Nihilism and Technologies of Othering: The Kurds in Iran, Iraq and Turkey

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Abstract

This thesis theorizes the original concept of *technologies of othering*, and explores the forms such technologies have taken in the century-long oppression of the Kurds, who constitute the largest stateless nation in the Middle East. The research question asked was: by what methods were the Kurds, promised their own state after the First World War, divided, encapsulated within, and oppressed by four new nation-states created by, and in the interests of, Western imperial powers? Unlike other studies of the Kurds, I use Kurdish as well as Middle Eastern and Western texts to show how theories of nationalism, realism and *Realpolitik*, and the 'rules' of the modern international state-system; and three ideologies- ethno-nationalism, Baathism and Islamic fundamentalism- constituted the political technologies of othering used against the Kurds, directly and indirectly, in three of the states--Turkey, Iran and Iraq. Drawing on Nietzsche, Heidegger, Ellul and Foucault, I demonstrate that *technique* and *nihilism* are linked to the discourses and practices of 'othering' as used in the Middle East and internationally. I employ philosophic methods derived from Western critiques of modernity, and classical Islamic political thought and practice, to interpret the political and historic data regarding instances when the Kurds were 'othered', ranging from marginalization and persecution to attempted genocide. Actions of imperialism, and Middle Eastern reactions to them, I argue, produced many nihilistic ideologies that fed the technologies of othering used.

The thesis also explores Kurdish texts showing their self-understandings as a people, and how they organized against state coercion whenever the opportunity arose. Nonetheless, so far the Kurds haven't defeated the awesome power of these technologies, nor overcome the tremendous forces of *reactive nihilism*. I show why the multiple

practices and discourses which constitute technologies of othering still deny the Kurds' control over their own destiny—a dilemma still to be solved. I conclude that, from the Kurdish perspective, technologies of othering deployed by Western theorists and statesmen and by Middle Eastern politicians and scholars are products of distorted forms of Western modernity, and reactions to them. Only when the Kurds are supported in their efforts to achieve the purported benefits of modernity—self-determination, security, and democratic rights—will the impasse be resolved in the countries which oppress them, and in the international community.

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DISTRIBUTION OF KURDS across Turkey, Iran and Iraq

75 - 100 %
30 - 75 %
Under 30 %

Miles 0 50 100 150
Kilometres 0 50 100 150

David McDowall, A Modern History of the Kurds, (New York: I.B. Tauris, 1997): xiv.

Introduction

In this thesis, I theorize the concept of political technologies of othering and its relation to nihilism in Kurdistan, showing how such technologies enabled the political persecution of the Kurds in the last century. The Kurds provide an important case, especially regarding the study of stateless nations and their nationalisms. The Kurds are the largest stateless nation in the Middle East and have survived many attempts to destroy their national existence. It is important to understand why and how they resist the three states which encapsulate and dominate them; against which the Kurds refuse to give up their national claims. This case lets me contextualize my theory regarding technologies of othering in politics, and show how the status of stateless nations is denied in the international system.

I use political philosophy and international relations theory in my approach to the case. I rely on Nietzsche's critique of (Western) modernity, nihilism and modern subjectivity; and Heidegger's critique of technology to develop my theoretical framework. To theorize my case study, I develop a philosophic critique of three dominant ideologies employed to 'other' the Kurds: state-sponsored ethno-nationalism, Baathism and Islamic fundamentalism. I also use the same philosophic method in my critique of the realist school of international relations and theories of nationalism.

The Kurds are an Indo-European nation living predominantly in the border areas between Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. Their population is estimated at between 27-36 million with 20 per cent in Turkey, 15-20 per cent in Iraq and 7 per cent in Iran and in Syria almost 8 per cent.¹ "Roughly 55% of the world's Kurds live in Turkey, about 20%

¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurds#Population>

each in Iran and Iraq, and a bit over 5% in Syria.”² The Kurds have taken every opportunity to rise up against the states that encapsulate and dominate them. From the beginning of the twentieth century, there wasn’t a decade without a Kurdish uprising. While other scholars study Kurdish political movements within a social science framework and from a privileged position of a subject, in this thesis I reverse the relation by looking at the Kurdish case from the inside, exploring how the Kurds see their situation. I rely on European philosophic self-critiques to craft a critique of modern power politics. I do so in order to demonstrate the problems of Western modernity from a Western point of view. I also rely on the classical sources of Islamic thought such as Farabi and contemporary scholars such as Nasr and Shayegan in examining issues of identity, power and politics within Islamic tradition.

I present a case-study of the struggles of the Kurds at three main moments in the 20th century in Iran, Iraq and Turkey: the borders of which separated the Kurds, who had lived together as a single community under Ottoman rule, according to a Western-directed remapping of the Middle East. This redrawing of the map of the Middle East contributed to so many different conflicts that the Kurdish issue has been almost lost among all other issues of the Middle East.

The Kurds are in the middle of a historic power struggle between the Middle East and the West. Neither civilization cares much about the Kurds and as a result the Kurds, have been and are victims of ‘othering’ by both. In this thesis, I locate the intricate political techniques which cause this dilemma for the Kurds and explain them through the philosophic grounds that defines the clash between Western modernity and tradition in

² *Ibid.*

the Middle East. The direction the Kurdish future may take is mostly out of their hands because the Kurds' fate is always decided elsewhere. I argue that this helplessness is best explained by analyzing the philosophies that created the problem in the first place. Two antagonistic modes of politics, Middle Eastern and Western, represent two different historical experiences, as they struggle for dominance over vast regions of the earth and its resources, especially oil. Kurdistan happens to be in the middle. The political techniques employed by both parties in this struggle involve pretending, either that the Kurds do not matter in the broad scheme of things, or simply that they can be ignored. These techniques I theorize as political technologies of othering. Ultimately, the Kurds have the most to lose from being trapped between these two ideological worldviews for a century. They have witnessed how the struggle for power between these two worldviews has deformed them both as they devalued each other, while each 'othered' the Kurds albeit using different political technologies.

I originate and develop the concept of *political technologies of othering* to explain the marginalization and persecution the Kurds have experienced over the last century. By technology I mean political techniques of using power and violence which the Kurds have often been the victims, ranging from political marginalization and exclusion, to the use of weapons of mass destruction and attempted genocide. In the grand scheme of politics among states in both the international and Middle Eastern nation-state systems, the Kurds exist in the middle of many contradictions and complexities. They are treated as what Heidegger called "standing reserve," used and then put aside, until needed again, then brought out in a manner of recycled objects to be reused when the next episode of *Realpolitik* dictates.

The Kurdish case over the last century presents an enigma, largely because of the intricacies of political technology of othering. On the one hand the Kurds are othered by the West, like many other nationalities, sects and creeds of the Middle Eastern and Islamic worlds. But they also are othered by the stronger and more nationalistic or religiously-organized nations in the Middle East including the Turks, Arabs and Persians. In the end, the Kurds have been in the middle of the most dramatic changes, often devastating to their environment and lives, but they rarely have been able to control the situation or prevent the disasters that befall them. They appear from time to time in the news and sometimes even make the headlines, but there is rarely a genuine presentation of their case or the context of their struggle.

In this thesis I argue that both the Western and the Middle Eastern reactions to the Kurdish situation are nihilistic in nature. I use *nihilism*, here, to refer to the devaluation of what are claimed as values.³ The values I see being devalued are political and philosophical; that is values the Western world is supposed to respect such as international law, human rights, and democratic rights. But these are frequently violated, negated, denied and often outrageously redefined to fit a certain power agenda. Such values are often rendered completely irrelevant. A system of values is created but when times get tough they are denied with no hesitation. Nor is nihilism merely a Western failing. In the Muslim world I see nihilism in ideologies of Turkish ethno-nationalism, Baathism and Islamic fundamentalism. These ideologies devalue many values created and taught by generations of classical Muslim thinkers and defined by just Muslim rulers. Values such as tolerance, compassion, love of knowledge and justice are now denied or

³ See Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1968): 9.

deemed irrelevant by these ideologies. The Kurds are stuck in the middle of these contradictions and violations. Neither the West nor Islamic Middle East accepts them for who they are, i.e. a nation with a distinct identity, history and rights. Both reject the right of the Kurds to self-rule and autonomy, which is a departure from both Western and Islamic values and practices. In the classical texts of these two civilizations, there are many principles and mechanisms which would allow the Kurds a state of their own or significant autonomy and self-rule at least. But nihilism corrupting both civilizations renders such principles and mechanisms irrelevant and constantly redefines them in ways that create an impasse for the Kurds. Throughout this thesis I show in detail how the colonial politics of the West in the Middle East; and the domestic politics of Turkey, Iran and Iraq have denied the Kurds their political and human rights.

Organization of the Thesis

This study is presented in eight chapters. In Chapter One I develop the theoretical framework of the thesis, by explaining five fundamental concepts: *technologies of othering*, *Western modernity and colonialism*, *nihilism*, *Islamic collective identity* and the *post-colonial crisis of identity*. The *technology of othering* is an original idea inspired by Foucault's understanding of "technologies of the self"⁴, which I develop, and define, describing its complicated techniques. While Foucault's concern is how Western modernity defines the identity of the modern self, I deal with the modern *othering of peoples*, focusing on how the Kurds have been othered by both the West and the Middle East. Whereas Foucault deals with the ethical techniques, which constitute the modern

⁴ See Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, Patrick H. Hutton, Ed., Technologies Of The Self. A Seminar With Michel Foucault (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988).

Western identity, I deal with the political techniques employed to reject and persecute the other, in this case the Kurds. My understanding of technology is inspired mostly by Heidegger and Ellul, for whom technology results in the dehumanization of politics among states. Technology is not just machine technology although machines are always the symbolic presence of technology. I understand technology also as an outlook or a way of seeing, willing and acting on political matters in the world.

Politics for the most part has become dominated by relations of power and violence. To theorize this, I use the concept of *nihilism* understood primarily through Nietzsche. I believe Nietzsche understood nihilism as the road the West adopted with the advent of modernity. Nihilism can explain why one sees so many contradictions in the modern history of the West; but I show that it also characterizes the history of the Middle East. The most dramatic contradiction is creating laws that are easily violated by their creators. For example to speak of freedom while practicing slavery, equality while practicing discrimination, peace while conducting war and many others. I believe these can best be explained as the condition of nihilism.

I also explore how *collective identity* was understood in classical Islamic thought, which is the opposite of what we see in fundamentalist Islamic ideas. I elaborate on the political condition of Kurds and their relationship with their rulers prior to the end of Ottoman rule and the establishment of modern nation-states in the Middle East. I theorize that ideology of Islamic fundamentalism, as evident in Iran and Iraq, is a nihilistic approach to politics and identity since it tries to build upon what no longer exist and tries to return to what was, both impossible and a nihilistic trap. This helps explain the *crisis of identity* after colonialism in the broader Middle East and Islamic world. I examine

colonialism in the first chapter and imperialism in the second; the former as parallel to modernity. I argue that the nihilism of modernity showed itself in colonialism. I examine imperialism in order to understand the realist school of international relations' account of the modern nation-state system. Imperialism was established as the world order and became naturalized as how international relations functioned particularly as expressed in the realist school. Colonialism and imperialism are different and yet related. Colonialism is about conquest and imperialism about expansion. While colonialism takes possession of other people's land; imperialism creates both economic and political dependency.

In Chapter Two I explore imperialism and realist school of international relations. I use Said and Arendt to theorize imperialism; and investigate the major theorists of the realist school such as Hans J. Morgenthau. I also examine the view of Western political actors involved in the *Realpolitik* in relation to Kurdistan. In this chapter I also critique realist rejection of Wilsonian idealist principles drawing on the theoretical framework begun in chapter one. I conclude that imperialism and the realist school of international relations have constituted technologies of othering against the Kurds because they accept the state-centrism of the modern, nation-state system which dismissed any claims of nations without states.

In Chapter Three I examine theories of nationalism in their original form and then I show how these ideas have been distorted and misrepresented regarding the Kurdish case. I present this distortion as a technology of othering the Kurds. I also examine Kurdish self-expressions of national identity in pre-modern times through the Islamic and Ottoman conceptions of collective identity, and modern nationalism as developed in

theoretical works by Anderson and Smith, showing the distortions employed in nihilistic technologies of othering.

In Chapters Four through Eight, I outline key moments when technologies of othering were deployed against the Kurds. In Chapter Four I deal with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the first large scale Kurdish rebellion. In this chapter I examine three fundamental issues: the situation of the Kurds under the Ottoman Empire, the creation of modern Turkey, Iraq, the treaty of Sèvres, and Shaikh Said's revolt. I outline the principles of politics among nations in classical Islamic sources and explain how the Ottomans implemented those principles. Then I explore the role of the Kurds within the Empire and explain how they were integrated into the Ottoman political system. I also show how this changed when the Empire collapsed and the partition of Kurdistan began. This chapter also explains the creation of the modern nation-state of Iraq and the division of the Kurds among four countries. I show that the first Kurdish rebellion of modern times under the leadership of Shaikh Said was in fact a reaction to all these changes. When the colonially-constructed borders were confirmed, the Kurds were defeated and divided. I conclude that, because of technologies of otherness, the Kurds were left stateless, divided and without representation in a new world defined by state-centrism; an international system in which only states have rights.

In Chapter Five, I describe the establishment of the first modern Kurdish state, the Republic of Mahabad in Iran. I deal with five major issues: Iran and modernity, the Second World War, and the prelude to the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad, the Declaration of the Republic, its fall and the aftermath of its brief existence. First I explain how Iran entered modernity through the military dictatorship of Reza Shah, consider his imposed

reforms and the backlash they created. I expose his relationship with the Nazis, which led to the overthrow of his regime and Iran's occupation during the Second World War, when the Kurdish regions of Iran escaped government control and the first Kurdish republic was established and functioned for one year. I explore how Reza Shah's ethno-nationalism and his military dictatorship deployed technologies of othering against the Kurds; moreover, I show that his distorted version of modernity was an act of nihilism.

In Chapter Six, I examine the Barzani movement in Iraqi Kurdistan during the Cold War. I explain the creation of Iraq by western 'great powers', the Baathist ideology and the coming to power of Baath Party in Iraq. I also outline the formative Iraqi Kurdish nationalism, the politics of Kurdish national resistance, and the role of the Barzanis. This chapter is important for understanding current Iraqi politics and how Baathist ideology destroyed the very notion of politics in Iraq. Under the devastating policies of the Baath regime and Saddam Hussein, Iraqi Kurds suffered greatly. I explain how the Barzani tribe became the most prominent Kurdish force in resisting and fighting against Saddam's violence against Kurds. The Baathist ideology and its totalitarian nature contributed the most to nihilism and technologies of othering. The Iraqi regime's attempted genocide against the Kurds was the most horrific example technology of othering.

In Chapter Seven I deal with the situation of the Kurds in Iran after the Islamic Revolution of 1979. I examine the ideological foundations of the Islamic Revolution, including its intellectual component; show how the Islamic Republic established control over Iran; and outline relations between the Kurds and the Islamic Republic, especially during the Iran-Iraq war. I expose the nature of Iranian Islamic fundamentalism and its ideological roots, using the concept of *reactive nihilism*. In this respect I introduce

intellectuals who played a key role in the formation of this form of fundamentalism, and show how the clergy class established its dominance over Iran. I survey the condition of the Kurds under the Islamic Republic and their resistance against Iranian fundamentalism, which imposed a violent politics. I conclude this created new technologies of othering which were used against the Kurds on both nationalist and religious grounds.

In Chapter Eight, I deal with the 1990s Gulf war and the invasion of Iraq in 2003 focusing on their consequences for the Kurds. I highlight the emergence of the Kurdish Regional Government of Iraqi Kurdistan, a recent experience of self-rule for today's Kurdistan. Then I outline the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the toppling of Saddam and his execution explaining the ramifications of these events for Kurdistan now and in the future. I conclude that the unwillingness of Western 'great powers' to recognize the Kurdish Regional Government results from technologies of othering, including the 'rules' of the international state-system, 'realist' state-craft, and the regional (Middle Eastern) *Realpolitik* which undermine Kurdish achievements and jeopardize the future of an autonomous Kurdistan.

