indicates on a scale from 0 to 100 the self-interest of a neighbouring state to grant sanctuary to an affiliated insurgency as well as its identification with that insurgency. The x-axis is two-tiered, with the left half indicating the pressure of the target state on the sanctuary state, and the right half of the international community. For each case discussed the respective amount of pressure is depicted in a scale from 0 to 100. As a function of these three factors the amount of

support the insurgency receives from the sanctuary state is denoted by the size of the respective bubble.

Case 1 (blue) is a classic scenario already discussed in the Anglin/Shaw model. The self-interest/identification of the sanctuary state is high – due to strong ideological affiliations, the target state being perceived as the Constitutive Other of both insurgency and sanctuary state – and the pressure from the target state is weak, conceivably due to the state being weak, internally fractured or already in the process of disintegration. The pressure from the international community is also weak, perhaps because the target state is perceived as a pariah, as was the case with Apartheid Rhodesia. The resulting support for the insurgency from the sanctuary state that seemingly has nothing to lose but lots to gain from supporting the insurgency is high.

Case 2 (red) varies from Case 1 only in so far as the pressure from the target state being very high. Consequently, while still harbouring a strong self-interest/identification to align with the insurgency and being able to count on the tacit approval of the international community, the sanctuary state has to tread carefully so as not to risk direct intervention or hurtful sanctions from the target state, and, as discussed in the Anglin/Shaw model, has to adapt its support for the insurgency accordingly.

Case 3 (green) is the reverse of the Case 1. Here, the pressure of the target state and the international community is so strong, turning the sanctuary state into a pariah and running risk of internationally condoned or supported sanctions or intervention, that a continuing support of the insurgency becomes suicidal. Although the self-interest/identification of the sanctuary state for support might have been originally high, the international climate has become so hostile that the ‘every man for himself’ rule applies, often resulting in the insurgency being dropped like a hot potato.

While the first three cases mirror the Anglin/Shaw model, the following two are not discussed there nor are they sufficiently addressed in a systematic way in the literature. In Case 4 (purple) both self-interest/identification to host the insurgency and external pressure are considerable but not high. As a result the support for the insurgency is significant but not sufficient to aid the insurgency for making a breakthrough. This case is exemplary of protracted conflicts in which the insurgency is used as a proxy by the sanctuary state to exert pressure on the target state in matters often not directly related to the insurgency’s struggle. The policy of the sanctuary state is to deal small blows to the target state via the insurgency, aimed at not significantly altering the status quo but just sufficient enough to strengthen the former’s bargaining

position, so that the target state might be forced to make concessions on matters truly in the interest of the sanctuary state. In exchange the sanctuary state can then cut its support, since the success of the insurgency has never been in its national interest in the first place. The support of Iran, Iraq, and Syria of various Kurdish NLMs from the 1970s until the present fit into this category, the most telling example being the PKK sanctuary in Syria. Here the Assad regime agreed to host Öcalan's group in order to extract concessions from Turkey on the use of the water resources of the Euphrates and Tigris together with other non-related political issues but at the same time took great pains not to overstep the mark and to limit PKK activities in Syria (Olson, 1997; Artens, forthcoming a and b). When after more than fifteen years, in 1998, Turkey threatened intervention, Assad expelled Öcalan within months.

Case 5 (orange) illustrates a case apart in which the external pressure has become almost secondary for relations between sanctuary state and insurgency – which is why I chose to depict them as extremely low. What determines their relations is the antagonism between the insurgency and the sanctuary state, an antagonism so pervasive that it might lead to outright conflict between the two and plunge the sanctuary state into a civil war. In most cases this antagonism results from ideological differences that are instrumentalised – by way of, for example, ‘ethnic outbidding’ – yet in all cases the more pragmatic reason is that the insurgency poses a direct challenge to the regime in power in the sanctuary state. The insurgency has become so potent – and in reverse often the sanctuary state so weak and internally fractured – that it can afford to take on the target state and the regime controlling the sanctuary state. Here, the insurgency aims for nothing more or less than taking over power in the sanctuary state or at least to help a regime to power that is more well-disposed towards its cause. Both the PLO in Jordan and Lebanon and the PKK in Iraqi Kurdistan are prominent examples of such a development (Brynen, 1990).

