



BRILL

The UK's All Party Parliamentary Group on Kurdistan

An Exploration and Conceptualisation of its Roles

Zana Gul | ORCID: 0000-0002-4291-6370

Lecturer in International Politics, University of Stirling, Stirling,
Scotland, UK

Zana.gul@stir.ac.uk

Sean Kippin

Senior Lecturer in Public Policy, University of Stirling, Stirling, Scotland, UK

sean.kippin@stir.ac.uk

Received 29 November 2024 | Accepted 19 May 2025 |

Published online 25 September 2025

Abstract

This article explores the roles and activities of, and criticisms faced by, the APPG on Kurdistan. Resources include the UK Parliament's website, the Hansard UK Parliament's, The Parallel Parliament's, the APPG on Kurdistan's databases, and APPGs' social media materials. The article perceives the roles of the APPG on Kurdistan as external and internal and conceptualises the performance and behaviour of the APPG on Kurdistan by scrutinising these roles as a fora of politics, policy venue, pressure participants, and policy entrepreneurs. Findings include: the internal and external roles and the four conceptual roles show how the APPG on Kurdistan carries out its activities which are concerned with the UK foreign affairs; the APPG on Kurdistan has utilised the UK parliament's various avenues and channels such as tabling Early Day Motions, securing debates at Westminster Hall, launching written evidence and reports, organising events, and questioning the PM and cabinet members on issues concerning the KR-I; the APPG on Kurdistan is not unique in its nature and activities compared to APPG groups that promote ties with foreign entities and there are concerns about some APPG funding sources.

Keywords

All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) – UK Parliament – Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Introduction

The APPG on Kurdistan in the United Kingdom Parliament provides information on and argues for the importance of the UK and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq's (KR-I) bilateral relations. This article explores this group, and provides an account of its roles and activities, as well as an exploration of a controversy around its finances. Further, it situates these observations within a broader account of the issues and controversies that such 'territorial' or APPGs face, particularly those which work on foreign countries and which receive funds from outside the UK. It uses these insights to explore the roles of APPGs in the policy process, and in playing an understated role in the UK's foreign policy and diplomatic relations with the outside world.

The study's question is: How does the APPG on Kurdistan demonstrate the internal and external roles and the four conceptual roles, a fora of politics, policy venue, pressure participants, and policy entrepreneurs in its performance and activities? In order to address this question, the study includes the following: Original insights into the APPG on Kurdistan's activities and engagements in the UK parliament, Iraq and the KR-I drawn from the main UK Parliament's website, Hansard (the UK's official report and records of all parliamentary debates), Parallel Parliament database and the APPG on Kurdistan's website and database, which documents its activities, reports and meetings. For example, relevant online resources included eighteen webpages from the main UK Parliament's website, five from Hansard, five from Parallel Parliament and four published reports from the APPG on Kurdistan. Additionally, this manuscript uses the APPG on Kurdistan's reports to provide insights into its activities beyond the UK. While some reports have been written by the secretariat, other reports explicitly state that the officers agree with the report. These materials have been supplemented by other resources such as the APPGs and their officers' social media activities, including the APPG on Kurdistan's "X" account formerly known as Twitter as well as British, Iraqi and Kurdish platforms and outlets.

The APPG on Kurdistan includes Members of Parliament (MPs) and House of Lords Members (Peers) from different political parties, as well as independents. It has been active through engaging through parliamentary channels such as organising and tabling Early Day Motions (EDMs), questioning

the government's policy in relevant areas, securing debates at Westminster Hall, and publishing reports. The group has also carried out several fact-finding missions and trips to the KRI. Further, it has expanded its network far beyond Westminster, working with various stakeholders, individuals and organisations both in the UK and the KR-I. We explore the APPG on Kurdistan's activities with reference to the internal and external roles of APPGs, as three primary APPG roles and we deploy the concepts of a fora of politics, policy venue, "pressure participants", and policy entrepreneurship, to conceptualise the roles and explain the performance, and activities of the group.

Generally, studies on APPGs have been limited and existing contributions are, namely, Keaveney's (2020) article on the APPG on Refugees' Twitter communication approach, and Rickard and Ozieranski's (2021) critical study on the pharmaceutical industry's ties with the UK's All-Party Parliamentary Groups. Furthermore, Gordon-Nesbitt and Howarth's article (2020) studies a report of APPGs on Arts, Health and Wellbeing that launched in 2017, and finally, Thomas's (2015) study explains the rise of APPGs and provides crucial background as to their organisation and emergence not generally provided elsewhere. No studies focus on APPGs with a focus on countries or territories, and our article contributes to this area and parliamentary studies. As such, it represents an important contribution to the small literature on APPGs, substantially enhancing our understanding of their role through exploring an influential case. The article contributes to the larger literature on the role of the UK Parliament in influencing foreign policy (which is often assumed in public discourse to be the exclusive preserve of the executive). The study also reveals how APPGs on overseas territories can be related to Stelios Stavridis and Davor Janci's (2016) parliamentary diplomacy and the role of parliamentary groups in global affairs. Thus examining how these groups make transnational connections beyond their sovereign state. The article starts by explaining what APPGs are, their emergence, and their evolution.

APPGs in the UK Parliament

The Emergence and Evolution of APPGs'

APPGs are informal groupings of Parliamentarians who enjoy a common interest in a particular policy field, or support relations with a given country or territory (Thomas, 2015, Norton, 2008). They 'come together on the basis of shared interests or backgrounds, independent of party (Norton, 2008: 240), and enjoy no official status within Parliament. (much less any formal role in the legislative process or statutory authority) (Kelly and Yousaf, 2014). They are

made up of Members of the House of Commons (MPs) and Lords (Peers), and are generally considered to be creatures of 'backbench' MPs. They are 'flexible bodies of varying size, some are 'small and informal social clubs, others run campaigns, hold evidence sessions and publish reports' (Transparency International, 2020: 3). While there is no definitive account of their emergence, groups of an APPG-like nature can be identified as early as the 1930s (Thomas, 2015: 11) such as the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee founded in 1939, and less formal groupings of parliamentarians across parties are of a far older vintage. By the 1970s, they were formally recognised by the Public Information Office (upon that body's establishment in 1978).

Their number has gradually increased over time, from 148 in 1986, to 442 in 2006, to over 500 in 2022 (Kelly and Yousaf, 2014; UK Parliament, 2022). Today, they are an established feature of Parliamentary life, with most Members of Parliament involved in more than one APPG (the activities of which are publicised to all MPs via a weekly 'All-Party Whip'). They are also shown to be influential in policymaking—for instance, Kippin (2021) discusses the influence of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Building Societies, providing the impetus for policy change in the regulation of building societies and credit unions. Further, the Chairman of the APPG for Russia Chris Bryant has argued they can, 'in good hands, foster better relations with other countries, keep a weather eye on an authoritarian regime, or bring into sharp focus a policy issue that may otherwise have been forgotten' (Bryant, 2022).

APPG Rules and Activities

The rules that govern APPGs have evolved over the period of their existence, with changes often following reviews and enquiries by relevant parliamentary authorities, such as the Committee on Standards and Privileges (and its two successor bodies), the office of the Leader of the House of Commons (and its Lords counterpart) and the Commons Administration Committee. The most recent round of changes saw APPGs subject to an updated set of rules, most of which relate to their registration, membership, activities, and transparency (UK Parliament, 2017). The rules include requirements on openness of membership across parties, the registration of benefits and benefits in kind, keeping registries updated, meeting frequency, and directions for how rule breeches should be dealt with and reported (UK Parliament, 2017).

One such 'tightening' of rules occurred in 2012 following the report of a joint working group by both Houses of Parliament (Thomas, 2015). The new rules included the elimination of the 'associate parliamentary group' category (groups which included non parliamentarians as members), a new requirement

that APPG reports disclose outside funding, and greater financial transparency. (Thomas, 2015: 13). APPGs demonstrate a wide variety in activity levels, with some laying near dormant, and others considerably more active, influential, and lively (Thomas, 2015). They may hold meetings and evidence sessions in a similar manner to the (official) Committees of the two houses, produce reports, make policy recommendations on areas of their interest, and facilitate links between sectoral (or country) stakeholders, APPG member MPs, and others. They act as a semi-formal means of transmitting evidence into the policymaking system, heightening the salience of issues or bringing them to the attention of MPs (who have the opportunity to pursue related activities through more formal avenues) For instance, the All Party Parliamentary Group on Smoking and Health published a report in June 2021 proposing ideas for the UK Government's Tobacco Control Plan (Ash, 2022) following engagement with sectoral stakeholders and members of the Tobacco Control 'policy community'. This demonstrates the important role played by APPG secretariat (of which more below).