My final conclusion about the technologies of othering is best explained by Saddam's trial and execution which rendered the Kurds irrelevant thereby 'othering' them absolutely. While the U.S. administration often used the example of Halabja as evidence of Saddam's brutality and danger to the world, and as part of the justification for their invasion, in the end he did not stand trial for any of his crimes against the Kurds. The Kurds were exploited to create a scenario for the war and yet the idea of Kurdish right to self-rule isn't in the vocabulary of either the Western media or the U.S.

administration. The fact that Saddam did not stand trial for his crimes against the Kurds and was turned into a martyr, because of the manner of his execution, is a betrayal of the Kurds. At the moment the Kurds face an uncertain future. No one can predict what will become of the Kurds when the U.S. forces pull out of Iraq. But one thing is certain, those in the corridors of power in Western or Middle Eastern capitals may not base their decisions on what will happen to the Kurds. This uncertainty is the result of Kurds being stateless (in terms of rights recognized by the nation-state system); and on the margins of both Western and Middle Eastern politics. Because of the Iraq war, the persecution of Iranian Kurds is completely unreported; and Turkish aggressions against them are not taken very seriously. The Kurds in Iran and Turkey still suffer serious violation of their rights by state oppression.

We must understand the technologies of othering, to comprehend the contradictions and complexities the Kurds have faced for a century. Divided between three aggressive, encapsulating states created by imperialist design, the Kurds have been the ultimate victims of technologies of othering. I show that, for a century, they have been caught in the middle of imperialist as well as regional wars and treated as "standing reserve." The recent events in Iraq demonstrate how vulnerable the Kurds are. Turkish tanks are massed on the border ready to invade Kurdistan of Iraq, especially if it were to try to convert its virtual independence from Iraq into statehood. Moreover, Iran repeatedly shells the Kurdish villages close to its borders, but the U.S. public is fatigued by the war in Iraq invasion, and the priorities of Realpolitik contribute once more to technologies of othering against the Kurds.

Chapter One: Theoretical Grounds of Political Technologies of Othering

In this thesis I theorize the concept and explore various aspects of *political technologies of othering*. In this chapter I theorize political technologies of othering and hypothesize how such technologies function and how the Kurds were othered. I explain how these technologies order political and discursive relations and how colonialism contributes to the political technology of othering. My methodology employs philosophic concepts to interpret my research about the Kurds. I analyze the neo/realist theories of international relations and theories of nationalism within the same framework to illuminate their relationship to the Kurdish issue. I use concepts drawn from philosophy because I believe the Kurdish issue is the result of techniques, discourses and practices best interpreted through a philosophic lens especially to make sense of what seems obvious or ambiguous.

I use Heidegger to understand the concept of technology and its political ramifications. I also employ Heidegger's critique of technique and its awesome power which I believe lets states and their discourses of othering dominate the planet; and I apply this critique to interpret the political technologies that often overpower the Kurds and dominate them. I also explore the concept of *nihilism* and its role in political technology, using Nietzsche's understanding of nihilism and its part in the technology of othering. I employ Nietzsche's radical critique of European rationality as a critique of modern subjectivity. I examine Nietzsche's idea regarding "how the real world became a

myth”¹ simply to provide a theoretical ground for explaining the field of distortion in chapter three when I explain how the realities of Kurdistan and those of original theories of nationalism have been falsified by nihilism, technique and subjectivity.

I argue that nihilism also exists in the Muslim world; therefore I explore collective identity in classical Islamic thought and argue that the identity was lost through various cycles of nihilism. Nihilism reveals itself in ideologies that I present in this chapter, and in the chapters to come I theorize that these ideologies are forms of nihilism which expose the crisis of identity experienced particularly in Iran, Iraq and Turkey.

I. Technologies of Othering

I conceptualize the *technology of othering* as an amalgamation of political discourses and practices designed to transforming the “difference” into “otherness” and justify punishing those who are different for being “other.” A technology of othering is a political strategy of marginalization, domination and elimination of the “other.” Its techniques ranges from exclusion from political discourse and discrimination, to extermination through state-sponsored violence.

To understand the concept of technologies of othering I first explain how I understand technology and its political aspects. Technology is often understood merely as machine technology; and when speaking of machines, most often modern tools and apparatuses come to mind. Technology should not be reduced to machines, however, modern or otherwise. Technology is also about “efficiency” particularly in its modern,

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Penguin Books, 1990): 50.

Western sense as a set of political practices, which reduces every element of life into a machine or a machine-like apparatus. As Ellul argues:

Technique certainly began with the machine. It is quite true that all the rest developed out of mechanics; it is quite true also that without the machine the world of technique would not exist. But to explain the situation in this way does not at all legitimize it. It is a mistake to continue with this confusion of terms, the more so because it leads to the idea that, because the machine is at the origin and center of the technical problem, one is dealing with the whole problem when one deals with the machine. And that is a greater mistake still. Technique has now become almost completely independent of the machine, which has lagged far behind its offspring.²

What is important to note is the significance of political technology; that is political techniques applied by the state-machine. I argue that technology and its appearance on the political scene have created unimaginable catastrophes. According to many historians of the Nazi movement, the National Socialist movement was the result of human collision with technology.³ This is because of how technology reduces humanity to merely “things” or “raw material” to be used. Martin Heidegger explains this in his essay, “The Question Concerning Technology.” Heidegger believes technology has a particular way of ordering humanity, which he calls “standing-reserve.”⁴ This term as used by Heidegger indicates that humans⁵ are reduced to objects whose existences are decided by the very essence of technology.

² Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*, trans. John Wilkinson (New York: Vintage Books, 1964): 3-4.

³ See Karsten Harries, “Philosophy, Politics, Technology” in Karsten Harries and Christoph Jamme, ed. *Martin Heidegger, Politics, Art, and Technology*, (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1994): 226.

⁴ See Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” edited by David Farrell, in *Martin Heidegger, Basic Writings*, (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993): 329.

⁵ Human here refers to a person without rights like those who used to be called slaves. Now they are not in chains but are not truly in charge of their destiny. See Hanna Arendt, *On Revolution*, (London: Penguin Books, 1965): 46.

This might seem more noticeable especially now that we live in the age of total wars⁶, weapons of mass destruction, global warming, mass migrations, mass deportations, mass consumption, mass media, mass killings, etc, which reduce humanity to faceless and voiceless “things.” Dispossessed people without the right to self-rule or self-presentation are among those most reduced to “things.” For the past century the Kurdish people have been among this unfortunate group. The horrors of Halabja⁷ provided a perfect example of humans, in this case right-less and state-less Kurds, reduced to a stockpile of “things” due to the essence of technology. This occurred on two levels of military and political technologies. Military technology created the killing fields of Halabja and political technology erased the Kurds from the essence of the Halabja controversy. The issue of Halabja was addressed by the international state-centric system as an issue between the two warring states of Iran and Iraq. Furthermore a great deal of the emphasis in the first stages of investigating this controversy was whether Iran was guilty or Iraq? That is whether Iraqis committed war crimes against Iran or if it was Iran who committed war crimes against Iraq? The Kurds became shadows and pictures of the dead while Washington, Tehran and Baghdad became the narrators of the story of Halabja. Kurds were othered by state techniques, military technique, and the international states system. Baghdad at the time of its mass killing at Halabja was Washington’s ally. Therefore the dominant issue was of an American ally, Iraq, fighting an American enemy, Iran, and the Kurdish issue or the crime of genocide became just an opinion and was basically phased out from the main discourse of events.

⁶ Modern wars produce a great number of casualties among the civilian populations. Sometimes an entire city or a number of villages are wiped out completely.

⁷ Halabja is a Kurdish town in the Iraq-Iran border that fell victim to Iraq’s chemical bombardment in March 1988.

One might say that Saddam was deposed and executed and Ali Hassan Majid, known as Chemical Ali and the engineer of genocide against Kurds, is now sentenced to death on the charge of crimes against humanity. So what is the problem? The Problem is that Saddam was not tried and condemned for his crimes against the Kurds. And Chemical Ali was part of a broader domestic, regional and international system that allowed him to undertake his technologies of mass killings. Besides the trials of Saddam and later Chemical Ali were nothing close to the truth and reconciliation attempts in South Africa or the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem. The Halabja affair is an extreme example of technology of othering and remains an open wound. The problem is that Arab revisionist historians may consider Halabja, not an organized and state-sponsored act of genocide, but the unfortunate and isolated criminal acts of a few individuals who were punished. This kind of distortion of history is already in the making. The Kurdish leadership in Iraqi Kurdistan has demanded that the crimes of Halabja to be recognized as genocide by the Arab world. Their message has been ignored completely.

I believe such crimes and their complicated political consequences can happen because of the nature of technology. To understand this we must review Heidegger's "The Question Concerning Technology" (1993). In this essay, Heidegger is concerned with revealing the essence of technology and treats technology in its relation to metaphysics.⁸ By essence he means the "what-ness" of technology or that irreducible element without which it can no longer be what it is.⁹ According to Heidegger, the essence of modern technology is "enframing." And he explains enframing as follows:

⁸ Metaphysics is the philosophic study of the ultimate character of reality. See Heimir Geirsson and Michael Losonsky ed., Beginning Metaphysics. An Introductory Text with Readings, (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers): 1.

⁹ See Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," ed., David Farrell, Martin Heidegger. Basic Writings, (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993): 312.

“Enframing is gathering together which belongs to that setting-upon which challenges man and puts him in position to reveal the actual, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve.”¹⁰ Heidegger is referring to how technology is “ordering” humans as “standing-reserves.” This “mode of ordering” is most noticeable when humans are exterminated in death camps or killed by weapons of mass destruction. The technological ordering of humans as “standing-reserve” by the techniques of “enframing” strips humans of their human essence and results in their murderers not seeing that they are murdering human beings. They feel they are dealing with numbers and objects to be disposed of; or even worse they see themselves cleaning up a mess. Those who participate in genocide are blinded by technique and its dehumanizing capacities. It is important to note that these qualities are not the only qualities that technologies have. Technology can also be very empowering, but what Heidegger is criticizing is that the destructive aspect of technology can be awesome and overwhelming.

Heidegger uses the term “enframing” to characterize the essence of modern technique.¹¹ Accordingly “enframing” is the primordial source of modern technology.¹² This term has some interesting connotations such as “hunting trap” and “tracking down a prey.”¹³ The Kurds are trapped in the enframing of technologies of othering usually expressed in the discourse that describes them as “other,” i.e., “tribal,” “ethnic,” anything but “citizens” or “respected members of the international community.” They are trapped and tracked down like prey in mass killings that the politics of international

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 329.

¹¹ Jean- Makrie Vaysse, *Le Vocabulaire de Heidegger*, (Paris: Ellipses, 2000): 14.

¹² Richard Wolin, *The Politics of Being: The Political Thought of Martin Heidegger*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990): 164.

¹³ Tom Rockmore & Joseph Margolis, ed., *The Heidegger Case: On philosophy and Politics*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992): 330.

relations does not know what to do about. “Enframing” does not allow the Kurds self-presentation and sovereignty over the discourse of their identity and their homeland, in particular in Turkey, Iran and Iraq.¹⁴ It is through “enframing” that Kurdish “difference” is transformed into “otherness” and they are punished for being “other.”

Trapped in the technological “enframing,” we see the Kurds but we do not recognize them. Technologies of othering mask the truth of being Kurdish. Instead of bringing them into the light of theory, definition, and discourse; it casts the shadow of cynicism over major issues related to Kurdistan. And this is due to the fact that technology “represents a metaphysical “world-picture” by means of which beings are “unconcealed,” but never known in their essence.”¹⁵ This “world-picture” is characterized as “enframing” and ultimately its goal is domination and power.

As a process of “enframing,” technology signifies a metaphysical standpoint whereby a “subject” counter-poses itself to the totality of existing “objects” (*Gegen-stände*) [standing against] for the purpose of subordinating them to an imperious logic of domination and control. As such, it becomes the signature or defining feature of the modern world in all its aspects.¹⁶

It is true that technology is an ancient phenomenon and not particular to modernity. But the modern subject motivated by “will to power” is particular to modernity. In this respect it must be remembered that the metaphysics of modernity is the “will to power.”¹⁷ And “ [i]t is precisely in this sense that technology must be understood

¹⁴ It is important to know that at the time of writing this thesis the future of Iraqi Kurds were still unclear.

¹⁵ Richard Wolin, *The Politics of Being: The Political Thought of Martin Heidegger*, (New York: Columbia University Press): 161.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ See Jean- Makrie Vaysse, *Le Vocabulaire de Heidegger*, (Paris: Ellipses, 2000): 14.

as the “consummation of metaphysics.” ”¹⁸ Basically it is metaphysics that rules the modern world and it does so qua technology.

Since the enframing becomes the exclusive mode through which beings are uncovered in the modern world, the totality of the real takes on the character of “standing reserve” (Bestand): things become entirely devoid of intrinsic meaning and significance; they are not known essentially or in the manner of their “Being.” Instead, they become meaningful only as part of the machinery of a gigantic “ordering process” set in motion by modern economy.¹⁹

The Kurds have been treated as “standing reserve” because they have been known through the process of “enframing” and for that reason they have not been known as who they are in their own reality, instead they are known as “tribes,” or an “ethnicity,”²⁰ etc. So it has been the norm to use them as “standing reserve” and “raw material” in a “stock pile of other materials;” and when they serve their purpose they are tossed aside and life moves on to another project. Kemal Ataturk, the Shah of Iran, Saddam Hussein, Kissinger and Ford, Bush (senior) all have used Kurds as “standing reserves”.

In this respect technology reduces humanity to available material. Guernica²¹, the Holocaust, Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Halabja are terrible examples of how human beings were reduced to material to be used, abused and wasted. It is important to understand the fundamental relationship between these crimes and technology.

Modern Western technology first and foremost means mastery of nature. This idea sooner or later was bound to reveal its political dimension.

¹⁸ Richard Wolin, The Politics of Being: The Political Thought of Martin Heidegger, (New York: Columbia University Press): 162.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ In chapter three I deal with such terms as “ethnie” and “ethnic” and their distortion from the original meaning. I also explain how such distortions are a part of political technology of othering.

²¹ The Basque city of Guernica was the first city in the history of modern times to be destroyed by aerial bombardment.

The new adage of rulers and educators is that to the mastery of non-human nature must now be added mastery of ourselves. The desire for 'mastery of ourselves' (which generally means the mastery of other people) results in the proliferation of new arts and sciences directed towards human control, so that we can be shaped to live consonantly with the demands of mass society.²²

This brings us to my notion of technologies of othering. Once a group of people, a culture or a civilization is considered to be "other" it is only a matter of time, style and degree before they will be stripped of their rights or even existence. The Kurds are othered in a double sense. Being a non-Western group of people they are considered to be just one of "them." This notion of "them" and not "us" today means either Arabs or Muslims. But Kurds are not Arab, Turk or Persian and systematically have been othered by these three major nations of the Middle East. To clarify the matter I first examine colonialism, which is one of the principle causes of othering in the modern world.

II. European Modernity and Colonialism

One of the most obvious mechanisms of the technology of othering is modern colonialism. Colonialism is perhaps best defined as "the control of a territory and its people by officials from an imperial or metropolitan center."²³ As to what motivates colonialism, it is best described as follows:

Colonialism is variously motivated by security considerations (settlers are planted to control strategic territories), economic avarice (exploiting the raw materials and labour of the native population), religious beliefs (spreading 'the true faith'), and/or overpopulation (or unwanted population) in the metropolis.²⁴

²² George Grant, Technology and Justice, (Concord: Anansi, 1986): 16.

²³ Kenneth McLeish, Key Ideas in Human Thought, (New York: Prima Publishing, 1995): 135.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

But one must realize that colonialism did not happen in a vacuum. In the history of modern European colonialism, three major figures stand out vis-à-vis the Middle East: Machiavelli, Napoleon, and Hegel. I will explain the role each played in theorizing and actualizing the project of modern colonialism in the Middle East.

Machiavelli prepared the European consciousness for a brand of politics stripped of moral concerns. He established the rules and principles for domination according to the formulas of rationality and calculative thinking. *The Prince* can be understood as a handbook for colonialism.

When the acquired states, as has been said, are accustomed to living under their own laws and in liberty, there are for those who want to hold them three modes [of proceeding]: the first, to ruin them; the other, to go to live there personally; the third, to let them live under their own laws, levying, and creating there a state of a few who will keep it friendly to you.... And whoever becomes the master of a city accustomed to living in liberty, and does not destroy it-- he waits to be destroyed by it.²⁵

Machiavelli was the first political philosopher of the modern understanding of power. In *The Prince* he wrote on how to take over another “city” and dominate its people. This may cause confusion regarding his link to colonialism because he speaks of the “city.” He does so because in his time the unit of political power was “city.” Later in the evolution of modernity the unit of political power became the “state.” Those interested in colonialism only needed to adjust his notions to their particular case. His formula of dominance still works by simply changing the terms and variables. In this case changing “city” for “state.”

