

Voicing a Nation: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Jalal Talabani's Rhetoric on Kurdish Identity and Ethnic Oppression

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the rhetoric of the late Jalal Talabani to answer to what extent he constructed the Kurdish identity and provided a clear illustration of the ongoing ethnic discrimination and subjugation of Kurds. Despite Talabani's pivotal place in Kurdish political history, very few scholars have utilized his earlier discourse to identify and analyse structures of ethnic discrimination and collective suffering. This study fills that gap by addressing the language role as a tool of national identity assertion through an analysis of Talabani's speeches. This is qualitative research with Critical Discourse Analysis based on van Dijk's socio-cognitive model, which considers discourse at three levels: textual, cognitive and social. The strategy facilitates investigation of linguistic devices such as lexical choice, repetition, and passivation at the textual level; intertextuality, polarization, and implicit at the cognitive level; and power relations, ethnic and social inequality, legitimacy and representation, and victimhood or heroism at the social level. These markers can help to reveal the way Talabani's discourse creates and reinforces Kurdish identity in an environment of ethnic oppression. It concludes that Talabani's associated rhetoric works as a strategic discursive force to raise the Kurdish struggle from the political resistance to an identity formation act. Talabani uses intentional language and socio-cognitive framing to aggregate pain into a story of common suffering and collective resistance. Utilizing emotionally charged data and historical allusions, he reframes Kurdish identity not simply as a product of past victimization but rather as a method to future empowerment through rhetorical polarization itself.

KEY WORDS: Critical Discourse Analysis, Jalal Talabani, Kurdish Identity, Ethnic Oppression, legitimacy.

1. INTRODUCTION¹

In critical discourse studies, much attention has been focused on the role of language in constructing political identity and conveying collective experience (Van Dijk, 1997). In these post-conflict areas characterized by inter-ethnic warfare, discourse functions as a medium of identity, opposition, and memory in the face of the past (Fairclough, 2013; van Dijk, 2008). An important case is the Kurdish case, Kurdish People's Protection Units known for its long history of marginalization and lack of real statehood, where political rhetoric serves as not only an expression but also a response to ethnic exclusion and oppression. Jalal Talabani: a voice of a nation, the famous Kurdish and Iraqi politician gave many speeches

that speak of history, identity and political rule. The speeches, especially those delivered at times of national crisis and transition, serve as important material for exploring how Kurdish identity is crafted and how ethnic oppression is discursively constructed.

The data for this research are based on two video interviews with Jalal Talabani, which are in the public domain. While the current study draws on two speeches, the first one is nearly 13 minutes long and delivered during a critical period in Kurdistan in February 1988, a time when state violence against the Kurdish people was particularly intensifying under the Ba'ath regime. The second speech, though it is shorter, complements this discourse through reflecting Talabani's later views, giving a temporal contrast that displays ongoing evolution in his discourse. Moreover, these speeches provide a sufficient sample to apply the socio-cognitive framework of van Dijk to analyse how Talabani's rhetoric pinpoints ethnic oppression and constructs Kurdish identity.

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2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Identity And National Representation

Identity is a category which has changed a lot in the last decades and which has become one of the central focuses of studies in the field of cultural studies, sociology and discourse analysis, to mention some. Identity is no longer seen as a stable, inherent quality, but rather as an emerging, sociocultural construction. According to Stuart Hall (1996), identity cannot be perceived as some essential quality rather a positional articulation, constituted through endless processes of negotiation, representation and interpretation. Mediation is a historical product of events, institutional practices, and power relations. Identity is produced and reproduced through discourse, and it continues to sustain itself through repeated performative acts that reinforce a sense of belonging to a group or ideology. It enables a more textured understanding of identity expression, particularly in situations of marginality or subjugation. So, Hall's approach highlights the significance of discourse in the identity-making process; thus, this is preferable with political characters such as Jalal Talabani, whose own rhetoric works in positioning and marking the Kurdish national identity boundaries.

More specifically, Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) sheds light on the process of identity by detailing the ways individuals categorize both themselves and others into social groups. Such classifications are the foundation of in-group and out-group differences, which play an important role in determining perceptions, attitudes, and behavior. Thus, in political contexts, such group identifications can be strategically exploited in order to unify group cohesion, opposition, or even exclusion. As a form of collective identity, national identity has frequently been used by politicians to foster collective awareness among the population and to legitimize the cause of a collective struggle against some perceived injustice. Jenkins (2008), similarly, makes the argument that identity is constructed at the chalkboard of personal thought and social interaction and that it is always being constructed and re-constructed in response to shifting social situations. Hence, studying the representation of national and ethnic identities in political discourse has become a necessary analytical tool to understand mechanisms of social cohesion, resistance, and political mobilization, especially in cases of conflict and marginalization.