Keaveny (2020, 499–500) categorised APPGs into those that focus on relations with countries, which make up around a fifth of the APPGs, and those that are subject-based and concerned with policy issues from different industries to music. These groups cover a diverse array of (i) topics, and (ii) geographic countries and regions. Regarding the former, there are APPGs constituted around broad and substantive policy topics such as Health, Education, and Pensions; those which focus on pastimes such as Polo, Photography, and Wrestling (which may be more analogous to a social club than a parliamentary body) and some which are borderline esoteric in their degree of specialisation, such as Tenanted Pubs, Metal Crime, and, curiously, 'Horse' (Thomas, 2015). Subject groups provide opportunities for MPs and Lords to discuss, research, advocate, and generally consider areas of shared interest, and to participate in related activities. Some may emerge temporarily, perhaps in anticipation of or response to a particular event (such as the London 2012 Olympics, or related to the COVID-19 pandemic). They also provide a context in which MPs organise around niche policy areas or sub-sectors, which may be concerned within a broader area like 'health' in formal governmental and parliamentary terms, but which receive little direct attention (such as specific types of cancer) from ministers or in the House of Commons. MPs may be incentivised to join for a variety of reasons, for example because an industry grouping is economically significant in their constituency, for ideological or other political reasons, or because they have an affinity or sympathy with a particular cause, country, or region (for example, many APPG for Pakistan members claim South Asian heritage).

At the time of writing, of 744 APPGs, around 132 are dedicated to foreign countries and areas (UK Parliament, 2023). There is an APPG for most recognised countries in the world, many of which are very active. For instance, the APPG for Ukraine has taken a high profile since the invasion of that country by Russia in February 2022, including organising aid delivery missions and taking a firm public stance (Sobel, 2023). A number of APPGs concern themselves with sub-national regions of nations engaged in a liberation or independence struggle and represent arenas for the furtherance of these goals, often in partnership with established outside organisations. For instance, the APPG for Palestine receives support from the Council for Arab-British Understanding (Parallel Parliament, 2023a). Such groups demonstrate that APPGs can play an unofficial role in national foreign policy, with the Palestine APPG controversially meeting with Palestinian officials who were members of Hamas in 2007 and seeking to influence international policy towards the territory (Macintyre, 2007). Other APPGs of this type, such as on Western Sahara, Tibet, and Catalonia maintain a generally sympathetic approach towards these territories (and at times their governments), providing a wider audience for their goals and objectives (including where these objectives may deviate from official UK foreign policy). Other regional APPGs may not be the subject of any particular controversy or contestation—such as the APPG for Norfolk Island (a tiny island 1000 km west of Australia), and may instead be a forum for promoting the territory's interests to a sympathetic ally country. Some of the APPGs focus on unrecognised or *de facto* states, liberation and independence movements highlight the prominence of those non-sovereign entities and self-determination movements in UK politics and foreign policy. Meanwhile, these APPGs exhibit the transnational debate and advocacy efforts by the APPGs for those non-sovereign entities that pursue recognition or assistance of aid (Voller, 2014, 355).

Secretariats, Scandals, and Controversies

Secretariats provide logistical support, mainly in the form of practicalities such as booking meeting rooms, producing reports, identifying topics for activity, and facilitating network building. They tend to be drawn from organisations which share an interest in the issues under consideration. For example;

- The APPG for Smoking and Health (mentioned above) has a secretariat provided by the anti-smoking group, Ash (2023), and the APPG on Refugees by a member of staff from a public affairs specialist employed by the Refugee Council (who spends approximately 20% of their time on APPG matters) (Keaveny, 2020).

– The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Africa has over 200 members, and its secretariat is provided by the Royal African Society, who claim credit for helping to ‘establish’ the APPG back in 2003 (Royal African Society, 2023). These secretariats generally provide funding in-kind, often a member of staff’s time (a portion of which will be set aside to deal with APPG business) and help with promotion and network building. They may also receive support in the form of use of facilities such as meeting rooms for conferences or events. One large benefit in kind is provided by the House of Commons itself, which allows MPs to book meeting rooms at no expense, provided it is for official use—a category which APPG activities fall under.

The controversies surrounding some APPGs raise questions about the nature of their roles and functions, which require more scrutiny. By their nature, APPGs provide a potential avenue for influence and money in politics, and thus can be considered as ‘corruption risks’ (Transparency International, 2020) which must walk an ‘ethical tightrope’ in their dealings with outside groups (Keaveny, 2020). This is owed to many factors, but mostly relates to the close linkages they generate between sectional interests of various kinds and the proximity they gain through APPGs to legislators. Rickard and Ozieranski (2021) for instance identify a ‘hidden web of policy influence’ of the pharmaceutical industry, finding that 16 of the 146 health related APPGs were subject to conflicts of interests arising from the donations and support in kind they had received from private sector pharmaceutical companies. The SNP Member of Parliament Alison Thewliss described being approached by a public affairs company acting on behalf of the drinks industry (Geoghegan, 2022) to set up an APPG—presumably in the hope of furthering their influence in Parliament. The public affairs company in question, Connect, is run by the former Labour MP Andy Sawford, suggesting that APPGs are connected to the “revolving door” between the private sector and politics (Draca, 2014; Wilks-Heeg et al, 2012). A similarly named organisation, Policy Connect (an organisation which provides the secretariat to a number of APPGs) was required to register as a lobbyist by the Office of the Register of Consultant Lobbyists (Keaveny, 2020).

Such issues led the then Chair of the House of Commons Committee on Political and Constitutional Reform Graham Allen to describe APPGs as a scandal ‘waiting to happen’ (quoted in Gallagher, 2014). Indeed, arguably it did happen, with investigative journalists from the Guardian and Open Democracy revealing the extent to which APPGs enable lobbying activities to take place. Their investigation found extensive private sector funding of the groups, such as by private health interests (the Obesity APPG), arms manufacturing (the Bosnia APPG), and fossil fuels (the Net Zero APPG). Around 30.7 million pounds has been funnelled into various APPGs since 2017 by multiple companies and

lobbyists (Geoghegan, 2022; BBC, 2022). Arguably, this is likely to be the tip of the iceberg, as only a very small number of APPGs' direct or indirect financial connections to foreign governments have been exposed (BBC 2021; Sky News 2022; Register of All-Parliamentary Groups, 2021).

Allegations of foreign funding, too, have been increasing over the last decade. An APPG has received funding indirectly via a Chinese agent linked to the Chinese Communist Party for setting up the Chinese in Britain APPG (Geoghegan, 2022; Bartlett, 2022) and the UK's domestic intelligence agency MI5 has warned about the vulnerability of the system to foreign manipulation. The Chinese in Britain APPG has also been accused of receiving donations from China via financial bodies and organisations such as the China Britain Business Council and the City of London Corporation (Webber, 2023). There have been claims of funding from Qatar, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Kuwait to specific APPG groups and/or to cover MPs' trips for "fact finding missions" to the region and promoting particular countries' concerns (Uddin, 2023; Stone, 2017). The APPG on Kurdistan has faced similar allegations of receiving funding and covering expenses for several MPs' visits to the KR-I. The APPG on Kurdistan, through its secretariat led by the secretary Gary Kent, has been paid by several entities including Kar Group, an oil and construction company associated with the KR-I. Kent works for Mary Glendon, the Labour MP and Opposition Whip (BBC 2021; Sky News 2022; UK Parliament, 2021). Since there have been reports on the APPG on Kurdistan's funds, Kent has been working unpaid and on a voluntary basis (APPG Kurdistan, 2022). See Table 1, which shows examples of the APPG on Kurdistan's sources of funding and spending.

