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SOMALI AND KURDISH REFUGEES
IN LONDON:

DIASPORA, IDENTITY AND POWER

by David J Griffiths

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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DECLARATION

The material contained in this thesis, except where referenced and attributed to other sources, is the sole responsibility of the author. A shortened version of chapter seven, Clanship and New Identities, has appeared as a separate paper - 'Somali Refugees in Tower Hamlets: clanship and new identities', *New Community* Vol 23 (1): 5-24, dated January 1997. No portion of this thesis had been published prior to the period of study. This thesis has not been submitted for a degree at any other university.

ABSTRACT

This comparative study of Somali and Kurdish refugees in London aims to develop understanding of refugee adaptation and identity formation as these are experienced differentially by two recently arrived refugee groups with distinctive histories, identities and orientation to political activity in both the country of origin and the society of reception. The thesis is based upon ethnographic fieldwork with individuals from both groups and in this respect marks a distinctive contribution to the study of refugees in Britain. In addition to original fieldwork material the thesis is based upon a detailed historical reconstruction of the groups in their country of origin and within the settlement context in London. A range of secondary data is also drawn upon at different stages of the argument.

The thesis is in four parts. Part one is a critical review of the literature on refugee adaptation and identity and argues for the importance of theories of ethnicity and cultural identity to the study of refugees in countries of settlement. The concept of diaspora is introduced as an heuristic device to elucidate the processes of flight, settlement and identity formation which are addressed in parts two to four of the thesis. Part two examines Somalia and Kurdistan as refugee generating areas. The international response to refugee crises in these two cases is set within a changed conception of security in the post-Cold war order. Part three documents the changing policy context and British government reception of the two groups in the late 1980s. The migration histories and settlement patterns of the groups in addition to differences in patterns of formal organisation are also examined. Part four is the kernel of the thesis and illustrates the role of imagined communities - the self-representation of communal identities - in the adaptation of the groups and of individual refugees in London.

Throughout this research the role and importance of group-specific factors to the adaptation process is emphasised. The distinctive histories, identities and aspirations of individual refugee groups and individuals is at the heart of the analysis. The quest for recognition, for economic and social parity in the country of settlement in addition to claims for cultural and national distinctiveness, raise important methodological and ethical issues which are addressed throughout the thesis

ABBREVIATIONS

DDKO	Eastern Revolutionary Cultural Centre (Turkey)
DP	Democratic Party (Turkey)
ELR	Exceptional Leave to Remain
ERNK	Kurdistan Popular Liberation Front (Turkey)
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ILR	Indefinite Leave to Remain
IND	Immigration and Nationality Department (Home Office)
IO	Immigration Officer
IRO	International Refugee Organisation
ITC	Independent Television Commission
KAC	Kurdish Advice Centre (London)
KCC	Kurdish Cultural Centre (London)
KDP	Kurdish Democratic Party (Iraq)
KDPI	Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran
KUK	National Liberators of Kurdistan (Turkey)
KWA	Kurdish Workers' Association (London)
LBWHAP	London Black Women's Health Action Project
NAA48	National Assistance Act 1948
OAU	Organisation of African Unity

PKK	Partiya Karkaren Kurdistan or Kurdish Workers' Party (Turkey)
PSK	Socialist Party of Kurdistan (Turkey)
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (Iraq)
RDF	Rapid Deployment Force (US)
SIA	Somali Islamic Association
SLCCA	Somali London Community Cultural Association
SNA	Somali National Alliance
SNF	Somali National Front
SNL	Somali National League
SNM	Somali National Movement
SNS	Somali National Society
SOHDA	Somali Redevelopment, Rehabilitation and Development Agency
SOMRA	Somali Relief Association
SPM	Somali Patriotic Movement
SRC	Supreme Revolutionary Council (Somalia)
SSDF	Somali Salvation Democratic Front
SWDO	Somali Women's Democratic Organisation
SYL	Somali Youth League
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNITAF	United Nations Task Force

USC	United Somali Congress
USP	United Somali Party

Foreword

The 1951 UN Convention on the status of refugees defines a 'refugee' as follows (UN 1981):

Any person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.

This definition, with its twin elements of a 'well-founded fear of persecution' and the reference to effective lack of nationality, is the standard within international law concerning the status of the refugee. However, the political and institutional history behind the formulation of the concept is by no means incidental to our understanding of its meaning. As Melander remarks (1988), in the inter-war period attempts to define the term 'refugee' were made on a largely *ad hoc* basis, responding to international crises as they occurred. In a fundamental sense the term 'refugee' became identified 'by reference to a certain nationality' (1988:7). International legislation passed in 1926 affecting Russians and Armenians codified this basic approach by defining a 'refugee' as 'any person of Russian origin who - no longer enjoys the protection of the Government of the USSR' (1988:7).

This critical distinction by reference to nationality was later modified by the inclusion of the element of personal motivation. Thus by 1938 any person leaving Germany 'for reasons of purely personal convenience' was automatically debarred from refugee status. As a result the so-called 'exclusion clause' of 1938 meant that it was 'now necessary to look into the underlying reason for a person's flight' (Melander 1988:7). Later institutional modifications reinforced the essentially individualistic basis of 'refugee' status, emphasising 'race, religious, or political *beliefs*', (my stress), as for example in the Bermuda Conference of 1943 (Melander 1988:7; Joly et al 1992; Zolberg et al 1989). Thereafter the definition is closely tied to the conditions of war and the emergence of superpower conflict (Gordenker 1987). By 1946, the International Refugee Organisation (IRO), founded under the auspices of the newly established United Nations, had used the concept of 'persecution' for the first time. As

Melander (1988:9) observes 'The IRO definition of the term 'refugee' was an ad hoc definition. The intention was to protect persons from countries under communist domination'. In sum, 'a strong political element had been inserted in defining the term 'refugee'' (1988:9).

The establishment of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in 1951 codified the cold war basis of the post-war refugee regime. The UN Convention on refugees applied, it should be remembered, to those fleeing events which had occurred before 1951 and within Europe, although this was later broadened by the 1967 Bellagio Protocol to include refugees from other parts of the world and later events (ICIHI 1986:20). However, the excessive individualism of the definition, based upon a subjective evaluation of the likelihood of persecution, had been consistently criticised by those countries where the bulk of the 'new refugees' from the 1970s onwards were to be found - in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America. Here, the ability to carry out case-by-case assessments of claims to refugee status had proven particularly problematic. The 1969 Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Convention on Refugees, consequently extended the criterion of persecution to include 'external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order', in the reasons compelling flight from the refugee's 'place of habitual residence' (ICIHI 1986:20).

According to Chimni (1998:352) the period from 1950-1989 had produced a 'depoliticised discourse' of the refugee which was based upon a neutral or 'positivist' interpretation of international law. It was this regime which was thrown into disarray by the growth in 'new refugees' from the 1970s onwards and the end of bipolarity in the late 1980s. What has occurred subsequently is a *re-politicisation* of the discourse on refugees. During the 1970s and 1980s a 'new approach' to the protection of refugees had developed which was based upon a repudiation of the 'exile bias' of the Cold war period (Coles 1989); a belief in the *difference* of the new refugees as primarily economically motivated and an *internalist* account of the root causes of refugee movement from the 'Third world', located in the weakness of the postcolonial state rather than the deprivations of global capital. By the mid-1990s repatriation and durable solutions through democratisation and the extension of human rights (UNHCR 1995) were officially endorsed as the most effective response to what was perceived as an escalating global refugee crisis. As Roberts (1998:376) has noted, over the last two decades these and other changes have resulted in a 'radically transformed refugee regime'.

While a full examination of the political underpinnings of the current refugee regime is beyond the scope of this study it is important to restate the role of power in the determination of the refugee as both an historical and sociological category (Zolberg et al 1989; Zetter 1988; Richmond 1993,1994). This basic premise forms the starting point for the following study of Somali and Kurdish refugees in London.

Introduction

Research aims

Rationale

This thesis is a comparative study of Somali and Kurdish refugees in London. The principal aim is to develop understanding of refugee adaptation and identity formation as these are experienced differentially by two recently arrived refugee groups with distinctive histories, identities and orientation to political activity in both the country of origin and the society of reception. Three sub-themes structure the argument, the related concepts of *diaspora*, *identity and power*. Following its recent revival in migration theory, the concept of *diaspora* is used as a organising or heuristic device to facilitate comparison between the two refugee groups examined here. The inclusiveness and suggestiveness of the term promote a range of comparative issues which I develop throughout the thesis. In particular, I compare Somalis and Kurds' relation to the structure of conflict in the society of origin; their modes of settlement and organisation and forms of consciousness and identity in the society of reception.

This attention to diaspora links in with an important sub-theme in the current research relating to the nature and importance of *cultural identity* in the context of globalisation and postmodernity. In particular, I suggest that descriptions of the 'refugee experience' in the refugee literature have been prone to overly deterministic accounts of subjectivity and agency. On the other hand, a purely free-floating approach to the adoption of identities - the celebration of difference in certain versions of postmodern theory - is also inadequate to the analysis of refugee groups. As I aim to demonstrate, refugee identity is strongly mediated by political institutions and social structures - both at home and in the country of settlement - to the extent that these factors heavily condition the everyday experience and identities of refugees. At the same time, the specificity of different refugee groups according to their distinctive histories, identities and aspirations is a central feature of my argument. For the Kurds, the role assigned to political identity is a matter of individual as well as collective survival. Although the articulations are different, in the case of the Somalis a similar mediation of experience by political and social structures is evident.

Unifying and underlining the focus on diaspora and identity is a concern with *power*, from geopolitical factors and the state-determination of refugee flows at the points of exit and entry, to the process of refugee community formation and the elaboration of communal and individual identities in the country of settlement. The conceptual underpinnings of this research are further developed in chapter one. In the remainder of this section I am concerned with the methodological issues raised by comparative research and the techniques and methods chosen to guide analysis of the groups examined.

The role of comparison

There are several approaches to the use of comparison in social research. In the first instance comparison is often regarded as an inherent feature of all research. As Oyen (1990: 121) argues:

when sociologists choose to observe only part of the surrounding social realities the choice always represents a comparison of the selected phenomenon under observation in relation to other social phenomenon, whether the choice is made explicitly or implicitly...

The choice of theories, concepts and domains of study all involve comparison. In the same volume Schench (1990) observes that comparison can be used either to elucidate differences, the uniqueness of phenomenon, or similarities and what is universal to a particular area or domain. Elsewhere Andreski (1964: 67) observes that ‘comparison does not amount to equality and there are no logical reasons why a comparison should be focused on resemblances rather than differences... it all depends on what kind of question we are trying to answer’.

In the context of empirical social science comparison is also seen an essential component in the testing and generation of theory. For Dixon (1987:22) ‘In a comparative study two different groups are compared using the same measure of the same variable at or nearly at the same time’. Traditionally, comparison involves the selection of situations which are similar in most respects but differ in known ways, a factor which allows for the testing and the generation of hypotheses. So for example, the notion of *theoretical sampling* implies progressive focusing of the sample to test the applicability of categories to a range of actors’ perceptions. This rests on purposive sampling methods. The concept of *analytic induction*

implies the comparative testing of hypotheses between selected groups, leading to adaptation of hypotheses to improve generalisability. The ultimate aim here is the development of hypotheses. *Grounded theory* (Glaser and Strauss 1967) is based upon a lengthy process involving initial data collection, the development of categories and the saturation of instances leading to the development of abstract categories which then guide future research. The ultimate aim in this approach is to derive theories from the fieldwork.

There are a number of drawbacks to these methods, a primary one being that theoretical assumptions are present in research from the outset, whereas comparative analysis in this usage is believed to allow primarily for the *generation* of theory. Ethnographic studies, for example, are seen as particularly important in generating substantive theory of a particular empirical area. Again, there are problems in this account: the notion of theory deployed here is unclear (does this refer to the generation of universal laws for example) and there is a general failure to specify the point at which the process of generating theory is likely to end (Burgess 1984:180). As Burgess remarks, there are other considerations besides theory-building, such as theory testing or the building up of ethnographic descriptions of phenomenon (1984:181) which may be more pertinent to particular research goals.

As I elaborate in more detail later in this section the function of comparison in the current research is to *apply* theoretical insights, empirical generalisation and historical evidence to the study of two refugee groups who have settled in Britain since the late 1980s. I do not regard this as the *testing of theory* in a strict sense for the reasons elaborated by Blumer, when he argues that the comparison of unique cases is not likely to yield laws or generalisations such as may hold in the natural sciences (Hammersley 1990:603). Only in the example of the strategic selection of cases, as in grounded theory and analytic induction would this be true. Again, as Hammersley points out 'finding and gaining access to cases that vary the independent variable and control relevant extraneous variables is by no means easy' (1990:604). This has not proven viable in the current research given the difficulties in gaining access to the groups and the often shifting character of the population under study. Moreover, analytic induction presupposes law-like principles at work in the social world which the reflexive character of human conduct tends to obviate in practice. I would support Hammersley's contention that the application of theory in ethnography operates in terms of *guiding principles for research*, rather than models of testing which are more appropriate for the natural sciences.

Comparison of refugee communities

This research has two primary points of entry. On the one hand there is the empirical question of variations between refugee groups in terms of their capacity to organise and represent their economic, cultural and political interests in the country of exile. As Robinson (1993:7) has argued, there is a lack of comparative research on refugee groups in countries of resettlement which may lead to broader explanation and theorisation. All too often as he has indicated (1993:7), 'we can be left with a series of unrelated 'snapshots' of particular groups at particular points in time in particular countries, without any attempt to add value to these studies through comparison, classification or contextualisation'. Similarly, for Gold (1992) the value of comparative research is to elucidate the role of differences in the formation of refugee communities in terms of contextual factors which would not otherwise have been available for scrutiny. As he argues (1992:3) 'methodologically, the comparison between these two populations allow me to make generalisations and conclusions about the broader social categories of 'refugees'... rather than group specific findings that would be generated by studying a single population'. In the refugee literature analysis has often been pitched at the level of the 'refugee experience' with its supposed universal characteristics (Stein 1986; Kunz 1973). There is clearly a need to specify differences in refugee settlement and different outcomes for refugee groups in terms of integration or marginalisation in the receiving society. While this is an important consideration, as I argue in chapter one the stress on the capacity of refugees to *integrate* into the receiving state may be problematic in relation to the specific character of refugee adaptation where home attachments are often paramount.

This leads me to the second point of entry to the present study. As I argue in chapter two, political factors in the country of origin are fundamental to the production of refugee flows. The relation to the home society and to the past is therefore central to the experience of refugees (Joly 1996). The concept of diaspora, which I discuss in chapter one is used here as a means of articulating this relation to the homeland. Diaspora, as many commentators note, has a multiplicity of meanings (Cohen 1997; Anthias 1998). Two elements which I draw on here concern *diaspora as social networks and relationships* - the impact of home relations on social relationships in the country of settlement for example, and *diaspora as cultural identity* - the processes of cultural maintenance and renewal which mark the experience of exile. In the literature on refugees there is a strong tendency to focus on the loss and trauma of exile. While this is undoubtedly justified a no less significant feature of exile is the process of cultural renewal and the emergence of new identities in the country of settlement. Here I draw heavily

on Cohen's (1997) notion of the experience of *diaspora as a facilitator of cultural change* and renewal.

I have accordingly developed comparisons between the groups on a number of fronts. In the first instance, I compare Somalia and Kurdistan as *refugee generating areas*, the types of conflict involved and the structural factors in play. I develop a broad typology of state-collapse and reformation in the case of Somalia (related to broader collapse of the post-colonial state in Africa) and the continuing quest for a state in the case of the Kurds (related to the different traditions of state-formation in the case of Turkey, Iraq and Iran). I identify these two constellations of factors (following a typology developed by Joly) as decisive components in the settlement and adaptation of Somalis and Kurds in London. Concerning *the groups' settlement in London* a variety of factors, historical, institutional and legislative are compared. Inter-state relations, government reception and public response, dates of arrival, numbers, locations of settlement, and settlement histories in the two groups are isolated as the main areas of investigation. The role of community organisations as the 'public face' of the community (A.P. Cohen 1985) is also addressed and in particular the issue of power in refugee communities: which groups have the power, used here in a Foucauldian sense, to establish a 'regime of truth' (Bousquet 1991) in the refugee community.

A final consideration, as Joly (1996) has observed, concerns the different modes in which refugee communities 'imagine' themselves and their shared identities in the country of settlement, as this may be particularly important for settlement outcomes. The main premise here, elaborated through the concept of diaspora, is that conflicts and identities brought over from the home society both persist and are transformed by the local conditions of adaptation. The principal features chosen for comparison are gender and generational divisions and constructions of national identity. The distinctive character of the groups in many cases pre-empts the drawing of direct comparison, a finding which reinforces a central argument in this thesis opposing the reduction of refugee groups to homogenous categories and identities.

Phases of research

Developing the research question; choice of groups; fieldwork contacts and locations

The earliest stage of research was concerned with developing the underlying rationale for comparative research. An intensive literature review on Somalia and Kurdistan, data on the

settlement of Somalis and Kurds in the UK, and the associated literature on ethnicity, nationalism and refugee adaptation was undertaken at this stage. Training in the appropriate methods of research was also completed at this point. The absence of an extant literature on the two groups meant that exploratory research was necessary, identifying locations, initial contacts and the criteria of relevancy which would structure the research. This stage could be characterised as one of finding out the relevant factors, or knowing 'what questions to ask' in the following stages. The London boroughs with the highest concentration of refugees in the two groups - Tower Hamlets and Newham in the case of the Somalis and Haringey and Hackney for the Kurds - were chosen for fieldwork. The reasons for this choice are several: Tower Hamlets is the oldest area of settlement for Somalis in London and would therefore provide a useful illustration of the relation between an earlier settled community and the new arrivals from the 1980s; Kurds from Turkey on the other side are the largest and most politicised of the groups and are overwhelmingly concentrated in Haringey and Hackney. The small Turkish/Cypriot community which had settled from the 1950s onwards would provide a point of comparison with the Somali case. In the event, other areas were included in the fieldwork given the tendency for secondary migration amongst refugees, particularly in the case of the Somalis.

Acquiring a 'sample'

As Burgess (1982) has argued, sampling in field research tends to be non-probabilistic as it is impossible to specify the probability of each element in the population being represented. Because of difficulties in gaining access to the groups snowballing was adopted, facilitated by initial contacts and later chance events. Overall I aimed for a level of 'typicality' in those interviewed based upon what was known of the population and also in relation to the range of questions I had to ask. The notion of 'sampling' in the exact statistical sense does not apply in this case given the indeterminate nature of the population as a whole. The meaning of sampling used here is not so much 'how much, how often' as showing linkages, implications and meanings, cross-checking and amplification across a range of sources, documents and narratives. Issues of trust were paramount in the early stages of fieldwork and in many ways this continued to be an issue throughout the research. A kind of 'researcher fatigue' was notable in both groups, with scarcely buried feelings of resentment towards research which had no immediate benefits for those involved surfacing on several occasions during fieldwork. I discuss the ambiguity of my own role in the research process more fully below.

Determining the nature of the 'sample'

- Somalis

What I call the 'core sample' consists of six group interviews with between three and six individuals per group and ten in-depth individual interviews. In total eleven women were interviewed and twenty two men. The majority, some two thirds were from the cities of Hargeisa and Burao while the remainder were from Mogadishu, Merca and Brava. The age range extended from college students to individuals in their fifties and sixties. All of the adult respondents were educated to secondary level in Somalia and nearly half were university educated or otherwise from professional backgrounds. In addition to this core sample I also interviewed members of the old seafaring community in Tower Hamlets; representatives from Somali women's groups; key workers in Somali associations or organisations in East and West London and visited a number of youth clubs, schools and colleges attended by Somalis. The interviews in these cases were more informal and seldom taped. The majority of the core sample was taped and the material later transcribed. All of the respondents spoke English, so that in marked contrast to the Kurds there was no need for interpreters. The interview format is included in Appendix one. Interviews on the whole lasted between one and two hours. Informants were contacted through snowballing and the gradual building-up of networks. Several informants acted as 'guides' throughout the period of fieldwork. Repeated interviews at regular intervals with these key informants allowed me to keep a check on continuities and change during the various stages of research. For the time-scale of research see Appendix two.

- Kurds

A similar range of criteria to the Somalis were considered to be relevant in the case of the Kurds: national background, region, education and occupation prior to flight, age and gender were the chief considerations. In all, nine groups of between two and eight individuals and ten in-depth individual interviews were undertaken, resulting in a total of twenty four males and twenty one women. The age range was broad, although largely concentrated in the twenty to forty range. The majority of respondents were from Turkey - thirty individuals - while ten were from Iran and five from Iraq. Kurds from Turkey were largely from rural backgrounds and had either worked as seasonal labourers or in factories. Some had attended University in Istanbul or were currently undertaking courses in London. Iraqi Kurds were more likely to have come from professional backgrounds and to be employed than other groups. A range of individuals was also contacted in the Turkish community and across a variety of Kurdish political groupings in north London. Meetings, demonstrations and festivals were attended on

numerous occasions. Besides the associations, coffee shops, schools and colleges provided useful opportunities to gather a wide range of information. Similar criteria apply in relation to the interviews as in the case of the Somalis above, although there was a greater need for interpreters which I used on several occasions (Edwards 1998). In order to personalise certain quotations cited in the text, specific names are occasionally ascribed to particular individuals. This occurs where individuals are quoted at length, although on the whole quotations are identified only on the basis of age, gender and background characteristics.

Methods used in the research

Given the lack of extant research on the two groups, this research combines a number of approaches, including *historical reconstruction and interpretation*, particularly in relation to the background characteristics of the groups. A *range of secondary data* (including official reports and grey literature) was used to reconstruct the background and settlement characteristics of the two groups, such as date of arrival, numbers and locations. The current research is qualitative in the sense of prioritising the experiences and interpretations of refugees themselves. It attends to these issues through *ethnographic methods* of first-hand contact and familiarisation with the groups through participation in natural settings, combining observation with a range of interview techniques from individual unstructured and semi-structured interviews, to group discussions around a series of topics.

Although not initially intended, the use of group interviews became a central feature of research. Language barriers in the case of the Kurds and an initial reluctance to disclose information in both groups were the main impediments to successful individual interviews. It appeared also to be the case that the individualist, 'expressive' model on which the in-depth interview is based had little hold on the collective orientation of both groups. As the literature on focus groups suggests (Kitzinger 1995; Kreuger 1988) group situations encourage a more natural interactive dynamic in which participants are able to generate their own ideas and interests and 'cross check' information amongst themselves. While I had a series of topics which I wanted to address group discussions would usually 'cover' these without the need for direct intervention on my part. While the advantage of this method was its spontaneity and the generation of unexpected data, one obvious drawback concerned the tendency for particular individuals to construct a message or viewpoint which other groups members were expected

to follow. This was particularly notable in the Kurdish associations. For this reason I attempted to conduct interviews on 'neutral ground' as far as this was possible.

Observation was always overt, participant to the point of 'joining in' demonstrations and rallies, or having conversations over tea in community centres or at home but falling short of that immersion in the communal life which is the goal of much ethnography. Mine was a half-way house towards acceptance and acknowledgement but conditioned by that reflexive awareness of their status as objects of administration or research which appears to be an essential part of being a 'refugee'. Acceptance was also conditioned by the class, education and literacy of the informant (Kay 1987). Friendships were formed in some cases only to be neglected on my part under the pressure of time and deadlines. The role of outsider was not necessarily negative. Both groups were familiar with researchers and would quiz me in detail on the nature and purpose of my research. An individual from their own community would have been an object of suspicion in a way which didn't apply in my case, where my outsider status was frequently a bonus. As I illustrate at various points in the text, the blunders in questioning or behaviour which were commonplace on my part in the earlier stages of research often illuminated aspects of the social life of the groups which I would not otherwise have observed. These instances are dotted throughout the text.

The role of Ethnography

My main orientation is toward qualitative research in the 'field work' tradition associated with Symbolic Interactionism and later theoretical contributions which stress the reflexive character of social life (Giddens 1976; Calhoun 1995). Any neat dichotomy between a broadly qualitative approach and the quantitative 'measurement' of social reality has been nicely deconstructed by Hammersley (1992:159). While there is no space here to rehearse Hammersley's argument in detail it is clear that any simple opposition between these methodological positions obscures the essentially *interpretive* nature of all sociological research. As Stanley has argued in a different context (1990a) ethnographic research is not peculiar in its reliance on descriptive methods in the approximation of social reality. Whether this is expressed in words or numbers may be beside the point. As Hammersley (1992:163) argues, 'We are not faced then, with a stark choice between words and numbers, or even between precise and imprecise data; but rather with a range from more to less precise data'. The decision as to the *degree of precision* required will depend on issues of feasibility and

desirability in relation to the area of research, while the meaning of precision itself is variable according to context.

Hammersley has raised important issues concerning the role of *theoretical description* in ethnography. How, that is, are we to think of the role of theory in relation to ethnography, given the latter's commitment to describing the particular and the unique in social interaction? Hammersley lists four typical responses to this question, those of (i) insightful descriptions, (ii) descriptions of social microcosms, (iii) applications of theories and (iv) development of theories. The first of these relies upon a celebration of the idiosyncracies and novelty of social interaction, with the role of ethnography being essentially to produce *sensitising concepts*, while the second is concerned with the symbolic or emblematic status of the *particular* in relation to the *general*. The notion of *typicality*, carried through from Dilthey to Lukacs in the field of literary studies, is a good example here, where the 'identification of the essential within the particular (is) characteristic of great art and literature' (Hammersley 1990:601). Neither of these has any pretensions to producing *Theory*, ie., in one of Hammersley's uses as a body of universal statements with predictive value. Only the fourth category above, under which Hammersley includes *grounded theorising* and *analytic induction*, does this. The latter is concerned with the application of hypotheses to comparable situations in the expectation of their holding as explanations. Adaptation of the hypothesis is then required to increase its generalisability. Testing is therefore central to this approach. The former has the more ambitious aim of *generating* theory from data, ie., of a 'middle range' type. This is to be achieved by the *constant comparative method* in which (a) conceptual categories are generated from an accumulation of facts and (b) hypotheses constructed concerning the relation between categories. As Glaser and Strauss (1967:40) argue:

In the beginning, one's hypotheses may seem unrelated, but as categories and properties emerge, develop in abstraction, and become related, their accumulating interrelations form an integrated central theoretical framework - the core of the emerging theory. The core becomes a theoretical guide to the further collection and analysis of data.

As Hammersley argues, this application of forms of explanation derived from the natural sciences is highly problematic in relation to sociology, given the pre-interpreted nature of the social world and the existence of a *double hermeneutic*, in terms of which there is a mutual

penetration of lay and sociological concepts (Giddens 1976). Both of these factors pre-empt the operation of law-like generalisation or the formulation of laws with predictive value. In these terms Hammersley assigns what he terms a 'teleological' status to sociological theory. In this case the third option outlined above, that of the *application* of theory to ethnographical description is the most plausible way of conceptualising the relationship involved. The function of comparison in my own research is to illuminate both differences and similarities (Andreski 1964) as a basis for more general observation and potential theorisation. As Alasuutari (1996) has argued, qualitative research advances through a process of *defamiliarisation*, or the use of constant comparison and analogy. The *special case* rather than the general phenomenon is the focus of analysis. Only later may it be possible to make more general statements based upon perceived similarities and differences between particular cases.

Reflexivity, power and authority in the research process

Although a central strand within feminist methodology, reflexivity has long been recognised as a vital feature of the research process (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983). Reflexivity or the 'researcher effect' more generally, is not something which can be eradicated from the research process but is rather to be integrated into the analysis, 'By including our own role within the research focus and systematically exploiting our participation in the world under study as researchers'... (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983:25). Following the basic insight that researchers are themselves social actors relying upon common-sense interpretations and stocks of knowledge, but also retaining the possibility of a certain critical distance in relation to the 'frames of meaning' encountered (Giddens 1976) it becomes possible to utilise the so-called 'researcher effect' as a resource within the analysis. This procedure is followed in the present text where my 'outsider' role could be an unexpected advantage in research.

It is clear that ethnographic description does not *reproduce* the social world which it investigates (Atkinson 1990), but rather its mode of description and explanation, including the deployment of textual and rhetorical devices, depends upon criteria of relevancy which are internal to the account in question. These criteria of relevancy are based upon the theoretical orientations and aims of the research, including the underlying values which structure the research. While the coherence of the models employed, their internal consistency and the systematic nature of the analysis are the most significant criteria, it is also necessary to make explicit the 'purposes, values and relevancies on which it is based' (Atkinson 1990: 609).

Although I elaborate on the ethical underpinnings of this research in the conclusion, there is clearly a need to develop textual awareness and reflexivity in relation to how our accounts are produced and what purposes they serve. There is for example, a strong tradition in recent American anthropology to deconstruct the certainty of the narratives produced by ethnography. In the accounts of Clifford and Rosaldo there is shift to the notion of the dialogic as opposed to the monological authorial voice (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Clifford 1988; Rosaldo 1989). The politics of representation is central here, in the sense of who is authorised to speak for and about other cultures. This theme forms an important underlying strand in the current research. As I argue throughout, issues of representation - by whom is research conducted, for what purposes and the ways in which groups are represented in a variety of arenas - are keenly felt and articulated by Somalis and Kurds living in London. Although I return to this theme in my conclusion, I would argue that the imposition of coherence on an 'unruly textual process' is ultimately a matter of authorial 'strategic choice' (Clifford 1988:54), however much 'other voices' may be said to enter into and structure the text.

While it has been commonplace to insist on the political nature of research (Bell and Newby 1977) this is capable of different nuances, from observations concerning the institutional arrangements and financing of research to Foucauldian dissections of micropolitics and the enmeshing of truth in relations of power. Marx's injunction to not only interpret but *change* the world is the classic instance of a committed approach to research as a basis for human emancipation. It is, in fact, the centrality of *praxis* as a guiding concept for the early Marx which justifies an activist relation to the production of knowledge, although this remains programmatic rather than developed in Marx's work. The elaboration of a critical social theory (Calhoun 1995:35; Foster 1999) rests upon the premise that all social life is reflexive in character and that therefore the categories used in sociological analysis depend upon and in turn influence lay conceptions. To this extent also, as Porter (1993:595) succinctly argues, 'Because social analysis may have practical consequences in society, the evaluation that analysts put upon social phenomena is crucial'. Although it is difficult to sustain the kind of separation of facts and values proposed by Hammersley (following Weber) it is not necessary to assume a naively partisan approach in research. This may, as Hammersley (1993) argues, have directly counterproductive results in obscuring evidence which could guide political practice. Neither will it do to present the protocols of the research process as if they were immune from the specific institutional contexts and gendered inequalities which many

feminist commentators have noted (Ramazanoglu 1992). Questions of power in the research process have been fully addressed in feminist methodology (Oakley 1981; Finch 1984; Stanley 1990b) and have a particular resonance for the current research. I return to these issues in the conclusion to this thesis, where the politics of recognition is addressed as a central theme in this study.

The following is a schematic outline of the structure of the thesis:

Box 1.

Thesis outline

Part One: Refugee Adaptation

- In Chapter One the conventional concern in refugee studies with the settlement and integration of refugees is displaced by the attempt to link the study of refugee groups to broader debates on ethnicity and cultural identity in the context of globalisation. The concept of diaspora is suggested as a means of comparing Somalis and Kurds in terms of the generation of refugee flows addressed in Part Two of the thesis; the reception, settlement and organisation of refugees outlined in Part Three and the identity and consciousness of refugee groups which is addressed in Part Four.

Part Two: Somalia and Kurdistan: the Fault Lines of the New World Order

- Chapter Two continues by outlining the importance of the international system to the production of refugee flows and the central role of the nation-state to the categorisation of refugees.
- Chapters Three and Four are case studies of Somalia and Kurdistan as refugee generating areas. These chapters build upon the central theme of the role of the nation-state in the production of refugee flows which was outlined in Chapter Two.

Box 1.*Thesis Outline***Part Three: Reception, Settlement and Organisation of Somalis and Kurds in London**

- Chapter Five pinpoints the role of the state in the reception of the two groups and the growing climate of restrictionism which has dominated British asylum policy from the period in the late 1980s when both groups began to arrive in the UK. The settlement patterns and migration histories of both groups are compared.
- Chapter Six compares the processes of formal organisation in the two groups and the degrees of variation and similarity between the groups.

Part Four: Imagined Communities

- Chapters Seven and Eight examine the construction of imagined, communal and individual identities in both groups with particular reference to the interrelation of factors in the country of origin and the society of reception.

PART I

REFUGEE ADAPTATION

Chapter 1

Refugee adaptation, identity and diaspora formation

It is a major contention of this thesis that current debates on ethnicity, cultural identity and diaspora have a particular relevance to the study of refugee groups in countries of exile. It is also important to emphasise the limitation of certain postmodern theories of cultural identity and the need for a greater balance between the structural mediation of identities and the cultural heritage of groups and individuals in accounts of refugee adaptation. This chapter therefore proceeds by providing an overview of the issues around the settlement and integration of refugees and a critical examination of the principal theories of refugee adaptation and identity. The assessment of this literature suggests the need for a conceptual framework which is more sensitive to the transnational basis of identity formation and the role of diasporas in the formation and consolidation of refugee groups in countries of settlement.

Refugee adaptation and social policy

One overriding feature in the refugee literature is the dominance of policy related studies concerned with the psycho-social problems of refugees and the associated stress on their settlement and integration. A review of the work on refugee adaptation reveals a characteristically eclectic range of positions and disciplines, from anthropology and psychology to sociology, social policy and philosophy. The psychological literature has had an important contribution to make in this respect (Stein 1986; Baker 1983), with the traumatic effects of torture, warfare and cultural displacement experienced by many refugees calling for a specialised body of knowledge and therapeutic treatment. Again, much of the policy-related and more general literature on refugees has been concerned with their psychological problems, generally framed within the context of trauma, uprooting, loss, displacement and acculturation (Cohon 1981; Berry 1986; Joly 1996; Dona and Berry 1999). (1). The focus on what has been called the 'refugee experience' is a central tradition in refugee studies. As Stein (1986:6) argues, 'for social scientists the refugee category is defined by the trauma and stress, persecution and danger, losses and isolation, uprooting and change of the refugee experience'. There are several difficulties in taking the category of experience as defining refugee-hood: loss, trauma and change are common to a range of migrants and may also be consequent upon the assumption of refugee status rather than leading to it. Malkki (1992) in this context has

observed that one limitation of the psycho-social literature on refugees is that it has tended to pathologise the refugee condition, rather than examining it as a product of specific types of social and historical relationship. In this respect, much of the literature on refugee adaptation has been informed by social policy considerations and an emphasis on the bureaucratic administration of refugees, particularly in relation to issues of settlement and integration.

The literature on the psycho-social effects of enforced exile suggests a need for individuals to rebuild their lives in the country of settlement in the absence of the possibility of return (Stein 1986; Zwingmann and Pfister-Ammende 1973). Similarly, for refugee agencies and proponents of refugee rights, the stress on the integration of refugees and asylum seekers is seen as a necessary corrective to the exclusionary logic which now dominates asylum legislation at the national, European and global levels (Miles and Thranhardt 1996; Richmond 1994). In this context, the communitarian emphasis on *social inclusion* has recently been marshalled as a means of safeguarding the rights of refugees and asylum seekers (Refugee Council 1997). As Levitas (1996) indicates, there are significant difficulties in the notion of social inclusion, particularly in relation to the blanking out of forms of differentiation within the ranks of the 'included'. Processes of inclusion and exclusion have to be conceptualised as operating on a number of macro and micro levels simultaneously. Brah (1996) for example, has argued for a conception of power and social exclusion running *within* as well as across ethnic groups, which I address in more detail below. More specifically here, it is necessary to ask whether the *concept* of integration, with its emphasis on social inclusion in the bounded nation-state, is an appropriate conceptual tool in explaining refugee adaptation.

Without rehearsing the history of the concept in any detail, it is clear that accounts of integration range from strong forms of *cultural assimilationism* (Park 1950) which are now generally rejected, to weak notions of *social participation* in the main structures of the receiving society. It is this latter sense which is now in common usage (Valtonen 1998). In a sophisticated defense of the term, Schierup and Alund (1987) argue that the concept of integration requires modification in so far as *migration is not a once-and-for-all process*, given that migrants increasingly participate 'in two alternate socio-cultural systems - that of the country of origin and that of the immigration country' (1987:21). In relation to the identities of migrants and by implication refugees, there is an emerging '*double existential frame of reference*' (Schierup and Alund 1987:22) whereby the cultural heritage of the migrant is 'remoulded and transformed through its incorporation into practice within the complex and changing historical reality of the migration process' (1987:22-3). The resulting

process of *migrancy* determines the character of integration in *both* societies. As a result 'the two communities ought to be treated as a single social field of investigation' (1987:22). Interestingly, there is a tendency in the literature on refugees to underestimate the continuing significance of links with home, which many commentators believe to have been severed by exile (Kunz 1981; Al-Rasheed 1991). For many refugees, as I illustrate in the case of the Kurds, the relationship with home and the diaspora has been actively facilitated by modern technologies of communication.

Schierup and Alund (1987) in developing the concept of integration have effectively challenged the dominant assimilationist assumptions of much early migration research, arguing in particular against the atomistic approach which isolates certain key *integration variables* such as language acquisition, education, work etc, a practice which is common in the refugee field (Montgomery 1996; Valtonen 1998). Given the ways in which the term is modified by the authors to incorporate contemporary transnational phenomena, it may be wondered whether the concept of integration (with its reference back to individual nation states) is not being overworked here in an attempt to describe the novel character of contemporary transnational migration flows and their consequences for identity formation. It can be argued that even in its more sophisticated guises, 'integration' presupposes the notion of a *bounded, unitary social whole*, the nation state, within which migrants and refugees are assumed to adapt. In the age of the decline of the nation-state, and subsequent changes in sociological categories and theorising (Eade 1997) it is precisely this assumption which has become open to question. The weaker sense of integration as 'participation' in key social spheres of the resettlement society (Valtonen 1998) is less ambiguous in this sense, but also more restricted in its focus on the refugee's incorporation in the host society. While the influence of social policy on the study of refugee adaptation is laudable in many respects, it is limited by its focus on the immediate and the pragmatic. As I examine in the next section, alternative sociological perspectives provide a broader view of the issues surrounding refugee adaptation and identity.

Approaches to the study of refugee identity

- *The bureaucratic administration of refugees - labelling theory*

The labelling approach has been one important strand in the conceptualisation of refugee identity, particularly in relation to the ways in which bureaucratic administration impacts on

those labelled as refugees (Harrell-Bond 1986). One of the principal thrusts of this approach is the way in which labelling both creates and sustains a condition of dependency for refugees. For Zetter (1991: 39) 'the specific tasks are to explore how and with what consequences people become labelled as refugees - how an identity is formed, transformed and manipulated within the context of public policy and especially, bureaucratic practices'.

That the label 'refugee' is a shifting signifier is indicated by the complexity of its meanings: there is, for example, the role of states in determining refugee status; refugees themselves resist labels, opposing their own identities to bureaucratic ones; there are conceptual and normative difficulties in distinguishing refugees from other migrants and finally, there is the way in which bureaucratic interests formulate the refugee label, the 'processes by which refugees are socialized with certain identities' (Zetter 1991: 40). In the latter case the main focus is the way in which labels impact on refugees and their own response to these labels. Examining labelling as a process involves attention to the *stereotyping* of groups and the ways in which identities are *ascribed* to groups on the basis of administrative *control* and *designation*. It revolves around a basic power inequality (it is non-participatory) whereby state-interest is normalised in bureaucratic procedure (Zetter 1991: 50). Finally, labelling is dynamic, involving a series of ramifications for refugee communities, with potentially 'destabilising' effects upon ethnic identity and gender relations, for example.

Zetter's analysis of the impact of a housing resettlement scheme in Cyprus has produced many valuable insights into the ways in which bureaucratic programmes may alter pre-existing cultural patterns among refugees, fostering a sense of distinctiveness and inferiority as *refugees*. One unintended outcome of this process is that refugees may themselves mobilise on the basis of their ascribed identity, perpetuating dependency while at the same time seeking to challenge it. In this sense refugee identity becomes politicised, while interest groups emerge who have a stake in the process of bureaucratic administration and control. The impact on state interests here may well be contradictory, with the state concerned to marginalise and de-politicise refugee populations they have in turn helped to create.

The parallels with work in mainstream race and ethnic studies is clear. Werbner and Anwar's edited collection (1991) on the theme of *Black and Ethnic Leaderships* documents the process of political incorporation of ethnic groups which may result from competition for funding and recognition by statutory authorities in the UK context. For Werbner, ethnic

communities are 'imagined', firstly by the state, as a means of allocating resources and controlling populations and secondly by local leaders, who invent 'communities out of segments' (1991:21). In both cases ethnic community can be said to be reified. In similar ways refugee organisations compete for funds and seek to have their identities and cultural aspirations recognised. This involves varying degrees of incorporation, resistance, and conflict for leadership within refugee communities, as I demonstrate in chapter six.

Other parallels might be drawn between the labelling approach and the focus on discourse and discursive regimes which stems from the work of Foucault (1984). Here, discourse and power are interlinked and productive of identities and modes of resistance (Foucault 1980). The two approaches clearly rely on very different assumptions however. Labelling, as Giddens (1997:178) points out 'is a label for a cluster of related ideas rather than a unified view'. It has roots in Symbolic Interactionism and Ethnomethodology, or a more general *social constructionist* approach to the understanding of social interaction (Craib 1997). A routine criticism of labelling theory is that it underplays the role of individual motivation, focusing on the process of *designation from above*. At the heart of the matter here is a problem over the conceptualisation of the subject which can be traced back to the writings of G.H. Mead (Henriques et al 1984). As Craib (1997:5) demonstrates, while the 'Me' (as the range of attitudes of others which the individual has to take on) is relatively unproblematic, the 'I' ('that aspect of the psyche which might receive something from the outside') remains elusive. For Craib, social constructionism typically underplays the 'capacity of subjective agency' (1997:5) upon which it ultimately relies.

In general labelling theory has an undeveloped conception of subjectivity (Hall 1991b). In the appropriation of labelling theory by refugee studies the emphasis would appear to be on the top-down effects of administrative categories and procedures on refugee populations and how they react to these. Given the vulnerability of refugees to state interventions, this is clearly an important emphasis and will be partially adopted in the present study. On the negative side, it clearly fails to address the range of current possibilities for investigating the processes of refugee adaptation and the active construction of identities by refugees. I address these issues more fully in later sections of this chapter.

- *Liminality*

The concept of the liminal has its roots in the study of rites of passage in traditional societies. Van Gennep (1960:11) distinguishes between 'preliminal rites (rites of separation) liminal rites (rites of transition) and postliminal rites (rites of incorporation)'. As liminal periods may themselves be extended, for example between adolescence and betrothal (involving distinct rites of separation, transition and incorporation) there is some overlapping of the categories. While this resulted in the disappointing conclusion (for Van Gennep) that he was unable to 'achieve as rigid a classification as the botanists!' (1960:11), the concept itself has proven influential in subsequent research. Turner (1977) outlines the importance of the *limen* ('threshold' in Latin) in describing the marginal state of transition between relatively fixed social roles. As Turner (1977:94-5) argues, in the

intervening 'liminal' period, the characteristics of the ritual subject (the 'passenger') are ambiguous; he passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state. In the third phase (reaggregation or reincorporation), the passage is consummated. The ritual subject, individual or corporate, is in a relatively stable position once more...

The in-between character of the liminal phase is often likened to death or being in the womb (1977:95). Indeed, the enforced uniformity of the liminal phase fosters a sense of common identity amongst neophytes engaged in the ritual. While liminality is akin to death it also acts to liberate energies and resources which are absent in the everyday world of structured roles and norms. Against structure, the liminal represents 'society as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated *communitas*' (1977:96). The latter refers to the sense of communion attaching to individuals in the liminal phase. For Turner, *communitas* and structure are mutually interdependent, the ordered hierarchy of the everyday depending on the (contained) flux of the liminal. As he argues, '*communitas* is made evident...only through its juxtaposition to, or hybridisation with, aspects of social structure' (1977:127).

In an interesting prefiguration of the postmodern absorption with issues of transgression and threshold states, Turner gestures toward the liberatory effects of the liminal and its association with cultural productivity when he observes that 'liminality, marginality, and structural inferiority are conditions in which are frequently generated myths, symbols, rituals,

philosophical systems, and works of art' (1977:128). The analogy with the often cited role of exiles in creative work - the advantages of a 'contrapuntal consciousness' for the artist in exile (Said 1984) for example, or the regenerative cultural effects of diaspora (Cohen 1997) - does not need to be overplayed at this stage. More immediately, for Turner liminality presumes a return to eventual stability, albeit 'revitalised' by the experience of *communitas* (Turner 1977:129).

Although developed in the context of traditional societies the concept has been routinely applied to the experience of refugees living in metropolitan countries (Al-Rasheed 1993; Camino and Krulfeld 1994; Eastmond 1993). Harrell-Bond and Voutira (1992:7) for example argue that:

In anthropological terms, refugees are people who have undergone a violent 'rite' of separation and unless or until they are 'incorporated' as citizens into their host state (or returned to their state of origin) find themselves in 'transition' or a state of 'liminality'.

Liminality has legal, social, economic and psychological effects, with the refugee often occupying an indeterminate status (awaiting a decision on an asylum application for example) with economic effects (withdrawal or lower amounts of benefits) leading to acute mental uncertainty and anxiety for the future. In this sense liminality is a useful shorthand term to describe the state of permanent tension which many asylum seekers and refugees experience in exile. Yet an uncritical adoption of the term leaves many issues unanswered. What kind of assumptions are made here about the viability or desirability of return/integration? Can identities be assumed to be integrated and coherent *prior* to migration and what happens to 'Home' once we have left it? Should the aim of successful adaptation be to 'incorporate' refugees? If so, how is this to be achieved? The chief difficulty lies perhaps in the implicit suggestion that liminality is exceptional, a state of being-in-between what are otherwise integrated communities and identities. In relation to current debates on the connection between migration and identity the liminal or 'threshold' state may, on the contrary, be seen as characteristic of the diasporic identities of an increasingly globalised culture.

While liminality refers to a state of dislocation within a bounded, i.e. temporally and spatially demarcated culture, contemporary realities of international migration and communication

flows are in danger of making the 'liminal' mundane. As Werbner (1997:4) argues, it is necessary to go beyond 'the old modernist insights into the nature of liminality' to understand how the interpenetration of cultures is negotiated in practice by different groups. In this respect, the concept of liminality has little to tell us about the transnational basis of identity formation, or of the constructed nature of the past in relation to future, projected identities (Hanmerz 1996; Shami 1996). As I demonstrate from my fieldwork in London with Somali and Kurdish refugees, these processes are central features of refugee adaptation in the diaspora.

- *Transculturation, or the stages approach to adaptation*

A third approach to refugee adaptation can be identified in a number of writers, and appears in very diverse contexts. On the whole it tends to stress the *processual* nature of refugee adaptation and therefore makes explicit what is assumed in other accounts, i.e. the peculiar temporal dimensions of exile. One of the most sophisticated theories of this type is that of Vasquez and Arayo (1988). They characterise this as an 'ethno-psychological' approach based upon an awareness of the unconscious dynamics of exile in which the Self is restructured in the context of its being allocated the position of Other, or Stranger (1988:271). In a chapter entitled 'Le poids du temps' (the heaviness of time) Vasquez and Arayo outline the stages through which Chilean refugees in France had passed, from initial trauma and loss (a stage characterised by rejection of the host society and an idealisation of home), to the stage of transculturation in which there is a consistent interplay between the values and norms of the culture of origin and that of the receiving society. If the home country is still idealised in this stage this gradually gives way to a critical appraisal in the final stage, which the authors characterise as the 'disturbance of myths' (1988:70). The implication for refugee adaptation is that the eventual turn to the host society does not result in stability or resolution of identity, but an acknowledgement of the potential, multiple axes along which identities might be forged (1988:73). In this, Vasquez and Arayo clearly anticipate more recent discussion of the significance of strategic, or positional identities (Hall 1996a) which I examine later in this chapter.

Several points can be drawn out here: the temporal aspect of exile is emphasised, not only in the sense of presenting adaptation as a process which occurs over time, but also in connection with the continued importance of the past in the constitution of identities. There is, as it were, a continuing dialogue between past and present, which although it lessens over time remains

constitutive of refugee identity. In this process refugee associations play a key role, for in enacting the myths and rituals connected with the home country they provide a means of preserving continuity with the past (Connerton 1989) as I discuss in chapter six. The stage of transculturation itself has many similarities with the liminal phase outlined earlier. Liminality is similarly characterised by ambiguity and ambivalence, although the restitution of the normal, structured life of the everyday resolves this in a way which is unavailable in Vasquez and Arayo's account. With them, it would appear that the refugee will continually reproduce the dialogic consciousness, the contrapuntal awareness (Said 1984) which marks the experience of exile.

In a comparable way, Baskauskas (1980), following the influential work of Marris (1975) on the experience of loss and change and the crisis of discontinuity which marks enforced exile, charts a three-fold process of grief and mourning amongst post-World War Two Lithuanian refugees to the United States. The first stage is characterised by *conservatism*, a feature also noted by Vasquez and Arayo, in which traditional cultural norms are reactivated as a safeguard against the unfamiliar and the alien. As Baskauskas (1980:282) argues, for the Lithuanians 'the personal confusion of identity in the new context provoked by the life pattern disruption became displaced into collective expressions of a common dilemma'. The second stage of *bereavement* is essentially the acknowledgement and working through of the grieving process, while the final stage of *innovation* signals the partial overcoming of grief and the ability to move forward in a new social setting. If this suggests a too-neat resolution to the problem of adaptation, it should be pointed out that Baskauskas is careful to stress the ongoing nature of the grieving process, at least for the first-generation of refugees. That the identities of the second generation will be formed by distinctive experiences is emphasised by Baskauskas, and forms an important theme in the present research. More generally, Vasquez and Arayo's emphasis on the processual nature of refugee adaptation is a central consideration in this research.

- *The Stranger*

As indicated in the work of Vasquez and Arayo, the concept of the Stranger has also been marshalled to describe the condition of exile and the position of the migrant/refugee in countries of settlement. There are several different models, developed in different contexts and with different aims in mind. The first to appear was that of Simmel (1971: 322) in his 'The Sociological Significance of the Stranger' of 1908, where he argues that 'the Stranger...

is the man who comes today and stays tomorrow, the potential wanderer, so to speak, who, although he has gone no further, has not quite got over the freedom of coming and going...’ Of his relation to a fixed set of social relations, ‘his position is peculiarly determined by the fact that he does not belong in it from the first, that he brings qualities into it that are not, and cannot be, native to it’. In sum, the Stranger represents the ‘union of nearness and remoteness’ (1971:322) and is therefore a potential threat to received orthodoxies and taken for granted social practices. For Schutz (1964:91) on the other hand, the Stranger is defined by his attempt to ‘be permanently accepted or at least tolerated by the group which he approaches. As Yuval-Davis (1997:48) notes, in neither case is the Stranger accepted by the group, but remains condemned to be an outsider. In a different context, Kristeva (1991) has developed the notion of the Stranger or Foreigner in psychoanalytic terms, as a splitting of the subject in the coming to awareness of their own alterity or Otherness: ‘the foreigner comes in when the consciousness of my difference arises, and he disappears when we all acknowledge ourselves as foreigners, unamenable to bonds and communities’ (1991:1). Living with Others, living *as* Others, are the twin demands of contemporary societies as we are compelled to adjust to the effects of international migration and the reality of human diversity.

Of contemporary social theorists it is Bauman who has consistently developed the concept of the Stranger in a series of publications throughout the 1990s. In Modernity and Ambivalence (1990) the Stranger appears as one of that great category of ‘undecidables’ who threaten the bases of social order and the urge to classification which underlies the project of modernity. Contact with Strangers involves ‘mism meetings’ of mutual unintelligibility *and* proximity. For Bauman (1990:149) ‘they stretch the temporary inconvenience of ‘not knowing how to go on’ (in situations of social interaction) into a terminal paralysis. They must be tabooed, disarmed, suppressed, exiled physically or mentally - or the world may perish’. The maintenance of order produces its own demons of chaos and indeterminacy, as I discuss later in the context of theories of national identity.

Bauman’s initial position is then elaborated in later publications: the necessity of living with Strangers given the scale of international migration - ‘the massive entry of the Strangers into the living space’ (1993:159); the production of Strangers as an off-shoot of the urge to order and the ‘domestication of the life-world’ (1993:160); the ambivalence of the Stranger (akin to the elimination of ‘dirt’ or the out-of-place) as their primary characteristic; the assimilation or exclusion of Strangers as the available strategies for dealing with ambivalence (1993:163).

Elsewhere the theme of the containment and pleasures of the Stranger are developed in relation to characteristic forms of modern urban life (1995:128). Under conditions of postmodern uncertainty (1997:25) the Stranger becomes an increasingly significant and volatile feature of everyday life and the search for secure identities. Strangers both entice by their exoticism and threaten by their difference. Unlike the Stranger of modernity, the postmodern Strangers are 'here to stay' (1997:30). In sum, as Simmel had earlier indicated, Strangers remain anxiety-producing due to the 'synthesis of nearness and remoteness', the ambiguity which is their defining characteristic. Despite many novel features, it can be argued that Bauman's principal contribution concerns the ethics of living with Strangers: the choice between excluding Strangers by erecting boundaries around and within the nation-state, or recognising them as members of a plural and inclusive society. I return to this issue in the conclusion to this thesis.

In the refugee field Wong (1991) has been one of the few alongside Vasquez, to develop the concept of the Stranger in the context of refugee adaptation. She begins by rejecting the integration model of adaptation and uses the concept of Otherness to characterise the refugee experience. Otherness, drawn from Simmel, refers to the relational reality experienced by refugees, as being both inside and outside a set of social relations. The object of focus therefore is the network of social relations in which refugees experience exile, both internally in community organisations, at the level of biographical meaning and in relation to the host society. How does the refugee organise his self as other in relation to subjective meaning and social organisation? Wong uses qualitative data, biographical reconstruction and group work, to elicit maximum information from the refugees' perspective.

Analysis of the individual experience of exile is governed by three hypotheses: that exile is governed by the relation between presence of the Other and absence of the known; that exile is processual and that time is a key component of the subjective experience of exile. In the first case the experience of being Other is well documented in the experience of refugees, as well as the Otherness of the new social setting. At the same time the known and loved is absent *physically* while being present in *time*. The past casts its shadow on the present, much as does the anticipated future of return. ...'one could say that the presence - the Now - of exile is shaped by a double determination: the presence of the present, and the presence of the absent' (Wong 1991:159). The temporal dimension is drawn from the work of Vasquez and Arayo and suggests different trajectories of experience for individual refugees, rather than one

overarching process of refugee adaptation. Finally, detemporalisation is seen as central to the experience of exile (Berger 1975:176) indicating a lack of connection with a personal life project and discontinuities in experience on both a personal and collective level. Wong views her analysis as part of an ongoing attempt to specify the differences between the experience of refugees and other migrants. Psychological trauma, downward mobility and the motivation for migration are seen as the distinguishing features of the refugee.

There is a clear parallel between Wong's heuristic use of Otherness and the more conventional analysis of the experience of exile in terms of liminality, which again refers to an indeterminate present locked between an inaccessible past and future. A general conclusion from the foregoing discussion is that refugees (along with a spectrum of other migration categories) may be said to exist between two sets of social relations but not to be exclusively defined by one or the other. In this respect, the figure of the Stranger will form a leitmotif in this research, as it neatly codifies the experiential ambiguity which is a commonplace feature amongst refugees. On a critical note, it can be argued that one potential problem with this general approach is the level of abstraction which suggests an invariant 'refugee experience' defined by its alterity and abnormality. The stress on loss and the negative effect of displacement is strongly reminiscent of earlier accounts of the refugee as a distinctive socio-psychological type (Stein 1986). The concept of diaspora which I develop more fully below, while making reference to the losses of exile also acknowledges the potential creativity which may be unleashed by displacement. A more nuanced account of the 'refugee experience' is necessary which can account for both the losses and the gains of exile and also steer analysis toward the broader issues raised by contemporary international migration. Of particular relevance here are current debates on the role of ethnicity and cultural identity and their renewed significance in the context of globalisation.

Ethnicity and cultural identity

For Barth (1969) while the ideal type of ethnicity presupposes biological and cultural traits coupled with aspects of self-definition in reality the crucial factor is the process of *ethnic ascription* by self or others. Ascription is necessarily selective and may be based on a variety of factors including language, religion, territory, etc. Overall, ethnic groups can be characterised as 'vessels' with varying contents, which are drawn upon according to context. The 'cultural stuff' which appears to be peculiar to specific ethnic groups is actually a

secondary feature. What establishes their distinctiveness and continuity is the maintenance of boundaries and the corresponding processes of inclusion and exclusion.

While Barth's analysis has been highly influential (Wallman 1979, 1986; Khan 1979; Watson 1977) and remains the subject of debate (Werbner 1991), it can be argued that boundary theory suffers from several key deficiencies. These are now well rehearsed but predominantly concern the functionalist logic which underlies the account of both inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic relations. In the former case, the maintenance of boundaries between ethnic groups tends to explain ethnic group formation in terms of systems of thought which are taken as key determinants of social structure (Rex 1991). The tendency to downplay power relations is particularly marked in Barth, when he argues for example that ethnic groups somehow 'arrive at judgements of hierarchy' (1969:27), as though this were a purely voluntary process. There is little made of the disjuncture which may occur between ascription by others and self ascription. The apparently bland consensualism in Barth, aptly summed up as 'benign ethnicity' by Rex (1991), tends to result in a curious vacuum when it comes to the question of intra-ethnic relations. The *cultural components* of ethnic groups may well be secondary features in Barth's sense, but they are quite clearly constitutive in another sense. Not only is the affective or primordial element, which appears to be a feature of ethnic solidarities missing (Rex 1991) but also the complex political processes by which ethnic and cultural homogeneity is produced in practice. This necessarily refers us to the divisions within ethnic groups and the mobilisation of myths and symbols which define the *ethnie* as a unity (Eade 1991).

This renewed stress on the *political construction* of ethnicity (Werbner 1991; Eade 1991) has become an important theme in recent discussions of the significance of *ethnies* as actors in both the international and domestic arenas (Smith 1981, 1991). It is also central to the experience of refugee groups in countries of the diaspora. While it is important here not to assume that the 'political construction of ethnicity' will automatically be a vital concern for all refugees, there are some grounds at least for supposing that, as Gold (1992:18) puts it 'the shared political beliefs of refugees may provide a basis for collective action', or again that 'refugees may be united by a commonly held culture in a way that economically motivated immigrants are not'. Sorenson (1990:298) for example, notes the importance of ethnic identity for refugee studies, 'as such identities are frequently central to the experience of migrant groups and can influence processes of resettlement and adaptation in a host society'. In

particular, he argues that the strong, reactive form of ethnic solidarity amongst Eritreans in Canada promoted effective and cohesive community formation in exile. Similarly, Desbarats (1986) has argued that the 'cultural inclusiveness' of the Sino-Vietnamese in the US acted as a 'liability' or brake on their successful adaptation. Ethnicity may therefore be an important variable in explaining differences in adaptation between the groups examined in this study.

The theme of ethnicity as a mobilising force is a central feature of recent accounts of *globalisation* which in many cases rely on a modified form of post-industrial explanation (Lash and Urry 1994). Globalisation can be seen in general terms as 'the concrete structuration of the world as a whole' (Robertson 1990:20), as this involves the levels of the world economy, international migration, transnational organisations, social movements and 'hybridised' forms of culture flow (Cohen 1997; Waters 1995:4). Appadurai (1990:297), emphasising the cultural significance of globalisation, has drawn attention to the radical disjunctions between the different forms of culture flow which characterise the global political economy: *mediascapes*, *technoscapes*, *finanscapes*, *ideoscapes*, and most significant for our purposes, the *ethnoscape*:

By 'ethnoscape', I mean the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guestworkers and other moving groups and persons constitute an essential feature of the world, and appear to affect the politics of and between nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree.