In fact European colonizers all over the globe have used all of Machiavelli’s propositions about dominance since the beginning of the modern era. In this respect

²⁵ Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Leo Paul S. de Alvarez (Illinois: Prospects, 1989): 29-30.

technology, as a mechanism of knowing in order to dominate, fits into the Machiavellian understanding of politics.

When 'technology' is used to describe the actual means of making events happen, and not simply the systematic study of these means, the word reveals to us the fact that these new events happen because we westerners willed to develop a new and unique co-penetration of the arts and sciences, a co-penetration which has never before existed. What is given in the neologism --consciously or not -- is the idea that modern civilisation is distinguished from all previous civilisations because our activities of knowing and making have been brought together in a way which does not allow the once-clear distinguishing of them. In fact, the coining of the word 'technology' catches the novelty of that co-penetration of knowing and making. It also implies that we have brought the sciences and the arts into a new unity in our will to be masters of the earth and beyond.²⁶

Machiavelli and colonialism are inseparable. He established the rules and principles of modern state-building. In other words all the artificially constructed regimes of the so-called Third World are created after Machiavelli's prescriptions.

Napoleon was the first modern colonialist to use Machiavelli's *Prince* as his Bible for colonization of the Middle East and North Africa. He assembled a team of Orientalists to help him conquer Egypt. He supervised their work and used their knowledge for further dominance over the Orient.²⁷ He used the technical knowledge of Orientalist experts as an efficient tool for his colonial project. It is important to remember, however, that Napoleon was a product of the Enlightenment and the French revolution. According to Hegel the French Revolution became World-Historical.²⁸ He glorified Napoleon's role in expanding and imposing liberalism all over the world.²⁹

²⁶ George Grant, *Technology and Justice*, (Concord: Anansi, 1986.): 12.

²⁷ See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1979): 81-82.

²⁸ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1956): 447.

²⁹ It is significant that Hegel took his own Eurocentrism for granted. He continuously spoke of the world but in reality he meant Europe. In fact this is a common attitude of all

Hegel strongly approved of Napoleon and his style of rulership as actualizing the “right ideas” to which the modern era was giving birth.³⁰ Moreover Napoleon himself admired Machiavelli and it is not hard to imagine that Napoleon’s favorite task was colonial conquest.

To understand the role of these three figures regarding colonization of the Middle East, we must remember how they were connected to one another. Machiavelli wrote *The Prince* with three audiences in mind: (1) an actual prince, i.e. his patron Lorenzo Medici, (2) the educators of princes, and (3) the potential prince,³¹ who turned out to be Napoleon. In this respect Napoleon was the first man in Europe to understand Machiavelli and apply his ideas in action on an international level. By examining Napoleon’s actions, Hegel believed he could see the world of idea or World Spirit realizing and actualizing itself. In other words, the Machiavellian Napoleon was fulfilling the destiny of the world according to Hegel. In this sense colonialism was no accident. The grand philosophy of Hegelian historicism first theorized and then actualized the project of dominance of the modern Europe over the world. Hegel was quite straightforward about the rightness of European dominance over the rest of the world. He justified this dominance in his thesis that no nation on earth can escape from history. He believed history is a divine plan which sooner or later reveals itself. He glorified Napoleon because he believed Napoleon knew that he was changing the course of events in Europe in the most radical way. Hegel called this level of knowledge Real Freedom,

Hegelians that in one way or another Europe and the world are easily exchangeable in their discourse.

³⁰ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1956): 451.

³¹ Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Leo Paul S. de Alvarez (Illinois: Prospects, 1989): 1-2.

which is the working of self-consciousness. He elaborated this notion by explaining that when one is free yet has no consciousness of it he is not “really” free. But when one is free and he knows he is free then we have the situation of “real freedom.”³² Napoleon met Hegel’s requirement in that he knew what he was doing and what he was doing was in accordance with Hegel’s divine plan for the history of the world.

That the History of the World, with all the changing scenes which its annals present, is this process of development and the realization of Spirit--This is the true *Theodicaea*, the justification of God in History. Only *this* insight can reconcile Spirit with the History of the World--viz., that what has happened, and is happening every day, is not only not “without God,” but is essentially His Work.³³

Hegel’s historicism was used to justify the culture of European imperialism. He believed Truth is revealing itself progressively in history. He considered this Truth to be a universal history working through the liberation of the entire earth by Europe through the project of Enlightenment in general and the person of Napoleon in particular. Hegel was also responsible for establishing the intellectual apartheid of European modernity which dismissed any form of non-European knowledge or consciousness as irrelevant to Universal History. Hegel thus provided the ideological framework for the historicization of the earth. In other words, modern Europe as used by Hegel was the guide for reshaping the earth in Europe’s image. This reshaping of the earth was one of the most destructive elements imposed on the peoples of the earth. The invention of arbitrary borders, building puppet regimes, and disregard for the natural course of non-European peoples’ lives became the essence of the encounter between Europe and the colonized world. In this respect this was an encounter with nihilism.

³² Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1956): 447-8.

³³ *Ibid.*, 457.

III. Western Nihilism

Modernity had many advocates, but Hegel was its most important philosopher. He philosophized modernity in a systematic manner and that was precisely what Nietzsche revolted against. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, just about the time when the Kurdish problem began to emerge, Nietzsche made the critique of modernity his most important project. He considered *Beyond Good and Evil* a critique of modernity.³⁴ In his works we can see a radical critique of modern European rationality.

Nietzsche was the first European who paid attention to nihilism thoroughly. In his view nihilism is about the gradual obliteration of metaphysical values. For the most part Nietzsche's critique of modernity and his efforts to overcome nihilism are the first European attempts to critique modern subjectivity. Today this critique is common but Nietzsche was the first to diagnose the problems of subjectivity. At the same time the critique of metaphysics is important because I believe there is a link between metaphysics and tyranny or simply injustice. Metaphysics require a hierarchy and impose a rule from top to bottom. Therefore metaphysics is the ground for tyranny. And nihilism creates the condition of arbitrariness as a justification for injustice. It imposes its arbitrariness on the whole planet. According to Heidegger "[n]ihilism, thought in its essence, is, rather, the fundamental movement of the history of the West. It shows such great profundity that its unfolding can have nothing but world catastrophes as its consequence."³⁵

³⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, "Ecce Homo," in trans. Walter Kaufmann, Basic Writings of Nietzsche, (New York: The Modern Library, 1992): 766.

³⁵ Martin Heidegger, "The Word of Nietzsche: 'God is Dead,'" in The Question Concerning Technology, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977): 62.

In Nietzsche's *Twilight of the Idols* there is a section called "How the 'Real World' at last Became a Myth; history of an error."³⁶ There he goes through the history of European subjectivity and explains how reality has never been dealt with. First the real world was lost to the Platonic "idea", then to the Christian God and after that to modern rationality. He considers all to be steps towards denial of reality of the world and creating fictitious subjectivities.³⁷ In the *Will to Power* he particularly targets modern rationality as follows:

The fictitious world of subject, substance, "reason," etc., is needed--: there is in us a power to order, simplify, falsify, artificially distinguish. "Truth" is the will to be master over the multiplicity of sensations--to classify phenomena into definite categories. In this we start from a belief in the "in-itself" of things (we take phenomena as *real*).³⁸

Nietzsche further elaborates: "Knowledge works as a tool of power."³⁹ The will to knowledge is to organize the world in a particular way, in a colonized way. But what led the modern Europeans to do so? Perhaps Nietzsche, himself explained it best: "To 'humanize' the world, i.e., to feel ourselves more and more masters within it--"⁴⁰ The project of modernity was to make European man, the master of the world, the agent whose mission was to change the world radically.

One should not understand this compulsion to construct concepts, species, forms, purposes, laws ("a world of identical cases") as if they enable us to fix the *real world*; but as a compulsion to arrange a world for ourselves in which our existence is made possible--we thereby create a world which is calculable, simplified, comprehensible, etc., for us.⁴¹

³⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Penguin Books, 1990): 50.

³⁷ See *Ibid.*: 50-51.

³⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1968): 280.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 266.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 329.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 282.

These modern simplifications of realities and categorical reductions paved the way for modern ideologies. To simplify reality is what ideologies do and that is precisely what Nietzsche is criticizing. Furthermore they also transform the free-thinking individual into a member of an ideological mob. Nietzsche regarding the notion of difference argues that,

Today, conversely, when only the herd animal alone receives and dispenses honors in Europe, when 'equality of rights' could all too easily change into equality in violating right... today the concept of greatness entails being noble, wanting to be oneself, being able to be different, standing alone and having to live independently.⁴²

The technology of othering is a function of intolerance for differences by transforming them into "other" and then persecute "them" for being "other." Nietzsche did not see the devastating effects of ideologies such as Fascism and Communism, but he saw nationalism. The world wars and ideological politics that have created so much destruction are inseparable from European nihilism. Nietzsche was predicting and expecting all the disasters of the twentieth century because he knew nihilism and its capabilities. That is why he wrote: "Nihilism stands at the door: Whence comes this uncanniest of all guests?"⁴³ He asks, "What does nihilism mean?" and gives the answer: "That the highest values devalue themselves. The aim is lacking; 'why?' finds no answer."⁴⁴ Nietzsche was reflecting on what was going on in Europe at the end of nineteenth century through the beginning of twentieth. When he says, 'why?' finds no answer, he is reflecting on the irrationality of the war of nations against each other, the

⁴² Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1989): 138-139.

⁴³ Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1968): 7.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

irrationality of colonialism and mastery of earth, and the faith in ideologies as modern religions. The death of God, in Nietzsche's terms, "leads to a world in which everything is permitted."⁴⁵ Perhaps he was predicting that the incredible scientific achievements of modernity could also be used for systematic and calculated massive crimes. When he wrote, "values devalue themselves" he was referring to irrational behaviors in the age of rationality, barbaric behavior among "civilized" nations. Nietzsche was writing about nihilism and nihilism was moving beyond the borders of Europe and the time of Nietzsche. Heidegger in his essay "The Word of Nietzsche: God Is Dead" explains that

Nihilism is the world-historical movement of the peoples of the earth who have been drawn into the power realm of the modern age. Hence it is not only a phenomenon of the present age, nor is it primarily the product of the nineteenth century, in which to be sure a perspicacious eye for nihilism awoke and the name also became current. No more is nihilism the exclusive product of particular nations whose thinkers and writers speak expressly of it. Those who fancy themselves free of nihilism perhaps push forward its development most fundamentally.⁴⁶

Nietzsche himself was aware of the historical character of nihilism. He also knew that nihilism would become a more noticeable problem in the future. He wrote:

What I relate is the history of the next two centuries. I describe what is coming, what can no longer come differently: *the advent of nihilism*. This history can be related even now; for necessity itself is at work here. This future speaks even now in a hundred signs, this destiny announces itself everywhere; for this music of the future all ears are cocked even now. For some time now, our whole European culture has been moving as toward a catastrophe, with a tortured tension that is growing from decade to decade: restlessly, violently, headlong, like a river that wants to reach the end, that no longer reflects, that is afraid to reflect.⁴⁷

⁴⁵Michael Allan Gillespie, *Nihilism before Nietzsche*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995): xii.

⁴⁶ Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1977): 62-63.

⁴⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1968): 3.

Nihilism as a force of will to power dominates and denies the objects of its domination be they nature or nations. When Middle Eastern nations encountered nihilism most often their reactions were nihilistic as well. And this is due to the overpowering influence of nihilism that even the reactions to it rarely have been immune from nihilism. Gilles Deleuze points out this contradictory and complex nature of nihilism by describing its dual sense as “negative nihilism” and “reactive nihilism.” According to Deleuze, negative nihilism “finds its principle in the will to deny as will to power.”⁴⁸ Nihilism, in the will to power, denies the object of its domination. In domination it denies. In comparison, Deleuze wrote, reactive nihilism “finds its principle in the reactive life completely solitary and naked, in reactive forces reduced to themselves.”⁴⁹

I believe the Middle Eastern encounter with nihilism began when European imperialism entered into the politics of Iran, Turkey and Iraq. The European imperialist’s will to power began the cycle of nihilism. The European subject thought of himself superior to the objects of his domination by virtue of his modern and scientific values. He thought of himself as superior due to his superior technology. But in fact this was nihilism as will to power because his superior technology did not provide him with superior ethics. He only had superior technique. And this superior technique, driven by the will to power, was the negating force of nihilism because it willed “nothingness” in the form of annihilation and domination over its captive subjects. There was nothing higher or new about it. Its claims of advance and progress were nihilistic. It was only advanced in technique and science, which enable it to dominate and negate. “Thus in its primary and basic sense, nihilism, signifies the value of nil taken on by life, the fiction of

⁴⁸ Gilles Deleuze, translated by Hugh Tomlinson, Nietzsche and Philosophy, (London: The Athlone Press, 1983): 148.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

higher values which give it this value and the will to nothingness which is expressed in these values.”⁵⁰

I believe that in encountering the awesome force of nihilism in the colonial will to power, a reactive nihilism was produced by Turkey, Iran and later Iraq. In these countries reactive nihilism revealed itself in the forms of ethno-nationalism, Islamic Fundamentalism and Baathism. I believe all the above ideologies involved reactive nihilism because they were a force of negation in a reactive way. They negated the colonial condition yet they also negated many aspects of their own cultures as well. In this process, they devalued those values they claimed to esteem. These values, the glory of nation, religion or progress, were ultimately devalued by the nihilist nature of their reactive ideologies. I examine these reactive nihilistic ideologies in chapters four, five and six where I examine Turkish and Persian ethno-nationalism, Iraqi Baathism and Iranian Islamic fundamentalism. In this respect, many aspects and dimensions of nihilism contributed to projects without meaning which contributed to the persecution and othering of the Kurds.

Hubert Dreyfus points out “nihilism is loss of meaning or seriousness.”⁵¹ He further explains that nihilism cannot be cured or prevented. But what should be done about it? Dreyfus, like Heidegger, suggests that all we can do is understand the problem of nihilism deeply so we do not contribute to it any more. In a nihilistic age nothing has authority for the actors in the project of power and domination. Nor is there any significant issue. Their project of will to power can be triggered and motivated by anything. And nothing demands their commitment to any principle. Rules can change any

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*: 147.

⁵¹ Hubert L. Dreyfus, “Knowledge and Human Values: A Genealogy of Nihilism,” in Teachers College Record, Volume 82, Number 3, (Spring 1981): 508.

time. This is why, regardless of so many protective measures and laws, many institutions and systems of guarding principles and “values,” there are still violations of all of them in bright daylight. Ellul in the early 1960s wrote: “[d]ocuments such as the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights mean nothing to a mankind surrounded by techniques.”⁵² What he meant was that these documents are not enough to stop abuses because the power of technology is awesome and the force of nihilism is unpredictable.

It often happens that the symptoms of nihilism are confused with the problem of nihilism itself. That is to say, the failure of certain Western ideas and ideals, particularly those favored by non-Western peoples, are not the problem of this local leader or those cultural differences or any other symptoms. These failures lie in the history of nihilism and metaphysics. Western modernity at the final stage of its metaphysical project, i.e. technology, has changed the history of the planet in ways yet to be discovered. These changes and the reordering of power relations around the globe have rendered many people powerless and enslaved. The usual way of avoiding the critique of modernity is that there have been many corrupt, local non-Western leaders who have been the agents of destruction along with their Western patrons. The point is not a competition about who was the most evil or who is to blame more than the other. The point is that the project of mastery, domination and conquest of the earth has its roots in Western modernity. One could argue that the idea of dominating the entire planet has been entertained by other, non-Western civilizations as well. But it should be noted that the dominance of modern technology, in various degrees, over the planet is unique.

⁵² Jacques Ellul, The Technological Society, trans. John Wilkinson (New York: Vintages Books, 1964): 281.