2.2. Kurdish Identity in Context

The Kurdish identity is both the result of a historic experience and a political resistance. Over the decades, the Kurds have faced systematic cultural repression, political exclusion and also disintegration of their lands,

but ironically rather than fading away into oblivion, this has had the paradoxical effect of strengthening their nationalist sentiments. The Kurds have experienced some of the most extreme forms of how to repress an ethnic group in Iraq, such as the Ba'athist regime of Saddam Hussein. A fuller history of the Kurds in Iraq covered by David McDowall (2004) is noted, whereby ruling administrations over the decades have attempted to blanket Kurdish areas in Arab identity, to move around Kurds from their inherited home-lands and to eliminate centers of 'Kurdish culture'. Such suppressive deeds – culminating in genocidal campaigns such as Anfal – has long been instrumental in constructing the identity of Kurds, infusing it with narratives of victimhood, perseverance, and opposition. In a similar vein, Gunter (1993) notes that the Kurds, although their current homeland is located in areas of separate states, have created a cohesive national identity that is based on the similarities of a common language, culture, and the experience of past oppression. Contrasting with dominant Arab narratives, this identity is often articulated through discourse, which serves as a primary medium of Kurdish national expression.

2.3. Ethnic Oppression and the Kurdish Experience

Ethnic oppression refers to the systematic discrimination, exclusion and violence against a group of people based upon their ethnicity. To the Kurdish people of Iraq, such oppression has manifested itself both explicitly and implicitly; from the prohibition of speech to institutionalized murder. This includes the state violence of the late 1980s, where thousands of Kurds were murdered, villages destroyed and whole populations displaced during the Anfal Campaign that sought to eradicate Kurdish identity. According to Human Rights Watch [(1993) these actions have been classified as events of genocide; because they have Kurds ethnic identity. To counter this general autonomy Kurdish organization so that they could eventually become a threat to national unity at the very least, the regime employed the full battery of legal, military, and discursive tools to delegitimize the existence of the Kurds as an ethnic group, and portray them, in public discourse, as enemies and threats to the state. This oppressiveness, according to Yildiz (2005), had a systematic nature that was not just physical but symbolic as well, representing the denial of Kurdish existence from the national identity and history by silencing Kurdish language, history and cultural expressiveness.

2.4. Voicing a Nation: Discourse as Resistance and Identity Assertion

Voicing a nation is the institution-based discourse that has been used to create, claim, and validate national identity in the context of marginalized national identity. For the Kurds, and particularly via the discourse of Jalal Talabani, speaking the nation is a mode of political rebellion and self-representation. Talabani frequently relied on public speeches, interviews, and parliamentary addresses as spaces in which to develop a pluralistic Kurdish collective memory, identity, and political aspirations. In calling upon a common history of perseverance, Talabani establishes a discursive space that not only acknowledges Kurdish identity, but which imbues it with positive value. Through his choice of words, he creates a story in which Kurds are a nation in the right that has been wronged by history and therefore most deserving of political rights and recognition. This narrative performs both internal and external functions; it consolidates cohesion among the group, while at the same time operating on the national and international levels to legitimize Kurdish demands.

2.5. Critical Discourse Analysis

As a method and approach of exploration, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), with its focus on power, identity and social inequality within political discourse, is relevant for the current study. CDA not only provides the means to investigate how Talabani's language constructs Kurdish identity, articulate collective memory, and problematizes dominant narratives of state power, but also provides the critical framework to examine the (re)construction of a Kurdish identity in the context of this study. CDA assists the researcher in stretching outside of linguistic choices and emphasizing the wider socio-political milieu in which these linguistic choices were made, thus revealing how Talabani discursively frames acts of resistance, victimhood and national legitimacy. According to van Dijk (2008), CDA does more than simply analyze the structural characteristics of texts, as it also takes into account their cognitive and social aspects of meaning construction, which makes CDA particularly powerful for analyzing political speeches developed in a context of historical conflict and identity tensions.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Kurdish national identity has been discursively constructed, and this theme has been explored in a range of national and political contexts in the academic literature. Their relationship with the broader political discourses of the country by examining the construction of the Kurdish identity in the media and the styles of politics in Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran, all these studies

attempt to shed light on the various ways in which the Kurdish identity is framed, contested and negotiated. This review subsequently brings these contributions into critical conversation to contextualize the unique focus of the current study on the rhetoric of Jalal Talabani.

Yıldırım, D. (2018), "Discursive Representations of Kurdish National Identity in Turkish Media" [in Turkish] (2012, Ankara University Press), offers A detailed study of representations of Kurdish identity in Turkish mainstream newspapers over a 20-year period (1990–2010). Utilizing van Dijk's socio-cognitive paradigm within a CDA framework, he illustrates how much of the Turkish media frames Kurds as an existential threat to national security discourse. Such a discursive practice creates an "us versus them" dichotomy, (re)legitimizing state practices which marginalize the Kurdish identity and promote ethnic discrimination. The study concludes that these mediated narratives prevent democratic discussions and keep systemic exclusion alive.

Salih's "Kurdish Political Discourse in Iraq: From Marginalization to Power" (2015, University of Sulaymaniyah) explores the changing nature of political discourse that Kurds in Iraq have adopted during and after the political changeover of 2003. Working with Fairclough's framework of CDA, and employing qualitative interviews, he observes an interesting discursive shift among Kurdish political elites, particularly within the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), from oppositional resistance to tactical engagement or cooperation in the context of federal system of Iraq. This evolution illustrates the balancing act Kurdish leaders have adopted in playing both the ethnic identity and the state card, and the assertion that discourse is a mechanism of political bargaining and power acquisition.