In this respect, a central feature of the global landscape is the emergence of what Appadurai terms 'deterritorialised ethnicities' or diasporic communities whose invented homelands are sustained through the operations of global 'mediascapes'. Separatist movements, or 'nations without states', are typical features here (1990:304). This is a theme which I develop in relation to Kurdish ethno-nationalism.

The focus on the role of new ethnic identifications (Hall 1992) has significantly broadened the debate on globalisation and migration and has raised the issue of cultural identity as a central question for social theory. Drawing upon a range of influences from post-Saussurian linguistics to psychoanalysis, it is now commonplace to question the coherence and stability of individual identity (Hall 1991b:44). The de-centred subject of postmodern discourse is

further elaborated by Hall (1991a) to include the *collective* identities of class, 'race', gender and ethnicity. With the erosion of the stability of individual and collective identities, the centre of analysis now shifts to the area of cultural representations as a whole. Culture is understood here not in the anthropological sense as a 'total way of life' or as confined to 'high art', but in relation to the field of signifying practices within which social meanings and identities are produced, articulated and contested (Williams 1978; Brah 1996:234). For Hall (1995:4):

The issue of cultural identity as a political question now constitutes one of the most serious global problems as we go into the twentieth first century. The re-emergence of questions of ethnicity, of nationalism - the obduracy, the dangers and the pleasures of the rediscovery of identity in the modern world... places the question of cultural identity at the very centre of the contemporary political agenda.

The nature of cultural identity is further developed in Hall's essay 'Who needs identity' (1996a) where he introduces the concept of *identification* as the coming-into-being of identities. Rather than regard identity as fixed, identification refers to the process of *articulation of identity* which is based upon the play of differences, the constant marking of boundaries and frontiers. An important proviso needs to be introduced here to the unlimited semiosis celebrated in some postmodern accounts of identity. As Hall (1996b:33) argues, 'I think of identity in terms of positionality... Identity is the sum of (temporary) positions offered by a social discourse in which you are willing for the moment to invest'. Rather than a complete slippage of meaning there is the temporary and provisional fixing of identities which is captured in the notion of positionality. Here the individual is linked into broader social discourses which temporarily ground identity. There is a particular place for the past and the role of memory in the narrativisation of the subject. Given that identity is formed in the relation with the Other (Hall 1996a:5) relations of power and exclusion are central to identity formation, with the result that identity is constantly 'destabilised by what it leaves out'. I return to these issues and their relevance for the adaptation of refugees throughout this thesis.

Remarking on the need to contextualise the importance currently assigned to issues of cultural identity, Hall argues (1996a:4) that:

We need to situate the debates about identity within all those historically specific developments and practices which have disturbed the relatively 'settled' character of many populations and cultures, above all in relation to the processes of globalisation... and the processes of forced and 'free' migration which have become a global phenomenon of the so-called 'post-colonial' world.

Refugee movements are clearly one of the factors which have pushed the issue of cultural and national identity to the centre of the international stage. Although I discuss these issues in later stages of this thesis, for present purposes it is clear that refugee identity is formed within the matrix of divergent sets of social relations and is strongly determined by the interrelation of distinctive histories and political institutions. Although Hall's account is certainly suggestive, there are problems concerning the slippage between his use of the concepts of *ethnic* and *cultural* identity. As Hall acknowledges (1996b:34) for him, *ethnicity*, *cultural identity* and increasingly *diaspora* are often interchangeable concepts which describe in proximate terms the specificity of cultural or ethnic identity, or as he puts it, 'what makes your difference different from my difference'. The ambiguity of the concepts is compounded by their high level of abstraction, making their application in empirical studies both problematic and also necessary. As Parker (1996) and McRobbie (1996) have remarked, there is a need to marry the insights of cultural studies with ethnographic research into the ways in which meanings and identities are produced in situations of everyday interaction. This is particularly the case with socially marginalised groups such as refugees, who are chronically under-represented in the British research literature. In this respect the cultural, ethnic and diasporic identities of refugees are central features of the adaptation process, as I discuss in later sections of this thesis. The concept of diaspora, alluded to above, requires further elaboration at this point.

The concept of diaspora

The recent renaissance of the concept of diaspora in migration studies has brought with it a number of contending interpretations (Safran 1991; Clifford 1994; Marienstrass 1989; Cohen 1997; Brah 1996; Anthias 1998). At the heart of the concept is the notion of a group's dispersal from an original homeland to which ties of allegiance are maintained. It suggests transnational affiliations which cross-cut national boundaries and has been elaborated in a variety of contexts, stressing either its link with postmodern cultural identities and

deterritorialisation (Hall 1990,1995; Clifford 1994; Brah 1996) or globalisation processes (Cohen 1997).

In relation to the cultural approach, for Clifford (1994:307) diaspora consciousness can be distinguished both from the loyalty demanded by the territorial nation-state and the claims of natural belonging to the soil made by 'tribal' peoples. Although diasporas may contain their own demands for national autonomy (in the current context the Kurds are a striking illustration) in practice diasporas are never exclusively nationalist, but transnational in character: 'they encode practices of accommodation with, as well as resistance to, host countries and their norms'. As Clifford further argues (1994:308) 'the term diaspora is a signifier, not simply of transnationality and movement, but of political struggle to define the local, as distinctive community, in historical contexts of displacement'. 'Diasporic language' and 'diaspora consciousness' (Clifford 1994: 311) suggest the double consciousness and contrapuntal modernity noted earlier by Said (1984) as one of the possible outcomes of exile: the experience of alienation and discrimination in the country of settlement in this respect is often coupled with 'stubborn visions of renewal' (Clifford 1994: 312). For the refugee groups examined in this thesis there is a similar necessity to accommodate and articulate the multiple attachments which they experience in the diaspora.

Again from a predominantly cultural perspective Brah (1996) has distinguished between diaspora as a theoretical construct - what she calls diaspora space - and concrete, historical diasporas. Concrete diasporas are defined in terms of the different forms of *leaving* - as in slavery or refugee flight; *reception* - concerning the relation to the receiving state and the *interrelation of different diaspora groupings* in the country of settlement. Any single diaspora is the composite of multiple journeys, narratives and processes of re-memory, which result in different imaginings of the group. As Brah argues (1996:183), 'the identity of the diasporic imagined community is far from fixed or pregiven. It is constituted within the crucible of the materiality of everyday life; in the everyday stories we tell ourselves individually and collectively'. We are again referred to the significance of narrative and memory in the construction of a sense of the distinctiveness of a particular diaspora. Diasporas are essentially contested spaces and in Brah's view there is a need to investigate how the collective 'we' is constructed in terms of differences in class, gender, race and generation. The notion of the conflictual and interpreted nature of diasporas is also a central theme in my fieldwork amongst Somali and Kurdish refugees in London.

According to Brah, diasporas are best understood within the terms of a multi-axial conception of power, which is relational and works across both macro and micro fields, i.e. from the state determination of diaspora groups, to relations between and within groups and the different processes of racialisation of groups. 'Home' is a central theme in the diasporic imagination and figures in several different senses in the diaspora experience, as 'feeling at home' or as 'homeland'. Brah's twin concept, that of *diaspora space* refers to the confluence of the *movement* of people and goods; the crossing of *borders* and literal or metaphoric boundaries or markers and the notion of *location*, referring here to fixity in movement, the connection of movement with 'staying put'. In sum, diaspora is treated by Brah (1996:194) as an 'investigative technology', or a way of thinking about contemporary population movements: 'the concept of diaspora signals these processes of multilocationality across geographical, cultural and psychic boundaries'. Summarising Brah's position, we can note the following distinguishing features of diaspora:

1. the form of leaving - e.g. refugee flight, slavery
2. the form of reception and relation to receiving state/society
3. the role of memory, and the elaboration of communal imagined identities
4. the internal differentiation of diasporas according to class, gender and race
5. the relation to home - the multiple meanings and ambivalent relations to home
6. the relation between community as imagined and encountered - the local/global nexus
7. a multi-axial conception of power

Arguing from a position which emphasises the role of globalisation in contemporary population movements, for Cohen (1997), modifying the earlier work of Safran (1991), there are seven key features of diaspora:

1. the dispersal from a homeland, often traumatic in nature
2. a collective memory of home entailing an idealisation of home or even its creation
3. the existence of a return movement or belief in return
4. a strong ethnic consciousness in the members of the diaspora
5. a troubled relation with the host society
6. the existence of ties with co-ethnics in other countries
7. the possibility of cultural renewal in the diaspora.

Contrasting Brah's (1996) and Cohen's (1997) accounts of diaspora, it can be seen that there is considerable overlap in the features outlined, although there are differences of emphasis within this. For Cohen, in common with Brah the *relation to home* is seen as a decisive aspect of diaspora, whether this is a territorial homeland, or *invented* as in the case of the Kurds. The central point in Cohen's account is that the concept of diaspora shifts attention away from a concern with the integration of ethnic groups at the national level, to a focus on transnational networks and identities. As Cohen (1995:14) has argued, diaspora is becoming disconnected from its historical moorings in the victim/territorial tradition and moving towards 'the idea of a nationalism without a nation-state (or territory)'. There is a particular emphasis in this account on the role of diasporas as social forms in their own right, outside and beyond the nation-state which I draw upon in my fieldwork with Somali and Kurdish refugees in London.

There are many contentious issues within the study of diasporas. Anthias (1998) who is one of the latest to enter the fray, indicates the following difficulties with the concept. In her view, it does not replace a concern with ethnicity but is crucially dependent on it; the focus on the transnational may turn attention away from the divisions of race, class and gender which structure concrete diasporas; issues of social exclusion and differentiated inclusion based upon these divisions need to be analysed and finally the focus on the original homeland may absolutise ethnic identity, particularly in relation to the development of fundamentalism within diaspora communities. Some of these concerns have been elaborated by Wahlbeck (1997) in relation to the Kurdish diaspora in Finland and Britain. The position adopted here stresses, along with Anthias (1998) and Brah (1996) that diasporas are arenas of contestation and the exercise of power, particularly in relation to issues of gender and ethnicity. As these authors emphasise, diasporas are not unitary phenomena. One point of particular importance is the considerable variation within any diaspora grouping: refugee communities, impelled for primarily political reasons, may be part of a wider diaspora which has occurred as a result of labour migration, for example. This is the case in relation to both the Kurds and Somalis, where refugee communities are complexly related to other parts of a broader diaspora, having arrived at different times in different places and under different migration conditions.

My own approach adopts elements from both the 'culturalist' and 'globalisation' perspectives on diaspora. I highlight the following points (drawn from Brah and Cohen above) in my examination of Somalis and Kurds in London:

- The specific character of *flight and dispersal from the homeland* (Cohen, point 1 above; Brah, point 1 above)
- The specific form of *reception and relation to receiving state and receiving society* (Brah point 2; Cohen point 5)
- The *relation to the home society* as this is imagined and narrated, including here the meaning of home, the issue of return, the relation to the past (Cohen, points 2 and 3; Brah, points 3 and 5)
- The significance of *ethnicity and intra-ethnic divisions* (Cohen, point 4; Brah, points 4 and 7)
- The importance of *cultural renewal* as a result of exile and dispersal (Cohen, point 7).

Given the recent date of arrival of Somali and Kurdish refugees in London it is important to locate this study as an examination of *diaspora formation*, a process which as van Hear (1998) has shown is subject both to change and reversal.

The orientation to home

If the relation to home is the decisive aspect for any diaspora, it is important to stress that how the relation to home is articulated varies within any diaspora group. In this context we should recall Clifford's stress (1992:115) on the way in which diaspora refers us to 'what is brought from a prior place (and how this) is maintained and transformed under new conditions'. Similarly, Anthias (1998:564) argues that 'diasporas... may have formed different collective representations of the group under local conditions'. There is therefore a constant interaction and *tension* between the cultural elements brought from the society of origin and those encountered and constructed under new social conditions. The 'orientation to home' has to be placed in this nexus of relationships as continually *reproduced and transformed* by individuals as they struggle to make sense of their new lives in the country of settlement.

In the refugee literature, the relation to the home society has figured prominently in accounts of refugee adaptation and settlement. Kunz (1981), has argued that a refugee group's relation to *the population of the society of origin* is significant in terms of settlement and integration outcomes: a positive orientation to home will tend to result in weak integration in the receiving society leading to potential marginalisation, while alienation from the home society

may result in a greater stress on integration for the refugee group concerned. This distinction has been elaborated by Al-Rasheed (1994:202) in the case of Iraqi Arabs and Assyrians in London and by Joly (1996) as the basis for a sociology of refugee groups in countries of exile. Following Kunz (1981), Joly argues for an integrated approach in which refugee adaptation is seen as the result of the interaction of factors relating to the country of origin, the process of flight and the country of reception (1996:150). In this, the relation to the country of origin is taken as fundamental for refugees, as the 'notion of the return to the homeland looms as a persistent feature of refugees' settlement' (1996:151). It should be added that even in the absence of a specific 'myth of return', the relation to the home society is decisive for refugees. It is in this context that Joly proposes to 'analyse refugee populations within the structure of conflict which led them to flee' (1996:152).

In practice, Joly differentiates between refugee communities which possess a collective political project in the society of origin and those which do not, again referring back to Kunz's (1981) earlier distinction between majority identified and events-alienated refugees. Those refugee groups with a collective project might include national liberation movements, territorially based national and ethnic groups or those fleeing dictatorship. Those without a collective project could be victims of genocide or generalised violence, for example (Joly 1996: 155). Again, there is some overlap with Zolberg et al's (1989) distinction between political activists and victim groups in refugee populations. Although in practice there is a continuum between these two broad categories, the typology is intended as an heuristic device and framework within which empirical work might usefully be conducted. As the following pages show, I employ the typology - at some distance and in a critical light - in order to facilitate comparison between Somali and Kurdish refugees in London.

According to Joly's typology, the first type of refugee has high degrees of community organisation, strong transnational linkages and an orientation to home which overrides integration in the host society. In this instance, Joly believes, the concept of diaspora may be a useful tool of analysis. The second type is the polar opposite. Having severed ties with the country of origin, the goal of integration becomes more significant for the group and with it the possibility of experiencing discrimination and marginalisation in the host society. The viability and coherence of this type depends on its existence as a group prior to flight and whether it has developed a cohesive consciousness. With weak networks and community organisation, marginalisation from both the society of origin and reception potentially awaits

this type of refugee group. In each case the meaning of successful adaptation for the group concerned is different: in the one case maintenance of the home culture and the link to home are paramount, in the other successful integration into the structures of the host society.

In analysing the concrete experiences of particular refugee groups certain factors are of importance in addition to the relation to home. These include the existence of a community of co-ethnics in the country of settlement and the prior formation of community associations. The perceived relation to the receiving state and receiving society, i.e. is the receiving state assimilationist or multicultural (Castles 1996) and the relations of compatibility between the country of origin of refugees and the receiving society are other factors of great importance. These issues are addressed in parts III and IV of this thesis.

Conclusion

The review of the literature on refugee adaptation and identity in this chapter has pinpointed a number of themes: the role of the past, memory and loss in the formation of refugee consciousness; the significance of time in the adaptation process and the associated de-temporalisation of experience; the central role of ambiguity in social relationships and identities. While providing many invaluable insights, it was suggested that one potential drawback to this literature is its depiction of an invariant 'refugee experience' which is primarily defined by loss and negativity. The conception of identity in much of this literature is also limited, tending towards a depiction of agency and subjectivity which is overly static and unilinear in nature. The recent literature on ethnicity, diaspora and cultural identity - with its emphasis on the constructed nature of individual and collective identities and the role of international migration in fostering multiple cultural attachments and forms of belonging - has been shown to raise a number of issues which are directly relevant to the study of refugees in countries of settlement. In the current research diaspora acts as an organising concept, encompassing attachments to home, forms of flight and settlement and modes of consciousness and identity. Of particular importance for refugee groups is the role of internal divisions and power relations as these affect the adaptation process and the forging of identities in the country of settlement. The main body of this thesis is concerned to chart the linkages between (1). the root causes of refugee flows in the two cases examined here, (2). the reception, settlement and organisation of the two groups and (3). their modes of consciousness and identity in the country of settlement. In the following discussion Joly's (1996) typology of

refugee groups is employed to facilitate comparison, although the internal variation in the groups is stressed throughout the analysis. Part two of this thesis is concerned with the structure of conflict in the society of origin and its impact on the refugee groups examined in this study.

PART II

**SOMALIA AND KURDISTAN: THE FAULT LINES OF
THE NEW WORLD ORDER**

Chapter 2

Refugees and the international system

In common with its subject matter, the study of diasporas involves a constant interplay between factors relating to the society of origin and the society of reception. In this section of the thesis I am concerned to outline some comparative issues relating to Somalia and Kurdistan as *refugee generating areas*. Although the two areas are diverse and disparate in the extreme there are some common points which I seek to draw out. As Zolberg et al (1989) had earlier remarked and as Richmond (1994: 205) has more recently confirmed, while economic migration can be said to reflect the global structuring of inequalities between the countries of the 'core and periphery' so *refugee movements reflect the political structure of the international system*. While the nation-state remains significant in the erection to barriers to entry for refugees and restrictions on exit - although the latter was more pronounced during the cold war period (Dowty 1987) - the 'fortress walls' are becoming increasingly internationalised (Morris 1997). For Zolberg (1981) the international state system determines the nature of refugee movement in a radical sense, in relation to the 'root causes' of refugee flows. These are essentially transnational in character, reflecting on the one hand global inequalities and structural dependency, including here direct intervention and clientism, and on other more specifically 'internal' factors such as social revolution, ethnic conflict, secession and nation-building, which in turn have to be understood within these wider frameworks. As Zolberg remarks (1986:167), 'the globalisation of domestic politics' is particularly acute in the 'weak states' of the countries of the periphery. As I argue in this section, the *internationalisation of domestic conflict is a central feature of both Somalia and Kurdistan* and is intimately tied to the generation of refugee flows in the two areas. This chapter provides the conceptual framework for the comparison of the two cases which I present in chapters three and four.

Refugees and the nation state

A central point of comparison in this context is the *significance of the nation-state in the generation of refugee flows*. Again, with reference to Zolberg et al's seminal work (1989), it is clear that the meaning of 'refugee' cannot be disentangled from the historical genesis of the term. Its first usage was in relation to the French Huguenots in the late seventeenth century

(1989:5). Religious persecution, or discrimination against social groups by the state based on either language, race or ethnicity, forms a sub-category of the *classic refugee* for Zolberg - that of the 'target group'. Another of the main forms of the classic refugee is the 'activist' or 'political dissenter', who make their appearance in the wake of the French Revolution and the Declaration of the Rights of Man. *What both may be seen to share is a dissident relation to the consolidation or maintenance of state power, based upon either accident of birth or active belief* (1989:9). From the end of the nineteenth century, with the emergence of the contemporary global system a distinctively new type of refugee appeared, that of the stateless or those belonging to national minorities (Chaliand 1989; Arendt 1964). The dominance of the nation-state in the international political system is the key factor here. What Zolberg et al call the 'nation-state formula' involves an identification of nationality with citizenship rights, such that the state-less and national minorities are automatically excluded from the 'imagined community' of the nation (1989:13):

the emergence of target minorities as a result of the 'nationalisation of rights' can be seen as an instance of a more general process, whereby the state's choice of an integration formula determines positive and negative categories of persons and its ensuing relationships with these groups. The formula is the construction of a collective identity encompassing the rulers and the majority of the population; its foundation may be religious, racial or even ideological, as well as national....

The 'unmixing of nationalities' within the former Russian, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires was to produce the 'classic' refugee of the twentieth century, the national minorities and the stateless. As Zolberg remarks elsewhere (1986:162) today's 'Third World' countries are victims of a similar process in which 'the adoption of the national model by highly heterogeneous...states, generated enormous tensions out of which emerged the minorities and the stateless....' Summarising and developing the contributions of Arendt and Zolberg, Tarzi (1991: 444-5) argues that a 'mono-national integration formula in a multicultural environment' will tend to result in repression and exclusion, leading either to calls for *secession* and autonomy as in the case of the Kurds in Turkey, Iraq and Iran, or to *irredentist* claims to reunite territories and populations, illustrated by the ambitions of a 'Greater Somalia' in the immediate post-colonial period. On acquiring independence in 1960, the five pointed star of

the Somali flag had clearly signalled the intention of re-uniting Somalis in the north and south of the country, as well as in Djibouti, Kenya and Ethiopia.

To signpost what I argue in more detail later, *state persecution* as a result of the drive to integration behind the nation-state model, underlies the mass flight of Kurds in Turkey, Iraq and Iran. *Inter-state conflicts* are one outcome of the refugee displacement which continues to destabilise the region. In the case of Somalis, the *manipulation of the post-colonial state by clan-based factions* resulted in a protracted undermining of centralised authority. The failure of the irredentist project with the Ogaden war of 1977 and state persecution of a range of clan factions throughout the 1980s led to civil war, the overthrow of the military regime, calls for the secession of the north-west and the eventual re-partition of the country. Refugee flows have been produced at virtually all of these stages.

The New World Order, security and international migration

Another striking parallel in relation to the two areas concerns the *internationalisation of the conflicts in both Somalia and Kurdistan* which corresponded to what has been seen as a new phase in the international political system. If the demise of the Soviet Union (Halliday 1990) was hailed as the dawn of a *New World Order* (George Bush, cited in Chomsky 1998:10) in retrospect the continuities in American foreign policy are more evident than the promise of innovation and security which the term suggested (Chomsky 1998). What is novel about the period is what de Waal (1998) has termed the 'newly emerging doctrine of humanitarian intervention' which was played out first in Kurdistan (northern Iraq) and later, amongst other cases, in Somalia. While the provenance of the doctrine and its implementation are complex (Mayall 1994) there are particular issues which are relevant to the current discussion. The 'globalisation of domestic politics' referred to earlier (Zolberg 1986:167) was in fact to become the hallmark of this period, with reformulations of international security heading the list of post-cold war concerns.

Falk (1995) for example has argued for a new, post-cold war conception of security in the move away from geopolitical considerations (conventional balance of military and economic power) to what he terms *humane governance*. The latter is concerned with alleviating insecurity from poverty, war and violence (Falk 1995:139). As a result, environmental concerns, demography, economy and energy are the main elements of a 'revitalised conception

of security' (Falk 1995:146). But as Falk recognised, while humane governance requires the development of a global civil society, what the New World Order had in store was a more efficient 'management of boundaries of the territorial state' (1995:141-2). The revitalisation of security, far from leading to increased democratisation, was to promise a tightening of territorial boundaries, conceived in regional rather than purely national terms (Richmond 1994) in which international migration was to figure as a primary concern.

The period since the ending of the cold war has witnessed dramatic changes in the scale and scope of international migration. Commentators like Loescher for example (1992:10) argue that the period after the cold war marked 'the beginning of a major new phase in the post-war history of international migration'. Principal among these changes has been the emergence of new areas of migration (Cohen 1991; Castles and Miller 1998), the escalation of particular forms of migration, notably refugees and asylum seekers, and the emergence of 'new migration spaces' i.e. women and the *specialised professionals* of the global cities (Cohen 1997). As the titles of many monographs written on the subject indicate (Weiner 1995) there is a perceived *crisis* not only in the scale of international migration but the capacity of many states to deal with what is seen as an unprecedented onslaught on the integrity of the nation state. Despite the relatively small volume of international migration (Thranhardt 1996; Roberts 1998) - compared to flows of capital, commodities, images and information for example - it is prioritised as a security issue by nation-states. Hence Widgren (1990:766) proclaims that 'uncontrolled, large scale international migration is threatening social cohesion, international solidarity and peace'. In a more measured response, Gould and Findlay (1994:279) argue that 'the emergence of the new world order has meant the reconsideration of the significance of migration in the moulding of the state and the nation'; while Ferris (1993:xix), suggests that the focus on refugees and migrants as a security issue, is 'a result of changing definitions of what security means in a post-cold war world'. As Loescher concludes (1992:5) 'in the post-cold war era, security has acquired a new and more complex significance. To traditional political-military issues at the interstate level must be added many other concerns, including ethnic conflict, refugee and migration flows, and population growth'.

Elaborating on the 'threat' posed by international migration, Weiner (1995) notes the following areas of concern:

- *Inter-state relations* - the furore in November 1998 between Turkey and Italy over the extradition of Abdullah Ocalan, 'Apo' of the Kurdish Workers Party is a case in point;
- *Security risks* - the Kurds in Western Europe provide a convenient example but there are many others ;
- *Cultural threats* - the Islamic dilution of the 'western heritage' for example;
- *Socio-economic problems* linked to welfare and unemployment;
- *The use of hostages* to secure demands in the country of origin.

As these examples indicate, *refugee movement is high on the list of perceived threats to international and national security*. The sporadic and crisis-driven nature of refugee movement may itself be an important factor here. Loescher (1992) echoing the work on the role of diasporas in homeland and 'host' politics (Constas and Platias 1986; Sheffer 1986) argues that refugees are frequently a political force in their country of residence, influencing relations with the sending countries, or encouraging military or political intervention. In these terms refugees may be seen to condense a range of economic, cultural and military threats to the receiving state. As Loescher (1992:5) again indicates, 'refugee problems are in fact intensely political: mass migration creates domestic instability, generates inter-state tension and threatens international security'. This was to be a dominant consideration and *rationale* for international interventions in the case of both Somalia and Kurdistan, as I explain in the following pages.

Security and the 'national order'

The precise nature of the threat posed by refugees needs some unravelling and in particular the discourse of security which underpins the threat to what Malkki (1992) has termed the 'national order'. There are many problems associated with defining security. At the outset it is useful to distinguish the conventional state-centred approach (Buzan 1993) from notions of 'societal security' relating to threats to the national imagined identity (Wæver et al 1993). A state-centred approach to security focuses on the issue of sovereignty and the national interest (1993:27), while societal security refers to the integrity of the large-scale 'we' identities of social collectivities - typically nations and nation-states. Both state and societal security prioritise survival in the face of external threat. As Wæver et al argue, societal security is an aspect of state security but is not identical to it. There are many instances, for example, where

the security of societies or nations is directly opposed to that of the state. The position of the Kurds in the Middle East is a clear example here. While a state-centred view will tend to incorporate military, political, economic, environmental and societal factors, Waever et al argue that these are distinct if interrelated.

Despite significant drawbacks, the main value of this approach is in attempting to identify how both societal security and perceived insecurities are socially constructed. Overall, Waever et al's analysis remains highly abstract and fails to offer a convincing or detailed analysis of the social construction of societal insecurities. Husbands (1994) raises a similar range of questions in relation to media-generated 'moral panics' around issues of national identity (Cohen 1994; Hall et al 1978). According to Husbands, insecurities around national identity were revived in the 1980s due to European integration and increased migration and asylum flows (Wrench and Solomos 1993). Currently these anxieties are articulated around two dominant themes, those of increasing numbers and cultural dilution, a position which has much in common with the so-called 'new racism' (Barker 1981). While the argument remains impressionistic, the significant point is that new permutations of 'threat' emerge continually. Concerning asylum seekers, as I cover in relation to Kurds in London, there appears to have been a transition from 'economic refugee' and 'bogus asylum seeker', to 'criminal' and 'terrorist' (Webber 1997). The perceived threat posed by refugees points to the tenuous nature of national identities, their very fragility and 'fuzziness' (Cohen 1994). As Husbands (1994:205) argues 'the supposed eternal verities of mature national identities may turn out to be more psychically fragile than decades, perhaps centuries of evolution would lead one to expect'.

Articulating this theme of the destabilising presence of the Other, Husymans (1995), argues that security has to be understood as a 'discursive-practical space', a discursive construct or 'security drama', in which outside threats are seen to endanger the 'inside' of already constituted identities: the non-problematic identity of the native is destabilised by the presence of the migrant. It is clear though that the inside is constituted in its relations to the Other (Miles 1989). In this sense the notion of 'societal security' can be seen to be deficient in several key respects: cultural identity, rather than resulting from a undifferentiated sense of the 'collective we', is internally differentiated, subject to constant change, and wrought from the relation with the Other (Hall 1996a). Husymans identifies the prevailing conception of security in Hobbesian terms as a question of control and order. The relation to the Other is therefore articulated in terms of Trust and Fear, with ontological security resulting from the 'continuity

of self-identity' (1995:58) which is based upon relations of trust. International migration - as the presence of the Other *on the inside*, represented by the figure of the Stranger - poses a direct challenge to the sense of cultural and self-identity (Bauman 1990), one which although involving economic and political factors is encoded in predominantly cultural terms, e.g. as the 'Muslim threat'. It is important to note here that a simple Self/Other distinction doesn't capture the complexity of the processes at work: some are more *selves* and some are more *others*, with modes of inclusion and exclusion varying from nation to nation (Cohen 1994).

In a similar vein, Richmond (1994) in refiguring the concept of security in relation to the threat to sovereignty posed by globalisation and refugee flows, argues that 'loss of sovereignty by the state threatens ontological security and the foundations of individual identity' (1994:222). In this 'security drama' the weak, permeable state represents a weakening of social order and increased vulnerability *to external threat and contamination* which ultimately endangers both cultural and individual identities. For Husymans (1995:61) 'the securitisation of migration in Western Europe places centrally the continuation of cultural identity on the security agenda'. In sum, international migration and refugee flows condense a number of 'threats': - to national security; social security and 'social citizenship'; societal security or national identity, and individual, ontological security. In this context, Waever et al make some interesting remarks on the emergence of 'identity management' (sic), in which the 'clear pivotal role of the modernist nation state as the main identity carrier' is replaced by a more fluid 'postmodern identity' (1993:193-4). In opposition to this, the main tendency in the post-cold war period has been the attempt to achieve a more effective *management* and control of international migration (Waever et al 1993:195; UNHCR 1995; Widgren 1990).

The reference to *contamination by the Other* is particularly significant in relation to what Malkki (1992:31) has called a 'sedentary metaphysics', a belief in the rootedness of people in relation to places, which is reflected both in deep anthropological impulses and scholarly description. The linking of the 'nation' with *land, soil* and '*the country*' are cases in point. As Malkki (1992:27) argues, 'Motherland and fatherland, aside from their historical connotations, suggest that each nation is a grand genealogical tree, rooted in the soil that nourishes it. *By implication, it is impossible to be part of more than one tree*' (my italics). Refugees are precisely those who belong to more than one tree. In doing so they disturb the body politic, becoming both outcasts and pollutants, simultaneously on the outside and the inside, very much in the manner of Simmel's 'Stranger' (1971). It is this process which results in the

construction of 'territorial displacement as pathological' (Malkki 1992:31). As Malkki (1992:32) goes on to suggest, 'the pathologisation of uprootedness' takes the form of an equation between physical displacement and moral uncertainty. Refugee studies and agencies, she argues, contribute to this construction of the refugee as a 'problem', subject to therapeutic interventions, physical segregation and control (as in the topography of the refugee camp). As she trenchantly concludes (1992:33) 'our sedentarist assumptions about attachment to place lead us to define displacement not as a fact about sociopolitical context, but rather as an inner, pathological condition of the displaced'.

While these arguments concerning the 'externality' of the refugee were first elaborated by Arendt (1964) the more recent debate has refigured the discussion in terms of processes of *confinement*, *sequestration* and *quarantine*, specifically in relation to issues of international security in the New World Order. As Oreskovic (1996:430) argues, 'to explain the global political situation, [leading strategists] use evolutionary and medical terms such as 'chaos'...'pathology'...'collapse', 'crisis'...' The debt to Foucault's work on confinement and the 'micro-politics' of the body is clear, although applied here to the 'political, legal and humanitarian strategies of the international community towards 'pathological' societies characterised by genocide, 'ethnic cleansing', mass killing'... (Oreskovic 1996: 430). As I illustrate in the chapters on Somalia and Kurdistan, just such a therapeutic scenario was operating in the case of the 'humanitarian interventions' in these areas, which occurred in the wake of the cold war.

Nation, nation-state and ethnic

As indicated above, processes of state formation and *disintegration* are central to the generation of refugee flows (Zolberg et al 1989; Arendt 1964; Tarzi 1991). In relation to the Somalis, a central background factor is the *failure of the post-colonial state* despite the emergence of Pan-Somali nationalist organisations in the post-war period (Lewis 1961, 1994) and the antagonism between the claims of clan and nation (Simons 1995, 1997). For the Kurds, the *pursuit of a viable state* in the Middle East has been hampered by geo-political factors, regional interests and the tribal and ideological divisions which continue to impede national unity amongst the Kurds. As these issues are central to the displacement and adaptation of the groups concerned, some further clarification of the significance of the nation and nation-state is called for.

There is little consensus on the meaning of the 'nation', although most reviews of the literature begin with Renan's (1982) discussion of the inadequacies of a purely 'objective' definition of the nation based upon such features as language, religion, 'race', or geographical boundaries. Writing, as McCrone notes (1998) in the language of the nineteenth century, Renan observes that 'a nation is a soul, a spiritual principle...' an argument which we might now frame in terms of the *social construction* of the nation. As Anderson (1991:4) argues, nations and nationalism are 'cultural artifacts of a particular kind'. Nations are 'imagined political communities', in Anderson's famous formulation: 'imagined' (because of the impossibility of any individual knowing all of the members of a nation); but also imagined as *limited in scope* (one nation in the world of nations) as *sovereign* and as a *community* of 'deep horizontal comradeship' (Anderson 1991:6-7). Weber had similarly argued that the concept of the nation 'belongs in the sphere of values' (Gerth and Mills 1970:22): 'in so far as there is at all a common object lying behind the obviously ambiguous term 'nation', it is apparently located in the field of politics... hence a nation is a community which normally tends to produce a state of its own' (1970:25).

The distinction between nation and *nation-state* is an important one. For Hugh Seton-Watson (1977:1) 'a state is a legal and political organisation, with the power to require obedience and loyalty from its citizens'. A nation, on the other hand, is defined in terms of the self-definition of a community in which people 'behave as if they formed one' (1977:5). As Guibernau argues (1996), one effect of the elision of nation and nation-state by for example Giddens (1985:119) is to obscure the significance of cases in which nations *do not* produce 'states of their own' to paraphrase Weber, or where existing states have been established on the basis of multi-ethnic affiliations, as in post-colonial Africa. These distinctions broadly correspond to the case of the Kurds and Somalis, as I argue in chapters three and four. Other definitions of the nation stress different factors. Smith (1981) is concerned with the ethnic origins of the nation. While not disputing the modernity of the nation, Smith is centrally concerned with the ways in which *myths of ethnic choseness* are mobilised in the context of contemporary state politics (Smith 1992).

The Kurds, for example, as a 'proto-nation' (Smith 1991) are engaged in a 'communal-demotic' strategy of ethnic survival, based on their sense of election and affiliation with a homeland within which they are attempting to restore sovereignty (Smith 1992:449). In this instance, the sense of ethnic choseness underpins nationalism by 'revitalising myths' and

'politicising culture', a process which is clearly underway amongst many Kurds in the diaspora. I later draw on Smith's notion of the phases which are involved in nationalist regeneration, involving the authentication, politicisation and purification of culture (1995:69). In similar vein, the 'invention of tradition' is a well-documented aspect of the formation of nations (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1986), and includes the creation of a national iconography, historical chronology and the development of a national cartography (Mc Crone 1998:55). Maps, as Anderson points out, are forms 'of representation laden with power implications' (McCrone 1988:55). In this respect one of the key features of national identification is the sense of belonging it confers, particularly as the experience of shared community is extended over time and linked to an historic homeland (Smith 1995). Connor (1994), Guibernau (1996) and Smith (1991) have all argued that the 'psychological bond' is one of the central components of national identity.

For Smith the *ethnie* is a 'human group claiming a homeland and sharing myths of common ancestry, historical memories and a distinct culture' (1992:438). The *nation* he defines as 'a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members' (1991:40). Other commentators (Oommen 1996; Eriksen 1993) argue for a distinction between the non-territorial claims of the ethnic group or *ethnie* and the *moral claims* to a territorial homeland which characterise nations. Nation-states, as we have seen, are those cases in which these moral claims have assumed the power of *legal enforcement* and administration (Oommen 1996:44). The latter would appear to be tidier conceptually, although Smith clearly wants to stress the continuities between the *ethnie* and nation which are the hallmark of his position (McCrone 1998:12). That Smith is well aware of the distinction between nation and nation-state is evident (1991:14-15), although he argues for a degree of overlap in so far as both have territorial dimensions. Smith's discussion of *proto-nations* as intermediary forms, in which ethnonational movements have managed to establish 'the nucleus of the future ethnic nation and its political identity' (1991:137) will be discussed more fully in relation to the Kurds.

While there is some disagreement over the boundaries of the terms, a common point of convergence is in an implicit hierarchy in terms of the relative completeness of the categories involved. For Eriksen (1993) for example, there is a clear development from rudimentary forms of ethnic categorisation, which are other-defined or external to the group (Jenkins

1994) and the development of *self-definitions* in the formation of ethnic associations and communities (Eriksen 1993:44). In this respect, nations are distinguished from ethnic groups precisely in their relationship to the modern state: 'nationalism...refers to a peculiar link between ethnicity and the state. Nationalisms are, in this view, ethnic ideologies which hold that their group should dominate a state' (1993:99). For Eriksen, there is a striking congruence between theories of ethnicity which stress processes of boundary maintenance and theories of nationalism. From this perspective, both ethnicity and nationalism are constructed, cultural artifacts and both depend crucially on the relation with the Other.

Nationalism and the Other

While there are many contending accounts of nationalism, according to Guibernau (1996) the defining feature is the historic link between notions of citizenship and national belonging as these are enacted through symbolic and ritual processes. Furthermore, if nationalism claims the nation-state for a particular ethnic group, it does so as a 'form of metaphoric kinship' (Eriksen 1993:108), providing a sense of place and belonging which would usually be available within kinship networks. If nationalism is an 'ethnic ideology which demands a state on behalf of the ethnic group' (ibid:118), it is customary as we have seen, to draw a distinction between civic and ethnic versions of nationalism (Smith 1995:100-1), although civic nationalism often rests upon a veiled form of ethnic particularism. Nationalism, as Billig (1995) argues, has been linked to modernity, either, for example by Gellner (1983) in terms of industrialisation, including the development of national education systems and the need for cultural homogeneity, or by Anderson (1983) with the emergence of print capitalism and the decline of religion. The close association of nationalism with the modern period is a common point of convergence in the literature.

Nationalism for Smith (1994) entails four essential features or beliefs: the world is divided into nations with distinctive histories and cultures; each individual belongs to a nation and this is his or her primary allegiance and source of identity; nations must be autonomous, free and secure; and finally, nations are the sole legitimate source of social and political power. While these are all important for the ensuing discussion, Baumann (1992a) has argued persuasively that the defining feature of nationalism lies in its relation to the *search for identity* which is made into a *self-conscious task or project* under conditions of modernity and rapid social change. 'Soil' and 'blood' are ways of grounding identity, in what Baumann refers to as the

'we-talk' of nationalism: 'Identity offered by the postulated membership of the inner circle of friends is circumscribed - made tangibly real - by the non-identity relationship to the outer circle of enemies. The 'we-ness' of friends owes its materiality to the 'they-ness' of the enemies' (1992a:678).

The issue I want to draw attention to here concerns the relation with the Other which is essential to the nationalist project. This feature has been noted by many authors (Bhabha 1990b; Cohen 1994; Eriksen 1993; Billig 1995; McCrone 1998), including the recent contribution by Triandafyllidou (1998). The essence of the argument is that national identity is inherently oppositional in character. As Triandafyllidou (1998:597) argues, 'the national bond divides humanity into 'us', fellow nationals and the 'other', non-members of 'our' community'. Given the *relational identity* of nationalism, it incorporates an 'inner ambivalence' (Baumann 1992a:687) which it has constantly to re-invent and 'overcome' as a condition of its own survival. For Baumann this takes the form of *enemies*, who are clearly marked as outsiders, and *Strangers* who are 'aliens in our midst'. The latter is the more indecipherable and therefore more threatening to the integrity of the nation. In Billig's terms (1995:97), the national imagined community is the composite result of the imagining of the *in-group*, the *out-group* and the *world of nations*. In relation to the latter, national identity would appear to be an *intrinsic part of what it means to be human* (Gellner 1983). As I discuss in my fieldwork amongst Somalis and Kurds in London, the *lack of a nation-state, or of recognition to claims to national independence within the international community*, may be a cause of stigma, anger and shame amongst those peoples who are currently pursuing a viable state form.

Conclusion

As many commentators have noted, there is an apparent contradiction between the broad processes underlying globalisation (Waters 1995; Thomson and Hirst 1996) and the continued division of the inter-national political system into sovereign nation-states (Zolberg et al 1989). This is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in the national control of immigration (Morris 1997) within purportedly transnational bodies like the European Union. In relation to economic globalisation, Thomson and Hirst (1996) have similarly argued for the continued importance of the nation-state. For commentators like Smith (1991) and Guibernau (1996) nationalism is clearly on the ascendant. For both authors nationalism has a stabilising role in globalising conditions, particularly in relation to the cohesion of individual and collective

identities. This is despite the fact that contemporary *ethno-nationalisms* (Smith 1991:123) are amongst the most prevalent and destabilising factors in international politics.

It is important to recall Smith's distinction here between *civic and ethnic routes* and models of the nation (1991:61), the former referring to the bureaucratic, state-directed incorporation of 'lower strata' into a territorially defined nation-state, while the latter indicates the creation of the nation 'from below'. In this case, popular or demotic mobilisation, based upon ethnic identifications and the *politicisation of culture*, are the defining features of an ethnic, as opposed to a predominantly territorial conception of the nation. For Smith, the Somalis and the Kurds are representative of a 'second wave' of ethnonationalisms in the pre and post second world war periods (the first had occurred in Eastern Europe and the Middle East) which arose from colonialism and post-colonialism. The aim of these movements was either independence, in the case of the Somalis, or outright secession from the colonial or post-colonial state for the Kurds in their different countries of residence.

While the crisis of the post-colonial state in Somalia has led to effective re-partition of the country and the development of a clan-based form of separatism in the north-west of the country, the Kurds continue to pursue a viable state, divided as they are between the competing powers of Turkish, Arab and Persian nationalisms. In this respect, as Cohen (1997) indicates in his discussion of Sikh nationalism, it is important to query what kind of nationalism is available for nations which are only now attempting to form their own states (Tatla 1999). Is the old, territorial form of nationalism which identified a place with a people, any longer tenable under globalising conditions? What, in particular, is the role of 'long-distance nationalism' (Anderson 1995) in the formation of a *non-territorial* sense of national identity amongst refugees living in the diaspora? In the following two chapters I address the distinctive historical features and processes of state-formation and dissolution which have produced refugee flows in Somalia and from the different regions of Kurdistan. A comparison of the two cases provides the basis for the analysis of diaspora formation in the groups which is undertaken in later stages of this thesis.

Chapter 3

Somalia: the collapse of the post-colonial state

With a population of between six and seven million and situated on the north-eastern tip of the Horn of Africa, Somalia has often been hailed as the one of the rare examples in Africa of an ethnically homogenous state, a factor which was used to explain its relatively peaceful transition to independence in 1960 (Laitin and S. Samatar 1987; Lewis 1983) and the limited success of the years of civilian government (1960-69), (S. Samatar 1991:16). That there was a substantial push of nationalist sentiment behind the project of a 'Greater Somalia' was clear for example from the pre-independence formation of the northern Somali National Society (SNS), followed later by the Somali National League (SNL) whose aims were, as Drysdale remarks, 'to stamp out all tribal influence and amalgamate all Somalis' (1992:5). The Somali Youth League (SYL) in the south, took a similarly anti-tribal position. In either case, the clan-factionalism which was believed to be endemic to Somali society was to be eradicated as a precondition for national unity and independence. This later became the benchmark of the Barre regime, (1969-1991), which launched its anti-tribal campaign in 1971 (Ahmed I. Samatar 1988:108). Barre's 1974 May Day address, for example, voiced the familiar plea for 'all Somalis to wage a war against tribalism' (quoted in Lewis 1994:171).

As Drysdale and other commentators have argued, though, this appeal to national unity often served as a convenient cloak behind which clan, and other forms of political self-interest could be mobilised. For him, as for the majority of commentators, 'the last three decades have proved conclusively that Somali political unity is more apparent than real' (Drysdale 1992:6). The extreme forms of clan-factionalism to emerge in the wake of Barre's fall in January 1991, and which now continue to divide Mogadishu in particular along well defined clan boundaries, are clear signs for many commentators of the long-established fact that '*modern Somali state politics is nothing but traditional clan politics writ large*' (S. Samatar 1991:26, [my stress]). This is despite the fact that recent initiatives by business leaders and Islamic courts in Mogadishu have attempted to assert a counter-influence to that of the clan-based militias ('Islam tries to end chaos of the clans', *Guardian* 29.6.99). In this chapter I am concerned with the root causes of the refugee crisis in Somalia and its development and escalation throughout the 1980s and 1990s. A core theme in my argument is the central role of clanship in both pre-independence and post-colonial Somali politics and social relations. In

later chapters I extend this analysis by examining the significance of clanship for the diaspora organisation of Somalis. The main focus in this chapter is on the changing significance of clanship in Somalia under the impact of disruptions to traditional pastoral relations and the emergence of a state-class in the post-war period. The manipulation of 'clannism' is the dominant theme in this account and is also central to the experience of Somalis in the diaspora, as I illustrate in chapter seven.

Explaining the Somali crisis

The significance of clan organisation to Somali social structure is a recurrent theme in the literature (Lewis 1961, 1994; Laitin and S. Samatar 1987; Laitin 1977; S. Samatar 1991; Ahmed I. Samatar 1988,1994) and is perhaps the dominant leitmotif in Lewis' A Pastoral Democracy (1961). It is echoed by Zolberg et al (1989:112) in their observation that the clan-politics of post-colonial Somalia was directly akin to 'interaction amongst ethnic groups in other parts of Africa'. Setting Somalia within the broader African context is particularly illuminating in relation to theories of the post-colonial state (Leys 1976; Goulbourne 1979) and to the issues of clientism and neo-patrimonialism (Clapham 1985). The permeability and weakness of state-forms in peripheral capitalist economies (Zieman and Lanzerdorfer 1977) is also raised by the Somali case. Other broad convergences between Somalia and a variety of other African states concerns the failure of the one-party state (Cohen and Goulbourne 1991; Brittain 1992); regression or stagnation in relation to the world economy (Laitin and S. Samatar 1984; Ahmed I. Samatar 1988) and the shared weakness of social formations which have failed to significantly transform the dominant relations of production (Leys 1994).

In these respects Somalia can be seen as part of a much broader regional crisis, (Doornbus and Markakis 1994). It is, as Rogge (1993) has demonstrated, in many ways *indicative* of those social forces in the 'South' and increasingly the 'East' (Cohen 1991) which are now producing refugee flows on a massive scale. These include ethnic rivalry, separatist and irredentist claims, regional disparities and economic and political disintegration (Cimade 1986:68). While these factors are all examined in the Somali context they are taken as representative of a wider social crisis and the more general process of state implosion which has taken place amongst the 'weak states of the periphery' (Zolberg 1986:167) in the wake of the cold war.

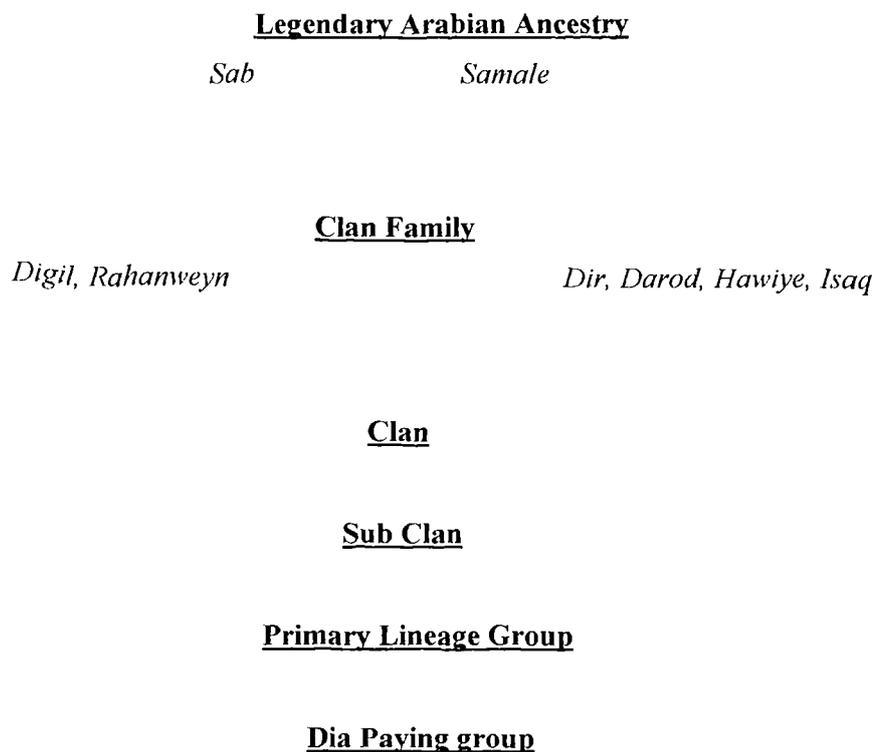
Although the attempt to locate Somalia in the broader African context is useful, it is necessary to grasp the specific historical and social features which continue to influence Somalia today, particularly in relation to *the production of refugee flows* and the *social organisation of Somalis in countries of resettlement*. An initial question therefore is the degree to which clan organisation was or remains a fundamental feature of Somali social relations. As I will argue more fully later, this question is particularly significant in the light of recent research in London's East End which suggests that a *revitalisation of clan politics* amongst the Somali community has occurred (El-Solh 1991:545), largely as a response to the recent arrival of large numbers of Somali refugees and asylum seekers, who had begun to flee the civil war in the North from 1988.

The clan basis of Somali society: social structure and ecology

Contemporary commentators on Somalia invariably refer to the pioneering work of I.M. Lewis as the authority on Somali social structure. The foundation stone of his work, *A Pastoral Democracy*, is based upon field work conducted in the 1950s in British Somaliland (Lewis 1994:5). It should be borne in mind that Lewis was working within an anthropological framework dominated by structural functionalism (Kuper 1973), and particularly influenced by the work of Evans-Pritchard on lineage segmentation amongst the Nuer (Evans-Pritchard 1974:192). This functionalist orientation is evident in the fact that while Lewis is at pains to stress the complexity of Somali social organisation, he delineates a definite *hierarchical and functional relation* between the different levels of Somali social structure.

Lewis states plainly that 'the key to Somali politics lies in kinship' (1961:1), but rather than analyse this in terms of 'tribes' - a concept which implies a fixed territorial unit as the basis of social organisation (1961: 297; 1983) - he opts for the more fluid concept of 'clan', based upon lineage and agnatic descent. The majority of northern Somalis, according to Lewis, are akin to the Nuer of the Sudan in their nomadic and egalitarian social practices. In particular the absence of formalised political structures beyond a degree of fluid contractual arrangement was taken to be distinctive of this form of 'pastoral democracy'. The basis of the kinship structure was seen to descend from larger to smaller units, as follows:

Figure 3.1 Somali Kinship Structure



(modified from Lewis 1993:72)

The principal clan families, the *Darod*, *Hawiye*, *Isaq*, *Dir*, *Digil* and *Rahanweyn*, are not strictly territorially delimited, although they do tend to have distinct geographical locations, i.e., the *Isaq* and the *Dir* in the north; the *Digil* and *Rahanweyn* in the agricultural areas in the south; the *Hawiye* in and around Mogadishu and the *Darod* in the south and in the north. In practice there tends to be some degree of overlap between the groups. In terms of their historical antecedents clan families in the north and south are believed to have differing ancestral origins (Lewis 1961:11). However disputed in origin (Laitin 1977:50), it is generally acknowledged that the several clan families are too large to function as viable political units. Clans are more significant aspects of social organisation and identification, although these in turn are further subdivided. The *Isaq* clan family, for example, historically has been divided into eight main clan groupings - the *Habar Awal*, the *Habar Yunnis*, the *'Iidegalle*, the *Arab*, and four *Habar Ja'lo* clans (Lewis 1994:202). These are in turn further divided into sub-clan, primary lineage group, and below this the dia-paying group whose function is to pay the 'blood wealth' involved in the settlement of feuds. Individual membership is at the level of the

primary lineage group according to Lewis, while the dia-paying group 'is the basic political and judicial unit of pastoral society' (1961:6). Elsewhere however, Lewis remarks that any lineage acting as a separate political unit is capable of functioning as a dia-paying group, albeit this is on a short-term basis (1994:22).

Overall, the clan genealogical system functions as a *pastoral mode of adaptation* to a harsh physical environment. As Drysdale remarks (1992:3), the pastoral economy is dominated by the camel (able to survive the long hauls in search of pasture land and water) and the breeding of sheep and goats. The movement of the nomads (located in British Somaliland and now self-proclaimed independent republic of Somaliland) occurs over hundreds of miles of often hotly contested interclan pasture lands. As Lyons argues (1994:192): 'the lands inhabited and exploited by Somali Pastoralists form a single economic and ecological unit, despite the political divisions'. Nomadic movement takes place from the Haud (now part of Ethiopia), which is used for grazing in the rainy seasons (Spring and Autumn) and then abandoned in Summer and Winter due to lack of water. At this time herds are driven over long distances in search of water wells in the coastal areas. There is, therefore, a complex series of movements and calculations to be made in the search for grazing-land and water between the different seasons (Drysdale 1992:1-4).

Although titles to water wells appeared to be generally recognised, grazing rights according to Lewis were *established through force*. The rationale for this is that in social relations dominated by clan organisation the sense of locality is weak. The only viable forms of solidarity are those of kinship. Accordingly, it is often argued that kinship comes to assume a clear ecological significance in relation to nomadic processes of adaptation and survival, or as Lewis (1961:127) has it, that 'clanship is the political principle regulating competition for sparse resources'. In this respect, because of the dominance of the ideology of the nation-state we are not sufficiently sensitive to the many possibilities of non-territorialised identities. In Somalia clanship has acted as a primary articulator of identity. This is true not only for politics in Somalia, but the way in which those forced into exile relate to others in the same position and to those back home. I develop these themes more fully in later chapters.

The lineage system itself functions in terms of agnatic descent, such that a son or daughter receives the first name of the father as their surname. Each generation therefore has a new first name, with the genealogy built along agnatic lines. *The fundamental point is that*

lineages are relative rather than fixed, depending upon which level - clan family, clan, primary lineage group or dia-paying group - is in question. Clan associations are therefore a source of unity *and* division, for within one clan family there are numerous points of identification which may be emphasised according to the particular exigencies involved (Lewis 1961:136). If lineages are relative they also grow at different rates, with different numerical strengths. The numerically stronger have greater genealogical span and therefore greater political power (1961: 145-6). The lineage system as a whole is therefore subject to change. Within a genealogical group lineages will tend to form alliances according to strength of numbers. They may, as occasion arises, unite as a body against some outside threat (1961:150). Size, in relation to genealogy, is therefore a central feature of Somali political organisation as this flows from the uneven rates of growth within lineages (1961:152).

While for Lewis the overall system is governed by lines of agnatic descent, *uterine ties* act to cement alliances across agnatic lines where potential areas of cleavage may occur. They may, that is, be called upon to rectify imbalances between lineages - 'to redress the balance of irregular growth and uneven proliferation' (1961:159, 1994:47). Agnatic descent, *tol* (or linking together) is the basis for political unity, but this is secured in practice through the *heer*, or political contract, which is a mechanism for the resolution of disputes at the level of the dia-paying group. Heer agreements are in turn made at lineage group councils or *shir*, at which elders have a prominent role to play (1961:183-200).

The central point here is that for Lewis *force* and *feud* are endemic to Somali social organisation. Clan politics are simply mapped onto the national party-political forms which emerged in the post-war period : 'The real struggle is between the elusive goal of nationhood and the day to day reality of sectional interests in lineage politics. For these traditional loyalties are part of the pastoral heritage and endure with it' (Lewis 1961: 267). This is a position which is echoed by other writers, for example Laitin and S. Samatar (1987:155), who argue that 'although religious, regional, and class divisions may play a part in Somali politics, ethnicity remains the paramount factor'. As remarked earlier, there are many who would regard contemporary Somali politics as 'nothing but traditional clan politics writ large' (S. Samatar 1991:26). It is this theme which I pursue in the following sections.

'Clannism', kinship and market pastoralism

While lineage segmentation would appear to have a clear functional advantage in the context of a traditional pastoral society which is geared to survival and competition for sparse resources, the 'structural precariousness' which characterises this system according to Lewis, fits uneasily with the requirements of bureaucratic forms of administration. For commentators like S. Samatar, therefore, there is an essential disjuncture between what was functional for traditional pastoralism and what is now seen as dysfunctional for modern state politics. The simple equation between clan and state- the latter seen as a continuation of the former - tells us very little about the relations between the two and begins to sound suspiciously like older versions of the 'cultural obstacles to modernisation' theme which was a hall mark of functionalist and modernisation theory in the 1950s and 60s (Eisenstadt 1964; Frank 1972). What is precisely missing is an account of the *historical* and *sociological* determinants which mobilise clan identities in the context of state politics. To broadly assert that there is an identity between clan and state elides the specific historical and social factors which mediate the two spheres.

In this context, Ahmed I. Samatar (1988) argues for the need to specify the historical changes undergone by pastoralism from precolonial times to independence. Rather than treat kinship as an apparently invariant feature of Somali social organisation, Samatar proposes to analyse it in terms of changes in the governing relations of political economy - in particular, (1) the insertion of Somali pastoralism into the international economy, and (2) the growing process of class differentiation which has partly resulted from this. Along with other commentators such as Kapteijns (1994), Ahmed I. Samatar (1994:8) traces a transition in kinship relations based around *tol* and *heer*, and anchored within an overarching moral framework, the *Umma* or Islamic law, to the present situation in which 'clannism', or the egoistic pursuit of self-interest based upon patrilineal descent, has come to dominate Somali social relations (1994:111) :

In my interpretation, *tol*, devoid of the hibid connection [marriage ties], *heer* and *qanoon* [Islamic law] - (the constituents of the Somali superego), once introduced to the seductions of state-power and private accumulation and consumption, turns into degenerative and narrow patrilineal identity (ie. clannism) conducive to very pernicious asociality.

Successive incursions, Arab, Portuguese, Egyptian and more recent colonial (British, Italian and French) had all left their mark on indigenous social relations (Ahmed I. Samatar 1988:21). Numerous protection treaties instigated by the European powers were signed with Somali clans in the 1880s in a scramble for influence in the Horn of Africa. The effects of intervention were particularly notable in relation to the development of a form of market pastoralism, which had resulted from Somalia's incorporation into the world economy (Kapteijns 1994; Aronson 1980). The consequences of a more pervasive market economy are well documented and include the disruption of traditional kin relations and partial proletarianisation of labour, ecological degradation and the reduction of risk-saving practices by pastoralists, all of which left them particularly vulnerable to climatic change. Particularly significant in this context is the growing exploitation of pastoralists who found themselves squeezed between a differentiated *merchant and middle class* in the coastal, urban areas and the *colonial and post-colonial state*, which obtained revenue from pastoral exports (Laitin and Samatar 1984).

In terms of the growing class differentiation of the urban areas and the rural hinterland, again many commentators point to a clear demarcation between pastoral-based kin relations and urban identities which had witnessed a significant weakening of kin ties (Kapteijns 1994:218; and Lewis's rejoinder, 1994:236). Class differentiation had become a significant feature of the towns in both the precolonial and colonial periods (Kapteijns 1994:222). Kapteijns (1994:222) suggests that the colonial state actively sponsored clan leaders in order to artificially maintain increasingly outmoded clan relations in the rural areas, - 'the colonial state confirmed or created clan leaders whose local authority derived ultimately from their links to the state and their access to the political, military and economic benefits it bestowed'. The overall rationale was to preserve rural relations against modernising influences, principally in order to ensure a steady flow of pastoral produce to the coastal and urban areas.