The modern West is unique in the sense that it could actualize its metaphysical principles of mastery through technology for political mastery. Foucault extensively deals with this issue from a Western point of view and tries to answer “What are we in our actuality?”⁵³ By “we” he refers to modern Western civilization. Foucault argues that, in the project of domination, Western modernity applied four types of technology: technologies of production, of language and discourse, of power, and of self.⁵⁴ In my opinion, all of these technologies are linked and bound together through the metaphysics of technology, which allowed the West to actualize the goal of domination over the planet even the galaxy. This left the political landscape changed in a dramatic way with many non-Western cultures marginalized or destroyed. The Kurdish issue came about in such a fragmented world. The Kurds were disintegrated into many parts due to this changing of the world order. But prior to this dramatic change, the Kurds lived in another world with another set of orders; the world of Islamic empire that no longer exists. But it is important to explore the question of collective identity and politics in an Islamic context so we can understand one of the most dramatic encounters of world history: the encounter between modernity and tradition, which produced nihilism.

IV. Collective Identity and Classical Islam

In this section I examine collective identity in classical Islam. The very idea of collective identity and political community in Islam date back to the dramatic beginning of Islam

⁵³ Michel Foucault, “The Political Technology of Individuals,” in Technologies of Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault, edited by Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton, (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988): 145.

⁵⁴ Michel Foucault, “Technologies of Self,” in Technologies of Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault, edited by Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton, (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988): 18.

and the creation of the first political community in the city of Madinah around 622, the year of the migration of the very first small group of Muslims from Mecca in Saudi Arabia, the birthplace of Islam, to Yathreb, later called Madinah-Tul Naby literally the city of the prophet, about 400 kilometers northeast of Mecca.⁵⁵ Yathreb/Madinah was the home of many different tribes and religious communities. But it was suffering from a long civil war that had brought the community near to destruction. Eventually the people of Yathreb/Madinah heard of a new prophet called Mohamad and asked him to come to their city and become the arbiter of peace among the warring factions. So in 622 Mohammad, who was persecuted in Mecca, answered the call of the people of Yathreb/Madinah and went to build a community for his new religion away from the persecutions of Mecca. His arrival on that date marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar. This story is the collective memory of all Muslims of different origins and cultures since it marks the beginning of their religion. But it is also important to note that it was in this place and at this time that Islam became a state religion. Mohammad as the prophet became the lawgiver and the ruler of the first Muslim political community. He agreed to be the arbiter of peace among the different tribes of Yathreb/Madinah if they accepted the message of Islam, which meant submission. The people did submit to Islam and Mohammad's rule and changed the name of their city from Yathreb to Madinah-Tul Naby, the city of prophet, handing over all authority to him.

It was with this dramatic act that religion became the cornerstone of politics in Islam. The period of Mohammad's rule over Madinah (622 - 632) has since been established as the archetype of the ideal political system for Muslims. As a result, Islam

⁵⁵ Andrew Rippin, Muslims. Their Religious Beliefs and Practices. Volume 1: The Formative Period, (New York: Routledge, 1991): 33.

considers two sources of legitimacy for ruling the community: divine revelation, which was the case with the prophet Mohammad but no one else, and by the consent of the community either because of their merits, for Sunnis, or by affiliation to the family of the prophet, for Shiites.⁵⁶ This is one of many differences which reveals that the Sunni / Shiite divide is a political conflict that began after the death of Mohammad.

Throughout their history, Muslims considered the period when their community was ruled by the Prophet Mohammad as the ideal political system. But problems arose when Mohammad died and left no specific instructions regarding who should be the next ruler. Ever since his death, Islam has been divided between those who believe the Muslim community should have been ruled by Ali and those who believed Abu Bakir was the rightful successor. Ali was the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law and, according to the Shiites, the first Imam, literally the leader. The Shiites believe Ali and after him his sons were the legitimate rulers. Because they were in the minority, they were called *Shiat al Ali*, i.e. the sect of Ali. The name suggests that they were a cult, not a part of the mainstream religion. But the Shiites throughout their history adopted the name and call themselves Shiites. Their minority status has made them one of the strong voices of political opposition in the history of Islam. So it was no surprise that when the Islamic revolution happened in Iran in 1979, it introduced the twentieth century to political Islam, because Shiism always had this tradition of political opposition. The Sunnis were so named because they considered themselves to be the followers of *Sunnat ul Rasul al Allah*, which means the followers of the norm or the tradition of the Messenger of Allah.

⁵⁶ Hans Daiber, "Political Philosophy," in History of Islamic Philosophy, part II, edited by Sayyed Hussein Nasr and Oliver Leaman, (New York: Routledge, 1997): 841.

The idea of norm and tradition indicates their majority status as representatives of mainstream Islam.

There is also a doctrinal difference between the two main branches of Islam. The Sunnis believe the ruler must be elected by a majority vote. In their belief, because the ruler is going to rule the people and protect the borders of Islamic territories, he needs support from the majority of the Muslim community. Shiites believe election does not apply and majority vote is irrelevant, because in their opinion the leader is also the supreme interpreter of the Divine Word, i.e. the Quran. According to Shiites, the average Muslims are not qualified even to recognize a qualified leader let alone elect him. The person who claims leadership must prove his worth by demonstrating his esoteric knowledge of the Divine Word.⁵⁷ The Sunnis called the elected leader Caliph or the representative of god and the prophet on earth. And the Shiites called their leader Imam, literally the leader. The Shiite/Sunni conflict has never been resolved. I believe one of the major causes of the destruction of Muslim Empire was this civil war between Muslims. But regardless of the Sunni / Shiite divide, there has been a historical continuity of Islamic rule based on a particular political philosophy.

Muslim empires in different historical periods survived because they built their political system based not on theology but on philosophy. And when they abandoned philosophy they were ended either by civil unrest or foreign invasions. To understand the philosophic ground of Islamic understanding of political rule, we must first understand Islam's vision of the human being. Islam has a theomorphic vision of human beings and

⁵⁷ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Islam, Religion, History, and Civilization, (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003): 110-111.

it emphasizes the ontological reliance of human beings on god.⁵⁸ Ontology here means the philosophic explanation for the cause of existence. God as the ontological cause of existence is the unifying force behind every aspect of life including the unity of politics and religion. Since God is one, all else is one and therefore politics and religion are one, because they all go back to god and god has created all. This should not be confused with the modern Western idea of state and the church. Separation of state and church in many modern Western systems does not mean a separation of religion from politics. The United States is a good example. While the state and church are constitutionally separated, there are always elements of religion involved in politics. But in Islam the link between politics and religion is stronger.

Since the ontological cause of human existence is god, to Muslims diverse groups of humanity are one and the same vis-à-vis law and state responsibility. An entire chapter in Quran is dedicated to explaining this notion.

O' humankind! We created you from a single pair of male and female. And made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is he or she who is the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well-acquainted with all things. (Quran, 49:13)

The Quran refers to all humanity inclusively as one family in their ontological reality. That is to say the diversity of human existence is the diversity of the members of the same functional family. This is the affirmation of the unity of existence. According to the Quran, all humans are created with an intelligence capable of knowing god.⁵⁹ This quality makes all human beings equal.

⁵⁸ Sayyed Hussein Nasr, The Heart of Islam, Enduring Values for Humanity, (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2002): 299.

⁵⁹ See Quran (95:4).

In the eighth century Islam developed a new metaphysics, which took the name of Sufism. The ideal of Sufism was love as the binding force uniting human beings. Politically speaking this notion was significant to early political theory in Islam. Farabi (870-950), Miskawayh (d. 1030) and Ikhwan al-Safa (10th – 11th Centuries), all pioneers of Islamic philosophy, established their political philosophy based on the notion of love as the motivating force for justice. Each, in his own way believed the only way a political system could overcome differences, particularly politico-economic differences, is through love. Political harmony can be created among people through justice based on love.⁶⁰ Unity through love establishes justice and harmony, an order which extended to the whole of the cosmos and back to human beings in their socio-political affairs. As a result, the ground of human political association must reflect the same harmony created by love. In Islamic cosmology, the cosmos is regarded as a unifying force that embraces all beings.⁶¹ Therefore the political order, as a part of being or existence, must reflect the order which embraces all. This vision of politics seems very utopian to a contemporary observer because of the catastrophes created by Islamic fundamentalism and nihilism. But in Islamic Spain (755-1492) this was not a mere utopia. It created the longest period of peace and harmony any of the major religions could remember. Perhaps a poem by the most famous Muslim Sufi of 12th century Cordoba, Ibn Arabi, can explain better.

My heart has become capable of all forms
 It is a meadow for gazelles and a monastery for Christian monks,
 A temple for idols and the pilgrim's Ka'aba,
 The pages of Torah and the book of Koran.
 I profess the religion of Love, and whatever direction

⁶⁰ See Hans Daiber, "Political Philosophy," in History of Islamic Philosophy, Part II, edited by Sayyed Hussein Nasr and Oliver Leaman, (New York: Routledge, 1997): 852.

⁶¹ Sayyed Hussein Nasr, Science and Civilization in Islam, (Cambridge: The Islamic texts Society, 1987): viii.

Its steed may take, Love is my religion and my faith.⁶²

Contemporary ideologies dismiss such ideas today because of the dominance of nihilism. These ideas seem naïve and impractical to modern Western and non-Western observers because they do not fit with the metaphysics of power and domination, or the reactions they create. Western modernity separates human rationality from intellectual intuition which was more open to loving the “other” than seeing the “other” as a market or a target. Islamic fundamentalism separated the human order from its humanist values because of its theologization of all politics. Western modernity created a technological and scientific era based on power not wisdom.⁶³ And Islamic fundamentalism established an ideology based on fear and tyranny rather than love and harmony. It is true that science has eradicated many diseases, but it is also true that medicine is an expensive commodity, often not available to all human beings equally. Its advances benefit first rich individuals and nations. Technology has made some aspects of life easier, but it also destroys environments and the living habitats of many peoples and creatures around the world who do not benefit from the technological comfort but witness their environment turned into a wasteland. In any case, to speak of love as a political act in the age of conflicting ideologies falls on the deaf ears of warmongers and supremacists.

Modernist Western politics reduced most political acts to acts of power, which end with domination over various “others.” So in Western modernity the dialectics of ruler and ruled are mainly power struggles. Therefore human beings are seen as by nature

⁶² Cited in Henry Corbin, Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi, trans. by Ralph Manheim, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969): 135.

⁶³ Sayyed Hussein Nasr, The Heart of Islam. Enduring Values for Humanity, (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2002): 310.

to be in a constant state of war of all against all.⁶⁴ But in Islam power is supposed to be the domain of god. Human beings are not supposed to exercise power without understanding that they have no power without god. This is a mechanism to prevent tyranny of one group over the other. Although the Quran does not map out the exact structure of political rule, it is very clear about notions such as justice, fairness, accountability and consultation with all parties involved in matters of politics. These notions, and particularly the issue of consultation, are addressed in the Quran specifically in a verse called Ale-Imran, named after Imran the father of Moses. This verse speaks of the Torah and the Gospels as predecessors of the Quran, and advises Mohammed on justice, fairness and consultations with the ruled.

It is part of the mercy of Allah that you deal with them gently, if you were severe or harsh they would have broken away from you. So pass over their faults and ask for Allah's forgiveness for them; and consult with them concerning conduct in affairs. Then when you took a decision put your trust in Allah. For Allah loves those who put their trust in him. (Quran, 3: 159)

Here the message of the Quran is clear: the Muslim ruler is not to be a dictator. True Islamic rule should not discriminate and should not create hierarchy. The ruled are considered equal to the ruler for two reasons: if the ruled are Muslim they are equal to the ruler for they are all brothers and sisters in religion; and if they are not Muslims they are equal to the ruler in creation.⁶⁵ For god has created all that exists and all existence shares the mercy of god. Quran is filled with stories of how god abases tyrants and destroys unjust rulers.

⁶⁴ See Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, (London: Penguin Books, 1985): 184.

⁶⁵ Sayyed Hussein Nasr, *The Heart of Islam, Enduring Values for Humanity*, (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2002): 251.

This all seems utopian now, because many countries with Muslim majorities are not examples of justice and fairness. But contemporary Muslims face many challenges, especially the political injustice related to the experience of modern colonialism. Farabi (870-950) reflected tragically on the worst-case scenario and argued that, “[t]he virtuous person is forbidden to reside in the corrupt regimes, and it is obligatory for him to emigrate to the virtuous cities if any exist in actuality in his time. If they are non-existent, then the virtuous person is a stranger in this world and miserable in life; death is better for him than living.”⁶⁶ In this respect Farabi believed political injustice to be an ontological problem because it affects all aspects of life, including the very meaning of life itself. Injustice corrupts everything and results in all values devaluing themselves in a nihilistic way. Nihilism looms out of the state of injustice, which is now the case of many Muslim majority countries.

Because classical Islamic thought highlighted the dangers posed by the self and other dichotomy, it created the concept of the *Umma*, literally the community of faith. The structure of the *Umma* was designed to overcome racial, linguistic and regional differences, because by the end of the first decade of its existence, Islam was a multicultural, multinational community. The early Muslims came from diverse backgrounds; Persia, Syria, Africa, central Asia and later India and Europe. They also came from different faith backgrounds; Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, and other ancient religions. Due to this diversity Islam needed to include all without creating a hierarchy among people. All were to be equal members of the *Umma*, which functioned by faith but cannot be forged by force. The Quran is very clear about human freedom in religion:

⁶⁶ Alfarabi, The Political Writings. “Selected Aphorisms” and Other Texts, Translated and Annotated by Charles E. Butterworth, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press): 61.

“There is no compulsion in religion.” (Quran, 2: 256). So the *Umma* was not a community of slaves; it was the assembly of the free. For early Muslims, freedom was one of the principles of a functioning *Umma*. Because no one had the right to play god, and god is the ontological cause of all things, human and non-human, then the reason of all things go back to god: “If it had been the Lord’s Will, everyone on earth would have believed. Do you then force people to become believers?” (Quran, 10: 99). To force a belief system on people is to play god and that is nihilism, the practice of modern ideologies. When fundamentalists try to force their beliefs on others they also act like ideologies in the cause of nihilism, which is now a universal phenomenon. Of course imposed conversions also happened before modern times in violation of the Quran and classical principles of Islam. The point being there is no compulsion in true faith. On the subject of apostasy, the same freedom is applied. Contrary to contemporary fanatic reactions to those who turn away from Islam, classical Islam never prescribed punishment (let alone punishment by death) in cases of apostasy.

Neither the Prophet himself, nor any of his Companions⁶⁷ ever compelled any one to embrace Islam, nor did they sentence anyone to death solely for renunciation of faith. In the light of this, it is not surprising to find a number of prominent ‘*ulama*’⁶⁸, across the centuries, subscribing to the view that apostasy is not a punishable offence. Ibrahim al-Nakhai (d. 713), a leading jurist and traditionist⁶⁹ among the generation succeeding the Companions, and Sufyan al-Thawri (d. 772), who is known as ‘the prince

⁶⁷ Companions refers to the first generation of Muslim companions of Mohammad who are the most reliable historical sources regarding the way early Islam ran the affairs of Islamic community. They hold a special place in Muslim history because they were the first teachers of Islam and their teachings were based on first-hand accounts of events, ideas and interpretations as they were the witnesses of how Mohammad ran the community.

⁶⁸ *Ulama* is a term referring to religious scholars who were prime authorities in terms of interpretation and explanations of the religious texts primarily the Quran and the collection of Mohammad’s saying.

⁶⁹ A traditionist is an expert on the interpretations of the saying and traditions of Mohammad. It is one of the branches of textual knowledge of Islam, which has contributed greatly to traditional hermeneutics and textual analysis.

of the believers concerning *Hadith*⁷⁰ (*amir al-mu'minin fil-Hadith*) and is the author of two important compilations of Hadith, namely *al-Jami al-Akabar* and *al-Jami al-Saghir*, both held that the apostate should be re-invited to Islam, but should never be condemned to death.⁷¹

There is no actual evidence whether during the ten years of Mohammad's rule (622 – 632) any individual or community was forcefully converted to Islam or punished for denouncing Islam. In this respect, *Umma* was the community of faith based on voluntary adherence. The community spirit was based on harmony and cooperation. It was on this principle that Islamic Spain (755-1492) allowed many Jewish and Christian scholars to flourish without having to convert to Islam. In fact in Muslim Spain there was a dialogue among Jewish, Christian and Muslim scholars. Maimonides (1135-1204) explained his Jewish philosophy employing Islamic terminology drawn from Sharia, and most Jewish philosophers explained Torah and Sharia (Islamic and Jewish law) as parallel constructs in a comparative way. Many of the great works of Jewish philosophy were written in Arabic. As Peiro argues:

Spanish Jews used the Arab language as much as Hebrew in prose writings. Arab was predominant in scientific tracts until about the 13th century. The most famous poets, whose poems reached the highest level of perfection in the Hebrew language, wrote their prose in Arab. So, for example, the *Kitab* by Moses ibn Ezra, the *Kuzari* by Judah Levi, the philosophical works of Ibn Gabriol and the greater part of Maimonides' works were all written in Arab, although among the latter's works we can also find some written in Hebrew, such as his long code of law *Mishneh Torah*.⁷²

⁷⁰ *Hadith* is the collection of sayings or traditions of Mohammad which is only second to Quran in terms of its significance. An expert on *Hadith* is sometimes called a traditionist as well.

