

Editorial | Djene Rhys Bajalan[‡]
Welat Zeydanlioglu[†]

On September the 25th 2017 the population of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, as well as those provinces outside Iraq's autonomous region currently under Kurdish control, voted overwhelmingly in favour of independence in a non-binding referendum. In certain respects, this is truly an event without historical precedent. For the first time, Kurds (or at least some Kurds) were given the opportunity to unequivocally express their choice on the question of Kurdish statehood. Nevertheless, the vote has not been without controversy. Many opposition figures in Iraqi Kurdistan regard the referendum as a political manoeuvre on the part of the ruling Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) to shore up popular support and cement its position as the region's dominant political party.

Still, whatever the motivations behind the political leadership's decision to hold the vote in Iraqi Kurdistan, it would seem undeniable that the majority of Iraq's Kurdish population favour independence. Whether or not the Iraqi Kurds will be able to realise independence is a different proposition. At present only Israel looks favourably on Iraqi Kurdistan's bid for national self-determination. The United States has reaffirmed its commitment to a unified Iraq and described the vote as "illegitimate". And, as might be expected, the project faces the seemingly implacable hostility of not only the Iraqi federal government but also Turkey, Iran, and Syria. The burgeoning crisis over the question of Kurdish statehood has thus prompted greater scholarly and journalistic interest in Kurdish affairs more generally. It is within this context that *Kurdish Studies* seeks to reaffirm its commitment to providing a venue for the publication of scholarly pieces examining the Kurdish community from a multitude of disciplinary perspectives.

The three articles published in this issue cover a wide range of topics. Sociologist Joost Jongerden's article, "*A spatial perspective on political group formation in Turkey after the 1971 coup: The Kurdistan Workers' Party of Turkey (PKK)*", examines the Kurdistan Revolutionaries, the milieu from which the PKK emerged in 1978. Jongerden's work, which focuses on the period between 1971 and 1978, endeavours to highlight an underappreciated aspect of the condition in which these groups operated, namely its spatial

[‡] Djene Rhys Bajalan, Assistant Professor, Department of History, Missouri State University, 901 S National Ave., Springfield, MO 65897, United States. E-mail: DRBajalan@MissouriState.edu.

[†] Welat Zeydanlioglu, Managing Editor of *Kurdish Studies* journal and the Convener of *Kurdish Studies Network*, Stockholm, Sweden. E-mail: welatzeydan@hotmail.com



dimensions. More precisely, his work uncovers how these groups maintained themselves in a period in which martial law and the “securitisation” of politics had made it difficult for such groups to operate openly.

The second article in our October issue shifts focus to the Kurdish diaspora in Europe. Ruth Kevers, Peter Rober and Lucia De Haene in their collaborative piece titled “*The role of collective identifications in family processes of post-trauma reconstruction: An exploratory study of Kurdish refugee families and their diasporic community*”, engage in the study of a group of five families in Belgium focusing on the role of shared culture and identification coping with cultural bereavement, commemorating trauma, and “reversing versus reiterating trauma”.

The third article in our issue is titled “*Kurds in the USSR, 1917-1956*” and penned by J. Otto Pohl, a historian of the Soviet Union. Here Pohl highlights the historical fate of a very different form of Kurdish diasporic community, namely those deported to Central Asia during Stalin’s campaigns of mass deportation and ethnic cleansing in the 1930s and 1940s. In doing so, Pohl sheds light on a serious lacuna in the already scant literature in English on the Kurds in the former Soviet Union.

With a view to further stimulating interest in both the Kurdish communities residing within the lands of the former Soviet Union as well as to highlight the significant body of scholarly work on the Kurds published in Russia, in this issue we also include a short inventory of works on the Kurds published over the last century in the Russian language prepared by Ibrahim Sirkeci and Andrej Privara covering books and articles in Kurdish Studies in Russian between 1917 and 2017. We have also included a field note on the independence referendum held in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and disputed territories based on observations by Bill Park, Joost Jongerden, Francis Owtram, and Akiko Yoshiokaa. Finally, it was with great sadness that the editorial board of *Kurdish Studies* received the news of the passing of Professor Amir Hassanpour. Professor Hassanpour’s contribution to the field was enormous and his loss will be deeply felt, not only by his family, friends, and colleagues, but all those engaged in Kurdish studies. Therefore, the last article in this issue is an obituary penned by Amir Sharifi highlighting Hassanpour’s immeasurable contribution to the field.

Editors’ acknowledgement

We are delighted to publish the second issue of our fifth volume, bringing such insightful research to our readership. As always we are indebted to all our reviewers, authors, readers and colleagues who make this unique publication possible. It is also with great pleasure that we welcome on board Sacha Alsancaklı and Marlene Schäfers as associate editors to *Kurdish Studies*.