A heterogenous middle class dominated education and entered state politics in the post-war period (Bulhan 1980), 're-imagining' in Kapteijns' phrase the boundaries of Somali clan identity in the post-war period. Gaining pace from the 1920s with the formation of the first Somali association, the Somali Islamic Association (SIA), (Ahmed I. Samatar 1988:44), the middle class was distinctive precisely in so far as it used clan identities to bolster its own position, (a), economically, with merchant classes emphasising their kin-relations with their pastoral suppliers, and (b), politically, as the 'state class' competed for control of the state

apparatus in the postcolonial period. For Kapteijns (1994:228), 'the Somali middle class reimagined clannism in the context of its exploitative relations with the pastoral producers and rural and urban voters'. 'Clannism' is viewed here as a latter-day distortion of kin relations, based upon the transformation of the pastoral economy and the manipulation of clan identities by the middle class (Bulhan 1980). While the precise nature of this diffuse 'middle class' remains problematic (Saul 1979), there is a broad consensus around the view that both the postcolonial state and its incumbents, the so-called state class, have either marginalised or manipulated pastoral producers in their attempts to centralise and reinforce state authority (Doornbus 1993; Doornbus and Markakis 1994).

Interpretations of the role of clan identities in relation to the state therefore tend to hinge, in the first case, around Lewis's reaffirmation of *the primordial role of kinship* - 'clanship is and was essentially a multipurpose, culturally constructed resource of compelling power because of its ostensibly inherent character 'bred in the bone' and running 'in the blood', as Somalis conceptualise it (1994:233). This gives some leeway both to the idea of *the social construction of kinship relations* which is central to Kapteijns' account and to the *manipulation of clan* which is pivotal to Ahmed I. Samatar. At the same time however Lewis is careful to assert the primacy of clanship as the *determining* principle of Somali social organisation. The second major tendency is the political economy approach represented primarily by Ahmed I. Samatar and Kapteijns. The general thrust here is to emphasise Somalia's insertion into the world capitalist economy, the uneven development of peripheral capitalism and the subordination of pastoral relations to an economic and political nexus dominated by the state and state-class:

While this view does not completely dismiss the role of primordial affinities in the the emerging struggle over the state in Somalia, it is an attempt to go beyond any single determinism and consider the interaction of various factors - clanism and intra-class competition among them, (Ahmed I. Samatar 1988:138).

Significantly however, in practice the theme of how the middle class manipulate clannism is a paramount feature in Ahmed I. Samatar's approach (1988:74). In this context Hussein Adam (1992:13) has attempted to counter both Lewis and Samatar's one-sided emphases by 'considering clan and class formation dialectically and giving due weight to the role of cultural factors'. Clan identities for Adam have a primary *socio-economic* basis and are particularly

important in redressing the balance in the case of an abuse of power by any one clan or clan alliance. In effect, Adam's analysis represents an attempt to unify the *cultural significance* of clanship with more purely *economic processes*. As a result, it is possible to argue that clanship is both socially constructed (as Lewis implies and as Kapteijns clearly asserts) and also decisive in its effects upon other social processes.

The end result of this is paradoxical for Somalis according to Kapteijns (1994:228) for 'most Somali men and women seemed unable even to imagine an alternative communal identity or to acknowledge that clannism was not an identity to which Somalis are genetically predisposed'. 'Clannism' is therefore the form in which the contemporary Somali 'imagined identity' is collectively constructed. At the same time it is a distortion of the moral framework of pre-colonial Somali kin relations (Kapteijns 1994). The appeal of clan as an organising principle lies precisely as Lewis suggests in its 'ostensibly inherent' character. In another context Stuart Hall has similarly argued in relation to the potency of 'racial' signifiers, that their ideological effectivity lies in their apparent rootedness in the natural order (Hall 1980:342). In the same way the significance of clanship is socially produced - whether this refers to the originary kin relations postulated by contributors like Ahmed I. Samatar and Kapteijns (and disputed by Lewis) or the ideology of 'clannism' which now distorts these and masks other forms of economic and political self-interest. It is this process which Kapteijns encapsulates when she refers to the *imagined communal identity* of the Somalis and which earlier we had conceptualised in terms of the political construction of ethnicity.

Clan and Nation-State

Indeed, evidence of the centrality of clan to contemporary Somali politics is not hard to find (Adan 1994). Lewis (1961,1983,1994) and others (Laitin and S. Samatar 1987) have extensively documented the clan basis of party politics in the post-war and post-colonial periods. Despite attempts to suppress clan identities noted at the beginning of this chapter, clanship habitually tended to resurface as a basis for political organisation and identification (Lewis 1961: 284). From the very inception of the Somali Republic in 1960 there were fundamental difficulties over uniting the two areas of previously British controlled Somaliland in the north and Italian-ruled Somalia in the south (S. Samatar 1991:16). In April 1960 a joint meeting of the legislatures of Somaliland and Somalia proclaimed that the two territories be united. Discrepancies between the two legislatures and administrations led to a now

independent Somalia issuing a decree of union between the two entities, although this was never legally formalised (Drysdale 1992:11-12; Adan 1994:101). Despite this, Somaliland and Somalia were *de facto* united in July 1960 as the Somali Republic. The new government was southern dominated, one amongst several factors which quickly led to northern calls for secession. A referendum held in the north in 1961 showed clear evidence of opposition to the Union (Drysdale 1992:12). Particular grievances arose in relation to the different administrations, legislatures, languages and regional disparities between the north and south of the fledging republic. An attempted *coup d'etat* in the north followed in December 1960. Although this was unsuccessful it was a warning sign of the instability of the union and in particular of northern fears of attempted southern hegemony (Ahmed I. Samatar 1988:62).

That the early civilian governments were affected by clan rivalries is also well illustrated in the literature. Davidson writing in 1975, for example, saw the 1960s as a 'period of intensive fragmentation of party along caste, and tribal lines - clans, sub-clans and extended families - down to one-man parties' (1975:27). A less fractious picture of the early years of civilian government is presented by Ahmed I. Samatar who stresses that the Shermaarke period of 1960-64 consisted of a coalition of SYL, SNL and the United Somali Party (USP), with the main lines of cleavage falling along class rather than clan lines. This is further illustrated for Samatar by the fact that the Hussein and Egal administrations of the 1964-69 period tended toward northern domination. The most significant factor in this reading are the changes in the climate of petty bourgeois politics in this period (Ahmed I. Samatar 1988:68-9). These accelerated after 1967 under the new government of Egal, in which clientism and neo-patrimonialism built along clan lines became endemic to the state apparatus (1988:71).

A deteriorating situation of economic stagnation, partial proletarianisation of rural areas and urban pauperisation, as well as continued dependence on overseas aid, was brought to a head with the assassination of President Shermaarke in 1969. Despite Prime minister Egal's attempts to alleviate the situation (S. Samatar 1991:17), six days after the assassination the military assumed power in a bloodless coup. That there may have been a degree of sympathy for the coup is evident from a number of sources. In many quarters the coup was seen as justifiable, given 'the abuse and misuse of public power and resources by the elected politicians' (Abdi I. Samatar 1992:213). It was, as Samatar (1992:213) further goes on to argue, 'the first time in African politics when a sizeable opposition voluntarily dissolved their parties and opted for a government dominated by a single party'.

Hopes for democratisation under the military rule of Major General Siyad Barre's Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC) were however soon to be dashed, as the regime proved to be 'highly repressive in ways unknown in Somali history' (Abdi I. Samatar 1992:213). Suspension of the constitution and parliament and curtailment of rights of association were rapidly enforced. Siyad's programme of national reconstruction under the banner of 'scientific socialism' (Ahmed I. Samatar 1988:89; Lewis 1993:32), consisted of a range of projects aimed at national revitalisation. While assessments of Siyad's economic record are generally highly critical (Laitin and S. Samatar 1984; Ahmed I. Samatar 1988:100) those relating to the social and political campaigns, in education and literacy for example (Laitin 1977; Ahmed I. Samatar 1988:103) or the position of women (Kapteijns 1994; IRBC 1994) are more equivocal. Indisputed features of Barre's reign were the extent of militarisation (Adam 1992:20), first under Soviet and then U.S. tutelage, and the centralisation of power in Siyad's own hands (Adan 1994:103). As Lewis goes on to argue, in addition to a veritable cult of the personality around Siyad (1994:153) there was the barely disguised hegemony of the *Darod* clan family in the so-called M.O.D. alliance of the *Marrehan*, *Ogaden* and *Dulbahante* clans which administered the state apparatus (Lewis 1994:154). This was despite the official campaigns condemning tribalism which Siyad initiated in 1971.

The reinforcement of clan as a basis for political identification is a recurrent theme in commentaries on the Barre regime. Again, this is open to variations in interpretation, from Lewis's characteristic assertion that tribalism 'waited in the wings' (1994:171), to Ahmed I. Samatar's search for a 'theoretical framework that stretches beyond clannist exclusiveness' (1988:138). As evidence of the wider social issues involved Samatar points to the divisions within the petty bourgeois leadership as a significant contending factor. Equally, the fact that an abortive coup by the *Mijerteyn* sub-clan of the *Darod* was led against Barre in the wake of the debacle in the Ogaden war of 1977, suggests that more than questions of clan loyalty were at stake (Adan 1994:104).

The period of armed opposition to Barre dates from the formation of the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) in 1978, although the *Mijerteyn* and the SSDF were rapidly neutralised by Siyad. The Ogaden war had another effect which was to prove decisive for the regime's relations to the *Isaq* clans based in the North west of the country. As the *Africa Watch* team document (1990), in the wake of the Ogaden war there was a massive influx of ethnic Somalis and Oromos into the northern border regions of Somalia. Some of these were

then forced into government militias which were used to repress the *Isaq* population in the north west (1990:30). *Isaq* were being systematically weeded out from the civil service and armed forces, even before the formation of the Somali National Movement (SNM) in the Gulf states and Britain in the early 1980s (Lewis 1994:180). Government persecution of the *Isaq* escalated in 1981 after the SNM located its headquarters in neighbouring Ethiopia (Africa Watch 1990:44; Searle 1992). The results of this are well documented and include the imposition of a state of emergency in northern regions, the operation of curfew, confiscation of property, withdrawal of export licences and relocation of villages (Africa Watch 1990:44). Despite this reign of terror (S. Samatar 1991:18) Barre was now faced with opposition from the SSDF and the SNM, both of whom led their operations from inside Ethiopia. It was this joint assault which led Barre to negotiate a peace with Mengistu of Ethiopia, thereby dropping all previous territorial claims to the formation of a Greater Somalia in return for Mengistu's cessation of support for the SNM and SSDF. By 1988 therefore Barre was free to concentrate on domestic issues. The scene was set for an all out war on the north (Lewis 1993:69).

Civil war, international intervention and retreat

In May 1988 the SNM launched co-ordinated attacks on the northern cities of Hargeisa and Burao and succeeded in temporarily routing Barre's forces. By July of the same year Barre had regained both cities, having subjected them to heavy artillery and aerial bombardment. As a result over 400,000 Somalis sought refuge in Ethiopia while another 50,000 had been killed by government troops (Adan 1994:106; Africa Watch 1990). An additional 500,000 were internally displaced (Africa Watch 1990). Persecution of the *Isaq* also spread to the south of the country. The first substantial wave of Somali refugees to arrive in Britain as a result of the civil war dates from this period. While the SNM was recovering from this assault, the *Hawiye* (the largest and most powerful clan in the south) had founded the United Somali Congress (USC). This quickly split into two factions (see below). Ogadeni refugees in Hargeisa who had been used by Barre against the SNM, formed their own Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM) which also opposed the regime. Although peaceful avenues of change were attempted for example through the *Manifesto Group* (Bradbury 1997:12) attempts at liberalisation by the regime arrived too late. Having reached an accord in August 1990, the three liberation movements led a coordinated attack against Barre which resulted in his overthrow and flight from Mogadishu in January 1991. Barre was to continue destabilising the south of the country through his army, reformed as the *Darod* affiliated Somali National Front (SNF), with

devastating effects for the inhabitants. In the majority of cases these were from minority clan groups with no direct involvement in the conflict.

The coalition of forces which overthrew Barre soon dissolved into factional disputes: the *Manifesto Group* hurriedly appointed Ali Mahdi Mohamed, belonging to the *Abgal* sub-clan of the *Hawiye*, as interim president of the new Somali Republic. General Aideed, belonging to the rival *Habar Gidir* sub-clan of the *Hawiye*, had led the USC rout of Mogadishu and opposed Ali Mahdi on political, ideological as well as personal grounds (Abdullahi 1995). A final rupture occurred between the two factions of the USC in September 1991, resulting in Ali Mahdi occupying the north of Mogadishu and Aideed the south. By this time Aideed's faction (along with the SPM) had transmuted into the Somali National Alliance (SNA) (Lewis 1993:72). Between December 1991 and March 1992 when the UN intervened to arrange a ceasefire, there was continuous conflict between the different factions of the USC. The USC and the SPM were also involved in a war of attrition with Barre's forces under the SNF. The coastal regions of Brava, Merca and the Benadiri population in general, as well as the central agricultural regions were systematically looted and razed to the ground as the contending factions battled for resources and power (Lulling 1997; Besteman and Cassanelli 1996).

One immediate outcome of the civil war in Somalia's central regions was the destruction of the agricultural belt occupied by the *Rahanweyn*, *Digil*, *Gosha* and other minority clans and communities (Lyons and Ahmed I. Samatar 1994). Famine awaited those who were unable to escape to Kenya, Ethiopia or more secure areas in Somalia (Waldron and Hasci 1995). Although Human Rights organisations had signalled the impending disaster in Somalia - Rakiya Omaar of the US based *Africa Watch* asserted that signs of social collapse and starvation had been clear three years prior to UN *Operation Restore Hope* in December 1992 - the international response was slow in coming. Several factors explain the delay: for the US priorities were changing in the immediate post-cold war world, where countries like Somalia had lost their significance as flash-points of superpower conflict; US and UN engagement in the Gulf and the prior establishment of the safe haven in northern Iraq, had also detracted attention from the situation in Somalia. The final decision to intervene in December 1992 was due to a number of factors. As Abdullahi (1995) argues, these were the last days of the Bush administration and the kudos of leading a humanitarian operation in Somalia may have seemed opportune to the departing President. Somalia also continued to be of strategic interest to the US, with the stationing of the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) in Berbera allowing easy

access to the Middle East. Finally, in the period of the New World Order it had become incumbent on the US to demonstrate a lead role in the absence of a rival superpower. What the Gulf War had secured by force, it was believed intervention in Somalia would establish by more humane methods. This was despite the fact that by the time of *Operation Restore Hope* in December 1992 it was already clear that the worst of the famine in Somalia was over (Abdullahi 1995; de Waal 1998).

The United Nations Task Force (UNITAF) formed under UN Security Council Resolution 794, justified intervention on the grounds that the condition of statelessness in Somalia posed a threat to 'international security and peace'. As we have seen, this reflects the changed nature of security concerns in the post-cold war period. Lyons and Ahmed I. Samatar (1994:3) note in this context that '*political disintegration generates instability and threatens neighbouring states through refugee flows*'. For Mayall (1994) resolution 794 was an unprecedented intervention in the affairs of a sovereign state, although the earlier establishment of the 'safe haven' in northern Iraq under UN resolution 688 had provided a testing ground both for an enlarged UN role and for the maintenance of US leadership in the Middle East. In both cases 'humanitarian interventions' violated the sovereignty of an independent state but were justified on the grounds of *maintaining international security and peace*. In the Somali case, what may have begun as a humanitarian operation quickly degenerated into an exercise in 'nation-building' under UNOSOM II in May 1993. In this context UNOSOM I referred to Sahnoun's earlier role as UN observer in Somalia in April 1992 (Sahnoun 1994).

The descent into chaos in Somalia has been amply documented (Abdullahi 1995; Lyons and Ahmed I. Samatar 1994; Mayall 1994; Bolton 1994; de Waal 1998). The most salient factors behind the failure of UNOSOM II relate to the heightened US role in Somalia and in particular the targetting of Aideed and the favouring of military leaders sympathetic to the old regime. The failure of the US to act earlier in relation to the famine in Somalia and Bush's track record of military support for Barre (Halliday 1983,1989) suggested to many Somalis that the US was more concerned to create a client state favourable to its own interests in the region (Abdullahi 1995), rather than provide disinterested humanitarian aid (de Waal 1998:134). The relative speed with which the UN operation was wound down after a series of open conflicts with Aideed's faction of the USC during 1993 suggests that the US preferred to maintain its authority in ways other than full-scale war ('The US saves its fists and uses a sling' *Guardian* 28.6.93, 'Clinton aims to spread burden with new foreign policy' *Guardian*

19.8.93). Low intensity operations and rapid response units, in addition to the internationalisation of the costs of maintaining security (Gill 1992) were to be the favoured future US options.

In the event, a deadline for US withdrawal from Somalia by March 1994 was finalised by March 1995. This was despite the fact that US Chief of Staff, General Colin Powell, declared that a US withdrawal would be 'devastating' for US hopes of a 'new world order' (*Guardian* 23.9.93). Post-mortems on the UN intervention blamed either the UN or President Clinton for deviating from the original aims of *Operation Restore Hope* (Bolton 1994). The legality and morality of intervention also came under close scrutiny (de Waal and Omaar 1994) with many commentators arguing that humanitarian intervention was used as a cover for other, more pragmatic purposes. US support for both Siyad Barre in Somalia and Saddam Hussein in Iraq throughout the 1980s, despite massive human rights violations perpetrated by them against their own populations, suggest that this was indeed the case. Most significantly, the greater room for manoeuvre in the post-cold war world and the need to stamp authority in the short-lived 'new world order' go some way to explaining the character of US interventions in this period. A common link, as I argue in relation to the formation of the 'safe haven' in Iraq, is a changed conception of international security in this period. In Somalia, the absence of a state and the impact of social disintegration leading to refugee flows to neighbouring states, was used to justify international intervention. In Iraq, as I demonstrate in chapter four, Kurdish refugees massing on Turkey's border in the wake of the failed bid for Kurdish autonomy in March 1991, by endangering the territorial integrity of Turkey produced the novel international response of 'internalising' the refugee crisis within the borders of northern Iraq itself.

Conclusion

To conclude, it is necessary to briefly restate some of the themes which were touched upon in the introductory remarks to this chapter. These concern the significance of what is now seen as a state of societal collapse, the effective dissolution of state and society in Somalia. The reply to the question 'what went wrong in Somalia?' (Doornbus and Markakis 1994), is typically framed in terms of a generalised crisis of the post-colonial state (Brittain 1992:46). For Doornbus and Markakis, but also as we have seen for commentators like Lewis, Laitin and Said Samatar, *the specific roots of the Somali crisis lie in a fundamental mismatch*

between the pastoral basis of social relations and the organisational requirements of centralised state power. A particularly important feature here is the issue of foreign intervention, briefly alluded to in relation to Barre's rapid conversion from Soviet to U.S. tutelage in the late 1970s and further developed in the context of *Operation Restore Hope*. Since the end of the second cold war (Halliday 1983) and the demise of the former Soviet Union the main issue facing African states would appear to be that of superpower *disengagement*, or rather meeting the new terms under which American hegemony is attempting to reconstitute itself within the region (Brittain 1992; Volman 1993). From the wider African perspective one conclusion from the foregoing argument is that 'the collapse of the post-colonial state is a regional, not solely a Somali, phenomenon' (Doornbus and Markakis 1994:85). Extending the argument, Gros (1996) has argued that the end of the cold war has seen the emergence of a 'fourth world' of collapsed states. In the African context Somalia represents a case of social and political 'anarchy', specifically in relation to the absence of centralised state power.

If the current crisis in Somalia is in many ways indicative of broader regional issues, the roots of the specific Somali crisis still stand in need of further elaboration. As we have seen, for Doornbus and Markakis (1994:86) 'to the extent that Somali society remained in the traditional pastoralist mode, it had no need for, nor could it afford the post-colonial state that was imposed on it'. Once the centralised apparatus of the state was in existence however it provided a basis both for the elaboration of a differentiated middle class of merchants, intelligentsia and state-class *and* for a process of contestation and consolidation of clan-identities in the struggle for control of economic and political resources. Developing the kind of analysis proposed by the Samatar brothers and Kapteijns, Doornbus and Markakis (1994:86) argue that 'clannishness expanded from the lower levels of agnatic kinship to the full clan and even the clan family. In this expanded form, the clan came to rival the nation', with consequences for the protracted process of state collapse which we have charted in this chapter.

With the secession of the north-west from southern Somalia in May 1991, the 'dissolution of Somalia as a nation-state' (Lyons and Ahmed I. Samatar 1994:23) would appear to have been complete. The overwhelmingly negative experience of over thirty years of union with the south had led to the final crack in the fragile edifice of Somali national unity. Although this has enabled Somaliland to lay the foundations of reconstruction in the north-west (Bradbury

1997), the overall project of Somali unity within a territorially integrated nation-state would appear to have failed. From Barre's attempts to 'stamp out tribalism', to the development of a Latin script for Somali (Laitin 1977) and the national literacy campaigns of 1973-4, to the pan-Somali ideal of a 'Greater Somalia', one central strand of the post-colonial experience had been the attempt to forge a united national consciousness amongst Somalis (Lewis 1980, 1983; Laitin and S. Samatar 1987).

The key elements of 'Somaliness', as Simons argues (1995) are nomadic/pastoral traditions, combined with clanship and Islam. Islam itself as Cassanelli (1982) has argued, became a vehicle for a collective sense of Somali identity throughout the nineteenth century, although Cassanelli is at pains to emphasise the ambiguous nature of Islam in the Somali context. The dominance of clan-based and nomadic/pastoral traditions in the 'national imaginary' on the other hand are due to the significance of these groups, both to the economic life of the country and to the manipulation of 'clannism' by the emerging state-class in the post-war period (Ahmed I. Samatar 1988). As Ahmed argues (1995: 225), *the invention of Somali identity* involved a glorification of the nomadic tradition, alongside the demotion of other Somali traditions. The development of a standard Somali based on Latin orthography, for example, as Cassanelli points out (1996:17) entailed the demotion of southern dialects in favour of the dialects of central and northern Somalia.

For commentators like Simons (1995,1997) the very fragility of the post-colonial state in Somalia and its inability to guarantee security for its inhabitants, meant that kinship networks retained their significance as a response both to ecological and *political* uncertainty. Clanship therefore remained the principal basis of trust under conditions of social and political change. The current period of societal breakdown in Somalia has meant that clanship has been reactivated as the means of securing safety networks and access to resources. A similar argument has been marshalled by El-Solh (1991) in relation to Somalis in London's East End. While this perspective acknowledges the fluidity of clan identities it emphasises the relative fixity of clanship in terms of its functions in conditions of uncertainty. An alternative perspective and one developed in my fieldwork, is that the current crisis of Somali state and society has forced a re-evaluation of Somali identity and history (Alpers 1995), and resulted in the need to *reformulate the Somali imagined identity* which is particularly acute amongst the Somalis of the diaspora (Cassanelli 1998).

Lyons and Ahmed I. Samatar (1994:63) for example, stress the erosion of the old systems of *heer* and the *Unma* and the need for the invention of new cultural forms and identities in Somalia. The degeneration of the old system has resulted in the 'alienation of individuals seeking to find meaning and cultural guideposts in circumstances *where traditional culture and values no longer relate to their environment...*' (my italics *ibid*:64). In relation to the formation of identities amongst Somalis in the diaspora, as Cassanelli (1998:1) notes, 'the very act of living abroad frequently enables people to think about their identity and their history in new ways'. These issues of change and the reformulation of identities amongst Somalis in the diaspora are further developed in my fieldwork amongst Somali refugees in London.

Chapter 4

The Kurds and the quest for a state

If Somalia presents us with the case of a failed or collapsed state in the wake of the cold war and subsequent international intervention and withdrawal, the situation of the Kurds illustrates the continuing search for a nation-state, within a region dominated by competing Arab, Persian, Syrian and Turkish state nationalisms. Today, the Kurds represent a minority within each of their states of residence, a 'stranded minority' in Cohen's terms (1997:191), or for Chaliand (1989) an 'inserted minority', with ethnic, linguistic and (in some cases) religious differences from each state's dominant ethnic group. Estimates for the population of Kurdistan vary widely, although reliable sources indicate a population of over 22 million, dispersed between Turkey (10-12 million), Iran (5-6 million) and Iraq (4 million) (Hassanpour 1994; Bruinessen 1996a). Although lacking clearly defined territorial boundaries and most significantly *international recognition*, Kurdistan is understood here to include 'most of Turkey's east and south-east, parts of north-western and north-eastern Syria, northern Iraq, and the adjacent parts of western Iran' (Bruinessen 1996a:30) Kurds are also spread throughout Armenia and Azerbaijan, although most Kurds continue to inhabit the mountainous regions where Turkey, Iran and Iraq converge (McDowall 1996:5-6). It is clear that Kurdistan, in the sense of a territorially defined, independent *nation-state* has never existed (Aguado 1990: 154). But for most Kurds the territorial reality of Kurdistan remains central to their sense of 'imagined' national identity (McDowall 1996:3).

After decades of oppression the Kurds still pursue a viable state form, whether in the guise of regional autonomy in Iraq or a form of federation in Turkey. One central theme which I develop here is that the search for recognition as a 'nation-in-waiting' animates Kurdish political discourse, from the militarisation of Kurdish politics (Bozarslan 1996:33) to the 'mobilisation and recruitment of civilian populations' (1996:33). Another important theme concerns the impact of nation-building in Turkey, Iraq and Iran, on the process of nation-formation amongst the Kurds themselves. In particular, the degree to which Kurds have been recognised as minorities within their states of residence has significant implications for Kurdish identity and adaptation in the diaspora. In this chapter I provide an overview of the historical background to Kurdistan and the significance of nation-building in the Middle East for the course of Kurdish development since the 1920s. The roots of the ongoing exodus of

Kurds are traced to the patterns of exclusion which they have experienced in their different 'host' states since that time. In the contemporary period the Kurdish revival in Turkey from the 1970s onwards is singled out for its impact on Kurdish politics, both in the Middle East and also amongst Kurds in the diaspora.

The search for recognition

Ethnohistory and the Kurds

For Smith (1995:61) the Kurds represent one instance of a premodern type of 'peripheral' ethnies, long dominated by the core ethnies into whose states they have been incorporated and systematically discriminated against as minorities. One outcome of this marginalisation has been the absence of an effective 'ethno-history' or written documentation of Kurdish tradition which their more powerful neighbours have enjoyed (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1986:13-14). Although Smith goes on to argue that the Kurds as 'resident ethnies' have managed to sustain a strong sense of cultural continuity, the absence of a state to underwrite claims to national legitimacy remains one of the bugbears of Kurdish nationalism. One significant aspect of ethno-history involves the tracing of a continuous historical narrative (Bhabha 1990b). This is particularly important for those peoples who lack the authority of a state and whose ability to express their communal identity has been systematically suppressed. As I argue later, the situation of the Kurds in Turkey represents the clearest case of an outright prohibition on expressions of Kurdish identity, while Iraq and Iran have allowed varying degrees of cultural expression and recognition as a minority to the Kurds. *The assertion of Kurdish identity takes a correspondingly intense and embattled form in Turkey, a factor which also has important implications for Kurds in the diaspora.*

To briefly retrace the early history of the Kurds, in terms of their origins the first appearance of proto-Kurdish peoples has been dated to the migration of Indo-European tribes westwards across Iran between three and five thousand years ago (Feili and Fromchuck 1986:123; Aguado 1990:153; McDowall 1996:8). Of the later migrants, the Medes are amongst the most commonly cited ancestors of the Kurds, although the likelihood is one of mixed ancestry (Feili and Fromchuck 1986; McDowall 1996:9). As Mc Dowell reminds us (1996), it is the *imagined lineage* of the Kurds which is significant for future political practice. Although Izady (1992:34) is confident that in the period from the fifth century BC to the sixth century AD the 'consolidation of the modern Kurdish national identity' took place, other

commentators are more circumspect. McDowell for example (1996:4-5) dates the emergence of a distinctive Kurdish *national consciousness* only from 1918 onwards. A more rudimentary *ethnic awareness* would appear to have been evident by the late seventeenth century with Ahmad-i Khani's poem, *Mem-u-Zin* (1996:5). Earlier still, Sherif Khan's general 'history of the Kurds' of 1596, displays an awareness of pan-Kurdish identity which is borne out of the experience of actual disunity (Hassanpour 1994: 3).

Despite controversies concerning the earlier period, it would appear that with the Arab conquests of the seventh century AD 'the Kurds (had) emerged from historical obscurity' (McDowall 1996:21). The Kurds were set to play an intermediary role in relation to their more powerful neighbours. Typically, this was to be through aligning themselves with the stronger party in order to secure a degree of independence. Although Izady (1992:41) places the Kurds at the heart of resurgent Islam in the twelfth century, a picture of consolidated Kurdish identity which is disputed by McDowall (1996:23), the thirteenth century Turkic and Mongol migrations began a period of instability which was to last until the relative peace of the sixteenth century. Briefly told, with the establishment of the Ottoman and Persian Empires as the dominant forces in the region the Kurds own position became more secure (McDowall 1996:26). As the Kurds now occupied the border marches between two mighty empires, they gained substantial degrees of independence by serving the interests of whichever party was dominant in a particular region. From this period began the reign of the semi-autonomous Kurdish principalities which lasted until the early nineteenth century (Bruinessen 1992a). In this respect, it is important to note that it is not until the erosion (in the early to mid nineteenth century) of the semi-autonomous status which Kurdish principalities had enjoyed that the *constituent elements* of Kurdish nationalism began to appear. As Kendal documents (1993:17) nineteenth century Kurdish nationalism had its roots in the tribal structures of rural Kurdistan and the role of the religious orders within this (McDowall 1996:50). As such, it had tended to be conservative in nature, aiming to maintain traditional social structures rather than promoting social transformation (Hassanpour 1994:4).

From tribalism to the world market

Traditional Kurdistan remained a predominantly rural society, with the majority of the population engaged in cultivation and animal husbandry while a small minority were nomadic. Kurdish social structure, as Bruinessen (1992a:120) documents, was 'highly stratified'. One of the more significant divisions was between Kurds living on the mountains and those on the

plains. The sedentary plains economy was characterised by exploitative landlord/peasant relations, with plains Kurds standing in a generally subservient relation to mountain Kurds. Overall, a form of 'tribalism' based on a *segmentary lineage structure* was the basis of social order, although as Bruinessen (1992a:59) remarks, it had proven extremely difficult to classify, except in times of conflict when the main lines of cleavage emerged. On the whole, non-tribal peasants stood in an inferior position to those belonging to tribes, in relation to access to customary grazing rights for example.

Tribal confederations were the largest units, followed by tribes and sub-tribes (Bruinessen 1992a). In practice, the household was the basic unit from which the lineage could be traced back to an ancestor, often of imagined lineage. According to Bruinessen, corporate groups above or below the village level rarely operated. As we have seen, tribe and territory were linked, particularly with the granting of territorial grazing rights. In this respect, given the inherently conflictual nature of segmentary lineage systems blood feuds were common (Bruinessen 1992a: 66-7). One of the pivotal roles of the *Agha* or tribal leader was to mediate in feuds, a role which was later adopted by the *Sheiks* in the wake of the weakened power of the agha class in the nineteenth century. Changes in land law in the nineteenth century encouraged the emergence of absentee landlordism, sharecropping and money-lending with rural indebtedness leading to a steady flow of Kurdish migration to the cities. A process of *de-tribalisation of land* in the mid-nineteenth century bolstered the position of landlord and Agha as titleholders (McDowall 1989:9).

As we have seen, historically Kurdistan has occupied a position on the periphery of its stronger neighbouring states. While this promoted the emergence of Kurdish principalities in the period from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, it also reinforced the highly segmented social structure outlined by Bruinessen, with a Kurdish aristocracy 'mimicing' its Ottoman overlords (Bruinessen 1992a:161). With the weakening of the Ottoman Empire under the impact of internal insolvency and Western financial influence (Kendal 1993:11-12) a more centralised form of control was exercised over the Kurds, with a consequent disintegration of the Kurdish emirates into smaller tribal units which were effectively *created and administered by the state* (Bruinessen 1992a:182). For Bruinessen this process has accelerated in the twentieth century to such an extent that power is now highly localised and dispersed in Kurdish rural society, with only the village Agha or tribal leader maintaining any vestige of authority. As Bruinessen (1992a:195) pointedly remarks, 'This devolution of

Kurdish political institutions is an immediate consequence of the development of the political institutions of the states into which Kurdistan was incorporated'.

Although weakened, as many commentators note *tribalism remains central to Kurdish political and social relations*. This underlies the paradox noted by Bruinessen of a Kurdish national liberation movement with a *conservative politics!* As he goes on to argue, the dominance of figures such as Barzani and Talabani (to which we might add Abdullah Ocalan) in the contemporary Kurdish movement, may indicate that the power of charismatic or religious leadership is far from over. Yet at the same time, the incapsulation of the tribe into the state apparatus and *the erosion of traditional rural relations through the incursions of the world market* have seriously undermined the traditional basis of Kurdish nationalism. As I illustrate below, in the twentieth century Kurdistan has become increasingly integrated into the international economy through internal and international migration and refugee displacement (Bruinessen 1992b,1996a). One consequence of this has been the emergence of urban-based and socialist Kurdish movements, particularly in Turkey.

Lost opportunities for the Kurds

The years from 1918 to 1923 have often been presented as a watershed in the history of Kurdistan, a period of lost opportunities caused by internal factionalism and ineffective leadership. To briefly state the background to these years, well before the end of the First World War the Allies had been devising ways of dividing the Ottoman Empire. The *Sykes Picot agreement* of 1917, for example, had proposed a joint dismemberment between France, Russia, Greece and Italy (McDowall 1996:116). The speed of events, with the overthrow of the Czar in Russia and the signing of the Armistice in 1918, dramatically altered the political landscape. In January 1918 President Woodrow Wilson proposed his *Fourteen Points for World peace* in which he had clearly stated that non-Turkic minorities inside the Ottoman Empire should be allowed 'autonomous development'. In keeping with this the *Treaty of Sevres* of 1920, signed by the Allies and a besieged Istanbul government, allowed for an Armenian state and independent Kurdistan.

As McDowall (1992:17) states, even without ensuing events there were several obstacles to the success of this arrangement. The first was the conflict between Armenians and Kurds inside the Ottoman Empire, who as Bruinessen remarks (1992a 269) often occupied the same territory. The use of Kurdish militias, the *Hamidiah*, by Sultan Abdul Hamid II to massacre

Armenians (Bruinessen 1992a:188-9) was later compounded by the use of Kurdish troops in the evacuation of Armenians from Eastern Anatolia in the First World War (1992a:271). As Bruinessen (1992a:269) frankly reminds us 'it was the Armenian massacres which made a Kurdish state feasible'. The second factor militating against the success of the Treaty was the conservative nature of the Agha class in Kurdistan, who as McDowall (1992:17) argues, 'had no interest in an unpredictable Kurdish entity, in which their own status might change for the worse'. In a similar vein, Kendal (1993:31) argues for a failure of leadership in the Kurdish movement, whose greatest moment of opportunity was during the *Armistice period* when the power vacuum at the time created a unique opening for an independent Kurdistan. For Kendal (1993:35) the Treaty of Sevres offered no such promise of Kurdish independence, but rather a truncated statelet from which two thirds of Ottoman Kurdistan was to be excluded. The 'independent' Kurdistan promised by the Treaty was simply 'an affront to the Kurds' (1993:35).

Whatever the imperial logic underlying the Treaty of Sevres, it was soon to be rendered obsolete by the course of events. As McDowall (1996:137) argues, 'it was void before the ink was dry', largely because power had already shifted to the cause of Turkish independence. Lured by the promise of an independent Sunni state many Kurdish nationalists, in fear of a Christian dominated Armenia, had supported the Ankara based government of Mustafa Kemal (Attaturk or 'Father of the Turks') in the Turkish war of independence which ensued after the collapse of the Ottoman government (Bruinessen 1992a: 272-3; McDowall 1996:130). Attaturk had earlier proposed a unity of Turks and Kurds against foreign occupation. On achieving the goal of national independence the strategic nature of this alliance was to be rapidly exposed. As Attaturk remarked on Nov 1st 1922, 'the state we have just created is a Turkish state' (quoted in Kendal 1993:48). As Kendal (1993:49) goes on to argue, the long-term aim of Kemalism had been to eliminate the Armenians and assimilate the Kurds.

Significantly, the *Treaty of Lausanne* (1923) ratified by Turkey and the Allied powers to finally settle the distribution of territory, failed to refer to the Kurds by name. The question of Kurdish autonomy was no longer on the agenda, for Turkey or the Allied powers, albeit Article 39 of the treaty allowed for the use of non-Turkic languages by national minorities (McDowall 1996:142). On the whole, the Treaty ratified what had been accomplished by Attaturk through force of arms (McDowall 1996:140). As Bruinessen (1992a:273) remarks, 'the Allies had to accept the new Treaty as a fact. The Treaty of Sevres became meaningless'.

The Treaty of Laussane, signed on the 23rd July, 1923, gave Turkey control of Eastern Thrace (European Turkey) and the remainder of Anatolia. As McDowall (1996:143) caustically notes, 'from that day onwards (Turkey) sought to hammer the Kurdish people on a Turanic anvil' (Kendal 1993). (1.) Those Kurds not under Turkish or British administration were integrated into French controlled Syria, Iran and the Soviet Union.

In 1918 the British had effectively secured control of the former Ottoman provinces of Mesopotamia. The original British plan was the creation of an Arab state with 'semi-autonomous Kurdish provinces' (McDowall 1989:18), the latter acting as buffer zones to their real area of interest, Mesopotamia. The *vilayet or province of Mosul* (populated mainly by Kurds) was a vital element in British calculations, initially for strategic reasons and later for the oil reserves around Kirkuk (McDowall 1996:143). Articles 62 and 64 of the Treaty of Sevres had proposed an autonomous Kurdistan with the right to later elect for complete independence should the Kurds be considered capable of self-government. The future of Mosul was to be decided at a later date in bilateral talks between Britain and Turkey with a view to its being integrated in an independent Kurdistan. The main issue for British interests was that newly formed Iraq (former Mesopotamia) would lack viability without Mosul to protect its northern frontiers.

In the event, the League of Nations was called in to arbitrate between the competing claims of Britain, Turkey and the majority Kurdish population of Mosul, about half of whom opted for autonomy within a future Iraq (McDowall 1996:144). After deliberation, the commission appointed by the League of Nations decided to award Mosul to Iraq under a 25 year British Mandate, guaranteeing *some degree of political and cultural autonomy to the Kurds who comprised nearly three quarters of its population*. Divisions between Kurdish groups (McDowall 1989:18), some of whom supported limited autonomy and others complete separatism, was an important contributory factor to the eventual inclusion of the Mosul Kurds in Iraq (McDowall 1996:143). Turkey finally accepted British control of Mosul in a bilateral treaty in 1926. The Anglo-Iraqi treaty of 1930 (implemented in 1932) which gave Iraq independence was to make no mention of Kurdish political or cultural rights.

Nation-building and Kurdish identity in the Middle East

Divergent paths of development

Turkey, as we have seen, emerged out of the ruins of the Ottoman Empire and was set to forge a distinct national identity under the 'Turanic anvil' as McDowall remarks above. Iraq, on the other hand, was the product of British intervention and had an 'unambiguous colonial identity' (Vali 1996:26). British policy was to acknowledge and utilise Kurdish institutions and tribal identities as a means of securing indirect rule. Ciment (1996:80) provides strong evidence of a British policy of 'retribalising' Kurdish social relations, as a means of securing administrative control. As we have seen, acknowledgement of Kurdish political and cultural autonomy was a central plank of earlier British attempts to incorporate Mosul into Iraq. If this was reneged on in practice, the acknowledgement of a *distinct Kurdish identity* clearly differentiates the experience of Kurds in Iraq from that of Kurds in Turkey, albeit this has subsequently taken a strongly tribal form in Iraq. The histories of the two states illustrate different paths to nation-building: *assimilation* in the case of Turkey and an uneasy *incorporation* or integration of Kurds in the case of Iraq. In contrast to the *outright prohibition on expressions of Kurdish cultural identity in Turkey*, it is clear that a certain degree of cultural and political development for the Kurds in Iraq had been deemed permissible (Vali 1996:28). As Vali indicates, this freedom of manoeuvre for Kurds was heavily dependent on the relative weakness of the postcolonial state in Iraq. Later centralisation of state power under the Ba'ath and Saddam in the 1970s has resulted in a policy of *ethnocide* against the Kurds which has only been stalled by the creation of the western-backed 'safe haven' and the formation of the Kurdish Regional Government in northern Iraq.

In the case of Iran in the period after the first world war - although this is developed more fully below - Vali (1996:26) notes a similar process of the 'emergence of a centralised territorial state', which constructed the 'nation and national identity as uniform and indivisible'. It needs to be stressed, in distinction to Turkey which forged a mono-national identity on the ruins of empire, and Iraq which was the product of colonialism, that the Iranian empire emerged from the first world war with a long tradition of rule over a multi-ethnic populace: Arab, Turkic, Lur and Kurdish (Ciment 1996:120; McDowall 1989:15). Arguably, this has resulted in a *less virulent and exclusive form of Iranian nationalism* than has been the case in either Turkey or Iraq (Ciment 1996:14). Cultural and linguistic affinity between Kurds and Iranians (McDowall 1996) is another factor which distinguishes the course of development in

Iranian Kurdistan. On the other hand, any threat to the *territorial integrity of the state*, as in Kurdish demands for autonomy, have been met with the same brutality as has been meted out to the Kurds in Turkey and Iraq.

In what follows, I develop these themes in the context of the ongoing narrative of Kurdish political history after world war one. In picking up the threads of the narrative an attempt at periodisation is useful. Aguado (1990) for example, has outlined two main periods which have affected the course of Kurdish nationalism: firstly, the tribal revolts of Kurdish chieftains and Shaiks which lasted from the early nineteenth century to the end of the second World War, and then the post-war period in which the Iraqi Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) had been the dominant actor. From the defeat of the KDP in 1975 Aguado notes a process of intensifying fragmentation in the Kurdish movement, caused by the following factors: strategic alliances with regional powers against fellow Kurds; internal, tribal divisions; national differences between the Kurds; the lack of a unified political voice for the Kurds and the dependence on external (superpower) support. While Aguado's historical account is excessively schematic (the fragmentation of the Kurdish movement has been a constant feature rather than limited to the current period) the issues which he addresses retain their pertinence. In this respect, Chaliand (1994) has produced a more nuanced historical account in which he notes four main periods in twentieth century Kurdish history. The first period is from 1920 to 1945 and here the centre of gravity is in Turkey.

Turkey

Kemalism, as we have noted, was based upon the assimilation of Kurds into the Turkish nation (Yesilgoz 1996:180). The secular, modernising impulse behind Kemal's nationalist project is evident in the abolition of the Sultanate in 1922 and the Caliphate in 1924. On the 3rd March 1924, Kurdish schools, associations, publications, religious fraternities and teaching foundations were all banned. The Kurdish language was similarly outlawed. Turkish identity was therefore to be constructed by eliminating other, competing sources of affiliation. Expressions of Kurdish identity were outlawed and brutally suppressed whenever they occurred. The threat to Kurdish identity and the traditional power base of Agha and Sheik led to a series of Kurdish revolts in the 1920s. In 1925 Shaik Said of the *Naqshbandi* brotherhood led a revolt which was largely followed by Zaza speaking Kurds (McDowall 1989:12), but with little support from other Kurds. Its failure was due to both internal divisions amongst the Kurds (religious affiliation versus broader nationalist goals) and superior military opposition.

It was met, as on other occasions, with brutal suppression and the forced deportation of Kurds to non-Kurdish areas. A later revolt by more nationalist oriented Kurds, the *Khoyboun* (McDowall 1989:12) illustrated the other key weakness in the Kurdish movement, its reliance on outside support. In this case the revolt failed due to withdrawal of support from the Shah of Iran. The Turkish government's strategy of forced population transfers to assimilate Kurds was met with fierce resistance in Dersim (now Trunceli) in 1932, where armed resistance was dealt with by summary suppression and the imposition of a state of martial law until 1946. In all, approximately one million Kurds were forcibly displaced between 1925-38, in a process of wholesale pacification and assimilation.

Before moving onto Chaliand's second period (1945-58) where the centre of Kurdish activity shifts to Iran, it is important to pinpoint the themes which have emerged from the earlier stage. The first is the *forcible suppression of Kurdish identity, either through assimilation, population displacement or the outlawing of expressions of cultural identity*. It is important to note that these processes have been particularly pronounced in Turkey. The second issue is the weakening of the Kurdish movement by a combination of inter-Kurdish rivalry and reliance on outside support. Both of these factors support Aguado's account (1990) of the causes of fragmentation amongst the Kurds.

Iran

As noted above, for many commentators the Pahlavi dynasty under Reza Khan was faced with the same problem as Turkey in the immediate post-world war one period, of *securing the integrity of the state* in the face of conflicting multi-ethnic groups and identities. It is important to restate here the traditions of rule over a multi-ethnic empire which Reza Khan inherited and the less virulent form of Iranian nationalism, in comparison with Turkey, which resulted. Despite this, the Simko revolt of 1921 (McDowall 1989:15) was the earliest of Kurdish protests against the centralising powers of the new state, although as McDowall argues, it was motivated by a combination of self-aggrandisement and opportunism on the part of Simko, rather than disinterested nationalist ideology. In this it followed the typical pattern of a 'classic Kurd chief who, like those who joined the Hamidiya cavalry, used government recognition at a time of uncertainty to advance his own power' (McDowall 1989:15).

The most significant development in this second period (1945-58) is the *Mahabad Republic*, instigated in January 1946 by a combination of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI)

and other (mainly Leftist) groups (McDowall 1989:16). This is often noted as a landmark in the Kurdish movement and was distinctive for its progressive political character. Both the *Komala* (*Komala-i-Zhian-i-Kurd* or *committee of Kurdish youth*) and the later KDPI were socialist and urban-based. Again, the Republic was critically undermined by dependence on *outside forces* (in this case Soviet support which was withdrawn by the end of 1946) and *internal divisions*. The yawning gap between urban and tribal Kurds was the most immediate factor, alongside a failure to decide between autonomy within Iran or outright independence, which sealed the fate of the fledgling republic (McDowall 1996:245). The ensuing period from the 1950s onwards, as McDowall (1996:249) argues, was one of retreat for Kurdish nationalism in Iran. When it re-emerged in 1979 after the fall of the Shah, it had been revitalised by the socio-economic transformations of the 1960s and 70s. Kurdish ethnicity and national identity, rather than tribalism had become the guiding principle of the national movement.

The significant points to underline here are the divisions between tribal and urban Kurds (a feature which cuts across Kurdistan) and the early development of *socialist-based* Kurdish parties in Iran. Another factor is the relative quiescence of the movement in Iran, in comparison with both Turkey and Iraq. Although there had been sporadic revolts after Mahabad, the activity of the KDPI remained muted until the 1958 coup in Iraq. Revival of activity inside Iran was very much dependent on the support and example of the Iraqi KDP under Barzani.

Iraq

In turning to Chaliand's third period (1958-75) which focuses on Iraq, it is necessary to recall the colonial heritage of British rule and the unstable outcome in the form of an Iraqi state divided between Shi'ite Basra in the south, 'Sunni Baghdad in the centre and the predominantly Kurdish province of Mosul' (Ciment 1996:113). The likelihood of a unified Iraqi national identity emerging in the wake of the last of the British backed monarchies in 1958, was therefore tenuous at best. Both the colonial and post-colonial state inherited a structural instability which made the Kurds a significant player in Iraqi domestic politics. Another factor noted earlier was the British attempt (while administering a form of self-rule under King Faisal) to control Kurdish areas through appointed tribal leaders. For commentators like Ciment (1996) this had resulted in the effective 're-tribalisation' of social relations among the Kurds. While tribalism has affected the whole of Kurdistan, it has

arguably been particularly significant in Iraq, where the figure of Mulla Mustafa Barzani came to dominate Kurdish politics until his death in 1979. Barzani had already played a significant part in the Mahabad Republic but he was to be the dominant figure in the Kurdish movement throughout the 1950s and 60s, 'combining the secular power of the agha with that of religious (and charismatic) leadership' (McDowall 1989:19).

To turn to developments within Iraq itself, the 1958 coup in which General Qasim overthrew the Hashemite monarchy led to a complex series of alliances and disputes between Qasim and Barzani in which both jockeyed for position and power. The partnership between Arabs and Kurds which was proposed in the 1961 Constitution had enabled Barzani to consolidate his own power base at the expense of his rivals in the KDP. The theme is the familiar one of tribal leadership (the Barzanis were of Sheikly ancestry) versus the modernising influence of nationalist and urban based ideologies. In particular, the Politburo of the KDP, heavily influenced by Jalal Talabani was Leftist in orientation and as McDowall (1989:20) points out predominantly from Sulaymaniya and Sorani speaking. Barzani's power base on the other hand was in the North and was Kurmanji speaking. (2.)

The Ba'ath coup which overthrew Qasim in 1968 commenced a new phase of possibilities and dangers for Barzani. A novel element in the equation was the affiliation between Talabani's wing of the KDP and the Ba'ath regime, both of whom proposed state-led forms of nationalist modernisation. The outcome of these internal divisions and strategic alliances with the Ba'ath regime was the *Peace Agreement of 1970* and the *Autonomy Proposals*, both of which gave the Kurds significant rights to cultural and economic autonomy inside Iraq (McDowall 1996). For Barzani, ever suspicious of the Ba'ath regime, these proposals were insufficient. In particular, Barzani wanted to wrest control of oil-rich Kirkuk from the Ba'ath. At the same time, the US, Israel and Iran were all keen to limit Iraqi power in the region. In a replay from earlier periods of Kurdish history, the US were willing to support Barzani to the point of destabilising the Ba'ath regime, but no further. When Barzani rejected the Autonomy Law of 1974 (which allowed less independence than the 1970 Autonomy Proposals) his gambit was very much dependent on continued US and Iranian support. The striking of a deal between Iran and Iraq in 1975 led to a hasty withdrawal of US support for Barzani. The routing of the Kurds which followed has been seen by many commentators as 'the most serious (defeat) that the Iraqi Kurds had sustained' (McDowall 1989:23). For McDowall the legacy of Barzani is

not entirely negative, as his example of charismatic leadership spurred the nationalist movement throughout Kurdistan.

The Kurdish revival in Turkey

Writing in 1994, Chaliand's fourth period takes us from the defeat of Barzani in 1975, through the Iran-Iraq war and the *Anfal* campaign of 1988 to Saddam's invasion of Kuwait and the establishment of the Regional Government in northern Iraq in 1992. The period as a whole is clearly one of great complexity (Bruinessen 1996a; Chaliand 1994). The main focus here is on developments inside Turkey, specifically the rise of the *Partiya Karkaren Kurdistan* (PKK) or Kurdish Workers' Party and the fifteen year war between the PKK and the Turkish government. This bias is justified not so much by the numerical significance of Kurds in Turkey as their *political significance*, both throughout Kurdistan but more importantly here, *amongst Kurds in the diaspora*.

According to Bozarslan (1992) after the failures of the 1920s and 1930s, Kurdish nationalism was only revitalised in the 1950s in Turkey under the transition to multi-party democracy. A cluster of factors was involved, including the impact of Marshall Aid, urbanisation, migration and changes in class relations in the countryside. Bozarslan argues that the development of a Kurdish intelligentsia was heavily dependent on industrialisation and improved communications between city and countryside. Hasanpour (1994) similarly points to changes in political relations in the 1950s as a result of land reform and urban class differentiation. The formation of a Kurdish 'working and middle class' and the increased participation of women at work expanded the social base of the Kurdish movement.

Following the military coup in 1960 and the 1961 liberal constitution what had become known as the 'Eastern question' received greater attention in official circles. It had long been evident that Turkey's south east scored lowest on all significant socio-economic indicators (Kirisci and Winrow 1997:125-6). Although there was a proliferation of publications during the 1960s Kurdish political activity was largely confined to the pursuit of civil and cultural rights. Later in the decade of 'Third World revolutions' (Halliday 1983) *Imperialism* came to be seen on the Left as the main obstacle to Kurdish development and autonomy. *Eastern Revolutionary Cultural Centres* (DDKOs) were instrumental in promulgating a 'third world' brand of Marxism-Leninism in this period (Bozarslan 1992:109). Migration to Western Europe and internally in Turkey were also key factors promoting increased awareness of the

political and economic situation in Kurdistan. By the time of the 1971 military coup a proliferation of Kurdish groups had emerged. Out of this period of organisational growth came the *National liberators of Kurdistan* (KUK) in 1977 and the PKK founded under Abdullah Ocalan in 1978 (Kirisci and Winrow 1997; Bruinessen 1988). Despite the introduction of martial law in Kurdish areas in 1979 and the 1980 military coup there was, overall, a significant failure to quell the Kurdish revolt. By 1984 the PKK had launched a war against Turkey which was to become the longest in the modern history of Kurdistan.

Briefly turning to other areas of Kurdistan, in the same period the *Iran-Iraq war* (1980-88) resulted in a complex series of alliances between Kurds in either country and the military of the opposing regimes. This proved to be a gambit in which the Kurds were consistently the losers and resulted in protracted inter-Kurdish fighting (Bruinessen 1986). While the greatest impact of the war had been on Kurds in Iraq and Iran it was also to prove significant for the position of Kurds in Turkey. It was only in the later stages of the Iran-Iraq war that the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and KDP in Iraq had united their forces in the *Kurdistan Front*. This was in 1987, by which time Iraq had managed to secure military supremacy against Iran and launched the *Anfal campaign* ('spoils of war') against the Kurds in northern Iraq (Laiser 1996; McDowall 1996:357). The use of chemical weapons against Kurdish villages, mass executions and forcible population movement were some of the methods deployed in Saddam's war against the Kurds. McDowall estimates that between 150,000 and 200,000 Kurds were killed during the different phases of *Anfal*. The mass influx of Iraqi Kurdish refugees to Iran and the Turkish border which followed, brought the Kurds for a short period to the world stage. The influx of some 60,000 Kurds in Turkey received most media coverage at the time, although Iran was to play host to over 200,000 Kurdish refugees (McDowall 1996:360). Much against the grain, Turkey was obliged to admit the refugees (although they weren't officially recognised as such), detaining them in camps under tight security and away from the gaze of the international media.

The war against the PKK was certainly a central factor behind Turkey's reluctance to provide shelter to the Iraqi Kurdish refugees. What McDowall has referred to as a 'national revival' amongst the Kurds in Turkey throughout the 1970s and 1980s was, as we saw above due to a number of factors including industrialisation, urbanisation and rural/urban migration. The formation of Kurdish identity in this period was set very much in the crucible of experience engendered by migration. Again, perhaps differentiating the experience of Kurds in Turkey

from the remainder of Kurdistan, an awareness of Kurdish identity was learnt through mockery, violence and the denial of identity (McDowall 1996:403). The process of displacement to the cities which Turkey hoped would assimilate Kurds often resulted in the 'rediscovery of roots', although it is clear that increasing integration of Kurds in Istanbul for example, also occurred on a large scale (Kirisci and Winlow 1997:136). The establishment in 1961 of regional boarding schools in Kurdish areas was further evidence of the ongoing attempt to assimilate Kurds. For official purposes the Kurds as a *distinct nation* did not exist. The denial of identity was compounded by the racist diatribe which Kurds routinely experienced in their encounters with Turks (McDowall 1996:407). Kurds were depicted as barbarians, as 'mountain Turks' according to official doctrine and more akin to animals than human beings.

As Vali (1996) argues, the Turkish conception of citizenship is based upon the proscribing of alternative ethnic affiliation. This reveals 'above all the anti-democratic nature of Turkish citizenship which sanctions the politics of exclusion and denial perpetrated against the Kurds since 1924' (1996:26). *The denial of Kurdish identity forms the central plank of Turkish identity and citizenship*. For Vali, this has had an important impact upon Kurdish nationalism, which rests on 'the suppression of civil society and democratic citizenship in Kurdistan' (1996:28). Civil society within Kurdistan has itself been crushed and deformed by years of oppression and denial. Similarly, Bozarslan (1996) argues that a cycle of violence has been perpetuated, not only in the oppression of the Kurds, but also in relation to internal Kurdish divisions. Violence was and is central to the process of state formation in the Middle East. It is also central to the collective memory of the Kurds, whose own historical experience and identity is centrally constructed around images of suffering and persecution.

For McDowall (1996:419), the PKK combined several novel characteristics in relation to earlier Kurdish movements: their social base was in the rural and urban poor rather than tribal leaders or middle class intelligentsia; the focus on class warfare was more pronounced in the PKK than in either the PUK or *Komala* in Iran, and the intensity of the national feeling which it promoted was based on the *revival of an imagined past*. This last feature is particularly pertinent, given the denial of Kurdish identity which has been so pronounced a feature of the Kurdish experience in Turkey. The *rediscovery of identity* is also, as noted above and developed in my fieldwork, a central feature for many Kurdish refugees in the diaspora. In this respect the distinction between *Sunni Kurds and Alevi Kurds* has been relatively

neglected in studies of Kurdish refugees in Britain, even though the largest number of Kurdish refugees to enter Britain in 1988 were from Alevi backgrounds (Collinson 1990; Reilly 1991; McDowall 1989). *The background to the flight of the Alevi Kurds in 1988 and the significance of Alevism amongst Kurds in London is discussed later.* More generally in this context, it should be noted that *the issue of Alevism in the Turkish context* is politically highly charged, with both the PKK and the government vying for the allegiance of Alevis, who in some respects appear to be developing their own distinct 'national' identity (Bozarslan 1992: 111; Bruinessen 1996b). The PKK's courting of the Islamic 'vote' in Turkey (Kirisici and Winrow 1997:149; McDowall 1996:433) may be opportunistic, but it also expresses a more longstanding conflict between Sunni and Alevi Kurds.

Addressing the role of religion, McDowall (1996:397) stresses *party-political changes* in the post-war period which resulted in the secularist tenets of Kemalism being undermined by the *appeal to Islamist sentiments*. The restoration of Islamic instruction in schools is one central instance of this process. In conjunction with economic liberalism the *Democractic Party* had bolstered the position of the agha class and the sheiks, with the result that the 'Kurdish countryside became once more the stronghold of Islam' (1996:397). Notably, this meant according to McDowall, that Sunni Kurds and Turks had more in common than *Alevi Kurds and Sunni Kurds*, an important factor in the ensuing history of refugee displacement in Alevi dominated areas. Throughout the 1970s the development of a distinctive sense of Kurdish identity was hampered *by the religious affiliations which continued to dominate the Kurdish countryside*. As McDowall notes, although there was a proliferation of Kurdish and Leftist groups in the 1970s, to reduce the conflict in Turkey at this time to one of *Left versus Right* or *Kurd versus Turk* was too simplistic. The outbreak of violence in *Maras* in April 1978 in which over 100 Alevi Kurds were killed, was the outcome of reprisals undertaken primarily by the 'Grey Wolves' (extreme Right of the *National Action Party of Alparslan Turkes*) but which involved both *Turkish and Kurdish Sunni elements against Alevi Kurds* who had migrated to the area in search of work (McDowall 1996:413). *Maras* and *Malatya* which were the scene of violence at this time were also to be significant a decade later in relation to the 3000 Alevi Kurdish refugees arriving in Britain throughout the Spring of 1989 (Collinson 1990).

Box 2.*Alevism in Turkey*

Although Collinson (1990) is careful to acknowledge that 'Kurds have never expressed their distinct identity through religious separatism' (Ch2:1), religious leaders, particularly of the Nasshbandi and Qadiriya brotherhoods, have often taken a lead role in the Kurdish national movement. The majority of Kurds adhere to the Shaf'i school of Islamic Law and are Sunni Muslims. In this context, a notable feature of the 1988-9 period is that most Kurds arriving in Britain as asylum seekers were from Alevi backgrounds. The term 'Alevism' - literally 'people of fire', or Qizilbash - the 'red heads' from their red head gear - refers to a complex of religious beliefs and practices, which claims devotion to Imam Ali. According to McDowall (1996:10) Alevism 'lies on the extreme edge of Shi'i Islam. It is a mixture of pre-Islamic, Zoroastrianism, Turkoman and Shi'i ideas that became the basis of a religious sect during the fifteenth century CE'. More generally, Alevism is one of the denominations of the Cult of Angels discussed by Izady (1992:150) which also includes Yezidism and Yarsanism or Ahl-I-Haq (1992:137). While most Kurdish Alevis speak Zaza, thus marking them out as easy targets for discrimination, many also speak Kurmanji (Bruinessen 1992a; Kreyenbroek 1992).