⁷¹ Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Freedom of Expression in Islam*, (Cambridge: Islamic Text Society, 1997): 93.

⁷² Marina de los Angeles Navarro Peiro, "Panorama of Hispano-Hebrew Literature," in Jesús Peláez del Rosal, ed., *The Jews In Cordoba (X-XII centuries)*, (Cordoba: Ediciones El Almendro, 1991): 53.

Maimonides was always welcomed with praise and prestige by Muslim rulers. For a good part of his life he served as court physician to the famous Saladin, the Muslim General, incidentally of Kurdish origin, who conquered Jerusalem in 1137. Maimonides gradually moved closer to the heart of Muslim lands to enjoy the freedom he needed for his scholarly pursuits.⁷³ Non-Muslims and non-Arabs were active partners and flourished whenever there was a functional *Umma* ruled by classical principles of Islam. But the era of classical Islam is gone and its values are left only in classic texts. Today most understandings of Islamist movements are fundamentalist which I maintain has more to do with nihilism than original Islam. In fact the ideologies aiming to revive the Caliphate, for Sunnis, or Imamatus, for Shiites, are all aspects of nihilism which devalue true Islamic values. This has created a crisis of identity particularly after the experience of colonialism which I address in the next section.

V. Crisis of Identity after Colonialism

The Islamic world first encountered Western domination in 1492 when the Muslim rule over Spain and Portugal ended and was replaced by Spanish rule under Isabelle and Ferdinand. Jews and Muslims were severely persecuted and eventually expelled from Spain and most other parts of Europe by seventeenth century.⁷⁴ Islam still flourished in India and parts of the Balkans but never truly recovered from this defeat. Finally Islamic civilization came to a halt with the end of The First World War when the Ottoman Empire was dismembered by Western powers. After this experience most of the

⁷³ See Ralph Lerner and Muhsin Mahdi, ed. Medieval Political Philosophy, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1991): 188.

⁷⁴ See Sayyed Hussein Nasr, Islam, Religion, History, and Civilization, (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003): 127.

Muslim world disintegrated. I will deal only with those parts of the Muslim world where Kurds live, i.e. Iran, Iraq and Turkey. For this, I explore Arab identity for Iraq, Persian identity for Iran and Turkish identity for Turkey.

The reactions of these three cultures are embodied in three ideologies: ethno-nationalism, Baathism and Islamic fundamentalism. I present a summary of these ideologies here but deal with them extensively later in the thesis: nationalism in chapter three, Turkish ethnonationalism in chapter four, Iranian ethnonationalism in chapter five, Iraqi Baathism in chapter six and Islamic fundamentalism in chapter seven. In those chapters I explain how these ideologies are part of the framework of technologies of othering. Here I present them as reactions to Western dominance.

The first reaction to the European dominance was nationalism, in Turkey and eventually also in Iran and Arab countries. Turkey is still a nationalist country but in Iran nationalism morphed into Islamic fundamentalism after the 1979 revolution. Iraq was carved out of the leftovers of the Ottoman territories, and was first under British rule, but it didn't really appear on the political map until the dramatic coup d'état of 1958, which brought to power a regime espousing the new ideology of the Baath Party. The Baathist ideology perhaps is the strangest mutation of all ideologies with elements of National Socialism, Stalinism, ethno-nationalism and Pan-Arabism. Contemporary Iraq now has Islamic fundamentalism added to its collection of ideologies.

It was in this environment of mutated, imported and created ideologies that the modern day persecution of the Kurds started. These ideologies acted as technologies of power and were instruments of state oppression. The Kurds faced persecution first in Turkey and then in Iran and Iraq consecutively. The Kurdish responses to these

ideologies have been different with respect to time and place. They range from 'perennial'⁷⁵ to civic nationalism, sometimes in the form of armed resistance and other times civil and human rights activism. In some periods Kurds achieved some measures of autonomy and statehood; at other times they have been severely suppressed. The Kurds first encountered state-nationalisms, then Baathism and finally Islamic fundamentalism. I will explain these ideologies, as they have been experienced in the three mentioned countries.

Nationalism

Both in Turkey and Iran nationalism started as part of cults of military dictatorship. Both countries were taken over by strong, dictatorial military leaders. In Turkey it was Ataturk and in Iran Reza Khan. Both leaders were life-long soldiers and their encounters with Western modernity were military. Both blamed the weakness of their countries on the weakness of their predecessors and the traditions of the past. As a result they believed that strong military men must rule their nations. Both espoused a militant ethnocentric nationalism and started a series of reforms imposed from the top. They hoped to transform their countries overnight, to be as strong as European countries. They only saw the appearance of Western nation-states and tried to imitate it. This was the beginning of reactive nihilism. Both were negating something by virtue of their will to power and in reaction to stronger forms of power.

In Turkey, Ataturk replaced the Arabic alphabet with the Latin one to create a European image for Turkish language. In both Iran and Turkey, leaders forced people to

⁷⁵ See Chapter three for definitions of perennial and civic nationalism.

wear Western styles of clothes. They abolished religious schools and traditions as a matter of state policy. Both forbade women to wear the Muslim veil. Reforms were always enforced by state violence. In both cases all was done in the name of the leader. In Turkey Ataturk and in Iran, Reza Khan were the very state itself. They both had absolute control and authority over every aspect of government and the political system. They both had the backing of their military, since they both were generals in the army. In this respect Reza Khan and Ataturk were the face of nihilism: in the name of “modernization” they established secular military dictatorships. They devalued the very modern values they claimed to advance. This confusion and distortion continues both in state actions and on the discursive level. Nihilism stays around even when its god is dead. In Turkey, even after the death of the dictator, the country worships his shadow as Nietzsche explained.⁷⁶ And in Iran even after the collapse of monarchy the nihilism of one-man rule still exists. In a sense nihilism has been the mode of politics in Iran and Turkey for a long time. Before declaring himself Shah, or the king, Reza Khan was Minister of War. From 1922 to 1925 Iran was the scene of many rebellions with no central government to bring the situation under control. Reza Khan, who had seen how the Ottoman Empire disintegrated, created a sense of urgency for military action among the Persian elite. Soon he managed to bring the situation under control and then declared himself as the new King in 1925.⁷⁷

Ataturk also gained the respect of the Turkish elite by defeating the invading Greeks in 1922. After the Ottoman defeat and its dismembering by Western powers, this victory led by Ataturk brought a sense of pride to the Turkish people. Ataturk seized the

⁷⁶ See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974): 167.

⁷⁷ See Ali M. Ansari, *Modern Iran Since 1921, the Pahlavis and After*, (Toronto: Longman, 2003): 29–31.

moment and declared himself the president of the Republic. Both Ataturk and Reza Shah established themselves as saviors of their nations because of their military victories. In both cases, they established a military discipline over their country in which no opposition was tolerated. For both the state policy was to assimilate all diverse members of the country to the dominant ethnic group. Each had a Kurdish population used to self-rule and regional autonomy. But now both Ataturk and Reza Shah passed laws which made wearing Kurdish clothes, speaking and reading or writing in Kurdish illegal. The Kurds were oppressed because they were not Persian or Turk. They found themselves 'othered' by state definition of the national identity. In both Turkey and Iran the state employed technologies of othering from discrimination based on language to military coercion extensively and systematically.

In both Iran and Turkey politics were reduced to a militant ethnocentrism intolerant of any form of diversity. This period and its anomalies contributed to further crises of identity. In Turkey the long-lasting military regime started with the genocide of the Armenians and continued with the persecution of the Kurds for almost an entire century. In Iran, the reaction to Reza Shah and later his son's policies was Islamic Revolution of 1979. The rise of fundamentalism in my view was mainly a reaction to top-down distorted modernization imposed by government. In any case, both countries became battlefields of one ideology against another.

Baathism

Baathism started as a revolutionary movement of militant Arab youth. The founder of the Baath party Michel Aflaq was a Christian Arab influenced by the Bolshevik movement.

The word Baath in Arabic means renaissance. Baath ideology was to be the basis of the Arab rebirth. It was created in 1943 but only came on to the political scene around 1958 when Baathists helped a group of young officers overthrow the British-installed monarchy.⁷⁸ The Baath party gradually took over all functions of government and the first Baathist regime came to power in 1963.⁷⁹ The Baath party became like a secret police organization with total control over the Army and the government. Baathist ideology introduced the Middle East to single party rule. The Baath regime used terror and torture from its early beginnings. It eliminated all other political rivals and limited the party's leadership to a small group of loyal members, one of whom was Saddam Hussein. He eventually became the center of both the party and the government, first as assistant secretary –general of the party and head of internal security in the government. He worked his way up to become the president of Iraq in 1979. Saddam became the state with nothing in Iraqi political system that was not under his control. He established one of the bloodiest reigns of terror in the history of Middle East.

As soon as Saddam consolidated his power, he began a series of racist acts. Saddam's regime undertook mass deportations, mass killings, ethnic cleansing and genocide. Iraq became a killing field and the torture house of the Baath party, all in the name of Arab renaissance. Baathism employed the most extreme forms of technologies of othering. Middle East Watch, a division of Human Rights Watch, recognized the Baathist policies towards the Kurds as attempted genocide and crimes against humanity.⁸⁰

The nihilism of the Baath party and ideology was a reaction against colonial powers. The

⁷⁸ See Samir al-Khalil, Republic of Fear, the Inside Story of Saddam's Iraq, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990): xxvi – xxvii.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*: xxviii.

⁸⁰ Genocide In Iraq. The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds. A Middle East Watch Report, (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1993): 3-5.

Baath became a significant example of nihilism. It devalued everything that classical Arab civilization had achieved. It distorted and deformed Iraq politics to a point that they may never recover. Not only it did not liberate Iraq from colonial role, it made Iraqis even more oppressed by internal tyranny and oppression.

Islamic Fundamentalism

Islamic fundamentalism has many dimensions and degrees. It exists as a reactionary movement in almost all Islamic societies. But I only deal with Islamic fundamentalism in Iran because of its relevance to the technology of othering the Kurds. The history of Iranian Islamic fundamentalism is linked to the Shiite struggle for political power, which is as old as Islam itself. But as an ideology Islamic fundamentalism, in Iran, belongs to a school of thought which had many Western-educated teachers and was under development from the 1950s. While the leader of the revolution was a cleric, the ideologues of the revolution were Western-educated secular men.

Among the intellectuals who contributed to the ideology of fundamentalism in Iran two figures stand out: Dr. Ali Shariati, a Sorbonne graduate, and Ale Ahmad, with a post-Doctorate degree from Harvard university. Ale Ahmad's theory was that the West is a disease which has struck Iranian culture. He developed this idea in his famous book *Gharbzadegi*, literally Westoxication or intoxication by the West. He wrote many other works but this one gained him such fame that he alone was invited to have a private meeting with Khomeini right after the revolution. Ale Ahmad basically presented the problem and simply suggested a solution is needed. But Shariati, a prolific writer whose artistic style impacted an entire generation, suggested a return to the authentic self. He

was harassed by the Shah's secret police all his life and died mysteriously at the age of 42, a few years before the revolution. Many believed he was poisoned by Shah's secret police. In his short life he wrote 37 books dealing with many issues concerning identity and culture. He taught sociology at Tehran University. His seminars were so popular that they were held in stadiums and amphitheaters of the university and were attended by hundreds of students. He was the most charismatic teacher of the young Muslim revolutionaries.

Shariati's students eventually succeeded in overthrowing the Shah's regime, but divided into many different groups. Among his followers only the most radical were integrated into the new regime, the rest were scattered and marginalized after the revolution. This division reflects the multiple strands in his thought. For example he did not believe in the subjugation of women and believed the veil should be a choice for women. His own wife was never veiled and enjoyed the freedoms soon abolished under the Ayatollahs. She wrote an incredible biography of him, which shows him as sensitive and liberal man. Shariati believed Islamic Law, or Sharia, needs to be reformed and adapted to demands of contemporary times. In the first years of the revolution some of his works which were too liberal for the Ayatollahs were pushed aside. Despite this, he remains one of the most influential thinkers of revolutionary Shiite Islam and his ideas were of paramount importance in mobilizing urban youth behind the revolution. Whatever his beliefs and intentions, Iran became the first highly organized fundamentalist state in the Middle East under the influence of his ideas.

Since the Islamic revolution in Iran, the ideology of fundamentalism became a technology of power, like Baathism and ethno-nationalism. These ideologies became

fierce and deadly when joined to modern technologies of war and the organizing force of political technology of their respective states. These ideologies, though different, all share a reactive nihilist attitude. In this respect they often become allies in their technologies of othering against Kurds. They also manipulate each other's Kurdish problem and use it for their strategic advantages.

The Kurdish homeland has been sliced up and Kurds have faced several episodes of mass deportation and forced depopulation. Their natural and human resources have been reduced to "standing reserve" and stockpile for those who rule them oppressively. The Kurds have been marginalized in the world community by the workings of the international state system. Their existence has been reduced to a few provinces here and there. A success story here is used to hide from view a catastrophe there. They are used every once in while to make a case for some agenda of power politics or used as material evidence in some legal argument for furthering another agenda from which they are absent. This level of reduction is what is meant by being merely a "standing reserve" in the Heideggerian sense, i.e. being put aside like some kind of object and brought out when needed. That is the situation of the Kurds as the objects of technologies of othering.

Conclusion

In this chapter I contextualized the concept of political technologies of othering with regards to the subjectivity of the modern actors regardless of their Western or non-Western origins. I argued that the essence of technology reduces humanity to stockpiles of "standing reserve." I also explained the function of "enframing" in the technological mode of thought and its particular way of ordering humanity and nature. I argued that

technologies of othering eventually void the values and concepts of their original meaning and purposes. I also asserted the awesome nature of technology and its unique power to dominate the planet.

I examined nihilism as the condition of thought and the direction of politics during twentieth century when the Kurdish issue became a political problem. I argued that nihilism is a universal phenomenon. I identified Western colonialism as nihilism and the ideological reactions to it, i.e. ethnocentric nationalism, Baathism, and Islamic fundamentalism, as reactive nihilism. In this respect Kurdish encounters with modernity were encounters with nihilism and technique. Islamic culture was no longer a source of identity and the new ideologies mentioned above transformed the Kurdish “difference” into “otherness” and then persecuted the “other” for their “otherness.” I concluded that Islamic fundamentalism is a major part of the Muslim world’s post-colonial identity crisis. The hallmark of Islamic fundamentalism is that it is ruled by ideology. In this respect I believe Iranian Islamic fundamentalism is a manifestation of nihilism and as such it negates philosophic Muslim values to an “absurd” or “meaningless” end. The Kurds are rejected and othered by nihilism. I examine nihilism and Islamic fundamentalism more thoroughly in chapter seven.

I assert that ethno-centric nationalism in Turkey is also a manifestation of nihilism and technique. It is a reactive nihilism because it is in reaction to the overwhelming power of Western techniques Turkey recoiled back to an artificially constructed “image” of self with absolute intolerance for “difference” and diversity. It was nihilistic because in reaction to the West it mimicked the appearance of the West, in matters of alphabet and people’s attire, by dictating the “will” of the “Father/Leader” on the newly constructed

nation. Ataturk spoke of modernization and Westernization, but the early Turkish state established a tyranny with no democratic relations between the state and the citizens. The nihilism of Ataturk's project and his movement is dealt with in chapter four. Reactive nihilism has been the ground of Baathism as well. I argue that the core of Baathism is a manifestation of nihilism and technique combined. With Baathism the Kurds encountered the awesome power of technologies of othering and the genocidal power of nihilism bent on absolute negation and annihilation. I deal with Baathism in chapter six extensively.