Some lawmakers, such as Lord Pickles and Sir Chris Bryant, expressed their concerns about the external funding of a number of the APPGs that work on foreign entities and countries. The House of Commons Standards Committee, which oversees matters related to the conduct of members, has examined such controversies, and suggested reforming the APPG system, such as by banning the secretariats from receiving funding from foreign governments (Rayner, 2023; BBC, 2023; UK Parliament—Committees, 2023). The Standards Committee stated that there are concerns firms and external powers could utilise APPGs to purchase political influence. The Committee was, however, alive to the potential for negative secondary consequences that may result from a crackdown on country APPGs, and in particular avoiding the loss of organisations which have often facilitated better relationships with countries, make a platform for sharing ideas and insights and offer "access to the political system for many organisations and individuals who might otherwise be excluded" (BBC, 2023).

TABLE 1 On the APPG on Kurdistan funds

<i>Funder</i>	<i>Date and Amount</i>
Gulf Keystone Petroleum (an International oil company that operates in the KR-I)	1 Jan 2015 £13,501 Paid the Secretariat
Kurdistan Regional Government	11 Nov 2015, £9,001 This is to cover some of the APPG's officers' visit to the KR-I.
Kar Group (a company based in the KR-I)	3 Nov 2016, £21,001 Paid the Secretariat
Sardar Group of Companies	20 Jun 2019, £10,501 This is to cover the APPG's officers visit to the KR-I.

SOURCE: (PARALLEL PARLIAMENT, 2024D)

The Framework of Policy Influence and APPGs Roles

APPGs are both bodies to be influenced, and actors which themselves seek to influence. We may conceive of them as having a number of internal and external roles. Internally, they exist as fora for politics, offering spaces for relevant policy communities to organise, build, share ideas, and (where there is disagreement) play these out with influential elected MPs. For example, there is not necessarily a 'default' position of an APPG on any given issue, whatever the topic, and this must be established by relatively traditional means of debate, deliberation, and at times, democracy. They may be assisted or have this perspective shaped by outside organisations (most often a secretariat) who may use the APPG as a vehicle for their own interests (of which more below). A second internal role is that of APPGs as policy venues, which can be targeted by organisations seeking to influence policy (Jones and Baumgartner, 2005; Kaunert and Leonard, 2012). Organisations may use the opportunities for engagement provided by APPG activities to pursue their own objectives, such as promoting evidence to an influential audience or facilitating strategic coordination. In other words, APPGs are a venue in which politics is conducted internally.

Secondly and more significantly, APPGs play an important external role, in the sense that many seek to exert pressure and to lobby for particular causes and interests, either alone or in partnership with outside interests. Therefore, they can be categorised as 'pressure participants' (Jordan et al, 2004) which

seek to shape or influence public policy, or achieve policy change, in line with the causes, interests, or organisations they represent. Jordan *et al* (2014) use pressure participant as a generic term to describe organisations active in the policymaking system, which subdivides into pressure groups, and policy participants, the former of which are organised groups with members seeking to influence public policy, and the latter who play a less defined role in either shaping or delivering policy. A second way of characterising this external role is through a focus on policy entrepreneurship.

Policy entrepreneurs are individuals or organisations which seek to influence policymaking through engaging in an investment of time and resources in anticipation of some future potential policy change (Mintrom, 2019; Kingdon, 1995). They are skilled at pursuing, justifying, and enabling policy change, usually—though not exclusively—working to influence government from the outside. Cairney (2018) describes successful policy entrepreneurs as being able to frame a problem, have a solution ready, and exploit the motive and opportunity of policymakers to select it, while Mintrom (2019) identifies a number of attributes and skills (such as credibility and strategic thinking), and the ability to pursue relevant strategies (such as network building). APPGs are in an opportune position to engage in these roles, having the resources to identify and couple policy problems and solutions, and enjoying an informal agenda setting role within the UK's political and policymaking systems. While we might consider some APPGs to be policy entrepreneurs, a more relevant understanding may be that they provide a platform for entrepreneurship, and a resource which can be drawn upon by individual policy entrepreneurs (who may not limit themselves to involvement with an APPG in pursuing their objectives) (Arnold, 2020).

These internal and external roles are in evidence with the case of the APPG on Kurdistan. It has provided a forum for the discussion of Kurdistan and its interests and pertinent issues related to its betterment; secondly, it has itself used this platform to directly engage with UK foreign policymakers. Thirdly, it has engaged in entrepreneurial activities itself, while providing an avenue through which Gary Kent (and perhaps other policy entrepreneurs) may seek to pursue their agendas. Importantly, these roles overlap significantly (and may in practice be difficult to disentangle). For instance, policy entrepreneurs can be (and arguably usually are) pressure participants, who engage with 'advocacy coalitions' (Arnold, 2023) to pursue policy change. Further, policy entrepreneurs or external pressure participants may pursue their goals through 'shopping' for a policy venue and settling on an APPG as a stepping stone to the pursuit of their goals. It is important, however, not to overstate APPG influence despite the many potential avenues for policy actors to pursue:

they enjoy no formal power or real status within the policymaking process, and it is difficult to imagine an APPG ever being a decisive factor in big-ticket policy change. Nonetheless, they undoubtedly do play an ongoing day-to-day role in the unseen goings on within the 'garbage can' of policymaking (Kingdon, 1995) and the UK's complex policymaking system. We now turn to a more in depth exploration of the APPG on Kurdistan, the primary focus of this article, in which these internal and external roles are in evidence (and indeed can be shown to overlap considerably). See table 2 on the roles of APPGs.

The Formation and Inception of the APPG on Kurdistan

First, a point of clarification: the APPG on Kurdistan (which focuses on the KR-1) should not be confused with the Kurdistan in Turkey and Syria APPG which lobbies for the Kurdish people in the two countries. The below discussion refers only to the former. The APPG on Kurdistan was created in November 2007 by a number of British politicians and MPs from different political parties. Since its inception, the group has been driven by its secretary Gary Kent, and has included members from all the main political parties, as well as independents. In 2008, the APPG on Kurdistan began to send delegations to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I) (Rudaw, 2014), and proactively lobbied to make a case for the UK's engagement with the KR-I diplomatically, economically and culturally. Since 2008, the main goal of the group has been the promotion of the mutual interests of the UK and the KRI. The APPG on Kurdistan has had several chairs, co-chairs and vice-chairs and the key figures include Nadim Zahawi of Kurdish origin, Alicia Kearns, Rt Hon Robert Halfon from the Conservative Party and Meg Munn from the Labour Party. Currently, the chair is Jack Lopresti (Conservative) and co-chairs include Wayne David (Labour) and Lord Austin of Dudley (formerly of the Labour Party, but latterly an Independent).

The number of the APPG on Kurdistan's officers and members has fluctuated. The APPG's membership includes chairs, vice chairs, officers, members and observers. The latter do not have to be active MPs in the parliament. In 2014, it had 7 officers and 13 members; in 2015, it had 16 officers; in 2017, it had 22 officers, namely a chair and 21 vice chairs. In 2020, it had 16 officers, a chair, a co-chair, a secretary, a treasurer and 12 vice chairs. In 2022, it had 11 officers, one chair and 10 vice chairs; and from May to July 2024, it had 4 officers, 16 members and 4 observers, which including Gary Kent, the secretariat (Parliament UK-All Party Parliamentary Groups, 2012, 2015, 2017,2016, 2020, 2024; Parliament UK-All Party Parliamentary Groups, 2024; UK Parliament, 2023). The group's meetings are known as "AGM Minutes", and the meeting notes have been recorded on