Perhaps the central distinguishing feature of Alevism is the non-observance of the five pillars of Islam: the statement of faith, the saying of prayers five times a day, alms giving, fasting in Ramadan and the pilgrimage to Mecca. Nor do Alevis attend mosques but will hold informal ceremonies called Cem. Trees in particular are marked out as sources of devotional activity (Izady 1992:151). Alevis will often describe their lack of adherence to religious or political doctrine as one of their defining characteristics. Folk conceptions of Alevism stress its unorthodox nature and egalitarianism, with Alevis often referred to as 'revolutionists' or 'leftists' by other Kurds. According to McDowall (1989) there are approximately 3 million Alevis in Turkey, of which a third are Kurdish and mainly located in the Tunceli (Dersim), Central Anatolian and Marash areas. As Collinson (1990:5) notes, Alevi Kurds in many of these areas are a highly visible minority (due to linguistic differences) and suffer from higher levels of discrimination and harassment than Alevi Kurds living further east. This in itself will tend to result in support for the PKK as the only viable political alternative in these areas.

Box 2.*Alevism in Turkey*

The tension between Alevi and Sunni within both the Turkish and Kurdish communities, is long-standing. As McDowall has shown (1989) Alevi and Sunni Kurds have often been on opposing sides in the national movement: the 1920 Dersim revolt, for example, was mainly engineered by Alevi Kurds, whereas the 1925 Shaik Said rebellion was largely Sunni in nature (Collinson 1990: Chp 2: 3). From the onset of the Turkish republic the relation between Alevism and the Kurdish movement has been ambivalent at best, with both Turkish and Kurdish Alevis supporting the secularist basis of Kemal's new republic. As a consequence, for Bruinessen (1996b:8) 'many Kurdish Alevis voluntarily assimilated to Turkish culture and came to identify themselves as Turks rather than Kurds'. The elevation of Islam to the level of state ideology in the post-war period and the migration of Alevis to urban areas resulted in intensified Sunni-Alevi conflict. This erupted periodically throughout the 1970s and culminated in the pogrom of Alevi Kurds in Marash in 1978, a massacre which was led by the same 'Grey Wolves' who were to secure power in Marash a decade later. The election of Okkes Kengar (one of the alleged instigators of the 1978 Marash massacre) to Marash Council in March 1989 was one of the main factors precipitating the flight of Alevi Kurds from the area. Partly as a result of the 'Turkish-Islamist synthesis' at the level of the state (Bruinessen 1996b:8) and partly as a result of the failure of the Left after the 1980 military coup, many Alevis looked for an alternative worldview in the renewal of the cultural and religious aspects of Alevism. This revival was in large part due to the work of Alevi intellectuals. For Bruinessen (1996b:8) the process of re-defining Alevi identity was heavily 'reminiscent of what goes on in nascent nationalist movements'. By the late 1980s the Turkish state was fostering the Alevi revival as an alternative ethnic option to that promoted by the PKK. Continued state collusion in repression of Alevis throughout the early 1990s (Bruinessen 1996b) indicated that the tension between Sunni Islam and Alevism was far from eradicated. If the attempt to co-opt Alevism by the Turkish state can be considered a failure, the bid by the PKK to secure the allegiance of Alevis may have been no more successful. For Bruinessen (1996b:9) 'Many, if not most Kurdish Alevis define themselves as Alevis first, and Kurds only second if at all'. On the other hand, many radical Leftist Alevis view the PKK as their natural ally against the Rightist-Islamist forces in the Turkish state, although the revival of Kurdish Islamic sentiment (McDowall 1996:447) may continue to alienate many Alevi Kurds from the Kurdish national movement.

To return to the role of the PKK, during the period of military rule from 1980-83 it had maintained a low profile and only began to target conservative aghas and military personnel from 1984 onwards. A cycle of violence and reprisals commenced in which innocent Kurdish individuals were often the victims. The introduction of the 'village guard' system in 1985 was an attempt to retribalise social relations in the countryside, using conservative tribal leaders as government outposts in rural areas. The system came under ruthless attack from the PKK (McDowall 1996:423) in a demonstration of terror which alienated Kurdish villagers without seriously undermining the village guard system (Bruinessen 1988). The formation by the PKK of the *Kurdistan popular liberation Front* (ERNK) in 1985, was a greater threat to Turkey, representing as it did a form of proto-state for the Kurds inside Turkey. The government responded by introducing emergency laws and military rule in Kurdish areas. Village depopulation and forcible displacement took place on a massive scale, with some 2000 Kurdish villages being destroyed by the end of 1994 (McDowall 1996:426; IAHRK 1993)

Turkey had been forced, as we have seen, to play host to Iraqi Kurds fleeing the *Anfal* in 1988. This, alongside the continuing war with the PKK was to have a significant impact on the domestic scene: by 1990 the 'Kurdish issue' had become the subject of open public debate. Foreign policy considerations concerning Turkish entry to the EU also encouraged a process of 'liberalisation' in relation to the Kurds (Gunter 1990). In April 1991 the use of Kurdish except in broadcasts, education and publications was allowed as part of the abolition of the 1983 penal code articles prohibiting separatist activities. At the same time, President Ozal introduced a new Anti-terror Law in April 1991 to coincide with the repeal of the earlier law. This effectively made the use of Kurdish a 'separatist offence'. In this context Laiser (1996:26) argues that 'Ozal's efforts to open up the Kurdish question proved ineffectual in practice and Turkey commenced a new era of political repression'. McDowall on the other hand notes a growing 'schizophrenia' in the Turkish state's response to its 'Kurdish problem': the Gulf war and the March 1991 uprising of the Kurds in Iraq (see below) had resulted in a rapprochement between Turkey and the KDP and PUK which went hand in hand with renewed repression of its own Kurdish minority! Although by 1991 the PKK was openly moving towards a federalist position, any recognition of the right to Kurdish self-determination was incompatible with the claims of the Turkish constitution and the indivisibility of the Turkish nation (Laiser 1996:89). With Ozal's death in 1993 Turkey was set to embark on another period of governmental repression and Kurdish counter-violence.

From the Gulf war to the 'Safe Haven' and beyond

Returning finally to the broader picture, it is useful to summarise the most recent changes affecting the Kurds, particularly as these relate to changed international responses to refugee crises in the post-cold war period. As we have seen, by the end of the 1980s the retreat of the Kurdish movement in Iraq after *Anfal* and the quiescence of the Kurds in Iran (McDowall 1996:275-7) was in direct contrast to the renewal of the national movement in Turkey. Although the region was far from peaceful it was to be thrown into a new state of flux with Saddam's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. This was well broadcast before the event but Saddam apparently overplayed his hand, badly miscalculating the extent of US interests in the region (Hitchins 1991). As Hitchins illustrates the Kurds had long been the victims of cold war *realpolitik*, as in the withdrawal of US support from Barzani in 1975 for example. This verdict on US foreign policy was to be borne out by events following the Gulf War. In the post-cold war period the Kurds were to be among the first victims, along with the Somalis, of the 'New World Order'.

US-led coalition forces began military operations against Iraq in January 1991. The defeat of Saddam by the end of February 1991, the rise and fall of the Kurdish uprising in March (along with the Shi'a in the south) and the Kurdish refugee crisis on border of Turkey in April 1991 followed one another with bewildering speed. In a replay of the refugee crisis of 1988 President Ozal blocked entry to the refugees on Turkey's border, proposing instead a UN 'protected area' inside Iraq. The establishment of the 'Safe Haven' in northern Iraq after Prime Minister John Major's proposal, effectively *internalised the refugee problem within Iraq's borders*. As Frelick (1993) demonstrates, under UN Security Council resolution 688 (demanding that Baghdad halt the suppression of its citizens) *Operation Provide Comfort* justified intervention ostensibly for humanitarian purposes but with the overall aim of *preserving existing territorial borders* within the region. Avoiding destabilisation of Turkey, the US's 'sounding post' in the region, was a fundamental consideration (Ciment 1996: 183). In addition to the establishment of the 'Safe Haven' a larger area north of the 36th parallel was declared a 'no-fly zone' for Iraqi aircraft under *Operation poised hammer*. This is currently maintained by American, British, French and Turkish aircraft.

For many commentators the humanitarian operation in the 'Safe Haven' and the operation of the 'no-fly' zone have been thinly veiled exercises in *realpolitik* (Keen 1993; Offtinger and

Backer 1994:45). Turkey for example has been allowed free rein to bomb Kurdish villages in Iraq in pursuit of the PKK. In addition, the international refusal to recognise the Kurdish Regional Government, formed by a coalition of the KDP and PUK in May 1992, has seriously weakened the new republic. The impact of economic sanctions, imposed on Saddam but rebounding on the Kurds, has resulted in disillusion with the experiment in Kurdish autonomy. As Offtinger and Backer argue (1994:44) 'the policy of refugee containment has established no more than a reservation for a stateless people'. The outbreak of inter-Kurdish violence between the KDP and PUK in May 1994 compounded what was already a situation of tragic dimensions (Sheikmous 1996). Many commentators agree that the fundamental aim of US foreign policy remains the preservation of the territorial integrity of Iraq, while maintaining a presence in the region *through the Kurds* (Ciment 1996:184).

The implications of the present situation are diverse. As Hassanpour (1994) notes, the resilience of the movement in Turkey and the existence of the Regional Government of Kurdistan are 'unprecedented' in the modern period. Disenchantment with the Regional Government on the other hand has driven many Kurds to view the PKK in a more sympathetic light. For Hassanpour (1994:7) 'its (*the PKK's*) ability to sustain a campaign of armed struggle against the well armed Turkish army has won it a leading position and popular support in both the urban and rural Kurdish areas, *as well as in the Kurdish diaspora*' (1994:7). These are themes which I return to in later chapters. September 1998 witnessed a US brokered deal between Barzani and Talabani, with a view to holding elections for the regional government in June 1999 (*Guardian* 28.9.98). In response to Turkish qualms over a stable Kurdish government in northern Iraq, both the US and Britain have recently restated their main aim as that of preserving the territorial integrity of Iraq. In addition, under the new arrangements the PKK is explicitly barred from using northern Iraq as a safe haven. Developments since the arrest and trial of Ocalan in February 1999 are discussed in the Afterword to this thesis.

Conclusion

Writing in the aftermath of the Gulf War and the establishment of the Kurdish regional government in Iraq, Fuller (1993:121) declared that the 'Kurdish issue is at the forefront of the international agenda in the new post-cold war era'. As he went on to argue, 'the Kurdish issue is central to the Middle East in the new world order' (Fuller 1993:122). The continued

U.S. commitment to destabilise Saddam, evident in *Operation Desert Fox* of December 1998 for example, suggests that some form of limited autonomy for the Kurds may continue to be on the political agenda in the foreseeable future. While little has been heard of the 'new world order' in recent years and its original meaning was vague at best, it drew attention to a constellation of factors which crystallised in the wake of bipolarity. Central to this cluster of factors, as I indicated in an earlier chapter, is a changed conception of security in the post-cold war world. Refugee crises continue to be produced as a result of state formation and collapse, ethnic conflict and the structural instability which is the legacy of the post-colonial state. International migration and refugee flows are clearly perceived as a security threat within the EU, with the Kurds themselves providing ammunition for calls for a tightening of Europe's borders ('Fears mount over Italy's back door', *Financial Times* 9.1.98).

In this respect, it is important to underline the role of international migration in the strengthening of Kurdish national consciousness. As Bruinessen (1992b:67) has argued, 'those who have voluntarily or involuntarily left Kurdistan have perhaps contributed more to the strengthening of the Kurdish movement than they would have done had they been able to remain there'. Kurdish political refugees in particular have been instrumental in the resurgence of Kurdish nationalism outside the territorial boundaries of Kurdistan. This reinforces one aspect of Cohen's (1997) notion of cultural renewal as a central feature of diasporas. As I aim to demonstrate, the Kurds, both at home and in the diaspora occupy a status akin to that of the 'proto-nation' outlined by Smith (1991:137). As he argues:

... where disaffected ethnies become alienated enough to resort to terror and revolt, their ethnic nationalism may become the vehicle for a new national identity... In these cases the movement itself is the prototype and harbinger of a new society and culture. Its cells, schools, guerilla units, welfare associations, self-help groups, women's societies and labour unions, as well as its songs, flags, dress, poetry, sports, arts and crafts, all presage and create the nucleus of the future ethnic nation and its political identity, even where secession is prevented and the community fails to obtain its own state.

While my central concern is with the dynamics of Kurdish cultural identity in London broader changes in international relations and domestic politics directly impact upon the process of adaptation for Kurds. Most significantly, with the arrest and trial of Ocalan in February 1999

Kurdish demands for national recognition have once again been placed at the centre of the international stage. Of particular concern to a range of European states hosting large numbers of Kurds are the security issues posed by the forms of affiliation, identification and belonging displayed by the Kurdish diaspora. I address these issues at greater length in later stages of this thesis.

PART III

**RECEPTION, SETTLEMENT AND ORGANISATION OF SOMALIS AND KURDS
IN LONDON**

Chapter 5

Reception and Settlement: the Politics of Asylum

The previous section had outlined the background factors and structural conditions which have given rise to refugee flows in the two groups examined in this study. This and the following sections of the thesis are based upon fieldwork conducted amongst Somali and Kurdish refugees living in London. The interrelation between factors relating to the home country and the society of reception are central features in the following analysis. In this respect, it is important to note that Britain is one of the original thirteen signatories to the Geneva Convention of 1951 and the Protocol of 1967 which outline the obligations of states towards asylum seekers and refugees. The Immigration and Nationality Department (IND) of the Home Office considers individual applications for asylum and has a binding responsibility under international law to adhere to the principle of *non-refoulement*. (1) The decision to grant asylum however remains at the discretion of the receiving state. Overall responsibility for the settlement of refugees lies with the Community Relations Unit of the Home Office, although in practice there is a strong tradition of co-operation between statutory departments, voluntary bodies and NGOs in the refugee field (Carey-Wood et al 1995; Kaye 1992).

Britain's long history of providing asylum (Cohen 1994) has been based upon a number of pragmatic considerations. For Cohen (1994: 69-71) foreign policy and economic interest, demographic pressures or demands and ethnic affinity are the most important factors. The discretionary powers of the state over the entry, definition (Zetter 1988) and control of refugees is the central factor. The broadly *ad hoc* approach adopted in Britain tends to confirm the reactive character of British asylum policy. As Cohen has remarked (1994:81), 'contemporary British refugee policy is predicated not so much on any plans for future quota refugees... rather (it) is framed as a reaction to the arrivals at port of entry claiming asylum and the post-entry admissions'... The 1999 Asylum and Immigration Act introduces elements of a directive approach to the asylum system, although one which is based more upon the increased restriction and control of initial applicants than the long-term settlement of refugees.

It was not until the 1970s that the so-called 'new refugees' emerged on the global scene (ICIHI 1986). This term refers to the increasing numbers of individuals who were affected by political instability and worsening economic crises throughout the Third World. As indicated

above, the largest groups to arrive in Britain during the 1970s were the 'quota' or 'programme' refugees from Uganda, Chile and Vietnam. From the late 1970s Iranians fleeing the Islamic revolution confirmed the changing profile of asylum seekers to Britain. Two central features stand out in the subsequent history of asylum in Britain: a continuing reluctance on the part of government to formulate an integrated approach to asylum, combined with the growing climate of restrictionism from at least the 1970s onwards (Kaye 1992). Other factors which Kaye (1992) notes in the period from the mid 1980s onwards is the marginalisation of NGOs in the refugee field as a result of the growth in intergovernmental bodies dealing with refugee and asylum issues and the Europeanisation of refugee controls (Joly 1996; Miles and Thranhardt 1996). A detailed examination of these issues is beyond the scope of the present study although it provides the essential context for the analysis in this chapter, which is focused on changes in the British policy framework and the reception and settlement of Somali and Kurdish refugees in Britain from the late 1980s onwards.

Growing restrictionism

The global rise in spontaneous refugees which began in the 1970s has continued throughout the 1980s and 1990s (ICHI 1986; Zolberg et al 1989; Richmond 1994) with an estimated 21,459,550 people of concern to UNHCR in 1998, of which some 11,491,710 were refugees (www.unhcr.ch November 1999). The early signs of an increase in asylum applications in Britain dates from around 1981 and reached an early peak in 1985 (Kaye 1992; Cohen 1994:81). In that year Conservative Home Secretary Douglas Hurd introduced visa controls on the principal groups claiming asylum - Sri Lankans, Indians, Bangladeshis, Ghanaians, Nigerians and Pakistanis (Cohen 1994:83). As several authors have noted (Kaye 1994; R. Cohen 1994; S. Cohen 1988) the treatment of the Tamils (and later the Kurds) - with the use of deportation, detention and the courts to curtail asylum claims - clearly broadcast the nature of the new asylum regime which now operated on an increasingly restrictive and European-wide basis. For Kaye (1994:149) the case of the Tamils signalled that 'control of refugee influxes was placed on the political agenda'. The trend thereafter has been one of increasing restriction of asylum rights and co-ordinated although often ineffective opposition by NGOs in the refugee field (Kaye 1992).

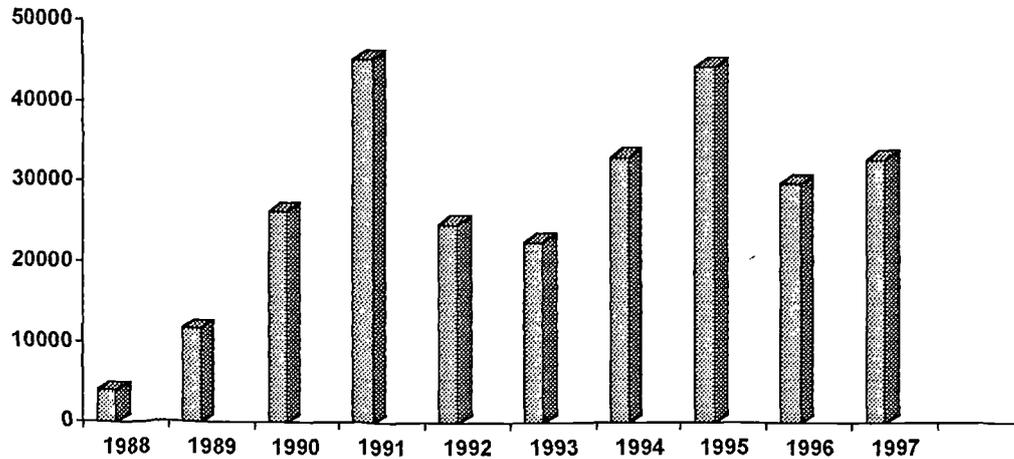
The Conservative victory in 1987 signalled the continued hegemony of the 'free-markets/strong state' mix which Hall (1988) amongst others had noted as the secret of

'Thatcherism's' success. The introduction of the Carriers Liability Act in that year which imposed fines on airlines carrying asylum seekers without valid documentation confirmed the tightening of state control over asylum seekers. New NGOs became operative at this time in the refugee field with an explicitly critical relation to government policy (Kaye 1992) There was also opposition from elements in the Labour Party to the Conservative stance on refugee issues, while a handful of refugee organisations were set up at this time which attempted to challenge the hard-line approach of the government, such as Refugee Forum (Moodley 1988). The well-publicised resistance of the Tamils to deportation in 1987 and later the Kurds in 1989, were to become test cases for the government's approach to asylum. Surveying the broader scene, the ending of the cold war and the breakdown of the former Soviet Union and its sphere of influence in eastern Europe had added a strong East-West flow of refugees to the global total (Cohen 1991) in addition to the increasing regional complexity of refugee and migrant labour flows across the globe (Castles and Miller 1998; Zolberg 1989). In the British context it is important to recall that between 1980 and 1988 there were 37,685 applications for asylum, an average of 4000 per year (BRC 1989). As the British Refugee Council (1989:3) indicated at the time, 'the number of people claiming asylum here - is still very small compared with other European countries and the rest of the world'. The rate of increase of asylum applications from the 1988-9 period onwards was therefore unprecedented:

Fig 5.1

ASYLUM APPLICATIONS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM 1988-1997

Number of principal applicants



Source: Home Office 1998

Taking the period as a whole, from 1988 to 1997, it can clearly be seen that 1991 and 1995 are peak years with approximately 44,000 asylum applications in each year (a factor which is closely related to refugee crises in the Balkans) although this trailed off under the impact of the 1993 and 1996 Asylum acts from 44,000 in 1995 to 29,600 in 1996. The small rise in applications in 1997 to 32,500 and again to 46,000 in 1998 (*Guardian* 23.4.99) and the worsening backlog of cases (Home Office 1998; 'Playing the numbers game', *The Guardian* 12.5.98) prepared the ground for the government review and White Paper in 1998 and the Asylum Bill of February 1999. Overall, it needs to be stressed that asylum applications in Britain remain small in comparative terms. In terms of refugees per head of population Britain is 11th out of 17 in the European league table, with one per 1,000 population, compared with Switzerland's 5.8 per 1,000 (*Guardian* 23.4.99). Reviewing the period from 1993-99, three successive Acts have been introduced in Britain which in each case have further curbed the rights of asylum seekers.

1993-1999: the legislative framework

Continuing the trend from the mid-1980s, in the lead-up to the 1993 Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act there was a concerted press campaign against asylum seekers, with even the more liberal press appearing to condone the panic over increasing numbers ('Asylum seekers overwhelm system', *Guardian* 31.10.90) As Kaye has indicated (1994) there had been a realignment in Conservative policy on asylum from the earlier sympathetic treatment of Vietnamese 'boat people' in the early 1980s to the containment of asylum issues under the net of Immigration control. In this respect it may be significant that the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol are incorporated in the 1971 Immigration Act, thus leaving asylum issues open to electoral manipulation and the deployment of the 'race card'. The 1991 Conservative Campaign Guide (Kaye 1994) reinforced the by now familiar argument that the asylum system was being abused by 'bogus asylum seekers' who were using the system to bypass immigration control. The *Daily Telegraph's* (3.7.91) declaration of 'the abuse of the system', for example, occurred at the same time as Home Secretary Kenneth Baker's calls for increased restrictions on asylum seekers in the run-up to the 1992 General Election. Although Labour opposed the draconian nature of the new legislation there were also signs of an emerging bi-partisan approach to asylum. While shadow Home Secretary Tony Blair denounced the inhumane and 'misguided' attempt to deny rights to asylum seekers he also explicitly condoned the language of 'bogus asylum seekers' (Kaye 1994), thereby reinforcing the incorporation of refugee issues under the banner of immigration control. This bi-partisan approach was to be confirmed both by the White Paper of 1998 and the Asylum and Immigration Act introduced by New Labour in 1999. I address these in more detail below.

The 1993 Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act was designed to deal with the backlog of asylum cases and aimed to introduce a streamlined approach to hasten decision making. The principal features of the Act are:

- It introduced a right of appeal for asylum seekers against an Immigration Officer's (IO) decision with a 48 hour time limit - an unrealistically short time in which to lodge an appeal.
- Asylum seekers and their children were to be finger-printed - giving credence to charges of the criminalisation of asylum seekers.

- Rights to housing were withdrawn - homeless asylum seekers were no longer entitled to housing by local authorities. By 1991 there had already been talk of a housing crisis in London ('Tests for being given a home to be stiffened', *The Guardian* 2.11.91).
- A failure to apply for asylum on arrival was to be held against the applicant under draft immigration rules - a punitive measure which anticipates the 'in-country' clauses in the 1996 Act.
- Abolition of rights of appeal against IO's decision was to be made in the case of overseas visitors and students.

The housing clauses of the Act immediately began to 'deprive asylum seekers of decent secure housing' (HACT 1994:4). Given the central role of housing in the settlement of refugees and asylum seekers (Carey-Wood et al 1995: 96) this was undoubtedly intended as a major disincentive for potential asylum seekers to Britain. Despite this, asylum applications peaked again in 1995 from 32,830 in 1994 to 43,965, an increase of 34% (Refugee Council 1996). It was also a particularly bleak period for the beleaguered Conservative Party, divided over Europe and deeply unpopular with a British public already captivated by the allurements of New Labour. Although the new Asylum and Immigration Bill was formally announced in the Queen's speech on November 15th 1995, its contents (detailed below) were known well in advance. The *Guardian* (25.10.95) was unequivocal: 'Let us be clear that the only reason why we are about to have another Immigration and Asylum Bill is because it is deemed to be politically advantageous to the Conservative Party's electoral prospects for this to be so'. For the irate editor it was seen to be another in a line of 'last ditch desperate measures to save the Conservatives in the face of the Blair ascendancy'. As in the case of the 1993 Act the Conservative party was set to play the race card in the run-up to elections in 1997. In stark contrast to their performance once they had assumed the mantle of state power, the manipulation of the 'race card' was explicitly opposed by New Labour at this time ('The Great Balkan lie', *The New Statesman*. 26.4.99).

What was to prove one of the most far-reaching of the Bill's clauses, that concerning the withdrawal of benefits for those claiming in-country or on appeal, was first mooted independently on Oct 15th 1995 under the Social Security (persons from abroad) miscellaneous amendment regulations. This came into effect on 5th February 1996 before the passing of the Asylum and Immigration Act in July 1996, and although overturned by the

Court of Appeal was incorporated into the Act under clause nine. The main provisions of the Act are:

- The extension of 'fast-track' procedures for asylum seekers from designated 'safe countries' - the so-called 'white list'. This was subsequently overturned by New Labour.
- The safe third country rule removed the right of appeal against return to a safe third country through which the asylum seeker had travelled en route to Britain. Again there was a substantial possibility of refugees not receiving fair treatment in the designated 'safe third country'.
- New criminal offences were introduced relating to attempts to enter the UK by deception and employer liability for employing workers without leave to enter or remain in the UK. This effectively imposed a form of immigration control by the back-door.
- The withdrawal of benefits for in-country and on-appeal asylum seekers. Asylum seekers were also excluded from local authority housing lists, a clause which was reinforced by the 1996 Housing Act. In addition there was to be a withdrawal of child benefit for all asylum seekers.

As indicated, the benefits clause has had the most immediate impact on housing and the system of welfare support for asylum seekers. The dramatic increase in the number of destitute asylum seekers and the consequent strain on London boroughs resulted in a number of high profile appeals lodged on behalf of asylum seekers by NGOs. The Court of Appeal ruled in February 1997 that local authorities have a duty under the National Assistance Act 1948 (NAA48) to provide housing and sustenance to homeless asylum seekers. As a result, overall responsibility for asylum seekers affected by the Act shifted from housing to social services departments. In May 1997 the High Court ruled that local authorities had a duty to provide both food and accommodation under the NAA48. A further ruling by the High Court in July 1997 established that cash payments were *ultra vires*, although cash payment was still available under the Children Act 1989. The effects in London were of an increasing number of asylum seekers supported under the NAA48, a worsening housing shortage, competition for bed and breakfast accommodation and the displacement of asylum seekers to the south coast and areas of northern England. London was characterised by a range of *ad hoc* responses and the absence of co-ordinated support measures across boroughs (Medical Foundation 1997). The increased costs over the benefit system and the acute housing shortage

led to a situation during 1997 when the asylum support system was widely believed to be heading towards breakdown ('Asylum seekers' support system near collapse', *The Guardian* 14.6.97).

This was the context for the New Labour review of the asylum system which was begun shortly after their taking office and continued to October 1997. Up to this point the new government could with some justification claim to be dealing with the legacy of Conservative maladministration. A sustained campaign by the popular press, in particular the *Daily Mail* and the *Evening Standard* to sensationalise the asylum issue was also intensified at this time. The *Evening Standard* reported on the arrival of asylum seekers from the Czech republic - ('Giro Czechs hit London' 13.11.97) while the *Daily Mail* raised the alarm over the 'Vanishing Immigrants' (21.8.97) the 44,000 asylum seekers who had reportedly escaped the immigration service net over a seven year period, although no reliable figures are available on this issue. A year on and the *Daily Mail* was still asking 'How to stem this flood of fake refugees' (12.12.98). On the ground in Dover the arrival of Roma asylum seekers from October 1997 roused local hackles, with the *Dover Express* openly advocating the deportation of asylum seekers (*Inexile* February 1999:12). The firebombing of houses occupied by asylum seekers in Folkestone in December 1998, although put down to the activities of 'right wing extremists' was an indication of the general climate of hostility towards asylum seekers. The bellicose performance of the immigration minister, Mike O'Brien, far from quelling the expression of popular racism rather confirmed the intent to weed out 'economic migrants' and 'bogus asylum applicants' from the asylum process.

In the event, the government White Paper of mid' 1998, *Fairer, Faster, Firmer: a Modern Approach to Immigration and Asylum*, did little to convince the government's detractors of New Labour's modernising zeal. The main points of the White Paper are reproduced in the Immigration and Asylum Bill of February 1999, which is likely to become law towards the end of 1999. Some of the principal changes include:

- The extension of carriers liability including new measures to refuse entry to undocumented passengers. The effect of this is to extend the pre-entry control of asylum seekers.
- The criminalisation of asylum seekers who make false statements in their applications.

- The abolition of the White List but continued fast-tracking of those with ‘manifestly unfounded claims’.
- The right to welfare to be denied to all asylum seekers, including social housing and support under the NAA48.
- A centralised system of support through a voucher system will be instigated and is to be in operation by April 2000.
- Dispersal of asylum seekers to designated areas of surplus housing but not necessarily community support or an infrastructure of legal advice, for example. No preference of location by asylum seekers is to be taken into consideration.
- Increased powers of entry, search and arrest for immigration officers. This is likely to exacerbate ‘race relations’ according to the Refugee Council.

These are some of the essential changes affecting the asylum determination process and support system for asylum seekers, although the precise content of the Bill is undergoing review at the time of writing. The continued restrictionism - in curtailing the ability of asylum seekers to enter the UK and the denial of choice over the location of accommodation - in addition to the removal of welfare rights for asylum seekers, has led the Refugee Council (1999:10) to express ‘grave concerns about the Government’s proposals for supporting asylum seekers...’ As they argue, ‘the Government’s proposals carry a real risk of totally excluding asylum seekers from mainstream society’... The punitive effects of the Bill far outweigh any positive changes towards speeding up the asylum determination process which was one of the main aims of the legislation. Neither does the Bill contain any proposals regarding the settlement concerns of those recognised as refugees, in relation to housing, employment, training and education. It should be noted that a recent Home Office policy document, Full and Equal Citizens (Home Office 1999b) appears to reflect a new-found concern for the integration and social inclusion of refugees. Taking into consideration its general thrust however, the new Bill confirms what is now clearly a bi-partisan approach to the restriction of asylum rights in Britain since the middle of the 1980s. (2.) As indicated above, political expediency and strategic interest have long been central components of British asylum policy. The contrasting cases of Somali and Kurdish refugees arriving from 1988 onwards provide a telling illustration of these themes.

The Reception and Settlement of Somalis and Kurds

It is necessary to preface this section by remarking on the dearth of information regarding asylum seekers and refugees in Britain. Ten years on from Joly's (1988a) path-breaking bibliography on refugees in Britain, Robinson (1998) has noted amongst other factors, the following deficiencies:

- The absence of official data on refugees and asylum seekers beyond the determination process stage, with even the latter unavailable for public scrutiny.
- The unsuitability of official data for analysing refugee groups, as in the Census which contains broad ethnic categories covering several nationalities.
- The sporadic character of official research into refugees - Robinson notes four official research papers over the last fifteen years - and the limitations of this research in terms of representativeness of sample.
- Finally, the failure to disseminate good practice or to provide long-term evaluation of refugee settlement in Britain are seen as major obstacles to improving services to refugees and asylum seekers in the future.

This is not an exercise in hand-wringing. Rather, it is important to establish at the outset the weak empirical base for studying refugees and asylum seekers in Britain.

In relation to the two principal groups examined here certain preliminary facts can be stated: in 1997 Somalis were 8% of all asylum applicants to Britain and those from Turkey (which includes the largest number of Kurds) were 4%. The Refugee Council (1996) also notes that between 1993 and 1996 Somalia and Turkey were among the top-ten refugee producing countries, a situation repeated in 1997 (Home Office 1997:4). As I demonstrate below, Somalis and Kurds (predominantly from Turkey) were two of the principal 'growth groups' in the sudden take-off in asylum applications in the 1988-9 period, a factor which is explained in each case by the worsening political situation in the country of origin. In neither case was there a formal government programme of reception and resettlement. Both groups are spontaneous refugees. Never-the-less, there are significant differences in *government response* and subsequent *patterns of settlement* which bear further examination.

Somalis

The colonial link

As we saw in chapter three, the immediate background to the displacement of Somalis is the process of state collapse in Somalia. The reasons for the degeneration of the independent republic of Somalia into endemic clan-based strife are complex and include processes of cold war intervention and struggles for power and resources which were typically encoded in tribal terms (Besteman and Cassanelli 1996; Besteman 1996; Ahmed. I. Samatar 1994). Somalia has been a refugee producing country from at least the Ogaden war in 1977 (Waldron and Hasci 1995) although the main flows date from the 1980s when armed opposition to the Siyad Barre regime began. Two particular periods stand out: the bombing of the northern cities of Hargeisa and Burao in 1988 and the overthrow of Barre and the degeneration into civil war in the south from 1991 onwards. Today, some half a million refugees wait in camps in Ethiopia and Kenya, while another half a million are refugees in North America and Europe (UNHCR 1997).

A distinguishing feature of the Somali case is the colonial link of former Somaliland with Britain. Although this relationship was officially severed in 1960 it still remains a vital benchmark in the minds of many, particularly elderly Somalis in Tower Hamlets. The initial government response to Somalis entering in large numbers in the 1988-9 period was also largely concessionary in nature. According to *Hansard* (20.12.91) a concession on family reunion for Somalis in camps in Ethiopia and Kenya whereby applications could be made from within the UK had been in operation since September 1988. This was later withdrawn in January 1994 when the British government viewed that the situation in Ethiopia had been normalised (*Hansard* 25.1.94) and that applications could therefore be made directly in that country. For many Somalis the concession indicated the special relationship which obtained between former Somaliland and Britain. As one Somalilander who was active in the community in Tower Hamlets indicated:

Britain allowed Somalilanders to come to Britain, not officially by paper but in reality that's what happened... allowed to come in because of previous relationship... They know that they've (Somalilanders) been living here for a hundred years... They know that they will go back... So that's why

they allowed them. Kids came - against the Geneva Convention. They cannot be asylum seekers, they've been allowed... People who cannot be defined as asylum seekers legally, they have been allowed...

The sense of historic ties between Britain and Somaliland was particularly marked in the case of older Somalis who had worked in the British Merchant Navy or fought on the side of the allies in the second world war. There was a consensus among many Somalis that until the removal of the concession in January 1994 British policy towards Somali asylum seekers was both generous and humane. A strong link between Britain and Somaliland persists in such bodies as the Somali initiated *Anglo-Somali society* and the *UK Somali Community Council* which are dedicated to fostering relations between government circles and Somalis in Britain. An active interest in securing the backing of the British government for funding and reconstruction in Somaliland is another vital consideration. Ongoing projects and new initiatives in the Somali community aim to cement ties between Somalis in Britain and at home, including both the process of national reconstruction in Somaliland and the encouragement of voluntary repatriation schemes. I discuss these issues in the afterword to this thesis.

A change in the climate of opinion towards Somali asylum seekers was signalled by the background brief on Somalia which was produced in October 1995 by the asylum division of the Home Office. The brief concluded that Somalis are not Convention refugees as they do not fulfil the criteria of persecution outlined there. The brief's contention is that by Western standards there never was a Somali state in the sense of a centralised, territorially bounded authority which offered protection to all of its citizens. The clan form for example had no clearly defined territorial remit. The colonies under Italy and Britain, similarly cannot be considered independent sovereign states. As there is no state persecuting Somalis, according to the Home Office, they are disqualified under the UN Convention. Perhaps as a result of this interpretation, from 1992 onwards most Somali asylum seekers in Britain have secured ELR rather than full refugee status.

The disingenuous nature of the argument concerning the Somali state does not need to be stressed here. More worryingly, the brief's argument that clan strongholds constitute 'safe areas' for return for clan members can be seen to be plainly erroneous. In particular, clans are subject to control by militias and are not co-extensive with a particular territory but often

compete with other clans for control. Clans cannot therefore guarantee 'safe areas' and there is little prospect of safe return to ethnic 'homelands'. The Home Office brief overstates the power of clan elders to guarantee security in a situation in which their power has been usurped by faction leaders and militia. Some of the alteration in the British government's policy towards Somalis may be related to the changing composition of Somali asylum applicants as more individuals from the south of the country, from Mogadishu and outlying areas, claimed asylum in Britain from 1992 onwards. The absence of historic ties between Britain and the south of Somalia which had formerly been under Italian administration may be the decisive factor in explaining changing Home Office policy towards Somali asylum seekers.

Migration waves and patterns

Somali labour migration, particularly to the Gulf states, has been a central feature of the Somali economy (Laitin and Samatar 1984). There are clear geographical considerations involved here, with Somalia forming a bridge between the Horn of Africa and Saudi Arabia. The historical link with Britain from the signing of the Protectorate and the role of Somalia as a 'feeding post' for the strategically placed Aden, provide the background to the employment of Somali males in the British Merchant Navy. Nomadism and migration are therefore central to the historical experience of Somalis, although their current displacement as a result of war and social disintegration poses a novel challenge for Somalis as they learn to live, perhaps permanently outside the homeland (Cassanelli 1998).

In relation to Britain, reference to Somalis in the literature on early migrant communities is often made 'in passing' and is of a largely anecdotal character (Little 1948). There are, for example, some interesting observations about the independent character of Somali seamen and their general aversion to more settled forms of occupation in manufacturing industry. The attraction of working at sea may have lain precisely in its unsettled character, which recalled the continuing nomadic traditions in Somalia. In general, it is possible to reconstruct four main phases of Somali migration to Britain:

- The early *transient communities* of seamen from Somaliland largely based in the Docklands areas of Cardiff, Liverpool and London. The system of mutual aid which existed within the seafaring community in the early 1900s was centred around Queen Victoria's Seaman's rest in London. According to Summerfield (1993:89) by the turn of the century there was a distinct community of male Somalis in London, many of whom

had wives at home looking after their property, either in the northern cities or in the rural areas. This tradition of sojourn migration continued unabated to the 1960s.

- With the run-down of the Merchant Navy in the 1960s there was a shift towards employment in industrial occupations in Sheffield and later Manchester and Birmingham. As Summerfield (1993:89) argues, 'the post 1967 period represents the first major influx of Somali women' who in the wake of independence in Aden (1967) chose to join their husbands in Britain. El-Solh (1991) regards this process of family settlement as a *temporary* expedient by Somali seamen wishing to claim welfare benefits for their spouses and children. This period also witnessed the temporary stay of elite students from the North, later to form the backbone of the SNM and Somali middle class (Summerfield 1993:90)
- The 1970s saw worsening unemployment and recession in the Merchant Navy. A return to Somalia was ruled out for the majority of seamen who were compelled to linger in Britain on the dole or on state pensions. Again, as Summerfield (1993) argues, there was a consistent belief in the possibility of return, with remittances sent back to Somalia to maintain wives and increase property or herds. For those who could afford it visits to Somalia were made every two years. The essentially sojourn nature of Somali migration was therefore maintained for many men. Women on the other hand were often active in setting up community organisations and self-help groups in this period.
- The 1980s witnessed the beginnings of civil war in Somalia: from 1982 there was a steady number of refugees arriving in addition to those with family reunion, or British nationals from the former British Protectorate of Somaliland. Somali youth working in the Gulf states and students often from cosmopolitan backgrounds joined the increasingly complex mix of Somalis arriving in Britain in this period. The period after the bombing of Hargeisa and Burao in 1988 saw a dramatic rise in war victims, the traumatised, and large numbers of young single mothers and children. The period after 1991 is again distinctive as many of those arriving from this time onwards were fleeing the collapse of the Barre regime in the south, the effects of the Gulf war and the continuing militia based warfare in the southern, coastal and central regions of the country.

The overall picture is therefore one of great complexity and a significant overlap of migration waves. Although the focus here is on those who have arrived as refugees since 1988, the relation between the different groups of Somalis is often a significant factor in the subsequent settlement and adaptation of refugees.

Localities, numbers and characteristics

Although Somalis are widely dispersed across London and different areas are monopolised by distinct clans as I discuss in chapter seven, London's East End and Tower Hamlets in particular has long been an area of settlement for Somalis from the former British Protectorate of Somaliland. Following the demise of light industry and port-related activities in the 1960s and 70s and the eventual closure of the Royal Docks in 1982 Tower Hamlets displayed all of the symptoms of acute urban decline (Keith 1995:553). As an area of settlement for minority ethnic groups today Tower Hamlets has more than its fair share of socio-economic disadvantage and endemic racism (Fekete 1990; Runnymede Trust 1993). Newly arrived migrants, as in the case of Somalis coming to Britain in the 1980s, are likely to find themselves at the bottom of whatever hierarchy of access and entitlement may exist. This is certainly how many Somalis regard their position in relation to the relatively well-established Bengali population (Eade 1989; Summerfield 1993; Jeffers et al 1996) and is borne out by the admittedly piece-meal and *ad hoc* research which has been initiated on Somalis in Tower Hamlets (Ahmed et al 1991; CSC 1998).

The highly distinctive character of Tower Hamlets as an area of settlement needs to be borne in mind. Not only is this one of the oldest areas of settlement for Somalis in Britain, and certainly the largest, it is also, unlike other areas in London and Britain, predominantly *Isaq*. While there would appear to be a general consensus that the majority of those living in the UK originate from Somaliland and belong to a range of northern clan families the sizeable and distinctive nature of Somali settlement in other areas of London was a point which was reinforced in conversation with Somalis time and again. The extreme heterogeneity of the Somali community in London is reflected on a local level within Tower Hamlets, in the co-existence of the earlier generation of Somali seamen and their families with those arriving from the 1980s onwards. This fragmentation of the Somali community is reinforced by local authority housing policy which has tended to disperse Somalis into neighbouring boroughs (El-Solh 1991). In this respect, it is useful to contrast the position in Newham, where there was an absence of a settled Somali community prior to 1989. The Somali presence in

Newham has developed from that period onwards as a result of displacement from Tower Hamlets.

The significance of *locality* was something which Somalis regularly raised during the course of interviews. Change of address and a generally 'shifting' attitude to place of residence was a shared characteristic of many of the refugees with whom I came into contact. In this sense, as El-Solh (1991) suggests, clanship may tend to act as *the only viable form of solidarity* for Somalis living in exile. This echoes Lewis's remark in relation to Somali pastoralism that 'clanship is the political principle regulating competition for sparse resources' (1961:127). While the majority of my sample came from urban backgrounds it remains the case that nomadism is a central feature of the Somali 'imagined identity'. This is so despite the undoubted importance of locality in the struggle for power and resources in Somalia (Adan 1994). As I suggest in chapter seven, locality may also be important in the formation of new identities for younger Somalis living in Tower Hamlets. According to CSC (1998) the majority of Somalis in Tower Hamlets live in the Shadwell, Wapping, Spitalfields, Whitechapel, Shoreditch and Bethnal Green areas situated in the west of the Borough.

Although the 1991 Census included a new 'ethnic' category, Somalis were not treated as a separate grouping. The population figures for the Somali community in London are therefore difficult to gauge (Al-Rasheed 1991). The only national source to allow an estimate of the total Somali population in Britain, the Labour Force Survey, indicated a figure of 47,000 in 1997 (LFS 1997). This is in stark contrast to uncorroborated figures which place the number of Somalis in London as 60,000 (Ditnars 1993,1995) while the population in Tower Hamlets alone is estimated as being between 10,000 and 15,000 (El-Solh 1991; Ahmed et al 1991). The most recent attempt to arrive at a more accurate figure can be found in the CSC report of 1998 which compares a number of different sources to arrive at an estimate of the number of Somalis in Tower Hamlets. An approximate figure of 10,000 was eventually arrived at, although this is contested by community groups in the area who calculate over 15,000 Somalis. The marked mobility of Somalis across boroughs also makes an exact calculation of their population size in Tower Hamlets extremely difficult to achieve. Research conducted in neighbouring Newham (Bloch 1996b) indicates a sizeable population of Somalis, as the second largest refugee group after the Tamils, with between 6,000 to 8,000 individuals.

Reliable demographic information on Somalis in East London is currently unavailable. What evidence there is from commissioned surveys indicates a young population, the majority are under 25 years of age, with a high proportion of female headed households many of whom are single parents (Bloch 1996b:14). The average household size is also significantly larger than the mainstream population. A high incidence of disability and long-term illness (CSC 1998:3) is coupled with chronic unemployment, poor housing and literacy and consequent problems in accessing mainstream social and educational services (Somali Conference Report 1998). The over-use of *gat* (a relatively mild narcotic plant) may have contributed to some of the social problems faced by Somalis, including mental illness and a spate of suicides by young Somali males. Much of the secondary information available on Somalis fails to differentiate between refugee and non-refugees in the Somali population. Given the complex nature of migration waves it is necessary to bear this in mind when attempting to draw conclusions from this data.

In relation to the number of asylum applications by Somalis, the picture is relatively clear:

Table 5.1

Asylum applications from Somalia: 1988-1997

1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
305	1850	2250	1995	1575	1465	1840	3465	1780	2730

Sources: Refugee Council (1996) and Home Office (1997)

The dramatic leap from several hundred applications in 1988 to nearly 2000 in 1989 corresponds to the bombing of the northern cities of Hargeisa and Burao in 1988. After an initially high rate of decisions granting full refugee status in the early 1990s the norm has been for Somalis to receive ELR. Between 1992 and 1996 an average of 90% of decisions on Somali asylum applications for each year were awarded ELR (Home Office 1995-7). Refusal rates are minimal in the case of Somalis. As I illustrate below, the case of Kurds from Turkey provides a significant contrast to that of the Somalis, both in terms of the initial governmental response and subsequent decisions on asylum applications.

Kurds

The politicisation of reception

In contrast to the Somalis, who began arriving in large numbers in the same period and on the whole received an initially sympathetic treatment from the government, the response to the arrival of Turkish Kurds in 1988 was framed in terms of a threatening influx of 'economic migrants'. This term had been freely used in relation to the Tamils in 1987 and was to be liberally applied to the Vietnamese during the repatriation crisis of 1989 (*Independent* 26.8.89). Stanley Spence of the Home Office Refugee Section spoke openly of the need to deter 'economic migrants' in relation to the 80 applicants from Turkey who had claimed asylum in the first three months of 1988 (*Independent* 3.9.88). While there are common features with the Tamils and the Vietnamese, an important factor noted at the time was the 'improvement in relations with Ankara' (*ibid*), a reference to a recent meeting between Mrs Thatcher and Evren of Turkey which made the issue of Kurdish refugees embarrassing for both parties. As I illustrate below, Anglo-Turkish relations are an important factor in the treatment of Kurdish refugees (*City Limits* 15.6.89) although they are intricately linked to broader issues of EU harmonisation on asylum and immigration policy.

If the arrival of Kurds began on a small scale in 1988, it was soon to develop into a pressing political issue during the Spring and early Summer of 1989. Reports from the period and anecdotal evidence from discussions with those involved in the reception of Kurds at the time suggest that the Home Office contacted Turkish groups in Hackney because it was 'one of the few places in Britain with a substantial Kurdish community' (*Independent* 10.5.89). One informant suggested that the earliest contact with the Home Office was as early as 1987, when one night he received a phone call informing him that '80 Kurdish people have arrived, can you come and get them?' The general impression of Kurds being 'dumped' in North and East London boroughs, particularly Hackney, Haringey and Islington, is borne out by the response of Local Authorities and voluntary organisations. Reports of pressures on housing and social services were common at the time (*Housing Association Weekly* 26.5.89; letters page, *Independent* 28.6.89; 'Volunteer burden creates bitterness and exhaustion', *Independent* 26.6.89). A coalition of Church, voluntary and political organisations (including the Turkish Left) was at the forefront of attempts to aid the increasing numbers of Kurds who were seeking asylum in Britain during May 1989 ('Bishop seeks help for Kurds', *Independent* 22.5.89).

While the humanitarian response on the ground was impressive, the governmental tone was far less sympathetic. Suggestions that visa requirements would be introduced to stem the flow of Kurdish refugees (to add to those imposed on selected nationals in the mid 80s) were circulating by the middle of May 1989 (*Guardian* 16.5.89). Tim Renton, then Minister of state at the Home Office, was voicing the prevalent ministerial view when he declared that most Kurds could not be considered refugees 'by any stretch of the definition' (*Daily Telegraph* 27.5.89) and that systematic trafficking in asylum seekers by agents in Turkey amounted to a 'transparent abuse of the asylum procedures' (*The Times* 27.5.89). At this point towards the end of May up to 50 Kurdish asylum seekers were arriving on a daily basis. The use of detention and imprisonment had been in place for several months while claims were being processed (*Guardian* 16.5.89). While government opinion hardened the sources of opposition tended to coalesce, particularly around the anti-detention and anti-deportation campaigns (letters page *Guardian* 27.5.89).

Anglo -Turkish relations

With the pending introduction of visa requirements, the issue of Anglo-Turkish relations came to the forefront. During the May crisis Ankara had assured the UK government that it would 'curb refugees' coming to England (*Independent* 12.5.89). The notification on the 2nd June that visas would be introduced as from 23rd June ('Hurd imposes visa controls on Turks', *Independent* 2.6.99) was again framed in terms of the economic motivation behind migration. It was to lead to a situation of 'tit for tat', with Ankara imposing visa restrictions (*The Times* 30.6.89) on British businessmen and officials travelling to Turkey. Although relations with Ankara may have been temporarily soured, there were other factors at work, including the role of the German government in pressurising the UK to introduce visas in order to prevent Kurds from entering Germany en route to Britain ('Visas for Turks introduced to halt migration flows', *Daily Telegraph* 2.6.89). In this case inter-governmental relations with Turkey may have been sacrificed in the name of the long-term goal of EU harmonisation.

Speculation about the reasons for the introduction of visas were occasionally set in the broader framework of EC /Turkish relations. As David Barchand of the *Financial Times* noted ('Kurds flight to the West is curbed', 9.6.89) a 1972 Treaty between the EC and Turkey should have given Turkish nationals the right to live and work anywhere in the EC as from 1986. As if this wasn't enough of a potential problem, the economic imperatives which led

many Turks to migrate to Western Europe were particularly acute in the case of the Kurds, living in some of the poorest regions in South-Eastern Turkey. In this context, it was claimed, the guise of refugee status was often a convenient mask for economically motivated migration. The dramatic rise in applications in the 1987-89 period could not, he argued, be explained in terms of the threat of imminent persecution. As McDowall (1989) indicated at the time, the growth of Sunni fundamentalism in the Marash region of Turkey from where many of the Alevi Kurds originated was a significant contributory factor to the Kurdish exodus in the Spring of 1989.

Co-ordinated efforts behind the scenes were apparently taking place to prevent Kurds from leaving Turkey in the first place. As Nick Field alleges ('Shutting the asylum door', *New Statesman and Society* 7.7.89) 'a team of immigration officers was sent to Turkey in May and June to prevent potential asylum seekers from boarding planes for Britain'. Despite these preventive measures, which effectively extended the exclusionary arm of the state to the country of origin, some 3700 Kurds had managed to claim asylum in Britain between the beginning of May and the 23rd June 1989. *Hansard* (21.6.89) had estimated some 2,838 since the beginning of May, with 81 in prison and 92 in detention. In addition to the use of detention, imprisonment and the introduction of visa requirements was the alleged removal of Kurds who had been prevented from exercising their right to make an asylum claim ('Deported Kurd is back in Britain', *The Times* 22.6.89; 'Kurds win plea to put asylum case', *Guardian* 31.8.89). The processing of asylum applications was also claimed to be influenced by the use of Turkish nationals as interpreters at asylum interviews, many of whom had pro-Turkish sympathies (*Hansard* 14.11.89:204)

Three broad phases can be identified in this account: firstly, the period before the bulk of arrivals in which Kurds enter in larger numbers, from 1987 to the Spring of 1988, during which they overtake the Tamils as principal asylum applicants in the UK. The government response of detention and imprisonment was an outcome of the belief that Kurds were 'economic migrants' rather than *bona fide* refugees. In this there is clear continuity with the treatment of the Tamils and later the Vietnamese. The second period is from the beginning of May to the imposition of visas on 23rd June. Arguably, in the absence of a settled community many Kurds had chosen to come to Britain before this date precisely because no visa requirement was in operation (Collinson 1990:29). There was little in the way of a settled Kurdish population to attract newcomers as I illustrate below. The third period, which

coincides with the imposition of visa requirements can best be summarised as a period of retrenchment and consolidation for Kurds. Most significantly perhaps, it was a period marked by the ascendancy of PKK affiliated organisations in the Turkish-Kurdish community in north London, as I demonstrate in chapter six.

Settlement patterns: of Enclaves and Ghettos

It is important to bear in mind the geographical proximity of the key London boroughs considered in this study, Tower Hamlets and Newham in the case of the Somalis and Hackney and Haringey in the case of the Kurds. The first three are conventionally designated as the 'East-End', whereas Haringey lies in north London. They all share a cluster of socio-economic disadvantages and high levels of racial and cultural diversity with over a quarter of residents in each borough born outside the UK in 1991 (Teague 1993). Haringey and Hackney are the central location for Kurds from Turkey. Green Lanes in Haringey which hosts a variety of Turkish Cypriot coffee shops, stores, and travel agents runs parallel to Stoke-Newington Road in Hackney which has a more Afro-Caribbean accent and character. The two principal PKK affiliated organisations - the Kurdish Workers' Association and the *Halkevi* - lie off these two central thoroughfares. In Haringey, Wood Green and Tottenham are the main areas of concentration for Kurds (Haringey Council 1997) and are also the most deprived areas in the borough. Hackney on the other hand combines the endemic problems of the Inner City with a legacy of corruption and maladministration in the local authority (*Evening Standard* 5.5.98). In important respects the Labour Left traditions of the local authority during the 1980s and 1990s have provided a sympathetic environment for the Kurdish organisations which established themselves in Haringey and Hackney from the late 1980s onwards.

Taking the Kurds as a whole, certain general features are clear. Although there was limited labour migration from Turkey to Britain in the 1950s, amongst which were a small number of Kurds, it was not until the late 1980s that Alevi Kurds from Turkey began to arrive in large numbers (McDowall 1989; Collinson 1990; Reilly 1991) as a result of persecution by Sunni fundamentalists in Alevi dominated areas in Turkey. Arguably, the existence of the Turkish Cypriot ethnic economy in the garment and catering trades in Haringey and Hackney had encouraged Kurdish settlement in these areas (Hackney Council 1993). The earlier initial settlement of Iraqi Kurds in the 1960s (Al-Rasheed 1994) due as Wahlbeck indicates (1997:172) to the colonial link between Iraq and Britain had tended to be within the established Iraqi community in West London (Iraqi Community 1996:2). Iraqi Kurds arrived

in London as a result of the 1958 coup and again after the Gulf war in 1991. Iranian asylum seekers from the Islamic revolution in 1979 were the largest single group of asylum applicants in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Amongst these there would certainly have been an unspecified number of Kurds. Kurds from Iran are more geographically dispersed and considerably smaller in number than the other Kurdish groups in London. There is also a likelihood that they will be active in Iranian political organisations rather than exclusively Kurdish organisations. This may reflect their size and capacity to organise as well as reluctance to join larger Kurdish organisations where they may be culturally isolated or ill-at-ease with the political complexion of the organisation.

In relation to Kurds from Turkey which are the primary focus here, Peter Marcuse (1996) has drawn a useful distinction between enclaves, as areas of spatial concentration 'which are walled in socially if not physically, but which have positive consequences for their residents, as opposed to 'ghettos', which are entirely negative' (Marcuse 1996:38). Although the character of the ethnic enclave as a resource in providing training and self-employment is important, it is also necessary to emphasise the overlap between enclave and ghetto. The distinguishing feature relates to the permeability of the 'walls that surround the cluster' (Marcuse 1996:41): whether these are determined from the outside, operating to exclude participation in the mainstream, or created and maintained from within the enclave itself. While the answer to this is difficult to determine with any exactitude, in the case of the Kurds there are a number of factors promoting enclave formation. In the first instance the nature of the *political project at home* imposes an insularity born of the need to preserve Kurdish cultural and national identity. As I argue in the following chapter, there are central tendencies within the Turkish Kurdish associations in north London which promote a process of cultural purification and insularity amongst Kurds. This, in tandem with the existence of an ethnic economy and poor education and literacy amongst many Kurds acts to maintain the ethnic enclave as a distinctive social form, aside from any processes of exclusion which may be in operation. Moreover, perceptions of discrimination by members of the Kurdish community are informed by prior experience of the denigration and denial of cultural identity in the home context. The perception of being *underestimated as a culture* and as a distinct nation is commonplace amongst many Kurds and is reinforced and reproduced across a range of social practices and institutional settings in the local settlement context. While processes of social exclusion and marginalisation may be significant in the case of the Kurds, in many respects these are outweighed by the continuing struggle for national independence at home.

Migration patterns, numbers and characteristics

The Kurds have a long history of forcible displacement and division. While this has usually been delivered upon them by their more powerful neighbours internal divisions have also played their part. According to Laiser (1996: 193) Kurds in the diaspora (including Europe and North America) number some one and a half million, consisting of refugees, migrants and second and third generation Kurds, of which an approximate 85-90% are Kurds from Turkey. Other sources place the number of Kurds living outside Kurdistan (defined as 'most of Turkey's east and south-east, parts of north-western and north-eastern Syria, northern Iraq, and the adjacent parts of western Iran' [Bruinessen 1996a:30]), as between one quarter and a third of the total population. Forcible population movement and systematic political persecution within Turkey and Iraq in particular have been major contributory factors, alongside more general underdevelopment and population pressures.

The principal Kurdish groups in Britain are from Turkey, Iran and Iraq, although no precise figures are available concerning their size and distribution. Compared with the half a million Kurds in Germany (Laiser 1996), Wahlbeck (1997:172) estimates that there are currently between 20-30,000 Kurds in Britain, of which two thirds are of Turkish origin and have arrived since the late 1980s. Estimates by the Kurdish community vary between 7000 and 40000 Kurds in north London (Haringey Council 1997). The number of asylum applications by Kurds since the late 1980s (see below) suggests that the smaller figure of around 7000 Kurds in north London may be the more accurate of the two. There are considerable problems in estimating the exact size of the Kurdish population due to the fact that Kurds are not recognised as a distinct nationality or ethnic group in the asylum determination process. As Laiser (1996:193) indicates, the lack of recognition of Kurds as a separate ethnic group leads to a situation in which 'not only has Kurdish origin been masked prior to leaving Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria, it is also hidden from the moment of arrival on foreign soil'.

Secondary sources (Haringey Council 1997) indicate that Kurds in London generally have insecure immigration status and poor levels of English on arrival in Britain. The Haringey Report suggests that the majority of Kurds are under forty years of age, have families of five or more members and have a poor skills base and educational background. Nearly 60% of respondents in the Haringey survey were male (1997:36-7). The specific character of my sample is addressed in following chapters.

A significant contrast between Kurds is the number of each group applying for asylum in Britain.

Tables 5.2 - 5.4

Asylum applications from Turkey, Iraq and Iran: 1988-1997

5.2 Turkey

1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
337	2415	1590	2110	1865	1480	2045	1820	1495	1445

5.3 Iraq

1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
163	215	985	915	700	495	550	930	965	1075

5.4 Iran

1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
393	350	455	530	405	365	520	615	585	585

Sources: Refugee Council (1996) and Home Office (1997)

The tables for applications are arranged in terms of their relative size, with applications from Turkey significantly outnumbering those from Iraq and Iran. Again, the leap in applications in the 1989 period is the significant factor in relation to Kurds from Turkey. The ending of the Gulf war brought a rise in applications from Iraqi Kurds, while continuing instability in Iraqi Kurdistan and the 'safe haven' may explain the rise in applications from 1995 onwards. Figures for Iran have remained consistently low throughout the 1990s, a factor which may be partially explained by the extreme difficulty in securing exit from Iran during this period. In comparing the different Kurdish groups therefore the relevant variables concern the relative size of the groups, the presence or absence of historic ties with Britain and the existence of settled communities of co-nationals. The politicisation of reception in the case of Kurds from Turkey is the outstanding feature in comparison between the groups. Another significant factor is the difference in recognition rates. As in the case of the initial government response,

this may also be attributable to foreign policy concerns. If we take the year 1995 as an illustration, the Asylum Aid Annual Report for 1996 notes in the previous year that:

only 50 people from Turkey were granted refugee status, while 910 (92% of decisions made) were refused... In contrast, figures for the other countries with large Kurdish populations show a more welcoming attitude. In 1995 71% of applicants from Iraq and 44% from Iran received refugee status. Again, many of these will have been Kurds. These figures are clearly affected by political considerations: in contrast to Iran and Iraq, Turkey is a NATO ally and is seeking to join the EU...