Needless to say, the cases displayed in this model are extremes, and are meant to illustrate tendencies, to provide a template for analysing actual cross-border insurgencies and internationalised conflicts, if not to reflect them in real terms. Secondly, and what is more often overlooked, sanctuary is a political process, not a static fact that is sufficiently dealt with by determining whether it exists or not. It is situational, dependent on and conditioned by the circumstances identified and therefore changing, vexing and waning, and malleable. It thus is unlikely that the occurrence of a sanctuary falls only within one of the categories described during its duration but that it

will shift between them, depending on factors we as social scientists are tasked to determine. In order to better illustrate this process, to test the model against an actual case study, to determine its value as an analytical tool, and to better illustrate the interdependence of identity and interests, it will now be applied to the PKK sanctuary in Iraqi Kurdistan.

III. Applying the Model to the PKK Sanctuary in Iraqi Kurdistan

The PKK sanctuary in Iraqi Kurdistan dates back to 1983 when the Iraqi Kurdish *Kurdistan Democratic Party* (KDP) granted it access to its territory and co-use of their base camps, logistic and supply routes as well as means of communication, i.e. transmitters, etc.. Founded five years earlier by Abdullah Öcalan and a group of like-minded Kurdish students, the PKK is a Marxist NLM championing, in its early stages at least, an independent Kurdish state, and its radicalism, doctrinaire rigidity, *Führerkult*, and brutality in tactics towards competing Kurdish political movements and the rural population of south-east Anatolia at large leads Romano (2006) to repeatedly compare it to Peru's *Sendero Luminoso*, set apart from other prominent guerrilla movements of the 1970s such as Nicaragua's *Sandinista National Liberation Front* (FSLN) or Uruguay's Tupamaros. After a few years, though, the group was on the verge of annihilation with most of its members killed, jailed, or on the run from the draconian persecution the post-1980 Turkish military autocrats meted out. The PKK was saved from extinction by the Iraqi Kurdish *Patriotic Union of Kurdistan* (PUK) of Jalal Talabani who, in Lebanon, brought them in contact with Palestinian NLMs and facilitated Öcalan being hosted by the Assad regime in Syria (cf. Artens, forthcoming a and b). This early stage of collaboration between PKK and PUK can be explained by a concurrence of self-interest and identity of the two parties with the PUK still pursuing, at least on paper, a Maoist ideology more in accordance with the belief system of the PKK and keen on giving its struggle an international, more pan-Kurdish direction (cf. Artens, forthcoming a).

The scope of this paper does not allow for an overview of the genesis of Kurdish ethnonationalism in the 20th century. Instead I want to stress four basic tenets, elaborated elsewhere in more detail (*ibidem*), yet crucial to following the key arguments made here: (1) Before World War One Kurdish nationalism is largely limited to cultural societies and literati circles in Istanbul, developing and becoming salient when the borders of the nationalist states of Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria were already drawn. (2)

