

Education Systems in Unrecognized States: Challenges to Nation-Building in

Abkhazia and Beyond

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Abstract

There is a growing literature claiming that the education system is a tool that states instrumentalize for their partisan purposes. However, it is less sure whether it is the case for unrecognized or so-called de facto states, whose statehood is in dispute. The thesis argues that unrecognized states do not differ from the so-called established states in their understanding of the education system. They use it in the same way as any other country does: to strengthen national identity and allegiance to the state, in other words forge what the government understands to be a good and obedient citizenry. However, having their statehood contested, the unrecognized states have to overcome unique challenges. Mainly drawing on the case of Abkhazia with some comparative elements of other de facto states: Northern Cyprus and Iraqi Kurdistan, the research shows that these challenges range from struggling to mediate total dependence on the patron state with a desire to form a separate national identity, to pandering to the international community, meanwhile strengthening exclusionary nationalism.

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Dedicated to those children in constant search of enlightenment

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Introduction

Education has always been considered a major factor in a nation's development. It has power to shape the understandings, attitudes, and behavior of individuals. Empirical studies by, among others, Sarah Graham-Brown, Kenneth Bush and Diana Saltarelli¹ clearly show the relevance of education for national identity, sense of nationhood and for binding citizens to the state, in general. Governments, realizing the important role of the education system to influence the masses, instrumentalize it, using education system for their own purposes. As Pierre Bourdieu notes, "[t]he educational institution is a central stake in the battle for the monopoly on dominant positions, where schools are the state's most potent conduit and servant."² The example of implementing partisan educational policies can be seen everywhere: the way one historical fact is taught in one country might be totally different in another. This is because through education it is easy and effective to construct the image of who we are, and differentiate the "self" from the "other".

However, in this thesis I want to look at the peculiarities of this process (influence of the education system on the construction of national identity) in the case of unrecognized states, whose statehood and sovereignty are in dispute. I hypothesize that the role of the education system in nation-building of unrecognized states is similar to the so-called established states, however the former ones face unique problems in this instance that the latter do not, and to further elaborate on these unique challenges is what I am interested in. The literature suggests that de facto states just like established states use education system in order to strengthen

¹ Minority Rights Group, "The Role of the Curriculum," *Education Rights and Minorities*, 94, no.1 (1994): 27-32.

Kenneth D. Bush, Diana Saltarelli, *The two faces of education in ethnic conflict: towards a peacebuilding education for children*. Florence, UNICEF, United Nations Children's Fund, Innocenti Research Centre, 2000. Print.

² Pierre Bourdieu. *State nobility: elite schools in the field of power*. Stanford: Stanford Univ Press, 1998.

national identity and allegiance to the state, however, in this research I am interested in the unique ways of adaptation they have to go through in the struggle with their ambiguous international status. As the empirical case studies will show, those challenges can range from having total dependence on a patron state, where unrecognized states have to strike a balance between appealing to the patron state and developing a form of their own national identity to pandering to the international community's liberal values in order to gain its favor.

The novelty of the thesis lies in the fact that even though there are some scholars like Graham-Brown, Bush or Saltarelli, who investigated the impact of education on national identity in the context of ethno-nationalist conflict, first of all, they mainly analyzed minority groups in a certain country, second, they did not address the uniqueness of de facto states. Thus, this research focuses on the unique challenges that the de facto states need to overcome in their usage of education system in the nation-building process.

Theoretically, the main issue of the research develops on the idea of identity being a socially constructed phenomenon, as according to Hobsbawm nations hold to "invented traditions" that are products of social engineering and are created to serve the interests of the ruling elites by channeling the masses.³ The theoretical basis of this thesis includes a wide range of sources that can be classified in several groups. The first body of literature consists of works on nationalism such as Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner, Michael Billig, Eric Hobsbawm⁴ and their definitions of identity. The second group deals with definitions of education such as by Johann

³ Eric J. Hobsbawm, Terence O. Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition*, (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Pr, 2010).

⁴ Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London New York: Verso, 2006).

Ernest Gellner, *Nations and nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983).

Michael Billig, *Banal nationalism* (London Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage, 1995).

Eric J. Hobsbawm, Terence O. Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition*, (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Pr, 2010).

Pestalozzi, Mark Smith, Paulo Freire.⁵ The third level combines these two strands by examining the influence of education on the nation-building process. Here, the works of Pierre Bourdieu, Suisheng Zhao, Catriona Bass, Stephen Harp, Namam Palander, Ghassan Shabaneh, Marcel Coenders⁶ are worth mentioning. Finally, at the fourth level, the works of Nina Caspersen, Scott Pegg, Robert Jackson, Charles King, Vincenc Kopeček⁷ that provide a thorough discussion of de facto and unrecognized states, will be consulted.

In order to test the hypothesis of the research, case study approach will be implemented as the primary method in this study. According to Robert Yin, case study methodology is “[a]n empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.”⁸ Joe Feagin et al. add that “[a] case study is an ideal methodology when a holistic, in-depth investigation is needed, where the study of *the single case* or an array

⁵ National Council of Educational Research and Training, *Basics in Education* (New Delhi: NCERT, 2014), 17.

Mark K. Smith, "What is education? A definition and discussion," Infed.org. 2015, accessed May 7, 2017, <http://infed.org/mobi/what-is-education-a-definition-and-discussion/>

Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 2000).

⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *State nobility: elite schools in the field of power* (Stanford: Stanford Univ Press, 1998).

Suisheng Zhao, "A State-Led Nationalism: The Patriotic Education Campaign In Post-Tiananmen China," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 31, no.3 (1998): 287-302, doi:10.1016/s0967-067x(98)00009-9.

Catriona Bass, "Tibetan Primary Curriculum And Its Role In Nation Building," *Educational Review* 60, no.1 (2008): 39-50, doi:10.1080/00131910701794515.

Stephen L. Harp, "Building The German Nation. Primary Schooling In Alsace-Lorraine, 1870–1918," *Paedagogica Historica* 32 (1996): 197-219, doi:10.1080/00309230.1996.11434865.

Namam Palander, "Higher Education Policy-Building in Kurdistan Region of Iraq: Perceptions of University" (MA Thesis, University of Toronto, 2013).

Ghassan Shabaneh, "Education And Identity: The Role Of UNRWA's Education Programmes In The Reconstruction Of Palestinian Nationalism," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 25, no.4 (2012): 491-513, doi:10.1093/jrs/fer055.

Marcel Coenders, Peer Scheepers, "The Effect Of Education On Nationalism And Ethnic Exclusionism: An International Comparison," *Political Psychology* 24, no.2 (2003): 313-343, doi:10.1111/0162-895x.00330.

⁷ Nina Caspersen, *Unrecognized states: the struggle for sovereignty in the modern international system* (Cambridge, UK Malden, MA: Polity, 2012).

Scott Pegg, *International society and the de facto state* (Aldershot, Hants, England Brookfield, Vt: Ashgate, 1998).

Robert H. Jackson, *Quasi-states: sovereignty, international relations, and the Third World* (Cambridge England New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 22.

Charles King, "The Benefits Of Ethnic War: Understanding Eurasia's Unrecognized States," *World Politics* 53, no. 4, (2001): 524-552, doi:10.1017/s0043887100019146.

Vincenc Kopeček, Tomas Hoch, and Vladimir Baar, "De Facto States and Democracy: The Case of Abkhazia," *Bulletin of Geography. Socio-economic Series*, no. 32, (2016): 85–104.

⁸ Robert K. Yin, *Case study research: design and methods* (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 2003), 13.

of several cases remains indispensable to the progress of the social sciences” (emphasis added).⁹ Thus, methodologically, the research will be based on a single case study, with Abkhazia as the subject of analysis. There are several advantages in the use of a single case study. One of the main strengths is that a single case study offers certain benefit for studying the phenomenon in detail and in context. Thus, as Robert Stake notes if, for instance, in experimental or quasi-experimental study the data collection and methods of analysis can hide the details, single case study, on the contrary, is designed to bring out the details from the viewpoint of the participants by using multiple sources of data.¹⁰ Feagin et al. concurs with that, adding that single case study “[e]nables an observer to record people engaged in real-life activities, while the experiment is an artificial construction of life. Case study provides a way of studying human events and actions in their natural surroundings. Moreover, it can permit the researcher to examine not only the complex of life in which people are implicated but also the impact on beliefs and decisions of the complex web of social interaction.”¹¹ However, despite its advantages, single case study also has limitations. The most common criticism is that its dependency on one case makes it difficult to reach a generalizing conclusion.¹² Apart from that single case study lacks rigor. Yin states that “[t]oo many times, the case study investigator has been sloppy, and has allowed equivocal evidence or biased views to influence the direction of the findings and conclusions.”¹³

Meanwhile, due to time constraints and limitations within the narrow scope of an MA thesis, it is not possible to conduct a wide-ranging comparative cross-case study of several de facto states in order to test the hypothesis in more general terms. However, taking into consideration the

⁹ Joe R. Feagin, Anthony M. Orum, and Gideon Sjoberg, *A Case for the case study* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

¹⁰ Robert E. Stake, *The art of case study research* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1995).

¹¹ Feagin et al. 9.

¹² Winston M. Tellis, “Introduction to Case Study,” *The Qualitative Report* 3, no. 2, (1997): 1-14.

¹³ Robert. K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (Beverly Hills, Calif: Sage Publications, 1984), 21.

criticism of this methodology, I decided to enrich my single case study of Abkhazia with comparative elements from other de facto states: Iraqi Kurdistan and Northern Cyprus to the extent that I could gather data in the short timeframe of two months. This will help me to illustrate if not a pattern, then at least a tendency as much as possible within the confines of an MA thesis.

Since state policy is the main organizing force for the public education system, the governmental authorities of these unrecognized states are the main unit of analysis. Due to my knowledge of Russian, I am in a position to draw on primary sources for analysis such as current history textbooks of public schools. The main reason for choosing textbooks on history is because, as Allan Luke puts it, history textbooks, unlike other textbooks, are not simple deliverers of “facts”. They are “[t]he results of political, economic and cultural activities, battles, and compromises. They are conceived, designed, and authored by real power with real interests. They are published within the political and economic constraints of power.”¹⁴ Thus, in evaluating history textbooks the main analytical emphasis will be put on which events are focused on, which events are excluded from the curriculum, what characterizes the “self”, what characterizes the “other”, who the heroes are, how borders are outlined etc., or in the words of Apple and Smith state “[w]hat is included and excluded in the history textbook signify more profound political, economic, and cultural intensions of the authority.”¹⁵

Additionally, analysis of white papers such as policies and executive orders regarding the education system will be included as primary sources. As for the time frame, the research

¹⁴ Allan Luke, *Literacy, Textbooks and Ideology* (Philadelphia: Falmer Press, 1988), 27-29.

¹⁵ Michael W. Apple and Linda K. Smith, *The Politics of the textbook* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 3.

focuses on the time starting from the actual proclamation of independence of Abkhazia in 1999 until the present. By choosing this time frame, it is argued that the unique ways of adaptation unrecognized state has to pursue in its nation-building process through the education sector will be explicitly shown.

Moreover, interviews are chosen as a complimentary method to this research. Steinar Kvale describes interviews as “[a]n interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest that sees the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production, and emphasizes the social situatedness of research data.”¹⁶ Semi-structured interviews, which are considered as the most common type of interviews used in the qualitative research,¹⁷ and, according to Annabel Kajornboon, “[t]he strengths of semi-structured interviews are that the researcher can prompt and probe deeper into the given situation.”¹⁸ Thus, few semi-structured interviews in Russian were conducted with local teachers of history and high school students. (See the details in the Appendix 1). I used a snowball sampling, by doing an open call to Abkhaz students on “VK” social media, which led to contact with local teachers. Since I was not able to conduct field research in Abkhazia, the interviews were done online. The interviewees asked not to disclose their names and preferred to stay anonymous. The interviews do not constitute the core method of the research, they only provide anecdotal evidence; however, they can complement the methods of a single case study by sharing real life experience regarding education system and the attitude of the governmental authorities towards education.

¹⁶ Steinar Kvale, *Interviews* (London: SAGE Publications. 1996), 14.

¹⁷ Ali Alsaawi, "A Critical Review Of Qualitative Interviews," *European Journal Of Business And Social Sciences* no.3 (2014), 151, doi:10.2139/ssrn.2819536.