The report then goes on to document the more lenient attitude to Iraqi asylum applicants after the Gulf war in 1991, whereas at the time of Halabja in 1988 when Iraq was still a useful balwark against Iran, the British government response was decidedly more frosty. It can of course be argued that as asylum claims are assessed on an individual basis the charge of political influence is hard to substantiate. Yet systematic discrepancies of the sort above certainly require further explanation, particularly in the light of the distinct political and economic relations obtaining between Britain and the countries which host large Kurdish populations. (3.)

Comparative themes

Comparing Somalis and Turks (as the largest group of Kurds in Britain), it is evident from Home Office statistics that large numbers began to arrive at approximately the same date in 1988-9 and have continued to do so during the 1990s, although differences in refusal rates and grants of refugee status and ELR between the groups and within the Kurds themselves are striking. The different relations involved between the British government and the sending countries is a central factor. Previous colonial ties, trade links, Nato allegiance and strategic interest all have a role to play.

Somalis and Kurds share common characteristics as refugees, including the shock of displacement, language barriers and considerable internal differentiation in terms of class and household characteristics. To briefly address these last two factors, Iraqi Kurds will tend to have higher educational levels than Kurds from Turkey, many of whom are from rural and

semi-rural backgrounds. This is in contrast to those Kurds who had earlier migrated to Istanbul or western Turkey, either as workers or as students. Somalis display similar internal differentiation in class terms, while they also have distinctive household characteristics, with a preponderance of female-headed households from rural areas amongst the post-1992 intake of Somalis (Bloch 1996b).

There are key differences between the groups, foremost of which is the long-standing historic link between Britain and Somaliland with relatively settled Somali communities in London, Cardiff, Liverpool and Sheffield. There is no settled community which is comparable for the Kurds, apart from Turks and Turkish Cypriots in North London, which are of a much more recent date and smaller in size. The colonial link in the case of those from Somaliland has a number of implications: long-standing communities including second and third generation Somalis are now commonplace in many major cities. For many of these Somalis Britain is now home. Given that recently arrived refugees often have family links with Somalis settled in Britain, British culture and institutions are second-nature to them, even if they had never set foot in Britain before their arrival as refugees. This may set up patterns of identification with the receiving society which is absent in the case of many Kurds, although the significance of colonial ties is perhaps stronger in the case of elderly Somalis than the younger generation.

Settlement patterns for the Kurds present an equally complex picture to that of the Somalis, consisting of different national groupings arriving at different times and settling in distinctive communities in particular areas of London. Inter-state relations are also significant in the case of the Kurds. The colonial link with Iraq for example, has already been mentioned as a factor encouraging earlier settlement of Kurds in the Iraqi community in West London (Al-Rasheed 1994). For Kurds from Turkey, the absence of a strong historic link with Britain apart from various trade and inter-governmental agreements and their general perception of close military and trade ties between Britain and Turkey, may reinforce a sense of being targetted as a ethno-national group which is a legacy of their treatment in Turkey. It may also enter into their perceptions of the discrimination which almost all visible minorities will encounter, as they struggle for some form of recognition in the Inner City. The spatial concentration of Kurds from Turkey in north London is another factor, alongside low literacy rates (in both Turkish and English) and poor formal education, which may further tend to promote an 'enclave' mentality. I develop these themes more fully in chapter eight.

Conclusion

The comparison of patterns of reception and settlement in the case of Somalis and Kurds provides some useful pointers to the role of group-specific factors in the explanation of refugee adaptation in the country of exile. Arriving in a period of growing government restrictionism and in a European context in which the doors were being firmly closed against refugees, the subsequent histories of the two groups examined here is distinctive. Interstate relations and the local settlement context are the key factors examined in this chapter, although this last theme is more fully developed in the following chapter on the development of community associations in the two groups. Although factors relating to the receiving society are clearly central to refugee settlement the development of the groups also depends on the inherited histories and social identities brought from the home context.

In relation to the presence of a political project in the home country, which Joly (1996) proposes as the decisive element in settlement, the contrast between the Kurds and Somalis would appear to be clear. The Kurds, no matter what their internal differences, are a 'people without a country' (Chaliand 1993). The *quest for a state* is a recurrent theme in the political discourse of the Kurds, although there is considerable disagreement as to the character and boundaries of a future Kurdistan (Kirisci and Winrow 1997). There is a long history of armed opposition as well as formal political organisation which continues with the aim of securing independence for a form of Kurdish state. For the Somalis, the immediate backdrop of refugee-hood is the *failure of the national project*, the collapse of society and state in Somalia in the wake of the cold war (Bestemann 1996). The reality in southern Somalia in particular is one of societal breakdown and fragmentation of power (Doornbus and Markakis 1994; Cassenelli 1998). Aside from the project of reconstruction in Somaliland, there is no political project which unites Somalis in a way which is comparable to the Kurds. This simple contrast, corresponding very closely to Joly's (1996) two types of refugee community group, requires closer examination.

Chapter 6

Fragmentation and consolidation: politics, identity and organisation

The distinctive character of the governmental response to the arrival of Somali and Kurdish refugees and the differences in their migration and settlement patterns are the central findings of the previous chapter. Patterns of formal organisation in the two groups are no less distinctive however. (1). In this chapter I contrast formal organisation in the two refugee groups in London. In drawing the comparison, it is important to stress the differences in their political histories and relation to country of origin: while the crisis of the post-colonial state in Somalia has led to re-partition, territorial fragmentation and the development of a form of *Isaq* separatism in the north-west of the country, the Kurds continue to pursue a viable state, divided as they are between the competing powers of Turkish, Arab and Persian nationalisms. But it is also important, as Clifford (1992: 115) reminds us, to attend to the tension between 'what is brought from a prior place (and how this) is maintained and transformed under new conditions'. What in particular are the local factors influencing community organisation in the two groups and how do these relate to the conflicts brought from the home society?

The role of community associations

There is now an established body of research on community associations and their role in the integration of migrants in countries of settlement (Rex et al 1987; Joly 1988b; Jenkins 1988). (2). Rex's general approach has been highly influential in the interpretation of associations in refugee communities (Salinas et al 1987; Dorais 1991; Sorenson 1990; Joly 1996; Walhbeck 1997, 1998). One reason for this as Joly has argued, is that associations may be seen as a 'useful indicator of the refugees' viewpoint' (1996:163), a proposition which I critically examine below. The study of refugee community associations has generated some broad conclusions: Salinas et al (1987:10-11) note the role of associations in rebuilding community life and a sense of belonging which has been disrupted by exile. Associations are also important in empowering refugees, alleviating 'boredom and depression' and in overcoming discrimination or insensitivity in the provision of statutory services. For Salinas et al, echoing Rex, there are three broad types of association: those concerned with cultural and welfare issues; those narrowly focused on practical assistance and finally those with an exclusively

cultural focus. In practice, there will tend to be an overlap in function depending on resources and levels of expertise.

For Dorais (1991) writing on the Indochinese population in Quebec, the formation of effective community associations depended on the existence of well-integrated individuals (upward mobility in the receiving society), core values (traditions of organisation and leadership) and the support of the host or home society for its success. The most significant variable here was the level of economic integration although the cultural homogeneity of the group was also cited as important. Gold (1992) in his comparative study of Vietnamese and Soviet Jews in California, notes that the absence of community-wide organisation and the tendency toward segmentation and fragmentation are typical features of refugee communities. While similar political orientations may unite refugees and foster the formation of associations they may equally lead to division and factionalism. Integration or marginalisation are almost equally likely outcomes for refugee communities in Gold's view (1992:18-23). The most significant factor is the 'broader context of refugees' settlement' (1992:23), including as in Dorais (1991) the economic context and role of state institutions in fostering refugee adaptation. (3). In Salinas et al (1987) factionalism in refugee communities was also noted as a central feature, although the existence of associations formed by co-ethnics who arrived at an earlier date may also have a marked effect on the ability of newcomers to settle and adapt in a shorter time period (Rogg 1971). This last point is relevant to both of the groups chosen for examination here, although the relation to earlier settled communities has led to markedly different outcomes in either case.

Somalis and the dynamics of invisibility

As noted above, from 1988 onwards Somali refugees began to arrive in large numbers in Britain as a result of worsening civil war, particularly in the north west of the country (Searle 1992). Although Somali seamen had been in the Docklands area of London from at least the end of the nineteenth century, according to several commentators Somali community organisation in East London had developed only in the late 1970s (Summerfield 1993) with the Somali London Community Cultural Association (SLCCA). This was initiated by women from Aden who had arrived in London in the 1960s (Hill 1991). Somali seamen had tended to maintain links with the homeland through remittances and frequent return to Somalia, but with no apparent evidence of diaspora politics until the emergence of the northern (*Isaq*) Somali

National Movement (SNM) in the early 1980s (Lewis 1994). In Tower Hamlets, the SLCCA, alongside the Somali Education Project and the Somali Counselling Project had managed to secure funding by the early 1980s. The Somali Relief Association (SOMRA) was also set up in this period to aid Somalis in camps in Ethiopia and Kenya. Although it is alleged that many associations were later 'taken over' by men (Summerfield 1993) a distinctive feature of Somali organisation in London is the independent role of women, either in working alongside men in key positions, or in setting up 'women-only' organisations promoting health and education issues. The relative economic independence of women both at home and in London (Summerfield 1993) and Siyad Barre's commitment to women's rights as part of the socialist project in the 1970s (Ahmed I. Samatar 1988; IRBC 1994) may be factors explaining the greater legitimacy and prominence of women in the public sphere than is the case in many other 'Islamic' cultures (El-Solh 1993).

Many reports at the time of the influx of Somali refugees in 1988 (*The Voice* 26.6.90) indicate growing pressure on the capacity of the community to respond to the problems posed by the new arrivals, with the SLCCA itself claiming that 'the vast majority of newly arrived refugees in London are in the Borough of Tower Hamlets' ('An interim report on Somali refugees' 23.1.90 SLCCA). According to El-Solh (1991) one result of the rapid influx of Somalis was a politicisation of the Somali community in Tower Hamlets: where before clanship was a 'taken-for-granted' and even declining feature of social relations, as a result of the war in Somalia and the pressure on resources in Tower Hamlets clanship was 'reactivated' as a means of providing much-needed, kin-based support networks. The social exclusion of *Darod* clan members (Siyad Barre belonged to the *Marrehan* sub-clan of the *Darod*) by the predominantly *Isaq* clan members now entering Tower Hamlets, was the less benign aspect of this process. Internal divisions within the *Isaq* itself as civil war broke out sporadically in the north of the country through the early stages of my contact with the community (December 1994 to the Spring of 1995) meant that clanship was an active force for Somalis in Tower Hamlets, although one which was subject to varying interpretations as I discuss in chapter seven.

Both before and after the demise of the SLCCA (the reasons for which I discuss in detail below) the distinctive feature of the Somali community in Tower Hamlets has been its *invisibility* and the apparent absence of any organised political or social presence. The fluid nature of clan organisation in Somalia may be one important factor in explaining the diffuse

organisational forms which are evident amongst Somalis in East London. The traditions of sojourn migration among the older generation of seamen is another important factor. Although a sojourner population of male Somalis has existed in Tower Hamlets from at least the turn of the century, there was little real attempt at integration or adaptation made on their part. As one recently arrived Somali woman working with the community in Tower Hamlets explained to me:

They (the seamen) never tried to understand the situation. They never tried to actually go ahead and do anything in the community, never integrate... So they remain invisible for a long time. Nobody even knew they were here. They used to have some cafes and billiard rooms in Brick Lane and that area. But because they were so self contained... they lived in their own island... So they didn't establish a base for anyone who came later.

The 'invisible' or 'silent' nature of the Somali community in Tower Hamlets is a theme which is present both in a variety of published reports (Al-Rasheed 1991; Rehman et al 1993; SOMRA 1992; CSC 1998) and is common in the *everyday discourse* of many Somalis living there. Clearly, the need to be recognised in economic or cultural terms is not confined to Somalis (Candappa and Joly 1994) but behind the special pleading and rhetoric of 'invisibility' lies a perception of social marginalisation *as a community* which is shared by many Somalis living in Tower Hamlets. Lack of awareness or knowledge of the workings of the 'system' was often blamed for the failure of Somalis to organise effectively. As the co-ordinator of the Newham Somali Association observed:

People should understand the system. If they understand the system there's no problem... what they do and what they can't do as organisations. Then there's no problem... The main point is the lack of education in the community... All organisations in Newham have this problem, it's not just the Somali...

The difficulty in establishing networks, even for those with a degree of formal education and cultural capital, is confirmed by the broader picture of entrenched disadvantage which many Somalis share (Ahmed et al 1991; Bloch 1996a; El-Solh 1991; CSC 1998). For those with little to offer the labour market - especially single men and women whose education or

training was disrupted by the civil war - language difficulties and non-transferable qualifications often intensify their experience of discrimination.

The stigma of social marginalisation and invisibility is compounded for Somalis by the perceived negligence of the local authority. The political history of Tower Hamlets is notorious, especially concerning the way in which the local authority deployed the 'race card' under the Liberal Democrat administrations of the 1980s (Jeffers et al 1996). Both for those Somalis who are active in local organisations and for their clients there is an awareness if not of outright discrimination, then of wholesale neglect of Somalis in Tower Hamlets. Although a *Somali Task Force* was set up by the authority in 1994 as part of the review which led to the withdrawal of funding to the SLCCA (*Report to Policy and resources Committee* 30.11.94) this was only to be one of many 'consultation procedures' and documents (Gulaid et al 1995; CSC 1998) elaborating on what earlier research had already clearly established: a lack of consultation with the Somali community, a failure to address their needs (the elderly, single parents and young single men and women stand out as the most obvious examples) and the absence of political will to resolve these issues.

As a co-ordinator of the Newham Refugee Centre and member of the Somali Refugee Action Group told me, there were additional reasons for the neglect of the Somalis in Tower Hamlets:

The lack of understanding and the lack of appropriate service delivery provision by the local authority has forced the Somali community to stay indoors. They are not receiving adequate services and they don't know how to access the service provision which is available within their reach... After the Bengali community in LBTH we are the second largest, but they have been overshadowed by the Bengali community because the Bengali community have got the representation with the decision-making bodies of the council and therefore their service provision is looked after, whereas the Somali community is completely neglected.

Although evidently 'fighting his own corner', this particular individual merely voiced what was a commonplace sentiment on the part of those Somalis working in the local community, that Somalis were sidelined in the local authority by a combination of Bengali dominance and inadequate service delivery. The perception of hostility towards refugees in the Borough was

voiced on several occasions by community workers, one of whom plainly stated that 'Tower Hamlets does not want to address the issue of refugees in the Borough'. Although the additional strain placed upon local authorities by the 1996 Asylum Act - with responsibility for in-country and on-appeal asylum applicants placed with the local authority - is a factor here, the authority's policy of housing Somalis outside the Borough dates from their period of arrival in the late 1980s. The spread of Somalis eastward - from Tower Hamlets through to Newham (Bloch 1996a) and Redbridge (Green 1996) was one result of this process. This in turn led to the formation of social networks among Somalis which were relied upon by those new to the area. As the co-ordinator of the Somali association in Newham explained:

One thing is that Tower Hamlets is overcrowded. There's a lot of Somalis and the reason they came there was because of relatives. When they came to the airport they say I want to go to Tower Hamlets because my uncle or my cousin... They want to come here (Newham), the same thing happened... What happened is that Tower Hamlets put them in Bed and Breakfast. That's how we learnt this. In Newham for example or Redbridge. So when the family's been here for two or three years, like this... (they settle).

Dispersal across boroughs, resulting from local authority policy as well as the tendency of Somalis to move and settle closer to kin, has been one of several factors affecting the community and its capacity to articulate a coherent social and political presence. The strong tradition of nomadism was also commonly cited by Somalis themselves as a reason for the high levels of mobility across London. In this respect, the distribution of Somalis eastwards has been followed by a more recent move towards West London, where housing and employment are in more ready supply (London Borough of Ealing 1997:27-33). Many Somalis are aware of the differences between boroughs or local authorities in terms of housing provision and access to benefits and this clearly influences the pattern of mobility across boroughs, or indeed outside London to the south coast and further afield.

The contraction of the public sphere

Clearly, the failure to establish effective community organisation cannot be laid solely at the door of the local authority. The collapse of the SLCCA in 1995 followed accusations of misallocation of funds and worsening internal divisions in the organisation which were

partially clan-based, but also related to generation and class divisions between those arriving since 1988 and the older community of Somalis. Accounts of this period are necessarily partial. One of the 'new guard' - a man in his thirties who had been active in the SNM in the Gulf states and arrived recently in London - pointed to the relation between the local authority and the SLCCA as the main obstacle to meeting the needs of the Somali community in Tower Hamlets. The need for the council to speak to a united community - 'you have to be one to receive resources', as this respondent indicated - effectively stifled independent initiatives, while enabling the local authority to administer to a pliable and well-defined 'client group'. For this particular individual the provision of services for Somalis had actually improved since the demise of the SLCCA! A rosier picture of the past was painted by a young man who had lived in London for twenty years. He could remember the passing of the 'old days' very well:

We used to have an organised community. We used to have like demonstrations. We were kind of well-organised. Small, but they were well-organised... Suddenly, a lot of them came. A lot of them came one time. A lot of them came and that created a lot of friction, between the northerners, some of them and the southerners. They were more united... There used to be a community before. Because of arguing and all that, it closed down... They start saying like clan, this one is better than the other ones. That's why the community shuts.

When pressed, this particular individual was unclear about the clans involved and may simply have been interpreting personal and political conflict in clan terms (Besteman 1996). Whatever the precise cause - clan affiliation, political machination and generational and class conflict would appear to be the most significant elements - the reality in Tower Hamlets and across East London more generally is one of inadequate representation in the public arena for Somalis, particularly given their size relative to other groups (Ahmed et al 1991; Bloch 1996b; CSC 1998). It is clear, for example, that there is no pan-Somali organisation in East London, even though the majority of Somalis and many of these from *Isaq* and related clans are believed to live there. Most striking of all Tower Hamlets has no Somali Association despite being the oldest area of settlement for Somalis in London. On the whole, it can be argued that Somalis in East London are weakly organised, fragmented and typically work within broad-based organisations, rather than Somali-run associations. A recent conference

which brought together Somalis from across London (Somali Conference Report 1998) indicated 'a multiplicity of Somali community organisations in the UK, divided according to clans and sub-clans' (1998:8). Specific issues raised by the conference concerned the effects of fragmentation and organisational failure on the Somali community itself. As indicated above, lack of institutional support and competition for resources were amongst the most important reasons for organisational failure.

The causes of fragmentation

While for commentators like Gold (1992) and McDowell (1996) weak organisation and factionalism are characteristic of refugee community organisation, the contrast with the Turkish Kurds, who as we shall see have been successful in organising on a local or small scale basis in north London (Wahlbeck 1998) requires further elaboration. Before turning to the case of Kurds in north London, it should be noted that one effect of the centralised control exercised by Siyad Barre in Somalia is an absence of traditions of *independent participation* in the public sphere which Somalis can draw on. Public participation, as in the case of women's groups and organisations which have proliferated in London was effectively state sponsored in Somalia (Ahmed I. Samatar 1988). With little experience of independent voluntary organisation Somalis will tend to fall back on the type of clientist relations they are accustomed to. According to the co-ordinator of one Somali organisation in East London:

When they came from Somalia they witnessed a lot of fighting... dead people. Always you know how to fight. You don't know how to sit down and talk to each other... So when they see any community organisation, they swear that they can get something... They don't understand that it is a voluntary organisation. *They've only known one system, a government system...* I can't bring my mother in here. She can't be a treasurer... members are elected (my stress).

What is significant here is the way in which conflict over control of local resources appears to compound the tensions and traditions of factionalism and clientism brought from the home context. As this same individual went on to explain, 'the reason they are shouting... is that they don't have access (to resources) except through community associations. All refugees look for something. A shop, get a shop. It's too much, you know'. The significant point in relation to the role of clanship, which is often presented as inherently divisive in nature, is that

clan factionalism for this individual is clearly related to the reality of material inequalities and competition for resources in the local context: 'people talk about clan, but it's not... the problems not clan, the problems the system... refugees have problems, the first problem, *unemployment...*' (his stress). The language of clan is often used by Somalis themselves to disguise other, more narrowly economic or political considerations. This is one important proviso to the explanation of fragmentary organisation in London in terms of clan factionalism which appears so plausible at first glance. The de-centralised traditions of social organisation in Somalia which retain their vitality outside the modern bureaucratic state, may be an additional contributory factor.

Before turning to the case of the Kurds in north London, it would appear that the negligible organisation of Somalis in East London confirms Dorais' (1991) findings: recently arrived and internally divided refugee communities, with low economic integration, little in terms of traditions of independent activity in the public sphere - the case of the Soviet Jews in Gold's (1992) account is a case in point - who lack educated personnel and work in a negative local political environment, will on the whole experience substantial difficulties in establishing cohesive and durable community organisations. To which we might add that *different traditions of social organisation* in the home country will also affect the capacity of groups to adopt the often novel *bureaucratic organisational forms* which are required of community associations in the country of settlement. It is interesting to ask how many of these factors apply to the case of the Kurds. Arriving at a similar point in time and in similarly large numbers, what has been the experience of Kurds as they rebuild their lives in London? Does the presence of a political project - the quest for a state - as Joly suggests, promote associational life and the unity of the refugee community?

The Kurds: politics and welfare

For Turks who had been living in London from the time of the 1970 and 1980 military coups in Turkey the sudden arrival of the Kurds in the Spring of 1989 presented logistical problems but a common linguistic (and to some degree cultural) heritage from which to build an effective solidarity campaign. As one Turk who was active in the anti-deportation campaign at the time remarked, the tradition of community associations and mutual societies in Turkey meant that the new arrivals 'slotted into place quite easily'. This was not only true organisationally but also in terms of the garment and catering trades where again the Kurds

were able to 'fit into' an existing economic niche. The tradition of local activism in Hackney, particularly around the Union of Turkish workers and the existence of social networks around the Turkish Cypriot garment trade and cafe business, meant that opposition to the government policy of deporting Kurds could be effectively co-ordinated. Although members of the Turkish Left were, by their own accounts, dominant in the early phase of arrival they were soon displaced by Kurds, particularly in the context of the community associations. The *Halkevi* in Haringey began life as a Turkish social club or 'coffee shop' in the early 1980s, but as I was cheerfully told by several Kurds was soon taken over by politically active Kurdish members. The former Turkish owners are now wealthy businessmen and own several of the concerns employing Kurdish garment workers in the Hackney area. The implications of Turkish social and economic supremacy in the local context are not lost on Kurds, many of whom also complain of their assimilation into the 'Turkish speaking' community by the various agencies of local government.

The early stages of Kurdish associational activity in London have been well documented by Reilly (1991) who illustrates the key role played by party politics amongst recently arrived Kurdish asylum seekers. In particular she argues for the importance of 'ethnicity building' amongst Kurds and the consolidation of a distinct refugee identity in relation to economic migrants and Turks, an approach which I develop in relation to the securing of the boundaries of national identity amongst Kurds. Drawing on Eastmond's work on Chilean refugees (1993) Reilly argues for the central role played by the 'culture of exile', which in this instance is focused on the political project in Kurdistan. She identifies three aims for the emergent Kurdish associations in the period up to 1990 (her main focus is on the Kurdish Workers' Association or KWA in Haringey): educational work around issues of self-identity; the internal co-ordination of Kurds and the development of propaganda and publishing. To a great extent these aims remain central to Kurdish associations in London, although they have been supplemented by more recent developments at home and in the Kurdish diaspora. The emergence of Med TV is a case in point and will be examined later.

Reilly also notes the internal differentiation amongst Kurds attending the KWA between those in leadership positions from urban and educated backgrounds and those from rural backgrounds. The latter tended to be older and to adopt a passive role in the organisation. In terms of party-political conflict, Reilly observes that after a period of relative unity when Kurdish asylum seekers first arrived, old conflicts from the home context soon re-emerged.

While there was a certain degree of change in allegiance, political affiliation tended to follow family and regional backgrounds, 'providing (Kurds) with a sense of identity and belonging, and with access to resources and facilities in Britain' (Reilly 1991:21), a perspective which has been developed by Wahlbeck (1998) in his discussion of Kurdish community organisation in London. The organisational instability of this period is accounted for in terms of the dynamics of exile politics: the interaction of organisational and external factors results in a process of continual political contest in which the 'frustrating conditions of exile' (1991:23) give rise to leadership contests and political factionalism.

The KWA based in Haringey is one of several Kurdish associations in London affiliated to the PKK. Writing in 1991, Reilly remarks that the 'victory of the PKK... marks a real change in the political orientation of the Turkish Kurdish refugee community in Britain' (1991:23). Whether reflecting a shift in popular sentiment or the greater organisational power of the PKK, the dominance of the PKK on the management committee of the KWA after a victory over the smaller Socialist Party of Kurdistan (PSK) reflected a politicisation of the association which Reilly believed may in future lead to the development of the 'KWA as a political pressure group, rather than a welfare organisation' (1991:23). As Wahlbeck (1998) has convincingly demonstrated, welfare functions remain central to the operation of Turkish Kurdish community organisations in London, despite their overall orientation to the politics of the homeland. It is evident that Kurdish community associations in London typically reproduce home divisions along national and *party-political* lines (Reilly 1991; Wahlbeck 1997, 1998). While these associations are non-political in a formal sense, and have a number of welfare functions, they mainly tend to promote the goal of Kurdish independence. In contrast to Joly's (1996) typology of refugee groups, on an organisational level there is strong evidence of a range of political projects relating to home, rather than a single political project - even within the Turkish Kurdish community. *Day-Mer* and *Komkar* or the *Kurdish Advice Centre* (KAC) amongst the smaller Turkish/Kurdish organisations, for example, are more socialist in orientation than the PKK dominated *Halkevi* and Kurdish Worker's Association and are affiliated to their own parties based in Turkey.

The Iraqi *Kurdish Cultural Centre* (KCC) in Lambeth provides a range of training and advice for Kurds rather than acting as a meeting point or platform for political agitation (KCC Annual Report 1993). I was informed by the co-ordinator of the KCC that a lack of financial support by Lambeth Council and the concentration of Iraqi Kurds in West London where the

majority of Iraqis are settled (Al-Rasheed 1992) had affected the performance and viability of the KCC. This is reinforced by Wahlbeck's (1998:222) observation that the proliferation of minority and specialist Kurdish organisations appears to have 'led to a decline in the activities of the KCC'. More significantly perhaps, there has been a notable move towards the politics of the PKK by some sections of the Iraqi Kurdish population. While a great deal of this may be due to disenchantment with the internecine fighting between the KDP and the PUK in northern Iraq - the KDP and PUK 'think with their stomach', as I was disdainfully told by a young Kurdish girl - the more obvious attractions of the PKK are its sustained military campaign and the effort to promote a modern and non-tribal public image: the development of Med TV and the experiment of the *Parliament in Exile* in the Hague are clear examples here. Several prominent personnel in the KCC have close links with the KWA and *Halkevi* and are often to be seen on shared platforms with representatives from the Turkish Kurdish community.

Iranian Kurds will either ally themselves with the socialist and nationalist Iranian organisations, such as *Komala* and various of its offshoots such as the *Worker Communist Party of Iran* (McDowall 1996: 276) or the principal Kurdish organisations. In the Summer of 1998 a group of Iranian Kurdish women had also organised themselves into the *Kurdish Women's Organisation*. As former *peshmerga* (literally 'those who face death' in military combat) they occupied an anomalous position in the markedly 'male-dominated' culture which tends to inform Kurdish political discourse (Laiser 1996). In effect, they were alienated both from the main associations and the culture of 'male honour' which they felt they perpetuated.

Typically, those attending the associations claimed that they were 'open to all Kurds'. This was belied in practice by the generally national basis of affiliation. While most of the principal associations had Kurds from different nationalities on their management committees (the KWA had one English person and one Iraqi Kurd as joint co-ordinators, while the KCC had several Iranian Kurds working as volunteers) the client base was overwhelmingly national in character. On several occasions I was informed that cross-national attempts at liaison had failed, with the specific national inheritance of an association re-asserting itself. It needs to be stressed though that a sense of pan-Kurdish identity was actively fostered by many in the associations and was clearly prioritised in those meetings where Kurds from different backgrounds came together to discuss issues of common concern.

Turkish Kurds (in contrast to the other Kurds from Iraq and Iran) as I indicated above, are distinctive in being highly organised and politicised. Community associations provide a variety of functions (welfare, cultural and political) with large attendance - the KWA has approximately 4000 members according to their own estimate, *Halkevi* an estimated 6000 - and the provision of a range of facilities including cafes, bookshops, access to Med TV, recreation, drama and sports activities (KWA 1997). Transnational links are correspondingly well developed, with close association with other PKK affiliated organisations throughout Europe (Laiser 1996; Wahlbeck 1997; Bruinessen 1996a; Sheikmous 1990). Lively traditions of a radical press inside Turkey, albeit routinely suppressed by the government, are evident in London (Duran 1996:46-7). Most significantly perhaps has been the development of Med TV, which although promoting a strongly PKK position, represents for many Kurds across the political spectrum a significant step forward in the international legitimacy of the Kurdish nation and a unifying force for Kurds in the diaspora (Vali 1996).

Everyday concerns, the purification of culture and the political project

Routine considerations in relation to the function of associations concern the provision of assistance and support to newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers. In addition to the immediate practical concerns of providing support the associations are also seen by many attending them as vital to the process of cultural retention and renewal for Kurds in the diaspora. In particular there is a constant need to reinforce a sense of why Kurds are living in the diaspora, and what their future hopes are, in opposition to the everyday concerns of economic survival. The harshness and insecurity of economic conditions for Kurds in north London was underlined by a member of the *Day-Mer* association in Hackney:

A lot of Kurdish people in London, their future not guaranteed. They haven't got a job. Casualisation and privatisation, people can't find jobs. Today, I'm a driver. Tomorrow I'm going to work in textiles or a building worker. It is not easy to live like this. Most of the Kurdish people, they are like this. It's not easy. And also people want to save some money, they want to have a shop, self-employed. A lot of Kurdish set up shop, coffee shops. People go and sit there, play cards. Also Off-Licence, mini-market, because their job is not regular... People are working very hard. They haven't got a job for the future, a regular job.

For some members of the PKK affiliated associations, those who chose to prioritise economic survival were seen as outsiders. A teenage girl who regularly attended the KWA told me:

We have relatives here (in Haringey). We have lots of relatives here but they are against the PKK because they are always thinking of money. How can we earn money? How can we do rich? How can we go to Turkey on holiday. Have a nice holiday, yes. We're not talking to them because they are strange.

This is one instance of an often noted hostility between those who had prioritised economic survival or 'getting on' and the politically committed Kurds at the associations. While the nature and extent of support for the PKK and the Kurdish struggle amongst Kurds in London is discussed in chapter eight the significant issue here is the degree to which the political affiliation encouraged by the associations may act to impede the process of integration amongst Kurds in London. This is a theme which I return to throughout this thesis.

The associations as public spaces, as frequently noted in the literature, provide an ideal ground for the elaboration of sentiments of national belonging and identity. In order to clarify important aspects of this process I draw upon Smith's (1995) distinction between the *authentication, purification and politicisation* of culture as central features of national renewal. Workers in the principal associations are keenly aware of the cultural change which all Kurds to varying degrees will have experienced since their arrival in England. Typically this relates to a perceived process of cultural dilution whereby Kurdish identity is held to be in need of preservation from outside pollution. By way of illustration, it is useful to note the role of drama in the associations. In a theatrical sketch which was performed one Saturday afternoon in the KWA as part of the 'First year of Kurdish Culture', a suitably gaunt Kurd, wearing an oversized coat and carrying a battered suitcase, mimed the experience of arriving in London, alone and clearly anxious, to a packed hall of sympathetic and amused Kurdish families and individuals. After a while, the bewildered novice is introduced to the temptations of the city by a grotesquely Westernised relative who proclaims (in English) while proffering a cigarette to his confused cousin, 'Welcome to Marlboro Country'. At this point the review is interrupted by another actor in the troupe who then asks the audience what the innocent Kurd should do - succumb to the ways of the city or go on his own way, alone but with his cultural baggage intact? Brechtian devices like this were commonplace in the workshops and performances at the KWA. On this occasion the audience were encouraged to support the

cause of cultural purity in a light-hearted and tongue-in-cheek way, combining didacticism with the virtues of wholesome family entertainment.

For Smith (1995:66) preserving the *authenticity* of the nation - 'the originality, the self-generating nature, of a given culture-community' - is closely related to the process of cultural *purification* (1995:69):

The politicisation of the native culture, therefore, often went hand in hand with the purification of the community. This meant, first of all, jettisoning all 'alien' cultural traits - words, customs, dress, food, artistic styles... but it also meant purifying the people themselves, forging the 'new man' and the 'new woman', in the image of a pristine ideal found only in an idealised past of heroic splendour.

A notable feature of the associations as public spaces is the dominance of iconography relating to home: images of 'Apo' or 'Uncle' (Abdullah Ocalan, leader of the PKK) take pride of place, as do smaller photographs of martyrs in the Kurdish struggle. Paintings of bucolic scenes in which Kurdish men and women pursue a peaceful rural lifestyle under the watchful gaze of *peshmerga* are commonplace. The familial and naturalistic framing of this type of nationalist iconography is well documented (Smith 1991). What is striking is the distance between these timeless rural scenes and the ever-present urgency of news-items broadcast on Kurdish Med TV (Vali 1996), particularly at the time of Ocalan's arrest and trial in February 1999. The anchoring of images of home in the givenness of the natural and the familial may restore a sense of stability which is violated by the realities of exile and the continuing war at home. Competing with 'Apo' for centre stage are large painted maps of Kurdistan, perpetual reminders both of what has been lost and also what has to be gained. While for many Kurds this imagery tends to fade into the background - one Kurd who had lived in England for several years remarked that it was difficult to recall the significance of particular photographs - there are constant reminders in the associations of the Kurdish struggle and why Kurds are living in London. Cultural events and festivals commemorating dates in the PKK calendar, debates, theatre, music and dance are all utilised to keep alive the sense of what it means to be a Kurd (Connerton 1989).

It is clear that the need to fortify Kurdish identity in London can be explained by its very suppression at home and the continuing war in Kurdistan. As a Kurd active in one of the associations remarked, 'in England, people, all they care about is one day at a time...what am I going to do today... They don't really care about what's going on in Turkey or any other countries, about the war... We have to look to the future and freedom'. Although many workers in the associations emphasised the importance of education and integration for the Kurdish community, one important effect of the politicisation of culture in the associations may be to intensify the enclave mentality which is a notable feature, particularly amongst older Kurds. As a keen advocate of the importance of integration, a young Kurd in the *Day-Mer* association argued of many recently arrived Kurds:

... body in London, their head in Kurdistan. They don't change really... suppose someone came in 1991, still he's in 1991. They don't change, because they think this culture (English) it's bad. 'Let's keep our culture. Let's keep'... They're really frightened in a way... by the culture, by the life, by a lot of things which they didn't see until they were over here. People who lived in the villages until they were forty and then they came here... (in relation to London) They visit their relatives from their village, that's all. That's the problem, I think.

For many Kurds, the transition from village to metropolis which was accomplished in most cases in a matter of hours or days, represents a drastic compression of the experience of historical change which the 'west' underwent in the course of decades, if not centuries (Berger 1975). The effects of this violent break in experience, particularly in relation to emerging gender and generational divisions amongst Kurds, are discussed in chapter eight.

The territorialisation of national identity

The role of the associations in the authentication and purification of Kurdish identity has been noted. Apart from their evident party political affiliation (Wahlbeck 1998) the *politicisation* of the associations is perhaps most notable in the way in which they are active in *constituting and securing* the boundaries of Kurdish identity. What is significant is the way in which the leadership within the associations articulate a particular 'public face', not only to members of their own community but to *funding bodies and local authorities*. In this respect, it is important to note Dusenbery's (1995) observations on the development of a Sikh diaspora,

that one of the contributory factors behind the territorialisation of Sikh identity was the 'multicultural discourse' of the receiving state (Vertovec 1995). As Dusenbery observes (1995:33-4):

If the local logic of multiculturalism...requires a distinctive source
'culture' derived from a recognised homeland or country of origin, then
Sikhs who believe their religion, culture and politics to be indivisible
will endeavour to supply the territorial basis for their 'separate' identity as Sikhs.

While the territorial reality of Kurdistan is considerably better established than that of Khalistan, the same pragmatics of funding and representation in the local political context apply. The possession of a homeland not only allows for formal political and social organisation but secures for the group a degree of legitimacy in the receiving state, which it may not otherwise enjoy.

On many occasions, for example, I was aware of the sense of shame which attached to the lack of state-hood amongst Kurds. As one eighteen year old Kurd who had recently acquired his own coffee shop told me:

I know a lot of Turkish people at work. When you don't have your own
country, when you say you're Kurdish, they say 'what's that? What's that?'
I have a restaurant of my own. The English they respect you... when you have
your own country they know you. *You're from Kurdistan* (my stress).

Again, to paraphrase Dusenbery (1995:34), the quest for Kurdistan may be one of the few means available of securing legitimacy and recognition for Kurds within the context of settlement in Britain. As noted above, Kurds are often acutely aware of their vulnerability as a 'stateless people'. In this respect, the denigration of national identity which has been their overwhelming experience in Turkey is often reproduced for Kurds in the local settlement context in London. Assimilation into the 'Turkish speaking' population is an example of bureaucratic misrecognition which has an obvious resonance for Kurds attempting to forge a distinctive national identity while simultaneously publicising their claim to an independent, sovereign state. I address these themes more fully in chapter eight.

Comparative issues: fragmentation and consolidation

In the current research, negligible and fragmentary community organisation, social marginalisation and the absence of a coherent political project stand out as the defining features for the Somalis in East London. For the Kurds, although small-scale and nationally based rather than pan-Kurdish in nature, community associations in the Turkish Kurdish community in north London have successfully consolidated their position since their formation in the late 1980s, combining welfare, settlement and political functions. While the socio-economic position of Kurds remains highly disadvantaged (Haringey Council 1997) the existence of an ethnic economy, albeit in the exploitative and notoriously insecure garment and catering trades, may act as a shield against the vagaries of the wider labour market. In conjunction with the nationalist project it may also reinforce the self-sufficiency and apparent insularity which is one of the distinguishing features of the Kurdish community in North London.

In comparing these two cases in more detail four main themes can be isolated for discussion.

- The presence or absence of a political project in the refugee group and the group's relation to the home society.

This is the variable singled out by Joly (1996) in her typology of refugee adaptation and community organisation in countries of exile. The Somalis confront a situation at home of territorial fragmentation, clan factionalism and *Isaq* separatism in the case of an independent Somaliland in the north-west. There is little evidence that these provide the basis for even small scale unity and political mobilisation, let alone pan-Somali identification. For Somalis who have grown up in London over the past ten years the disintegration of the territorial state has had profound implications for their sense of belonging to a united Somali polity. For the Kurds, while national and party political divisions are decisive both at home and in London, the quest for a state provides a unifying factor for small scale mobilisation within the wider Kurdish community (Wahlbeck 1998). In the case of Kurds from Turkey this tends to be based upon highly localised and specific geographical locations with strong informal networks down to the village level in many cases. Referring to Joly (1996) therefore, the focus on group-wide political affiliation and the attempt to construct a typology on that basis appears to be misplaced in relation to the groups examined here. The divisions in refugee communities

and the significance of sub-group mobilisation, either at the level of clan, sub-clan, nationality or region, appear to be the most significant factors (Gold 1992; McDowell 1996).

- The existence of a community of co-ethnics and ethnic economy in the local settlement context prior to the arrival of the refugee groups in the late 1980s.

The earlier dependence of Somalis on sea-faring and their concentration in port-related work or industrial production has been noted by a number of authors (Little 1948; Banton 1955; El-Solh 1991; Summerfield 1993). The virtual absence of an ethnic economy, apart from a few Somali cafes (Upton Park and Whitechapel host the two main Somali cafes in East London) may have inhibited the formation of an ethnic enclave in the positive sense used by Marcuse (1996) as a self-enclosed niche in which the community may develop and draw upon its own resources. Somali refugees arriving in the later period may well have reinforced a detached attitude to the receiving society, with a commitment to return being a particularly powerful impulse in the earlier stages of exile. The relation between 'newcomers and old-timers', to adopt El-Solh's (1991) distinction, far from easing the process of settlement may in some cases have exacerbated the factionalism brought from the home context. The demise of the old Somali community organisation in Tower Hamlets may be partially explained in these terms.

For the Kurds, the formation of community associations was facilitated by a pre-existing ethnic economy in the Turkish and Turkish Cypriot community. Dating from the 1950s, the Turkish Cypriot community was later supplemented by Turkish labour migration in the 1960s and Turks fleeing political persecution in the 1970s and 1980s. Although the settled community was small and mixed in character, it should be noted that the insertion of Kurds into Turkish-dominated economic networks has had important implications for the elaboration of an independent Kurdish identity in the settlement context. While traditions of political mobilisation in north London may also have eased the initial stages of settlement and organisational consolidation for Kurds, again it needs to be emphasised that the relationship between Kurds and Turkish 'co-nationals' was often troubled and conflictual in nature. In the case of the *Halkevi* in Hackney, for example, its establishment as a largely Kurdish association appears to have been accomplished by the assimilation and politicisation of an existing Turkish organisation. At the same time, elements of the Turkish Left or Turks

sympathetic to the Kurdish cause continue to play a prominent role in many of the Kurdish associations.

- The traditions of social and political organisation brought from the home context.

Clan factionalism, for example, is the most commonly cited cause of disunity amongst the Somalis (El-Solh 1991; Lewis 1994) although its role is open to interpretation (Griffiths 1997). Clanship, as suggested above, may not be so much a primary cause of division as a cultural asset which is mobilised in the competition for resources in the local context. The lack of relevant experience in developing community organisations or independent activity in the public sphere are central factors noted above. In the case of the Kurds, party political mobilisation based upon Marxist-Leninist or socialist principles (McDowall 1996) while promoting factionalism has also lent itself to bureaucratic methods of administration. Traditions of a radical Leftist press in Turkey and the development of Med TV have also facilitated political mobilisation among Kurds in north London.

- The local settlement context, including the competition for resources, specifically as this is mediated by the multicultural discourse of the local state.

For the Somalis, as we have seen, the competition for resources is one of several factors which have promoted the fragmentation of the community. The simple formulation that Somali disunity is 'borne in the blood' (Lewis 1994) therefore requires considerable modification in the case of Somali community organisation in East London. In the wake of the SLCCA Somalis in Tower Hamlets have lacked a suitable public vehicle for the expression of their identities and interests. Dispersal across borough boundaries and the heritage of clan division compound the contraction of public space for Somalis. For the Kurds, the territorialisation of national identity promoted by the PKK affiliated organisations, although deriving from the nationalist project, lends itself to the reification of community and access to resources in the local settlement context. This reification is accomplished in the associations in part at least through the related processes of the authentication, purification and politicisation of the national culture.

Conclusion

The focus on formal community organisation in this chapter has been dictated by a central strand in the literature on refugees in countries of exile which asserts a positive link between community formation, associational life and integration. While confirming certain of these findings, particularly in relation to the facilitating factors behind the formation of associations, the discussion has concentrated less on the issue of integration (with its emphasis on the receiving society) than on the role of associations as a site for the public enunciation of identities. In contrast to Rex et al (1987:17) who, amongst other functions had regarded associations as providing 'identity options' for migrants (with the rational, unitary 'self' very much centre-forward in this analysis) it is important to re-conceptualise the role of the associations in the formation of identities in terms of the related processes of *representation* and *identification* (Hall 1996a). Given the conflictual character of these processes, a focus on sub-group identification and the modes of self-representation operating at this level may be particularly important in the analysis of refugee groups (McDowell 1996). I explore these issues further in the next section of the thesis.

While therefore Joly's group-level typology is suggestive, more attention needs to be paid to the ways in which 'diasporas... may have formed different collective representations of the group under local conditions' (Anthias 1998:564). These 'local conditions' include the relation with co-ethnics and co-nationals, the nature of the ethnic economy and the competition for resources in the local context as this is mediated by the multicultural discourse of the state. These factors, in addition to the distinctive cultural assets and political traditions brought from the home situation, as Joly suggests, provide the framework within which the formation and dissolution of refugee associations may be analysed. In this sense, a greater focus should be given to relations of power within refugee communities and in particular the capacity of some groups to successfully narrativise and represent communal identities in the country of settlement. As we have seen, it is here that the comparison between Somalis and Kurds is perhaps most striking, with the fragmentary forms of social organisation in the Somali community appearing to impede their capacity to represent their interests and thereby secure access to resources in the local settlement context. By contrast, the role of the PKK in the consolidation of associations and identities has been the dominant feature since Kurds began to arrive in London in the Spring of 1989. United at sub-group level, the Kurdish

associations have successfully managed to combine the long-term goal of political mobilisation with the day-to-day concerns of welfare support and provision.

On a final note, it can be argued that one of the advantages of comparative research may be precisely to pinpoint those contextual and situational factors which are often lost in the policy-dictated focus on the 'broader picture'. Far from detracting from the generic issues of refugee resettlement the study of specific ethnic or national groupings may actually facilitate it. The strength of comparative analysis is also in showing how factors common in refugee resettlement, for example, ambivalent or conflictual relations with co-ethnics or co-nationals and the need to secure resources in the local context, may have radically different outcomes according to the specific histories, identities and aspirations of the refugee group in question.

PART IV

IMAGINED COMMUNITIES

Chapter 7

Clanship and new identities

The absence of a coherent and inclusive political project in the home country is an important factor affecting the settlement of Somalis in London. Somalia provides an illustration of social dissolution and state collapse which is rooted in the conflict between the claims of clan and those of the modern nation state. *Isaq* separatism in the self-proclaimed republic of Somaliland adds to this picture of endemic clan division in Somalia. Recent critical commentary has compounded the deconstruction of Somalia by emphasising the fragile nature of Somali national identity (Ahmed 1995) and the emergence and consolidation of minority identities, particularly in the wake of the civil war. The experience of diaspora, although not novel for Somalis, has occurred on a massive scale as a result of the war (UNHCR 1994) and has contributed to the questioning of traditional Somali social norms and institutions (Cassanelli 1998).

As we have seen, Somali refugees in East London face a barrage of obstacles: divided families as a result of the civil war; a preponderance of single households lacking support networks or clearly defined roles; chronic unemployment linked to the over-use of *qat*, suicides and mental health problems. A high degree of social fragmentation is evident in the relative absence of community associations and organisations and the geographical dispersal of Somalis across London. The lack of community in the sense of an inclusive network of support mechanisms and forms of identification is the most notable feature of life for Somalis in London. Clan divisions and factionalism inherited from the home country have been one set of factors which have contributed to the invisibility and marginalisation of Somalis in London.

In this chapter I examine the significance of clan identities for Somalis in London and the different ways in which this influences the process of refugee adaptation. I am interested both in the continuing significance of clanship for Somalis and in the degree to which clan identities may be undergoing change. This links to a central theme in the study of diasporas concerning the manner in which cultural identities are both maintained and transformed as a result of displacement. I chart the significance of clanship for Somalis from the perspective of the war and flight from Somalia and how this has affected the process of settlement in

London. I then outline the ways in which clanship is currently perceived by Somalis before turning to the question of the types of change in gender and generational relations, which may be affecting Somali communal identities. Finally, I address the long-term implications of the emergence of new identities amongst Somalis in London.

Clanship and communal identities

Components of Somali identity

Any discussion of Somali identity needs to attend with great care to the complexity of the Somali heritage. As Bradbury (1997) has remarked, contemporary Somalis bear the weight of often conflicting historical traditions: Islam, pastoral nomadism, clanship, Somali nationalism, state socialism and free-market ideologies. The consolidation of minority identities in the wake of the civil war is an additional factor which has to be borne in mind (Cassanelli 1998). The cultural baggage carried by Somalis also includes differing interpretations of African identity. Uchendu (1975) cites continental, black African, new national and local ethnic identities as the main options on offer. Somalia's historical links with Yemen and the Gulf states point to the influence of Arab identifications which is partially corroborated by Somalia's membership of the Arab League (El-Solh 1991). The construction of Somali identities in the diaspora undoubtedly further complicates the picture.

For most commentators clanship has been a dominant factor for Somali history, identity and social development. Zolberg et al (1989) for example, have noted that clanship, despite the claims of an homogenous Somali identity, has a function akin to that of ethnicity in other parts of Africa. It can be argued in the Somali case that there has been a negligible formation of a common national identity. In Somalia, clan affiliations and clan particularism have tended to dominate over the formation of a pan-Somali identity (Lewis 1994). In relation to the 'invention' of Somali national identity which occurred in the post-war period (Ahmed 1995; Simons 1995) this was based upon a selective reconstruction of Somali traditions and in particular pastoral nomadism and clanship. As Cassanelli (1982, 1996) and others have argued, this has tended to phase out the accounts of minorities or the interests of those not affiliated to the major clans.

As we had noted earlier, there is considerable scholarly disagreement over the significance of clan identities in the Somali context. Primordial theories of clanship, such as that attributed to

Lewis, have recently been challenged by those who stress the distortion and manipulation of clanship as a result of colonial and later state-class interventions in the post-colonial period (Ahmed I. Samatar 1988, 1994). Again, recent commentators have noted that the struggle for political and economic resources in Somalia may have a greater significance than supposed clan affiliations (Cassanelli and Besteman 1996). Ahmed I. Samatar (1994) for example, has argued that the present crisis in Somalia concerns 'the full breakdown of culture', of which the ideology of 'clannism' is the clearest expression. In other words, 'clannism' represents both a simplification of clan identities and the reduction of other sources of identity and alignment to those of clanship. It is precisely this reduction and simplification which Besteman (1996:129) has noted in the reporting of the war in Somalia and which also resonates in Somali's own accounts when they use 'the language of clan to describe contemporary conflicts'. As Besteman further observes, this usage of the language of clan is often a coded way of referring to more complex sources of division which bypass the 'foreign listener'. For these reasons the interpretation of clanship amongst Somalis in the diaspora has to be treated with some caution.

The majority of my respondents were from the *Isaq* clan family and had an extremely well defined sense of their identity in relation to other clans or the minority groups such as the Bravanese who had entered East London from 1992 onwards. Individuals from other clans had a similarly keen grasp of their distinctive histories and identities. In examining the role of clanship amongst Somali refugees my approach focuses on its *perceived significance* for refugees as they struggle to rebuild their lives in London. This contrasts with El-Solh's (1991:545) approach which tends to analyse clanship in terms of a set of functional relationships, support networks and forms of alliance, all of which have been resurrected by Somalis living in exile. As clanship persists as a central feature of social organisation for Somalis both at home and in London, it is important to assess its significance for Somalis and the ways in which it continues to structure their lives in exile.

Clanship and the orientation to home

The political conflict which causes an individual to flee their country of origin will often continue to affect them in their new settings. What is clear amongst Somalis in London is that there is an ongoing series of attachments to home which structure their everyday lives. This was often apparent in the vital interest shown towards current events in Somalia which was commonplace amongst Somalis. I was repeatedly told, as one Somali woman from Burao put

it, that 'everything that goes wrong out there... it affects us over here. Because we are not... We are here - still, not emotionally. *Politically, we are over there all the time*', (my emphasis). An identical sentiment was expressed by a young Somali male from Hargeisa:

All the Somali - their body is here but their mind is in Somalia. Everybody, young or old is talking about politics in Somalia. There's nobody talking about what's going on in Tower Hamlets. This is the amazing thing. I suppose, they forget there and try to establish here - not talk about politics in this country (*i.e. Somalia*) - then they can do something and come together. There's no question. But everybody is talking about in Somalia, what's going on there. What happened yesterday. Do you have a phone number in Somalia? What information do you have? None of them is talking about what's going on in Tower Hamlets.

While the daily struggle to survive is uppermost for the majority of Somalis living in Tower Hamlets, there was also a perceived need to respond to the problems and conflicts which they brought with them, in addition to those which they now encounter in Britain. A woman from Burao who had taught at University in Mogadishu told me:

We came from a war...you bring your own problems here. Don't think that because we just came from there we don't have our own problems. *You just bring all the baggage with you. It goes on...* On top of all the problems that you face here *you've still got your own problems. Most people are dealing with day to day problems and have no time for anything else.* For any immigrant community in the world it takes a while to really settle down and look around... *to solve these problems in a common way.* Everyone is exploiting us because we are divided. But who's not divided? There are always divisions amongst issues...but the more you know who you are dealing with the better off you are. *At the moment we are more concerned with survival...I think that's why we are not very much organised at the moment...* (my emphases).

What is indicated here is that while the struggle for everyday survival is prioritised this needn't imply that the burning issues of Somali politics are left behind - 'you just bring all the baggage with you'. The baggage in this case refers to the divisions in the home country,

mainly centred around clan, which persist in exile. In this respect, the experience of civil war and social breakdown in Somalia varies according to the background of particular individuals. The case of 'Amal', a thirty year old woman from Mogadishu, illustrates the conflict between *Darod* and *Hawiye* which took a particularly brutal form after the coup against Barre in 1991. At the time of interview she had been in England for four years. She recounted her experience of the breakdown in Somalia:

Refugees have many problems... I was happy in my country, you know. I had my job. I had my house. I had everything. Can you imagine, one day I have to walk out, to leave everything... (At the time of Siyad Barre's downfall in 1991) We left from the airport... My own people came (from her clan) and I was living on the University campus. We had our house there. My husband was away... I was so happy when we left Mogadishu. At least we will get some peace, you know. The next day, people coming around my house - 'go, or I will shoot'. Taking everything that was there... I wasn't a politician. My husband wasn't a politician. We were civilians. He was teaching. I was teaching. They said nothing will happen to you because you are not involved in politics. But they were after the civilians who were (*Darod*)...

I was the same clan as the dictator. I was from the people who made an uprising in the centre. I was surprised because these people made an attempted coup in 1978. My clan, some people of my clan they made an attempted coup (the *Mijerteyn*)...All the *mijerteyn* who were in the city were paying for that attempted coup. All the Somalis were against these people. They say, 'uh, uh. You are *Mijerteyn* so you have to pay'. We suffered but we didn't want to leave, because we said 'why, I am not this expectation to be near to our home, but I will do my living'... We expected after the civil war, 'ah huh, you were the people who were suppressed for twenty years, now will come people who will understand your problem' (pause, laughter). We had to leave our houses, our things...

DG: Who was running after you?

Not only Aideed really but anyone who was of that clan (*Hawiye*). That clan

was thinking that we are, they have the power to destroy everything... At that time they were saying, 'This is your clan, you take the power and you make everything that you destroy'. Neighbours also killed each other...because different clan, you know. So, they came after us...

Amal's story documents the process of breakdown in Mogadishu and the intensification of clan reprisals and animosities in the wake of Barre's fall in 1991. Her own clan, the *mijerteyn* although leading an abortive coup attempt against Barre in 1978, was also a sub-clan of the dictator's clan, the *Darod*. When the civil war in Mogadishu erupted in 1991, for the *Hawiye* United Somali Congress (USC) it was open season on any clan which was associated with the old regime. Although guileless in relation to the conflict, the experience of war had disturbed the innocence of contact with Somalis outside the frame of her immediate friends and family. Contrasting her relations with fellow Somalis before and after the conflict, Amal noted:

I was graduated in Italy. Whenever I saw a Somali, whoever, you are very close really. But now, I can see here, I wanted to talk to someone... But you know, in London if you go to talk to people, 'Oh, you're Somali aren't you?' But now we can't see each other in front of each other... Because everybody is saying, 'if you talk, he might say who you are talking to', you know. That's our situation...

Where before social contact between Somalis had been unproblematic, the experience of war had created divisions and memories of violence which would scar social relationships for many years to come. The significance of clan as a marker of identity is also particularly important in this account. Both in Somalia as in London, knowing *who you are* and *who the other is* in clan terms, may be vitally important for security and individual well-being. As I argue below, this explains some of the continuing significance of clanship in London.

While many individuals would claim that their clan or region had been specifically singled out by Barre for ill-treatment, the sense of persecution was particularly strong amongst those from the major cities of Burao and Hargeisa in Somaliland which had been virtually destroyed by Barre's campaign of aerial bombing in 1988. These individuals form the core of my sample. The long-standing animosity between the north and the south, the former British protectorate of Somaliland and the centre of power in Mogadishu, was often be expressed in the starkest

terms. As one man from Hargeisa in his mid-forties, a highly vocal proponent of secession and reconstruction in Somaliland told me:

I will put this in two ways. When the UN forces were in Mogadishu and claiming many lives, we were all supporting the southerners. But as such there is no Somalilander who would be happy to be with a south man... I'm not over-evaluating it if I say for example a Jewish person was to say 'do you like the Germans?'... The problem is that you can measure it in that level, because it was indiscriminate killing...

This is an extreme view from an individual with an accumulated experience of opposition to Barre throughout the 1980s. Yet the sense that Somaliland - which is ethnically almost entirely *Isaq* with a small number of *Warsangili* and *Dolbahunte* (Bradbury 1997:v; Lewis 1993:72) - had been reserved by Barre for systematic underdevelopment and violent reprisal was commonplace across a range of Somalilanders. For many of these individuals there was no going back to the ideal of a united Somalia. The dream of national unity and the sense of trust between clans had been shattered by the experience of dictatorship and war.

Transplanted divisions

Of the few commentators to write on Somalis in London, El-Solh (1991:545) has argued that a *reactivation of clan politics* amongst the Somali community in Tower Hamlets has occurred as a result of the recent arrival of large numbers of Somali refugees and asylum seekers. The main contours of El-Solh's argument are that clanship - the *primordial basis* of the Somali imagined identity - remains inimical to the establishment of durable and cohesive forms of social organisation, both at home and in countries of the diaspora. As we had seen in the previous chapter, Somali organisation in East London is impeded by a variety of factors, amongst which clan factionalism is a potential contributor. Across London as a whole there is also evidence of fragmentation based upon clan affiliation. In relation to Somalia there is often a tendency to subordinate other factors, those of class, gender, age, 'race' and language for example, to this one main line of demarcation (Besteman 1996). While this approach is debateable in relation to Somalia (Ahmed I. Samatar 1988; Kapteijns 1994), it is considerably more problematic when transposed to the countries of the diaspora where conflicts over resources are often transposed and imagined in clan terms. Moreover, although clanship

remains central to social relations for Somalis in London it is subject to processes of change and re-evaluation which I address later in this chapter.

During the course of an interview I would explicitly raise the issue of clanship, an approach which invariably led to a defensive or closed reaction on the part of those I was speaking with at the time. The sensitive nature of this subject is well illustrated by a visit to the Somali Pensioners' Lunch Club in Cable Street, when after briefly explaining the purpose of my research, several of the former seamen earnestly and without prompting assured me that 'all peoples have good and bad', 'everywhere you find good and bad people'. This was as much as to say that I was bound to have negative expectations of them due to the endemic clan factionalism in both parts of Somalia and that this would obviously colour my perceptions of them. On the same occasion I was explicitly told that 'people do not like to talk about clan'. Several years later towards the end of my fieldwork with Somalis, I was similarly informed by an ethnic Somali from the Ogaden - 'I don't like foreigners to ask about tribes'. This comment was not so much targeted at me as at the effects of outside intervention in Somalia. Academic research and theorising was not immune from the accusation of external interference in Somali affairs. The mapping of clans in Somalia in terms of their relative size and distribution - which has been a mainstay of Somali studies - was not only seen as inaccurate but as lending itself to competing claims by clans for territorial control, thereby, as I was told by several informants compounding the conflict back home.