TABLE 2 The roles of APPGs

Role and definition	Example
<p><u>Internal</u> <i>A forum for politics</i> where internal deliberation takes place between like-minded politicians, and where control is sought by policy actors over the external agenda of the APPG <i>A policy venue</i> which outside organisations seek influence</p>	<p>The APPG on Kurdistan organises and hosts meetings with its members, at times inviting non-members. These activities match with a fora of politics role as it develops internal deliberation and the agenda develops. The APPG on Kurdistan inquiry in 2016 was planned to carry out a fact finding mission and to address the challenges between Baghdad and Erbil; The APPG on Kurdistan publishes reports such as “Two steps forward, one step back in Kurdistan: Robust Pragmatism and Internal Reform”. (APPG on Kurdistan, 2016; Lopresti, 2017). The last two activities play a policy venue role which seeks to promote evidence and influence.</p>
<p><u>External</u> <i>A pressure participant</i> organisation which lobbies from within the system for policy change A group form of a ‘<i>policy entrepreneur</i>’ which engages in certain activities such as coalition building, problem definition, and venue shopping to achieve policy change <i>A platform for policy entrepreneurship</i> through which individual actors can engage in entrepreneurial activities</p>	<p>Tabling EDMs and securing debates at Westminster Hall and asking cabinet members about the UK’s policy towards the KRI. Asking the PM on issues relevant to the KRI. These activities and examples show the APPG on Kurdistan as pressure participants within the UK parliamentary system and the activities try to change policies. In 2010, the APPG on Kurdistan convinced the UK labour government to send an official trade mission to the KR-I. The APPG on Kurdistan asked the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government to keep the consulate in Erbil (APPG on Kurdistan Report, 2013). These developments led to increasing trade and the number of British companies in the KR-I. These examples show that the APPG on Kurdistan tries to shape policies relevant to the KR-I. The APPG on Kurdistan and its secretariat built a network between various British and Kurdish key figures and policymakers. These networks facilitate different individuals’ engagement in its activities. This insight shows that the APPG on Kurdistan is a platform where policy entrepreneurs can engage in different activities.</p>

the APPG on Kurdistan's website, which include participants' names, apologies, issues discussed, future plans, expenditure, guest speakers and occasionally elections of chairs. The APPG meetings are held around twice a year. According to the AGM Minutes, the internal process of decision-making, including the selection of chairs, appears to be a democratic process and goes through internal elections and consensus. Other key internal decisions and financial statements are taken by agreement between the key officers of the group and members (APPG on Kurdistan, 2022).

Before the inception of the APPG on Kurdistan, Gary Kent and several Labour politicians and MPs created the intra-party group Labour Friends of Iraq (LFIQ) in 2004. The LFIQ discussed different perspectives on the US-led invasion which was dominating proceedings at the time, and aimed to unite and support trade union movements, women's groups and the new democratic process in Iraq (within a Labour Party fraught with divisions over the efficacy of the invasion at this point). Some of those members assisted in writing the Labour Party's official position on Iraq in 2004. Activities with the LFIQ encouraged Kent to go to the KR-I in 2006 to meet union leaders from across Iraq. These visits and meetings, such as with Kemal Shaker, the leader of the Kurdistan Communist Party in 2006, paved the way for commercial and cultural connections (E-international relations, 2018).

In addition to the APPG on Kurdistan, the APPG on Iraq and the APPG on Yazidis (a minority in Iraq) are APPGs where some of their objectives intersect with each other. The APPG on Iraq is a group that focuses on promoting Iraq and the UK's ties as a whole, including economic, cultural and political ties (Parallel Parliament, 2024b). Currently, the APPG on Iraq has four officers. The APPG on Iraq's activities included, for example, a visit by its officers to Iraq and the Iraqi Parliament which was coordinated with Iraq's federal government and the UK Embassy in Iraq. The APPG on Iraq's officers met the Iraqi parliament's speaker, ministers and parliamentary communities such as the UK-Iraq Friendship Parliamentary Committee, the Civil Society Committee, and the Human Rights Committee. They discussed various issues, from economic issues, combating terrorism, and human rights violations to relations between Iraq and the KRG (British Group Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2018). The APPG on Iraq organised events such as an event in the UK in December 2022, which included Iraqi Ambassador Jaffar al-Sadr and the APPG on Iraq's officers to promote bilateral relations in different sectors. Another event was a reception at the House of Commons in April 2024, which included the Iraqi agriculture minister (Iraqi Embassy in the UK, 2022). The APPG on Yazidis, which was created in 2022 and has 4 officers, aims to raise awareness of the Daesh genocide against the Yazidis and seeks justice for the victims and survivors (Parallel Parliament, 2024c).

The APPG on Iraq and the APPG on Yazidis have engaged in relevant activities involving parliamentarians and policy makers in the UK and beyond; they have fewer activities and are less active in terms of their officers' engagement and activities compared to the APPG on Kurdistan.

The APPG on Kurdistan's Activities, Goals and Lobbying Efforts:

According to the UK Parliament's website (2024) "To lobby is to make the case for a particular policy, cause or group directly to a government minister or a member of either House with the aim of influencing their decisions" (Parliament UK, 2024). The Kurdistan APPG has been working and lobbying to achieve certain goals. Its overriding objective is 'to promote friendship and understanding between the peoples and representatives of the Kurdistan Region in Iraq and the UK' (Parliament UK, 2022). According to its publications and reports, the group's aims include:

- Robust diplomatic engagement with the KR-I,
 - Encouraging investment, business and trade between the UK and the KR-I,
 - Easing visa applications for Kurdish businesses and students, cultural exchange,
 - Supporting Kurdish rights in Iraq, showing the region as a beacon of religious tolerance and secularism,
 - Fact-checking and fact-finding efforts that would inform parliament and policy makers,
 - Engaging with various educational and humanitarian entities in the KR-I, and:
 - Showing the KRG as a strategic and security ally of the UK against terrorism.
- These core goals are developed through the internal role as they have been shaped by the deliberation of the APPG on Kurdistan's members and its key supporters which exemplify the internal APPG role described above as a forum for politics.

A prominent example of the APPG on Kurdistan's achievements is gaining the UK parliament's recognition of the Kurdish genocide on the 23rd of February 2013 in a parliamentary vote. A key contributing factor in obtaining the recognition was the Kurdish diaspora's active lobbying efforts and coordination with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) offices and representations in Europe and the UK. The genocide known as the Anfal campaign was architected and executed by Saddam's regime in the second half of the 1980s. The ethnic cleansing campaigns resulted in 150–180,000 civilian deaths, and 180,000 declared missing (Basar and Toivanen, 2017, p.405).

The APPG's journey to gain recognition for the genocide included Nadhim Zahawi's petition in 2012, which received 27,800 signatures from British citizens and residents. The petition stated that the UK is a 'promoter of international values': "We urge the Government to recognise formally the Genocide against the people of Iraqi Kurdistan and to encourage the EU and UN to do likewise. It would also enable Britain, the home of democracy and freedom, to send out a message of support for international conventions and human rights." (Petitions UK Parliament, 2013). The APPG on Kurdistan also secured the relevant debate at the House of Commons, which won the formal support of the recognition of the genocide (Hansard, 2013). Obtaining this parliamentary recognition exemplifies the APPG's 'pressure participant' and policy entrepreneur roles, through identifying and manufacturing opportunities for substantive policy change. However, to date, the government has not recognized this decision, and it has remained in the House of Commons with the government taking the position that it is not its role to adjudicate on the 'complex legal question' of whether a genocide took place.

The APPG on Kurdistan's efforts have strategically promoted and projected its aims in the UK Parliament to mobilise support among MPs. On the 28th of February 2013, members of the APPG on Kurdistan displayed their work in a debate at the British Parliament. Stephan Metcalfe, a conservative MP, said, "As an all-party group and as a country, we are working to develop our relationship with the region, to maintain the already strong ties we have in many areas and to nurture underdeveloped ties in others." Meg Munn, then the co-chair, said, "The all-party group is very active and has an excellent website with a range of views and news. Members can look at the issues relating to Kurdistan" (Hansard, 2013). The APPG on Kurdistan also seeks close economic and commercial ties between the UK and the KR-I. In the Commons Chamber on the 14th of January 2021, Robert Halfon, said "recent report from the all-party group on the Kurdistan Region in Iraq ... identifies opportunities for British bodies in energy, solar power, film production, higher education and agriculture, including quality pomegranates from Halabja, and it states that the Government should organise a second official trade mission once covid allows." (Commons Chamber—Hansard, 2021). These statements show the APPG on Kurdistan as an external role and policy entrepreneur as they lay out some of their activities and goals at the House of Commons and try to build a coalition of MPs.