¹⁸ Annabel B. Kajornboon, "Creating Useful Knowledge: A Case Study of Policy Development in E-learning at Chulalongkorn University Language Institute" (PhD diss., University of Melbourne, 2004).

This research methodology allows to emphasize and examine the unique challenges that de facto states face in their struggle with their contested status of statehood through certain practice and policy implementations used by the governmental authorities regarding the education system of Abkhazia with comparative elements from other de facto states such as Iraqi Kurdistan and Northern Cyprus.

In terms of structure, the thesis is divided into four chapters. In order to verify the hypothesis, first, there is a need to clarify what is meant by national identity and education system. The first chapter defines these two concepts based on the pertinent literature. Additionally, in the first chapter, the previous research regarding the impact of education on the construction of identity will be examined. The second chapter will proceed with the conceptualization of unrecognized and de facto states. Taking into account the theoretical basis of the argument from the first two chapters, chapters three and four will analyze the empirical case studies of Abkhazia and offer snapshots from other de facto states. In the conclusion the entirety of the data will be discussed in summary fashion in order to make some, admittedly preliminary, generalizing statements on the role of education systems in identity formation in de facto or unrecognized states as well as highlighting the main challenges these states face in the process.

Chapter 1: The role of education system on the construction of national identity

In this chapter the role of the education system in the nation-building process will be discussed. Section one commences by offering a definition of nation and nationalism, drawing on the pertinent literature on nationalism. The second section, distinguishing education and schooling, offers a working definition of the education system. This sets the stage for looking at the existing literature on the relationship between nation-building and education system.

1.1 National Identity

This study draws on the theoretical assumptions of modernism of nationalism theory, which is centered around the idea of identity being a socially constructed phenomenon. According to Hobsbawm, nations hold to “invented traditions” that are products of social engineering and are created to serve the interests of the ruling elites by controlling the masses.¹⁹ He states that the country's “[h]istory is not what has actually been preserved in popular memory, but rather it has been selected, written, pictured, popularized, and institutionalized by those whose function is to do so.”²⁰ Thus, states are engaged in a process of creation, dismantling and restructuring images of the past to play a certain role in the present. Hobsbawm claims that the “invention of traditions” was the main strategy of the ruling elites to counter the threat posed by mass democracy. Examining the period from 1870-1914, which he considered as an apogee of invented traditions, Hobsbawm outlines three major innovations that gave rise to nationalism: *the development of primary education*, the invention of public ceremonies, and the mass production of public

¹⁹ Eric J. Hobsbawm, Terence O. Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Pr, 2010).

²⁰ Hobsbawm, 13.

monuments (emphasis added),²¹ which were all carried out by the state for the above detailed purposes.

Similar to Hobsbawm, Benedict Anderson states that the “[n]ation is a political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.”²² However, he claims that nationalism has to be understood not just in terms of political ideologies, but within large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which nationalism came into being.²³ Anderson also draws particular attention to the idea of the simultaneity of time, which makes it possible to "imagine" the nation as a 'sociological organism' moving steadily down (or up) history.²⁴ He illustrates it through two popular forms of imagining, the novel and the newspaper. By bringing the example of the novel “Noli Me Tangere” by Jose Rizal, he illustrates the power to make the readers feel some kind of belonging to an imagined Filipino community, by showing how certain words and phrases are used to make the readers feel part of that community, to make them feel united in a particular group.²⁵ Through this Anderson emphasizes the importance of textual representation in the imagining of the nation, thus, he introduces the idea of print-nationalism. According to Anderson, print-nationalism appeared as a consequence of print-capitalism. He argues that print-capitalism made it easier for people to think about themselves and to relate themselves to others in profoundly new ways. Vernacular languages laid the foundation for national consciousness on several levels. First of all, it created unified fields of exchange and communications, through which people became capable of understanding each other via print and paper.²⁶ This print-

²¹ Umut Ozkırımlı, *Theories of nationalism: a critical introduction* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 117.

²² Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London New York: Verso, 2006), 6.

²³ Ibid, 12.

²⁴ Ibid, 26.

²⁵ Ibid, 26.

²⁶ Ibid, 6.

capitalism fostered the feeling of unity, since “[f]ellow - readers, to whom people were connected through print, formed in their secular, particular, visible invisibility, the embryo of the nationally imagined community.”²⁷ Second, print-capitalism helped to create an image of a historic past so central to the subjective idea of the nation.²⁸

Moreover, Anderson introduces the concept of 'official nationalism', which is described as a “[c]ombination of naturalization with retention of dynastic power, in particular over the huge polyglot domains”²⁹ (for example Russification). “[O]fficial nationalism is distinguished by the compulsory *state-controlled primary education*, state-organized propaganda, official rewriting of history and militarism” (emphasis added).³⁰ Anderson also claims that nowadays “[n]ationalist leaders are in a position to consciously use civil and military educational systems modeled in official nationalism, thus, the idea of “nation” lies in virtually all print-languages, and the nation-ness is indivisible from political consciousness.”³¹

To sum up Anderson's view, he considers the nation as a cultural artefact of a particular kind that is imagined through visual and textual representations controlled by the state, which is the central agent behind it. Anderson brings a good example, comparing a biography of the nation with a baby, whose identity cannot be remembered but narrated.³² In this narration process states play a crucial role at least through education systems and print-capitalism, where those national events should be remembered or forgotten as “our own.”³³

²⁷ Anderson, 12.

²⁸ Ibid, 22.

²⁹ Ibid, 86.

³⁰ Ibid, 101.

³¹ Ibid, 135.

³² Ibid, 204.

³³ Ibid, 206.

Another prominent author, Ernest Gellner, concurs with Anderson, stating that nationalism is not about the awakening of nations to self-consciousness. “[N]ationalism invents nations, where they do not exist.”³⁴ He defines nationalism as a political principle that maintains similarity of culture in the basic social bond.³⁵ By culture he means a “[s]ystem of ideas and signs and associations and ways of behaving and communicating,”³⁶ where similarity of culture is considered as “[b]oth necessary and sufficient condition of legitimate membership: only members of the appropriate culture may join the unit in question, and all of them must do so.”³⁷ However, for him, in nationalism “[t]he political and national unit should be congruent.”³⁸ He claims that the very existence of the centralized state is an important part of the background of the nationalist vision of the world.³⁹ Therefore, he states that the problem of nationalism mainly arises only in a world in which states are taken for granted and required.

Thus, he claims that nationalism presents itself as an awakening of a dormant, old and latent force, however, in reality, it is a consequence of a new form of social organization that is based on highly internalized, education-dependent high cultures, each protected by its own state.⁴⁰ He argues that the myths about nationalist ideology reverse the reality: it calls to defend folk culture, however, in fact, it strengthens high culture, it states to protect an old folk society, but, in reality, it helps to create an anonymous mass society.⁴¹ It might seem to advocate cultural diversity while, in reality, it enforces homogeneity both inside, and between political units. And it is all done

³⁴ Anderson, 6.

³⁵ Gellner, *Nationalism*, 3.

³⁶ Gellner, *Nations and nationalism*, 7.

³⁷ Ibid, 4.

³⁸ Ibid, 1.

³⁹ Ibid, 5.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 48.

⁴¹ Ibid, 124.

with the help of a state, as “[t]he state is, above all, the protector, not of a faith, but of a culture, and the maintainer of the inescapably homogeneous and standardizing education system.”⁴²

Moreover, Gellner states that there are two crucial factors for constructing a modern society: power and access to education, where education refers to a complex of skills that make a man competent to occupy most of the ordinary positions in a modern society.⁴³

Gellner's definition of nationalism can be summarized in the following way: it is a form of patriotism characterized by important features: the units of nationalism are culturally homogeneous, “[b]ased on a culture that is striving to be a literate culture, large enough to sustain the hope of supporting educational system that can keep a literate culture going; they are poorly endowed with rigid internal sub-groupings; their populations are anonymous, fluid and mobile, and they are unmediated.”⁴⁴

However, the above mentioned definitions might not capture the day-to-day notions of nationalism, thus, it is also worth looking at the term 'banal nationalism' introduced by Michael Billig, which “[c]overs ideological daily life habits that enable the established nations to be reproduced.”⁴⁵ However, Billig does not necessarily mean that it is benign and harmless. For him, banal nationalism is reproducing institutions, which possess vast armaments that are ready to be used in an ideological battle.⁴⁶

⁴² Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 110.

⁴³ Ibid, 89.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 138.

⁴⁵ Billig, *Banal nationalism*, 6.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 7.

Billig argues that in the established nations there is continual “flagging”, or reminding, of nationhood.⁴⁷ These states have a certainty of their continuity but at the same time they just remind their citizens of the nationhood. However, what is important is that this reminding is done by the government on a daily basis, thus, it may largely remain unconscious for the citizenry. Billig argues that identity should be found not in the body or mind of an individual, rather in “[t]he embodied habits of social life created by the state.”⁴⁸ He states that “[t]he reproduction of nation-states depends upon a dialectic of collective remembering and forgetting, and of imagination and unimaginative repetition.”⁴⁹ That is why, according to Billig, historians creatively remember ideologically preferred facts of the past, while avoiding looking at those that are discomfiting.⁵⁰ In addition to Anderson, Billig claims that members of the nation do not only have to imagine themselves as nationals or imagine their nation as a community, but they must also imagine that they know what a nation is. Thus, they have to identify the identity of their own nation,⁵¹ a process in which again, the education system plays a central role.

Therefore, drawing on the theoretical assumptions of the scholars of modernism in nationalism theory, in this study I look at the nation as a socially constructed phenomenon, where the government through the education system plays a crucial role in the nation-building process.

⁴⁷ Billig, 8.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 10.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 38.

⁵¹ Ibid, 68.

1.2 Education system

It is important to look at the definition of education because there is no strict determination of the term and there is even a common confusion between education, education system and schooling. Some prefer too broad definitions. For instance, according to Johann Pestalozzi, “[e]ducation is a natural, harmonious and progressive development of man’s innate powers. It is a medium through which the society transmits its heritage of past experiences and modifications, system of values and the modes or skill of acquiring it.”⁵² Mark Smith persists in the same chain of thought, defining education as a “[p]rocess of inviting truth and possibility; the wise, hopeful, respectful cultivation of learning undertaken in the belief that all should have the chance to share in life.”⁵³ Meanwhile, on the other side, Paulo Freire relates education to schooling and defines it in more narrow terms. He considers it as so-called “[b]anking-making deposits of knowledge.”⁵⁴ However, in this thesis, education is meant as a learning process that shapes our ways of thinking and our portrayal of the world.

Though, just for clarification, I want to emphasize that in this study, I attempt to examine the role of the education system, not education per se. If education is considered as a process, shaping people's worldview, the education system is the structure of this process. It is here that institutions come in with a certain intent, having a particular agenda behind a learning process. Thus, one of the main distinctions between education and the education system is that the latter includes pedagogy. As Geoffrey Hinchliffe explains, “[p]edagogy relates to those social, economic and political requirements which a state requires from its education system; pedagogy

⁵² National Council of Educational Research and Training, *Basics in Education* (New Delhi: NCERT, 2014), 17.

⁵³ Mark K. Smith, "What is education? A definition and discussion," Infed.org, 2015, accessed May 7, 2017, <http://infed.org/mobi/what-is-education-a-definition-and-discussion/>

⁵⁴ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972).

addresses those skills which society needs. Therefore, pedagogy views learning instrumentally whereas education views learning for its own sake.”⁵⁵ Thus, in this thesis, I look at the education system, which also includes policies and reforms that government uses in the education field in order to strengthen nationalist rhetoric.

I explicitly draw on literature about the authorities’ influence on the education system in nation-building that is making reference to the so-called established states, like China and France, in order to show that unrecognized states are not dissimilar. Thus, Pierre Bourdieu, for instance, considers school as a “[g]uarantor of the contemporary social order via the state power that concentrates social divisions.”⁵⁶ In his prominent work “The State Nobility” Bourdieu tries to bury the myth of the school “as a liberating force;” on the contrary, he reveals that it should be considered as one of the foundations of state domination and of the legitimation of its domination.⁵⁷ Moreover, by seeing the state as a “central bank for symbolic credit,” he argues that it is “[n]ot the army, the asylum, the hospital, and the jail, but *the school* that is the state’s most potent conduit and servant” (emphasis added).⁵⁸ Peter Gray concurs with Bourdieu, stating that the school “[c]ontinues to be defined as children’s work, where authorities’ power assertive means are used to make children to do that work.”⁵⁹ Suisheng Zhao in his study explains assertive methods of this power, introducing the concept of so-called “state-led nationalism” in China that was implemented through education by teaching simplified or idealized Chinese history and traditions. The Chinese government used patriotic education, where they also portrayed the nation’s main achievements as a success of the leadership of the Communist

⁵⁵ Geoffrey Hinchliffe, “Education or Pedagogy?” *Journal of The Philosophy Of Education* 35 (2001), 34.