Raising the issue of clan was a sure way to spark off feelings of defensiveness, so that eventually I attempted to elicit information in a more indirect way when the subject of clanship emerged in the course of a conversation. This heightened sensitivity to clan was not simply a product of my 'outsider' role in the research process as El-Solh suggests (1991:545) although this was undoubtedly a factor. I was, more significantly perhaps, in the early stages of fieldwork attempting to conduct research at a time of great friction and suspicion in the Somali community in Tower Hamlets. Not only was the faction fighting continuing in the south of the country around Mogadishu but in December 1994 divisions had also broken out in the north in Somaliland (*Africa Research Bulletin* 1994: 11661).

As one man from Hargeisa who had worked in the national theatre in Mogadishu declared:

The major clans in the north...it's Isaq against Isaq. *And actually this fighting that's going on now is more serious than the other one* (referring to the Ali Mahdi/Aideed split). *More serious because two families are fighting each other*, (my emphasis). Neighbours! You see? Your neighbours! You can't! You can't!

While for this individual it was impossible to accurately assess the effects of clan fighting on those involved in Somalia, the bitterness of the fighting at home would often spill over to the more mundane business of finding work in Tower Hamlets, where people from the 'wrong clan' would have little chance of securing employment. Clan divisions could also be used to disable individuals from 'speaking for the community'. One young woman who was active as an advice worker for Somalis in Tower Hamlets, recalled:

I went to a meeting with a colleague. He was young and he was born here. I knew more about clan than he did. And he (another individual) said to this man (my colleague) 'You're not *Isaq*!' Obviously, he wasn't from the north. He was from the south. I never knew this myself. Never asked him. All I knew was that he worked for this organisation. (This other man) said to him, you know, 'You're not *Isaq*. You can't really speak for the community'.

'Speaking for the community' was one of the issues we had noted in the previous chapter where Somali disunity was often seen to prevent effective organisation. As the man from the Ogaden introduced earlier remarked, 'we have tens of community centres, everywhere (across London). The reason is mostly financial. Not for the good of the community but for individuals... There is a charity called 'Ackroyd House'... there is a small clan of the *Isaq* there who is dominating there and they don't let anyone else there'. Stories of this type were frequently in circulation, suggesting that the carving out of 'turf' in employment and other areas was a common practice which could be used to exclude those from opposing clans.

Contrasting the position in Somalia and in London, many Somalis believed that factionalism was not only rife in the community but served personal ends, lining pockets and fuelling the war back home. Amal, whose story of flight from Mogadishu was cited earlier in this chapter, remarked on clan divisions in London:

In England it's still worse, I think. We tried every clan to call his people and talk to them and say, 'Now we have to think about what happened. We have to organise ourselves. Persuade also others to give up their (arms)'. What will they say to this clan man? 'Give money. We are collecting money'. To make fight there. Why should we give money to fight? We haven't ever paid that. We don't like because I escaped from war. Why should I pay for war?

Payment of a 'tribal fee', although common, was actively resisted by those Somalis who refused to prolong the war back home. An attempt was also made by many Somalis to disentangle those elements of clanship which were manipulated by individuals in the name of clan, but often used for their own ends, from those which fostered solidarity and cohesion. In relation to Tower Hamlets, at the most elementary level clan relations were perceived by Somalis in terms of a *support network*, providing financial assistance and emotional support for recently arrived refugees. This aspect reinforces El-Solh's (1991) interpretation of the role of clanship in Tower Hamlets and was in fact a pronounced feature of many of the interviews which I conducted. Anecdotal evidence certainly bore out the significance of clanship in this respect. On one occasion, as I was told, an elderly Somali arrived at Heathrow dressed only in a loin-cloth. On being asked whether he had any means of support, he simply replied 'I am *Isaq*!' In general, the positive aspects of clan were seen to lie in its use as a way of locating individuals in an alien social environment. For newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers in particular, clanship provides an indispensable tool for recognition and support. In this respect, clanship and the more immediate forms of family assistance were seen as positive features by most Somalis. As one young woman remarked, 'I think sometimes when (clanship's) of use is when people stick together'. It can be argued, though, that the existence of networks of co-ethnic groups is a primary factor in successful adaptation and settlement for refugees *as a whole* and is by no means peculiar to Somalis. As I argue below, although conservatism in reinforcing the traditional functions of clanship may well be a stock response to the experience of change the degree to which this becomes the dominant tendency within any refugee community is subject to the perceived viability of the 'old ways' of doing things.

It remains clear that the legacy of suspicion and bitterness from the war at home has heavily conditioned social relationships between Somalis in London. In the early phases of settlement clanship clearly acts as an initial marker for refugees arriving in London. Ironically enough for an African country which had hitherto laid claim to ethnic homogeneity, the clan-based

splintering of Somalis across London is extreme. Camden and Islington in north London are recent areas of settlement for Somalis from the South; Kilburn, Paddington and Acton on the west are similarly dominated by southern Somalis, predominantly of the *Darod*. In south London Streatham is largely *Hawiye*. Tower Hamlets and Newham remain solidly northern and *Isaq* - with Somalis in Tower Hamlets mainly, it appears, from the *Habar Ja'lo* sub-clans (Lewis 1994:202). Since the 1992-3 period there has also been a large number of Somalis from the south entering both boroughs. It appears that southerners as a whole now outnumber northerners across London, a radically different picture from the early 1990s when the earliest arrivals were those from Somaliland.

Given that many areas in London are now mixed in clan terms it is interesting to observe the degrees of interaction between the clans. In the case of Tower Hamlets and Newham, where no historical animosities exist these appear to be cordial, if remote. Absence of kin ties and linguistic and cultural differences mean, particularly in relation to those from rural areas or Brava where a different language (Chimini) is spoken, that social interaction on either side is kept to a minimum. On the other hand, the complex inter-linking of clans from different regions in Somalia will mean that social ties between Somalis will persist. One of the staunchest defenders of the secession of Somaliland I had met in Newham, a Somalilander in his forties who hotly condemned the misdeeds of the 'south', was, so it turned out, married to a woman from Brava!

The demarcation of zones in London between the different clans, although not rigidly fixed, is never-the-less distinctive. As I was told by a University educated woman from the central agricultural region in Somalia, who herself was *Darod*:

What they do now is each tribe wants to have the same community centre. Once you know that that community belongs to a certain tribe you don't want to go there. You want to go and find your own... Basically the communities are known by tribal names. *We don't say the 'Somali community', we say 'the Somali community of that tribe'*. That tribe is there... *Kilburn area is Darod* (my emphasis).

Again, this clearly sounds the death knell of 'community' as an encompassing and inclusive set of social relations in the case of the Somalis. The phrase, 'the Somali community of that

tribe', is a clear indicator of the fractured character of the Somali communal identity and its impact upon refugee adaptation. In Gold's terms (1992) 'localism' typically predominates over community wide organisation for Somalis in London. The failure of the ideal of Somali national unity signalled by the war and subsequent partition, may have been due as Simons (1995) suggests to the inability of the Somali state to provide security for its inhabitants in the period after independence. Clanship continued to provide a network of relations which guaranteed security under conditions of political and economic uncertainty. This is one of the senses in which clanship can be said to retain its significance for refugees in London, whose overall condition is defined by its insecurity. Crucially, the absence of institutional support in reception and settlement for Somali refugees which we noted in the previous chapter may have added to the weight of historical division between clans by inadvertently reinforcing the role of clanship as a support mechanism in the country of settlement. In many cases though, particularly for single mothers or the many young men who fall through the welfare net, there has simply been no adequate support system in place. In some cases this has added to a sense of being 'let down' by inherited Somali institutions which I discuss later in this chapter.

Identities in transition

If clanship is both a source of unity and division, as Lewis (1961) long ago recognised, it is also central to the ways in which Somalis continue to see themselves, even for those who may have little interest in clan or clan politics. The process of becoming aware of clan has been quite recent in many cases, particularly for Somalis from urban areas. As one twenty two year old, University-educated woman from Mogadishu remarked:

But we never knew our clan, you know. *We never know who we are*. Actually, when I say who we are I mean which clan. Especially in this country. When we were living in Italy we were the same as we are here... There are so many younger than me that knew before I knew *where they belong* and everything. I never noticed... Most of us came from Mogadishu originally where, in a certain sense, the tribal thing was not really emphasised that much... They emphasises the tribal thing after the problems but still they are much better than other people from other parts of Somalia... (my stress).

Growing awareness of clan and its significance for identity and belonging as a result of the conflict at home and its reanimation in London is a consistent theme across a range of

individuals, particularly of younger Somalis. This is not to say that clan divisions are positively endorsed however. The difference between urban-based Somalis and those from rural areas is particularly important in this respect, with the latter appearing to be more closely tied to clan networks than those in the cities. Knowing *who you are* and *where you belong* could often simply be a question of survival, as another young woman from Hargeisa who was on the whole highly critical of clanship argued:

... You shouldn't walk around being ignorant. You should know who your enemies are. But really, anyone would know - it's history. It's about boundaries, it is! If you don't know your boundaries, you're in trouble. If you don't know that you don't walk into some area that people don't accept people, they're going to chop my head off. These things I think it's important that people know, that people understand. And it's important that you change it as well. Not just know and use it, *but know to change it* (my emphasis).

Knowing who you are or how you have been placed by a certain discourse is therefore a first step in changing that discourse and the attendant identities and roles that go with it. In this sense I would argue that there is a need to build upon Simons (1995) and El-Solh's (1991) approach and not only observe how clanship persists as a central feature of Somali social relations in London but also the ways in which traditional cultural elements, including clanship, are reformed under the conditions of exile. It is necessary to stress that the refugee experience for Somalis is heavily conditioned by the state of societal collapse, the effective dissolution of state and society in Somalia (Doornbus and Markakis 1994; Simons 1995). For many Somalis the crisis in Somalia has been experienced in terms of clan conflict and division. Popular depictions of the war in Somalia reinforce this notion of clanship as central to the conflict and of clan factionalism as endemic to Somali social relations (Besteman 1996).

The relevance of this for the present discussion concerns the way in which the crisis 'at home' feeds into the social identities of Somalis in the diaspora. As one former caseworker for Tower Hamlets Law Centre remarked to me, 'their (Somalis) old way of life has let them down severely. They haven't found a new way yet. So it's a transition of losing their identity yet at the same time it's having to really redefine what that identity is'. To corroborate this remark, refugees living in Tower Hamlets were often explicit about their own sense of

confusion and lack of direction in relation to their identity as Somalis. In an off-the-cuff remark to me, one ethnic Somali from Kenya remarked that, 'I'm Somali, but I don't understand the Somali community'. Elsewhere, another Somali complained about not knowing 'what type of culture we have anymore...it's not really anything...I think there's a lot of problems going on... You never know where you stand on anything'. For those Somalis living in the diaspora, social relations and identities are clearly not immune from the strain and change which Somalis are experiencing at home (Adam 1994; Adan 1994; Lederach 1993; Michaelson 1993). In the next two sections I am concerned to trace the links between changes which are occurring within the domestic sphere, specifically in gender and generational relations and the broader processes of change which are affecting Somalis in London. I also attempt to link these changes to the re-evaluation of tradition, and in particular the central role of clanship in the Somali imagined identity.

Gender and the reconstruction of tradition

The position of Somali women

A state of flux or tension in gender relations is a notable feature of my sample and is a central dynamic of refugee adaptation (Kay 1987; Eastmond 1993; Buijs 1993; Camino and Krulfeld 1994). As we might expect, there are a complex variety of responses entailed in negotiating gender identities. El-Solh's discussion (1993) concerns the diversity of ways in which Somali women interpret Islam in achieving new identities. For the men, as I demonstrate here, the shifts are equally if not more problematic. The issue of changing gender relations amongst Somalis needs to take account of the considerable variation within Somalia between men and women in terms of education, rural/urban divisions and religious belief. On the whole, the position of women in Somali society underwent a degree of change during the 1970s, particularly with the introduction of the Family Law in 1975. This gave equal rights to women in divorce, property and inheritance, although in practice a number of constraints continued to operate on women (IRBC 1994). Despite this, Siyad Barre's reforms met with active resistance from Islamist leaders in Somalia. The formation of the Somali Women's Democratic Organisation (SWDO) in 1977 for example, was used by Barre to promote human rights and education against female genital mutilation (FGM) as part of a wider onslaught against 'tribalism'. While according to many commentators there had been an improvement for educated or professional women in urban areas in Somalia during the 1980s, rural women or those dependent on a male wage continued to occupy a subordinate social position. In

general, women have a lower public profile than men and are less involved in decision-making, although their dominant role within the household is believed to counter-balance this. Significantly for our purposes, the experience of the war has disrupted the clan-based system of protection for women (IRBC 1994) resulting in a displacement of many women from traditional roles and identities.

Notably in relation to Somalis in Tower Hamlets, there is a high incidence of single women with children in the community, a phenomenon which in Somalia 'was unknown before the war' (IRBC 1994:103). The 'abnormal' character of many households in Tower Hamlets in terms of Somali norms needs to be stressed. Some of the cultural pressure on single women is indicated by Mohammed, a Somali who was active in the housing field in Tower Hamlets:

So here you are. The other problem that nobody likes to talk about is the single mothers. These women who are single mothers are 70% of our population I would say... The family cracked. The responsibility that was put on the woman is very important. In our culture the woman is the boss of the house. She owns everything... She takes the responsibility... And the man, they are the breadwinner... So she's not in a situation where she will be thrown away. In Europe it's impossible... There isn't a place for the woman. She loses her husband - 'cos she's lost her role, so she's no good for anything.

For the women themselves the lack of defined roles could be experienced as one of simple loneliness and marginalisation (Al-Rasheed 1993). As I was told by a recently arrived single parent from Mogadishu, 'When we were in our country we were sharing everything... we had someone to share everything, but here we are alone. Whenever you are sharing now, you are sharing your problems (laughter)'. On the other hand the other distinctive feature of social organisation amongst Somalis in Tower Hamlets is the high proportion of women's organisations, or organisations in which women occupy a lead role. In some cases this is taken by women from Aden who had arrived in the 1960s or 'second generation' Somalis born to seamen, but there is also a large number of Somali women who are active in community organisations who arrived as refugees in the period after 1989. In many cases these are women who were active in campaigning against FGM in Somalia or otherwise involved in education or development work in rural areas. Their client base is now also overwhelmingly amongst the women in the community, dealing with issues such as FGM, literacy, education and training.

Box 3.*Somali Women's Groups*

Outside the statutory sector, illustrations of successful organisation include the many small-scale 'grass-roots' groups, such as *Tawakal*, based in Stepney or *Badaado* women's group in Newham. Often founded by women (typically those settled in Britain since the 1960s, or women who had been working on women's issues in Somalia) they have varying remits. *Tawakal* for example is mainly concerned to provide services to Somali women across east and north London but also has significant links with development agencies working for reconstruction in Somaliland. *Badaado* and *The London Black Women Health Action Project* (LBWHAP) are more narrowly concerned with health (particularly the infibulation of women), counselling and education in the East London area.

The pronounced public profile of women in the Somali community is the most notable feature here (Summerfield 1993). This partly reflects the peculiar demographic characteristics of the Somali population in East London, with its high preponderance of single and single parent, female headed households. Somali women's groups will typically point to the array of problems faced by Somali women, including high levels of illiteracy in Somali and heightened difficulties in learning English, a lack of familiarity with welfare systems, distance from extended family networks as forms of support and the consequent effects of social isolation. The legitimacy of independent women's initiatives also reflects the economic self-sufficiency practiced by many Somali women, both at home and increasingly in London itself.

The viewpoint of the men: public invisibility and the private sphere

It can in general be argued that a process of realignment in identities is occurring for Somali refugees which can be more broadly related to their 'liminal' status, in both the public and domestic spheres. The high public profile for some women, alongside the departure from traditional family norms, had led to a range of responses from the men in my sample. For some of the men I interviewed the often noted 'invisibility' of the Somali community in the public sphere could be perceived in positive terms, as a mark of the resilience of Somali culture and the Somali family. As one man in his thirties who had arrived as a refugee in 1989, put it:

The community itself...it's one of the strongest communities to more or less hold to the traditional way of life, whereby the family is stronger...than it was before.

The Chinese community for example has been here for a long period of time and you hardly see them anywhere, simply because they are united together...You don't see them on the street! The Somalis are almost the same. For one thing you can hardly see them!

This positive interpretation of the invisibility of the Somali community is significant, primarily as an aspect of a perceived threat to the 'traditional way of life'. That this reconstruction of 'traditional' Somali values entails an extreme simplification is clear however from other sources where the economic and social independence of Somali women in Somalia (Lederach 1993; Kapteijns 1994) and particularly in contrast to neighbouring Bangladeshis in Tower Hamlets is emphasised (Summerfield 1993). Being 'true to one's culture' in the case of some of the men, very often meant reinforcing a particular conception of 'traditional' gender roles, or at the least expressing anxiety about the state of flux in gender relations. As one man in his thirties from Hargeisa who was educated to secondary level, told me:

What happened is that the majority of Somalis, they looked after their families, their children, their wives. And they preferred their lifestyle and the man must be, must get income for the family wherever he can. Whether he work in Arabia... and then children respected their father. Women, she was respected... And now, when they come to this country, *one marriage is from social security, one marriage is from the woman and the man*. The important one is the marriage for the social security, because the marriage for the man is less respectable because he doesn't provide anything, for her or the children... 'Cos, what every woman is saying is that you are not providing anything for us. You are coming here just to waste our time, to cook for you, wash up your clothes. So she's keeping, you know, to be happy to marry to social security. And if you have a problem with your wife you will lose your benefit... So this is the problem.

Here, the problem is constructed in terms of a violation of 'traditional' Somali norms. The solution is seen to lie in the virtues of *masculine self-reliance* and the confinement of women to the domestic sphere:

The man get the work - the family will go back traditionally, lifestyle for the family. Your wife is here... you're working. You must use your technique and your traditional lifestyle. When you are in Somalia you are paying the bills, you are buying clothes - everything. You are in your hands. And now, escaping your hands and in the hands of the social security. So you hold onto them!

As Al-Rasheed notes, the loss of status for male refugees in the public sphere is well documented in the migration literature (1992:93), as is the apparently greater adaptability of women to changed economic and social circumstances (Buijs 1993; Benson 1994; Kulig 1994). What is interesting here is the association of state-dependency - reinforced by the negative connotations of 'refugee status' (Zetter 1988) - with the loss of the male breadwinner role and what is perceived to be the erosion of the patriarchal Somali family structure, particularly as this concerns the perceived emancipation of women. Again, it needs to be stressed here that there is considerable variation within households. For those women whose previous experience has been one of dependency on a male wage the 'freeing up' from male authority which state provision allows may result in marriage breakdown and a sense of the 'disposability' of men indicated above. For those women with previous experience of economic independence on the other hand the dynamics are often different. For the men in my sample, most of whom were on benefits and educated by and large to secondary level or above in Somalia, the anxieties of under-performance were acute.

There is also an important link here with feminist theories which stress the gendered nature of the welfare state. Neo-liberals, for example, regard the state not only as a 'mollycoddling nanny' but also as actively *emasculating*. As Sawyer argues (1996:131), 'neo-liberalism depicts the results of social liberalism as a loss of masculinity - through 'overprotection' by the state in the public sphere and *usurpation of male roles in the private sphere*'. It is the latter - as this is perceived by both Somali men and women - which may have important implications for the stability of the family and the preservation of traditional social norms.

A recurrent and clearly topical anecdote which was recounted to me by both male and female Somalis concerned a cartoon which had appeared in a Somali newspaper. In the words of one Somali male:

This is a Somali woman who arrives in this country... Her husband claims, 'O, why am I going through all these delays', more or less literally lying down. Doing like grilling flour, he's got the baby on his back. She's wearing like a really tight skirt with high heeled shoes... There's a picture on the wall - 'One word and I call the police'. And she said 'this is you babe', (laughter). There's a 99 number on the wall and she says 'one word and I call the police'.

Again, the significant feature here is the displacement of male authority in the home by the institutions of the state. Somali males' dealings and frustrations with the Department of Social Security, for example, were a common bone of contention, as was an awareness of the erosion of their own role and status. The story above was relayed by both men and women: by the men with an air of mock resignation, as of those who know the dice are loaded against them but who battle on regardless, and by the women with amused disbelief. The ironic humour surrounding the changing role of women would appear to be linked to a perception of their incorporation into the political and economic agenda of the receiving state, both as possessors of rights and participants in the public sphere. For many men the sexual emancipation of women and the subordination of men in the home (as a result of their inferior position in the public sphere) is associated with an incipient 'feminisation' of the state (Pateman 1988: 199-204). On occasion, this was explicitly voiced. In a group discussion with three Somali men in their twenties, one individual remarked:

The woman has first priority in Europe (gestures to indicate that women are at the top and men at the bottom). *The law, the whole system here.* Because like back home woman never used to work. Woman used to be in the house and look after the kids. But now she can go to college, she can go to work... So she's got the house to herself. So, a lot of men you see them walking with their bags 'cos they got kicked out. Some of the women, they just say 'I'll call 999. If you don't go I'll call the police' (my emphasis).

The intensity of the male response depended on the background of the individual involved, with many men where both partners were in employment in Somalia frequently adopting a more liberal attitude. A state of unease in gender relations was however typical across a range of households.

The response to change and neo-traditionalism

The long-term implications of this perceived decline in male authority were not lost on many Somalis. A Somali woman from the north, herself active in campaigning work in Somalia, had the following incident to report:

I met a Somali who used to work together in Somalia... We were working together. So he came last week and I met him and I said 'Are you planning to stay here until the war in the country finishes?' 'No, I don't think so, because I have to go back and I don't want to bring my family here'. And I said 'can you tell me the reason that you don't want to bring them here?' And he said 'there's a story, that your wife, if she's not happy with you maybe she can call in the police and maybe they can throw you out (laughter) and she can say whatever she likes. So, I don't want that to happen to me', he said. 'I don't want to lose my children'.

The implications were also clearly spelt out for social relations inside Somalia itself:

There will be a time when we will all go back home. This is not our country. It's our second country. We will go back to Somalia tomorrow. But don't you see, the woman who has known her rights, who became aware of her rights, do you think you can put pressure on her when she is back home? That will be a very brave man. *Still, there will be confusion in the community.*

There are a variety of responses to this 'confusion in the community'. While changes in gender relations may lead (in some cases) in the direction of a weakening of the patriarchal basis of the family, there is also a movement towards a strengthening of fundamentalism and neo-traditionalism in some sections of the Somali community. An escalation in arranged marriages for example - 'Somalis are sick with marriage' as I was told by a twenty three year old woman from Mogadishu - was a prominent feature noted by a range of individuals, suggesting a concern with long-term stability which the condition of exile was often unable to satisfy. As Al-Rasheed (1993:91) has noted of Iraqi exiles in London, 'Iraqi women seem to focus their concerns on their inability to establish family stability and continuity... Exile leads to the reconstruction of the meaning of marriage which in their minds becomes associated with security, family life and stability in general'. A similar process appears to be underway

amongst significant numbers of Somalis in London, although the women in my sample were often less than enthusiastic on this count.

If the reality of clan factionalism - the critique of 'tribalism' - was never far from the surface in conversations with Somalis, clanship continued to be seen in positive terms as a *constitutive* element of Somali identity. The centrality of clan to the traditional model of Somali identity was made explicit by a young Somali male:

I don't know if you have seen...I think it was that guy who was an Englishman (I suggest I.M.Lewis) - yeah, Lewis. Somalis, they believe in the camel. They believe in religion and they believe in clan. They say, which one you want to throw away? First you throw away religion. Second, if they want to throw away, they will throw away camel. And then finally clan... I think that point that Lewis made, I agree with him.

The incorporation of anthropological interpretations (Besteman 1996:128-9) into common sense accounts of Somali identity is interesting, not so much as an example of what Giddens has called a 'double hermeneutic' of social theory and every-day discourse (1976), as of the construction of a highly specialised model of traditional Somali identity. In another instance a Somali male observed:

In a way the attitudes... they are coming back to Africa, to the religion, whereby the woman should obey the husband. This is coming in more and more. It's coming back to life. More or less some of the people who are not the traditional way of life are being segregated in being not a religious person... All the Somali. People are being strict Muslim...*the woman should never speak to anyone on the street.*

For this particular individual, African/Islamic tradition and a 'silent' role for women in the public sphere are synonymous. Articulating the Islamic theme more forcefully, the same individual later remarked that a lot of Somalis 'are realising who they are and what they are and feeling faith to themselves, as one Somali. A lot of them are getting into traditional dance... like a Somali Malcolm X'. The hybrid character of this type of fundamentalist reaction needs to be stressed, particularly in relation to the Black Power referencing of this

particular individual with its implicit appeal to a *worldwide African diaspora*. Gilroy (1996:74) in particular, has noted the significance of the Malcolm X cult:

as an early symptom of a folding process in which the past was recycled and re-imagined as well as actively re-invented. The Nation of Islam provides a significant model of solidarity here that is important precisely because, though it uses the idea of Nationhood, it is not based on nationalism, notions of citizenship or rights, but on an older and more straightforwardly authoritarian form of kinship that is masculinist, intolerant and militaristic and shares important features with other 'fraternalist' and 'fratriarchal' political cultures.

As Gilroy then goes on to demonstrate hybrid forms of identity are compatible with a range of political ideologies and 'fundamentalisms'. This is an important corrective to the more celebratory accounts of hybridity and diasporic consciousness and certainly needs to be borne in mind in interpreting the valorisation of masculine self-reliance which permeates some sections of the Somali community in Tower Hamlets.

The response by Somalis to changes in gender relations in both the public and private spheres is highly complex. Many women question traditional roles and expectations, particularly in relation to male authority in the home, while a number of the men reinterpret Somali identity in a way which emphasises the primordial role of clanship and a 'reversion' to patriarchal, African/Islamic traditions. It needs to be emphasised that there are a number of intermediary positions between the *explicit critique* of traditional roles and the *conservative re-invention* of tradition. There is also no clear-cut division between 'male' and 'female' perspectives. As El-Solh (1993) has indicated, the way in which Somali women renegotiate their cultural identity in Britain varies according to their age, class, contact with Islam in the Gulf states and length of stay in Britain. The same is true for the men in my sample, many of whom had critical attitudes to what they perceived as the negative aspects of clanship and any attempt to 'revive' traditional gender relations.

Generation and change

Between the old and the new

As in the case of changes in gender relations which may occur with some rapidity in refugee populations, generational relations often succumb to a similarly accelerated process of reconstruction (Camino 1994:30-1). On the one hand, parallels can be drawn between Baskauskas's study (1980) and my own research in London's East End. As in the Lithuanian example, recently arrived Somali refugees in Tower Hamlets have encountered an already settled community, in this case of earlier seamen and their families, as well as those who had arrived from Aden and the Gulf states at different periods from the 1960s. There is a similar experiential gap between the new refugees, within my sample at least, often highly educated, urban and cosmopolitan and the oldtimers within the community, who as noted above were predominantly sojourner or transient migrant workers. It is precisely the legitimacy of the old 'ways of doing things' which is called into question by many of the new arrivals, echoing Al-Rasheed's comments on 'the old meanings attached to structures, institutions, values and norms' (1993:92) which no longer apply so readily in exile.

An added complexity concerns the fact that the new arrivals have themselves brought up children in London, whose experiences have again been quite different from their own. For this group of young people, particularly between the ages of 18-25, it can be argued that their social identities have been formed from within the crucible of two juxtaposed sets of social relations. The questioning of traditions is if anything more acute in this group, where the process of forming identities has drawn upon divergent cultural practices and norms. The fluidity of the identifications of young people needs to be stressed. As Camino (1994:31) argues, 'no single or static form of ethnicity develops among refugee youth'. A broad range of responses can be located in the Somali community, only some of which are openly critical of traditional Somali institutions. As I go on to argue, the critique of traditional identities can largely be explained in terms of the perceived failures of the past and the older generation. The social conditions of many young Somalis, as they encounter unemployment and blocked opportunities, compounds this sense of bitterness towards the older generation, in particular those who they believe had fomented conflict in Somalia.

The challenge to parental authority

For the generation of Somalis who have arrived in England since the late 1980s and whose children have reached early adulthood in the intervening period there is a common perception of a challenge by their children to parental authority and the traditional codes of Somali culture. As one man with an errant teenage son remarked:

In the UK I think our daughters and our young, maybe there's something going to happen, because something is different... A very important thing, one thing I have seen in this country, if you are in the school, the school is teaching them about relationships (sex education). Also to learn how to make relationships between man and woman... that is not our way in our religion and our tradition. The problem now here is that sometimes three o'clock, or one o'clock they leave school. They are not coming straight home. They are going out and then coming at ten o'clock p.m. *So that is now the difference between then and now. And we can't do anything to this.*

The discrepancy between Somalia and Britain in cultural norms surrounding sexuality for example has been noted by Somalis who are active in the educational field (Kahin 1996). Again, the nature of state interventions in the traditional arena of the home is a source of disquiet for many Somalis. The sense of a generation slipping away from parental control was reinforced in conversations on many occasions. The same worried father above continued:

For example, my son he is nineteen years old, tries to smoke hashish and drinks whisky. I was trying to say 'my child. Don't do that'. (explains the anti-social consequences of drug abuse, in crime etc). Our traditional culture is the parents and teachers they are helping each other and they are the same, they contact each other whatever happens, because the teacher is the one who is taking you out from the dark and showing you the bright skies (the light). They don't respect the teachers here. Something is gone. So that if the teachers don't do what they are supposed to and they're not respected... the child has no respect.

DG: So what do you think should be done?

If you don't have the people to show you the light, it is going to be this way. That is the reality now in this country because you can't, you can't just try to argue with your parents. Because if you're trying to tell him the good way he's going to report you to the police - 'My father and my mother beat me'. They come the police and *that is not the way of our people, to come in front of our parents* (he is beginning to get agitated at this point).

This is the story I have to tell myself of my son. I don't know what happened. He didn't say to me that he was going to call the police. I just saw the police, three of them. I asked them what happened and what was wrong here and what happened. My son told me, I rung that, I called them to come, because of my father. But why? ... The police asked me why did you slap your son? And I told them, 'Why are you wasting time to come to our place'... Anyway I slap my son in front of you because they waste their time in coming here. And then the police they became kind and calmed down and said to Ahmed that you have to listen to your father and mother...(he imitates a police siren at this point and suggests that the police would be run off their feet if they intervened in every domestic dispute)...

This passage, recounted with a great deal of humour on the part of the elderly Somali in question, is interesting on several counts: firstly as an indication of a sense of the failure of public institutions to respect the distinctive cultural needs of Somalis and secondly for the role of police interventions in the domestic sphere and the challenge to parental (predominantly male) authority which this is seen to pose. The analogy with men's response to women's increased awareness of their rights - and their ability to exercise these rights noted in the previous section of this chapter - is clear. What is perceived as a crisis of respect for many parents is seen rather differently from the viewpoint of the young themselves. For the emerging generation there are a number of issues, with education disrupted at home and the additional difficulty of adjusting to the education system in Britain (Somali Conference Report 1998). Many of these young people, from conversations I had with teenage Somalis at schools in Tower Hamlets for example, also have highly negative perceptions and images of the situation back home, associating Somalia with warfare, famine and general savagery. For those with more finely tuned recollections of the bitterness of war there was often a sense of

revulsion at the past and the suffering which had been inflicted in the name of clanship and tradition.

Youth, Afro-Caribbean culture and the Somali community

What is perceived as a failure of parental control can again be related to a lack of power in the public and domestic spheres and an increased awareness of rights by some of the younger generation. The intrusions of the state are seriously felt as an assault on parental authority even if they are taken in their stride and treated with a degree of humour, as in the example above. Particularly worrying for Somalis who arrived as refugees from the late 1980s is the association of many young Somalis (particularly males) with Afro-Caribbeans ('AC's' in the following passage) living in their local area. One Somali from Brava recounted the story of his 'rastafarian' son:

I fought back for nine months but now he is OK, he's cut it off (his dreadlocks).

Yes, they (AC's) come here (to his house). Sometimes I send them away. I don't like. (mimics an AC 'walk' and laughs). American Music. He's got many disks, I think Reggae and what you call? Rap? Yes, rap. But now he doesn't do anymore. *Because the problem here stems from the mother who just leaves, is lenient with children and lets them do what they want to do. Doesn't stop deviations.* There are problems with the family... Yes, I've had problems with the Police. They've warned me... The police they come here, they say 'don't touch your children'.

As I have argued earlier, there is an oscillation between forms of neo-traditionalism and emergent, novel identifications in the Somali community. Changes in the domestic sphere, resulting from the loss of the male breadwinner role and the erosion of male power over women and children which this has entailed, are central to this process. For many parents the association of young Somalis with Afro-Caribbean youth could often be seen as a potential threat to the integrity of Somali culture. Looking to the prospect of an eventual return home and the need for cultural continuity, one Somali male in his late twenties compared the position of younger Somalis with that of Afro-Caribbean youth:

The Indian community is trying to seek refuge within themselves... They solve

their economic problems within themselves...Why the Indian communities are prosperous and the Afro-Caribbean are not prosperous? Simple reason is that the Afro-Caribbeans are a lost generation. They are not having that kind of tradition in their community. So I am afraid if the Somalian community do not take the example of the Indians, do not try to correct and use their unity and all their culture and keeping in hand the younger generation, that would be very worrying. That would be a lost generation as well.

What is notable here is the appeal to an insular notion of a bounded community which preserves its integrity by looking inwards and 'keeping itself to itself'. In this respect, Afro-Caribbean culture and its youth in particular, represent a type of unwanted contagion. For many Somalis in their late teens who have grown up in London over the last five to ten years, the proximity to Afro-Caribbean cultural forms is immediate, although their relation to it is often parodic in nature. The sense of Afro-Caribbeans 'looking after themselves', being self-reliant and independent, was strong in the young male Somalis I spoke with in Tower Hamlets. For some, Afro-Caribbean culture *as encountered and interpreted*, represented an alternative to the failures of their own traditions. Association with Afro-Caribbeans was very much dependent on locality and a range of contextual factors. On one of several occasions when I was observing and talking to young Somalis at the youth club in Tower Hamlets there was either explicit mimicry of Afro-Caribbean musical forms (one young Somali mimicking Reggae motifs) while the mannerisms of handshakes and vernacular of African/Americans was adopted in a free style, suggesting adoption rather than simple parody. Baseball hats and trainers were other emblems of African/American culture freely adopted, although on the whole the relation was ambiguous and parodic rather than naively imitative. The relationship also varied between individuals, with many rejecting the mannerisms and the profuse bad-mouthing which appeared to be associated with Afro-Caribbean culture.

Alternative identifications are actively sought out by some of the younger generation of Somalis growing up in Britain, which seek to break the bounded community celebrated in the traditional account of cultural identity. That these identifications are parodic, imitative and partial in nature does nothing to belie the threat which they are seen to pose to the integrity of the Somali imagined identity. A useful contrast has been developed by Gerd Bauman (1997) which may help clarify the issues at stake. According to Bauman, within any ethnic community there will be two major and co-existing approaches to the articulation of

communal identities: firstly, there is the *dominant discourse of culture*, which assumes a homology between culture, ethnic group and community. From a processual concept referring to the ways in which meanings and symbols are mobilised in the context of social interaction (Hall 1996a), culture becomes reified as the property of a distinctive ethnic group: 'ethnic labels are thus validated as referring to actual 'ethnic groups', and these groups are defined with reference to a homogenous and discrete 'culture' they are assumed, *ex hypothesi*, to share' (Baumann 1997:211). The mobilisation of ethnic groups in terms of shared culture is often, as Baumann notes, effected on the grounds of an already existing 'community' (1997:213). Dominant discourses therefore assume that 'ethnic minorities must form a *community* based on their reified *culture*' (1997:213, my italics).

The second main expression of communal identities, the *demotic discourse of culture* is distinctive in that it de-links culture, ethnicity and community, pointing to the possibility of trans-ethnic alliances and identifications, or what Back (1996) has referred to as 'liminal ethnicities'. In this respect, Baumann notes the tensions within 'ethnic communities' between 'culture as reified in the dominant discourse, and culture performed as a process of negotiation within, about and across 'ethnic communities' ' (1997:221-2). Processes and dichotomies of this sort are clearly evident in the Somali community in Tower Hamlets and are often, as in this case, expressed in generational conflict and dissent.

Box 4.

The Somali Youth Club

Situated at the back of Oxford House in Tower Hamlets, the Somali youth club consists of one room with a pool-table, a counter and several chairs. It is open once a week for two hours and is the only public facility for young Somalis to meet in East London. Women no longer attended after their presence had been questioned by some of the elders. Abdi was one of the most vocal of the young men. He had arrived in London in 1989 after the bombing of Hargeisa and proudly referred to north-west Somalia as 'Somaliland'. In discussion, Abdi's comments were most acute on the failings of the community itself to provide for the needs of Somalis. He accused the community organisations of 'pilfering funds' for themselves, a comment which was corroborated by Hassan, one of the volunteer workers at the club.

Box 4.*The Somali Youth Club*

Recently a large sum had been acquired by one of the Somali organisations from the National Lottery, none of which had made its way down to the young Somalis in the club. 'Tribalism' and the elders were seen as the main source of the problems in the community. In this respect, I was referred to the fact that Somaliland had recently re-appointed Egal as leader some thirty years after the first civilian administration in the 1960s! The elderly (if not clan elders) were seen to be firmly in power. Abdi was, so he told me, particularly 'disappointed' with the Somali community in Tower Hamlets.

According to Abdi and several other youths there, clanship only appeared to be relevant for the elders in terms of fomenting conflict and for the women in terms of arranging marriages within clans. Both were resisted by the young men here, although to what extent this was translated into practical opposition is another question. Clanship amongst these young men did not appear to be an issue. They all belonged to different 'tribes'. As Abdi pointed out, they would be killing each other in Somalia, but here they were at peace with one another. Outside the confines of the room this was not the case, as it was pointed out that London was heavily codified in tribal terms, with conflict routinely breaking out between the different factions. Clanship was seen as significant in terms of placing people - 'its good to know who you are' - but was dangerous in so far as it separated people from one another. The main issue for these young men appeared to be that of internal problems within the Somali community itself in terms of the factionalism and self-interest which was leading to the neglect of the welfare of the community. The elders, for example, were in several cases roundly condemned as the 'reason we are in this mess'.

The elders and the critique of 'tribalism'

Returning to the group of Somalis who arrived from the late 80s, those individuals in-between the old generation of seamen and the young people encountered above, they also are often highly critical of past traditions but on the whole more ambivalent in their attitudes. There is a need to clarify what is meant by the 'elders' in this context as Somalis themselves would use the term to refer to 'the older generation' but also 'clan elders'. The elision is itself significant as it indicates a weakening of the role of clan elders which appears to be borne out by research

in Somalia (Bradbury 1997) as well as in the diaspora (Goodman 1997). As one Somali male in his thirties who had arrived in 1989, observed on the role of the older generation in fomenting clan conflict:

The old generation, they influence the young group. Every time they have got the elder members - they are influencing. This clan did this and this and this...

The elders are respected here but, people, you know, not everybody. The majority, you know, they are very nice guys. They do influence the young people, you know, they say this clan and this... *Seperating the people who are living together and giving the wrong information* (my stress).

In addition to criticising the role of the elders in disseminating misinformation they were also roundly condemned as out-of-date by many Somalis. A woman from Hargeisa who had been in England for ten years and was now working with the community in Tower Hamlets remarked on the irrelevance of the clan elders to the problems encountered by the young in London:

I think the way it used to work - it doesn't make sense, when elders came together to solve problems... The problems that are happening here, they're out of touch. They don't know who has got problems. You know, that young man tramping the street (referring to a young Somali male who was sleeping rough) - he hasn't found anyone he can relate to. As far as I'm concerned as well. Either they've failed or they need re-training (laughter). I think that they need to. There's a gap, anyway.

The lack of authority and leadership in the elders is the dominant theme in this account. For many, the experiential gap between the elders and the young was often interpreted in terms of the insularity of the elders and their lack of accountability. As a woman in her thirties from Burao, remarked of the clan elders:

Most of the time (in Somalia) they are not accountable to anybody else.

I think that's where the problem lies. Over here (Tower Hamlets) it's the same sort of system and most of the elders here don't understand the situation here, so they are even more lost to us (laughter).

There is an implicit parallel drawn here between the old way of life in Somalia, based upon the authority of the elders which in these two instances was perceived in *predominantly but not wholly negative terms*, i.e., for its lack of accountability and insularity, and the problems which Somalis are encountering in Tower Hamlets where again the elders are seen to be 'out of touch'. As the former of the Somali women above explained:

I think the more confused people are...the more they cling into identity where they came from. And that's very important at times. Sometimes it becomes something else. They have more confidence in *the old ways that they do things*. And there are *the new ways that people do things*. The old ways may be out of date and they don't work, and the people who came after them can't relate to it, (my emphases).

The authority of the elders, the 'old way of doing things' was seen to be based upon clan allegiances which were often themselves the object of explicit condemnation:

The old generation that's been here for years, I think you'll find that they're all mixed up because... I find anyway when I'm talking to them, sometimes I think they're so out of date! The fact that they're taking sides... the tribal definitions that they'd use, the tribal terminology and really passionate about things as well.

While clan identifications could sometimes be seen as 'like, you know, an alien language', the reasons for its persistence were clearly acknowledged by many recent refugees. Its main function was seen to lie in its use as a *short-hand device* for easing the process of identifying and 'placing' Strangers in an alien social environment. The prevalent discourse of 'tribalism' amongst Somalis themselves indicates a degree of critical reflexivity concerning the role of clanship which is absent in many scholarly accounts of Somalis. As one Somali male in his mid-thirties, a doctor who had arrived as a refugee in Tower Hamlets in 1985 observed:

The clan mentality reduces as you come down to the new generation. It's an outlook, if you like an ideology, so it doesn't fix on the younger generation. (*On the role of clan for the elders*)... It's his club. He understand you, he should know who you are, where you come from. Get hold of your address and

he place you (laughter). He know how to deal with you, (my insertions).

The younger generation on the other hand 'they just dont care about *who is who*' (laughter). As one young woman remarked, the new generation have different ways of identifying people, 'Like who went to what school. Its the same thing'. Clan identifications have, in this particular case at least, been displaced by those of class and the achievement of social position through education (Bulhan 1980). As I indicated earlier, many of the refugees in my sample came from professional, middle class backgrounds in Somalia. While this undoubtedly accounts for their relative distance from orthodox clan allegiances it should also be noted that there was evidence of a more general feeling of 'disappointment' with the clan system and the role of the elders. In many cases however it was the women who were the more critical of traditional arrangements. A Somali woman related the following account of some elders' failure to intervene effectively in a marital dispute:

Nobody is listening to the old people. I know a family in Southall. There was a conflict between them and the two families tried to sit together and discuss about their problems. They tried to put the family together, two times, three times. Later on, they couldn't handle it. They said 'no, its up to you because you are not listening to us'. The wife was saying that she was supporting the man! 'Because he think here is Somalia. I have to refuse whatever. I think this is not good for me. Don't think I'm accepting whatever he said'. *The Somali community are a male dominated community... all the women have changed since they came here, so it's up to you*, (my emphases).

The significant feature here is that an implicit association is made between an *erosion in the position of the elders* and the *decline of male authority in the home*. Taken together, the changes outlined here suggest, if not the abandonment of traditions then a reworking of identities which has been prompted by the novel conditions of exile, particularly state interventions in the domestic sphere and changed roles in the public sphere for both men and women. Although there are strong tendencies to the consolidation of traditional identities in the reinforcement of marriage and Islamic dress codes amongst many Somalis (Amnesty International 1995) there is also the counter-development of new identities which have arisen as a result of contact with groups in the country of settlement. In this respect, a middle-aged

Somali from the north who was involved in promoting cultural events in Tower Hamlets, remarked that:

A lot of Somalis are actually forgetting their culture, especially the young people. That happens in so many ways. A Somali wedding. The young people, during the wedding they are actually dancing with non-Somali music, especially the Afro-Caribbean. But if you ask them to make a traditional dance they can't... Somalis are, you know, Muslim and have this Muslim cultural background but they don't mix with the Arabs. They identify with the Africans. They are more close to those people, those people from West Africa and all that...

Although he recognises that he is out-of-date, for this particular individual Somali identity is perceived in terms of Muslim identity, rather than the African/Islamic identifications which some younger Somalis seem to be displaying. According to the anecdote recorded earlier being Muslim (along with clanship) is one of the cornerstones of Somali identity. What this means *in practice* is open to interpretation. Somalis are Sunni Muslims but retain some elements of pre-Islamic Cushitic beliefs, including 'the veneration of Muslim saints, many of whom were founders of Sufi communities' (El-Solh 1993:30). While the *Umma* or Islamic nation may be central to Somali identity how this is perceived is affected by a number of factors, including age, class, gender and contact with more rigid forms of Islam in the Gulf states, particularly in relation to *dress codes for women* (1993:32). *On the whole, it would appear that there is no one 'traditional' Somali/Muslim identity to which contemporary Somalis can mythically 'return'. The notion of 'tradition' deployed - as in the example of the 'traditional Somali family' which as Lewis (1962) remarks was relatively unstable due to the high incidence of divorce - is constructed and consequently interpreted according to the pressures experienced in exile. As Shami remarks (1996:18), 'it is not that migrants from Islamic countries 'carry' fundamentalism with them to the 'new world', it is encounters and experiences across boundaries that engender new interpretations of Islamic identity and faith'.*

Conclusion

The reworking of traditional Somali identity which I have outlined is a particular response to changes in the role of clanship, gender relations and generational differences which have been

occurring in Tower Hamlets. The reworking of tradition, far from being a simple *recapitulation* involves a selection of motifs which juxtapose and combine elements in novel and unexpected ways, suggesting the presence of 'something new and unrecognisable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation' (Bhaba 1990b:211). This is evident in the 'silent' or 'invisible' space allocated (by some of the men) to the women in the Somali community and the wider African identifications and allusions to Afro-Caribbean culture and music which were commonplace amongst younger Somalis living in Tower Hamlets.

Although clanship - as the linchpin of the Somali imagined identity - remains a central feature of social relations for Somalis, it is subject to contradictory processes of change and reinterpretation. The state of dissolution in Somalia is compounded in the case of refugees, where changes in gender relations and the family may be contributing to a decline in the authority of clan identities. For some younger Somalis, faced with the routine constraints of daily life in Tower Hamlets, clan identifications may on occasion appear irrelevant to the problems which they are facing. There are, however, opposing tendencies towards the consolidation of traditional identities: these range from an intensification of clan endogamy - the 'mania' for marriage noted earlier - and a reinforcement of the traditional motifs of *Clan, Family and Islam*, to the deployment of wider African identifications by younger, predominantly male Somalis. In so far as an *identification with Afro-Caribbean youth* living in Tower Hamlets is occurring this would appear to be based upon a *common experience of racism* in employment, education and housing (Ahmed et al 1991; Rehman et al 1993). In this respect the criminalisation of Somali youth is already apparently well under way, with the *Evening Standard* reporting (28.12.95) on 'refugee thugs' from Somalia roaming the Underground at Bethnal Green station.

While it is difficult to sift media amplification from what are real social and economic problems amongst Somalis, there would appear to be a solid basis for arguing for a state of crisis amongst certain sections of Somali youth. This takes a variety of forms, from an over-use of the culturally accepted *qat* to an unprecedented number of highly public suicides by young Somali males. In sum, for Somalis in Tower Hamlets there is a strong generational as well as gendered basis to the process of refugee adaptation and the reinterpretation of tradition (Camino 1994:30). Younger male Somalis, in particular, deploy a range of strategies in order to combat the racism and sense of endangered masculinity which they experience in Britain. In this respect, the cultural syncretism practiced by some younger Somalis (Gilroy 1987:155-

6) although drawing upon wider Black identifications, tends to select and encode in a way which is compatible with the dominant motifs of the Somali/Muslim imagined identity.

Consequently, the emergence of localised forms of identity is highly fluid and exists in a state of extreme volatility in Tower Hamlets. It is important to recall that ethnic identifications are situational in character, with wider African identifications often used by Somalis as a response to the common experience of racism which they share with Afro-Caribbeans living in Tower Hamlets. The emergence of new ethnic identifications entails conflicts over the nature of tradition and identity which are intricately linked to renegotiations of gender and generational differences. As we have seen the identities which result are often politically regressive in nature (Solomos and Back 1996:145-155) rather than the emancipatory forms celebrated in many postmodernist accounts of hybridity and difference. As Hall has noted, the 'rediscovery of identity' can often result in 'a form of fundamentalism' (1991b:36). This is particularly notable in the 'masculinist' reinterpretation of Somali/Islamic identity outlined above (Gilroy 1996).

Returning to the initial discussion on the role of clanship in Somalia and London, while a central feature of refugee adaptation thus does tend to entail an orientation to home this need not simply reproduce or *reactivate* the social divisions which are present there. Rather, these are subject to a process of interpretation, whereby traditional elements co-exist alongside novel features or *localised responses*, which are themselves reconstituted as 'traditional'. Hence the notion of 'stages' of refugee adaptation introduced in chapter one which suggested a transition from past attachments to new identities, may be insufficiently sensitive to the *merging of tradition and innovation* which characterises the refugee experience. One instance of this among younger Somalis is the existence of wider African identifications and their partial alignment with Afro-Caribbean youth. It remains to be seen how far these identifications are taken by the new generation of Somalis growing up in Britain.

In terms of the implications for the future adaptation of Somalis in London, there are several possibilities which emerge from the preceding discussion. The tendency for a reinforcement of localised adaptation along clan lines remains a strong likelihood, although the implications of this are ambiguous. Individual mobility through education is certainly compatible with a retrenchment of the insular, bounded Somali community. Continued marginalisation for Somalis as a group may co-exist with individual escape routes out of, or adjacent to the

'community', particularly in the emerging generation. On the other hand, the kinds of trans-ethnic alliances noted here although currently fairly partial in nature represent for many Somalis a dilution of cultural identity which they are keen to avoid for their children. Several Somalis I spoke with voiced anxieties over the possibility of the younger generation simply dissolving into 'Afro-Caribbean' culture. The main implication was that the future might hold a *different type of marginalisation* for Somalis and one which was compounded by the loss of their specific identity and cultural heritage. In either case group wide mobilisation and integration into the mainstream seem a very remote possibility for Somalis in London. A final speculation about the future concerns the strong desire to return home for many Somalis, an issue which I address in the Afterword to this thesis.

Chapter 8

Securing the Boundaries of National Identity

The quest for a state is the defining feature for Kurds both in their countries of origin and in the diaspora. Different traditions of nation-building in Turkey, Iraq and Iran have leant a different complexion to the Kurdish movement in each country. The patterns of settlement for Kurds in London reflects not only the peculiar migration history of each group but also the distinctive histories and identities they have brought with them from the home context. For these reasons Kurds do not form a homogenous community in London but are rather divided by country of origin, political affiliation, history of settlement and location. In chapter six we saw that Turkish Kurds, as the largest and most politicised of the groups, have consolidated their position through the community associations in north London. Of particular importance was the role of the associations in promoting nationalist discourse (Eastmond 1998) and in fortifying national identity against the everyday pressures of economic survival. The insular, enclave nature of the Kurdish community in north London is a distinctive feature, with the PKK affiliated organisations providing a lead role in welfare provision and political mobilisation.

In this chapter, I argue that the suppression of national identity in the home context, particularly in relation to Kurds from Turkey, is a constitutive feature of identity formation and adaptation for Kurdish refugees in London. I first address the heritage of division amongst Kurds and the reactive character of Kurdish identity stemming from their history of oppression. In London, the lead role of the PKK in the Turkish Kurdish community is emphasised and the ways in which alternative affiliations are suppressed in the effort to forge a unified sense of national identity amongst Kurds. The creative role of diaspora is a significant element in this account. Secondly, I turn to the ways in which nationalist discourse in the Kurdish community define roles for women and youth as the markers of the cultural boundaries of the nation. The final theme concerns the importance assigned by Kurds to issues of representation: how Kurds and Kurdish identity are represented in the public sphere are burning political and personal issues for many Kurds as they continue their search for national recognition. Tensions within the Kurdish community between the competing quest for a territorial state and the claims of life in the diaspora are addressed, although more fully developed in the concluding chapter.

Forging the nation

The nation in pieces

One of the enduring consequences of the insertion of the Kurds into their 'host' states has been that 'the political discourse in each part of Kurdistan is different, and so are the forms of political action' (Bruinessen 1992b:35). As we have seen, the different pattern of nation-building in each state has had a significant impact on the course of Kurdish development. For many commentators, the impact of 'decades of systematic Turkification, Arabisation and Persianisation have taken their toll and changed the character of the Kurdish nation as a whole. It is doubtful whether one can talk any more of a Kurdish nation' (Malek 1988:93-4). The sources of division are indeed acute: religious, tribal and linguistic divisions compounded by the different national regimes to which Kurds have been subjected. McDowall (1996) and Bruinessen (1996a) stress the continuing role of tribalism and primordial loyalties, for example in the Regional Government in northern Iraq and to a far lesser degree in Turkey.

While there are clear divisions between Kurds there is also a strong sense of continuity and commonality of experience. Hassanpour (1994) has traced the development of modern Kurdish identity from its ethnic roots and its later elaboration in scholarly works such as *Sherefname*, Sharif Khan of Bitlis's study of the Kurds written in 1596 and the poem *Mem u Zin* by the classic Kurdish poet Ehmede Kani, written towards the end of the seventeenth century (Kreyenbroek and Allison 1996: 10). Historians of Kurdish nationalism tend to stress its initial confinement to elites during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Kendal 1993). Elaborated over the course of centuries, Kurdish identity was believed to be based not upon language or religion (both of which are extremely diverse among the Kurds) but on *territory, tribal culture and ethos* and *differences* from Arabs, Turks and Persians. While in the nineteenth century the Shaikly orders were instrumental in promoting nationalism the unity they fostered tended to be shortlived and based upon the exclusion of Shi'as, Alevis and Yezidis from the Sunni majority. The decisive development in the twentieth century has been the incorporation of subaltern classes into the nationalist project (Kendal 1993) a process which has been strengthened in the post-war period. Urbanisation and industrialisation in Turkey and migration from rural Kurdistan to the major cities of Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir have all acted to promote the development of Kurdish nationalism. The impact of Kemalism, pan-Arabism and Leftist ideology across Kurdistan has given a secular democratic tinge to the erstwhile tribal and elitist character of Kurdish nationalism. The pre-eminent contemporary

champion of Kurdish nationalism, the PKK, has its constituency among the rural and urban working classes (McDowall 1996).

McDowall (1992) is undoubtedly correct when he argues that it is the *imagined lineage* and *self-identity* of the Kurds which is crucial in explaining the persistence of Kurdish nationalism in the closing years of the twentieth century. As a corrective to Malek above, we might say that despite decades of systematic domestication the Kurds remain obdurate in their pursuit of a state of their own. Bruinessen (1992b) highlights the exercise of political will and processes of identification behind the adoption of a purely *Kurdish* identity, over other available identities. As he remarks (1992b:47) in practice Kurds have a choice of multiple identities 'and it depends on the situation which one he or she will emphasise or de-emphasise. A Sunni Zaza speaker is a Zaza, a Kurd, a Sunni Muslim and a citizen of Turkey'. For many individuals therefore the consolidation of a purely Kurdish identity requires the fixing of identity and the suppression of alternative sources of affiliation. This is particularly pronounced in relation to the Kurdish community in London, where the nationalist discourse promoted by the associations continues to play a central role in cementing Kurdish identity.

A community of suffering?

Given the evident divisions between Kurds in London in terms of areas of settlement, social networks and formal organisation, in interviews I would raise the issue of Kurdish dis-unity as a problem for identity and political action. As I came to understand, posing this question was often taken as a sign of the privileged position I occupied as a member of an established, not to say hegemonic nation-state. One Iranian Kurd who worked as a volunteer at the KCC in London firmly corrected me:

We know our identity. We know very well that the Kurdish people are the same nation, divided from each other because of colonialism or imperialism...now in the present all Kurdish people know that the Kurds are the same nation. *We have got the same pain and the same attitude to life*. Although there are some differences between us, as there are between the Cockney and the Welsh! (laughter)

The implicit reference to the 'fuzziness' of British identity was well taken (Cohen 1994). Most significantly, while all emergent nations may be called upon to authenticate their identities, in this instance rather than by reference to shared territory, national history,

language, religion or culture (none of which apply unproblematically to the Kurds) it was the *experience of suffering* which was believed to unite Kurds and ground their shared identity. On another occasion, an Iraqi Kurd who held a senior position in the Kurdish Workers' Association explained the issue to me in very similar terms:

...they are Kurds. They all suffer. In my background they all suffer if you are a Kurd. That's all. I don't think in different nationalities. I don't recognise Turkey or Iraq or Iran...They're my country, the same. Each of them (Turkey, Iraq) like a snake: they have a different face but the same poison.

Interestingly, both of these individuals explicitly eschewed nationalism. At the same time, the downplaying of national differences - the insertion of Kurds in Turkey, Iran and Iraq - in the light of a common experience of oppression provided the basis for a shared sense of Kurdish identity. Their position might be reformulated in terms of Turner's (1957: 302) notion of a 'community of suffering', where 'the affliction of each is the concern of all; likeness of unhappy lot is the ultimate bond of ritual solidarity'. The depiction of the Kurds as a 'community of suffering' is often expressed by Kurds themselves in their own accounts of their identity and history. Kurdish music and poetry are replete with examples of the anguish of an outcast and victimised nation. Scholars, similarly, have noted that Kurdish nationalism and identity rests on the 'suppression of civil society and democratic citizenship in Kurdistan' (Vali 1996:28). In general, although the experience of violence and state oppression is indeed formative for the Kurds it provides shaky ground for national unity, particularly when violence as so often in the past, becomes enmeshed in intra-Kurdish relations.

Never-the-less, as I illustrate here, suffering and oppression do provide a common ground for Kurdish identity and are constitutive elements of Kurdish claims for national independence. What is striking in discussions with Kurds is the essentially *reactive* character of Kurdish identity: the claim for Kurdish unity is often made on the basis of a shared experience of oppression and the consequent need for protection in the form of an independent state. Although a keen awareness of the plural character of Kurdish identity -in the extent of intermixing of populations inside Turkey for example - is readily acknowledged by the PKK leadership, this is often combined with an assertion of national distinctiveness and claims to territorial control. Given the prominent role of the PKK affiliated community associations in London on an organisational and ideological level, it is important to understand the range and

influence of the PKK on Kurds in London and its role in popularising the movement for Kurdish independence.

The meaning of support for the PKK in London

Although the main associations in north London are PKK affiliated, the nature of support for the PKK in the Kurdish community is markedly ambivalent. Many individual families are divided in terms of their political affiliations, with brothers and sisters or parents and children adopting diametrically opposed political positions. In this context it is necessary to clarify the meaning of 'support' for the PKK affiliated associations in north London. In Turkey, class and educational background and the lack of political alternatives - given the suppression of avenues of cultural expression for Kurds in Turkey - make support for the PKK inevitable in the current context, but not necessarily so in the long term, as one highly critical Iranian Kurd who had been active as a *peshmerga* remarked:

If the Turkish government gave only a little bit of democracy, the PKK haven't any place in Turkey. Because the Turkish government is very, very dictatorial, corrupt government, you get the PKK. If you make a little freedom in Kurdish, only legal freedom... (pause)

As the pause here suggests, support for the PKK may well diminish with even partial liberalisation in Turkey. The cycle of violence and counter-violence however is at present self-perpetuating. Even from within the ranks of the Turkish Kurdish community the absence of democracy in Turkey was used to explain the rise of the PKK, with many preferring a non-military solution in line with the PKK's pursuit of a negotiated form of cultural autonomy inside Turkey. How far this will change under the impact of the arrest and trial of Ocalan remains to be seen (see Afterword). In London itself, the picture is diverse. That reference to the PKK amongst Kurds is a sensitive issue was borne out, as on several other occasions, by the limitations of my own questioning. On one occasion I was talking to a group of Kurdish students in a school in Haringey. As the school had some 400 Turkish and Kurdish speaking students it was an ideal location to test the level of political awareness amongst younger Kurds. When I asked for clarification about the activities of a group mentioned by one of the students - was it the PKK or someone else? - the shocked silence and rapid intervention of the Kurdish teacher in the room, 'You can't say that (i.e. mention the PKK). It might get back to the parents...' was immediate proof of my inadvertent transgression. Some things are not

spoken of in public, clearly not in the public space of the schoolroom where word may reach the ear of parents, anxious that their children avoid the dangers of political activism. Again, this and other incidents suggested that there was far from unanimous support for the military struggle in Kurdistan but rather a spectrum, from total commitment to outright hostility, fear and condemnation.