Another study is the investigation of Ahmad into how Syrian Kurdish actors make claims to autonomy while facing authoritarian repression in "Language, Power, and Resistance: A Critical Discourse Study of Kurdish Autonomy Claims in Syria" (2018, Damascus Research Institute). He uses Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA model to analyze PYD manifestos, speeches, and social media communications to illustrate that Kurdish resistance discourse is developed based on historical suffering and justice metaphors. Within this international legal framework, Kurdish destinies are constructed as victims and as reformers, using inclusive pronouns and historical analogies to legitimate Kurdish aims through international human rights and democratic norms.

"Constructing Ethnic Identity through Political Discourse: The Case of Kurdish Leaders in Iran" (2020, University of Tehran Press) by Rezaei analyzes the rhetorical practices of Kurdish leaders to identify ethnic

interests in Iran at a time when the state denies the existence of ethnic minorities. Employing an interdisciplinary approach by integrating CDA with narrative analysis and relying on Hall's definition of identity as a discursive construct and Wodak's discourse-historical analysis, Rezaei finds Iranian Kurdish discourse "captured by symbolic language, cultural references, and coded narratives". These subtle strategies keep Kurdish identity alive in the public realm when overtly ethnic expression is severely limited by political repression.

Ahmed and Faiq published "A Socio-cognitive Approach to the Analysis of Selected American (Athletes) Celebrity Speeches" in Koya University Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (2023). Analyse interactions of language, cognition, and social structure in speeches of three celebrity athletes of the United States. It aims to show how it is a discursive and social context, and cognitive frameworks that convey ideology in celebrity talk. It is concerned with what ideologies are inscribed within the discourse of athlete celebrities and the ways that the language of the discourse articulates and processes these ideologies. The authors adopt van Dijk's socio-cognitive model (discourse-cognition-society paradigm) to analyse the speeches. The key conclusion is that athlete-celebrities serve as influential public spokespeople who promote themselves favorably and thus disseminate their perspectives and ideological values via affirmation and motivational rhetoric.

Although these studies provide an understanding of Kurdish identity shaping through collective and structural discourse in different contexts, the present study differs by focusing on the individualistic discursive practices of Jalal Talabani. What makes this investigation distinctive is the linking of resistance and power, through focusing on the discourse of one figurehead international leader. This research applies van Dijk's socio-cognitive model to Talabani's speeches and interviews in order to shed light on the cognitive representation and discursive construction of Kurdish ethnic identity authority in the uppermost layers of Iraqi political elite. It thus makes an important contribution to the literature in that it foregrounds elite-level discourse not only as a key context for identity negotiation but also as a more dynamic space for political agency.

4. METHODOLOGY

The limitation of this study is that it depends on only two selected speeches, which may restrict the scope of analysis. Moreover, these speeches provide a sufficient sample to apply the socio-cognitive framework of van Dijk to analyse how Talabani's rhetoric pinpoints ethnic oppression and constructs Kurdish identity.

The socio-cognitive model of CDA developed by Teun A. van Dijk offers an unambiguous answer to the problem of the relation between language, thought, and society. Discourse levels analysis argues there are three levels of analysis for discourse: textual structure, cognitive structure and social structure. Levels display how speakers construct meaning and influence audiences and how they shed light on or challenge power relationships (van Dijk, 2008). It is especially useful for investigating political speeches, since identity and representation is commonly found as a path of focus.

1. Textual Structure: Making meaning through the choices that made in language within the text at this level, the following linguistic devices are practiced.

- Lexical Choice: the use of words which carry ideological meaning or emotional weight For example, phrases like "freedom", or "oppressive" or "resistance", can embody a particular value or identity (Fairclough, 2013).

- Repetition: is getting certain words or phrases repeated to drive home the main ideas or themes. This supports the most important ideas in the discourse (van Dijk, 2008).

- Passivation: Who acts? Who is acted upon? This is related to whether the subject is doing the action (active voice) or receiving it (passive voice). The use of passive constructions can conceal responsibility or divert attention (Fairclough 2013).

2. Cognitive Structure: The belief, knowledge, ideology, and mental model level of the theory that examines how meaning is produced and interpreted through discourse. At this level these following linguistic devices are employed:

- Intertextuality: The reference to other speeches, events, or cultural texts serves to reinforce the arguments, drawing on collective memory (Kristeva, 1980; Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

- Polarization: The Making of an "Us" Versus "Them Mentality" such linguistic mechanism divides groups into in-groups and out-groups, which is commonly used to stimulate either the solidarity of or hostility toward a specific group (van Dijk, 2006).

- Implication: The speaker does not state the meaning directly but uses language that implies a meaning. This forces the audience to come to their own inferences from prior knowledge and beliefs, (Van Dijk, 2008)

3. Social Structure: This layer links discourse to wider, underlying power relations and social contexts, focusing on the extent to which discourse reproduced or positions itself against instances of social inequality. That is to say, this connects the speech to real-life oppression and national claims. The following features of the language are practiced at this level:

- **Power Relations:** How power relations are built or challenged in the discourse. It is orientated towards who talks?, who is muted? and how the hierarchy of power gets portrayed? (van Dijk, 2008).

- **Ethnic and Social Inequality:** Examine language as a vehicle for marginalization, secondclass status, or wrongfulness. It demonstrates a mechanism by which social hierarchies are (re)produced or challenged (Wodak, 2015)

- **Legitimacy and Representation:** This means presenting a disinformation campaign against your opposition by portraying the group either as victims or as hero this difference in moral perception can also lead to extensive emotional arousal in the audience (Wodak & Reisigl, 2001). This frames a group as suffering or as brave, influencing how the audience morally perceives and responds emotionally to them (Wodak & Reisigl, 2001).