⁵⁶ Bourdieu, *State nobility*.

⁵⁷ Bourdieu, *State nobility*, 5.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ “A Brief History Of Education,” Psychology Today, accessed May 20, 2017, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/freedom-learn/200808/brief-history-education>.

Party.⁶⁰ In addition to the Chinese nation-building process through education, Catriona Bass shows the struggle of the Tibetans living in China in their formation of national identity. Even though in their curriculum there are some attempts to implement policies regarding the education in favor of enlightening Tibetan ideology, the Chinese government strictly controls it and brings changes in educational reforms putting emphasis on the fundamental role of the Chinese Communist party in bringing economic and social advancement to Tibet and portraying Tibet as an “unalienable part of China.”⁶¹

Furthermore, Stephen Harp also argues on the importance of education, however, in his work he focuses mainly on primary schooling by giving an example of schools in Alsace and Lorraine in 1870-1918. He states that the German government tried to “Germanize” school students in Alsace and Lorraine through an emphasis on German history and geography lessons in primary schools in order to strengthen German national identity.⁶² Ghassan Shabaneh is also in support of the critical role of education on nationalism. He examines the work of United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) providing opportunities to Palestinian students to express and enact Palestinian identity. He states that despite the fact that Palestine was geographically fragmented; it is still possible to reconstruct national identity through certain educational policies.⁶³ Marcel Coenders and Peer Sheepers also agree on the important role that education plays in the formation of a nation. However, in their study, they come to the conclusion that education’s

⁶⁰ Suisheng Zhao, "A State-Led Nationalism: The Patriotic Education Campaign In Post-Tiananmen China," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 31, no.3 (1998): 287-302, doi:10.1016/s0967-067x(98)00009-9.

⁶¹ Catriona Bass, "Tibetan Primary Curriculum and Its Role in Nation Building," *Educational Review* 60, no.1 (2008): 39-50, doi:10.1080/00131910701794515.

⁶² Stephen L. Harp, "Building The German Nation. Primary Schooling In Alsace-Lorraine, 1870–1918," *Paedagogica Historica* 32 (1996): 197-219, doi:10.1080/00309230.1996.11434865.

⁶³ Ghassan Shabaneh, "Education And Identity: The Role Of UNRWA's Education Programmes In The Reconstruction Of Palestinian Nationalism," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 25, no.4 (2012): 491-513, doi:10.1093/jrs/fer055.

impact on nationalism depends on the liberal-democratic tradition of the country. They also find that the effect of education does not depend on the level of cultural diversity within a country.⁶⁴

Summarizing, if education is seen as a learning process that can shape the ways of thinking, the education system is its structured way used by the government for the construction of a particular social reality. As Bourdieu argues the state uses the school as an instrument of symbolic domination.⁶⁵ Thus, national education is a clear testimony of the powerful influence exercised by the state in order to strengthen nationalist rhetoric. “[A] national system of education is a living thing, the outcome of forgotten struggles and ‘battles long ago’. It has in it some secret working of national life. It reflects, while seeking to remedy, the failing of national character.”⁶⁶ Thus, it can be noted that many scholars have studied the important role of education in nationalism before, highlighting the role of the governmental authorities, who by implementing certain educational policies, try to shape the nation-building process. However, in this thesis, I want to investigate the role of education system on the nation-building processes of de facto states. I hypothesize that the use of education system for certain political purposes in de facto states does not differ much from so-called established states, nonetheless, there are particular challenges de facto states meet in this process, which I want to examine in detail. However, in order to look at the empirical case study, first one needs to define what a de facto state is and what particularities this type of polity features.

⁶⁴ Marcel Coenders, Peer Scheepers, "The Effect Of Education On Nationalism And Ethnic Exclusionism: An International Comparison," *Political Psychology* 24, no.2 (2003): 313-343, doi:10.1111/0162-895x.00330.

⁶⁵ Bourdieu, *State Nobility*.

⁶⁶ An extract from lecture delivered in 1900: Quoted by I.L.Kandle: New Era in education; unknown p.33

Chapter 2: Unrecognized or de facto states

A vast number of terms have emerged to describe this particular phenomenon in contemporary international relations, including “de facto states”, “unrecognized states”, “para-states”, “states within states”, “pseudo-states” etc.⁶⁷ Charles King, on the other hand, does not prioritize a particular term but uses “unrecognized states”, “de facto countries”, “independent statelike entities”, “separatists”, “unrecognized regimes” interchangeably. He characterizes these entities by continued state weakness, external support, complicity of central governments, cultural legitimization, as well as 'unwitting' assistance of international negotiators.⁶⁸ Donnacha Ó Beacháin et. al. use “unrecognized state” and define it as “[e]ntities that have achieved and maintained internal sovereignty over an area for an extended period, with a degree of internal legitimacy but only limited formal recognition at the international level, or none at all.”⁶⁹

However, the most prominent scholar on this topic, Nina Caspersen, thoroughly exploring this phenomenon, uses the term “de facto state” as well as “unrecognized state”. She notes that unrecognized states have achieved de facto independence but have failed in gaining international recognition or were only recognized by a few states at most.⁷⁰ They are the products of volatile conflicts and are faced with the superior principle of territorial integrity of existing states. They have their origins in national self-determination conflicts and are denied recognition because they are seen to violate the principle of territorial integrity. She defines “[a]n unrecognized state as 1) an entity that has achieved de facto independence, covering at least two-thirds of the

⁶⁷ Robert H. Jackson, *Quasi-states: sovereignty, international relations, and the Third World* (Cambridge England New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 22.

⁶⁸ Charles King, "The Benefits Of Ethnic War: Understanding Eurasia's Unrecognized States," *World Politics* 53, no.4 (2001): 524-552.

⁶⁹ Donnacha Ó Beacháin, Giorgio Comai, Ann Tsursumia-Zurabashvili, "The Secret Lives Of Unrecognised States: Internal Dynamics, External Relations, And Counter-Recognition Strategies," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 27, no. 3 (2016): 440-466.

⁷⁰ Nina Caspersen, *Unrecognized states: the struggle for sovereignty in the modern international system* (Cambridge, UK Malden, MA: Polity, 2012).

territory to which it lays claim and including its main city and key regions; 2) its leadership seeks to build further state institutions and demonstrate state legitimacy; 3) the entity has declared formal independence or demonstrated clear aspirations for independence (e.g. through independence referendum, adoption of a separate currency or similar acts that clearly signal separate statehood); 4) the entity has not gained international recognition or has, at the most, been recognized by its patron state and a few other states of no great importance; 5) it has existed for at least two years.”⁷¹

Scott Pegg, provides a slightly different take. He defines it as “[a]n organized political leadership which has risen to power through some degree of indigenous capability; receives popular support; and has achieved sufficient capacity to provide governmental services to a given population in a specific territorial area, over which effective control is maintained for a significant period of time.”⁷² However, he concurs with Caspersen that two years of de facto independent existence is a minimum to qualify as a de facto state.

Caspersen also claims the importance of distinguishing between failed and unrecognized states: “[u]nrecongized states lack the international recognition that serves to bolster failed and failing states and helps protect them from complete collapse and external invasions.”⁷³ The main difference between the two, according to Caspersen, lies in the external/internal sovereignty. Failing states, also called quasi-states,⁷⁴ claim external but lack internal sovereignty, whereas unrecognized states claim to have achieved internal sovereignty but lack external sovereignty, i.e.

⁷¹ Caspersen, 11.

⁷² Scott Pegg, *International society and the de facto state* (Aldershot, Hants, England Brookfield, Vt: Ashgate, 1998), 26.

⁷³ Caspersen, 8.

⁷⁴ Robert H. Jackson, *Quasi-states: sovereignty, international relations, and the Third World* (Cambridge England New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

recognition by other states. Thus, self-reliance is vital for the survival of unrecognized states.⁷⁵ Distinguishing from unrecognized states, Pegg also stresses the importance to differentiate de facto states from puppet states, where by the latter he means nominal sovereigns under effective foreign control, especially in cases where the establishment of the puppet state is “[p]lanned as a cloak for manifest illegality.”⁷⁶ Thus, he argues that the de facto state has a much more organic and symbiotic relationship with its population than the puppet state does.

However, to call an unrecognized state a state might be biased in regard to sovereignty. As according to the classical view, sovereignty is an absolute, it is a rigid and exogenous attribute of states, thus, it is either a state is sovereign, or it is not a state at all. As, for instance, Morgenthau explicitly states, “[i]f sovereignty means supreme authority, it stands to reason that two or more entities – persons, groups of persons or agencies – cannot be sovereign within the same time and space.”⁷⁷ However, there has been a debate in international relations whether there is a distinction between internal and external sovereignty,⁷⁸ where, according to Martin Wight, internal sovereignty refers to “[a] supreme law-making authority in each community” while external sovereignty is “[t]he claim to be politically and juridically independent from any superior.”⁷⁹ In fact, according to Article 1 of the Montevideo Convention, “[t]he state as a person of international law should possess the following qualifications: a) a permanent population; b) a defined territory; c) government; and d) capacity to enter into relations with the other states.”⁸⁰ Moreover, the Article 3 explicitly states that “[t]he political existence of the state is independent

⁷⁵ Jackson, *Quasi-States*.

⁷⁶ Pegg, 35.

⁷⁷ Hans Joachim Morgenthau, Kenneth W. Thompson. n.d., *Politics among nations: the struggle for power and peace* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964, c1960), 329.

⁷⁸ Caspersen, 15.

⁷⁹ Martin Wight, *Systems of states* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1977), 130.

⁸⁰ "Montevideo Convention On The Rights And Duties Of States - The Faculty Of Law," Jus.Uio.No, accessed May 26, 2017, <http://www.jus.uio.no/english/services/library/treaties/01/1-02/rights-duties-states.xml>.

of recognition by other states.”⁸¹ However, the dominant conceptions of sovereignty in international relations theory prevent us from imagining the existence of internal sovereignty without international recognition, drawing on the inability of the unrecognized states to enter into relation with other states on equal terms.⁸² However, here, Pegg also agrees with Caspersen, claiming that the use of term 'state' is merited for these entities, since they meet main requirements: population, territory and effective government, where there is no minimum population and territorial size is required, and we have seen examples of the states that were admitted to the UN despite their lack of effective government (e.g. Congo, Rwanda, Angola, Cambodia etc.).⁸³

Caspersen argues that the defining requirement of unrecognized states, the aspect that distinguishes their position in the international system, is their lack of recognition.⁸⁴ Pegg concurs with Caspersen stating that de facto states “[a]re distinguished by the existing international community's unwillingness to accept them into the club as new members with full juridical equality and the mutual recognition of legitimate authority which that implies.”⁸⁵ However, Caspersen also emphasizes that the question of recognition began to attract more attention only around the second half of the nineteenth century, as before that the de facto existence of sovereignty was sufficient.

Caspersen states that unrecognized states are commonly portrayed as “[a]narchical badlands that are founded on aggression and frequently also on ethnic cleansing, they are viewed as the

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Caspersen, 23.

⁸³ Pegg, 44.

⁸⁴ Caspersen, 16

⁸⁵ Pegg, 49.

antithesis of stable, orderly, sovereign states.”⁸⁶ Pegg agrees with Caspersen's critique on this regard, stating that one of the criteria for a de facto state is that it is different from random “[b]andits, drug lords, or nominally-political groups whose main intent is to line their own pockets with profit, plunder, or taxes.”⁸⁷ It is distinguished from such groups by its political goals, capabilities to provide some sort of governmental services and its presumably higher degree of popular support.⁸⁸ Yet, their negative image brings with it a lack of international engagement, which has important consequences. Unrecognized states cannot obtain loans from international credit institutions, they are prohibited to be members of international organizations, international laws and regulations cannot be applied in their territories, which further discourages foreign investors; they are usually closed to international markets and so on.⁸⁹ Moreover, Caspersen argues that such a negative portrayal of these entities further prevents them from getting international recognition, even in the non-legal sense. She agrees with the fact that these polities are generally weak, poor and corrupt, but at the same time, the negative image of them is overplayed.⁹⁰ Here, Caspersen and Pegg do not mean that the de facto states should be seen solely in positive terms, however, they deserve a more balanced and less normative treatment than they have often received in the past.