I conclude that the Kurdish issue requires an examination of the effects of the technologies of othering, including discourses and practices whose essence is "enframing" with the goal of entrapment, distortion, subjugation and dominance. They fit well within the domain of Realpolitik, dominance and the negating power of nihilism. Technologies of othering function within a field of distortion and "meaninglessness." The devaluating nature of nihilism makes these political technologies devalue what they claim to value and deny it any meaning. These technologies have such overwhelming power that they suffocate the "enframed" object of their domination and at the same time they exhaust the outside observers by their overwhelming details and obsession with "nothingness." In conclusion, I see technology as dominance over discourse and practice and not a choice that can be avoided. At the same time, nihilism is a condition that looms over its subjects and is not a mere opinion that can be cast aside. In the final analysis it is nihilism and technique that other the Kurds.

Chapter Two:

Theoretical Considerations Regarding Imperialism and Realism

In this chapter, I examine how the realist school of international relations and imperialism relate to technologies of othering. How does the realist school of international relations contribute to political technologies of othering? In what ways do the tenets of realism exclude the Kurds? How does Realpolitik contribute to technologies of othering and nihilism? I also explore how neorealist's stubborn rejection of Wilsonian principles has contributed to technologies of othering and what its effects been on the Kurds?

I employ the concepts of political technology and nihilism I developed in the previous chapter to provide a theoretical framework for analyzing and interpreting the historical and political data regarding the role of realism and imperialism in creating the discourses and practices that othered the Kurds. These discourse and practices I conceptualize as part of technologies of othering and the manner of subjectivity employed by realists and neorealists I call nihilism. I also explore conceptions of imperialism and its impact on Kurdistan during its century-long encounter with imperialism. My conception of imperialism is drawn from Hannah Arendt and Edward Said in relation to domination and national self-interest of the West. I investigate into the principles of realism and show how each principle explains the political situation of technologies of othering. In particular I examine the state-centric nature of the international system and show its impact on the Kurds. I also argue that neorealist

principles consistently over-ruled idealism and maintained the status quo regarding the exclusion of Kurdistan from the international system.

I. Imperialism and Kurdistan

In chapter one I dealt with colonialism and here I deal with imperialism. These two concepts are different and yet related. I examined colonialism parallel to modernity and argued that one of the manifestations of nihilism and technique was modern colonialism. In this chapter I deal with imperialism which established itself as a “world order” or international system. To use Arendt’s terms, colonialism is about “conquest” and imperialism is driven by “expansion.”¹ Colonialism is basically about taking possession of other people’s land, while imperialism is creating dependencies.² As Said argues, ““imperialism” means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory; “colonialism,” which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory.”³

In my view, Western imperialism contributed to the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire and recreating of the political map of Middle East. This dramatic change deeply impacted the Kurds and resulted in the partition of Kurdistan. Furthermore, the twentieth-century started off with imperialism and imperialistic wars. This does not mean there was no imperialism before this period. On the contrary, there were many examples of imperialism prior to modern period in history. But I focus on modern capitalist

¹ See Hannah Arendt, The Origin of Totalitarianism, (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1979): 131.

² *Ibid.*

³ Edward W. Said, Culture and Imperialism, (New York: Vintage Books, 1994): 9.

imperialism in the twentieth-century because for the most part that is when the Kurdish issue became a political problem.

Twentieth-century imperialism was an expansionist ideology and practice. It was for this reason that modern imperialism became a fundamental part of the world politics that impacted most of the Middle East in negative and destructive ways. In fact within the past century imperialism has been the only way that modern Western states such as Britain, France and United States have been conducting politics in Middle East. This has to do with the general goal of imperialism. According to Hannah Arendt, "What imperialists actually wanted was expansion of political power without the foundation of a body politic."⁴ This was the investment of power and the export of violence to client countries. These aspects of imperialism for the most part were felt in Iran before the Islamic Revolution of 1979, in Turkey and in Iraq prior to Saddam's invasion of Kuwait in 1991 when the rulers of both countries were allies and partners of the West in different times and manners.

Expansionism seeks to maximize the imperialist's power over dominated territories. Power has been the major concern of modernist political philosophy since Hobbes conceptualized politics as a perpetual maximization of power which formed the basis for modern imperialism. He was one of the first moderns to claim that all politics are power politics. This can be concluded from his idea of what the political world is all about. He believed that the world out there is an anarchy and in a state of perpetual war. This, he claims, is due to "man's nature."

⁴ Hannah Arendt, The Origin of Totalitarianism, (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1979): 135.

So in the nature of man, we find three principle causes of quarrel. First, Competition; Secondly, Diffidence; Thirdly, Glory.

The first, makes men invade for Gain; the second, for Safety; and the third, for Reputation. The first use Violence, to make themselves Masters of other men's persons, wives, children, and cattle; the second, to defend them; the third, for trifles, as a word, a smile, a different opinion, and any other sign of undervalue, either direct in their Persons, or by reflection in their Kindred, their Friends, their Nation, their Profession, or their Name.

Hereby it is manifest, that during the time men live without a common Power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called War; and such a war, as is of every man, against every man.⁵

Hobbes talks about "human nature" as a philosophic notion and builds a political philosophy rooted in his theory of "human nature." His views regarding the relationship among human beings are determined by his idea of "human nature." He finds "human nature" negative and the cause of all social and political problems. In his pessimistic views Hobbes describes a political world where there is no fellowship in human society, instead only enemies. When applying this view to international politics, Hobbes' ideas can be seen as contributing to international lawlessness as opposed to international laws.

Hannah Arendt makes the following assertions:

With the assumption that foreign politics is necessarily outside of human contract, engaged in the perpetual war of all against all, which is the law of "the state of nature," Hobbes affords the best possible theoretical foundation for those naturalistic ideologies which hold nations to be tribes, separated from each other by nature, without any connection whatever, unconscious of the solidarity of mankind and having in common only the instinct for self-preservation which man shares with the animal world.⁶

According to Arendt it was in such an environment of thought that modern Europe came to a conclusion that imperialism was the only way to conduct world

⁵ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, (London: Penguin Books, 1985): 185.

⁶ Hannah Arendt, *The Origin of Totalitarianism*, (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1979): 157.

politics.⁷ It is important to note that the project of imperialism is a huge undertaking and it requires the participation of a great number of the citizens of the imperialist country. In order for this project to succeed, imperialism must present itself to be at the service of the national interest. As a result there is a link between modern Western nationalism and imperialism. But the idea of national solidarity among all citizens in the early stages of capitalism, even more so at the turn of the century, seems quite problematic. One must remember that in this stage of capitalism the class distinction was so high that the poor working classes felt more solidarity with members of their own class from another country than they did with their capitalist countrymen. The level of class struggle in this period was so high that it could break up many European capitalist countries. Basically by making imperialism a matter of national interest modern West managed and controlled the class-struggle that was almost destroying modern capitalist countries. The poor were given the hope and vision of getting rich by becoming the agents and workers of colonial and imperialist expansions. Said argues that, “[a]t some basic level, imperialism means thinking about, settling on, controlling land that you do not possess, that is distant, that is lived on and owned by others. For all kinds of reason it attracts some people and often involves untold misery for others.”⁸ The Western poorer classes were economically motivated to become agents of imperialism. The imperialist project has a dual purpose: on the one hand it provides investment and market opportunities for war industry; and on the other hand it ships the unemployed or unemployables to war. In the earlier part of capitalist modernity the so-called surplus populations were sent off to colonized lands. In any case these poorer classes, when shipped off to those foreign lands, almost always

⁷ See *Ibid.*: 132.

⁸ Edward W. Said, Culture and Imperialism, (New York: Vintage Books, 1994):7.

they conduct themselves with no regard for the lives of the Other. They functioned in an environment of international lawlessness. As a result they employed a good deal of cruelty towards the local population. Their lack of care and concern for the needs and lives of strangers is rooted in racism. And the ground of this racism is provided by imperialism. It is no surprise that racism and imperialism in the modern context developed in a parallel manner. Although racism and race thinking had a long history it was with the advent of the modern capitalist period when racism became the ideology of imperialism. Arendt argues that, "neither the racism of modern nationalism nor the power-craziness of the modern state can be explained without a proper understanding of the structure of imperialism."⁹ Modernity and its ideological approach to politics and life created an intricate relationship among nationalism, colonialism, racism and imperialism.

Colonial policies and domestic nationalism of European countries were united together with the goal of imperializing the whole nation.¹⁰ This as I mentioned earlier could solve the problem of unemployment and at the same time provide the imperialists with soldiers, agents and bureaucrats. This project could go on only by employing the poor and resentful masses who were already susceptible to racist ideas. At the end imperialism could claim to be the only solution to the economic problems of modern times. But for this to happen the masses had to lose their belief in the idea of a humanity no different from them. Although there were plenty of race doctrines to undercut the idea of foreigners as fellow human beings entitled to equal rights, it was Hobbes whose idea of international lawlessness provided the ground for imperialist racism. While Hobbes

⁹ Hannah Arendt, Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954, Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism, (New York: Schocken Books, 1994): 211.

¹⁰ See Hannah Arendt, The Origin of Totalitarianism, (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1979): 155.

never directly wrote of race and racism he diminished the ideas of humanity and the possibility of international law. Arendt concludes: "Hobbes at least provided political thought with the prerequisite for all race doctrines, that is, the exclusion in principle of the idea of humanity which constitutes the sole regulating idea of international law."¹¹

The link between racism and imperialism is so strong that even if there were no racism in the prior history of the West, imperialism undoubtedly would have found it necessary to invent it.¹² Imperialism makes encounters with Otherness inevitable and this encounter, in order to be at the service of imperial domination, includes racism. For this attitude to happen easily the imperial project relied on the ethics of nationalism which claimed national interest above all other considerations such as "humanity" or any other universal moral principle. Imperialism relies on the discourse of domination and domination functions based on the notion that the Other is inferior and deserves to be dominated. This discourse of domination works in texts, concepts and attitudes. Said argues:

Neither imperialism nor colonialism is a simple act of accumulation and acquisition. Both are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and people require and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination: the vocabulary of classic nineteenth-century imperial culture is plentiful with words and concepts like "inferior" or "subject races," "subordinate peoples," "dependency," expansion," and "authority."¹³

At the turn of the twentieth century when Kurdistan was divided and its autonomy was lost it was the common sense of imperialism that the peoples of the Middle East could not rule themselves and so must be ruled. Although the imperial powers created

¹¹ *Ibid.*: 157.

¹² See *Ibid.*: 183-184.

¹³ Edward W. Said, Culture and Imperialism, (New York: Vintage Books, 1994): 9.

many states out of the territories of the Ottoman Empire, none of these states ever had real independence. What made the Kurdish case even more complicated that it was not only subject to the indirect control of the Western imperial powers but also an internal colony. This complication still exists to this date for which the Kurdish people have been paying a heavy price.

During the 1991 Gulf crisis, the Kurds were fighting Saddam but this went unnoticed. Due to imperialistic understandings of the region, the West did not know or did not want to deal with this fact. First the Kurds were undermined as if they were not actors in the scene at all. And when they revolted against Saddam's regime, they received no recognition or support. That meant that the West in 1991 could not see the Kurds as allies or equals in a common fight. The result was Saddam's brutal punishment, but at his eventual trial there were no mention of any atrocity that he committed or sanctioned against the Kurds. The first Bush administration's doctrine of "The New World Order" was a function of the same old imperialism. Just as the Realpolitik of the turn of the century had done, so the contemporary Realpolitik denied the Kurds agency and self-rule, when the opportunity presented itself. Even today when the fall of Saddam provided another opportunity still the Kurds are denied a state based on the same notions that have been at play for the last century.

This issue of recognizing the Kurds' ability to govern themselves is more urgent now. With the possibility of a failed U.S. policy in Iraq and the departure of U.S. troops, the Kurds may face hostility from all sides in the region. If they are not considered capable of self-rule, they may not receive the support which many other allies of the United States are receiving, and their future will be even more devastating than what they

experienced in the early part of the previous century. The Kurds may lose yet another opportunity for a state, self-rule or even limited autonomy simply because of imperialistic understandings of them as Other. In this respect, the international community may witness another catastrophe that could have been prevented. But the more serious question is why such things are not prevented? What logic makes it hard to comprehend the details and nuances of scenarios such as the Kurdish dilemma?

Racism is one answer. This isn't just a Kurdish problem. Much of humanity is not counted as humans who are equal to those in the West. And the condition of imperialism makes this moral failure seem merely as a technical problem; something that could be easily blamed on some institution, a local dictator, local inefficiency, difficulty of dealing with too many factions, regional security considerations, etc. But the truth is there is no confidence in the Other to be able to act as a mature and reliable partner. And due to the history of racism, the Other is rejected as an equal and therefore not even considered as a partner in resolving a regional issue.

Western imperialism, and perhaps this is true of all imperialisms, founds its program on the disappearance of the "other." This of course necessitates the construction of others as an absolutely oppositional, completely homogeneous, and ultimately superfluous figure, rather than as figures in a possible dialogue of equals, figures with which one is implicated.¹⁴

This issue has also a great deal to do with the imperialist understandings of international politics and relations. Consequently I explore the realist and neorealist schools of International Relations, which structure the Western centers of power's understanding of the Kurdish issue.

¹⁴ Eric Cheyfitz and Savage Law, "The Plot Against American Indians in Johnson and Graham's Lessee v. M'Intosh and the Pioneers" in Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease, Editors, Cultures of United States Imperialism, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993): 109.

II. International Relations Theory and the Kurdish Issue

Although there are many different schools of thought in the study of international relations, the Middle East in general and the Kurdish issue in particular have been dealt with almost entirely within a realist foreign policy. Consequently I explore the realist theory which supports such policy and critique this school of thought.

Early Realism

The realist theory of international relations includes classics such as Thucydides, Augustine and moderns like Machiavelli and Hobbes. But the Kurdish situation was influenced by realist ideas formed in relation to the First and the Second World Wars. For the most part, then, this realist theory was a direct reaction to the horrors experienced by the international community in general and Europeans in particular. Realists claim to be engaged in a scientific study of international politics which can figure out what happened and determine how it could have been prevented, in a rational, scientific way. They faced a huge dilemma: how to explain what triggered “civilized people” to commit such “barbaric” acts against each other. The events of the two world wars were constantly at the back of realist theorists’ minds in designing their theories of international relations. In this respect, realist theory began as a critique of three major sets of ideas: (i) the Liberal ideas that led to the creation of League of Nations, (ii) Communism and (ii) National Socialism.

Communism and National Socialism were criticized because of their totalitarian nature and the crimes committed in their name. But the liberalism of League of Nations

was criticized because it was based on the ideas that nations can be cooperative and that war could be ended. These ideas were considered utopian and realists claimed that they must be confronted with realist understanding of international relations. E. H. Carr wrote his classic *The Twenty Years' Crisis* to reflect on this period between two world wars. He dedicates an entire chapter to establishing the case that he is a realist scientist of politics and not a utopian.¹⁵

Carr was taking a position against Wilsonian liberalism prevalent in U.S. foreign policy after the First World War. One expression of these ideas was Woodrow Wilson's address to Congress on peace terms on January 8, 1918: "The day of conquest and aggrandizement is gone by; so is also the day of secret covenants entered into in the interest of particular governments and likely at some unlooked-for moment to upset the peace of the world."¹⁶

It was in this spirit that Woodrow Wilson attended the peace conference in Paris and delivered his famous fourteen point peace plan for the world, reflecting his idealist philosophy. This was the focus of realist criticism. Ironically the twelfth point of Wilson's plan directly concerned the Kurds.

XII. The Turkish portions of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development, and the Dardanelles should be permanently opened as a free passage to the ships and commerce of all nations under international guarantees.¹⁷

¹⁵ See Edward Hallett Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939, An Introduction to the Study of International relations*, (London: Macmillan, 1970): 7-8.

¹⁶ Michael Waldman, *My Fellow Americans, The Most Important Speeches of America's Presidents, from George Washington to George W. Bush*, (Naperville, Illinois: Sourcebooks, Inc., 2003): 90.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*: 92.

The Kurds were one of those nationalities whose dreams of statehood were crushed by defeat of idealist politics of international relations. Wilson's dreams were never realized and neither were those of millions of others. Wilson was an anti-imperialist intellectual who became president of United States of America. He became the symbol of what the realists called the utopian or idealist vision of international relations. Carr's critique of this brand of politicians is evident in the following remarks.