It was suggested, especially by those outside or belonging to the smaller associations, that the nature of support in the Kurdish community was far from the unanimity claimed by many of those in the PKK affiliated organisations, with economic considerations weighing in to explain the flight into exile. As a journalist affiliated to the *Day-Mer* community association in Hackney remarked:

In London, the Kurdish community is not only PKK. Small percentage of the population. 50,000 Kurdish population, only about 1000 support the PKK. About 5000 people know about the PKK. The other 45000 people in London are not political, because they had some trouble in their country, economic trouble too. Their future not guaranteed. That's why they try to come here.

The precise figures concerned are not the issue, but the mixed motivation for the flight of the Kurds is an important theme. Many Kurds, it appears, have used the refugee route as a means of securing improved economic conditions for themselves and their families. This was a persistent enough theme amongst the politically committed Kurds I interviewed to suggest that it was well substantiated. From the perspective of the politically active, economically motivated Kurds were seen as betraying the Kurdish cause. As one young woman who was active in the KWA remarked on this issue:

But now from Turkey, all people coming to England now! I try to help them but they don't want that. They say, 'Oh, it's so nice. I'm so happy here. It's good'. (For her) you are here to think about your future. If you want to do something for your country you know, you must do something here... They say 'we are Kurdish' in the country but when they come here (England) they say 'we are Turkish'...

It would therefore be naïve to assume that political motivation was the exclusive consideration behind the flight of the majority of Kurdish refugees living in London. Christopher McDowell (1996) makes a similar point in relation to the Tamil 'asylum diaspora' in Switzerland. The existence of an institutionalised form of 'asylum migration' was certainly in evidence amongst Kurds in London. The implicit knowledge of smuggling networks and the close village or family ties between newly arrived and settled Kurds indicates, at least from those I interviewed, a clear form of chain migration. Although not pursued in the present context this signals the mixed motivations for migration which may underlie many individual Kurd's decision to seek asylum in Britain. Kurds themselves will draw the distinction between the politically motivated 'patriots' and the bulk of 'ordinary Kurds' who are more concerned with economic survival than Kurdish politics. This is merely to confirm Richmond (1993) and others contention that there is a continuum of motivational factors, from the reactive to the pro-active, from the economic to the political, which underlie what states are at liberty to confirm, or not, as examples of 'refugee flight'.

Overall, it should be noted that the gratitude and loyalty which is felt towards the PKK is striking across a spectrum of Kurds, not only the uneducated or the rural poor. A PKK rally or meeting, although these are carefully stage-managed, generates an intensity of collective emotion which is undeniable. These are, above all, *social occasions*: the rather humourless image of the political meeting or rally misses the point, as PKK meetings and rallies are family affairs with the participation of all age groups, from the elderly to the very young. Music and dance invariably punctuate and *lighten* the prolonged political speeches from the platform, which although followed attentively are treated as part of a collective occasion embracing a variety of different viewpoints and experiences. The strong identification with Ocalan - 'Apo' - is also incontrovertible and was marked across Kurds of all nationalities, particularly during the period of his arrest and trial (see Afterword). As I was repeatedly told, the PKK had proven itself in practical and military terms and had secured the loyalty of the mass of Kurds as their one effective means of self-defence. Not unimportantly, the Kurdish associations were also able to deliver effective services for the Kurdish community in London.

Although the PKK organisations continue to have a lead role in the Turkish Kurdish community, it is important to stress that a number of those attending the associations are not supporters of the PKK but are in fact critical of it. Allegiance in many cases was made on

pragmatic and social grounds rather than ideological ones. There are also those who are frankly alienated from the main associations. For many Kurds as I illustrate below, Alevism provides an alternative source of affiliation and a challenge to the nationalist discourse promoted by the Kurdish associations in north London.

The significance of Alevism

It is clear that the majority of Kurds arriving from the late 1980s were from the Sivas, Marash and Malatya areas of Turkey, where the Kurdish population is almost exclusively *Alevi* (McDowall 1996:10) and lives in close proximity to both Turks and other minority groupings (Andrews 1993). Inter-marriage and incorporation into Turkish dominated areas as well as government prohibition on the expression of Kurdish culture and identity, have resulted in what many Kurdish nationalists regard as a process of assimilation of Kurds to Turkish culture (Kirisci and Winlow 1997). Although perhaps the majority of Turkish Kurds in London are Alevi, it is important to stress the mixed character of those from northern Kurdistan. After the initial influx of Kurds in the Spring of 1989 later arrivals throughout the 1990s have had a number of different points of origin. For example, many Kurds had earlier migrated either to Istanbul or the West coast, in order to flee persecution or in search of work and educational opportunities. The mass exodus of Kurds to these areas as a result of village depopulation and destruction by the Turkish army is well documented (Ciment 1996). Other Kurds migrated further afield, to northern Cyprus for example to join the 'Turkish' settler population there. Still others perhaps from more central regions in Kurdistan had a history of temporary settlement in other European countries, notably Germany, before opting to come to England. While many of these may be Alevi in origin, their first hand experience of urban life had often proven decisive for their political education and growing awareness of themselves as Kurds.

Many of these more cosmopolitan Kurds are experientially at some distance from the Alevi Kurds who had arrived without any experience of urban life or political education straight from their rural backgrounds in Marash or Sivas to the streets of north London in 1989. It is this group of Kurds who have remained, at least within the parent generation, decidedly closed off from the wider society. Kurds from other areas in Turkey, especially where the majority population is Kurdish, will often refer to these Kurds as 'assimilated Kurds', a phrase used by the PKK to describe the self-alienation of these individuals from their 'true national identity'. The Turkish Kurdish population is therefore clearly internally differentiated and stratified in terms of background experience, education and geographical mobility. Many of the more

recent arrivals are also from Sunni backgrounds, a factor which again distinguishes them from the 1989 arrivals.

While many Kurds affiliated to the associations, as I illustrate, deny the significance of Alevism as a form of allegiance and belief, it is clear that in the Turkish context Alevism has proven significant as an alternative to a purely Kurdish identification (Bruinessen 1996b). The relationship between Kurds attending the PKK affiliated associations and those aligned to the smaller *Cem-Evi* (house of worship) or *Alevi Cultural Centre* in Dalston is a case in point. In relation to the issue of Alevism, for example, a commonplace observation within the PKK associations was that national identity, the difference between Turk and Kurd was the fundamental marker of identity. As one teenage Kurd remarked:

I'm Kurdish, that's all. You only ask some people if they are a Kurd or Turk. They say 'Alevi' and it doesn't make any sense. Do you know what I mean? Alevi is your religion. They say 'I am Alevi'. They don't seem to know that Alevi is your religion. Not like you're a Kurd or Turk.

Any attempt to prioritise Alevi identity was dismissed as a betrayal or misunderstanding of the significance of nationality - 'If you ask them if they are Kurdish or Turkish, first they say 'I'm Alevi'. They try to deny their nation'. For most adults attending the associations Alevism was roundly dismissed as 'unimportant', a form of 'false consciousness' manipulated by the Turkish state in order to defuse the Kurdish movement. While the argument that Alevism has been manipulated by the Turkish state is undoubtedly true, there are abiding animosities which continue to divide Alevi and Sunni Kurds. Those Kurds who chose to identify themselves primarily as Alevis would do so for a variety of reasons, including historical factors in the home setting which have led to ambivalent, if not hostile relations between the Sunni majority, to which many Kurds belong, and Alevis (Bruinessen 1996b). As I argued in chapter four, it is important to stress that Alevis themselves are far from unitary in orientation but combine fundamentalist and secular tendencies under a broad umbrella. Attachment to cultural forms and traditions would appear to be more significant for many Alevis than adherence to a particular religious doctrine. Choosing *not* to identify with what some regard as a 'nationalist sect' may also be responsible for the distance which many Alevi Kurds keep in relation to the PKK dominated organisations in London. More generally, the strong association of Kurdish identity with the PKK and the military struggle in Kurdistan may be one reason for many

Kurds shying away from the acknowledgement of their Kurdish identity. As one highly committed fifteen year old girl at the KWA explained concerning the pressures on parents, 'the problem is when you're a Kurd in Kurdistan... (rethinks this) when some people say 'I'm just Alevi', they think they're going to send their child to war at the age of ten or twelve. If I come here (KWA) they're going to take away my son. My whole life is going to change, depending on who I meet...' Fear of involvement and of being dragged into the war was a factor which, although brought over from the home context continued to influence Kurds in London.

Most of the Kurds at the associations were well aware of the disapproval expressed by significant sections of the Kurdish community concerning the 'terrorism' promoted by the PKK. As one young woman who regularly attended the KWA remarked, 'I've got some more cousins at *Cem-Evi* who want to come here but his mother doesn't let him. 'Cos they're afraid that they will go to war or something. They think that these people (KWA) are interested in war'. While political divisions within families were common, with many Kurds having brothers and sisters or parents who regarded themselves as Turkish, the Alevi/Kurd divide was also a consistent feature within families. Brothers and sisters would often find themselves on the opposite side of the political divide. As one fifteen year old activist, who was herself Alevi and born in Sivas, told me:

Some people think, like my brothers, they are Alevi. They are not Kurds. They are just Alevi. But they say Sunni people is Kurds. They are just Kurds. They are saying 'I'm Alevi, not Kurd'. They are both Kurds. They are both Kurds, but (her brothers say) 'I'm not Kurd'. They say, 'PKK hates Alevis'. They say, 'if we have a free Kurdistan Sunnis will fight Alevi'.

Intra-familial divisions in relation to the Kurd/Alevi issue represents a significant political divide in the Kurdish community which although caused by a variety of factors, including historical animosities, fear and opposition to the PKK, impacts on the ways in which Kurds identify themselves, their social relationships in London and their relation to home. It is important to register Alevism as a distinct form of allegiance which clearly fractures any notion of a unified and homogenous Kurdish community, such as that promoted from within the Kurdish associations. Some Alevi Kurds were notably divided in their allegiances. While their loyalty may well have been to the Kurdish national struggle they would stress the

flexibility and pluralism of the Alevi tradition and their distinct history of oppression. One man in his thirties, again from the Alevi stronghold of Dersim, who had worked for several years as an actor in the Kurdish associations in London told me:

Before 1980 Turkish government kill Alevi because they are... dangerous. Don't believe the God, don't believe the Mohamed. Now the Alevi people help the Kurdish people. They have a lot of problems in Turkey. Not only the Kurdish peoples' problems. But now, it's too important, the Kurdish problem... All the Europe, the Kurdish people, the background I think is Alevi. But they believe the PKK. All Kurdish people now and guerillas are PKK. The problem's not Alevi/Sunni...

Although Alevi identity in this account is distinct and Alevis have their own history of oppression, for this individual the urgency of the Kurdish struggle outweighs these considerations, uniting Alevis and Kurds in a common cause. Many Alevi-identified Kurds would of course disagree with this assertion. This individual's claim that 'All Kurdish people now... are PKK' is also clearly inaccurate but indicates more than wilful deception or bad faith. Rather, it appears to be part of a broader effort to suppress alternative sources of allegiance and identification and consolidate the process of national renewal amongst Kurds in London.

Diaspora and national renewal

The freedoms and constraints of exile

For many Kurds attached to the associations, the ability to express Kurdish identity and organise politically has been among the main benefits of their period of exile in London. This was a consistent theme in discussions with Kurds. On one occasion, for example, I had organised a group discussion at the KWA. All of those present were men in their thirties and above who could recall the suppression of political activity in Turkey and were clearly able to draw the comparison with their present circumstances in London. As one grey-haired Kurd with piercing blue eyes and the drooping moustache which is characteristic of men in certain areas of Kurdistan, remarked:

In Turkey, in Kurdistan I couldn't say I was a Kurd, that I was Kurdish from Kurdistan and that I had my own language. But here (London) you can say you are a Kurd and feel that there are Kurds here, without oppression or state authority that imposes that we are not Kurds, that we are Turks. *So that we feel that we are more Kurds here than in Turkey* (my emphasis).

The role of displacement in fostering a sense of Kurdish identity is of central significance here and is a consistent theme throughout the following discussion. During the same focus group, another somewhat younger individual had earlier enthusiastically remarked that 'We came to Britain because there was more democracy here. We are more relieved. We are free. We can take our books and talk'... As though to throw cold water on this enthusiasm an older and more experienced Kurd countered, recalling his first impressions of London, 'when I was the first time here I feel as though I am in prison because I couldn't speak the language. I didn't know any people or the culture. I didn't know the way... so I was in a sort of open prison. That was my first experience'. The metaphor of the open prison then came to dominate this section of the discussion with several individuals remarking on the limited freedoms of exile. One individual who was an activist in the PKK argued that:

This country is an open-prison full stop. First because of the language barrier; that we are far away from our families, our kids or wives or relatives, and third because the Home Office approach makes this country an open prison because I've been here for eight years and because of my asylum position (he had ELR) I can't travel.

While the expansion of freedom was tangible for many Kurds, it was limited by their legal status and the policies of the receiving state. Summarising the argument for the group, the elderly Kurd cited above observed:

'Of course there's freedom (in Britain) but if we can't really have our own Kurdish schools, there are more than fifty thousand Kurds live in Britain... we don't have that, we don't have our schools, how are we going to exercise, practice our culture here? How are we going to teach our children? Since I have been here the British government call us Kurds a *minority*...' (his stress).

This individual's resistance to the assimilation of Kurds to the status of an *ethnic minority* is indicative of the broader quest for recognition as a distinct nation with linguistic and cultural rights, which animates the discourse of many Kurds living in London. It also suggests something of the importance of cultural retention for Kurds, particularly as this affects the younger generation. In effect, while the greater freedom to express national identity in Britain is acknowledged by most Kurds this is typically offset by a belief that the British state either actively supports Turkey or is frankly indifferent to the plight of the Kurds. The original responsibility of Britain for the dismemberment of Kurdistan was also regularly introduced by Kurds during the course of an interview, indicating not only a continuous and aggravated sense of betrayal by the 'West', but also a keen awareness of the role of history and memory, even amongst the most apparently 'uneducated' of rural Kurds. In this context, the role of memory and ethnohistory is particularly important for stateless nations who lack the institutional support and legitimacy conferred by the possession of a state. For the Kurds, under the combined impact of dispersal and the absence of a territorial state there is a continuous and protracted effort to establish the contours of national identity.

'Becoming Kurdish': the discovery of identity

While the ability to organise politically in London was accented by older Kurds, for many younger Kurds the process of discovering Kurdish identity has been especially significant. The importance of 'becoming Kurdish' was raised in a conversation with a Turkish woman who had grown up in London and who was now married to a Kurd. Describing her own problems in adapting to life in Britain, she broadened the discussion to include young Kurds in London:

You want to adopt it as well, become part of London, so to speak. I think the Kurds have the same problem. On top of that they've also got the struggle of trying to define themselves as Kurdish. Trying to define themselves as being Kurdish, *becoming Kurdish* (her stress). ...

The decision to become Kurdish was by no means an easy one and involved a process of sustained engagement and self-definition. As one fifteen year old who was currently struggling with his education in Britain remarked:

When I was in Turkey I was working in the mountains. When I came here (KWA) I learnt everything, about the PKK, why they are fighting Turkey, why Turkey rule them, the language and things like that... When I went to school my dad took me to *Halkevi*. I know all the people. I learned everything then... like Party (PKK).
I understand everything (my stress).

Many of these young people, some no older than twelve or thirteen, would attempt to draw the contrast between their lives in Turkey, often from remote rural areas and their improved level of understanding in London. This was typically framed in terms of the vocabulary of *learning, understanding and knowledge*, as for example in a sixteen year old girl's observation that 'years ago when we didn't know anything about... *we did know we were Kurds but we didn't know anything about the PKK*'. Implicitly, 'becoming Kurdish' is identified with affiliation to the Party, its leadership (particularly Ocalan) and the nation, a process in which Kurdish identity has been effectively channelled through the Party and its ideology. While it may come as no surprise that younger Kurds would be particularly susceptible to organised political education and the discovery of national identity, this was a process which also affected other age groups. Evin, a thirty year old woman who was born in Izmir, described her own growing awareness of Kurdish identity, first at home in Turkey and later in London:

When I go to primary school I everyday say 'I am Turkish. I am a Turk. I am a hardworker'. You know, that kind of thing. We grown up like this. I feel that I am Turkish. I didn't know I am a Kurd (laughter). You know, 'it's very nice to become Turkish. They are so strong, they are'... Then I read - you couldn't read in Turkey that kind of book, if you find it - and I find a professor called Ismael Besicki. When I read that book, I say I am 'assimilated'. And I shame myself (am ashamed).

DG: How old were you are at this time?

I was twenty one and I think I am Turkish... My father is half Turkish, half Kurdish ...but my father was a soldier in the army and he believed in Kemalism! That's why I grow up like that. There's no other ideology... We grow up in that kind of system. I was criticising things from the Left, but I didn't see myself as Kurdish people.

You know, because in the newspapers and television you can't see how it is. Are they happy? What is going on there? (in Kurdistan). You don't know. But when they (Kurds) came to the West side, they start to talk about things. They talk about that kind of thing and I said 'Oh. They are in trouble'. Because that kind of people, you know, the military side, always say you are a supporter of the PKK. Middle of the night, you can go outside (to be shot)... They (her Kurdish neighbours) tell me these kind of things and I say there's something strange going on there. They can't say these things to the television and the newspapers...

Later, shortly after she had arrived in London in 1989 and claimed asylum, she joined the KWA as a voluntary worker:

I want to learn the Kurdish Left, because I learn Turkish Left. My brother is from Turkish Left. I just want to learn Kurdish idea and politics. I went to the Kurdish community association to learn all about history and other things. I learn a lot of things really. There was more chance to learn these things than in Turkey, in here (London). I improve myself and I saw that it's very nice to learn all cultures, all ideas and to really improve your knowledge. It's very nice to learn everything. But in Turkey there's no chance to learn anything. Just state government ideology. Nothing else.

The ability to organise politically in order to acquire the culture, history and language which had been denied to them in the home situation is the dominant theme in many Kurds' accounts. In particular, acquisition of the Kurdish language is seen as central to restoring the sense of national integrity. The Irish poet Thomas Moore had remarked on the effects of English conquest in Ireland in the 1840s, that 'to lose your native language and learn that of an alien is the worst badge of conquest, it is the chain of the soul. To have lost entirely the native language is death; the fetter has worn through...' (Fishman 1972:48). Sentiments of this type were common amongst Kurds in London, both in relation to the inability to speak the native Kurdish tongue in the case of Kurds from Turkey and in an acute awareness of the different languages or dialects spoken by Kurds (Kreyenbroek 1992). Vernacular mobilisation as Smith has noted (1991) is central to demotic ethnonationalism. As Fishman (1972:43) from the perspective of socio-linguistics has also argued:

Modern mass nationalism goes beyond the objective, institutional identification of community with language... to the identification of authenticity with a particular language which is experientially unique, and therefore functional in a way that other languages cannot match - i.e. in safeguarding the sentimental links between past and present and future.

In many cases, for Kurds in London the effort to override language differences would result in a kind of strategic simplification in the cause of incipient national unity. As one keen proponent of a united Kurdistan, a Kurd from Turkey and a law student in a north London University argued:

If you speak dialects (Kurmanji, Sorani) we can communicate easily with one another. Our problem is we don't speak our dialect very well, because we haven't been taught it. For example, my dialect is Kurmanji but I haven't learnt it. I must learn it because once I've learnt it I will be able to communicate with someone who speaks Sorani.

On other occasions Kurds from Turkey have told me of the pleasure in being able to communicate with Sorani speakers through the use of Kurmanji - 'I feel he was my cousin' as one Kurd from Dersim told me after he was able to talk with a fellow Kurd from Iraq. On the other side many scholars have noted the mutual unintelligibility of Kurmanji and Sorani (Bruinessen 1996a; Kreyenbroek 1992). There is also considerable disagreement concerning the common roots of the different 'dialects'. Within the less nationalist sections of the Kurdish community there is real scepticism about the possibility of communication and affinity between Kurds. One Iranian Kurd who had fought as a *peshmerga* on the Iran/Iraq border noted of the Kurds that 'Nobody understands each other... They are quite strange (different). For example...(drawing a parallel here) I cannot speak Spanish, I cannot speak Italian - quite different cultures, different customs, different clothes'. As in so many other areas, scholarly debate is heavily implicated in the nationalist cause and used to bolster opposing political positions.

The reality on the ground in London is that few Kurds are able to communicate effectively between the different dialects, let alone speak them in the case of Kurds from Turkey due to

the suppression of the Kurdish language at home. A fifteen year old Kurdish girl who I talked with on several occasions at the KWA, told me of her experiences in Turkey:

I was always talking in Kurdish with my mother and grandmother, but when I went to school in Turkey my teacher... always used to hit me because I can't (shouldn't) speak Kurdish. A bit Kurdish, a bit Turkish and I almost forgot Kurdish. And when I came here I had to learn English. It feels like three languages. You don't even know which one to think about... That's why I can't speak Kurdish now. I'm here for nearly eight years. Even my English isn't that good because I'm speaking Turkish language, sometimes Kurdish...

On another occasion, a young male activist in the *Halkevi* in Hackney noted:

The basic problem is that Kurdish people in Turkey try to speak Turkish like Turkish people... I didn't have any chance to learn the Kurdish language in Turkey. You go to a community centre and you have Kurdish classes, you are obviously in danger. That's why it's so difficult in Turkey. Another problem is that in Istanbul, in Turkish areas, you cannot even say easily you are Kurdish...

Another young man in the *Day-Mer* association in Hackney remarked on the consequent *self-alienation* of many Kurds, himself included:

You know the problem for the Kurdish people is that my Turkish is better than my Kurdish. When I was born in 1971... you know, my teachers, everything, all, everywhere, everybody to teach me Turkish speech. *That's why you can't go back to Kurdish things. It's not possible.* It's not easy because you are Turkish. Everything in Turkish. They are Turks. We are Turks. My family they are Kurdish and they are not like me. I am assimilated more than them, my father and my mother. They can think in Kurdish, but me, I can't. For example, now I listen to Kurdish music and I do Kurdish folk-dancing (my emphasis).

Many other Kurds were in the same position of having to *consciously acquire the language and culture* which they felt they had been robbed of by the Turkish state. While for the individual above the attempt to recover Kurdish identity, to 'go back to Kurdish things' was

seen as impossible, the effort to revitalise Kurdish language and culture was still prioritised. In many national liberation movements the revival of the national language has often acted as a precursor to political mobilisation for national independence. In the case of the Kurds the revitalisation of the national language is closely linked to the broader military struggle in Kurdistan and to the emergence and consolidation of the Kurdish diaspora. High levels of illiteracy amongst Kurds in London make this task particularly arduous. As I illustrate later, this highlights the role of Med TV in promoting what many Kurds regard as a new form of Kurdish national identity.

Overall, for many younger Kurds or for those who were 'assimilated' into Turkish culture (Laiser 1991) there has been a coming to awareness of their Kurdish identity: suppressed at home, this has been 'discovered' after a process of sustained political education which in many respects has only become available to them as they have struggled to make sense of their lives in London. The effort to learn the language and culture has been indicated in the attempt to 'go back to Kurdish things'. The rediscovery of the past and Kurdish tradition, including the language, dance forms and music, were typical features across a broad spectrum of Kurds in London. As McDowall (1996:419) has argued, the popular character of the PKK in particular stems from its social base in the rural and urban poor and its *revival of an imagined past*. The impossibility of 'going back to Kurdish things' is perhaps the main issue here, given the deformation of Kurdish social relations and culture which has resulted from partition and the dismemberment of Kurdistan between its more powerful neighbouring states. Kurdish identity has to be actively invented by linking the past, present and future in a coherent political project (De Vos and Romanucci-Ross 1975). The issue of cultural continuity is therefore particularly important for the Kurds, notably in defining roles for the bearers of the national culture, women and the emerging generation of Kurdish youth.

Defining roles

Women as the 'border guards' of the nation

While the nationalist Kurdish historian Izady (1992) has noted the marked independence of Kurdish women in Kurdish society - in going unveiled and enjoying a high degree of independent action, including the relative absence of arranged marriage - commentators with a more critical eye remark on the continuing heritage of tribal 'codes of honour' surrounding women's sexual conduct (Laiser 1996). Yet Laiser's argument that the subordination of

women in Kurdish society is Islamic rather than Kurdish in origin may be disingenuous, given that gender relations as Yuval-Davis (1997) suggests are an inherent part of how the national community is imagined. There can be little doubt that the advent of the PKK has altered the position of women, among some sections of Kurds at least and to varying degrees. The prominent role of women in the PKK (Laiser 1996; Ignatieff 1993) testifies to their incorporation into the national project. According to Laiser (1996:190) for many Kurdish women 'the PKK offered the possibility of both personal and political achievement, and a worthwhile sense of self-sacrifice'. In this respect, Yuval-Davis (1997:110) has noted the ways in which 'the (re) construction of men's - and often even more importantly women's - roles in the processes of resistance and liberation has been central in most such (national liberation) struggles'. The attraction for women in particular, has been to be able to 'establish for themselves new identities, skills and respectable social positions, as well as to struggle for causes they believed in' (Yuval-Davis 1997: 110).

Yuval-Davis (1997) raises several issues which are relevant to the position of women in the Kurdish community in London. The first concerns the issue of the *biological reproduction* of the nation: the 'control of marriage, procreation and therefore sexuality' (1997:22) is high on the list of priorities for groups with nationalist projects such as the Kurds. Secondly, the *cultural reproduction* of the nation allocates a primary role to women, whereby they come to act as the 'border guards' of the national imagined identity. The imposition of dress codes for women as a means of preserving the honour of the nation, 'is but one facet of a more general 'freezing' of cultures which takes place in diasporic communities'. (Yuval-Davis 1997:46). In effect, Yuval-Davis argues that women occupy an ambiguous position in the national imagined identity. They symbolise collective unity and honour yet are subordinate within these terms. The issue of cultural reproduction and the maintenance of cultural boundaries, with women as the preservers of tradition and the integrity of the nation are particularly acute in the case of diaspora groups which are pursuing nationalist projects at home. As we have seen in the case of the Somalis, the increased awareness of rights and freedoms which may accompany contact with liberal, 'western' regimes, is likely to significantly impact upon relations within the family and between men and women more generally. In the case of the Kurds this is compounded by the need, urgent for Kurds from Turkey, to secure the boundaries of the national imagined community.

In London, many Kurdish women continue to be defined either by their place within family structures or in relation to the national project. In marked contrast to the Somalis for example, there is only one independent women's organisation amongst Kurds in London (see below). Women however are prominent within the principal Kurdish associations, which are by no means 'male dominated' in any naïve sense. The effect of the PKK on gender relations in the Kurdish community has been significant, although often difficult to gauge for the outsider : the fact that men and women occupy the same tables at the *Halkevi* in north London was pointed out as a significant advance on the situation in Turkey for example! The modernising impulse behind the incorporation of women into the military struggle and their representation in leadership positions is evident, yet the effects are uncertain in relation to the broader context of gender relations amongst Kurds in London. I draw here on interviews with men, women and teenagers who attended the main associations in north London. Although only representative of what might be termed the 'nationalist community', the range of responses here indicates some of the ways in which gender is presented and managed as an issue.

For many men there was a perception of increased freedoms for women in London, most of which had negative implications for retaining cultural identities. As one man from Malatya who worked as a volunteer at the KWA remarked:

Some of them (women) think OK they are free now so they can do anything they like. They have their children, they let their children go. It's really a bit difficult to take it... For example, just because they came in England they think we used to live in Turkey but it's passed away now. They don't really care. That's why they don't really care... Mostly it's the teenage girls because they go to school and they want to be like their friends. They want to act like that.

Although the process of change affected all of the younger generation, it was teenage girls who were singled out for special attention and monitoring by parents. The apparent increase in arranged marriages, with several teenage girls in my experience sent back to Turkey to marry boys there, is as Yuval-Davis (1997:66) argues a 'powerful device to continue the intimate links and inclusionary construction of boundaries of 'the community' '. If arranged marriages were one way of maintaining a physical and cultural bond with the homeland, intermarriage with English or Turkish individuals could often prove a problematic area. Although I came across several instances of young Kurdish men who were married either to Turkish women or

English women, on the whole this was not seen as a permissible arrangement for Kurdish women. Even highly politicised Kurdish males were surprised to find themselves reverting to traditional roles in marriage. As one young, University educated Kurd who was married to an English woman noted:

It causes problems sometimes I have to say. There's no way that there's no problems at all. For example, there is a problem with clothing. A woman must be respected for example when they dress - for Muslims. And there's nothing wrong with this. And you are against this. Not because you are religious, you know that's not right. Your instinct... (laughter). I wasn't aware of this problem before I got married. But there's no problem like this now... (laughter) because I am in control (laughter). I'm not saying that I'm always dominant. There are things that you give up, things that you give up sometimes...

The evidence from arranged marriages and the prohibitions on inter-marriage for women, especially with Turks, suggest that despite the official rhetoric of female emancipation the traditional role of women as the bearers of the honour of the culture remains intact. There were certainly dissenting voices from women outside the main associations, whose explicit avowal of feminism had put them beyond the pale. These appeared to be a minority who had been effectively silenced by the dominance of the principal associations. On the other side, for those younger women who were passionately committed to the Kurdish cause, the issue of marriage could appear as a sideline to the real problems facing Kurds. As one teenage girl who worked as a volunteer at the KWA remarked of her friends at college:

...They are thinking if I marry and have a husband, they are saying 'I will be free if my husband washes the dishes and if he cooks the meals - I will be free'. But that is wrong, you know... *If you want to be free, you have to be political first. You have to learn about PKK... your country. That is freedom.* You can be a free woman if you like... You have to be political... you have to be a leader for people... If you can't make woman free you can't have free Kurdistan either. Apo says this. That is very true. Because woman's situation was very simple. She was beaten, saying 'yes' and 'no' to her husband... (my emphasis).

The subordination or identification of the interests of women to that of the nation is a standard rhetorical move in Marxism/Leninism. As a consequence, for many of these young women there was a strong resistance to what they perceived as outmoded, traditional roles within marriage which appeared to have been imbibed from the nationalist discourse of the Party. In this respect, the modernising zeal of the Party was in conflict with the conservatism of received traditions, although the often uncritical adoption of Party norms produced its own brand of authoritarianism. There is therefore a contradictory range of responses concerning changes in gender relations, on the one side reinforcing the traditional role of marriage - women as the marker of the cultural boundary - and on the other an official rhetoric of female emancipation tied to the Party and its modernising ideology, with women again acting as the bearers of the nation. For those women who were active in the associations participation in the Kurdish movement clearly provided the much needed self-respect and sense of purpose noted earlier by Yuval-Davis (1997). For many women outside the main associations, the perspective was far more critical of the potential of the main Kurdish parties to represent the independent interests of women.

The women of the Iranian Peshmerga

A group discussion with eight Kurdish women from Iran who had been active as *peshmerga* for *Komala* (McDowall 1996) on the Iran/Iraq border provided a very different perspective from that at the principal associations in London. All of the women present had 'gone to the mountains' to fight at the time of the Islamic revolution in 1979, when most of them were in their early teens. They had regrouped in London in June 1998 to form the Kurdish Women's Organisation, which aimed to give an independent voice for Kurdish women in London. It became clear in discussion that most of them had joined *Komala* in Iran for a combination of reasons. On the one hand as Kurds they felt that they had no choice as their political activity was itself a death sentence, but they were also motivated by the fight against sexual discrimination. As one of the women said, 'the male role and the discrimination that we felt in the society pushed you to fight against it'.

They recounted the reaction of their families at some length, recording the shock which greeted their decision to join the *peshmerga*. Although this was to be expected, it was the reaction of the men in the *peshmerga* which they found hardest to understand. After a period they were gradually if reluctantly accepted by the men, although they had to constantly

overcome resistance to their presence. As one woman who had herself been in charge of a patrol of 14 women indicated:

The organisations, they are mainly led by men. There wasn't any, at least in theory (general laughter) they hadn't any discrimination. Obviously it was difficult from the beginning to settle down and get their acceptance. It was clear after that... Well you know the background in Kurdistan, it's not, as my friend said, it was OK in theory but it was not easy to accept practically. Because something new in the society, so it was not easy for everyone to accept easily. ... their culture, their tradition and everything, you know. Maybe one person says that he's accepting something, but its not easy to do in practically. So I mention that it was not easy and we struggled for it several years. But at least, we could.

For reasons familiar from the literature on male refugees who had been active in political or military struggle in their country of origin (Kay 1987) the transition to life in London had proven particularly difficult for these women. Contrasting her position in London and on the border in Kurdistan, one of the women remarked, summarising the experience of the group:

When we came here (London) it was a sort of transit for us. On the border we were in the camp and that was a sort of special circumstance and it was not normal life. Everybody was from the same background, *peshmerga*, we didn't have a normal life. We didn't have financial responsibilities, dealing with things we have to do now. When we came here it was (the same)... but now, when we came here and we struggle to adapt to this society, life is a struggle that we have to establish ourselves... Now we're back to the main responsibilities of women and mother, children, family, domestic, everything. We go back to all these problems. And on top of that try to learn the language, find a job and then adapt to English society, to integrate.

The lack of normality, of the domestic and the routines of everyday life had been one of the unexpected bonuses of life as a *peshmerga*. Life on the border had its attractions, much as the initial experience of life in London had seemed like another state of transit. After a period of time the reality of the struggle to survive in London had set in. The return to normality,

although family life was actively embraced by most of the women, brought its own sense of disappointment and nostalgia. As the former of the women above told me:

I still miss my life... the environment I was, without worry about money and bills (laughter). We do everything together, shared everything... Obviously each of us, we have beliefs... from past experiences that we want to put into practice here. We are used to talking to people, having to go around places, but we don't have that same situation or those circumstances at the moment. We are in less contact with people. And again, that experience of things, we can't use them, so we feel sort of gap and this gap affects us psychologically. In a way, life in exile has created that gap for us. And then it may affect our attitudes, for example we are quieter. ...With the experience you have in the past and the one you get here, you want to put them into practice. You don't have the possibilities. It's not the right environment. That makes you go back to the past and always regret for the past. We think that in the past we had more facilities and conditions was better for us and we regret and wish we had everything here.

The accumulated experience of struggle in Kurdistan and now in London had given these women a keen sense of independence in relation to what they perceived as male dominated Kurdish organisations. They again recounted at some length the resistance of men in the Kurdish community in London to the formation of their organisation, for a mixture of what they saw as party political and more gender-based reasons. Unlike what appears to be the case in the PKK dominated associations, the independent organisation of women was seen as a priority, where the claims of nation are off-set by those of gender. As one of the women remarked, with an air of finality concerning the role of the associations in London:

Being Kurdish is not the only fact, but what they do for women, that's the important thing. Not only being Kurd. When it comes to such rights I am more comfortable when I talk to somebody in the SWP, who are not Kurdish. *Being a Kurd does not do anything.* You should have the same ideas (my emphasis).

Within the nationalist discourse at the associations there was little room for the articulation of the independent interests of women. In discussions with men for example it was often the case that gender relations in exile were clearly perceived as a problem, but one which was caused

either by a lack of well-defined roles for women or the influence of western feminism. While the tensions around gender relations are a central feature of refugee adaptation in general, in the case of the Kurds there is a strong tendency for these conflicts to be directed and channelled through nationalist discourses which emphasise the role of women as participants in the national struggle and as the physical and cultural bearers of the nation.

'Normal' and 'committed' youth

During the course of a group discussion which I held at the KWA consisting of eight men in their thirties and above, half of whom were married, half single, the discussion moved onto the issue of changes in the family since Kurds had arrived in London. One man who was clearly having problems within his own family voiced what was seen as a common experience:

...the greatest impact is the different culture in Kurdistan than in Britain. This has the greatest effect on children, because when a family comes from Kurdistan, especially the children, they can only speak Kurdish, not Turkish - and here they learn English straight away. They have grown up with English culture, not that they don't have Kurdish culture at all, but it becomes like a conflict, a sort of tension between the families. It's a different culture they bring up. Then they come in a different tradition. It's a different culture... they become out of control... When I come here some of my kids they are grown up and they have left college and finished University. I have problems with my kids of course and my wife. We don't adopt this country's customs and my kids obviously they did. There's a sort of tension within the house, the home... we couldn't find for example a job, or learn English.

The difficulties in adjusting for the older generation have led in many cases to a feeling of having been left behind. As one Kurd from Dersim - whose own migration experience had been considerably more cosmopolitan than the arrivals from 1989 - remarked of the difficulties this group faced:

From village they come to London. Feudalism. A closed life. The family (the same). But now it has changed. Now the family has children, learning English, going to

school and understand the area. Going to work... Now there's a big problem because the mother/father can't understand the children. They (the children) cannot understand the mother/father.

This individual was clearly indicating the linguistic and experiential gap which had begun to divide Kurdish families. Adopting English ways or 'getting into drugs' were seen as one type of response by the young. As indicated above, not all Kurdish youth had chosen to identify with the Kurdish struggle. There was strong evidence of a polarisation of young people in this respect, with perhaps only a minority choosing the path of radicalisation. 'Normal' youth on the whole took its course outside the main associations. While the focus here is on those who had adopted the cause of national liberation fieldwork conducted outside the associations (in schools and cafes) indicated a much broader spectrum of affiliation and belonging than catered for within the associations. It is also important to register that adopting 'English ways' and political radicalisation were by no means mutually exclusive but were sometimes complementary, at other times directly opposed.

For the 'committed' youth at the associations the role of what Anderson (1995) has termed 'long-distance nationalism', is crucial. Apart from their role in the activities at the associations, I was told on several occasions while conducting fieldwork that young Kurds had left London to join the fight back home. In one instance a middle aged Kurdish woman had shown me a photograph of her two teenage sons who had gone back to fight in Kurdistan. For her, as she told me through an interpreter, there was no point in talking about the situation as 'nothing could be done'. The fatalistic response was disheartening to the outsider, but in this case she clearly had no control over her sons, who had simply 'taken off'. The wilfulness of the young was a common theme amongst parents. One of the most dramatic episodes in London following the arrest of Ocalan (see Afterword) was the attempted self-immolation of a fifteen year old Kurdish school girl in London. Remarking on this particular episode, a Kurdish woman in her thirties from Izmir told me:

The younger generation, when you look at Germany, England, all of them want to burn themselves. It's very interesting for me because in other cultures they don't have the same problems, you know with democracy. Their problems are birth control and other things... It's incredible and I shocked when I see on

television the girl (referring to the fifteen year old school girl who had burnt herself outside the Greek Embassy)... You can't keep them down.

They're rebellious. They're out of control... Mother and father doesn't like this kind of thing but... They're going to join, you know, the PKK. They don't let them say anything. They just go... You know, they don't have any problems, like financial or democratic way... They can study here. They can take a career. They don't want that kind of thing. They have a very utopic idea.

In relation to the youth at the associations, the most notable feature is the absence of a 'normal childhood'. One Turkish worker at the KWA had referred precisely to this aspect by referring to the Kurdish youth there as 'children of the struggle', those who because of their own experiences of oppression had never known the relative ease of 'childhood', at least as this is understood in the West. As one fifteen year old girl told me in relation to the need to resist peer pressure:

They want me to go to school. They want me to have boyfriends, things like that. If you want to be friends with them, you have to do bad things. You have to have a boyfriend. I hate them. I can't be friends with them. Because we have a very big trouble. We have trouble, yes. You have to help our country, yes. Help PKK, because he's (Apo)fighting for us... I can't... *I can't be... normal. Yes (like she's found the right word). I can't be a normal person. Like er going to school and coming home, reading. This is normal. I have to think about things every morning, every second... I want to say lots of things, about the Turkish government, what they have done to Kurdish people. About Mustafa Kemal. Why Kurdistan is in four pieces.*

Dressed in the olive-green combat fatigues of the guerrilla army this young girl was active in the drama group at the KWA and was already in the position of leading the younger members there. The denial of the normal impulses of youth, particularly relating to sexuality, is the striking feature in her account. Segregation of the sexes as Ignatieff (1993) notes appears to be the norm in the PKK guerrilla camps in Kurdistan. Few of the young Kurds I encountered at the KWA were as zealous as this particular individual, where more indulgent attitudes towards relations with the opposite sex were commonplace. As Ignatieff has perceptively noted in his observations on female guerrillas in Kurdistan (1993:156) the devotion and passion of the

young may appear like 'mental slavery' to an outsider but to the participants themselves is a cause of 'true happiness'. There was a sense of real liberation for these young people as they engaged in workshops, drama and discussions at the KWA. In the early stages of fieldwork in November 1996 I followed the activities of one group of young Kurds who were involved in rehearsals for an improvised play which re-enacted scenes of Kurdish martyrdom, the abuse of villagers by a brutal Agha and the torture of Kurds by Turkish police. Other themes addressed concerned the problem of drug abuse among Kurdish youth in London. These scenes were later performed at the Eighteenth Anniversary of the founding of the PKK, an impressive occasion held in a vast Sports Hall in Lee Valley. The dedication and seriousness of these young Kurds was perhaps the most striking feature. Grippled by the cause of national independence, their passionate espousal of 'Apoism' perhaps only lacked the weight of experience encountered in older Kurds, where accumulated indignities had both embittered and intensified the longing for a state of their own.

It is clear that not all young Kurds have chosen so readily to submit themselves to the rigours and responsibilities of Kurdish identity. For any migrating group the loss of the native culture or traditions, particularly as this affects the younger generation, is a common concern. This process appears to occur with great rapidity amongst refugee populations, or those who have been forcibly displaced and may have little immediate prospect of return. There is in this sense a real issue for Kurds in London around the *preservation of cultural and national identity*. The pressures of daily survival outlined in chapter six alongside the pressures of change for family members, make it easy for Kurds to become alienated from the political project. For the politically committed on the other hand there is a constant need to tighten the reins of national identity. The community associations have an important role to play in the celebration of national identity and the future liberation of Kurdistan. They also act through a variety of means to define roles for Kurds and to promote a positive image of the Kurdish nation. It is this latter process which I now examine in more detail.

Representing the nation

'Don't say we all live in the mountains'

The subheading to this section is drawn from an apparently casual remark made to me by a Kurd in response to my question whether he felt it a good thing to be writing about the Kurds - to which he replied, 'Yes, so long as you don't say we all live in the mountains'. Earlier in

the conversation I had made (what I thought) was an ironic reference to the role of mountainous terrain in the formation of the national character of the Kurds. For many Kurds however the designation 'in the mountains' recalls the abuse thrown at them of being a backward people - 'like a bear' or an 'animal' as I was told on several occasions. The sensitivity to my attempt at humour was illustrative of a more general sense of being *underestimated as a people* which informed the observations of many Kurds. Familiarised by routine denigration to regard their own culture as a thing of little worth, the issue of how Kurds are represented, by whom and for what purposes, are burning political and personal issues for many Kurds in London.

It is important to emphasise the political dimensions of representation. Against the notion of representation as *mimesis* it is useful to recall with Hall (1992:254) that -

How things are represented and the 'machineries' and regimes of representation in a culture do play a constitutive, and not merely a reflexive, after-the-event, role. This gives questions of culture and ideology, and the scenarios of representation - subjectivity, identity, politics - a formative, not merely an expressive, place in the constitution of social and political life.

The constitutive character of the 'regimes of representation' is doubly important in the case of marginalised social groups. In a recent essay, Werbner (1997) has drawn an important distinction between representation and self-representation in ethnic communities. Self-representations are the necessary 'essentialist self-imaginings of community' (1997:230) which occur in the public arena, in contrast to definition by the Other in racial violence, for example. In an interesting discussion of the role of silence and voice, Werbner distinguishes between the silences of ethnicity, produced by processes of contestation within ethnic communities whereby differences are not eliminated but related positionally and dynamically, and the silences of racism which exclude difference by violence, for example. There is therefore a constant dialectic between silence and representation in ethnic communities, whereby 'the relationship between communal representations or identities...is inherently dynamic and positional' (Werbner and Ranger 1996: 72). The silences of gender for example or of minorities within communities are particularly significant. Vertovec's observation (1995:87) on the growing awareness amongst Hindus in Britain of 'how others see them...as they come to realise and to articulate how they wish to see themselves in new or changing contexts', is

particularly relevant to the current discussion. In relation to Kurdish refugees in London we might add 'how they wish *others* to see them'. How, that is, are Kurds seen or represented and how does this impact on the ways in which they *wish to be seen*? While this question with its underlying demand for recognition is not peculiar to the Kurds, in their case issues of representation and recognition have added significance: firstly, in relation to the *denigration and misrecognition* as a distinct nation which is their overwhelming experience in Turkey and to varying degrees in Iraq and Iran and secondly in relation to the *quest for a state* which animates Kurdish political discourse both at home and in the diaspora.

Representation by Others

As we had seen in chapter two, national identity is defined by its relation to the Other. Turkish citizenship in particular is defined by the exclusion and denial of alternative forms of ethnic or national affiliation (Vali 1996). In this respect, Kurds (along with other minorities) occupy the place of the Other of Turkish nationality. This relationship is closer to the notion of the Stranger as the 'alien in our midst' (Bauman 1992a:687) than it is to the Enemy, or those who belong to a clearly defined 'out-group' (Billig 1995). It can be argued that Kurds, particularly in the Turkish context, occupy a position akin to the 'dirt' which has to be eliminated and *reproduced* as the basis of social order (Bauman 1993:162). It should come as no surprise therefore that there is an acute sensitivity amongst Kurds to the ways in which they are perceived by outsiders. On one occasion I was discussing the significance of education for Kurds in London with a young man who had previously studied at University in Istanbul and was currently improving his English at college. Language, rural background and poor education in the home context were highlighted as the main difficulties faced by Kurds in London:

Kurdish people, they didn't have any opportunity in Turkey. They always, they are uneducated Kurds, uneducated people. So now they've got an opportunity to educate themselves they should improve themselves... *People always think that Kurdish people are so rude, so uneducated people. This is unjustified. These people haven't got any opportunity until now. Psychologically and politically I want that Kurdish people get educated (my emphasis).*

After explaining in more detail the lack of family support which impeded many Kurdish students, he recounted his own experiences at college in London of what he felt had been

discrimination. As he explained, 'racism is not just based on colour but on cultural differences. So I know, people, you know always attack people from the Third World... they *underestimate our (Kurdish) culture*' (my stress). This sense of being underestimated as a people although first learnt at home was often reproduced for Kurds by their experiences in London. One of the most galling encounters for Kurds was with the admittedly small number of Turkish nationalists in London. As the same individual remarked:

They underestimate the Kurdish people, like in Turkey. In this country (England) people believe in equality... In Turkey they say that Kurds live in the mountains, like bear (laughter). They say 'bear' to us. They treat us like animals, yes. They come here and they see Kurdish people... Many of them are members of the nationalist movement... Sometimes you know, after a football match they go round here with the Turkish flag (laughter). Our young people throw stones to them...

The perceived dominance of Turks in the local authority in terms of employment was also common in many Kurds' observations. Above all, it was the assimilation of Kurds to the 'Turkish speaking community' which most riled them and was actively combated by the main Kurdish associations in north London. During the course of my fieldwork several campaigns had been successful in gaining recognition for Kurds as a distinct national group, in the schools for example and in local authority reports (Haringey Council 1997). The systemic failure to recognise the Kurds as a distinct nationality is perhaps most prevalent in the asylum and immigration process, where it remains a bugbear to Kurdish claims for national recognition.

For the individual above, underestimation and condescension towards Kurds often went hand in hand. While the gap between English and Kurdish people was explained in terms of 'language and cultural differences', he felt that 'some of them (English people) oppose us, (because of) benefits... Some of them pity us. They've got pity for us. Kurdish people are killed by Turks or Arabs... poor Kurdish people!' Being patronised was compounded by the experience of misrecognition which was commonplace in Kurds' dealings with official bodies. He continued his story:

For example, in Southgate college, if I say I am a Kurd, they oppose, they change it to Turk. If you say you are a Kurd they say Turkish. For example, last week my teacher said to me that I was liberal Turkish. 'You are quite different, quite different from the others' (laughter). Some people can make trouble, but this doesn't give teachers the right to think that all community are...

If the local settlement context provides a range of what Valtonen (1998) has called 'stressor effects' for Kurds - incidents and grievances which powerfully amplify the collective damage which Kurds have experienced at home - representations of Kurds at the national level aroused similarly intense emotions. In one instance a public meeting was called at the KWA to show and discuss an *Inside Story* programme which was broadcast on the BBC in October 1996. This was made by an Iraqi Kurd who had been in England since the 1980s and charted his attempts to get his brothers out of the *Safe Haven* in Arbil. The bulk of the film consisted of the circuitous route which the filmmaker and his brothers had to take to get to Heathrow and documented the extensive network of smugglers operating - especially in the Ukraine - and the large sums of money which had to be paid in order to buy a passage to England. The brothers were eventually detained in England and refused asylum.

Representatives from the World University Service, the Refugee Council, Asylum Aid and the KCC were present as a panel in the hall, indicating the importance which the issue held for Kurds. The audience was a mix of Kurds of different nationalities, families, and single men and women of all ages. Response to the film was heated but centred above all on the issue of how Kurds had been represented in the film. It was felt in the main body of the hall that the image of Kurds presented was overwhelmingly negative: the *Safe Haven* was seen as a disaster area, the Kurds as hapless victims. It was suggested that there was a conspiracy, of which the BBC and Home Office were the main agents, to present the Kurds in a negative light. There was a broad consensus that the film was biased and showed the Kurds as passive and incompetent. Contributors from the panel were keenly aware of the broader issues involved, with several references to the role of the media in 'gatekeeping' and preserving the 'national interest'. For the assistant producer of the film, who happened to be English, for the Kurds to be seen on mainstream TV was an advantage in itself. As the film was addressed to a European audience and not the Kurds, he took the line that 'some information was better than none'. This was hotly contested from within the hall. In particular, the right of an outsider to 'speak for' Kurds was roundly rejected.

This incident represents a sensitivity to the denigration of national identity and Kurdish claims to statehood, which although focused on the *Safe Haven* in northern Iraq was an issue of concern to all Kurds. The ways in which Kurds were represented, by whom and for what strategic interests, were the key issues raised by Kurds in a number of different settings. The incident above occurred at a time when Med TV, the world's first Kurdish language satellite TV station had been in operation for about eighteen months. As I discuss below, its impact on Kurdish identity and the integrity of the national imagined community has been profound. In particular, it has opened up possibilities for the self-representation of Kurds, the 'self-imaginings of community' which Werbner (1997) has outlined and which I now examine in more detail.

Med TV: representing the Self

The role of the new technologies of global communication in eroding the boundaries of the nation-state is a consistent theme in recent discussions of globalisation and the emergence of diasporic communities (Morley and Robins 1997). As we had noted in chapter one, Appadurai (1990:297) has proposed the notion of the 'global ethnoscape' to capture the 'landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live'. Deterritorialisation, one of the key features of the contemporary 'global cultural economy', is particularly significant for those peoples who live outside their homeland, whether imagined or real. For Appadurai, the Kurds illustrate the more general case of a nationhood 'steadily increasing in scale and regularly crossing existing state boundaries...', in this case 'because previous identities stretched across national spaces' (1990:304). Fragmented across the countries of the Middle East as a result of imperial partition, we have now to add the dispersal of Kurds in the diaspora to this stretching of identities 'across national spaces'.

Transnationalism in the form of global ethnoscares and associated mediascares challenges the homogeneity and hegemony claimed by nation-states. There is, in this sense, an antagonistic relation between diaspora and nation-state, with 'ethnicity, once a genie contained in the bottle of some sort of locality... forever slipping in and through the cracks between states and borders' (Appadurai 1990:306). The history and evolution of Kurdish Med TV is a clear illustration of this conflict. Med TV, short for *Medya*, a reference to the Medes - one of the principal ancestors of the Kurds - was founded in Autumn 1994 by members of the Kurdish diaspora and on Oct 14th of that year was licensed to broadcast for ten years under the British Independent Television Commission (ITC). It was established by Med Broadcasting Ltd, a

private business partly financed by the Kurdish Foundation Trust. Although there are no direct links with the PKK it is commonly identified with the Kurdish movement for national independence. According to Med TV sources (Hassanpour 1995: 6):

For the first time in history, the Kurdish people can now see their own lives, their own reality, reflected on television screens across the world. Med TV hopes to assist in the regeneration of the Kurdish language and the identity of the dispossessed nation whilst informing the Kurdish public of the world, national and international events.

One of the founders of Med TV, Hitmek Tabak (Ryan 1997) claimed that the immediate background to the formation of Med TV was to prevent the 'disappearance of the Kurdish nation', a factor which has increased salience given the raising of Kurdish villages and deportation which was occurring in Turkish Kurdistan on a massive scale at this time. This also occurred at the time of the *Parliament in Exile* in the Hague in April 1995 and exemplifies the increasing search for legitimacy by the PKK in Europe. As Hassanpour (1996:4) notes, Med TV was hailed at the time of its inception as a pioneer of 'broadcasting to ethnic groups without homeland'.

Test transmissions of Med TV began on March 30th 1995 and normal broadcasting on May 15th of that year. Transmission time was six hours daily by October 1995 - between 16:00 and 22:00 GMT. During the period of Ocalan's arrest broadcasting was 24 hours a day. Med TV broadcasts to Europe, West Asia and North Africa and is based in London, with production work in Brussels and to a lesser extent in Berlin and Stockholm. A variety of languages are used, mainly Kurdish and Turkish with some Arabic although provision is made for minorities and their dialects. Music, cultural programming and news are dominant features. Med TV also offers Kurds the chance to learn the classics in translation, and buys in documentaries from the BBC for example which are presented mainly in Kurmanji. Discussion and talk shows, including phone-in shows and panel participation which encourage debate are amongst the most popular items. There is a wide range of family, religious and political programmes. News takes up the largest portion of programming time at some 20% and is followed avidly by Kurds in London. The dominance of news and cultural items can make Med TV fairly uneventful viewing for younger Kurds brought up on a diet of cable and satellite TV which caters for a broader variety of tastes. 'Too much news and music' was a typical complaint by

younger, less politicised Kurds in London. There was also some criticism from Kurds who identified Med TV with the PKK and regarded it as the mouthpiece of the Party, rather than the Kurdish nation.

The significant point here is the space which Med TV has opened up for the articulation of a new sense of the Kurdish nation, which is not confined to one part of Kurdistan or to one language or nationality and which actively incorporates the experience of the Kurdish diaspora into a revitalised conception of the nation. For many commentators Med TV exemplifies the independence of diaspora from homeland, its self-sufficiency in being sustained by media and global communications. As Hassanpour (1995:3) argues:

The technology of satellite broadcasting has its own dynamics. *It empowers the stateless Kurdish nation to establish its cultural and linguistic borders...* Moreover, it has the potential to create a public forum or rather a 'public sphere' in a society where state coercion has pushed debate into the underground and the privacy of the individual mind (my emphasis).

From its very inception Med TV met with sustained opposition from Turkey who claimed that by promoting Kurdish independence it threatened the territorial integrity of the Turkish state. The first broadcasts of Med TV in April 1995 aroused immediate protests from the Turkish government ('Turkey protests as Kurds beam TV from Britain', *Daily telegraph* 24.5.95) who actively lobbied Britain to withdraw the ITC licence. In September 1996 Med TV offices in London and the main studios in Brussels were raided by police, with the detention of staff and removal of tapes and computer disks ('Police raid Kurdish TV in London' *Guardian* 20.9.96). It seems fairly clear that this represented a co-ordinated attack on Med TV across Europe as a result of diplomatic pressure on London and Brussels by Turkey. With no evidence to support claims that Med TV was supporting 'terrorism' the satellite channel was soon back in action. Writing in 1996 Hassanpour notes that 'to its credit, the ITC has so far kept Whitehall at arms length, and refused to submit to Turkish pressure' (1996:45). The events of February 1999 with the arrest and trial of Ocalan, were soon to cast doubts upon this judgement.

The Kurdish nation unbound?

As indicated above, Med TV represents an attempt to overcome the fragmentation and dispersal of the Kurds which was the legacy of imperial intervention. Yet it bears repetition that there has at no time been an independent Kurdistan in the sense recognised in contemporary international relations. The heritage of fragmentation and division predates imperial intervention and is a product of geo-political location and social organisation which have consistently impeded Kurdish unity. If the nature of the homeland is contentious for Kurds, it is also distinctive in so far as it is largely created, or *invented after the event*. Remarking on the territorial division of the Kurds, one Iranian Kurd in London who had been active as a *peshmerga* on the Iran/Iraq border and was affiliated to an off-shoot of *Komala* declared:

Kurdistan is in four parts, in Iraq, in Iran, Turkey and Syria. Nobody understands each other! (laughter). I can't believe in Kurdish state in Turkish area of Kurdistan for one week... They are quite strange (different)... (in relation to Kurdish nationality) That's only a feeling. Not in reality. For example, last year we had a council. They ask you where you're from. What is your nationality? 'I'm from Kurdistan'. Kurdistan on the map, we haven't anything called Kurdistan. That's only a feeling. Only a feeling...It's like the national lottery. People imagine they are going to win the lottery. It's like that (laughter).

Territory on its own therefore provided an insecure basis for the founding of Kurdish identity. Yet on other occasions it was precisely the fact of geographical dispersal which appeared to prompt the creation of a new, non-territorial sense of Kurdish identity (Basch et al 1994). As another Iranian Kurd who again had fought as a *peshmerga* and worked as a volunteer for the KCC argued:

We now as Kurds are not living in Kurdistan. South Africa, from South Pole to North Pole. From Eastern to Western. All the world you can find Kurds. Western national identity, national identity is not faced with the form as it was in the past - my country, my mountain, my river, my trees, things like that. I cannot be a Kurd and appreciate my land if I am living in London, if I am living in South Africa, if I am living in Latin America or Japan. You cannot be proud

of your mountains or your climate. And Med TV is in the same way, the same direction. This is a new postmodern nationalism.

While this particular individual was exceptional in his grasp of the theoretical issues involved, he articulated a common perception of Kurdish unity beyond the confines of the territorial state and of the role which Med TV had played in promoting this. As he remarked when I asked him what he thought the impact of Med TV had been on the Kurds:

Med TV is part of our national identity, although it tried to give people an identity. But Med TV is more than a means. It is the Kurdish people... It has people from every part of Kurdistan. You can find every people...Iranian, Iraqi, Syrian, Turkish, Armenian. Kurds from South Africa...Kurds living in every part of the world. That's what I mean about this global village...It symbolises the nature of being Kurd, being *Kurdistani*... all the people living in Kurdistan. Kurdish people have been Kurds by birth, not living there. Like the Jew (laughter). Kurdistan people... the Kurds and the other people who are living with us in Kurdistan...Kurdistan for Ashurian, for Assyrian, for Armenian. They're our guests living in our land... That's a powerful point for me, that we have to go towards this global village. There's no escape from that... You can't find any kind of nation state or national identity in any part of the world with this homogenous identity...

In this account, Med TV is not only a means of communication but is representative of the multiplicity and plurality of Kurdish identity, of Kurds 'living in every part of the world'. At the same time the territory of Kurdistan is home to a number of peoples, all of whom are *Kurdistani* or 'Kurdistan people'. Plurality of Kurdish identity and of the peoples occupying Kurdistan is acknowledged, yet the association of nation and territory persists in the claim that 'they're our guests living in our land'. Importantly, the territorial claims are not exclusive in nature but acknowledge the right to co-existence with other nationalities living in Kurdistan. The tension between *the nation unbound*, the significance of diaspora as this is exemplified by Med TV and the narrower conception of the *nation as territorially grounded* - the orientation to the homeland - remains. In this respect, the same individual remarked when asked if he would return to Iran, 'No, I don't go back. Why? Because here is Kurdistan. Here

is my country. Here. Now.' Of the Country/Nation as 'people' or as 'place', it was evidently the Kurdish people who were more significant for this individual.