Furthermore, Caspersen describes main processes of state-building for the unrecognized states. One of them is an ability to deliver basic public services, or in other words, the ability of the government to exercise its authority, which is problematic for many of unrecognized states.⁹¹ Therefore, external assistance, mainly from a patron state, is vital for the existence of the de

⁸⁶ Caspersen, 21.

⁸⁷ Pegg, 29.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Caspersen, 42.

⁹⁰ Caspersen, 22.

⁹¹ Ibid, 52.

facto state. This assistance primarily includes military as well as economic support. This is very prominent in the cases of Abkhazia and Northern Cyprus. However, this dependence on a patron states is seen as a function of international isolation: the more isolated the polity, the more dependent it is on the patron state.⁹²

Moreover, Caspersen stresses the importance of unity and homogeneity in unrecognized states. However, sometimes this unity can be imposed by the entity's leadership through, for example, martial law, state-sponsored education, cultural programs and compulsory military service that includes political indoctrination.⁹³ Unity and state-building, in general, imply the creation of symbolic attributes of statehood (i.e. national flag, anthem, holidays and etc.). Caspersen argues that unrecognized states often make more ambitious claims than this. They are trying to claim that they have all necessary attributes of statehood except for international recognition.⁹⁴ In addition to this, she claims that the main challenge for an unrecognized state is the balance between providing a strong and an effective state, as well as promoting unity, plurality and diversity. The latter makes them often imitate recognized states in order to please an international audience.⁹⁵ This can be explicitly noted in the case of Iraqi Kurdistan.

According to Caspersen, the main conclusion that can be drawn is that de facto states “[s]hould not be dismissed as anarchical badlands, as black spots on the international map of sovereign states, but the degree of statehood that they have achieved differs significantly between cases.”⁹⁶

⁹² Caspersen, 56.

⁹³ Ibid., 82.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 83.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 89.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 104.

She argues that the creation of statehood is possible even without recognition; however, the lack of external sovereignty constrains the form of internal sovereignty that develops.

Based on this definition and in accordance with the literature, Abkhazia can be categorized as a prime example of a de facto state. As was stated in the introduction, in this study I hypothesize that a de facto state, even though lacking international recognition, does not differ from other states in the way it instrumentalizes education system for strengthening nationalist rhetoric, however, it is distinguished by certain challenges it has to overcome in the nation-building process that become apparent in the educational sector. Thus, the next chapter proceeds with a case study of Abkhazia in order to test the theoretical assumption on the empirics and look what exact challenges a de facto state has to face.

Chapter 3: Case of Abkhazia

Abkhazia is situated on the Eastern coast of the Black sea, bordering Russia in the north and the North Caucasus and Georgia in the East.⁹⁷ As of 2011, the population of Abkhazia is approximately 240,705, out of which Abkhazians make up 50.71%, Armenians 17.39%, Russians 9.17%, Georgians 17.93%.⁹⁸ The monetary unit of the polity is the Russian ruble, and the majority of its non-Georgian nationals received Russian citizenship back in the early 2000s.

Until the beginning of the twenty first century Abkhazia was part of the Russian Empire. In 1918 following the break-up of the Russian Empire, Abkhazia became a member of the Union of United Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus. In 1922 Georgia and Abkhazia entered the Transcaucasian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic. However, when Georgia proclaimed its independence in 1991, many Abkhaz supported more vociferously a break with Georgia in favor of independence and closer ties with Russia. Tension grew, and in 1992 Georgia sent troops to enforce the status quo. Thus, a separatist war broke out, prompted by tides of nationalism among both Georgians and Abkhaz.

In 1999 Abkhazia formerly declared independence with no international support for recognition. However, the situation changed in the mid-2000s. In August 2008, the Georgian army attacked South Ossetia. This led to a short-lived but severe conflict between Georgia and Russia, as Russia sided with South Ossetia to counter Georgian troops.⁹⁹ Abkhazians, taking advantage of

⁹⁷ "Republic Of Abkhazia | Abkhaz, Abkhasia, Apsny," Abkhazworld.Com, accessed May 10, 2017, <http://abkhazworld.com/aw/abkhazia>.

⁹⁸ "The Population Of Abkhazia Stands At 240,705," World,Abkhaz, accessed May 10, 2017, <http://abkhazworld.com/aw/current-affairs/534-the-population-of-abkhazia-stands-at-240705>.

⁹⁹ Kristin M. Bakke, John O'Loughlin, Gerard Toal, and Michael D. Ward, "Convincing State-Builders? Disaggregating Internal Legitimacy In Abkhazia," *International Studies Quarterly* 58, no.3 (2013), 594.

the situation, with the help of Russian troops, established control over the upper Kodor Valley, which used to be part of Abkhazia until the 1992-1993 war. Until 2008 no state had recognized Abkhazia, but after the Russian – Georgian war of August 2008, Georgia's breakaway territories, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, were recognized by Russia on August 26. Three more states (UN members) recognized Abkhazia: Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Nauru, rendering Abkhazia a de facto state.¹⁰⁰

Thus, lacking external legitimacy, Abkhazia has to prioritize internal legitimacy that is integral to their quest for recognition. Kristin Bakke et al. argue that one of the main sources of internal legitimacy for the de facto state are *nation-building* (rather than state-building) efforts mainly by fostering collective identity.¹⁰¹ Joel Migdal adds that states that are unable to provide their citizens with well-being can survive creating certain ceremonies or public rituals that strengthen national unity.¹⁰² However, as Dov Lynch notes, it is of particular importance for the de facto states, that governmental authorities highlight the population's shared war experiences and common enemy to create collective solidarity.¹⁰³ This is the case of Abkhazia, where the education system is used in the nation-building process. However, in order to trace the challenges throughout this process, first, I will analyze governmental attempts to implement policies in the field of education, then I proceed with the analysis of the interviews with local teachers and pupils, who share their real life experience regarding the relevance of these policies. Finally, I provide an analysis of a standard textbook on the history of Abkhazia.

¹⁰⁰ Tom Trier, Hedvig Lohm, David Szakonyi, *Under siege: inter-ethnic relations in Abkhazia* (London: Hurst, 2010), 1.

¹⁰¹ Bakke et al., 594.

¹⁰² Migdal Joel, *States in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

¹⁰³ Lynch Dov, *Engaging Eurasia's Separatist States: Unresolved Conflicts and De Facto States* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2004).

One of the key issues that the authorities have to pay attention to is the Abkhaz language. As stated earlier, only half of the polity's population is native Abkhaz people, out of whom, not everyone speaks their mother tongue. As Tom Trier et al. state, language is one of the most powerful features of ethno-nationalist identity in the Caucasus.¹⁰⁴ Thus, preserving the language equates to the preservation of national identity. In the Abkhazian situation the question of the native language is even more critical, because from 1930 until 1950, under Stalin, Abkhaz people faced forced 'Georgianization'. It included large-scale resettlement of Georgians into Abkhazia, as well as violent language assimilation of the Abkhazians that was aimed at making Georgia's possession of Abkhazia irreversible.¹⁰⁵ The harsh repressions against the Abkhaz language included a change from Abkhazian to Georgian script, the language of instruction in schools was also changed to Georgian that went in parallel with the closing of all Abkhazian schools, a ban on radio broadcasting in the Abkhaz language as well as replacing all names of historical places into Georgian.¹⁰⁶ Thus, it can be of no surprise that the revival of the Abkhaz language faces severe problems nowadays.

Realizing such serious problems, the Abkhaz authorities, in order to preserve the language (key in their eyes to national identity), implemented and are still implementing several policies and laws. First of all, according to Article 6 of the Constitution of Abkhazia, the state language of the Republic is Abkhazian; Russian along with Abkhazian is recognized as the language of state institutions. However, there is no separate mention of Georgian. The constitution simply guarantees to all ethnic groups, living in Abkhazia, their right to freely use their native

¹⁰⁴ Trier et al., 57.

¹⁰⁵ Vyacheslav Chirikba, *Razvitie Abkhazskogo Yazika V Usloviyah Polietnicheskogo Obshestva: Vyzovy I Perspektivy* (Sukhum, 2010), 7.

¹⁰⁶ Chirikba, 7.

language.¹⁰⁷ In November 2007, the Abkhaz Parliament passed a law “on the state language of the Republic of Abkhazia” that makes provisions for a steady transition to the use of Abkhaz language in all spheres of public life before 2015.¹⁰⁸ The law included mandatory usage of Abkhaz language by all administrators and high-level officials at every level of government, members of the People's Assembly, school directors, and judges as well as administrative staff in the judicial system; all documentation regarding legislative and legal proceedings must be in the Abkhaz language by 2015.¹⁰⁹ However, even though the authorities ensured to provide preparatory courses and materials to educate all segments of the populations, including ethnic minorities, such an ambitious goal was not achieved.¹¹⁰ One of the main reasons is the crucial role of the Russian language, with which Abkhazian cannot compete.

The problems the envisioned renaissance of the Abkhaz language faces, is also reflected in the schools. Due to financial constraints, Abkhazia is unable to thoroughly develop their own education system, where the primary language of instruction is Abkhazian, thus, Abkhazia had to adopt Russian education model, where all textbooks are published in Russia, hence, in Russian. The exception is only the first four grades of the elementary schools, where subjects are taught in Abkhazian, however, starting from fifth grade the primary language of instruction is Russian, where only some subjects, such as literature and Abkhaz language are taught in Abkhazian.¹¹¹ Therefore, apart from Russian control over the publication, Abkhazian school textbooks have Russian emphasis in them. This leaves the Abkhaz government in a situation that they can't freely and easily use their education system for their own purposes. However, in order to tackle

¹⁰⁷ "Konstituciya Respubliki Abkhaziya" [Constitution of the Republic of Abkhazia], Apsnypress.Info, accessed May 10, 2017, <http://www.apsnypress.info/apsny/constitution/>.

¹⁰⁸ Trier et al., 59.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 62.

the problem of unpopularity of native language, in 2001 the government established the Fund for the Development of Abkhaz Language (FDAL), which was aimed at publishing new teaching materials. The government allocated RUR 3.5 million (USD 130,000) for 2008.¹¹² The head of the Fund, Gunda Kviciniya, said that the government tries not spare money to ensure that the Fund has the ability to issue colorful and interesting textbooks, first of all for children of young age.¹¹³

The annual reports the Fund has to provide to the authorities, evidence the work the Fund has done over the past six years. Numerous audio and video discs, Abkhaz language textbooks, “Abkhazian History” books in Abkhazian for schoolchildren, as well as Abkhazian language phrase books, posters, illustrated books have been issued for children. Several encyclopedias as well as pre-school manuals were published in Abkhazian.¹¹⁴ Paying special attention to the representatives of other ethnic groups especially, the Fund issued Abkhazian-Russian, Abkhazian-Turkish, and Abkhazian-English dictionaries that are supplemented by audio discs to facilitate self-study.¹¹⁵ Moreover, apart from issuing books, the Fund works in close cooperation with “Abkhazfilm”. Thus, for example, in 2013 a full-length animated film “Anastasia” was released. According to Kviciniya, the result was immediately visible, as people started singing Abkhazian songs that were used in the film, popular phrases were also heard in the street of Abkhazia.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Trier et.al., 60.

¹¹³ “Abkhazskie deti – v Abkhazskie shkoly.” [Abkhazian Children – To Abkhazian Schools.], Apsnypress.Info, accessed May 10, 2017, <http://www.apsnypress.info/news/-abkhazskie-deti-v-abkhazskie-shkoly-/>.