As a consequence thereof, the process of Kurdish identification has been oriented towards varying constitutive Others and has been shaped by the political, social, and economic contexts in the respective countries and societies. (3) Pan-Kurdish ethnic consciousness is most salient among the diaspora; in the Kurdish ‘homelands’, as a result of ninety years of separation and a lack of a distinct prior feeling of communality, this consciousness is mostly an ever present yet rarely acted on sentiment, save for political rhetoric of ethnonational elites to justify and legitimise actions *ex post*. In hardly any case since the immediate aftermath of World War Two are common ethnic consciousness and ethnic group solidarity the determining variables to explain the actions of Kurdish ethnonationalist parties. (4) Lastly, of all major Kurdish ethnonationalist movements the PKK is the only one that has ever pursued a secessionist or irredentist agenda, while all others fought for national self-determination within the borders of the existing nationalist states and – although often under constraint – in dialogue with the respective governments, that is, they sought to enforce a negotiated solution, a degree of political autonomy. To put it less abstractly, while Kurds in Turkey were confronted by an effectively and ideologically strong nationalist state that denied them their very identity, Kurds in Iraq faced a notoriously weak state which lacked any coherent national legitimisation, torn apart by legion internal divisions. Consequently, while Kurds in Turkey became the victims of a cataclysmic ethnocide before their national consciousness became salient, Kurdish ethnonationalism in Iraq blossomed along, and often in collaboration with the manifold currents of (pan-) Arab ethnonationalism, which, until the second half of the 1970s, frequently bestowed upon Kurdish leaders the role of kingmakers in inner-Iraqi power struggles. This role was exacerbated by Iraq – in contrast to Turkey – becoming an early battlefield of super power rivalries during the Cold War which had its Kurdish parties enjoy the dubious privilege of serving as their proxies. Ultimately, while in Turkey the traditional Kurdish elites were either shattered early on, or later, at large, co-opted by the nationalist state, traditional societal structures in Iraq not only prevailed but tribal leaders often formed the vanguard of the Kurdish ethnonationalist movement. In light of these different trajectories it then appears justifiable to conclude with Martin van Bruinessen, the only scholar who has conducted extensive ethnographic field work in all major parts of Kurdistan, ‘it might, in fact, be more apt to consider the Kurds not as one, but as a set of ethnic groups’ (2000: 14), and to speak of Kurdish ethnonationalisms in plural rather

than a singular, implying an ethnic group defined by cross-border unity, communality and solidarity.

In 1983 the PUK had fallen out with the Assad regime and been banned from Syria (Artens, forthcoming a and b), forcing the PKK to look somewhere else for an Iraqi Kurdish ally. That ally was found in Massoud Barzani's KDP, and while it is obvious what the PKK was to gain from this new alliance – a sanctuary on Iraqi Kurdish soil with direct access to its theatre of operations in the mountains of south-east Turkey and nominally protected by an international border albeit not beyond the reach of retaliatory strikes of the Turkish air force – the motives for the KDP to enter this alliance are more complex. In contrast to KDP, who fought for reaching an autonomy agreement with Saddam Hussein, the PKK was the only modern Kurdish NLM that, in its early days, promoted and pursued a distinctly irredentist and secessionist form of national self-determination, its nationalism was also emphatically anti-elitist, leading Paul White (2000) to discuss them as Hobsbawmian 'revolutionary modernizers' and Martin van Bruinessen to attribute them with Robin Hood-like qualities when claiming that 'much of the PKK's violence was directed against the haves in the name of the have-nots' (1992: 42) – an idealization difficult to support even in the PKK's beginnings.

The PKK and KDP differ in composition, constituencies, ideology, and political aims like night and day. The KDP is the grand doyen of Kurdish ethnonationalism, founded by the legendary Mulla Mustafa Barzani in 1946, who succeeded in wedding his clan's interests and those of affiliated tribes with budding urban nationalism, characterised by Ghareeb (1981: 39), as a 'a marriage of convenience, albeit with suspicion on both sides'. This mutual suspicion between progressive and conservative elements led to a split in 1964, from which ultimately the PUK emerged in 1975. While the emergence of the PUK initially weakened the KDP, one could also see the split as a necessary adjustment that rendered possible an even more dominant position of the Barzani clan and its constituencies. The PKK, on the other hand, had declared the very *aghas* and tribal leaders in Turkey that emulated the KDP their prime target. Hence by embracing the PKK, Barzani would have run risk of alienating his traditional constituency, not broadening it. Ethnic group solidarity as the key explanandum for the KDP offering the PKK its territory as sanctuary appears even less authentic, when we consider that at the very same time the alleged KDP-PKK ethnic alliance was struck Barzani's KDP fought its sister organisation, the Iranian Kurdish KDP-I, for the