A further relevant activity relates to facilitating visits. From 2008 to 2014, the APPG sent ten delegations to cities, towns and villages across the KR-I, including thirteen parliamentarians (some more than once). Since then, the group has taken more than fifty MPs to the KR-I (Boycutt-Owen, 2022) and

the British MPs' visits continue to date. Through the APPG on Kurdistan's networks, parliamentary sessions and published reports, this group provides policy recommendations to the UK government, its officials and members of the House of Commons and House of Lords. An APPG on Kurdistan report could follow a fact-finding trip to the KR-I. For example, a report presents the fact-finding mission's outcomes and recommendations. A report includes the APPG on Kurdistan's meetings with officials, politicians, academics, activists, diplomats, civil societies and individuals in the KR-I. The reports also show images of places the APPG on Kurdistan members visited in the KR-I. Reports, such as those published in 2011 and 2018, advocate for the KR-I, including its economic and tourism sectors, and the region's religious pluralism. The reports also critically review specific issues the KR-I faces. For instance, the 2011 report identifies corruption, women's rights and the limitations and challenges independent media and journalists are facing and advocates for more media freedom and information rights (APPG on Kurdistan Report-Update, 2011). Therefore, this report tries to objectively analyse the region's development and provides first-hand information and analysis. Other reports provide political analysis, for example highlighting the schism and rivalry between the KR-I's two ruling parties (the Kurdistan Democratic Party—KDP, and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan—PUK) that hinders the progress of the KR-I. The APPG on Kurdistan works closely with the KRG highest representation in the UK and some of the APPG on Kurdistan's reports are published by the KRG representation in the UK such as the July 2011 report. The APPG also met key decision-makers, MPs, opposition figures, civil society groups, journalists, and key business figures as part of their fact finding missions in KR-I. They visited sites in the KR-I and Iraq, such as the Kurdistan Parliament, local governorate buildings, universities, Internal Displaced Camps, polling stations, and anti-Daesh operation rooms and defences.

These activities illustrate the roles of APPGs in the UK policy process. Firstly, the authorship of these reports is a process that is driven by the APPG on Kurdistan's members' internal deliberation, establishing their shared position on such issues—in illustration of the APPG role as a forum for politics. The group is also a policy venue for research as the KR-I's actors utilise the opportunities the fact-finding missions offer (many reports are written as part of the fact-finding missions) to shape the ideas and perceptions and influence the APPG on Kurdistan. Relatedly, the APPG on Kurdistan's secretariat plays a policy entrepreneurship role, it has been active in organising and facilitating the operation of the APPG. This secretariat provides logistical support and synchronises between the key bodies and figures relevant to the APPG on Kurdistan's aims and the Iraqi Kurds. Gary Kent who leads the APPG on Kurdistan's

secretariat promotes the Iraqi Kurdish cause in the British and Kurdish media and networks with British and Kurdish stakeholders and politicians. Beyond Westminster the APPG on Kurdistan and its members actively engage with actors with similar goals. In the UK, the APPG on Kurdistan contributed to events, debates and receptions that included the KRG's representatives and officials, the Center for Kurdish Progress, the Sheikh Mahmoud Foundation and the Conservative Middle East Council. These activities are considered as an internal role as they are enriching the deliberation between the APPG on Kurdistan's members and allow interactions between their members and external actors which ultimately shape the external agenda.

Early Day Motions

As discussed above, the APPG on Kurdistan can be characterised as a “pressure participant” in the policy process which seeks to influence policy from within the political system in order to achieve their key objectives of raising the profile of and lobbying for the KRG and the KR-I. Members of the APPG have been active in tabling Early Day Motions (EDMs), trying to secure debates and questioning cabinet members at Westminster Hall and the PM at the House of Commons on the UK's policy towards the KR-I. EDMs are motions signed by MPs and put forward and submitted for a debate in the UK parliament. Some EDMs attract public and media interest. If an EDM is debated which is very rare, it provides a formal, non-binding expression of opinion and publicises a position regarding an issue (UK Parliament, 2023; Kellerman, 2013, 263). EDMs “are best thought of as expressive ... methods for MPs to signal their position to others” (Kellerman, 2013, p. 266). EDMs are a parliamentary instrument to cultivate attention and shape outcomes, and despite tabling a motion, they are usually not debated and put to a vote (Kellerman, 2013, 263).

Tabling various EDMs by MPs illustrates the importance of the KR-I in policy circles and helps to draw attention to the KR-I. Members of the APPG on Kurdistan tabled several EDMs in support of the KRG and for key issues concerning the KR-I. These EDMs included MPs inside and outside the APPG on Kurdistan. In 2017, an EDM tabled in July 2017 was on the independence referendum in support of the self-determination of the KR-I (UK Parliament, 2017). Please, see the selected tabled EDMs that involve MPs, chairs and vice chairs of the APPG on Kurdistan.

There have been some EDMs from various political parties tabled by MPs that criticised the KRG and the Kurdish ruling parties. A 2011 EDM was on the violations of press freedom in the KR-I and a killing of a journalist and asked the UK government to urge the KRG to establish an independent commission to investigate the violations (UK Parliament, 2011). Before establishing the

APPG on Kurdistan, several MPs tabled EDMs supporting the Iraqi Kurds. In 1992, an EDM was tabled on the Saddam regime's blockade of several areas in the KR-I that caused food and fuel shortages which led to illness and death (UK Parliament, 1992).

While the KRG has official and pragmatic relationships with regional and neighbouring powers (Turkey and Iran) the two countries have been militarily targeting the Iranian Kurds' and Turkish Kurds' political armed groups in the KR-I. The KR-I's secluded mountain areas, such as the Qandil Mountains, have provided refuge for the operatives of Kurdish armed groups such as the Kurdistan Workers' Party (known as PKK) and its Iranian Kurdish offshoot, The Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK). The Turkish and Iranian air bombardment of the KR-I's areas have killed civilians and destroyed properties (Kent, 2019; Human Rights Watch, 2018 and 2020). The APPG on Kurdistan supports the KRG in the face of the region's geopolitical challenges. For instance, due to an attack in the KR-I in 2018 by Iranian missiles targeting an Iranian Kurdish political camp in Koya, the APPG on Kurdistan asked the British government to make a representation to the Iranian government, and the vice-chair, Labour MP Mary Glendon tabled an Early Day Motion in September 2018 which stated: "That this House strongly condemns the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corp's bombardment of an Iranian Kurdish refugee and political camp in Koya, which is within the borders of the officially recognised Kurdistan Region in Iraq and 200km from Iran" (Rudaw, 2018; Early Day Motions 2018). While debates have not been secured, these EDMs led to raising awareness and increasing publicity about the issues that concern the APPG on Kurdistan. See Table 3 on examples of APPG on Kurdistan's EDMs.

Debates at Westminster Hall

Debates have been secured by members of the APPG on Kurdistan at Westminster Hall. Westminster Hall offers MPs a chance to raise an issue and get a response from a minister, and any MP can take part in a debate (though a vote cannot be taken). The debates, which are held on Wednesday or Tuesday, take place when MPs apply for a debate that is then approved by a ballot organised by the Speaker's Office (UK Parliament, 2023). Debates were secured, for instance, in January 2014, July 2017, and March 2019 on the UK and the KR-I's bilateral relations at Westminster Hall. These debates included insights and statements from MPs, including the members of the APPG on Kurdistan. The 2017 and 2019 debates started with statements from Jack Lopresti (currently the chair of the APPG on Kurdistan) that focused on the Iraqi Kurds' role, namely the *Peshmerga*, in contributing to the defeat of Daesh and the implications of the KR-I's non-binding referendum and how the UK

TABLE 3 On the APPG on Kurdistan's EDMs

<i>EDM's number and date</i>	<i>Themes</i>
1677: Tabled by the Chair Robert Halfon on 22 March 2021	30th anniversary of Sir John Major's no-fly zone over the KR-I.
1061: Tabled by the Chair Robert Halfon on 23 October 2020	The APPG on the Kurdistan Region in Iraq on a virtual delegation to meet Kurdistanis leaders;
848: Tabled by Chair Robert Halfon on 07 September 2020	Recognition for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq
94: Tabled by the Chair Robert Halfon on 22 January 2020	Bilateral relations with the Kurdistan region in Iraq
2481: Tabled by a vice chair, Mary Glindon on 12 June 2019	New president of the KR-I
8: Tabled by a vice chair, Mary Glindon on 14 October 2019	Effect of Turkish military action on the KR-I

SOURCE: (UK PARLIAMENT, 2017, 2020A, 2020B, 2020C)

could support negotiations between the federal government of Iraq and the KRG. Minister for the Middle East Alistair Burt and Minister for Africa Harriett Baldwin responded to the questions for the 2017 and 2019 debates, respectively. Both ministers acknowledged the role of the Iraqi people and Iraqi Kurds (Peshmerga), in vanquishing Daesh and ministers encouraged negotiations between Baghdad and Erbil to overcome their differences regarding the referendum and to adhere to the Iraqi constitution and the Iraqi federal court, which ruled the referendum was unconstitutional (Hansard, 2014, 2017, 2019). The APPG on Kurdistan members' engagement in the Westminster Hall debates is an external role and compatible with the pressure participants' attributes as they are elevating a key issue related to the KRG and pressing the UK government to take a position or action.