¹¹⁴ “27 October- Day Of The Abkhaz Language,” Abkhazia-Pmr.Org., accessed May 10, 2017, <http://abkhazia-pmr.org/news.php?id=290>.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

For the popularization of the native language, the government even went so far as to create a holiday for Abkhazian. Every year, 27 of October, Abkhazia celebrates this special day, running different kind of activities especially among pupils. During the week that follows the day of the Abkhaz language, usually national flags are distributed, sometimes small children get colorful bookmarks with Abkhaz emblems on them, also banners with national attributes are used as backdrops for photos for teenagers.¹¹⁷ This is a perfect illustration of what Billig described as banal nationalism when the government tries to “wave flags” in such a way that citizens do not notice it because sometimes these activities are, of course, not only related to the Abkhaz language, but are a distinct feature of the overall nation-building process.

Moreover, interestingly enough, every year Abkhazia (in cooperation with Russia) dedicates a week to Russian language.¹¹⁸ During this week several activities held, aiming to develop Russian language in Abkhazia. However, analyzing the problems with Abkhazian, it seems that the Abkhaz government should be more concerned with popularization of the native language rather than developing one, in which the majority of the population (including native Abkhaz) speak. However, the governmental authorities state that Russian is not only the language of interethnic communication, but it is the main factor in the development of integration processes between Russian and Abkhazia. Thus, it is crucial for Abkhaz people to ensure preservation of Russian.¹¹⁹ Moreover, according to the head of the department of Russian literature in Abkhaz State University, M. Ladaria, “[t]hanks to the knowledge of Russian language, the people of Abkhazia have the opportunity to get acquainted with the classics of world culture, literature and art, take

¹¹⁷ "27 October- Day Of The Abkhaz Language," Abkhazinform.Com, accessed May 10, 2017, <http://abkhazinform.com/item/2439-27-oktyabrya-den-abkhazskogo-yazyka>

¹¹⁸ "Russian Week In Abkhazia," Gramota.Ru, accessed May 10, 2017, http://www.gramota.ru/lenta/news/8_2682.

¹¹⁹ "Russian Week In Abkhazia," Rosnou.Ru, accessed May 10, 2017, http://www.rosnou.ru/weeks_of_russian/week_RA/.

part in the continuous exchange of values and achievements in the spiritual and moral spheres.”¹²⁰ Once again, it just shows the dependence of Abkhazia on the patron state that even having critical problems with the native language, the government still dedicates whole week to the development of Russian, which is spoken everywhere in Abkhazia.

Regarding teaching Abkhazian at public schools, the government faces a shortage of teachers of Abkhaz language. To overcome such problem the authorities use different ways, including increasing salaries for teachers of Abkhazian,¹²¹ involving ordinary third-year students who can teach Abkhazian in their free time after university,¹²² and sometimes even stricter policies: since the Abkhaz State University graduates about three hundred students annually, the Ministry of Education proposed to issue degrees to university students only after they work as teachers for two years at a public school.¹²³ However, there is a tendency among the ethnic Abkhaz families that prefer sending their children to Russian schools. The main reason for this is that parents believe that Russian schools are of better quality to prepare children for a competitive job. Moreover, every year the Russian Ministry of Education allocates a significant number of grants to Abkhazian high school students to obtain their degrees in Russian state universities.¹²⁴ Comparing national higher education with the Russian system, a growing number of Abkhazian students opt for the latter, thus, apart from choosing Russian schools, where there is no emphasis

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ "Respublika Abkhazia," Scicenter.Online, accessed May 10, 2017, <http://scicenter.online/russkiy-yazyik/respublika-abkhaziya-70029.html>.

¹²² "V shkoly Abkhazii pridut 26 611 shkolniki i 3 700 uchitelei" [26 611 pupils and 3 700 teachers come to Abkhazian school], Apsny.Ru | Абхазия, accessed May 10, 2017, <http://apsny.ru/news/?ID=24280>.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ "Chirikba: Nado privyazat Abkhazskuyu Identichnost k Abkhazskomu Yaziku" [Chirikba: We Need to Bind Abkhazian Language to Abkhazian Identity], Sputnik-Abkhazia.Ru, accessed May 10, 2017, <http://sputnik-abkhazia.ru/analytics/20150701/1015096701.html>

on Abkhaz language, pupils aren't willing to dedicate necessary time to learn Abkhazian since they don't see the necessity of it in their future.¹²⁵

However, recently the Abkhazian Ministry of Education has put into action a policy where all high school students, regardless of their nationality and their preference for university (Abkhazian or foreign), must pass a state exam on Abkhaz language. If the student does not pass the threshold, the school offers an opportunity to retake the exam after a few months. The reason behind this law is that many high school students did not pay much attention to Abkhazian, as they thought that they would not need it once they leave the country to study in Russian (or rarely Georgian) universities.¹²⁶

To analyze the situation in Abkhazia in more depth, I want to highlight the Gali district, which shares a border with Georgia, where the majority of the population speaks Georgian. In Gali people feel limited to speak Georgian, as any manifestation of sympathy towards Tbilisi might be fraught with risk.¹²⁷ Nevertheless, there are fifteen Georgian schools and five Russian schools in Gali region (according to UNICEF, while the Ministry of Education states only eleven Georgian and ten Russian schools, as the government doesn't want the public to know that there is a big number of Georgian schools in the country).¹²⁸ Gali is divided into Lower and Upper Zones; in the former, bordering Georgia directly, education depends on the financial resources available for teaching. Thus, usually, textbooks for elementary education in Georgian are provided free of charge by the Georgian government. However, in September 2006, the Ministry

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ "Chengeliya: Vpervie v Neabkhazskih Shkolah Budut Sdavet Abkhazskiy Yazik" [Chengeliya: For the First Time Non-Abkhazian Schools Will Examine Abkhazian], Sputnik-Abkhazia.Ru, accessed May 11, 2017, <http://sputnik-abkhazia.ru/interview/20170504/1020963296/chengeliya-vpervye-v-neabxazskix-shkolax-budut-sdavet-abxazskij-yazyk.html>

¹²⁷ Trier et al., 69

¹²⁸ Ibid, 70.

of Education provided free of charge new textbooks on history and geography in Russian language in order to substitute the Georgian textbooks used in teaching these sensitive subjects.¹²⁹ Meanwhile, in the Upper Zone of Gali region the majority of schools have Russian as a primary language of instruction and Georgian as a foreign language for all eleven classes with three to four hours a week depending on the grade.¹³⁰ Just as Abkhazians had to go through forced “Georgianization” back in 1930s, now Abkhaz authorities try their utmost to eliminate the Georgian language from the Gali region.

Thus, according to the Georgian scholar, Nestan Charkviali, Georgians are concerned with the forced Russification of Georgians living in Abkhazia. He states that from September 2016, Georgian children living in Gali region lost the right to obtain primary education in their native language. He adds that in Tkuarchal and Ochamchira regions in school certificates to ethnic Georgians, in the column “mother tongue”, it is prohibited to indicate “Georgian”, instead, they put “Russian.”¹³¹ Moreover, in the last five years eight teachers and one principal of Georgian schools have been suspended from work in Abkhazia for the reason that, according to Charkviali, they “mentioned Georgia in a positive context.”¹³² In its turn, the Abkhazian authorities justify these actions, claiming that by providing children education in the Georgian language, these pupils cannot establish future careers in Abkhazia; since they do not know the Abkhaz language and only speak fluently Georgian, these graduates tend to attend Georgian universities then and/or migrate there altogether to build their future in Georgia.¹³³ Therefore, many Abkhazians

¹²⁹ Trier et al., 70.

¹³⁰ Ibid, 72.

¹³¹ “V Tbilisi Obespokoeny “Nasilstvennoi Russifikaciy” Abkhazii” [Tbilisi is concerned about “Forced Russification of Abkhazia”], Golos Ameriki [American Voice], accessed May 11, 2017, <http://www.golos-ameriki.ru/a/nc-georgian-language-language-ban-in-gali/3292417.html>.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

are scared to lose their identity, language, and culture, some even fear they may not survive as an ethnic group. Thus, there is a certain 'siege mentality' observable, in which Abkhazians perceive that they have an overriding need to unite against who they perceive to be their external enemy - Georgians¹³⁴ - and the government is trying to do everything in order to preserve the Abkhaz national identity.

As mentioned in the Introduction, in order to complement and enrich the case study method, I have conducted semi-structured interviews with three teachers of Abkhaz history from Gagra and Sukhum cities as well as five high school students from Gagra, Sukhum, Gudauta and Ochamchira cities. I have purposefully interviewed people from different cities in order to generalize the situation in the whole country (See details in the Appendix 1). Since these interviews do not constitute a core method of analysis for this study and the small sample only provides anecdotal evidence, I will not present the analysis separately, instead, I will summarize them as follows.

Most of the students agreed with the fact that the education system in Abkhazia does not nor is it meant to challenge governmental authorities. “Our education system cannot be compared with the Western. We are a post-Soviet country, we are *dependent on Russia*, thus, our education system is structured in the same way as the Russian. In Abkhazia we do not have that much freedom of speech, hence, I would not say that the goal of our education system is to challenge the governmental authorities.”¹³⁵ One of the teachers of Abkhazian history concurs with this, stating “In my personal view, the education system should not challenge the government position,

¹³⁴ Trier et al, 120.

¹³⁵ Interviewee 4

contrary, they should interact with each other, and only this close interaction can bring prosperity in the future.”¹³⁶

Asking the question about the curriculum in Russian beginning from the fifth grade, one of the teachers responded: “We have to do it. We simply don’t have a choice right now. You know about our economic situation in Abkhazia. Unfortunately, as for now, we don’t possess enough financial resources to change the whole curriculum into Abkhazian. We are *highly dependent on Russia*, thus, we have to use their education system along with textbooks published in Russian.”¹³⁷

However, all of the interviewed students also agreed that school strengthened their love towards their motherland as well as pride for their nation. “I am proud that I am Abkhaz and that I was born and raised here. Indeed, our school succeeded in instilling a sense of patriotism. For example, after lessons on the history of Abkhazia, I was even more proud of my own country. Even now I still remember how in primary school we used to sing patriotic Abkhazian songs in our singing lessons.”¹³⁸ However, one respondent differed from the rest: “I cannot say that I began to love my country more after certain lessons or courses. I always loved my motherland, regardless of any classes I had.”¹³⁹

Interestingly, even though being very proud of their own national identity, all of the high school students expressed their will to study in Russian universities. One of the interviewees stated, “I

¹³⁶ Interviewee 1

¹³⁷ Interviewee 3

¹³⁸ Interviewee 6

¹³⁹ Interviewee 8

want to study medicine. That's why I need a very good university. Unfortunately, our education system is not that strong. Plus, I will be getting a grant to study in Russia. So why not?"¹⁴⁰ This again shows the problem that Abkhazian government faces. School graduates are not interested in deepening their knowledge of Abkhazian, since they plan to study in Russian universities, which are, comparing to Abkhazian ones, much stronger. The dilemma that the authorities face is that they can't restrict students in using the grants for studying at Russia, since they believe that these students after getting education of high quality will come back and help developing the country; but at the same time, by providing pupils such opportunities, it is hard to foster nationalist rhetoric among students that aim to build their careers in Russia.

As Kolsto and Blakkisrud state "[n]ation-building concerns soft aspects of state consolidation, such as the construction of shared identity and a sense of unity in a state's population, through *education*, propaganda, ideology, and state symbols. Very often these kinds of policies include elements of cultural and linguistic homogenization" (emphasis added).¹⁴¹ Such is the case of Abkhazia, where a prime device of the nation-building process is the development of the Abkhaz language as well as the education system. Examining different policies that have been implemented by the governmental authorities in the field of education and analyzing the conducted interviews, first of all, it can be noted that the government does use the education system in order to influence children and raise nationalist sentiments among them. Encouraging students by diplomas and certificates, governmental authorities try to strengthen nationalist rhetoric. However, despite its attempts, economic dependence on Russia prevents Abkhazia to promote partisan ideas to the fullest. Russia, in its turn, takes advantage of such dependence.

¹⁴⁰ Interviewee 9

¹⁴¹ Pål Kolstø, Helge Blakkisrud, "Living With Non-Recognition: State- And Nation-Building In South Caucasian Quasi-States," *Europe-Asia Studies* 60, no.3 (2008), 484.