Khomeini regime as part of the Iran-Iraq War (van Bruinessen, 1986). And it is the regional context of the Iran-Iraq War and the eternal rivalry between PUK and KDP that explains the latter's alliance with the PKK, rather than allowing ethnicity pre-eminent explanatory power and portraying the KDP-PKK alliance as a result of their allegedly shared kinship. For I would argue that, unlike the PUK, for whom group solidarity and pan-Kurdish credentials may in part have shaped its interests, the KDP was not compelled by fellow kinship but acting on orders from Tehran when granting the PKK access to its territory (Artens, forthcoming a and b). In the crucial summer of 1983, hoping to gain the upper hand against its arch-rival, the KDP, and hoping to negotiate an autonomy status for Iraqi Kurdistan, the PUK entered the Iran-Iraq War on the side of Saddam Hussein. In return, Syria, Iran's major ally, expelled the PUK and both Damascus and Tehran encouraged their clients, the PKK and KDP, to collaborate in the hope of weakening the PUK in Iraqi Kurdistan. In sum we can ascertain that the origins of the PKK sanctuary in Iraqi Kurdistan fall between Case 2 and Case 4 of our model: the KDP had a clear self-interest – while no shared identification – to grant the PKK sanctuary on its territory in so far as Barzani hoped to win Öcalan's group as a potential ally in his contest with Talabani's PUK but had no interest in the struggle of the PKK in Turkey itself.

The situation and the power constellation in the region at large changed dramatically with the 1991 Gulf War. Just before, the Iraqi Kurds, pressed hard by Saddam Hussein's genocidal al Anfal campaign, had been on the verge of annihilation while the PKK, who appear to have struck a deal with Baghdad (Artens, forthcoming a and b), had become the supreme military force in Iraqi Kurdistan, strong enough to have forced the mighty Turkish army into a standoff. With the Gulf allies having dealt Saddam Hussein a devastating blow and encouraged by President George H. Bush, the Iraqi Kurds rose in rebellion only to be abandoned and to be crushed by Saddam Hussein's forces. In a most staggering reverse of fate, Turkey, who feared a flood of tens of thousands of Kurdish refugees, approached the U.S. to establish and enforce a humanitarian safe haven in Iraqi Kurdistan north of the 36th parallel (Graham-Brown, 1999; DiPrizio, 2002; Hale, 2007; Charountaki, 2010). Operation 'Provide Comfort' thus indirectly served as the fundament for an internationally guarded, albeit not sanctioned, autonomous zone within Iraq that gradually over the next years developed into the Iraqi Kurdish de facto state. This infant political entity, though, was vitally dependent on international – primarily Turkish – goodwill since the Turkish parliament