It matters little that Wilson, who thought that the right was more precious than peace, and Briand, who thought that peace came even before justice, and Mr. Eden, who believed in collective security, failed themselves, or failed to induce their countrymen, to apply these principles consistently. What matters is that these supposedly absolute and universal principles were not principles at all, but the unconscious reflexes of national policy based on a particular interpretation of national interest at a particular time. There is a sense in which peace and co-operation between nations or classes or individuals is a common and universal end irrespective of conflicting interests and politics. There is a sense in which a common interest exists in the maintenance of order, whether it be international order or "law and order" within the nation. But as soon as the attempt is made to apply these supposedly abstract principles to a concrete political situation, they are revealed as the transparent disguise of selfish vested interest. The bankruptcy of utopianism resides not in its failure to live up to its principles, but in the exposure of its inability to provide any absolute and disinterested standard for the conduct of international affairs. The utopian, faced by the collapse of standards whose interested character he has failed to penetrate, takes refuge in condemnation of a reality which refuses to conform to these standards.¹⁸

Carr illustrates these feelings of distrust in idealism in the political environment of Europe between the two world wars. Carr accuses idealists, particularly Wilson, of failing to understand 'reality;' that is, how international politics really function.¹⁹ Carr prefers to see reality through a prism influenced by Machiavellian ideas crediting Machiavelli as

¹⁸ Edward Hallett Carr, The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939. An Introduction to the Study of International relations, (London: Macmillan, 1970): 87-88.

¹⁹ See *Ibid.*: 14.

the first political realist, in his famous work *The Prince*.²⁰ He explains that Machiavellian realism was based on three principles: (i) history is about cause and effect and therefore can be understood rationally, (ii) theory should follow practice rather than the other way around and (iii) politics should have the upper hand over ethics not the other way around.²¹ Carr is equally influenced by Hobbes's view of the state of nature as anarchy. He believes that the anarchy of international politics can be cured by principles developed through observation and rationality.²² Carr is establishing the case for realism based on modern principles of politics as established by Machiavelli and Hobbes. But he also draws the difference between their realism and contemporary realism. He believes that Hobbes and Machiavelli were pessimists and whereas his version of realism is progressive because of the influence of Hegel and Marx and their ideas of the progressive march of history.²³ Carr argued that, "[t]he substitution of reason for Divine Providence enabled Hegel to produce, for the first time, a philosophy based on the conception of a rational historical process. Hegel, while assuming a regular and orderly process, was content to find its directing force in a metaphysical abstraction—The Zeitgeist."²⁴

Carr identifies the ideas of Machiavelli, Hobbes and Hegel as the modern roots of a realist theory of international relation. Realism fits within the domain of modernist discourse particularly on issues of power, morality, and politics among states. Carr establishes the case for all these issues while remaining within the discourse of modernity.

²⁰ See *Ibid.*: 63.

²¹ See *Ibid.*: 63-64.

²² See *Ibid.*: 26.

²³ See *Ibid.*: 65.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

One of the fundamental aspects of Carr's theory, which remained true for next generations of realists, is that all politics is power; that is, the essential element of politics is power.²⁵ To Carr and the realists, power means domination over the other. In Carr's view the dominance of the Great Powers is not only a fact, but it acts like the law of nature in international politics.²⁶ The debate over the nature, use and abuse of power is an engagement in moral issues and realists assert that international politics are above morality, because the strong usually win, therefore progress is in the hands of the victor.²⁷ They usually make the argument that the international situation shows that there is no such a thing as international morality and no universal moral code.²⁸ Reinhold Niebuhr, another realist, in his famous book, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* argues that, "[i]n every human group there is less reason to guide and to check impulse, less capacity for self-transcendence, less ability to comprehend the needs of others and therefore more unrestrained egoism than the individuals, who compose the group, reveal in their personal relationships."²⁹ In the realist view, international relations are purely political and therefore the realm of power and not morality. According to Niebuhr "human communities have greater difficulty than individuals in achieving ethical relationships."³⁰ This he asserts is due to "the inevitable conflict of interest between nations."³¹ Carr believes that, "[p]ower is a necessary ingredient of every political order."³² Then it is

²⁵ See *Ibid.*: 102.

²⁶ See *Ibid.*: 105.

²⁷ See *Ibid.*: 225.

²⁸ See *Ibid.*

²⁹ Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960): xi.

³⁰ *Ibid.*: 85.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Edward Hallett Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939, An Introduction to the Study of International relations*, (London: Macmillan, 1970): 232.

important to ask what is the unit of power? Carr asserts that in modern world the form of the political community is state.³³ Moreover states operate on coercion therefore the unit of power is the state.³⁴ Furthermore the state is actually a territorial unit,³⁵ a physical “reality” and not just an idea. And since the realists claim to deal with reality, they believe in an international community populated with states as its members. Carr asserts that, “[i]t is scarcely less utopian to imagine an international order built on a coalition of states, each striving to defend its own interests.”³⁶ Niebuhr best describes the nature of this international relation as follows

It may be possible, though it is never easy, to establish just relations between individuals within a group purely by moral and rational suasion and accommodation. In inter-group relations this is practically an impossibility. The relations between groups must therefore always be predominantly political rather than ethical, that is, they will be determined by the proportion of power which each group possesses at least as much as by any rational and moral appraisal of the comparative needs and claims of each group.³⁷

The early realists such as Carr faced a dilemma in the formation of National Socialist’s drive for naked power and their absolute divorce of politics from morality. So the early realists began to modify their views on the separation between power and morality. Carr asserted that it is an unreal kind of realism which ignores morality in any world order completely.³⁸ He came to this conclusion because if an international order is built on naked power people revolt against it.³⁹ However there is a delicate note in his small

³³ See *Ibid.*: 95.

³⁴ See *Ibid.*: 96.

³⁵ See *Ibid.*: 228.

³⁶ *Ibid.*: 235.

³⁷ Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society, (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1960): xxii-xxiii.

³⁸ Edward Hallett Carr, The Twenty Years’ Crisis, 1919-1939, An Introduction to the Study of International relations, (London: Macmillan, 1970): 235.

³⁹ See *Ibid.*: 236.

compromise between power and morality. He concludes that power is the dominance of the victor's morality, which is good as long as the victor is "tolerant" and "not oppressive."⁴⁰ With all his attempts he did not manage to resolve the issue and at the end his politics is divorced from morality and he realizes that. He confessed that, "[w]e shall never arrive at a political order in which the grievances of the weak and the few receive the same prompt attention as the grievances of the strong and the many. Power goes far to create the morality convenient to itself, and coercion is a fruitful source of consent."⁴¹

Carr's final resolution is that the moral task of the dominant power is tolerance and creating the condition of tolerance is something only the dominant power can do.⁴² Carr's ideas can be summarized in three points: (i) the essence of politics is power; (ii) the state is the unit of power; and (iii) the international system is an anarchy due to conflicts of interests; therefore the powerful with good morality must rule.

The second most important realist international relations theorist was Hans J. Morgenthau who constructed realist theory in a systematic way. Morgenthau explains realism based on the following six principles: (1) politics are governed by objective laws rooted in human nature; (2) the main principle of politics is interest defined as power; (3) interest as power is an objective category but not fixed; (4) universal moral principles do not apply to states; (5) moral aspirations of one particular nation are not universal morality; (6) politics is an autonomous field of activity and is only governed by its own principles.⁴³ Morgenthau offers many details and historical examples in explaining these principles, but there are many problems also. The most striking problem arises from the

⁴⁰ See *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² See *Ibid.*

⁴³ Hans J. Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations. The Struggle for Power and Peace, (Montreal: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1993): 4-13.

first principle's notions of "objective laws" and "human nature." To claim that the realist subject is forming his/her ideas based on objective laws is a modernist prejudice based on the logocentric dichotomy of knowing subject and knowable object out there. Whenever a realist observer of an international relations problem faces the fact that his/her observations was not really as if there was some objective laws that he or she could have based the analysis of the situation on that, the realist claims that objective laws are there, it is only a question of technical difficulty that we didn't get the result we wanted. And these technical difficulties accumulate as the complexities of real life grow.

The idea of "objective laws" is a reduction of political science to a modernist mathematical and laboratory science such as physics or chemistry. Reducing political science to such forms of science is to disregard the unpredictable elements and complexities of human and social sciences. Political reality does not merely deal with the objects of experience as many physical and mathematical sciences do. In most cases political reality also deals with the objects of mind and culture that cannot be easily objectified. As Jim George points out "the world is always an interpreted "thing," and it is always interpreted in conditions of disagreement and conflict, to one degree or another."⁴⁴

Political reality is fluid and changing constantly. One must not mistake a momentary glimpse of reality for a permanent picture of an object. To know the reality of life one must be as dynamic and progressive as the never-stopping reality itself. This dynamic approach to knowledge is a threat to a metaphysical order already tired of the fast pace of changes in every aspect of life. It is in this regard that the positivist/realist

⁴⁴ Jim George, Discourses of Global Politics: A Critical (Re)Introduction to International Relations, (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994): 24.

notion of “human nature” is even more problematic. It is never clearly explained what human nature is. It is always implied as if there is such a thing as “human nature” which is a solid constant factor beyond changes of time and place. It is often claimed that this so-called “human nature” has been studied from antiquity onward and it is always treated as a given. Such notions are not just unfounded and hence problematic but are always used as a function of power and dominance. The claim is almost always the same: it is in human nature to dominate ‘others’; and if we don’t dominate them they will dominate us. And it is always the case that the difficulties of proving anything called human nature is ignored conveniently.

Morgenthau’s second principle identifies the main principle of politics to be interest defined as power is typically modernist as well, because it divorces politics from moral considerations. It implies that, no matter how wrong, everything is justified as long as it serves your interest. This principle is completely in line with that aspect of modern imperialism which combined with nationalism. It justifies the sacrifice of universal values such as humanity, and international law, for the sake of interest defined as power.

The Kurds suffered several times in modern history when their cause was not in line with Western powers’ self-interest. They suffered even more when Western self-interest led them to ally themselves with the oppressors of the Kurds. For example, during the 1980’s the Western powers were supporting Saddam in his war against Iran. It was during this period that Saddam embarked on a campaign of genocide against the Kurds. In fact it was during this period when Saddam, who was an ally of the West, used weapons of mass destruction against the Kurds. At the time the West and particularly the United States justified their support for Iraq and Saddam in terms of their self-interest. I

examine this issue in detail in chapter eight, but it must be reminded that Saddam was fighting the Iranians who had established an anti-U.S. government. In the equations of the time the Kurds did not matter because in no way could they serve the interests of the Americans. Ironically it was Saddam who was serving the interests of the Americans. The contradictions stemming from this principle are an aspect of nihilism. It devalues its own values.

This is not just a question of the past. It is a current issue as well. At the moment Turkey is a strong ally of the United States and at the same time oppressing its Kurdish minority. But the United States and NATO's interests lie in an alliance with Turkey and the Kurdish issue again does not count in any way in the realist understanding of international relations. This situation and its seemingly shifting nature have affected the Kurds several times throughout the modern history. In this respect nihilism keeps returning to the issue of Kurdistan in many guises.

The third principle of Morgenthau's realist theory explains that interest as power is an objective category but not a fixed one. This indicates a typical modernist attitude that commitments can be broken or shifted when it serves the interests of the realist political actors. The Kurds have actually experienced this aspect of realist politics in recent times. In 1991 when Saddam invaded Kuwait and United State's first war against Saddam started, president Bush, the senior, actually asked the Iraqis to rise up against Saddam and said the West would help them in their cause.⁴⁵ The Kurds as well as the Shiites did so; but when the time came United States let them down. The Kurds and the Shiites then became the target of one of Saddam's severe retaliations. The reason that

⁴⁵ See John Bulloch and Harvey Morris, No Friend But the Mountains, The Tragic History of The Kurds, (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1993): 11-12.

United States did not help the Kurds and the Shiites was a shift in its interest. The United States then needed a Sunni Arab to rule over Iraq in order to keep the balance of power in the region, so the U.S. interest shifted from toppling Saddam to keeping him. The Kurds and the Shiites paid a heavy price for this shift in U.S. policy in the region.

One might have a moral problem with this shift of interest and changing sides but Morgenthau's fourth principle of realist international relations is a denial of all moral obligations by states. The fourth principle is that universal moral principles do not apply to states. It is in this respect that the United States and some of the Western countries are known to have many contradictions in their foreign policies. This point is the basis of many abuses of universal principles and international laws in times of high crisis. It is during such periods of crisis, when notions such as human rights and international conventions against for example the torture of detainees, are neglected and rendered irrelevant. The realist approach to international relations makes it possible to put the policies of a particular state above international and universal norms.

The fifth principle that the moral aspirations of one particular nation are not universal morality is a contradiction in realist international relations. Because when the powerful dominate the powerless, its moral aspirations become universal. The fifth point is a subversive way of saying basically there are no universal values shared by all of humanity. In this respect most values can be devalued and rendered useless. This becomes a justification for the acceptance of the values of the powerful states. In fact this is a mask for domination of the powerful on spurious moral ground. Because in practical terms it indicates that the moral principles of the weak or dominated nations are not universal and they can be violated.

The sixth principle that politics is an autonomous field of activity and governed only by its own principles poses a problem when the basic principle of politics is defined as power in terms of interest. This means that any other consideration is subordinate to power or interest. The declaration of politics as an autonomous sphere of human activity is to say that politics happens in a world of anarchy because there is no law above power and self-interest. To this end everything goes in realist understanding of politics. And modern period has documented the brutality of such a politics where all kind of violence have been justified in the name of national security, interest, power and status quo. In realist theory, basically everything in politics is either power or at the service of power. Morgenthau argues that “[i]nternational politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power.”⁴⁶ Moreover power in realist theory basically means domination over the others. Again Morgenthau is very clear when he argues that, “[w]e have said that by power we mean the power of man over the minds and actions of other men, a phenomenon to be found whenever human beings live in social contact with one another.”⁴⁷

This unending will to power and dominance over the other in every aspect of life, i.e. minds and actions, is the establishment of master / slave relations that have been played out in actual history of modernity. Modernist theory and practice have been in harmony in the project of power and dominance for the sake of power and dominance. This theory and practice justifies itself through a certain view that is violent and constructed based on a metaphysics rooted in Western logocentrism. This means it is grounded on dichotomized sets of factors which in the end find their roots in the original dichotomy of good / evil as us / them.

⁴⁶ Hans J. Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations. The Struggle for Power and Peace, (Montreal: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1993): 29.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*: 115.

[A]t the core of Western history and philosophy is a textual “past” framed in terms of whole series of dichotomies that demarcate that which is real and that which, by its definitional relationship with prescribed reality, cannot be. This story, aggregated and institutionalized via its articulations across the contemporary social theory disciplines, is the modernist *metanarrative* – the discourse of self/other, identity/difference, realism/idealism, illusory/certainty, and Realist knowledge *as* International Relations.⁴⁸

In a sense the political claims of realist theory are built on a certain ontology which is seriously contested by those schools of thought whose project have been a genuine critique of modernity. From their perspective the claim of realist theory to an a-historical and perennial foundation for their principles is a mere fiction. It is true that the intellectual roots of realism go back to Thucydides and to some extent Saint Augustine; but these ancients and medieval thinkers are subject to modernist interpretations and presented strategically to serve a modernist project. The traces of their thought in the writings of Machiavelli and Hobbes leave no doubt about the modernist power politics in realist theory. In any case, realism is built on a modernist ontology, which privileges the role of a rational subject who dominates the object of knowledge in order to control and dominate the world and life in its totality. This modern subject is always certain about what he is doing to the world. In fact, history has shown many examples when the subject of knowledge was wrong and, by acting on erroneous understanding, created many catastrophes.

Whether drawing on a positivistic distaste for metaphysics or simply starting from assumptions about rationality, objectivity and individual autonomy that have become hegemonic within modern liberal societies, modern social science has been prone to reduce all awkward questions to difficulties of method and technique.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Jim George, Discourses of Global Politics: A Critical (Re)Introduction to International Relations, (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994): 30.

⁴⁹ R. B. J. Walker, Inside / Outside: International Relations as Political Theory, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 19.