Thus, for instance, according to Giorgi Chachba, Abkhaz authorities, due to a lack of political experience and relevant legal practice, as well as fear to offend “senior comrade”, sometimes blindly sign different agreements with Russian government. These agreements are formalized in all spheres: military, economic, social, education and etc., which completely cover the socio-political life of Abkhazia. In terms of education system, for instance, Russia appointed one of its political scientist, Sergey Markov, as a chairman of the admissions committee in the Abkhazian State University, which is now, again, according to Chachba, on the edge of becoming a branch of Russian university.¹⁴² This does not only explicitly demonstrate induced dependence of Abkhazia on the patron state, due to its contested international status, but it also shows how Russia takes advantage of such dependence.

In order to gain a more comprehensive analysis, as a part of my single case study, I examined a textbook on Abkhaz history for the tenth and eleventh grades of every public school, written by Abkhaz scholars Oleg Bgazhba and Stanislav Lakoba.¹⁴³ Throughout the textbook, in every part of the historical narrative, the authors always emphasize the uniqueness and richness of Abkhaz culture, paying close attention to prominent figures of the Abkhaz past, describing their contribution to the development of the Abkhaz nation. The authors call on the young generation to be proud and take care of their rich cultural heritage that dates back to ancient times.¹⁴⁴

The textbook portrays Abkhazia as an ancient country and nation, dating its history to the Paleolithic period. Special attention is paid to the international recognition of the Abkhaz

¹⁴² “Zavoevannaya Nezavisimost Ili Podarenniy Suverenitet,” [Conquered Independence or Given Sovereignty], Live Journal, accessed May 23, 2017. <http://giorgi-chachba.livejournal.com/14664.html>

¹⁴³ Oleg Bgazhba, Stanislav Lakoba, *The History Of Abkhazia*, 2nd ed. (Sukhum: The Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Abkhazia, 2015).

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 214.

kingdom. The authors of the textbook claim that in the tenth century the Abkhaz king, George the Second, was titled “brilliant exusiast”, *proving independence of the ruler of Abkhazia*, was internationally known for his “royal dignity” and the actual request to preserve with the Byzantines “the spirit of alliance and the purity of friendship.”¹⁴⁵ Throughout the book, there is a constant reminding of the importance and strength of Abkhaz nation. Thus, for example, the authors compare the titles of the Abkhaz king with the rulers of Ancient Rus and Kartli: the latter were simply called archons without any epithets, showing their lower rank.¹⁴⁶ In another example the authors emphasize an important role of Abkhazians in the democratic process of Turkey, as Mustafa Kemal's allies, supporting him in Turkish War of Independence.¹⁴⁷ Through this the authors try to demonstrate the strength of the Abkhaz nation, being internationally recognized already in ancient times and playing an important role in the international community since.

However, even on narrating their own history, Abkhazians scholars have to draw on Russian authors, since they don't have enough means for the education sector. Thus, the textbook portrays Russians as the only saviors of Abkhaz people from the savage and cruel Georgians.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, the former President of Abkhazia, Sergey Bagapsha, in his speech in Moscow State University of International Relations stated, “[t]he opinion that Russia fought against the peoples of the Western Caucasus is erroneous, since it is obvious that the battle of the Ottoman and Russian empires for domination in the region was going on. Abkhazia, in its turn, was just stuck

¹⁴⁵ Bgazhba, Lakoba, 145.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 145.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 299.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

between the collision of interests of great superpowers. But it was only Russia that Abkhazia saw as the only faithful supporter and defender.”¹⁴⁹

While Russians are portrayed as ‘saviors’, Georgians, from the very first pages of the history book, are portrayed in a negative way. The authors state that because of the fact that Georgians were siding with the Russian Empire during the war (1817-1864) against the peoples of Caucasus, including the Abkhazians, Georgians were allowed to settle in Abkhazia in large numbers. “[P]rominent representatives of Georgian intelligentsia, educated in Russian universities, persuaded the rulers of Russia in the profitability and success of holding only Mingrelian (Georgian) colonization in Abkhazia. In order to achieve this main goal, they expressed their loyalty to them, seeking to obtain the right for exclusive possession of Abkhazia and its lands.” This negative attitude towards Georgians can also be noted in the language that the authors use, for instance, “[t]he *dependent* Georgia was *eager* to own *bleeding* Abkhazia” (emphasis added).¹⁵⁰ Through this language, the authors are trying to portray Abkhazian people as “bleeding” victims, whereas Georgians are savage people justifying the argument of Raymond Williams about ‘selective tradition’, when the state “[e]mbodies its vision of legitimate knowledge and culture, one that in the process of enfranchising one group’s cultural capital disenfranchises another’s.”¹⁵¹

Thus, Dodo Chumburidze, Chief Researcher in the Institute of History and Ethnology of Georgia, argued that the textbook on History of Abkhazia has only one ideological purpose: “[t]o raise

¹⁴⁹ "Russia And Abkhazia — 200 Years Of Brotherhood And Partnership," Rossiyanavsegda.Ru, accessed May 11, 2017, <http://rossiyanavsegda.ru/read/1182/>.

¹⁵⁰ Bgazhba, Lakoba, 271.

¹⁵¹ Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (London: Chattoand Windus, 1961).

hostility and hatred for Georgians in Abkhazian youth, to make them feel superior, being the creators of civilization, to raise pride in the heroic past and the desire to protect their country from Georgian invaders.”¹⁵² He argues that it is a very dangerous way to teach Abkhazian youth according to that textbook, as it only awakens hatred towards Georgians, adding “[w]e do not incite such hatred and thus do a good thing, because hatred never brought good, but we need to pay more attention to history. Otherwise, in the future the Georgian youth will not be able to respond to their Abkhaz peers in the slander that they are taught at school, which is nothing more than scientific falsification.”¹⁵³

However, it comes with no surprise that the Georgian side will find the arguments provided in the Abkhazian textbook biased, and will refute all the historical claims. After reading the textbook it is not difficult to see how Abkhazian pupils, after studying this textbook, see their nation as a perpetual victim who finally deserve a more just treatment. This assumption has been proven correct in the interviews.

In conclusion, as Kolsto and Blakkisrud treat nationhood as a quality that strengthens the de facto states' chances for survival,¹⁵⁴ that pattern can be clearly observed in the Abkhazian case. For Abkhazians the loss of Abkhaz language equates with losing national identity. However, no matter how much the Abkhazian authorities want to support development of Abkhaz language or change the curriculum with an emphasis on Abkhaz history and culture, they have to face lack of financial resources, hence, strong dependence on the patron state. Two thirds of the Abkhaz

¹⁵² “Uchebnik “Istoriya Abkhazii”: Tochka Zreniya” [“History of Abkhazia” Textbook: Point of View], Inosmi.Ru, accessed May 11, 2017, <http://inosmi.ru/caucasus/20100330/158911296.html>.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Kolsto and Blakkisrud, 485.

national budget comes from Moscow subsidies.¹⁵⁵ Meanwhile, Russia is not very keen on spending its money on books in Abkhazian or on an increase of salaries for teachers of the Abkhaz language. Neither is Russia interested in sponsoring nationalist activities in Abkhazia.¹⁵⁶ Another obstacle is that putting pressure on the non-Abkhaz population such as obligatory use of Abkhaz language might exacerbate non-Abkhaz fears of exclusion and discrimination and place a serious strain on community relations. Thus, the Abkhazian government has to tread very carefully in order to avoid ethnic tensions within society but at the same time work on nation-building in order to compensate for its lack of international recognition. However, whether this is unique to Abkhazia, or it can also be observed in other de facto states will be analyzed in the next chapter.

¹⁵⁵ "Abkhazia's Dependence On Russia Questioned Amid Presidential Elections - Nieuws – FMS," Foundationmaxvanderstoel.Nl, accessed May 11, 2017,

https://www.foundationmaxvanderstoel.nl/nieuws/nieuws_item/t/abkhazias_dependence_on_russia_questioned_amid_presidential_elections

¹⁵⁶ "Abkhazia I Rossiya. Ot Lyubvi do Nenavisti" [Abkhazia And Russia. From Love To Hate], Rusinform, accessed May 11, 2017, <http://rusinform.ru/fight/645-abkhaziya-i-rossiya-ot-lyubvi-do-nenavisti.html>

Chapter 4: Snapshots from other de facto states

Examining the case of Abkhazia in the previous chapter, it has been shown that the governmental authorities try to use the educational system in the nation-building process in order to raise national consciousness and a sense of patriotism, however, the scope of which remains impacted by economic and financial instability in Abkhazia and its dependence on the patron state. Thus, this chapter looks at other de facto states, first of all Northern Cyprus, then I proceed with Iraqi Kurdistan, to see whether there is a similar pattern.

4.1 Northern Cyprus

The island of Cyprus, located in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, has a long history of contested ownership. According to the international community, there is only one state: the Republic of Cyprus, but the northern part of it has been occupied by Turkey and constitutes a separatist entity that is not recognized as an independent state. Therefore, the international community stands on the principle that there is only one Cypriot state, of which parts are occupied by another state. Meanwhile, Turkey and the Northern Cypriots stand on the principle that there used to be a Cypriot state, however, in 1974 Turkey in response to the Greek attempt to create a unitary Greek Cypriot state, which would have made Turkish Cypriots a minority, invaded the northern part of Cyprus, leading to the proclamation of the Autonomous Turkish Cypriot Administration. It was followed by the establishment of the Turkish Federative State of Cyprus in 1975, and in 1983 the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Only Turkey recognized the independence of TRNC and considered the rest of the island as part of Cyprus, however, not as a state. Thus, neither the international community, nor Turkey divide the island into two states, both sides consider the island as one entity, disregarding the relevance of each other.

Therefore, being rejected by the international community as a state, the TRNC had the goal not only to be politically recognized as a sovereign legitimate state but also to create its cultural image as a nation.¹⁵⁷ The TRNC government saw the educational sector as one of the ways of achieving this goal. Following the referendum in 2004, the governmental authorities of the TRNC produced new volumes of textbooks with an emphasis on Turkish Cypriot national identity.¹⁵⁸ The TRNC government attempted to establish its own autonomous education system, portraying itself as a sovereign political entity with its own vision on national education.¹⁵⁹ As Mertkan-Ozunlu and Thomson note, “[t]he TRNC reform agenda ...has a nation-building component. Through curriculum reform, and an emphasis on citizenship, policy makers hope to strengthen further a distinctive *TRNC national identity*” (emphasis added).¹⁶⁰ The national education in the TRNC is a centralized education system under control of the TRNC Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MEYS).

According to the TRNC Constitution, education is compulsory until the age of fifteen and free until the age of eighteen.¹⁶¹ Since the TRNC government sponsors national education, all public schools follow the requirements and standardized curriculum agreed by the MEYS. Teachers are required to follow the instructions and have no say in the selection of books. The MEYS decides which textbooks should be used at schools, and all the textbooks used at schools bear the stamp of approval from the MEYS.¹⁶² This illustrates full control of the government in the education sector, thus giving it freedom to instrumentalize the educational system for its own political

¹⁵⁷ Sefika Mertkan-Ozunlu, Pat Thomson, "Educational Reform In North Cyprus—Towards The Making Of A Nation/State?" *International Journal Of Educational Development* 29, no.1 (2009): 99.

¹⁵⁸ Olga Campbell-Thomson, "Exploring the Process of National Identity Construction in the Context of Schooling in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus." (PhD diss., University of Manchester, 2013), 49.

¹⁵⁹ Campbell-Thomson, 51.

¹⁶⁰ Mertkan-Ozunlu, 102.

¹⁶¹ "The Constitution Of The Turkish Republic Of Northern Cyprus," Cypnet.Co.Uk., accessed May 12, 2017, <http://www.cypnet.co.uk/ncvprus/main/polsyst/constitution/>.