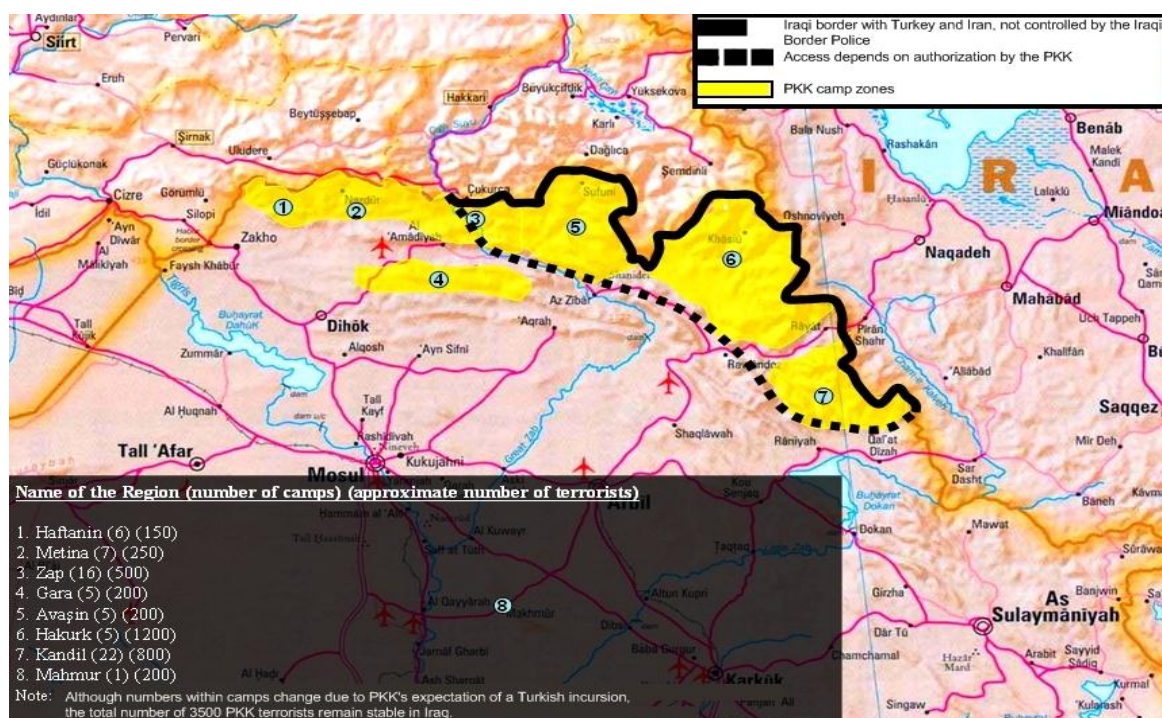
had to renew every six months permission for the allied fighter jets that kept Saddam Hussein's forces at bay to operate from Incirlik Airbase (Hale, 2007). This inevitably brought the KDP and PUK into conflict with the PKK; a conflict that, after an at first failed mediation initiative by Jalal Talabani, had KDP and PUK, now forming the *Kurdistan Regional Government* (KRG), side with Turkey and force the PKK into surrender. This second phase of the PKK sanctuary in Iraqi Kurdistan can be located between Case 3 and Case 5 of our 'Sanctuary State – Insurgency Model'. On the one hand, the Iraqi Kurdish parties with their very survival depending on protection by the international community and the PKK's target state had suddenly become significantly more vulnerable to international pressure. On the other hand, the PKK had alienated KDP and PUK by exploiting their weakness during the al Anfal period and making advances to their opponent, the Saddam Hussein regime in Baghdad. Consequently, what followed was less an ideological conflict but a power struggle for supremacy over Iraqi Kurdistan, in which the Iraqi Kurds' self-interest was diametrically opposed to the PKK's. Both sides saw their survival threatened by the other's pursuits and dependencies, creating a zero-sum mentality that turned sanctuary into a battle ground.

In 1993 the civil war in Turkey could have been ended. Defeated by a KDP/PUK alliance with Turkey, the PKK had surrendered in Iraqi Kurdistan to the PUK and Jalal Talabani had mediated a unilateral PKK ceasefire with Turkey that ultimately, though, came to naught with the sudden death of conciliatory President Turgut Özal and hardliners in Turkey gaining the upper hand in internal political struggles. Yet, also Talabani himself thwarted this unique opportunity for peace by playing a double game. He allowed the PKK fighters surrendering to the PUK to keep all their weapons and equipment and re-located them to camps on PUK territory (Artens, forthcoming a and b) with the intention to use them in confrontation with the KDP looming on the horizon. The civil war that broke out between the PUK and the KDP in May 1994 and lasted on and off for four years was first and foremost fought over supremacy of the Kurdish polity in Iraq. The PUK felt excluded on several fronts from the spoils of de facto statehood: not only did its territory lay south of the 36th parallel and was therefore not protected by the Gulf War allies, the PUK also increasingly felt politically marginalized in parliament and jockeyed with the KDP over revenues from traffic at the Harbur border gate, Iraqi Kurdistan's only lifeline to the outside world (Laizer, 1996; Gunter, 1998 and 1999; Romano, 2006; Tahiri, 2007). Backed by Iran and the PKK, the PUK succeeded in taking Erbil which prompted Massoud Barzani to go to the lengths of