The APPG on Kurdistan and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq's non-binding Independence Referendum on the 25th of September 2017

The APPG on Kurdistan's reports and statements show that the group supports the KR-I's right to self-determination (APPG on Kurdistan Report, 2018). This

was confirmed on the 14th of July 2017, two months before the KR-I's non-binding independence referendum at a Westminster Hall debate on the KR-I which was secured by Jack Lopresti, then the chair of the APPG on Kurdistan. Lopresti criticised the federal government of Iraq by arguing that the latter lacks an appetite for federalism or minority rights, and it didn't deliver on its commitments to the KR-I, particularly regarding the budget (UK Parliament, 2017). Lopresti acknowledged that the KRG would not declare independence unilaterally, but that he supported September's independence referendum. Further, Lopresti urged the UK's and West's involvement in the referendum process, namely sending observers and supporting the KR-I's rights (Hansard, 2017).

Six members of the APPG on Kurdistan observed several referendum poll stations in September 2017 in Erbil, Slemani, and Kirkuk (Rudaw, 2017a). The referendum went ahead in spite of the opposition of the Federal Government of Iraq. In retaliation, it imposed draconian punitive measures and sanctions on the KR-I, such as banning direct flights to Kurdistan, asserting control over border crossings and airports, and halting foreign currency transfers to the KR-I and four Kurdish banks. Moreover, the federal government armed forces with the Popular Mobilization Forces (an umbrella for Shia militias) orchestrated a military campaign that took full control of the disputed areas such as Kirkuk and Khanaqin in Diyala province, resulting in the death of 100 peshmerga in Kirkuk. The then Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi described the referendum as unconstitutional, a position endorsed formally by the Iraqi Federal Supreme Court (a body which has the final word on such matters). In the meantime, the UK government rejected the referendum and stated "The UK does not support this referendum and continues to back the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq. We believe that any referendum should be agreed with the Government of Iraq." (GOV UK—Press Release, 2017; GOV UK, 2023).

After the referendum: The APPG on Kurdistan criticised Baghdad's response to the KR-I's referendum. In May 2018, an APPG on Kurdistan delegation (led by Lopresti) visited Baghdad for the first time to mitigate the tensions between the KRG and Baghdad (Sulvaivany, 2018). At Westminster Hall, Lopresti said, "I supported the referendum, whereas the all-party parliamentary group for the Kurdistan Region in Iraq, which I chair, broadly took a neutral position but supported the Iraqi Kurds' right to self-determination. We observed it in Erbil, Kirkuk and Slemani on 25 September 2017. It was clearly a joyous and colourful day, and the result was also clear: a 93% vote for independence on a 72% turnout." (Hansard, 2019). Lopresti also said, "None of the all-party group's requests are about trying to encourage statehood. That is and has to be

a matter for the Kurds.” (Hansard, 2019). While the APPG on Kurdistan respects Iraq’s integrity, it recognises the Kurdish aspiration for more devolution of power. Despite the high turnout, there was a disparity between the KDP and the PUK-controlled areas. For example, while the turnout in Sulymaniah was over 50 percent, the KDP areas had a higher turnout (O’Driscoll, and Baser, 2019).

A month after the referendum, the Commons Chamber, the APPG Chairman Jack Lopresti questioned Prime Minister Theresa May about the UK response towards the KR-I’s referendum. May restated the government’s previous official position and urged all parts, namely Baghdad and Erbil, to pursue dialogue and focus on the war on Daesh (APPG on Kurdistan; Rudaw, 2017b). On the 12th of December 2017, PM May called the KRG’s PM Nechervan Barzani and discussed the referendum and the restoration of international flights to the KR-I. The APPG on Kurdistan’s engagements in Westminster Hall and the Commons Chamber are conceived as an external role and pressure participants as they pressed the UK government and fellow MPs to support the KR-I during and after the process of the KR-I’s referendum. Due to the international community’s lack of support for the non-binding referendum, the KRG began to invest in its ties with Baghdad and regional powers to revive them rather than pursuing independence.

Based on the APPG on Kurdistan’s fact-finding mission trip to the KR-I, it published a report in May 2018 on the referendum and its implications. The report encapsulates the challenges of the KR-I and the way forward for all parties involved (APPG on Kurdistan Report, 2018). During the global war on Daesh, the APPG on Kurdistan underlined the KRG’s and its Peshmerga’s role in fighting Daesh and other radical fundamentalists. This has been illustrated by the group in many formal and informal reports, events and statements. After the APPG on Kurdistan’s fact-finding trip in November 2015 during the peak of the war on Daesh, a report was published by the latter titled *The Land Between Two Anniversaries* which urged the UK to provide rounds for the forty heavy machine guns it supplied a few months ago and it also asked for more heavy machine guns that would assist the Peshmerga fighting Daesh (APPG, Kurdistan Report 2016). The report requested the UK to offer medical units to support the increasing number of deaths of Peshmerga combating Daesh. As mentioned earlier, the reports, including this one, demonstrate the APPGs internal and policy venue roles. The reports pave the way for the APPG on Kurdistan’s members and non-members to develop their collective evidence and external agenda, and in this particular case, influence a policy to help the KRG during the regional embargo imposed on the KR-I due to the referendum and combating Daesh.

Conclusions

This article aims to build a middle-range conceptual framework through an abductive approach, using the case of the APPG on Kurdistan to develop and refine roles that can inform a wider understanding of APPGs, and other comparable informal bodies within the UK political and parliamentary systems, beyond descriptive accounts. The APPG on Kurdistan demonstrates the influence of such groups in both the UK's policy process generally and more particularly in foreign policy and parliamentary diplomacy. It has shown continuation in its internal and external roles in the forms of a fora of politics, pressure participants, policy venue and policy entrepreneurship. Its members have shaped the APPG on Kurdistan's internal role, and some outsiders have contributed to its external agenda. Its internal role's activities, such as group meetings, witnessed members and like-minded non-members interact in moulding its agenda. Its meetings exemplify this fora role as they offer spaces for MPs and the KR-I's actors to share ideas and discuss a position or an approach relevant to the UK and KR-I. The APPG on Kurdistan has also acted as a policy venue—another internal role activity. For example, fact-finding trips and reports lay the foundation for external actors (the KR-I's governmental and non-governmental actors selected by the APPG) to inform policy. The APPG on Kurdistan's reports reached the UK's policy circles, and these reports and fact-finding missions had a widespread presence in the KR-I's media outlets. The topics within the reports and trips ranged from the Kurdish genocide, media freedom, the KR-I's politics, and economic and tourism ties to combating terrorism (namely Daesh). The APPG on Kurdistan's internal and external roles includes a wide range of parliamentary diplomacy activities, such as building networks between various British and Kurdish key figures and policymakers.

The APPG on Kurdistan's external role has arguably been more consequential, and seen the group operating as a pressure participant within the parliamentary system through setting up petitions, tabling EDMs, securing Westminster Hall debates, and questioning cabinet members and the PM on UK policy. At the House of Commons debates, the APPG on Kurdistan's chairs and vice chairs pressed and questioned top officials on the UK's position regarding, for instance, the Kurdish genocide during Saddam's regime, the KR-I's independence referendum and supporting the KRG during the war against Daesh. The APPG's external role as a policy entrepreneur occupied a notable function in engaging in entrepreneurial activities, such as an advocacy coalition and building a network of various individuals and organisations from different political affiliations and sectors. Often, these actors share the APPG on Kurdistan's objectives and the APPG on Kurdistan as an entrepreneur tries

to identify opportunities and problems and shape policies via venue shopping through airing their recommendations to the public and policy makers through parliamentary channels and beyond.

The APPG on Kurdistan has demonstrated persistence throughout the last 15 years in terms of improving the image of the KRG and the KR-I. It indicated the relationships' benefit to the UK and the KR-I during the region's difficulties, namely during the war on Daesh, and the KR-I's independence referendum's implications. While the APPG on Kurdistan recognises the KR-I as an important partner to the UK, it acknowledges the KRG's and the ruling parties' shortcomings, such as corruption, the growing rift between the PUK and KDP and the cases of violations of press freedoms. The recent controversies about the external funding of several APPGs that focus on foreign entities, including the APPG on Kurdistan, have been at the centre of debates among policy and media circles. The concerns about several APPGs' finances by some fellow MPs and observers brought up ideas and suggestions for reforming how and who in the APPGs should receive funding and have a more transparent system for the APPGs to follow.