5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

5.1. Textual Structure Analysis

At this level, the focus is on how meaning is constructed through language use and choices of style and rhetoric. Hence, the following linguistics markers are employed in order to look at how Talabani uses certain linguistic tools to pick sides when telling his story, raise the appeal to emotion, and make audiences interpret as he would prefer;

5.1.1. Lexical Choice: Talabani picks ideological and emotional loaded vocabularies that create a solid moral story. Some notable samples are:

- Names like “brave,” “heroism,” “revolution,” “struggle,” “resistance,” and “sacrifice” lend their magnificence to the Kurdish cause. Such lexical items assert that to be Kurdish is to be fearless and in the right.

- “[F]ascist,” “racist,” “dirty plot,” “savage,” “cruel,” “genocide”.— these are the words used to describe the regime. All of these words ramp up the emotion and dehumanize the enemy, delegitimize the enemy.

- Words like “self-determination,” “freedom,” “unity,” “democracy” place the Kurdish cause into widely established concepts of justice and human rights that span the entire globe.

- Understatement such as “more than 3,159 villages [were destroyed]” tries to give an empirical heft to the speaker’s claims and evoke shock through quantified destruction (Salih, 2012).

- He uses assertive and declarative language to describe Kurdish identity and statehood: “Kurdistan is a country,” “God created,” “officially recognized,” “Regional Government,” “National Assembly.” Such words mold Kurdistan into an actual and real polity and

a national unit — legitimate political and national on the back of history and the support of god.

- The non-created nature of the identity, the part where it says “I didn’t create it; God created”, gives it a religious and moral element — where legitimacy is invoked beyond human politics and has an implicit challenge to deniers by the yardstick of a higher authority.

- “Recognizing,” “interfering,” and “efforts” are all term which are carefully politically used to highlight the opinions of other nations or possible divisional figures while defining Kurdish political reality (Asiir, 2011)

Such choices of vocabulary are not incidental; they are of course meant to directly create an image of a heroic self and a demonic portrait of the foe, and thus to legitimize the Kurdish struggle. The strategic blending of emotionally and ideologically loaded vocabulary builds a strong rhetorical engine for mobilization and justification of resistance.

5.1.2. Repetition: Here, Talabani repeats his word choice in an intentionally mixed effort of engaging his audience in sympathy of suffering and reiterating his own resilience. The structural and thematic repetition reinforces the key ideas of the discourse:

- The repeated destruction verbs: “destroy,” “demolish,” “burn,” and “erase” are articulated by him multiple times, for asserting the large amount and continuity of aggression and oppression inflicted by the Ba’ath regime.

- Ideas of unified and resistant: Terms such as “the people of Kurdistan,” “unified revolution,” “unified revolution,” “heroism,” “struggle,” and “resistance” are used multiple times to establish a collective identity and also call for an action.

- Repeating the phrases “Savage and fascist,” “savage enemy attack,” “savage and cruel way” by him stresses the inhumanity of the assailant. (Salih, 2012)

- The word “recognition” appears in several forms to signify a powerful piece of legitimacy and political status: “officially recognized”, “recognizing”, “If you don’t want to recognize”

- The national identity inherent within the discourse is sustained by the repetition of “Kurdistan” as the topic of the phrase.

- The repeated counter-claim — “I didn’t create it; God created it” — strengthens the truth and moral legitimacy of the claim — this sign of the argument’s haplessness counter-denial (Asiir, 2011)

The repetition is effective in embedding and internalizing central ideas of martyrdom, endurance, and unity in the audience.

5.1.3. Passivization: Agency and responsibility are framed based on the voice that is constructed.

- Active: "The people of Kurdistan... launched their revolution fight..." In this quote, the Kurds are assigned clear agency.
- Passive: "Villages have been destroyed," "Water springs covered with cement." By employing the passive voice, the subject is distanced from the act itself, and the focus shifts to the suffering and away from the actor.
- Active: "The Ba'athist army forces... used bombs, tanks, and chemical weapons." Directly assigns responsibility.
- Passive: "These townships and districts have been completely demolished." Once more, focuses more on the effect than the person doing it.
- Active voice to assign agency to the enemy: "'They want to achieve this...' 'They have destroyed more than 3,159 villages...', 'They try to destroy the cities...' These constructions do not only directly place the blame with the Baath regime but they also make them seem aggressive.
- Passive voice to conceal victimization or avoid particulars: "Kurdistan is seriously facing a campaign of destruction...", "...can seriously be called genocide...", "...have been completely demolished and destroyed..." Salih (2012). In these samples he removes agents from the verbal phrase, causing emphasis to be placed upon the suffering and objectification of the Kurdish people, in addition to permitting rhetorical buildup of emotional strength. The voice changes in action and suffering to smartly guide his audience to the places of sympathy and moral condemnation.

5.2. Cognitive Structure Analysis

This stage shows Talabani's views, ideologies, and mental models, and also those he wants to shape in his audience about Kurdish people.

5.2.1. Intertextuality: it references to other texts and events give a sense of political continuity and historical depth.