During the course of a group discussion held at *Halkevi* with a range of individuals in their twenties and thirties, the role of Med TV in supplying accurate information was emphasised by one of the members, a young man who had studied at University in Istanbul:

Mesut: You hear the real news about the Kurdish problems, in Turkey and also in other parts of Kurdistan. You can't tell what's going on in Turkey or Kurdistan from the other programmes, or what the real ones are...

Rabia: Most of the news in Turkey or on Turkish TV is fabricated... Before Med TV you couldn't get any news of what was going on. It's because it's a channel of information for them. *It's become a form of identity. They identify with it now. So it helps their identity, in terms of reminding people of we're still struggling, it's still going on...*

Ismet: it also in a way links millions of people around the world, in a way it vaccinates them (laughter around the table) ideological vaccination. *It becomes part of their identity.* We didn't know... but a year ago we saw this programme... we didn't know there were Kurdish people living in Africa! All over the world, you know - Kurdish people. *We know they are there and they know we are here.*

Rabia: *you don't feel so isolated in London because there are Kurds all over the world.*

Again, rather than representing identity, Med TV had become a *part* of Kurdish identity. As I was told by a young Kurd from Istanbul at the time of the ban on Med TV in April 1999, 'when you don't see your image you are a nobody'. Meetings, events and rallies amongst Kurds in north London were routinely videoed and the images played back to the audience or to other Kurds overseas, while simultaneous broadcasts of meetings elsewhere in the Kurdish diaspora were recycled for the audience in London. In many respects the simultaneity of the Kurdish imagined community was enacted by means of the new technologies of communication. There is an important contrast here with Anderson's (1983:23) comments on

the private, daily reading of the national newspaper - 'what more vivid figure for the secular, historically-clocked, imagined community can be envisaged' - where the presence of the newspaper is physical confirmation of the 'imagined world' of the nation and the more public modes of consumption of Med TV at the associations or around the TV set at home, where the collective presence of Kurds confirms the reality of the Kurdish nation. In general terms, as Cohen (quoted in Vertovec 1999:450) has argued:

Transnational bonds no longer have to be cemented by migration or by exclusive territorial claims. In the age of cyberspace, a diaspora can, to some degree, be held together or re-created through the mind, through cultural artifacts and through a shared imagination.

Yet the self-sufficiency of the diaspora formation should not be overestimated. Territorial claims and the support for the continuing struggle in Kurdistan are the touchstone for many Kurds and point to the continuing tensions between the claims of the homeland and the new demands and possibilities of life in the diaspora.

Conclusion

For Kurdish refugees in London, social organisation and adaptation is conditioned by the reactive character of national identity which has developed - in the case of Kurds from Turkey - in response to the ethnic nationalism of the Turkish state. The intense, embattled and distinctive character of Kurdish identity provides a basis both for political mobilisation and the defence of welfare rights in the country of settlement. The Kurdish associations have a key role in the promotion of nationalist discourse amongst Kurds in London. The assertive character of Kurdish national identity needs to be stressed. As an instance of what Calhoun (1995:220) has called 'categorical identities', national identity:

involves claims about *categories of individuals who putatively share a given identity*. This allows a kind of abstraction from the concrete interactions and social relationships within which identities are constantly renegotiated, in which individuals present one identity as more salient than another, and within which individuals achieve some personal sense of continuity and balance among their

various sorts of identities (my emphasis).

As the authors of a recent article on the construction of national identity have argued (Bechhofer et al 1999:521), although national identity is fluid and changes over time, there are certain contexts, such as sustained warfare with the Other for example, in which it may remain relatively fixed 'and for quite lengthy periods entirely stable across a wide variety of contexts'. Nationality in this respect is the 'trump card in the game of identity' (Calhoun 1995: 256). It provides a nodal point for individuals around which other axes of identity tend to converge. In the Kurdish community in north London for example Alevism tends to be suppressed as an alternative source of affiliation, while the potentially disruptive effects of changes in the family are managed by defining roles which incorporate individuals into the nationalist project. The lead role of the associations in this respect suggests that nationalist discourse is central to the adaptation process of individual refugees affiliated to the associations. The 'abstraction from...concrete interactions', the equalising character of nationalist discourse, erases difference and promotes the unity of the Kurdish imagined identity.

The degree to which nationalist discourse continues to be successful in securing the boundaries of Kurdish identity depends upon a number of factors. In London, the pull of change and the integration of the younger generation are issues which preoccupy and concern many Kurds. Changes in Kurdistan itself are increasingly volatile: the demoralisation resulting from the arrest and trial of Ocalan and evidence of growing polarisation in Turkey on the Kurdish issue ('Turkish voters put faith in nationalism', *Guardian* 20.4.99) may lead in a number of different directions. Hence on the one hand there may be a move away from the more federalist and pluralist conception of a future Kurdistan promoted by the PKK in recent years, towards a retrenchment of Kurdish territorial claims. At the same time the PKK's appeal to the urban constituency in Turkey has highlighted the limitations of the kind of charismatic nationalism represented by Ocalan. The death sentence hanging over Ocalan and the retreat of the PKK from Turkish soil are the major factors affecting Kurds, both at home and in the diaspora, as 1999 draws to its close (see Afterword). More generally, changes in the diaspora as Kurds generate new identities and forms of belonging are another potential constellation of factors. Med TV (and its successor after the I.T.C. ban on Med TV in April 1999) in this respect illustrates something of the self-sufficiency of diaspora, of the nation unbound outside the territorial homeland. A final consideration is that the adaptative strategies

of Kurds in London appear to pull in opposing directions, between enclave formation and a continued resistance to cultural change, and the burning need to participate and be recognised as a distinct nation, an equal in the 'world of nations' (Billig 1995). I address these dilemmas more fully in my concluding remarks.

Conclusion

This thesis has been concerned with a number of core themes relating to the adaptation process of Somali and Kurdish refugees in London. The concept of diaspora has been used as an organising device to structure comparison between the groups in terms of the root causes of refugee flight, the reception and settlement of the two groups and their modes of organisation, community formation and adaptation. The significance of ethnic and cultural identities for the two groups has also been documented in the analysis of 'imagined communities' amongst Somalis and Kurds. I have argued that the modes of representation and self-imaginings which structure experience for individual refugees and asylum seekers are central to the adaptation process. The role of power relations from the geopolitical to the local level has been another important strand to the argument. Related sub-themes developed in different chapters have concerned the role of the nation-state in the generation and reception of refugee flows; the changing role of the refugee in the post-cold war order in relation to the perceived threat contained by the refugee as the Other or Stranger and the nature of nationalism and its special significance for Kurdish political mobilisation and identity. I have also drawn upon the relevant literature in the refugee field concerning adaptation and settlement and the role of community associations for refugee integration. On the whole I have attempted to build upon the existing literature while utilising the insights of research in the field of ethnic relations and cultural studies on the nature and significance of cultural identity.

In addition to the concept of diaspora, a central axis of comparison in this research has been derived from Joly's typology of refugee groups based upon their orientation to the structure of conflict in the society of origin. A broad typology of state collapse and disintegration in the case of the Somalis and the quest for a state in the case of the Kurds has been used to facilitate comparison between the groups. While this has proven useful as an heuristic device it is clear that there are many qualifying factors in operation which explain divergent patterns of adaptation and identity between the groups. A range of factors, including the prior existence of a settled community of co-nationals; the presence of an ethnic economy; local political agencies including the character of the local authority and the demographic characteristics of the groups themselves have been shown to be of central significance. Internal variations within the groups in addition to the character of inter-state relations between sending and receiving countries are other significant variables. The combination and effects of these factors vary

widely between the groups and are important contributory elements in addition to the original typological distinction.

It is possible to present a general profile of the groups from secondary data, historical reconstruction and the small number of individual cases examined. For the Somalis, the experience of social dissolution in Somalia is vital to their adaptation in London. Fragmentation is the key characteristic of social relations among Somalis in London, particularly as this is structured around clan conflicts generated from the home context. Clan divisions have been transplanted to London affecting the character of community organisation and, to some degree, patterns of geographical dispersal and concentration. While clanship acts as an integrative mechanism in providing support networks, it also divides Somalis. A particularly salient feature is the manner in which social dissolution at home translates to social relations amongst Somalis in London. Gender relations and intergenerational conflict have been singled out as the most significant elements. This corroborates McDowell's (1996) findings on Tamils in Switzerland where he notes a 'breakdown in trust and authority' as a result of the weakening of the social fabric in Sri Lanka (McDowell 1996:230). This had ramifications for gender relations and respect for authority in the Tamil community which is replicated in my research amongst Somalis in London. A similarly 'abnormal' demographic profile amongst Somalis in London, as in the Tamil case, may be an important contributory factor.

Another significant parallel with McDowell's research concerns the relationship between a settled community of co-nationals and later asylum seeker arrivals with different background experiences and expectations. The sojourn character of earlier Somali migration had precluded the formation of a 'bridge' for later migration or an effective economic or cultural base from which to build once the new refugees began to arrive in the late 1980s. The extremely variegated character of the newcomers, both in terms of class and regional background, makes a simple contrast between 'immigrants' and 'asylum diaspora' which McDowell draws difficult to sustain in this case. Marginalisation and invisibility have been amongst the most common experiences noted by recent Somali refugees, despite the long-standing historic link between Britain and Somaliland and the existence of a third generation of Somalis in many of Britain's major cities.

While the Kurds have experienced a similar process of marginalisation in Britain this is intensified by the embattled, reactive character of national identity and the political project at home. The demand to be recognised as a distinct nation is carried over from home and impacts upon the relation with the receiving society. In many respects Britain is a place of increased freedoms and the ability to express Kurdish identity, yet at the same time it was one of the instigators of the dismemberment of Kurdistan and continues to support Turkey both economically and militarily. The political project provides an effective basis for organisation in the Turkish Kurdish community in London, despite the dispersed and fragmented character of the Kurds as a whole. As in the case of the Somalis, localism and segmentation are characteristic features rather than group-wide mobilisation and organisation (Gold 1992). For many Kurds the experience of exile promotes national renewal and the discovery of identity. Although processes of intergenerational change and altered patterns within the family are notable features amongst the Kurds the national project acts to define roles for women and youth in a way which is absent amongst the Somalis. The quest for recognition amongst Kurds is paralleled by a concern with the politics of representation, or the *self-imaginings of community* (Werbner 1997) which I have shown to be central features of adaptation for both Somalis and Kurds in London.

Imagined Communities

Although in both groups there are strong central tendencies towards the elaboration of what Gerd Bauman (1997) has called the *dominant discourse of culture*, there are also significant counter-tendencies towards the formation of trans-ethnic alliances or the *demotic discourse of culture*. In distinction to the *dominant discourse*, the latter promotes an engagement with the present rather than a recourse to tradition and the past. These two tendencies were amply demonstrated in the case of the Somalis, where the *reconstruction of tradition* could be seen as a response to changes in both the public and private spheres which were felt to challenge the integrity of the Somali imagined identity. By contrast, the dominance of the PKK in the Turkish Kurdish community has meant that the public, nationalist discourse of the Kurds is strongly determined by the need to secure the boundaries of Kurdish communal identity. Alternative sources of affiliation are actively challenged and channelled by those in the associations. Yet while those in and around the principal associations promoted a uniform, 'public face' for the community (A. P. Cohen 1985) there were significant dissenting voices from the smaller associations or those who were not affiliated to any of the major Kurdish

political groupings. In this case alternative sources of solidarity were promoted, either those of class, gender or 'common humanity'. The insularity and exclusiveness of the associations was a particular target of criticism. An Iranian Kurd who had been active as a *peshmerga* on the Iran/Iraq border and who was affiliated to an off-shoot of *Komala*, told me:

I am not in any Kurdish community, no. Because I am not feeling I belong to Kurd. I am human... For example, every community centre there are nice people. I went to Iranian centre. I don't know any Persian, but they were kind. The Kurdish community help the Kurdish people. Like religion - (the primacy of nationality) not human... If you go to Kurdish community and you to go other community, you feel you are outside the community. Because you are not relaxed. You say, 'I am a Kurd, I am a Kurd'. You should be interested in other people. What's the difference between me and you? I think nationalism is a terrible thing. If I think of nationalism I think of Yugoslavia, I think of Croatia, I think of Rwanda... That experience, I do not believe it. Why myself I make separate to others?

If national exclusivism was one target of criticism the claim of the principal associations to represent the community at large was another source of complaint. The contentious nature of support for the PKK in the Kurdish community is one example of this, as we have seen. For the more socialist and humanist Kurdish associations in north London, or for those individuals who seek to go beyond traditional party political divisions, Kurdish identity was to be forged on the basis of trans-ethnic alliances and the promotion of integration rather than insularity and cultural purity. Those Kurdish organisations with a socialist orientation (*Day-Mer* in Hackney, the PSK and the smaller Iranian Kurdish parties are examples) stressed the dangers of absolutising national identity and the common cause uniting the 'working classes' of all nations. The dangers of nationalism were often clear to those attending the major associations, but were seen as an inevitable by-product of the struggle for national independence. 'I'm no nationalist, but'... was a common enough expression used by Kurds broadly affiliated to the PKK and the military struggle in Kurdistan.

In both groups there is evidence of a turning to the past to make sense of the present. In the Somali case, the secession of Somaliland and the promotion of *Isaq* separatism in the north west of Somalia is based upon pre-independence political institutions and personnel, with the

revival of clanship as the organising principle of the state. Many Kurds similarly promote an ideal of the territorial nation-state which appears increasingly to belong to the past (Cohen 1997). The combination of blocked integration in Britain and an *unwillingness* to integrate caused by the continued quest for state-hood means that many Kurds are dominated by an imagined past of Kurdish unity. As I was told by a volunteer at the Iraqi KCC in Lambeth who felt himself to be out of tune with most of his fellow Kurds:

They (Kurds) cannot speak from the past and they cannot merge themselves here...
 If they stay here they're wasting their time with Kurdish nationalism and this idea
 in their background... just staying where you are and not going forward
 and unfortunately in this country, in this society we have much to fear... to be part
 of this society... The British are very difficult...

This sense of blocked integration being compounded by the insularity of the Kurdish community was also expressed to me by a senior figure at the *Halkevi* in Hackney, who recounted the common saying amongst Kurds that 'if you want to get ahead, get out' (of the Kurdish community). In the case of the Somalis *the legacy of clan particularism* and the experience of social breakdown and for the Kurds *a focus on the political project at home* are powerful conditioning factors affecting settlement in Britain. As I argue in the Afterword to this thesis, the worsening condition at home with the arrest and trial of Ocalan and the ban on Med TV have reinforced the sense of an embattled community amongst many Kurds, while for a significant number of Somalis the experience of marginalisation in Britain has made the prospect of return to Somaliland increasingly attractive.

Another general contrast between the groups, referring back to Anderson's initial formulation of 'imagined communities' relates to the different 'styles' in which the communities are imagined. As Anderson (1983:15) has argued, 'all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined'... In this context it is important to contrast the *particularity* of clanship - 'the Somali community of *that tribe*' - with the *universalism* of nationality - 'we all suffer, *we are all Kurds*'. Nationality, as I had indicated above, acts as the 'trump card in the game of identity' (Calhoun 1995:256) erasing and managing difference (of gender, generation and minority identity) while clanship is inherently prone to emphasis of difference and fragmentation. Again, there

are counter-tendencies in the emphasis on difference in the Kurdish community and the stress on national unity amongst Somalis. As Calhoun is careful to emphasise, there is always a tension between identity and *identities*, at both individual and collective levels. Identity is in the nature of a *project*, but there are tensions between the categorical fixing of identity and the actual *juggling* of identities which any individual or collectivity will perform. In opposition to a postmodern acquiescence in 'soft relativism', Calhoun acknowledges the necessity of 'strategic essentialism' in the articulation of collective and individual identities, a belief in 'freedom' or the 'nation' for example, as these are often a source of 'heroism and self-sacrifice' (1995:224). The importance of the nationalist project amongst the Kurds illustrates the intermeshing of individual and collective identities in a process where as Hall (1996b:33) puts it, 'the psyche is able to invest in a public space'. In a similar vein, clan particularism has a nodal significance for many Somalis which precludes the unlimited semiosis and choice between competing life-styles and identities, which is often celebrated in the more naïve postmodern accounts of nomadism and migrancy (Chambers 1994).

The national project amongst Kurds also offers up a range of positive roles and an image of the future which appears to be lacking in the Somali community. In this respect, the associated dilemmas of containing change while sustaining a vision of the future are perhaps more effectively managed within the Kurdish community. The lead role of the PKK in the Turkish/Kurdish community is a central factor here, although it often appears to promote its own goals above the developing interests of the Kurdish diaspora. A deep suspicion of 'assimilation' into British society is a hallmark of the PKK's current position in relation to Kurds in Britain. The associations have a central role in consolidating identities which again is absent in relation to the Somali community. There the inability to unite due, at least in part, to clan factionalism and the legacy of the past impedes organisation and cultural retention. Past traditions and norms tend to fossilise, rather than being linked to a vision of the future. For the Kurds, the process of 'becoming Kurdish' is part of the project of managing identity in a controlled way, of fixing and clarifying the problem of identification (Ignatieff 1993). Nationalism offers a way of channelling the past, present and future in a coherent individual and collective project. In the case of many Somalis the past has been 'split off', experientially and politically, as a result of the civil war and the perceived failure of the old system in Somalia. Exile has further disrupted the normal patterns of family life with little in the way of clear guidelines to take their place. The future is therefore problematic and unseen for many Somalis. By contrast, for the Kurds the continued quest for a state propels them forwards into

the future, although for many commentators this relies upon a vision of national belonging which is rooted firmly in the past.

Refugee identity and the politics of recognition

A central strand in this thesis has been concerned with issues of cultural identity and representation and the pursuit of claims to recognition. It is this final theme which I would now like to address in more detail. In general, refugees are defined by their lack of rights, particularly in relation to protection from their own state, 'either because their own state is the cause of the predicament or because it is unable to meet their basic requirements' (Zolberg et al 1989:33). In the case of asylum seekers in Britain there are also diminished rights in relation to employment, welfare, housing and family reunion. This denial or lack of rights is often compounded by the experience of violence and insecurity, either in the home country, during the process of flight, or in the country of reception. The experience of torture and imprisonment is common in the case of many refugees, resulting in damage to the physical and psychological integrity of the person. Refugees are typically faced with the prospect of reconstructing their life projects and identities in exile. A minimum consideration in this respect is the granting of formal legal recognition and protection by receiving states. That the grant of asylum is not a straightforward process and is governed by considerations of *realpolitik*, ethnic affiliation and economic factors is amply documented. But the process of recognition for refugees and asylum seekers can be approached from a broader sociological perspective by drawing on accounts which stress the political significance of recognition in the context of transnational migration. As I indicated above, appeals to recognition on the basis of social and economic marginalisation or distinctive cultural and national characteristics have been central underlying themes in the current research.

In Multiculturalism: examining the politics of recognition, Charles Taylor (1994) has argued that the dialogic nature of self-identity (we learn who we are by our relation to Others) is an essential characteristic of human identity. At all times men and women will have developed their sense of self-identity through the encounter with the Other. What is novel and peculiar to the modern period is that in conditions of de-traditionalisation recognition by Others *can fail to occur*: recognition is no longer built into the social structure in terms of accepted roles and expectations. In this respect, the concern with recognition is closely linked to Romantic ideals of authenticity, whether of the person or the nation. *Withholding of recognition* as Taylor

argues, is now seen as a form of oppression (1994:36). Two modes of politics have emerged in the modern period based on the quest for recognition: equal dignity in citizenship rights and a politics of difference based on particular identities. Taylor criticises the universalist position for homogenising difference in favour, on occasion, of the defence of particular identities as a social good. His solution to the problem of multicultural relativism is the recognition or *presumption of equal worth given to all cultures*, albeit this is open to investigation and critique in relation to commonly agreed standards.

In the present context, what is most significant is that 'all societies are becoming increasingly multicultural, while at the same time becoming more porous.... This porousness means that they are more open to multicultural migration; *more of their members live the life of diaspora, whose centre is elsewhere*' (1994:63, my italics). In this respect, the presence of refugees in countries of asylum, or more precisely, *heightened public awareness* of their presence, raises the question of recognition of cultural difference and rights for recognition by refugee groups and individuals. This may concern a struggle for recognition at home which is continued in the diaspora (particularly in the case of the Kurds) and the attempt to be recognised as minorities within the host society in terms of the acknowledgement of cultural identities and social and economic rights. In this respect, Calhoun (1995:218) has drawn on Taylor to emphasise the ways in which identity claims in the public realm necessarily raise issues of legitimacy and power, 'the politics implied by the differential public standing of various identities or identity claims'. It should be noted though that there are tensions in Taylor's account between the dialogic conception of identity and the claims for authenticity for specific national groupings. This has ramifications for the conception of recognition which I analyse more fully below, specifically in relation to the work of Axel Honneth.

In an attempt to construct a critical theory of recognition Honneth (1991) has argued that the notion of human dignity relies on the experience of forms of personal degradation and injury. As with Taylor, self-identity is seen as dialogic in nature, such that 'the constitution of human integrity is dependent on the experience of inter-subjective recognition' (1991:188). In outlining his conception of morality based upon a theory of recognition, Honneth differentiates between three basic forms of disrespect, by which is meant that which damages the integrity of the self 'by depriving (the) person of the recognition of certain claims to identity' (1991:190). These are firstly, violations of the physical integrity of the person, by torture and rape for example; secondly, 'structural exclusion from the possession of certain

rights within a given society' (1991:190). As Honneth argues, 'the experience of being denied rights is typically coupled with a loss of self-respect' (1991:191); and thirdly, the denial of social acceptance for individual and collective life-styles and identities. Corresponding to and rectifying each form of disrespect is a particular type of recognition: love, or bodily-related recognition; the extension of legal rights to formerly excluded groups, and finally, forms of political solidarity or recognition to alternative life-styles and cultures. As Honneth concludes, 'Morality, if understood as an institution for the protection of human dignity, defends the reciprocity of love, the universalism of rights, and the egalitarianism of solidarity against their being relinquished in favor of force and repression' (1991:196). The implications for refugees would appear to be clear, as violation of the person, the denial of rights and the misrecognition of specific cultural and national identities have been shown to be central factors for many individuals in this study.

While Foster (1999) argues that Honneth's work represents a significant advance on the formalism of Habermas and the linguistic turn in Critical Theory he nevertheless proposes a *radicalisation* of Honneth's position, arguing that there is an important (and unnoticed) ambiguity in the meaning of recognition, which is never simply re-cognising but a composite of the *confirmation* and *constitution* of identities. As Foster argues (1999:16):

Recognition is not merely a mode of individual self-confirmation, but also a mode of community formation which at the same time decentres and thus destabilises that community. *Recognition therefore only secures identity by rendering it dependent on, in community with, what it is not, on what is non-identical with it.*

It is useful here to recall Hall's (1996a:5) comment that identity is constantly 'destabilised by what it leaves out'. The sealing of a dominant or essentialised discourse of culture in this sense is always a provisional affair - the entry to the realm of public discourse which is vital to the process of recognition also brings with it the attendant dangers of change and transformation. This partially explains the positive value ascribed to invisibility and insularity amongst sections of the two groups examined here as a means of preserving cultural identity. An associated problem is that Honneth's account of recognition tends to rely on an idealisation of the role of public institutions in granting legal recognition to autonomous subjects, and significantly underplay the power of the Other in 'interpellating' the individual in Althusser's sense (1971), thereby defining and controlling the subject through the process

of recognition. The multicultural discourse of the state is one such mode of recognition which potentially both controls and codifies subaltern groups through the artificial construction and legitimation of ethnic boundaries. It may be asked whether 'multiculturalism' in this context has much to offer refugee groups who are pursuing often divergent forms of political and social recognition in the country of settlement.

Wieviorka (1998:891)) in a recent review of multiculturalism in the policy sphere, regards multiculturalism in its broadest sense as a response to the cultural differentiation produced by modernity. According to Wievorka (1998:901) in order to be a workable policy multiculturalism requires 'several stable cultural communities both wishing and able to perpetuate themselves'. In this respect the relative stability, size and viability of most refugee communities would tend to preclude them from the multicultural framework. As he argues (1998:902) there are many 'temporary immigrations composed of individuals or groups who have chosen to live only partly in the host country', to which we might add a range of forced migrants whose political affiliations extend beyond the host country to their homeland. Transnational or diasporic allegiances clearly cut across the nation-state framework implied by the multicultural model. In addition to the limitation of multiculturalism in reifying ethnic communities, it is also the case that not all 'cultural identities are of the type which seek to maintain a distinct identity' (Wievierka 1998: 903). Many Somalis place little emphasis on this aspect of recognition for example. A purely culturalist form of recognition also brings with it the problem of ignoring the economic and social inequalities which continue to impede refugee communities in Britain (Carey-Wood et al 1995). That some form of multiculturalism informs current British policy on refugees is evident from a recent Home Office document (Home Office 1999b) on the settlement and integration of refugees in Britain. This is explicitly conceived in a multiculturalist and race relations framework, although it remains to be seen how far the integrative and multicultural inflexion of this document is translated into practice. The document explicitly stops short of tackling the causes of 'social exclusion' for example and is firmly located in the arrangements for the implementation of the new and largely restrictive asylum regime which is set to come fully into operation by April 2000.

It remains clear in relation to the two groups examined here that the issue of recognition, whether of cultural and national claims or of economic and social rights, was a priority for many of those interviewed. Certain of these claims as Wievorka observes, transcend the stage of the nation-state within which multicultural policies are typically framed. The claims of the

Kurds to national recognition and independence are issues of foreign policy and state interest which transcend domestic, or local policy concerns. Nevertheless, these claims continue to structure the identities and interests of Kurds living in London as does the issue of recognition for Somaliland as an independent state for a minority of Somalis in London. Whether a multiculturalist social policy is adequate to these often incommensurate claims, for social and economic parity in addition to the recognition of claims to specific national and cultural identities, is a vital consideration for future British policy on refugees and asylum seekers. Escalating numbers of ‘bogus’ or the now more favoured term of ‘abusive’ asylum seekers continue to tax political leaders (*Daily Mail* 28.7.99, ‘Straw nightmare as number of asylum seekers rockets’). The perceived threat of international migration and unregulated refugee flows documented earlier in this thesis has also recently resurfaced in the affair of Kurdish leader Ocalan’s arrest and trial (see Afterword). From a more general migration perspective, as Castles and Miller (1998:276) have noted, the security issues posed by diaspora groups with homeland politics now effectively spill over the boundaries of the nation-state. As Cohen has also argued (1997:196) the contemporary globalisation of migration has resulted in ‘an increasing proliferation of diasporic, subnational and ethnic identities that cannot easily be contained in the nation-state system’. In this respect, it would appear that the emergence and consolidation of diasporas (Van Hear 1998:263) and their claims for recognition, will continue to pose challenges for social integration and the cultural identities of nation-states.

On a final note, it is important to restate Honneth’s plea for an *egalitarianism of solidarity* in relation to the claims for recognition made by the refugee groups examined here. In this research one particularly significant factor for many Kurds, for example, was the way in which the denial of claims to identity or recognition relating to the country of origin was often amplified by the sense of marginalisation in the local settlement context. In this respect the assertion of national identity and the claim for recognition on that basis was a recurrent feature in interviews. In the following case, by no means exceptional, a strong claim to recognition was made by a twenty four year old, Iraqi Kurdish male, based on the notion of *shared humanity*:

We don't have a country, a free country... Why the United States and the United Kingdom don't make one country for Kurdish? ... why don't you give freedom? What's the difference between people here and people of Kurdistan? What's the

difference? I don't know. *What's the difference between you and me?*

In drawing attention to the immediate situation of *researcher and researched* this individual was making explicit what was often taken for granted or implicit in the research process. As reflexive agents, refugees and asylum seekers are aware that their social position in the receiving society is in many ways *eccentric*. They can make no claim to belonging to the social world occupied by the interviewer (nor may want to) but in many cases will instead stress their particular claim to recognition based upon a belief in a common, shared humanity. Kurds in particular, may have identities and histories which have gone unnoticed in their society of origin or which have been used against them, or experience what they feel is wholesale neglect, indifference or hostility in the 'host' society. In either case a claim is made during the course of an interview for recognition by the Other. This raises important questions about the moral and affective nature of research into refugee communities and the relations of power and responsibility between researcher and the subject of research.

As I argued in the introduction to this thesis, debates on the ethical implications of sociological fieldwork typically foreground the role of reflexivity as a central tool of analysis. Feminist research in particular has placed the onus on the researcher to situate themselves in relation to their gender, race, class (Harding 1987:9) and their effects on the field of study. It has long been a tradition in participant observation for example to document the ethical issues raised by gaining access to specific groups and the assumption of roles in the field. Latterly, feminist research has raised issues of power relations and the dynamics and potential abuse of interpersonal relations in the interview process (Oakley 1981; Finch 1984). Research on refugees and ethnic groups has commonly emphasised their 'vulnerability' and openness to exploitation (North 1995). In this respect, different traditions adopt opposing stances on the ethical and political goals of research, with some feminists and anti-racists suggesting the need for open partisanship. While I would agree with Hammersley (1993:437) that research should be 'based on judgements about the plausibility and credibility of evidence' rather than personal political affiliation, the ethical and political underpinnings of research into refugee communities are inescapable.

In sociological theory there has been an increasing concern with establishing dialogue rather than the assertion of monological authority. As Bauman (1992b:85) has argued, the decline of the certitudes of modernity has brought with it a new role for social theory, 'a new discursive

formation of a dialogical, not monological sociology'. If anything the emphasis on dialogue is more firmly developed in anthropological discourse with its stress on the polyphony of voices in ethnography and the challenge to the monological, authorial voice (Clifford and Marcus 1986:15). Dialogism is not so much a methodological prescription as an ethical credo, with its implied role for social theory in establishing 'voice' for those normally excluded from public discourse. Bauman (1993) for one, has emphasised the foregrounding of ethical questions under postmodernity with a freeing up of the ethical relation from the constraints of universalising moral codes. More concretely perhaps in this context, postmodernity throws into sharp relief the ethical issues raised by the co-presence of Strangers in the 'living space'. For Bauman (1993:159), 'the problem of modern society is not how to eliminate Strangers, but how to live in their constant company - that is, under the condition of cognitive paucity, indetermination and uncertainty'. In sociological research the establishment of dialogue may well be one stage in the process of recognition and understanding, but as Foster (1999) has argued and as I have sought to emphasise in this research, it is important to locate the breaks in dialogue, the blockages and misunderstandings, the ways in which dialogue is entered into and retreated from. For many of the refugees in this study the struggle to gain a voice or hearing was an essential part of dialogue, in the research process perhaps as much as in the broader political and public domain.

Afterword

Changes in the political situation in the country of origin and in international relations have a significant impact upon the lives of refugees in the diaspora. The geopolitical importance of the Kurdish issue and the volatility of the region occupied by the Kurds means that they have had a continually high profile - *Halabja* in 1988, the uprising after the Gulf war in 1991 and Turkey's ongoing war with the PKK are the most obvious examples. By contrast, since the UN debacle Somalia has been largely marginal to the course of international relations. Yet Somalis, like Kurds, are highly sensitive to current developments at home and the regional issues which influence domestic politics. In this section I provide a brief 'update' of some of the domestic issues which were affecting Somali and Kurdish refugees in London, in the Spring and Summer of 1999.

Reconstruction in Somaliland: the prospects for return

Reports from Somalia in June 1999 presented a contradictory picture, of the re-establishment of order combined with continuing conflict and instability. Members of the business community and Islamic leaders in Somalia for example had managed over several years to restore a limited degree of order in the face of the clan-based militia which had dominated Mogadishu since Barre's fall ('Islam tries to end chaos of the clans', *Guardian* 29.6.99). Yet at the same time the resurgence of the Ethiopian/Eritrean conflict threatened to undermine these initiatives by drawing opposing clans into the broader regional conflict, thereby fuelling the conflict around Mogadishu and the central agricultural region ('Horn of Africa conflict sabotages Somalis' hopes for stability', *The Times* 25.6.99). Given the volatility of the central and southern regions the brightest prospects for peace currently appear to lie in Somaliland, although even here continued instability prevents any feasible long-term renewal. Commentators on reconstruction in Somaliland make guarded observations on the extent of economic and social revival since secession in 1991. The self-proclaimed state has been plagued by insecurity and conflict, notably in the period after the SNM withdrew as the 'sole official party in Somaliland' (Bradbury 1997:21) in 1993. In clan terms, Somaliland remains predominantly *Isaq*, although there are significant subdivisions within this (Bradbury 1997:20) as well as smaller numbers of *Gadabursi* and *Issa*, *Dolbahunte* and *Warsengili*, all of which are related to larger clan families. Given their numerical supremacy, the decision to secede in 1991 may be regarded as a form of *Isaq* separatism, rather than the Somaliland nationalism suggested by many of its proponents.

Armed conflict has characterised Somaliland since its inception in 1991, although the *Borama Conference* in 1993 attempted to set the foundations of the new state on a more secure footing. Central to this process was a revived role for the elders in the Assembly of Elders (*guurti*). In June 1993 the National Guurti appointed Egal, Somalia's first prime minister in 1960 as the new president of Somaliland. Although there was some successful reconstruction of the state machinery and legal apparatus (Omaar 1994) in this period, the 'new state remained politically fragile' (Bradbury 1997:24). This was confirmed by the outbreak of war in November 1994 between opposed *Isaq* factions (Bradbury 1997:25-7) fighting for economic control and political supremacy. The already devastated cities of Hargeisa and Burao were the areas worst affected by the war which continued sporadically until 1996. Despite some positive movement towards reconstruction and the re-establishment of order, the situation in Somaliland remains unstable, with some doubts about the ability of the central administration to combat clan particularism. Further problems concern the lack of international legitimacy for the new regime which continues to hamper reconstruction and development programmes.

Criticism of the role of the elders from within Somaliland itself suggest that they may be motivated more by institutional self-interest than their traditional role of short-term mediation in disputes. This again raises the issue of how far traditional Somali institutions have been affected by the war and the process of social dissolution in Somalia as a whole. Bradbury (1997) like many other commentators is undecided on this, suggesting both that Somalis are reaching towards solutions to current problems based upon past traditions, but also that traditional pastoralism has 'broken down' thereby affecting 'authority structures'. The volatility of identities and allegiances amongst Somalis in London has been documented in earlier parts of this thesis. It is also clear that for those Somalis who remain at home the future remains deeply uncertain.

Despite this, there have been several initiatives from within the Somali diaspora which have aimed at restoring peace and social order in Somaliland. The *Peace Committee for Somaliland* (Bradbury 1997) originating in Addis Ababa, held a conference in London in April 1995 which aimed to secure peace between the warring factions inside Somaliland. This organisation has since folded to be replaced by a plethora of uncoordinated initiatives from within the Somali community, particularly in East London. SOHDA (Somali Redevelopment, Rehabilitation and Development Agency) replacing the earlier SOMRA was initiated by

Somalis who have been in England since at least the 1960s and is currently attempting to secure funds for projects in Somaliland. This is one of several projects aiming to go beyond traditional clan loyalties and to encourage Somalis 'to learn to live together', as I was told by one of its trustees in London, a man who had been active in the SNM in the Gulf states in the 1980s. The organisation itself combines *Isaq* with *Hawiye* on its board of trustees, aiming for a synthesis of 'north' and 'south'. *Tawakal*, a Somali women's group based in Commercial Road, aims for a similar unification of Somalis by combining individuals of different clan and regional backgrounds on its management committee. It has close links with NGOs based in Somaliland and promotes reconstruction projects in Burao and other areas which have been affected by the war. Again, second generation Somalis born to those who arrived in the 1960s have a prominent role, although refugees from the late 1980s are also active in the organisation.

The *Somaliland, UK Development and Returning Home Project*, jointly sponsored by the Centre for Social Action at DeMontfort University and the EC, is another ambitious project which aims to combine the community development of Somalis in selected British cities (London, Sheffield, Liverpool and Cardiff) with a voluntary scheme for return to Somaliland. Initiated by Somalis active in the community in East London, the *Somali Community Link* aims to foster relations between 'grass-roots' organisations in Britain and Somaliland with a view to returning home for individuals who participate in the scheme. Although regarded with a degree of suspicion by many Somalis who associate it with forced repatriation, for the increasing number who are active in the scheme it provides a chance to explore avenues for return and economic improvement which are currently denied them. The common perception of blocked opportunities in Britain suggests to many Somalis that there are 'better opportunities in Somaliland', as one of the paid workers on the scheme told me. The continuing instability in Somaliland was the greatest obstacle to generating trust in the scheme. Even those participating in the project pointed to the worsening economic conditions in Somaliland resulting from the ban by the Gulf states on the import of Somali livestock. Nominally for health reasons, according to many Somalis this is a thinly veiled attempt to destabilise the new state of Somaliland which the Arab League had opposed from its inception in 1991.

As one elderly male participant in the scheme who had worked for the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in Somalia, and whose own twenty five year career had been ruined by the

administrative malpractice of the Barre regime told me, the downturn in the economy had added to Somalis' doubts about the viability of return: 'Who will guarantee my security, my economic security there? There's no government there... Who will look after my children? I go from the frying pan to the fire again (laughter). They go back into the fire again (laughter)'. Despite this, the impulse to return and help in the reconstruction of the country was overpowering for this individual: 'we want to do something for the people and for ourselves'. In England, 'the whole future is dark, you know'. The chronic waste of the younger generation was a particular concern. Hopes for the future were based upon a belief in building the skills-base of the younger generation of Somalis, so that they could establish lives for themselves in Britain and also contribute to the reconstruction of Somaliland. Drawing a parallel with the earlier experience of Somali migration to the Gulf states in the 1970s, this individual believed that today's refugees may be able to play a similar role in sending remittances to Somaliland: 'refugees in the diaspora, not only here in London, if they get an economic boom there will be a lot of money going back...'

At present there is little indication of a large scale movement of return. The optimism of this individual's belief in economic reconstruction in Somaliland was tempered by a keen awareness of the pitfalls involved. Amongst younger Somalis who had spent their formative years in Somalia but who had acquired a taste for life in the diaspora, the ambivalent feelings evoked by the prospect of return were striking. Many remarked that they would return, 'if we had a proper government', or if the younger generation were in control. Yet in practice, particularly for several young women I spoke with, the resurgence of Islam in Somalia had raised serious doubts in their minds. As one twenty two year old, who had witnessed war as a young girl in both Hargeisa and Mogadishu told me, 'if the situation exists in Somalia (that) women have no rights, I'm not interested'. More generally, she doubted the ability of Somalis to live together again as one nation. 'They don't trust each other. There's no trust...' as she told me, recalling her own experience of war. For those Somalis attempting the difficult task of reconstruction the relative absence of international support and recognition (Bradbury 1997:36-9) is part and parcel of what they perceive as the broader neglect of African and Somali affairs. It needs finally to be asked whether for many Somalis in London the worst case of 'double marginalisation: from the country of origin and the country of settlement' (Joly 1996:58) may not apply. Lacking the solidarity of the Kurds whose collective identity has been produced and sustained by the experience of oppression, developments amongst Somalis in London may continue to depend upon the struggle for peace at home.

The capture of Abdullah Ocalan: global repercussions and the impact on Kurds in London

What was to unfurl in dramatic scenes across the Kurdish diaspora began inconspicuously enough with the forced expulsion of the PKK leader, Abdullah Ocalan from his Syrian-protected military base in Lebanon's Bekka valley in September 1998. The expulsion of the PKK came after Turkish threats of military reprisals if Syria refused to comply with their requests for the removal of Ocalan. On the 9th October 1998 Ocalan was smuggled via Greece to Russia, from where he again had to flee once the Israeli secret service had passed the news to the Turks ('Global plot that lured Kurd's here into trap', *Observer* 21.2.99). Gambling on a campaign to publicise the position of the Kurds Ocalan opted to seek asylum in Italy where the conflict between Turkey and Italy over Ocalan's fate was propelled onto the world stage ('Battle intensifies over Ocalan's fate', *Guardian* 18.11.98). A range of diplomatic and trade issues were thrown into relief here, with Italy depending on trade links and Turkish control of illegal immigration into Italy. Both Turkey and the US at this time were pushing for the extradition of Ocalan to Turkey to be placed on trial. While US secretary of state, Madeleine Albright was demanding that Ocalan 'face justice - we would prefer that this take place in Turkey', the US was brokering a deal between the KDP and PUK to secure a stable platform for US interests in Iraq in the continuing campaign to overthrow Saddam. The key actors in the ensuing drama - Ocalan and the PKK, Turkey, the US, Greece and Israel were already in place by the end of 1998.

After refusing to send Ocalan back to Turkey (where the death penalty is in violation of Italy's constitution) and given the unwillingness of Germany to act as host, Ocalan eventually fled Italy on the 16th of January 1999, being passed from Russia to Greece where he arrived on the 29th of January. A combination of Turkish and US pressure resulted in Ocalan being offered temporary asylum in the Greek Embassy in Nairobi, unluckily for Ocalan the CIA's African headquarters. Subsequent US pressure on Greece was believed to be particularly important for ensuing events. For the US it was of course vital to secure the goodwill of Turkey in maintaining the airbases which service the No-Fly Zone in Northern Iraq. Ocalan arrived in Nairobi on the 2nd February. Israel intelligence was purportedly involved in passing intelligence to the CIA and Turkish intelligence. The eventual seizure of Ocalan - who was pressurised into leaving the Greek Embassy by the Kenyan authorities on the evening of the 15th - was broadcast to the world by a triumphant Prime Minister Ecevit of Turkey. Ocalan arrived in Turkey at approximately three a.m. on the morning of February 16th.

The effectiveness of the Kurds' global networks was amply demonstrated in the rapidity of response in the early hours of the 16th. Up to twenty five European countries were caught up in the protests on the 16th and following days ('Hour by hour, a new Kurd attack', *The Independent* 17.2.99), with Greek embassies placed under siege ('Embassies under siege as Kurds orchestrate Europe-wide protest', *The Independent*, 17.2.99). PKK supporters in London held a junior official at the Greek Embassy in Holland Park hostage for three days ('Fighting at Embassy Siege', *The Evening Standard* 16.2.99). The speed of events is perhaps indicated by the fact that the Greek Embassy was reported to have been stormed by PKK supporters at 2.30 on the morning of the 16th. While the Metropolitan Police were set to play a waiting game with the Kurds inside the Embassy, Foreign Office sources were unequivocal, claiming that 'although Ocalan has apparently renounced violence there is still substantial evidence of recent violent terrorist activities by the PKK' ('Fighting at Embassy', *Evening Standard* 16.2.99). For many Kurds in London however, the capture of Ocalan had resulted from the co-ordinated betrayal of Greece, Israel and the US in using the Kurds, as so often in the past, as a bargaining chip in the affairs of state. Although there was official denial of covert involvement in the capture of Ocalan, a Washington spokesman opined that the White House 'was very pleased with the apprehension of this terrorist leader' ('Girl sets fire to herself as Kurds protest', *The Times* 17.2.99).

On the morning of the 17th, the front page of the national dailies in Britain was dominated by the image of the fifteen year old Kurdish girl, Nejla Kanteper, hair and back ablaze, as she demonstrated in London by setting alight to herself in protest against the capture of Ocalan. The Press was quick to seize on the sensational aspects of the siege, the *Evening Standard* claiming that 'Kurdish activists use London base' (16.2.99), while the warped psychology of the nationalist martyr was briefly dissected ('Martyrs who fanned the flames of protest', *The Times* 17.2.99; 'Teletubbies and terrorists in a teenage fanatic's bedroom', *The Daily Mail* 18.2.99). The sporadic instances of disorder in the Kurdish community in London were quickly seized upon. For example:

- in 1991 there were attacks on Turkish banks in London
- in 1993 a Kurd set alight to himself in the Immigration Services Offices at Croydon
- in 1994 there was a spate of attacks on Kurdish leaders in north London, reputedly by the Turkish secret service and 'Grey Wolves'

- in the same year co-ordinated attacks on Turkish embassies occurred across Europe and there were protests against the arrest of a European spokesman for the PKK, Kani Yilmaz, under the Protection of Terrorism Act
- 1996 brought the arrest of two Kurds charged with attempting to firebomb a Turkish bank, while the KWA in Haringey was stormed by police during rehearsals for Harold Pinter's *Mountain People*, the police apparently mistaking actors for 'real terrorists'.

With the Embassy siege fears were briefly fanned that the Kurdish community in Britain would launch an offensive against civilian targets in Britain and on British holiday makers in Turkey, a strategy which had been used to some effect in the past ('Hospitality abused', *The Daily Mail* 18.2.99). The official response was more guarded, with many arguing that MI5 regarded the Kurds as 'legitimate dissidents'. Despite the success of the Metropolitan police strategy of 'the long haul' in relation to the Greek Embassy siege (a factor which the Met. were keen to exploit at the time of the release of the Macpherson report on Steven Lawrence's death) Foreign Office calls on Turkey to treat the Kurdish leader in a fair manner were hopelessly at odds with New Labour's continued support for Turkey as an important trading partner, member of Nato and significant purchaser of arms.

By the 18th of February the Kurdish protesters in the Greek Embassy in London were negotiating the release of their hostage and the ending of the siege. The apparent climb-down by the Kurds in London had not occurred without huge ramifications across Europe caused by the protests in other countries: popular internal support for the Kurdish movement had forced the resignation of three ministers in the Greek cabinet and the humiliation of the Greek administration ('Athens in crisis over CIA link to Ocalan capture' *The Guardian* 19.2.99); while the shooting of three Kurds by Israeli security guards in Berlin ('Drei Tote bei Kurden - Aufruhr in Berlin', *Die Welt* 18.2.99) along with Israel's apparent involvement in Ocalan's capture and a more general Turkish/Israeli rapprochement, was to result in Israel becoming a new target for PKK attacks ('Turkish links win Israel new foe', *The Guardian* 18.2.99). Since the 16th February some 1000 Kurds had been placed under arrest across Germany and threatened with deportation ('Schroeder threatens 'militant Kurds' with deportation' *The Guardian* 19.2.99).

In Turkey, Kurdish riots in Istanbul and other major cities were quelled while the indecision of the PKK leadership was exploited by renewed incursions by Turkish troops and aircraft into

northern Iraq where the PKK had temporary bases ('Ankara force storms into northern Iraq', *The Times* 18.2.99). In response to European concerns that Turkey provide a fair and accountable trial for Ocalan, Prime Minister Ecevit was increasingly adopting a hard-line stance ('Turkey warns EU: keep off Ocalan trial', *The Guardian* 22.2.99) accusing Greece for example of harbouring terrorists. The public relations offensive continued with the temporary halt to military action in northern Iraq and the promise of an amnesty to PKK troops before the Turkish elections in April 1999. The potential defeat of the PKK and the capture of Ocalan were clearly great bonuses to the beleaguered Ecevit government which it was keen to capitalise on. Meanwhile, Turkey's ambassador to Britain reminded the British public ('Turkey and the Kurds', *The Times* 22.2.99) that 'we are currently Britain's largest trading partner in the whole of the Balkans, Near and Middle East and southern Mediterranean. Around a million British people visit us each year'. With a view to the 'anti-terrorist' fever which was gripping some sections of the Press, Ambassador Sanberk left the readers of *The Times* with the following warning, or was it a threat? - 'these groups (Kurdish militants) are now part of British and German society. If they are given false expectations (concerning an independent Kurdistan) and encouraged to drift towards ever more desperate extremism, it is Britain and other Western European countries that will have to live with the consequences'.

During the period of Ocalan's arrest in February 1999, Med TV was broadcasting for twenty four hours a day. Med TV had become the main source of information for Kurds regarding the situation across the Kurdish diaspora and gained a relatively high public profile for a short period of time. As a result of alleged 'incitement to violence' during Ocalan's arrest and under sustained pressure from Turkey, the ITC placed a twenty one day ban on Med TV in March 1999 which was later renewed in April. While the decision about Med TV's future was being made by the ITC during April, Christian Satellite TV offered to broadcast Kurdish programmes. The satellite frequency was jammed - it was presumed by Turkey - every night at six when Med TV news was due to be broadcast. At the *Halkevi* in north London in place of the news a spokesperson delivered news items by fax from Med TV in London and Brussels. The success in implementing a ban on Med TV at this time was part of a concerted campaign by Turkey in the run-up to the elections in April and the attempt to silence the Kurdish opposition. Ominously enough, the election in April of the *National Action Party* on a platform of radical nationalism, suggested that 'political opinion on the Kurdish issue looks set to become even more polarised' (Turkish voters put faith in nationalism', *The Guardian* 20.4.99).

With the new government installed the death sentence was passed by a Turkish court on Ocalan in June 1999, an event which was soon followed by Ocalan's renunciation of the armed struggle and the voluntary removal of the PKK from Turkish soil. By the Autumn of 1999 the PKK had clearly sustained a demoralising defeat. Immediately after his arrest in February however, PKK supporters in London had been eager to capitalise on the Kurds dramatic re-entry on the world stage. Initial anger at the capture of Ocalan had been transformed into a more measured demand that Europe take note of the Kurdish issue. Kurdish demonstrations in the major European cities which took place on the 22nd February were geared towards consolidating the impact which the PKK had made earlier in the week.

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The demonstration in London on the 22nd of February began as a small scale affair with a clutch of PSK supporters outside the Ministry of Defence in a side street off Whitehall. One notable feature of the demonstration was the participation of a range of Kurdish groups, in addition to representatives of the Turkish Left. The PKK were dominant overall, with members from the main associations including *Halkevi* and the KWA. Makeshift banners, in English, were carried by the young and the old and set the tone for the demonstration - 'No more dirty war', 'Fair Trial for Ocalan in Fascist Turkey', 'Turkey's dirty war against the Kurds spread into Europe'. One ten year old boy was carrying a banner with the legend - 'Kurds have been betrayed by Europe, I shall tell my grandchildren about it'. Although stage managed, the popular character of the demonstration was clear. One of the central aims of the demonstration was to pressurise the British government. Large banners, professionally made in this case, demanded that Britain 'Stop the arms trade with Turkey'. The demonstration was also clearly in support of 'Our leader, Apo'. Many of the chants used on the demonstration, 'Apo, PKK, Kurdistan', for example, demonstrated the identification of Ocalan with the political movement for Kurdish independence. Black and white and colour photographs of Ocalan were hoisted aloft makeshift banners and placards. The Green, Yellow and Red of the Kurdish flag were everywhere in evidence, from headscarves to neckerchiefs tied around babies necks.

It was an occasion for public display which was rarely offered to the Kurds outside their enclaves in north London. As the Kurds walked in orderly files down Whitehall past the memorials to Imperial heroes, it was difficult to imagine what the assorted crowds of well-

heeled tourists and passers-by were making of this spectacle from another world. Public response to the Kurds had been broadly sympathetic to their pleas for freedom and national independence. But the notoriously short attention span of the Press and public sentiment was already coming into play on the morning of the demonstration. The crisis in Kosovo had rapidly displaced the Kurds from the front pages of the world's press. Compassion is clearly a volatile commodity in an age of recurring and ongoing 'humanitarian crises'. Although some of the demonstrators' chants harked back to an earlier time - 'Vietnam yesterday, Kurdistan today' - the absence of an organised solidarity campaign was one of the most notable features of the demonstration and of support for the Kurds more generally in Britain. While a few writers and intellectuals had rallied behind the Kurdish cause - Ignatieff, Pinter and Hitchens are the readiest examples - 'popular support' tended to be represented either by the rump of a number of 1970s Trotskyist organisations or solidarity organisations which were effectively sponsored by the PKK in London. Lacking the organised support which was characteristic of the earlier campaign against the Vietnamese war (or indeed the socialist support networks which made the Chilean resettlement programme feasible in the 1970s) the Kurds may have appeared both out of place and also as Ignatieff (1993) has noted in a different context curiously *anachronistic*, as they congregated in this one-time hub of Imperial power. The Kurds continued quest for a state is perhaps the most extreme case of 'unfinished business' left over from the failure of the Great Powers to live up to their own rhetoric of national self-determination in the inter-war period. As events unfolded around the arrest and trial of Ocalan it became clear that the Kurds remained the butt of *realpolitik* and strategic interest in the closing years of the twentieth century, as they had done throughout most of its course.

Notes

Chapter 1

1. Acculturation is defined by Dona and Berry (1999: 171) as 'the process by which migrant groups adjust to being in contact with different cultures'. The authors stress that acculturation is a multidimensional phenomenon and involves psychological and social dynamics and processes, although 'individual acculturation is best understood within the framework of group acculturation' (1999:173). Acculturation outcomes range from integration and assimilation to marginalisation, depending on the degree of importance ascribed to cultural retention within the migrating group. In the current research the term 'adaptation' is used to describe the process of cultural negotiation undergone by refugee groups, although with a less 'psychologistic' inflexion and with a greater detail to the interpreted and conflictual character of culture and identity formation than may be suggested by the term *acculturation*.

Chapter 4

1. Yesilgov (1996:181) notes the goal of Turanism as the establishment of the 'Great Turkic Empire', initially conceived in opposition to the Ottoman Empire. See also Kendal (1993) and Mc Dowall (1996).

2. The often-noted divisions of the Kurds in terms of (1.) *language*: the principal 'dialects' of *Kurmanji* (covering Turkey, Syria and Armenia and northern Iran and Iraq) and *Sorani* (in Iraq and central Iran) (Kreyenbroek and Sperl 1992:71) are as mutually unintelligible as English and German and contain sub-dialects which vary from region to region. Another dialect, *Zaza*, is spoken principally by Alevis; (2.) *religion*: while the majority of Kurds belong to Sunni Islam, significant minorities in Iraq and Turkey are Shi'a. *Alevis*, a heterodox sect associated with the *Cult of Angels*, are particularly important in the Turkish context as a counterbalance to a purely Kurdish national identity; *Yezidis* (Bruinessen 1996a:30) are another significant religious grouping; and (3.) *tribalism*, often overlaid in the contemporary context by party political affiliations (Ciment 1996) compound the difficulties in constructing a unified sense of Kurdish national identity.

Chapter five

1. The principle of *non-refoulement* states that asylum seekers shall not be forcibly repatriated to a country in which they fear persecution (Article 33 of the 1951 UN Convention). In relation to the meaning of the term 'refugee', there is a complex differentiation of categories

and entitlements concerning what are loosely termed 'refugees'. Convention refugees are those recognised under the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol as individuals with a 'well founded fear of persecution'. These individuals have entitlement to family reunion and the full rights of people settled in the UK. Less secure statuses include Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) and Exceptional Leave to Remain (ELR). Individuals with ELR are allowed leave to remain on a discretionary basis for an initial period of one year, which may be renewed after three year periods. After a seven year period ILR or Convention status may be granted. Those with ELR and ILR have no rights of family reunion, although a grant of reunion may be made after a four year period. Asylum seekers are 'spontaneous refugees' in contrast to the Quota or Programme refugees who arrive as part of a government sponsored refugee programme. The Ugandan Asians (1972), Chileans (mid-1970s) and Vietnamese (late 1970s) are examples of quota refugees during the 1970s and 1980s (Joly 1996; Robinson 1985; Refugee Council 1997). In 1992 the British government agreed to take a quota of 1,000 Bosnian households and their dependents under the Bosnia programme. In 1995 another 500 individual places were made available (Bosnian Programme 1997). Both the Bosnian and the more recent Kosovan programme of April-May 1999 instituted a special form of temporary protection (Refugee Council 1999).

Additional distinctions which have proven important since the 1996 Asylum and Immigration Act concern the difference between asylum seekers who claim asylum at port-of-entry and those who claim in-country. This has had an important impact on the entitlements of individual asylum seekers. In the case of spontaneous refugees the abiding principle up to the 1996 Asylum and Immigration Act had been that they were absorbed into mainstream welfare provision. Both the 1996 Act and the 1999 Asylum Bill represented a break in this tradition.

2. The political conjuncture in May 1999 bears further elaboration. On the domestic front, the earlier publication of the Macpherson Report in February 1999 (Home Office 1999a) had prompted a formal political commitment to challenging institutional racism by the Home Secretary, Jack Straw. Only shortly afterwards the government was to be seen rushing through the committee stages of the new Asylum Bill, with very few concessions to opposition from backbenchers and campaigning groups ('The Great Balkan lie', *New Statesman* 26.4.99). Internationally, the political agenda was dominated by the continuing Nato intervention in Kosovo. Whatever the merits of the bombing campaign the immediate outcome had been the largest refugee crisis in Europe in the post-war period. The political manipulation of the

refugees by both the Serbian administration and Nato requires more detailed examination than can be given here. In Britain, the difference between the relatively preferential treatment of Kosovars under the Kosovan programme and that meted out to their fellow nationals who had arrived only weeks prior to the Nato intervention, is perhaps the most glaring discrepancy. Visa restrictions on individuals from the former Yugoslavia and a hostile press response had greeted Kosovars seeking asylum in Britain prior to the introduction of the Kosovan programme and the Nato campaign. In the event, the government's grudging pledge to provide temporary protection for up to 1,000 Kosovars a week ('UK may open door to 50,000', *Guardian* 6.5.99) was not to be fulfilled. With the cessation of the war in June voluntary repatriation of Kosovars assumed a more pressing political urgency.

3. A recent (May 1999) Asylum Aid publication - Still no reason at all - documents the deficiencies of the Home Office Refugee Section's country profiles relating to the background situation of refugees (Asylum Aid 1999: 47). These are available on <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/ind/cipu.htm>

Chapter six

1. A mapping exercise of the main Kurdish associations across London has been undertaken by Wahlbeck (1998). In the current research the principal associations only were chosen for examination. In each case the co-ordinators and key workers in the associations were interviewed using semi-structured interview techniques. A range of secondary data was also collated. The negligible presence of formal associations in the case of the Somalis necessitated a different approach. Where possible co-ordinators were interviewed, but in the case of non-Somali organisations with *Somali personnel*, a more typical occurrence in Tower Hamlets, key Somali workers were contacted. In addition, the responses of a wide range of individuals from both refugee groups have been drawn upon to illustrate particular stages of the argument.

2. Rex (1987) had explicitly stated that the study of associations was one means of investigating the question of identity in migrant communities, regarding this as part of a broader political sociology concerned with the degree to which immigrants are assimilated or withdraw into ethnic enclaves. As he argues (1987:17) 'it does make some sense then to see the immigrant associations and community structure as forming the intimate small scale group which has moral influence over the individual and which yet integrates him with a larger society'. Rex had initially suggested four main functions for community associations:

overcoming isolation; material help; defending interests and promoting culture. He later added *maintaining links to the homeland*, a central feature of contemporary transnational or diaspora communities and one which is increasingly significant in the field of refugee studies (McDowell 1996; Shami 1996; Eastmond 1998; Wahlbeck 1998).

3. A central theme in the literature on refugee associations is their role in strengthening and unifying ethnic or national identity, notably in the latter case through the promotion of nationalist discourse (Eastmond 1998). Both Vasquez (1989:130-1) and Eastmond (1993:40) in their analyses of Chilean exiles note the role of associations in preserving a sense of the past and providing a bridge with the homeland. The deployment of ritual, dance and symbol are vital elements in the selective reconstruction of tradition which the Chilean associations enacted. Stressing the temporal dimensions of exile, Vasquez notes the change in function in associations which occurs over time, with a broad shift from political activism to social events as the community integrates into the receiving society.

Appendices

Appendix One: Interview format

1. **Biographical detail** - region, age, occupation, educational level, marital status
2. **Migration details** - when left, how, facilitators, issues and problems
3. **Arrival and Reception** - who helped on arrival, networks, government reception, relation to services, refugee status, waiting time for decision on status
4. **Networks and Settlement** - the role of family and friends, contacts in the community; the relation with the host society and forms of contact, relation to other groups
5. **The Role of Community Associations** - belonging and identification, degrees of participation and activities engaged in
6. **The nature of Community** - perceptions of change, generational and gender divisions
7. **Ethnic and National Identity** - language, culture and religion as constituent elements of imagined identity
8. **International Networks** - formal links with home and diaspora - organisational and media
9. **Futures and aspirations** - future plans, return or settlement, the location of home, educational/employment aspirations
10. **Key areas on Community Associations:**
Date of foundation, aims of the organisation, history, membership, structure, relation to statutory services, funding activities, participation, annual reports.

Appendix Two: Timetable of research

Oct.		Literature review and training	
1993	pt		
1994		Fieldwork with Somalis	
1995			writing up
1996			
Suspension			
1997	ft	Fieldwork with Kurds	
1998			writing up
1999		Submission	

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