calling on Saddam Hussein for help. On 31 August 1996, 30,000 Iraqi troops in conjuncture with KDP *peshmerga* attacked Erbil and re-conquered it, provoking the U.S. and Great Britain to launch ‘Operation Desert Strike’ (Graham-Brown, 1999; Byman, 2000). The regional conflagration further escalated when in January/February and May 1995 and again in May and September 1997 Turkey intervened, officially to rout the PKK from Iraqi Kurdistan, but in fact coordinating strikes with the KDP and, on one occasion, even shelling PUK positions (Gunter, 1998). While the PKK sporadically collaborated with the PUK, it also acted as a spoiler throughout the civil war, deliberately attacking the KDP whenever KDP and PUK had agreed on an internationally mediated ceasefire in order to provoke a new round of fighting. The PKK had no interest in a peaceful solution for the conflict; Öcalan reasoned that by KDP and PUK wearing each other down he could achieve what had eluded him in 1992: supremacy over Iraqi Kurdistan. Ultimately, though, international mediation paid off with Barzani and Talabani signing the Washington Agreement of September 1998 that ended the civil war, a deal that was sweetened by U.S. President Bill Clinton signing a month later the *Iraq Liberation Act* into law, bestowing on KDP and PUK millions of dollars in funding aimed at regime change in Iraq.

Worse than the settlement between KDP and PUK for the PKK was that in the same month, as a result of Turkish pressure, Syria expelled Abdullah Öcalan, which led to his capture by Turkish intelligence in Kenya in February 1999, and ultimately imprisonment for life on İmralı Island. It turned out to be a blow from which the PKK never recovered. Today only a shadow of its former self, an estimated 3,500 fighters – down from 15,000 active fighters at its peak in the early 1990s (Marcus, 2007; Eccarius-Kelly, 2011) – are scattered across less than a dozen camps in northern Iraq (see Figure 3). The PKK underwent several name changes along with ideological transformations – pan-Kurdish secessionism and rigid Marxism had already been abandoned in the 1990s – and internal power struggles that weakened it to lasting effect.

Figure 3 – The PKK Sanctuary in Iraqi Kurdistan – PKK Bases in the early 2000s



Source: Turkish Military Intelligence

The final phase of the PKK sanctuary in Iraqi Kurdistan, from 2000 until present, then falls into the category of Case 3 and 4 of our model. After the Iraq War the political status of the Kurdistan Region as an autonomous region within the federal state of Iraq was enshrined in the Iraqi Constitution of 2005. Yet, its relations with Turkey – in particular since Ankara's relations with Washington were at its lowest due to the Turkish parliament's refusal to join the 'Coalition of the Willing' and open its territory to allied forces as a second, northern front – remained ambiguous. Statements from KRG officials hint to the fact that KDP/PUK officials welcomed the presence of a weakened PKK on its territory as a leverage via Turkey to gain concessions in possible future negotiations on the final political status of Iraqi Kurdistan and the contested territories at its borders such as the oil-rich city of Kirkuk (Artens, forthcoming a and b). On the other hand, the KRG was eager not to provoke Turkey by giving the PKK too much leeway and ultimately, despite public protests, tacitly acquiesced to the Turkish incursion of 2007/8 after the Bush Administration, with whom Prime Minister Erdogan had reached a rapprochement, had green-lighted it and provided the Turkish armed forces with vital satellite intelligence (*ibidem*). This phase can best be described as a 'Phony War', an elusive stalemate all sides could live with: the PKK relied on its

conditional sanctuary in Iraqi Kurdistan and oscillations from armed provocations to unilateral ceasefires to maintain its influence on the political process in Turkey, the KRG toyed with the idea of using the PKK sanctuary as a bargaining chip via Turkey, and in Turkey a political sea change in 2002 had brought the AKP to power, shifting the public and political discourse from the relentless pursuit of a military to finding a political solution to the so called ‘Kurdish Question’ and from a securitization of Ankara’s relations with Erbil to a gradual de-securitization via expanding trade links (Artens, forthcoming c).