- By referencing the names of those villages, towns, and districts that destroyed by Ba'ath evokes the shared collective memory : "Tewela, Biara, Khormal, Penjwen, Barznja, Chwarta, Swraqallat, w Qallacholan, w Sangaw, Aghjalar, Gallala, Choman, Qaradagh, Marga, and many other places are completely destroyed.. etc. these demolishings are crystal clear sign of ethnic oppression.
- "Epic of liberation (Dastani Rizgari)": Refers to a famous landmark in revolutionary history. Referring to a certain battle places Kurdish resistance into the context of a heroic event in history.
- Allusion to 'chemical attacks': Calls upon war crimes understood around the world.
- "...recent attacks by the Baath regime of Iraq against the brave Peshmerga forces of Kurdistan." This speech references it to the still-ongoing historical

conflicts Iraq faces with the Baath regime and also the Peshmerga forces.

- "Until now, the enemy has destroyed more than 3,159 villages in Kurdistan..." A canonized historical point of reference which embeds the devastation in a larger context of ethnic cleansing.
 - "'On July 18, 1987, they issued a historic joint statement." Cites a clear political event that represents Kurdish unity and demand for self-rule.
 - Revolutionary Autonomous Movement – "...instead of the historic slogan of autonomy, today we use the right to self-determination..." This sample references Kurdish political demands, history links, and rhetorical evolution (Salih, 2012).
 - He connects Kurdish identity to an authoritative history by alluding to historical and political landmarks: "Go back to the first building of Turkish National Assembly—you will see on the wall the list of M Kuran." In referencing the Turkish National Assembly – a concrete institutional site of political power whose contours are widely understood among the populace – this invocation draws on the political symbolism of the Kurd being denied full recognition in the Turkey republic's history of statehood and legitimacy. The reference to Kamal Pasha (most likely Mustafa Kemal Atatürk) indirectly anchors Kurdish history to the influential political actors and events of the region, and reinforces collective historical memory (Asiir, 2011).
- These references that are used by Talabani are meant to create an associative historical consciousness that serves to affirm and legitimate Kurdish being and aspiration. Intertextuality therefore legitimizes present assertions through historical framing.
- 5.2.2. Polarization:** Such strategy makes a clear distinction that goes beyond the 'Us-versus-Them' paradigm between the Kurdish in-group and the Baathist out-group.
- Demonizes the other – "Racist enemies," "dirty plot" and "fascists,"
 - "courage," "Bravery," and "heroism": Glorifies the in-group
 - "our historic statement." vs. "Their pipe-dreaming plan", and also "Baath regime of Iraq" vs. "...against the brave Peshmerga forces of Kurdistan". He Portrays Kurds as heroes vs. regime as villain. It is a plot to destroy and demolish Kurdistan, erase the Kurdish nation...We use it to villainies "them" as the ones attacking and "us" as the nation whose survival is endangered,
 - They intend to remove Kurds from their lands, as he says "They want to displace the Kurdish people from Kurdistan..." – opponents want to take us out, appealing to an existential threat.
 - "...political forces of Kurdistan have reached an agreement and established peace among themselves."

Set-themselves apart by contrast to the disunity of "them" (Salih, 2012).

- "If you deny it, it doesn't mean that it's not existing.", "If you don't want to recognize, it's up to you." (Asiir, 2011). This polarization recognizes the existence of an opposite side (deniers, non-recognizers), yet argues that the denial of the opposite side is irrelevant and does not work against the fact of being a Kurdish. He portrays the Kurds as a unified and understandable entity with a real political existence, whereas everybody else are outsiders that refuse to see the truth. The text creates a binary between Kurds and those who deny their existence, making an unambiguous "us vs. them" delineation.

5.2.3. Implication: Talabani uses implied meaning rather than overt claims, as in:

- "According to their pipedreaming plan": implies delusion, will eventually lead to failure,
- "With acknowledgment of both friend and enemy": Indicates global and even enemy recognition and respect, which shows the legitimization of Kurdish identity
- "Conditions are suitable for resistance": implies a signal for encouraging and promising Kurdish people, yet vague.
- "They are trying hard to carry out and fulfill this plan." Points to the fact that the Baath regime is deterrent and persists in seeking to kill and demolish Kurdistan.
- "In some places, they have even covered the water spring with cement." Implies extreme cruelty and ruthless destruction of life bases for cleansing Kurdish ethnicity.
- "They have earned the highest role in the course of the revolution—emerging as the greatest veteran and heroic force in Kurdistan." Implying moral legitimacy and superiority of the Kurdish fighters because of their dedications and sacrifices.
- "People from the areas that have been liberated—thousands upon thousands of them have begun joining the army." Implies a prevalent and popular support for the resistance, an expression of collective Kurdish solidarity. (Salih, 2012).
- The quote: "Kurdistan is a country. I didn't create it; God created." Suggests that Kurdish statehood and identity are beyond human invention or political negotiation, therefore their legitimacy is a fact cannot be denied by a human being.
- The message: "This country is now part of it" The term "Kurdistan" (referring to a region of Iraq) suggests that Kurdish autonomy in Iraq, while disputed, has become a fact of political life. The wording of "its up to you" (Asiir, 2011) when it comes to recognition implicitly suggests that denial by others will not change

the reality of otherness or the legitimacy of the Kurdish existence, and it also hints to the opposers to change their mind.