¹⁶² Campbell-Thomson, 54.

goals, illustrating the argument of Apple and Christian-Smith, who argue that “[e]ducation and power are terms of an indissoluble couplet.”¹⁶³

As for the native language, unlike Abkhazia, Northern Cyprus does not face the problem of it slowly disappearing. Turkish is considered a state language, and is widely spoken by the whole population of TRNC. It is also a primary language of instruction in all public schools, while English is the second language. However, Turkish is regarded as the only language of instruction until sixth grade. Pupils, who reach a satisfactory level of English by the end of sixth grade, may opt for courses such as mathematics, science and geography in English in the upper grades. Moreover, there are some electives that are offered in English.¹⁶⁴

Since Turkey is considered its patron state, due to economic and political instability in the early years of the establishment of the TRNC, similarly to the previous case of Abkhazia, all textbooks were supplied by the patron state. However, with the outcome of the Education Reform of 2004, most of the textbooks that are used in public schools are now produced in Northern Cyprus. The exceptions are courses such as Turkish Language, Religious Culture and Moral Principles, and History of the Establishment of the Republic of Turkey and Kemalism.¹⁶⁵ It was crucial for the TRNC to have textbooks published specifically for schools of Northern Cyprus, as it marked the establishment of its own national curriculum. Earlier, in the Turkey-produced books the term “our country” was attributed to Turkey, in new textbooks “our country” was used with regard to the northern part of the island.¹⁶⁶ However, no matter whether it is Turkey-produced or TRNC-

¹⁶³ Apple, Christian-Smith, 2.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 157.

¹⁶⁵ Campbell-Thomson, 167.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

produced textbook every book in lower secondary school has a standard opening sequence: the national anthem, which is actually the anthem of Turkey (“İstiklâl Marşı”), Atatürk’s portrait and a well-known Atatürk’s *Address to the Youth*.¹⁶⁷ This pattern does not only illustrate what Billig describes as constant ‘flagging’ of nationhood, but, unlike the Abkhazian case, it also shows the much more prominent role of the patron state, since Turkish Cypriots, let alone a younger generation, have to see Atatürk as the father of the nation of Turkish Cypriots, which is factually absurd since the island became a British protectorate before he was born and he died almost four decades before Turkey annexed northern Cyprus. Yet, the textbooks tell them he is precisely that.

As for the History subject, in the TRCN curriculum there are two courses of history: General History and History of the TRNC. General history is a course of Turkish history. Its curriculum portrays Turks as brave warriors, as well as an enlightened nation that is able to produce beautiful art and built a society on a legal basis.¹⁶⁸ Meanwhile, the revised programme of History of Cyprus, on the contrary, emphasizes Cypriotism, beginning with the foundation of the TRNC. Interestingly, in the maps of the textbooks, the image of TRNC never comes separately, always on a slate of the whole island, even though there are distinct boundaries of the TRNC.¹⁶⁹ However, the southern part of Cyprus is not called The Republic of Cyprus (the official name recognized by the international community), rather the Greek-Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus.

¹⁶⁷ Campbell-Thomson, 177.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 184.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 200.

Meanwhile, in both of the history courses, Greek Cypriots are defined as “Rum,” a Turkish term that is usually used to refer to three categories: the Greek Orthodox community (Rum millet) living in the Ottoman Empire, present-day Greeks living in Turkey and to Greek Cypriots. For Greeks that live in Greece, the term “Yunan (Ionian)” is used.¹⁷⁰ “[T]he use of “Rum” for Greek Cypriots implicitly identifies them as former subjects of the Ottoman Empire, and certainly different to Greeks, thus denying their claim to a Greek identity and delegitimizing their political demands for Union with Greece.”¹⁷¹ Therefore, students have clear understanding of what their country is: Kuzey Kibris – Northern Cyprus. However, even though the TRNC has the same anthem as Turkey, pupils consider Turkey as a totally different but benevolent country that apart from recognition provides military and financial support.¹⁷² Furthermore, pupils are well aware of the division of the island and that in order to get to the other side, people need to cross a border.¹⁷³ Thus, in keeping with Bourdieu, it appears that governmental control of the education sector succeeds in making children aware of their national identity, and distinguishing it from both Turkey and Southern Cyprus.

Moreover, forging of the national sentiments can be noted in school daily life. Thus, public schools in Northern Cyprus start their Monday morning with assembly and singing the national anthem (of Turkey). But here, students sing the national anthem facing a bust of *Ataturk*. The anthem learning was built into the curriculum of Music lessons in each grade in all public schools. It is “[a]n obligatory ritual built into the routine of schooling and required by higher

¹⁷⁰ Yiannis Papadakis, *History education in divided Cyprus: a comparison of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot schoolbooks on the "History of Cyprus* (Oslo, Norway: International Peace Research Institute, 2008), 14.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Champbell-Thomson, 175.

¹⁷³ Ibid, 199.

regulatory authorities.”¹⁷⁴ Moreover, by continually 'flagging' the national rhetoric through the images of Atatürk at public schools, the positioning of these schools within the particular nationhood, of which Atatürk is a current symbol is very prominent.¹⁷⁵ Teachers concur with the fact that the main emphasis of the educational system is still on Turkish heritage, and stress the importance of providing information on other cultures to make students easily integrate with the rest of the world.¹⁷⁶

Therefore, it can be shown that the role of the patron state in Northern Cyprus is even more prominent than in the case of Abkhazia. It comes to quite ridiculous situation that the Turkish Cypriot children have to learn in school that the father of their nation is Atatürk, despite the fact that Cyprus was ceded from the Ottoman Empire long before the rule of Atatürk. By the time Atatürk became a national hero of Turkey, following the Turkish war of independence, Cyprus was ruled by the British and it became an independent state in 1960 with Atatürk, who died in 1938, having no role in this development. Thus, Turkish Cyprus should have actually nothing to do with Atatürk or the Turkish anthem whatsoever.

In conclusion, looking at the case of Northern Cyprus, it can be noted that the governmental authorities try to strike a balance between appealing to the patron state on whom they are completely dependent (perhaps even more than Abkhazia) and developing a form of their own national identity. However, examining the cases of Abkhazia and Northern Cyprus, where the role of patron state is very prominent, it will be of great interest to look at Iraqi Kurdistan and analyze what challenges it has to face, since it does not have any direct patron states.

¹⁷⁴ Campbell-Thomson, 137.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 146.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 142.

4.2 Iraqi Kurdistan

Iraqi Kurdistan is located in the northern and north eastern parts of Iraq, bordering Turkey to the north, Syria to the west, and Iran to the east. The capital of the polity is Erbil. The official languages of Iraqi Kurdistan are Kurdish and Arabic. However, the respective communities in some areas also use minority languages such as Turkmeni, Assyrian and Armenian. Apart from Kurds, there is a diversity of ethnic and religious groups in the Region — including Arabs, Turkmen, Chaldeans, Syriacs, Assyrians, Yazidis, Kakayi and Shabaks.

Following the defeat of Saddam Hussein's regime in the Gulf War of 1991, and their own frustrated uprising, the Iraqi Kurds still began increasingly moving towards the creation of a de facto state and its government in northern Iraq.¹⁷⁷ The international community's intervention led to the creation of the northern no fly zone. The continued pressure of Kurds on the Iraqi regime resulted in the withdrawal of Iraqi troops, which helped to fill the created vacuum by holding elections in 1992, proclaiming self-rule. That was the birth hour of the de facto state also known as Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). However, the status of KRG is contested among scholars. Some highlight its strictly legal status as an autonomous region of Iraq, while others continue to categorize it as an unrecognized state. In light of its ambiguous status, Hannes Cerny suggests the terminology, “within but at the same time apart from Iraq.”¹⁷⁸

In order to compensate for a lack of international recognition, the KRG, just like Abkhazia and Northern Cyprus, also forges nationalist views in different ways, including the education system. However, unlike previous cases, the KRG also pursues a different objective: pandering to the

¹⁷⁷ Michael M. Gunter, "A De Facto Kurdish State in Northern Iraq," *Third World Quarterly* 14, no. 2 (1993): 295.

¹⁷⁸ Hannes Cerny, *Iraqi Kurdistan, The PKK and International Relations: Theory and Ethnic Conflict* (London: Routledge, 2017).

international community. One of the reasons for such an objective has to do with the Bush administration and the Iraq War. For almost a decade Iraqi Kurdistan has been portrayed in Western media (and itself promoted such a portrayal) as a sole success story of the Iraq War.¹⁷⁹ When George Bush attacked Iraq, he justified it by claiming to liberate the Iraqi people and turn Iraq into a prosperous and democratic country, which in the end did not work out for Iraq, but to some extent worked for the Iraqi Kurdistan.¹⁸⁰ Thus, the Bush administration took every opportunity to point out that the liberation that they wanted to achieve in the Iraq War actually happened in Iraqi Kurdistan. Iraqi Kurdistan, in its turn, was happy about such a portrayal and kept nourishing it. The KRG tried, and is still trying, to show to the international community that they are distinguished from other countries in the Middle East by following liberal and democratic ideals.

Therefore, if for the Abkhazian case the main source of financial aid is Russia, and it thus had to adopt the Russian educational system, the KRG took inspiration from the Swedish education system due to the close cooperation with Sweden and its generous funding in the educational sector. Thus, starting from 2005 the KRG had to introduce new subjects that previously were not in the curriculum. It included civic education, democracy, and human rights.¹⁸¹ With the changes in the educational system, the main aim was to no longer consider education as an instrument for promoting the interests of the political elites, rather as a progressive force for changing society and bringing about harmonious coexistence.¹⁸² The Iraqi Kurdish government saw it as a great

¹⁷⁹ Luke Harding, "Revisiting Kurdistan: 'If There Is A Success Story In Iraq, It's Here,'" *The Guardian*, 2014, accessed May 28, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/16/arrived-in-kurdistan-with-chemical-weapon-suit-iraq-saddam-hussein>

¹⁸⁰ "The Iraq War: Bush'S Biggest Blunder," *Newsweek*, accessed May 12, 2017, <http://www.newsweek.com/iraq-war-bushs-biggest-blunder-294411>

¹⁸¹ Mohammed Alsayid, "Peace Education In Iraqi Kurdistan Schools: An Analysis Of Human Rights And History Education Curriculum" (PhD diss., Coventry University, 2015), 91.

¹⁸² Ibid.

opportunity to create an image of liberal practices in order to appease the international community. One of the officials of the Ministry of Education (ME) in KRG claimed that the goal of the new system of education is “to change the mindset of youth to be *more liberal* and away from extremism, fanaticism and for the people to be open minded to hear and accept different opinions” (emphasis added).¹⁸³

One of the ways to resemble the Swedish education system was to give autonomy to higher education institutions. Thus, the KRG, in order to transfer power, decided to grant academic and administrative control to local universities. However, in their turn, universities must become transparent and comply with democratic values, which will enable students and faculty to be involved in the decision-making process.¹⁸⁴ In regard to the medium of instruction, the government implemented a multilingual policy, making Kurdish the first language of instruction, Arabic second and English was considered as a foreign language, which is now even employed in some kindergartens.¹⁸⁵

However, even though the ME claims to make changes in favor of liberal education, in reality, this does not seem to be the case. The coordinator of an NGO Civil Rights organization noted: “[I] was supervising the evaluation program of Human Rights Education in 2007, and after visiting many schools we came out with a list of suggestions and recommendations for improving the program. Although we gave these recommendations to the ME, nothing has changed since then.”¹⁸⁶ One of the project managers at the national Zewa Centre for Protection

¹⁸³ Alsayid, 102.

¹⁸⁴ Palander Namam, "Higher Education Policy-Building In The Kurdistan Region Of Iraq: Perceptions Of University Representatives" (Master thesis, University of Toronto, 2013), 55.

¹⁸⁵ Ali Mahmood Jukil, "The Policy Of Educational System In Iraqi-Kurdistan," *Journal Of Human Sciences* no.53, (2013).

¹⁸⁶ Alsayid, 111.

of Child Rights stated, “[v]ery often the decision-makers need training to believe in human rights.”¹⁸⁷ It appears to be that instead of following the recommendations of various NGOs, the governmental authority pursues its own goals: strengthening nationalist rhetoric. According to the law, legislation no. 11, of 1992 states: “[c]onserve and promote Kurdish cultural originality in a manner in which to promote the ideals of the Kurdistan Liberation Movement and its democratic aims as well as direct special concern to the cultural education of children.”¹⁸⁸ This pattern illustrates Bourdieu’s argument that school as a liberating force is just a myth; on the contrary, school is the foundation of state domination:¹⁸⁹ the KRG benefiting from the financial aid of several NGOs, keeps the pretence of changing the educational sector in favor for liberal and democratic views, but in reality uses the education system for strengthening nationalist discourse.