The case of the APPG on Kurdistan could prompt studies on other UK territorially focused APPGs, and it could be studied alongside similar groups in other countries' parliaments or assemblies. It also shows how a group of parliamentarians or legislators strategizes and attempts to promote certain interests related to foreign affairs and parliamentary diplomacy. Thus, parliamentarians could be involved in international politics.

References list

- APPG Kurdistan Report. (2016). *The Land Between Two Anniversaries APPG on Kurdistan*. <http://www.appgkurdistan.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/appg-pdf.pdf>.
- APPG Kurdistan Report. (2018). *Robust Pragmatism and Internal Reform Report of APPG Kurdistan Region in Iraq fact-finding trip to Kurdistan and Baghdad*. <http://www.appgkurdistan.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/appg-kurdistan-delegation-report-may-2018-website.pdf>.
- APPG on Kurdistan Report-Update. (2011). *Kurdistan Update Follow up visit—20 years after the Uprising*. <https://www.iraq-businessnews.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/UK-All-Party-Parliamentary-Group-APPG-Kurdistan-Report-190711.pdf>.
- APPG on Kurdistan Report. (2013). *Report of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on the Kurdistan Region in Iraq on its fact-finding mission to Erbil, Duhok and Domiz*. http://uk.ekrg.org/PDF/appg_november_2013_report_version_two.pdf.

- APPG on Kurdistan. (2022) Minutes of the AGM of the APPG held on 17 March 2022. <http://www.appgkurdistan.org.uk/?p=887>.
- APPG on Smoking and Health. (2021). *Delivering a Smokefree 2030: The All Party Parliamentary Group on Smoking and Health recommendations for the Tobacco Control Plan*. <https://ash.org.uk/uploads/APPGTCP2021.pdf?v=1652361624>.
- Arnold, G. (2020). Does Entrepreneurship Work? Understanding What Policy Entrepreneurs Do and Whether It Matters. *Policy Studies Journal*, 49(4), 968–999. <https://doi.org/10.1111/psj.12388>.
- Ash. (2023). *About the APPG on Smoking & Health*. ASH. <https://ash.org.uk/about/who-we-work-with/appg/about-appg>.
- Bartlett, D. (2022, February 2). The exposure of a Chinese agent in London underlines international security concerns about the United Front Work Department. *SOAS China Institute*. <https://blogs.soas.ac.uk/china-institute/2022/02/02/the-exposure-of-a-chinese-agent-in-london/>.
- Baser, B., & Toivanen, M. (2017). The politics of genocide recognition: Kurdish nation-building and commemoration in the post-Saddam era. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 19(3), 404–426. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2017.1338644>.
- BBC. (2021, November 17). All-party groups: The source of the next Westminster lobbying scandal? *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-59307270>.
- BBC. (2022, April 29). All-party groups: Foreign influence could be next scandal, MPs warn. *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-61271058>.
- BBC. (2023, April 5). APPGs: Reforms urged to protect Parliament from ‘hostile foreign actors’. *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-65175591>.
- Boycott-Owen, M. (2022, April 8). Labour MP’s aide paid £400,000 by oil firms linked to Kurdistan. *The Telegraph*. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2022/04/08/labour-mps-aide-paid-400000-oil-firms-linked-kurdistan/>.
- British Group Inter-Parliamentary Union. (2018) UK delegation visits Iraq at pivotal time for its future. *British Group Inter-Parliamentary Union* <https://www.bgipu.org/activity-reports/uk-delegation-visits-iraq-at-pivotal-time-for-its-future/>.
- Bryant, C. (2022). MPs’ groups are taking millions from private interests—that can’t go unchecked. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/feb/17/mps-groups-millions-private-interests-all-party-parliamentary-groups>.
- Cairney, P. (2018). Three habits of successful policy entrepreneurs. *Policy & Politics*, 46(2), 199–215. <https://doi.org/10.1332/030557318X15230056771696>.
- Commons Chamber—Hansard. (2021). *Commons Chamber—Hansard—UK Parliament*. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2021-01-14/debates/obd6e537-7210-411e-9b63-844ca6192905/CommonsChamber>.

- Draca, M. (2014). Institutional Corruption? The revolving door in American and British politics. In *Social Market Foundation and CAGE*. <https://www.smf.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Social-Market-Foundation-Institutional-Corruption-the-revolving-door-in-American-and-British-politics.pdf>.
- Early Day Motions. (2018). *IRANIAN ATTACK ON CAMP INSIDE THE KURDISTAN REGION IN IRAQ—Early Day Motions—UK Parliament*. <https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/52077>.
- E-international relations. (2018, September 12). Interview—Gary Kent. *E-International Relations*. <https://www.e-ir.info/2018/09/12/interview-gary-kent/>.
- Gallagher, P. (2014) 'Corporate funding of all-party groups 'next big scandal'- after huge rise under the coalition', *The Independent*, 18 May. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/corporate-funding-of-all-party-groups-next-big-scandal-after-huge-rise-under-the-coalition-9391286.html>.
- Geohegan, P. (2022, 21 February). APPGs scandal: MP reveals how lobby firm tried to use her to influence Parliament. Open Democracy. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/dark-money-investigations/appgs-scandal-mp-reveals-lobby-firm-tried-influence-parliament-alison-thewliss-snp/>.
- Gordon-Nesbitt R, Howarth A. The arts and the social determinants of health: findings from an inquiry conducted by the United Kingdom All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing. *Arts Health*. 2020 Feb;12(1):1–22.
- GOV UK. (2023). *Foreign Secretary's statement on Kurdish referendum*. GOV.UK. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-statement-on-kurdish-referendum>.
- Hansard. (2013). *Kurdish Genocide—Hansard—UK Parliament*. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2013-02-28/debates/13022853000002/KurdishGenocide>.
- Hansard. (2014). *Westminster Hall—Hansard—UK Parliament*. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2014-01-15/debates/651e9041-9814-4efe-b986-5418365e48bf/WestminsterHall>.
- Hansard. (2017). *Kurdistan Region in Iraq—Hansard—UK Parliament*. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2017-07-04/debates/70604F01-A130-4745-B97A-548EF33E8957/KurdistanRegionInIraqhighlight=party±group±iraq±kurdistan>.
- Hansard. (2019). *Kurdistan Region in Iraq—Hansard—UK Parliament*. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2019-03-06/debates/2DEBF969-9EE9-4BB0-9BED-8CEA201FAC27/KurdistanRegionInIraqhighlight=party+group+iraq+kurdistan>.
- Human Rights Watch. (2018, September 19). Turkey/Iraq: Strikes May Break Laws of War. *Human Rights Watch*. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/09/19/turkey/iraq-strikes-may-break-laws-war>.

- Human Rights Watch. (2020, July 22). Iraq: Turkish Airstrike Disregards Civilian Loss. *Human Rights Watch*. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/07/22/iraq-turkish-airstrike-disregards-civilian-loss>.
- International Transparency. (2020). *Submission to the Standards Committee Inquiry into All Party Parliamentary Groups by Transparency International UK*. <https://www.transparency.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdf/publications/TI%20UK%20Standards%20Committee%20APPGs%20FINAL.pdf>.
- Iraqi Embassy in UK, (2022) [X] Ambassador @jaafaralsadr participated in the first meeting with Iraq APPG which is chaired by @khalid4PB & @Baroness_Nichol (December, 8), <https://x.com/IraqinLondon/status/1600917411921768448>.
- Jones, B. D., & Baumgartner, F. R. (2005). *The Politics of Attention*. Chicago University Press.
- Jordan, G., Halpin, D., & Maloney, W. (2004). Defining Interests: Disambiguation and the Need for New Distinctions. *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 6(2), 195–212. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-856X.2004.00134.x>.
- Kaunert, C., & Leonard, S. (2012). The development of the EU asylum policy: Venue-shopping in perspective. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 19(9), 1396–1413. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2012.677191>.
- Keaveney, P. (2020). Insider outside: Freedoms and limitations in the twitter communications of the United Kingdom's all party parliamentary group on refugees: *Journal of Language and Politics*, 19(3), 498–517. <https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.19002.kea>.
- Kellermann, M. (2013). Sponsoring Early Day Motions in the British House of Commons as a Response to Electoral Vulnerability. *Political Science Research and Methods*, 1(2), 263–280. <https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2013.19>.
- Kent, G. (2019). *British MPs: Kurdistan Region allies must be protected from Turkish aggression*. Rudaw.Net. <https://www.rudaw.net/english/opinion/16102019>.
- Kingdon, John W. (1995). *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies*. Second Edition. Harper Collins College Publishers.
- Lopresti, J. (2017). *After Mosul: Independence for the Kurdistan Region?* | APPG Kurdistan. <http://www.appgkurdistan.org.uk/?p=507>.
- Macintyre, D. (2007). MPs meet Hamas and criticise embargo against Palestinians. *The Independent*. https://web.archive.org/web/20070202031110/http://news.independent.co.uk/world/middle_east/article2201098.ece.
- Mintrom, M. (2019). So you want to be a policy entrepreneur? *Policy Design and Practice*, 2(4), 307–323.
- Parallel Parliament, (2024b). *Iraq APPG*. <https://www.parallelparliament.co.uk/APPG/iraq>.
- Parallel Parliament, (2024c). *Yazidis APPG*. <https://www.parallelparliament.co.uk/APPG/yazidis>.