Today, the PKK is but a thorn in the KRG’s side. In the present constellation of regional power politics the Kurdistan Region depends more than ever on Turkey’s goodwill. In 2010 Turkey was the biggest investor in the Kurdistan Region, with more than half of the foreign companies registered there being Turkish, 90 percent of all imports to the region originating in or coming via Turkey, and the Kurdistan Region’s major pipelines ending in the Turkish oil terminal in Ceyhan (*ibidem*). Even more important, though, since the U.S. troop withdrawal from Iraq in 2011, is Turkey’s political backing of Iraqi Kurdish autonomy via an increasingly nationalist government in Baghdad. Yet after the disastrous civil war of the 1990s the KDP and PUK, whose domestic support is declining due to rising authoritarianism, paramount corruption and a perceived favouritism towards foreign investors to the disadvantage of the local populace, fear they cannot afford via their constituencies to do Turkey’s bidding by again fighting ‘fellow Kurds’. Consequently, the KRG tries other avenues of playing up to Turkey such as offering its role as a mediator during the so called ‘Kurdish Initiative’ of the Erdoğan government in 2009 – so far with precious little success.

Conclusion

The analysis of sanctuary in the study of cross-border and internationalized civil wars cannot be limited to determining its mere existence, as many large n-studies on global conflict confine themselves to, and, based on whether it exists or not, making claims on group cohesion and group solidarity, as do the majority of investigations of identity conflicts in the literature on conflict analysis, peace building, and counterinsurgency. Sanctuary is far from static; on the contrary, it is a political process shaped by complex interactions between its constituting elements and conditional to external factors, whose intensity, scope, duration, and impact on the conflict at large waxes and wanes with changes in the wider socio-political environment. In order to capture the complexities of

sanctuary and therewith analytically grasp its nature, an appreciation of the complexities and ambiguities in the relations between sanctuary state and affiliated insurgency are key. Furthermore, the interplay between identity and interest cannot be reduced to a simple unidirectional equation but should be understood as a fluid, multi-layered matrix of varying constellations, reconstituting each other in diverse constellations and hierarchies conditioned by circumstance. Both factors are key to comprehending the complexities and ambiguities in the relations between an insurgency and its sanctuary state and therewith the nature and dimension of the internationalised identity conflict in question.

The schematic model introduced in this working paper is a unique contribution to the existing literature on internationalised identity conflicts in its attempt to chart this matrix by taking both factors into account and, as a consequence, supplying a tool by which relations between an insurgency and its sanctuary state can be categorized. As outlined above, though, such a categorization can only be the first step, the limit beyond which no generalization or meta-theory on conflict should reach in my opinion. As a subsequent, second step each conflict needs to be studied individually with the fine comb of qualitative (and to a certain extent quantitative) analysis in order to determine more precisely the interplay between interest and identity in the given context. This second step has been exemplarily demonstrated with the case study of the PKK sanctuary in Iraqi Kurdistan, an example widely quoted in the literature on sanctuary in internationalised identity conflicts. To this end, the case study was not only employed to test the merits of the model as an analytical tool via an actual conflict but also to illustrate how to conduct the two-levelled investigation outlined here in actual terms. Having thus presented the viability of this new model and the analytical chain of reasoning for which it is supposed to serve as a basis in a first test run I would now suggest it for further application to a variety of case studies for fine tuning.

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