Such implicit meanings reinforce Talabani's ideological position by pushing the audience to take for granted the existence of a Kurdish nationhood. This inference serves to more subtly position Kurdish action as justified and history unavoidable

5.3. Social Structure Analysis

This level connects the discourse of Talabani to power dynamics, social relations, and ideological struggles.

5.3.1. Power Relations: Talabani contrasts state and grassroots power as the below samples prove:

- He expresses a counter-force to centralized state power of Kurd by stating "unified revolutionary army".
- "[R]ecent attacks by the Baath regime of Iraq against the brave Peshmerga forces of Kurdistan.". In this it clearly defines the Baath regime as the main repressive force standing against the Kurdish forces of resistance; Describing Peshmerga as "brave" is a way to raise the Kurdish fighters above all the acts of aggression perpetrated by the regime of violence and terror. It positions an asymmetric struggle of power.
- "Iraqi Kurdistan today is facing tough circumstances and is vulnerable to racist enemies and fascists..." The phrase depicts the Kurdish society as held hostage by oppressive state forces, a society that has to be rescued despite their willingness to push back.
- "The Iraqi government uses all its forces—including armies, bombs, tanks, airplanes, and chemical weapons..." Listing unmanageable military power and chemical weapons accentuates the extreme imbalance of power and the depths to which the Ba'ath dictatorship with the intention to control and oppress Kurds.
- "Under the leadership of the political force of revolutionary of Kurdistan-Iraq..." This phrase, in reference to the leaders of the Kurdish resistance, implies the existence of political power and political direction among Kurdish revolutionary of the struggle for deposing the Ba'ath regime, which effectively challenges the traditionally predominant Ba'ath power and emphasizes Kurdish autonomy in the context of resistance.
- "They have unified their armies and forces, forming a unified revolution army..." (Salih, 2012). The merging of forces depicts systematic opposition; pooling Kurdish resources and establishing a political-military front against them. So that they can strengthen their revolution and fight together in the revolution against the enemy. He assiduously stresses the will and determination of the Kurds to challenge the power structures created by the regime, and defends their resistance as not only justified but as a means of survival

and protection of their rights. Power is depicted not just in the military, but also in the ethical and political spheres.

- He has called the shots and respectfully outlines what it means to be Kurdish and what it means to have a Kurdish state: "We don't want to interfere in your own efforts. If you don't want to recognize, it's up to you." (Asiir, 2011) It makes a moral and existential claim to authority beyond human politics that none could deny (e.g. from the standpoint of Turkey or Iraq).

- The use of such terminology, that a "We have a Regional Government of Kurdistan... and National Assembly of Kurdistan" displays legitimacy to Kurdish political institutions and indicates de facto authority, which does exist within Iraq's political reality.

- He cautiously recognizes the other's stance: "We don't want to interfere in your own efforts. If you don't want to recognize, it's up to you." (Asiir, 2011) This demonstrates an acknowledgment of an external force over the Kurdish people while at the same time claiming their right to self-determination, sometimes interpreted as a constructive combination of respect, defiance, and a resistance. The speech that contests the historical silencing/denial of Kurdish nationhood narrated by others, instead present the Kurdish voice and presence as self-evident and inevitable.

5.3.2. Ethnic Inequality: this is to show how Talabani's language reflects systemic marginalization.

- "...[v]ulnerable to racist enemies and fascists who are trying to carry out their dirty plot." This demonizes the Iraqi regime as perpetrating ethnic-based suppression, establishing Kurds as a downtrodden and ethnocide 'race', subject to systemic oppression and fascistic racism. The scheme is to destroy and demolish Kurdistan, to erase the Kurdish nation, and to Arabize Kurdistan and its people." It explicitly declares the intent of ethnic cleansing and cultural genocide, naming Kurds as the subject of a state-organized and state-funded project of ethnic disappearance and systemic social injustice. The text, "Enemy has destroyed more than 3,159 villages... burning all of them down." Without a hint of irony it offers example after example of the destruction wrought upon Kurdish society, a physical and cultural genocide that represents as an act of ethnic oppression. "In some places, they have even covered the water-spring with cement." This expresses the full destruction of the sources of life of the Kurds, and points out the brutality of this ethnic oppression, and its wide range. "They want to displace the Kurdish people from Kurdistan so that Kurdistan will be completely destroyed and fully Arabized..." In this sample, he explains how regime's social engineering attempts to transform reality of demographics and ethnicities creating second class citizens (if not eradicating them outright). "Campaign of destruction and demolition,

which can seriously be called genocide..." (Salih, 2012), it frames Kurdish suffering as one that fits the definition of genocide within international law and morality, thereby rendering the discourse more pressing and morally weighted.

- Addressing the denial of Kurdish existence, the text reveals ethnic marginalisation: "If you deny it, it doesn't mean that it's not existing." (Asiir, 2011). This reflects the Kurdish experience of being socially and politically erased or subjected to marginalisation. But what followed regarding recognition by Iraqi authorities speaks of unequal treatment and contested sovereignty (especially with those whom we refrain from recognition, implicit Turkey). References to recognition in a term of the Turkish National Assembly are attempts to assert a kind of historicity, a historical legitimacy, against the ethnic exclusion built on such attempts in the first place. Such a discourse reveals the institutional racism and inequality that the Kurds are subjected to.