- Parallel Parliament, (2024d). *Kurdistan Region in Iraq APPG*, <https://www.parallelparliament.co.uk/APPG/kurdistan-region-in-iraq>.
- Parliament, P. (2023). *Palestine APPG*. <https://www.parallelparliament.co.uk/APPG/palestine>.
- Parliament, P. (2023a). *Jamaica APPG*. <https://www.parallelparliament.co.uk/APPG/jamaica>.
- Parliament UK. (2022). *House of Commons—Register Of All-Party Parliamentary Groups as at 4 May 2022: Kurdistan Region in Iraq*. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmhallparty/220504/kurdistan-region-in-iraq.htm>.
- Parliament UK, (2024). *Lobbying*. <https://www.parliament.uk/site-information/glossary/lobbying/>.
- Parliament UK-All Party Parliamentary Groups, (2014). Register of (As a ALL-P t11 April 2 ARTY 014) Groups, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmhallparty/140411/register.pdf>.
- Parliament UK-All Party Parliamentary Groups, (2015). Register Of All-Party Groups [as at 30 July 2015]. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmhallparty/register/kurdistan-region-in-iraq.htm>.
- Parliament UK-All Party Parliamentary Groups, (2017). Register of All-Party Parliamentary Groups. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmhallparty/171220/register-171220.pdf>.
- Parliament UK-All Party Parliamentary Groups, (2020). Register of All-Party Parliamentary Groups. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmhallparty/201216/register-201216.pdf>.
- Parliament UK-All Party Parliamentary Groups, (2022). Register of All-Party Parliamentary Groups. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmhallparty/221130/register-221130.pdf>.
- Parliament UK-All Party Parliamentary Groups, (2024). Register of All-Party Parliamentary Groups. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmhallparty/240513/register-240513.pdf>.
- Petitions UK Parliament. (2013). *Archived Petition: Recognition of Genocide against the Kurds in Iraq*. Petitions—UK Government and Parliament. <https://petition.parliament.uk/archived/petitions/31014>.
- O'Driscoll, D., & Baser, B. (2019). Independence referendums and nationalist rhetoric: the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. *Third World Quarterly*, 40(11), 2016–2034.
- Rayner, T. (2023). *Westminster Accounts: 'The next big scandal'—Informal groups of MPs given £20m from external organisations since 2019*. Sky News. <https://news.sky.com/story/westminster-accounts-the-next-big-scandal-informal-interest-groups-of-mps-are-little-known-by-the-public-yet-are-huge-business-12783075>.

- Rickard, E., & Ozieranski, P. (2021). A hidden web of policy influence: The pharmaceutical industry's engagement with UK's All-Party Parliamentary Groups. *PLOS ONE*, 16(6), 0252551.
- Royal African Society. (2023). All Party Parliamentary Group for Africa. *Royal African Society*. <https://royalafricansociety.org/whatwedo/policy/appga/>.
- Rudaw. (2014). *British MP s Report on Five Years of Progress in Kurdistan*. Rudaw.Net. <https://www.rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/21012014>.
- Rudaw. (2017a, September 24). *Six British lawmakers to observe Kurdistan referendum*. Rudaw.Net. <https://www.rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/240920179>.
- Rudaw. (2017b). *Tough questions on Kurdistan in the British House of Commons*. Rudaw. Net. <https://www.rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/03112017>.
- Rudaw. (2018). *Iran's attack on Kurdish parties in Koya raised in UK's Commons*. Rudaw. Net. <https://www.rudaw.net/english/opinion/14092018>.
- Stavridis, S & Jancic, D. (2016). The Rise of Parliamentary Diplomacy in International Politics, *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 11 (2–3) Spring, 105–120.
- Sky News. (2022). *Hostile states pose 'real risk' to UK security as MP s warn reforms needed to prevent 'next great parliamentary scandal' | Politics News | Sky News*. <https://news.sky.com/story/hostile-states-pose-real-risk-to-uk-security-as-mps-warn-reforms-needed-to-prevent-next-great-parliamentary-scandal-12602154>.
- Sobel, A. (2023). When our APPG delivered aid to Ukraine it was deeply personal for me. *The House*. <https://www.politicshome.com/thehouse/article/appg-delivered-aid-ukraine-it-deeply-personal>.
- Stone, J. (2017, February 7). *British MP s went on 53 foreign trips paid for by despotic regimes last year*. The Independent. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/register-of-interests-mps-brutal-regimes-unfree-freedom-house-arms-trade-saudi-qatar-gifts-a7561801.html>.
- Sulaivany, K. (2018, May 29). *VIDEO: British officials praise Kurdistan as 'beacon of stability' in region*. <https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/story/16048-VIDEO:-British-officials-praise-Kurdistan-as-%E2%80%98beacon-of-stability%E2%80%99-in-region>.
- Thomas, P. E. J. (2015). Reaching across the aisle—explaining the rise of All-Party Parliamentary Groups in the United Kingdom. *Political Studies Association 65th International Conference*, 30–31. <https://www.psa.ac.uk/sites/default/files/conference/papers/2015/Paul%20Thomas%20-%20All%20Party%20Groups.pdf>.
- Uddin, R. (2023). *Qatar, Dubai speeches and Israel trips: Middle East donations to UK MP s*. Middle East Eye. <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/uk-qatar-israel-dubai-middle-east-donations-mps>.

- UK Parliament. (2011). *HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAQI KURDISTAN—Early Day Motions—UK Parliament*. <https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/43251>.
- UK Parliament. (2017). *Guide to the Rules on All-Party Parliamentary Groups*. <https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/pcfs/all-party-groups/guide-to-the-rules-on-appgs.pdf>.
- UK Parliament. (2017). *REFERENDUM IN THE KURDISTAN REGION—Early Day Motions—UK Parliament*. <https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/50644/referendum-in-the-kurdistan-region>.
- UK Parliament. (2020a). *Recognition for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq—Early Day Motions—UK Parliament*. <https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/57390>.
- UK Parliament. (2020b). *Bilateral relations with the Kurdistan region in Iraq—Early Day Motions—UK Parliament*. <https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/53549>.
- UK Parliament. (2020c). 30th anniversary of Sir John Major's safe haven in and no-fly zone over the Kurdistan Region.—*Early Day Motions—UK Parliament*, <https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/58300>.
- UK Parliament. (2023). *Register Of All-Party Parliamentary Groups*. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmallparty/230628/contents.htm>.
- UK Parliament. (2023). *Westminster Hall debates*. <https://www.parliament.uk/about/how/business/debates/westminster-hall-debates/>.
- Voller, Y. (2014) “countering violence against women in Iraqi Kurdistan: state-building and transnational advocacy.” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 46 (2), pp. 351–72.
- Webber, E. (2023, January 13). Blue-chip firms with Chinese interests pour cash into UK parliament lobbying group. *POLITICO*. <https://www.politico.eu/article/blue-chip-firms-with-chinese-interests-pour-cash-into-uk-parliament-lobbying-group/>.
- Wilks-Heeg, S., Blick, A., & Crone, S. (2012). How Democratic is the UK? The 2012 Audit: Executive Summary. *Democratic Audit*. <https://democraticaudituk.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/exec-summary.pdf>.