In general, due to governmental control, the education system in Kurdistan lacks development of critical thinking. Judith Neurink describes education in Kurdistan as spoon-feeding, comparing students to “[a] nest full of baby birds, who open their beaks to receive the food the parent is bringing in.”¹⁹⁰ The President of the University of Salahaddin in Erbil, Dr. Mohammad Sadik, concurs with Naurink stating that “[t]he biggest problem with the teaching methods here is that teachers go in and talk, talk, talk. The students write it down and that is the end of the story. Students are not the center of the activities. Even at the university, the system is authoritarian and fear-based. The teacher is the master and the students have to sit and listen. They even can't

¹⁸⁷ Alsayid, 111.

¹⁸⁸ Gareth R. Stansfield, *Iraqi Kurdistan: political development and emergent democracy* (London New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 206.

¹⁸⁹ Bourdieu, 5.

¹⁹⁰ "Let'S Stop Spoon-Feeding the Students," Rudaw, accessed Amy 12, 2017, <http://www.rudaw.net/english/opinion/16112013>

move.”¹⁹¹ The KRG takes advantage of this method of teaching by making students uncritically accept whatever is presented in the curriculum. Abdurrahman Wahab goes even further, stating that students “[e]nd up being entrapped in ideological games of flag-raising patriotism.”¹⁹² This reflects how in reality the governmental authorities of Kurdistan try to influence the mindset of students, by making methods of teaching authoritarian and not learner-centered, as Alsayid notes that for Kurdish standards good schools are considered the ones that provide a maximum amount of information, while the best students are those who memorize the most without as much as questioning the material. The main principle of learning is one of submission, obedience to the teacher, and uncritical acceptance of information as indisputable facts.¹⁹³

In fact, since its establishment, the ME in Kurdistan aimed to promote Kurdish national identity and to “[f]oster an educated generation that loves their country and its citizens.”¹⁹⁴ Similarly to the previous cases analyzed in this study, the implementation of this goal can be especially explicit in the subjects of history in public schools. First of all, teachers of history of Iraqi Kurdistan at the beginning of each class are obliged to talk for five minutes about the achievements of Kurdistan.¹⁹⁵ In history textbooks a lot of attention is paid to the oppression that the Kurds have experienced throughout history, including the legion of Kurdish uprisings and Saddam Hussein's attempts at genocide. This way the government tries to unite Kurds by awakening bitter emotions and connecting the old and young generation through shared trauma.

¹⁹¹ Jessica Lynn Jastad, "Memory, Promise, And Imagination In Iraqi Kurdistan: Leadership In Education Policy Development" (PhD diss., University of San Francisco, 2008), 90.

¹⁹² "The Education Crisis Facing Iraqi Kurdistan | The World Weekly," Theworldweekly.Com, accessed May 12, 2017, <https://www.theworldweekly.com/reader/view/magazine/2016-03-31/the-education-crisis-facing-iraqi-kurdistan/7315>

¹⁹³ Alsayid, 173.

¹⁹⁴ Afaq Tarbawia [in Arabic] cited in Mohammed Alsayid, 103.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

However, according to Alsayid, the numerous Kurdish uprisings and violent conflicts are praised and considered as legitimate ways in the struggle for independence.¹⁹⁶

Like in the case of Abkhazia, the history textbooks of Iraqi Kurdistan stress the uniqueness of the Kurdish nation. Kurdistan is defined as a “homeland of Kurds” – “cradle of civilization”, as well as the “first homeland of the second generation of mankind.”¹⁹⁷ Furthermore, the textbooks emphasize the importance of a certain Kurdish village, Charmo, which is located near Kirkuk (that is the focus of Kurd's most important territorial dispute¹⁹⁸). Charmo is portrayed as the first place where human beings settled as a result of the development of agriculture, however, most importantly, historical textbooks frequently mention Charmo's proximity to Kirkuk, which is followed by regular claims of Kirkuk being a Kurdish city. Through this, the authors aim to strengthen the KRG's territorial claim over the area.¹⁹⁹

Similar to the case of Abkhazia, where Georgians are portrayed as “cruel oppressors”, in Kurdish history textbooks special attention is drawn to a negative image of the Iraqi government. Historical textbooks argue that it was always better for Kurdistan to be separated from Iraq, that working with the Iraqi government never brought positive results, it always betrayed the Kurds, who wanted to resolve issues peacefully, and all the horrible consequences were because of the Iraqi government's poor administration.²⁰⁰ The portrayal of Iraq is so negative that, interestingly,

¹⁹⁶ Alsayid, 104.

¹⁹⁷ Kirmanj, 373.

¹⁹⁸ Aram Rafaat, “Kirkuk: The Central Issue of Kurdish Politics and Iraq’s Knotty Problem,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 28, no. 2 (2008): 251–66.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Kirmanj, 172.

even “Iraq” does not appear on maps of the Kurdistan region. It only appears below the borders of the Kurdistan Region, thus giving the impression that it is another country.²⁰¹

However, changes in the history textbooks in favor of native Kurds brought a number of complaints among Christians and Yezidis teachers: “[t]hey want to make us Kurds by force, as the Arabs before wanted to make us Arabs, the Ministry of Education wants to drive students toward Kurdish nationalism.”²⁰² Teachers complain that the education system of Iraqi Kurdistan lacks equal inclusiveness of all communities, thus, students do not study the ethnic background of their society’s minorities.²⁰³ The inequality can also be seen in different treatment of teachers in Kurdish and Arabic schools, teachers in the latter get less salary than in the former.²⁰⁴

In general, according to Alsayid, the curriculum of history had mainly one approach to understand the reality: “[I]t is always the Kurds who are right, while the Iraqi government and the international community are wrong; the Muslims are right and the disbelievers are wrong - all bad characteristics are attributed to the other and the good qualities to the Kurds, that is, the dominant group that controls the knowledge the students receive.”²⁰⁵ Moreover, as part of learning, each history textbook has questions after the section. After examining the textbooks, Alsayid notes that almost all questions are recall questions. They are not made to encourage students to critically think; rather, students just need to repeat what is stated in the textbook.²⁰⁶ Thus, such a strategy of purposefully avoiding comprehensive knowledge about the reality and

²⁰¹ Kirmanj, 375.

²⁰² Alsayid, 105.

²⁰³ Ibid, 107.

²⁰⁴ Ibid, 108.

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 195.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, 187.

information about other minorities enables the governmental authorities of Iraqi Kurdistan to foster nationalism among the young generation.

Concluding, Iraqi Kurdistan, unlike all other previous cases, does not have a single patron state, however, most of its foreign direct investment still comes from the West and Turkey. The data shows that the governmental authorities of Iraqi Kurdistan try to create an image of making policies in the educational field in favor of liberal views, but in reality, it still fosters exclusionary and assimilationist Kurdish nationalism. It appears that theoretical assumptions of the governmental use of the education system in promotion of nationalism as well as empirical evidence of the Abkhazian case hold the truth for Northern Cyprus and Iraqi Kurdistan. Moreover, in the cases of Abkhazia and Northern Cyprus we can trace attempts of the authorities: on the one hand, they are heavily dependent on the patron state that provides them not only money and security, but most importantly, recognition; and on the other hand, they want to develop a form of national identity independent from the patron state, while the Iraqi Kurdistan authority is striking a balance between pandering to Western liberal views and promotion of Kurdish nationalism through an authoritarian education system.

Conclusion

In this research, I hypothesized that de facto states do not differ from other states in their understanding of education. However, the main goal of this thesis was to identify unique challenges that the de facto states face throughout their nation-building process in the field of education. In order to do this, the first chapter provided the theoretical basis of nationalism, in which identity was considered as a socially constructed phenomenon and nations as “imagined communities.” However, in this thesis, I also looked at this social construction of national identity through what Billig calls “banal nationalism” - the embodied habits of social life created by the elite,²⁰⁷ in this case, by the governmental authorities. Furthermore, the chapter distinguished between education and the education system, where the latter is considered as a structured process of the former one, where the institution comes in with a particular intent. Moreover, the first chapter provides a literature review of the empirical case studies regarding the state's use of the education system in a nation-building process, concluding with Bourdieu's claim that schools should be considered as instruments of a state's symbolic domination.

Fleshing out several terms that are used by different scholars in order to describe states with disputed status over their statehood and contested territory, the second chapter, offered to use “de facto” and “unrecognized” states interchangeably, drawing on the conceptual framework of, mainly, Caspersen and Pegg. Taking into account Caspersen's argument that the creation of statehood is possible even without recognition, however, the lack of external sovereignty constrains the form of internal sovereignty that develops, I claimed that Abkhazia, Northern Cyprus, and Iraqi Kurdistan can fall into the characterization of unrecognized states.

²⁰⁷ Billig, *Banal nationalism*.

The third chapter, focusing on a single case study of Abkhazia, demonstrated that there is no big difference between de facto states and so-called states in the use of the education system in the nation-building process. They both instrumentalize the education system in order to raise national sentiment and strengthen nationalist rhetoric, which justifies the hypothesis of this research. The chapter provides a detailed picture of Abkhazia, where all these elements are in play. The key issue for the Abkhazian government is to preserve the slowly disappearing native language, as according to Trier et al., language is one of the most powerful features of national identity in the Caucasus.²⁰⁸ Thus, numerous attempts by the Abkhazian government can be traced in their struggle for popularizing the native language, including passing the law on a steady transition to the use of Abkhaz language in all public life, as well as mandatory use of Abkhazian by all administrators and high-level officials of the government; providing free language courses for citizens; establishing a special Fund for the Development of Abkhaz language, writing textbooks and directing movies in Abkhazian, and even creating a public holiday for the Abkhaz language, as well as issuing degrees to college students only after they work as teachers of Abkhazian in public schools for two years. Furthermore, analysis of Abkhazian history textbook also shows governmental attempts of fostering exclusionary and assimilationist Abkhazian nationalism, eliminating Georgian identity.

However, regarding the main challenges that Abkhazia, being a de facto state, faces in the nation-building process, which is of the main interest of this research, it is shown that one of the main difficulties for Abkhazia is its dependence on its patron state. Abkhazia has to strike a balance between appealing to Moscow, since Russia provides not only recognition, but financial

²⁰⁸ Trier et al., 57.

and military support as well, and on the other hand, developing national identity. Thus, changes in the education system in favor of Abkhazian language and the promotion of patriotic rhetoric can be traced, however, they are quite slow, owing to the financial dependence on the patron state.

In the final chapter, which is intended to enrich the single case study, one can see two facets I wanted to highlight by way of the two other unrecognized states. In the Northern Cyprus case, the challenge of being dependent on the patron state is even more prominent than in Abkhazia. Unlike Abkhazia that at least has created its own national anthem, the TRNC does not only use “İstiklâl Marşı” as the national anthem of the TRNC, but it even comes to the absurd situation when Turkish Cypriot children need to learn that the father of their nation is Atatürk, who has actually nothing to do with them. Meanwhile, the Iraqi Kurdistan case explicitly shows that school is a form of social control rather than a vast engine of democracy, despite the fact that Iraqi Kurdistan, on paper only, through their educational policies tries to claim a desire to take inspiration from the Western education system. In reality, the system is authoritarian and fear-based; where students have to uncritically accept the information as indisputable facts. Thus, in the case of Iraqi Kurdistan, it is visible how the government tries to keep the balance between pandering to Western liberal views, in order to receive acceptance to be a respectful member of international community, meanwhile strengthening exclusionary Kurdish nationalism.

Thus, it is not surprising that unrecognized states, just like other states, instrumentalize education for strengthening nationalist rhetoric, however, unlike other states, *de facto* states have to go

through unique ways of adaptation in their struggle for their contested international status, such as total dependence on the patron state as well as pandering to Western democratic ideals.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Interviewee 1 - Teacher of the History of Abkhazia in Abkhaz public school in Gagra

Interviewee 2 - Teacher of the History of Abkhazia in Russian public school number 2 in Gagra

Interviewee 3 - Teacher of the History of Abkhazia of Russian public school number 10 in Sukhum

Interviewee 4 - Tenth grader from Russian public school number 10 in Sukhum

Interviewee 5 - Tenth grader from Russian public school number 10 in Sukhum

Interviewee 6 - Eleventh grader from Russian public school number 10 in Sukhum

Interviewee 7 – Tenth grader from Abkhaz public school number 2 in Ochamchira

Interviewee 8 - Eleventh grader from Russian public school number 4 in Gudauta

Interviewee 9 - Eleventh grader from Russian public school number 2 in Ochamchira