5.3.3. Legitimacy and Representation: The speech reiterates that the Kurdish leadership stands for its people. Talabani and the Kurdish authorities that he represents cast the Kurdish movement as one as legitimate and historic.

- "With the acknowledgment of both friend and enemy."
- "The greatest veteran and heroic force."
- "Political forces of Kurdistan have unified."
- "Joint statement... historic."
- "Rightful claim of the Kurdish nation." (Salih, 2012)

Jalal Talabani assumes both a transparency of the representative of the Kurdish nation and an intention of symbolic continuity from a shared national tree, "We have a Regional Government... National Assembly...God created it... that we are recognizing in Iraq." (Asiir, 2011). The discourse combines an appeal to divine creation with the invocation of established political institutions, asserting legitimacy on both religious and political levels.

5.3.4. Victimhood or Heroism: One of the important discursive strategies is the balancing Kurdish suffering versus resistance. The moral difference elicits moral sympathy or admiration.

- The Kurdish people are shown as victims under the criminals of regime: "Burning schools, mosques, hospitals." And "Covered springs with cement."

- "Under the leadership of the political force of revolutionary of Kurdistan-Iraq... recognized as the strongest bravery revolutionary force." His speech legitimizes Kurdish fighters as political and military representatives of Kurdish identity, emphasising their recognition by both allies and foes and thus positions them as a political claim.

- “Through their fight against the enemy and their sacrifices... they have earned the highest role in the course of the struggle.” It shapes the idea that revolutionary are heroes who have sacrificed for the cause of the Kurdish national and therefore are the rightful leaders of the Kurdish national cause and thus are inevitably legitimized for their political authority.

- “Forming a unified revolution army to bring all Peshmerga forces under one political and courageous leadership.” This unification bolsters its political mandate and pushes its power up as an organization; it is a show off for the domestic and international recognition.

- “On July 18, 1987, they issued a historic joint statement.” The historic statement has crystallised Kurdish political aspirations, asserting them publicly and collaboratively as a structured and sophisticated national movement with political rights.

- “[S]elf-determination of the Kurdish nation was asserted.” The open assertion of self-determination provides Kurdish legitimacy against both state repression and the denial of recognition by others, basing it in tangible international norms and principles (Salih, 2012).

- This excerpt is more coming from the side of asserting legitimacy, but there is a small undertone of victimhood through denial: “If you deny it, it doesn’t mean that it’s not existing.” It presents Kurds as erasure or denial victims, an oppression itself. Yet, the self-assured declaration of being and acting also positions Kurds as those who remain proud of and dignified within themselves, a heroic refusal to disappear, to not be silenced.

6. CONCLUSION

The rhetoric of Jalal Talabani is a strong way to build an identity of Kurds and portray the ethnic oppression under Baath regime. The analysis illustrates that Talabani’s discourse functions on three levels, according to the socio-cognitive model proposed by van Dijk, namely, textual, cognitive and social. Textually, Talabani writes in ways that grant agency to Kurdish actors through the overwhelming use of active voice and through repetition of linguistic tokens of destruction and displacement to signal systematic oppression. Now, as far as cognition is concerned, he refers to shared history together with intertextual allusions that build a common Kurdish identity and call for unity, as well as political consciousness. The narrative subverts existing social hierarchies, reclaims identity, and pushes the right of self-determination. Through a framing that invokes victimhood, heroism, and ethnic inequality, Talabani communicates that the Kurdish people are more than survivors of state violence; they have earned the right to political representation and self-determination. That is

why, these linguistic strategies do not just memorialise a memory; they also build a national voice based on resistance and historical authenticity.

Therefore, it is concluded that, the major themes of the research—the voice of a nation and Kurdish ethnicity—are intertwined throughout Talabani’s rhetoric. His speeches are performative builds of nationhood, shaping a common Kurdish history and driving political momentum through these choices of speech. The discourse recalls the past and casts a vision for the future while claiming and amplifying the once silenced voice of a people. So, through using Critical Discourse Analysis, this study has shown how Talabani uses language, ideology, and memory in a way to challenge marginalization and articulate a notion of national integrity, cohesion, and independence.

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دهنگدان به نتهوههک: گوتار شیکاریهکی رهخنهگرانه بۆ ریتۆریکی جهلال تالهانی

سهبارت به ناسنامهی کورد و ستمی نتهوهی

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پوخته

ئهم توێژینهوهیه له ریتۆریکی خوالنخۆشبوو جهلال تالهانی دهکۆلیتهوه بۆ ئهوهی وهلامی ئهوه بداتهوه که تا چ رادهیهک شوناسی کوردی بنیات ناوه و وێنایهکی پروونی له ژێردهستهی و نهژادهپهرستی بهردهوامی گهلی کورد بێشکەش کردوه. سههرای پێگهی سههرکی تالهانی له میژووی سیاسی کورددا، بهلام زۆر کهم زانیان که لێکیان له گوتاری پێشووتری وهگرتهوه بۆ دهستیشانکردن و شیکردنهوهی پێکهاتهکانی نهژادهپهرستی و ئازاری بهکۆمهڵ. ئهم لیکۆلینهوهیه ئهوه بۆشاییه پردهکاتهوه به ئاراستهکردنی رۆلی زمان وهک ئامرازێکی جهختکردنهوه له سهرا ناسنامهی نتهوهی له رێگهی شیکاری وتارهکانی جهلال تالهانییهوه. میتۆدی توێژینهوهکه چۆنایهتی، لهگهڵ گوتار شیکاری رهخنهیی که لهلایهن مۆدیلی کۆمهلایهتی-مهعریفی تیون ئهی فان دایکهوه چوارچینه کراوه پهڕهوهکاتن، که گوتار له سێ ئاستی پهڕهوهیدا شێ دهکۆلیتهوه - دهقی، مهعریفی و کۆمهلایهتی. ستراتیژیهکه لیکۆلینهوه له ئامرازه زمانیهکانی وهک ههلبژاردنی وشهیی، دووبارهکردنهوه و پاسیفکردن له ئاستی دهقیدا ئاسان دهکات؛ نێوان دهقهکان، جهمسهرگیری و ئاراستهوخۆ له ئاستی مهعریفیدا؛ و پهڕهوهندهیهکانی دهسهلات، نایهکسانی نتهوهی و کۆمهلایهتی، شهعهیت و نوێنهرایهتی، و قوربانیبوون یان قارهمانیتهی له ئاستی کۆمهلایهتیدا. ئهم ئامرازانه دهتوانن یارمهتیدهر بن بۆ ئاشکراکردنی شیوازی دروستکردن و بههێزکردنی ناسنامهی کوردایهتی بهکۆمهڵ و بههێزکردنی گوتاری تالهانی له ژینگهیهکی نهژادهپهرستی. ئهم لیکۆلینهوهیه بهو ئهنجامه دهکات که ریتۆریکی جهلال تالهانی وهک هیزیکی گوتاری ستراتیژی کاردهکات بۆ

بهزرکردنهوهی خهباتی کورد له بهرخۆدانی سیاسیهوه بۆ کردهوهیهکی پێکهینانی شوناس. تالهانی زمانی مهبهستدار و چوارچینهی مهعریفی کۆمهلایهتی بهکاردههێنێت بۆ کۆکردنهوهی ئازار بۆ چیرۆکیکی ئازاری هاوبهش و بهرخۆدانی بهکۆمهڵ. به کهڵک وهگرتن له داتا ههست بزۆینهکان و ههروهها ئاماره میژوویهکان، ناسنامهی کورد نهک تهنا وهک بهرهههه قوربانیکردنی رابردوو بهلکو وهک میتۆدیک بۆ بههێزکردنی داهاتوو له رێگهی خودی جهمسهرگیری ریتۆریکییهوه دادهپێژێتهوه.

وشه سههرهکیهکان: گوتار شیکاری رهخنهیی، جهلال تالهانی، ناسنامهی کورد، چهوساندنهوهی نتهوهی، شهعهیت

التعبير عن الأمة: تحليل نقدي لخطاب جلال طالباني حول الهوية الكردية والعراق

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ملخص

تتناول هذه الورقة البحثية خطاب الراحل جلال طالباني للإجابة على مدى إسهامه في بناء الهوية الكردية، وتقديم صورة واضحة عن التمييز العرقي المستمر وإخضاع الشعب الكردي. على الرغم من المكانة المحورية لطالباني في التاريخ السياسي الكردي، إلا أن قلة من الباحثين استخدموا خطابه السابق لتحديد وتحليل هياكل التمييز العرقي والمعاناة الجماعية. تسد هذه الدراسة هذه الفجوة من خلال تناول دور اللغة كأداة لتأكيد الهوية الوطنية من خلال تحليل خطابات جلال طالباني. يعتمد البحث على منهجية نوعية، مع تحليل نقدي للخطاب بناءً على نموذج تيون أ. فان ديك الاجتماعي المعرفي، حيث يُحلل الخطاب على ثلاثة مستويات مترابطة: النصي، والمعرفي، والاجتماعي. تُسهّل هذه الاستراتيجية البحث في السمات اللغوية، مثل الاختيار المعجمي والتكرار والتخمين على المستوى النصي؛ والتناص والاستقطاب والضماني على المستوى المعرفي؛ وعلاقات القوة، والتفاوت العرقي والاجتماعي، والشرعية والتمثيل، والضحية أو البطولة على المستوى الاجتماعي. يمكن لهذه العلامات أن تُساعد في الكشف عن الطريقة التي يُنشئ بها خطاب طالباني الهوية الكردية الجماعية ويعززها في بيئة من الاضطهاد العرقي. وتخلص هذه الدراسة إلى أن خطاب جلال طالباني المصاحب يعمل كقوة خطابية استراتيجية لرفع النضال الكردي من مقاومة سياسية إلى فعل تكوين هوية. يستخدم طالباني لغة مقصودةً وتأطيرًا اجتماعيًا-معرفيًا لتجميع الألم في قصة معاناة مشتركة ومقاومة جماعية. وباستخدام بيانات مشحونة عاطفيًا، بالإضافة إلى إشارات تاريخية، يُعيد صياغة الهوية الكردية ليس فقط كنتيجة لتعرضها للظلم في الماضي، بل كطريقة لتمكين مستقبلي من خلال الاستقطاب الخطائي نفسه.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تحليل الخطاب النقدي، جلال طالباني، الهوية الكردية، القمع العرقي، الشرعية.