The very existence of a rational order of existence is inherited from the idea of a universe created by a rational God whose engineered creation is only to be discovered by a modern subject. This is a constructed notion based on a metaphysical ordering of the universe from top to bottom as a justification of the many variations of master/slave and self/other dichotomies. Nonetheless, to the extent that political actors follow the advice of realists, a self-fulfilling theoretical success results. That is, since the modern state system to some degree functions on 'realist' percepts, realist theory 'explains' much of how, for example stateless nations like Kurds are treated within it. The above-mentioned metaphysical order intensified the violence in modern encounters with otherness.

Connolly explains:

If conquest and conversion are the two authorized orientations to otherness, neither engages the enigma of otherness. Both operate as contending and complementary strategies by which a superior people maintains its self-assurance by bringing an inferior people under its domination and tutelage. These two modes function together as premises and signs of superiority; each supports the other in the effort to erase threat of difference to self-identity.⁵⁰

From the end of WWI until the present, the Western encounter with the Middle East has been an encounter with otherness in the above mentioned two modes of conquest and conversion not in a religious sense but a political one. Kurdistan is stuck in the middle of a yet another crisis engineered by the confusions and contradictions based on realist international relations theory. From the 1990s in northern Iraq a Kurdish regional government has governed parts of Iraqi Kurdistan. This regional government has received no recognition as a sovereign state by the international community of states. The reason is the Turkish state's intolerance of anything Kurdish and the fear that Kurdish aspiration

⁵⁰ William E. Connolly, "Identity and Difference in Global Politics," in James Der Derian and Michael J. Shapiro, eds., International / Intertextual Relations. Postmodern Readings of World Politics, (Toronto: Lexington Books, 1989): 328-329.

to self-rule in Iraq may spill over into the Kurdistan part of Turkey causing civil unrest and demands for democratic reforms. Hence the confused realist strategy that led the U.S. to the 2003 invasion of Iraq may in fact become counterproductive to the continuation and stability of the youngest democracy in the Middle East, i.e. Kurdish Regional Government in northern Iraq. There are other examples of these small-scale democratic experiments in Kurdistan that perished due to imperialists' concerns over Realpolitik. The Republic of Mahabad created during the Second World War is a good example (see chapter five). Currently the United States apparently values its alliance with Turkey more than the democratic aspirations of the Kurdish minority in Iraq. This might be identified as a typical realist choice and yet presenting a contradiction.

Neorealism

It was contradictions and complexities such as discussed above that brought about the idea that realism might need to update itself. This brought about a new approach to realism called neorealism, which I will explore next. Neorealism came about to update realism to the contemporary demands of the social sciences. But it largely remained faithful to the principles of realism. Neorealist theorists of international relations still believe there is a persisting reality they can perceive which is beyond space and time. They differ from their predecessors by virtue of method and style.

Waltz, a neorealist, for example argues that, "[w]hat we think of as reality is itself an elaborate conception constructed and reconstructed through the ages. Reality emerges

from our selection and organization of materials that are available in infinite equality.”⁵¹ If reality is fixed forever and knowledge is merely to reconstruct the same thing over and over why we need theorists to do this time and again. Waltz explains that we cannot understand reality as it presents itself to us, we must reconstruct it theoretically to understand it.⁵² So the subjective rearrangement and reconstruction of a persisting reality is what neorealist theorists of international relation try to do. He further elaborates:

Theories explain laws. This does not accord with usage in much of traditional political theory, which is concerned more with philosophic interpretation than with theoretical explanation. It does correspond to the definition of the term in the natural sciences and in some of the social sciences, especially economics.⁵³

As he establishes his case in defence of theory, Waltz argues that in the process of understanding reality, laws are discovered and theories constructed.⁵⁴ But he leaves the laws of nature alone because he believes the classics already discovered them. Therefore what is left for him to do is to reconstruct theory. In this pursuit he defines theories as being either reductionist or systemic.⁵⁵ Reductionist theories reduce international relations to merely one of its aspects⁵⁶ while systemic theories see international relations as a set of interacting units.⁵⁷ To Waltz modern international politics is a system whose units are states.⁵⁸ This system is anarchic because international politics is a political system without government.⁵⁹ So far Waltz explains the same basic realist principles by using a

⁵¹ Kenneth Waltz, Theory of International Politics, (Ontario: Addison – Wesley Publishing Company, 1979): 5.

⁵² See *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*: 6.

⁵⁴ See *Ibid.*; 7.

⁵⁵ See *Ibid.*: 18.

⁵⁶ See *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ See *Ibid.*: 40.

⁵⁸ See *Ibid.*; 93.

⁵⁹ See *Ibid.*; 88.

new vocabulary. Ultimately he is concerned with how to establish order out of chaos and what conflicting members of the chaotic international system have in common.⁶⁰ Waltz believes all states are driven by self-interest⁶¹ and in this respect they are the same. But they are not equal in their ability to pursue their goals because they differ in power.⁶² Waltz describes the situation of international politics hence: “[a]mong states, the state of nature is a state of war. This is meant not in the sense that war constantly occurs but in the sense that, with each state deciding for itself whether or not to use force, war may at any time break out.”⁶³

The anarchy of the international political system is due to the absence of a world government. Waltz presents the case that if disorder is to be replaced by order then first anarchy must be replaced by hierarchy.⁶⁴ And the hierarchy of the system is decided by the level of power each state has.⁶⁵ So he transforms power politics to great-power politics. In his view the strong should establish order by force and not worry about the ethics or fairness because, “international politics is mostly about inequalities anyway.”⁶⁶ This attitude is rooted in the neorealist notion that the question of violence and coercion is irrelevant. What is relevant is the legitimate use of violence,⁶⁷ because like his realist predecessors he too believes that, “the international politics is the realm of power.”⁶⁸ All this brings him to Realpolitik which he defines thus:

⁶⁰ See *Ibid.*: 89.

⁶¹ See *Ibid.*

⁶² See *Ibid.*: 96.

⁶³ *Ibid.*; 102.

⁶⁴ See *Ibid.*: 100.

⁶⁵ See *Ibid.*: 97.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*: 94.

⁶⁷ See *Ibid.*: 104.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*: 113.

The elements of Realpolitik, exhaustively listed, are these: the ruler's, and later the state's, interest provides the spring of action; the necessities of policy arise from the unregulated competition of states; calculation based on these necessities can discover the policies that will best serve a state's interests; success is the ultimate test of policy, and success is defined as preserving and strengthening the state.⁶⁹

In this respect international politics becomes dominated by Realpolitik, which sums up the core of neorealist theory as a continuation of realism. The shift from realism to neorealism has not changed the ground of its analysis of international power politics. Power still is regarded as the main element of politics; the state still is considered the basic unit of power; and the world out there is still perceived to be in the state of anarchy. The only difference is that neorealism asserts that chaos can be replaced by order through the dominance of a great power, i.e. a hegemon. This role is of course reserved for the United States because after the end of the Cold War it became the hegemonic power, "one with both the willingness and the ability to make and maintain rules for world politics."⁷⁰

In general, then, neorealism became an attempt to reform the technical problems of realism in a new era. Neorealist theorists spotted four basic problems with realism which they sought to resolve: (i) realist theory could not be used for a consistent operational formulation; (ii) realists were reductivist, they did not understand the reality of "the system"; (iii) realist theory was not grounded in social theory, no insights from economics, psychology or sociology; (iv) the realist understanding of power was limited to political-military power.⁷¹ Neorealists claimed that they deal with reality with

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*: 117.

⁷⁰ Robert O. Keohane, "Realism, Neorealism and the Study of World Politics," in Robert O. Keohane, ed., Neorealism and Its Critics, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986): 9.

⁷¹ Richard K. Ashley, "The Poverty of Neorealism," in Robert O. Keohane, ed., Neorealism and Its Critics, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986): 260-261.

objectivity whereas the realists have a metaphysical approach. By this they meant that the chaos of international politics is the result of self-interest and not the function of metaphysical notions such as “human nature.”⁷² But neorealists have their own metaphysical baggage. Ashley insists that, “the states-as-actor assumption is a metaphysical commitment prior to and exempt from scientific criticism.”⁷³ This means that state-centrism of neorealism takes precedence over its claim of structuralism.⁷⁴ This presents a contradiction in the neorealist claim of understanding power in a more complex way compared to their realist predecessors. Ashley argues that, “[i]n neorealism, there is no concept of social power behind or constitutive of states and their interests. Rather, power is generally regarded in terms of capabilities that are said to be distributed among states-as-actors.”⁷⁵

The state-centrism of neorealist theory effects almost every aspect of this theory. Because state-centrism is not a mere point in theory it is an ontological principle in the heart of their theory. Ashley maintains that, “For the neorealist, the state is ontologically prior to the international system.... For the neorealist it is impossible to describe international structures without first fashioning a concept of the state-as-actor.”⁷⁶

Basically the model of the world presented by neorealists is a system populated by states. In this respect there is no fundamental difference between realism and neorealism. In the end the neorealists merely introduced a new set of words, which basically describes the same thing as the realists have been doing. Both realism and neorealism are part of technologies of othering due to their state-centrism. These two

⁷² See *Ibid.*: 263.

⁷³ *Ibid.*: 270.

⁷⁴ See *Ibid.*: 272.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*: 276.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*: 271.

schools believe in a world system which does not include the Kurds as members, but as “standing reserve” of political technology. This brings me to the discussion of realism in actual practice regarding the Kurdish issue.

Kissinger, Realism and Kurdistan

Although technically it makes sense to include Kissinger with Morgenthau in the intellectual mapping of realist theory of international relations; Kissinger requires a treatment of his own, because he played an important role in the political history of Kurdistan and in recent years some of his most loyal students have been following his footsteps in Kurdistan. Kissinger is the link between the realist theory, U.S. foreign policy and Kurdish affairs. A famous quotation by Henry Kissinger from 1976 resonates more than ever in the current situation of Kurdistan: “ [c]overt action should not be confused with missionary work.”⁷⁷ This very short phrase sums up the realist attitude in international politics. The United States has a complicated and often contradictory policy towards the Kurds. In my opinion there are three trends in the U.S. foreign policy regarding the Kurds: (i) Iranian Kurds are completely absent from any U.S. agenda. (2) the Turkish Kurds are disfavored due to the Turkish-U.S. alliance; (3) the Iraqi Kurds are almost favored but often abandoned when they need U.S. support the most. The U.S. has been involved with the Kurds since Woodrow Wilson’s fourteen point plan for world peace. But the real story of this complicated and often unnoticed relationship goes back to the 1970’s and the Nixon and Ford Administrations, when Henry Kissinger was the Secretary of State. Kissinger describes this relationship as follows:

⁷⁷ Quoted in Lokman I. Meho, The Kurdish Question in U.S. Foreign Policy. A Documentary Sourcebook, (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2004): 8.

America involvement [with the Kurds] has had both ideological and strategic origins. Wilsonian tradition peoples us in the direction of supporting national self-determination, but it also produces what is becoming America's perennial policy dilemma: the limits of American moral obligation in an area so remote and inaccessible as the mountainous Kurdistan enclaves amidst countries which profoundly affect the American national interest.⁷⁸

The U.S. attitude towards the Kurdish issue is a prime example of realism at work in a strangely continuous and systematic manner. But while United States was the prime actor in these affairs, the policy of realism is not limited to Americans. In fact often the states of Turkey, Iran and Iraq have been far more brutal in their realism than any Western power. This was the case particularly during the 1970's. Kissinger, who was directly involved with both U.S. foreign policy and relations with Turkey, Iran before 1979 revolution, and Iraq before and after Saddam, gives this report of regional actors of the Kurdish affairs.

Neighboring states such as Turkey or Iran would support the Kurds to deflect Iraqi pressures from their territory. But they were at no point prepared to embrace the creation of a Kurdish national state. By the same token, neither the Nixon, nor the Ford, Bush, or Clinton Administrations ever supported independence for the Iraqi Kurds, much less for those in the neighboring countries. All sought to combine Kurdish autonomy with preserving Iraq's territorial integrity, fearing that Iraq's disintegration would trigger decades of turmoil as its neighbors fought over the spoils. Especially after Iran turned into a hostile fundamentalist state under Ayatollah Khomeini, Iraq's territorial integrity was perceived as a counterbalance to Iranian ambitions.⁷⁹

The contradictory elements of Realpolitik have always worked against Kurdish aspirations for their own homeland. To an outside observer, it must be very strange that in the name of preserving the balance of power keeping a brutal dictator like Saddam in power was considered a better choice than giving the Kurds a chance to create a Kurdish

⁷⁸ Henry Kissinger, Years of Renewal, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999): 578.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*: 579.

state. This contradiction is due to realism's state-centrism and the state-based nature of the international political system as they see it and function in it, which gives priority to those represented by an established state of their own. Whether the claims of states surrounding the Kurds were justified or not is not relevant since sovereign states are seen as entitled to defend their territory. So U.S. foreign policy was to support them in such a defence rather than support the rights of a minority within established states, especially when such established states were allies. The U.S. government preferred to be involved in the Iraqi Kurdish affairs of 1970's consequently only in a covert operation rather than an open manner because of this state-centrism. The Kurds did not have a state to protect their rights and for the U.S. to engage covertly in helping a minority fight against the recognized sovereign state that encapsulated them was a policy option free from any moral and legal obligations. In fact in most Machiavellian projects, this type of covert operation is preferred and the partner like the Kurds usually accept its role out of desperation. And this was the case for the Kurds because the international system is state-centric and U.S. policy was based on that; and the Kurds were minorities encapsulated in states hostile and notorious for their lack of respect for human rights. The Kurds made their 'choices' in an environment of desperation and without legal protection from either an internationally respected contract, or a partner willing to use its power overtly in their defense.

It is also important to remember that the U.S.'s involvement in Kurdish affairs happened during the Cold War. After the coming to power of the Baathists in Iraq (1963), the regional powers along with the U.S. feared that Iraq and the Soviets might build a strong alliance that could unbalance the situation in the Middle East in a dramatic way.

This was also the period of Mustafa Barzani movement, which I explore extensively in chapter six. But for now I focus on realism of U.S. and regional powers surrounding the Kurds with particular emphasis on Kissinger's role, ideas and impacts.

During the Cold War, there was a fierce competition between U.S. and the Soviets over Iraq due to its significant oil reserves and also its strategic position. The Kurds were caught in the middle and used as pawns and "standing reserves" by all sides, including Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and United States, and even to some degree Jordan and Israel. Kissinger identifies the U.S. concerns as follows:

At issue was the future political orientation of a country [Iraq] second only to Saudi Arabia in its reserves of oil, hence with resources to threaten the equilibrium in the Middle East and especially in the Gulf. In 1968, the Baath Party, committed domestically to a radical socialist program and avowing military hostility to the West, had returned to power in Baghdad.⁸⁰

Iran, Jordan and Israel were most threatened by the political direction Iraq had taken. All three participated in a covert operation of aiding Kurdish fighters who were fighting Baghdad. Since the creation of Iraq the Kurds have been in revolt against Baghdad. By the late 1960's a massive and organized resistance in Kurdish areas of Iraq was engaged in continuous fight with the central government. So it is important to note that no foreign power created the civil unrest in Iraq or the Kurdish revolt against Baghdad. The foreign powers only manipulated this already existing movement. This point is important in order to appreciate the history of Kurdish struggle against tyranny and oppression as an independent and homegrown national movement. But this struggle fell victim to the international intrigues counseled by realist ideology.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*: 579-80.

They [Iran, Jordan, and Israel] treated the latter's [the Kurd's] quest for autonomy in the inhospitable mountains north of Iraq as a card to be played to divert the Baathist regime's energies and resources away from their own border. Though we [the Americans] did not actually participate in this covert assistance, our intelligence agencies were briefed on it by their counterparts in each of the countries involved. And, of course, all these countries were receiving economic and military aid from the United States.⁸¹

While at this point of the game the Americans were indecisive about Iraq, the Soviets were more aggressive. In 1972 the Soviets got closer to the Iraqi Baathist regime. Iraq then became the major ally of the Soviets in the Middle East and as a result it received many Soviet arms. Although the Kurds were the first to experience Iraq's new military makeover, the neighboring states also began to feel the new danger. These new risks got the American's attention. Eventually Nixon met with the Shah of Iran in May 1972 in Tehran to discuss the situation.⁸² In August of the same year, Nixon ordered a covert program of aiding the Barzanis in their fight against Baghdad.⁸³ Iran and Jordan were dealing with the Kurds on America's behalf. For a while the Kurds became a real challenge to Baghdad, so the Soviets increased their military aid to Iraq. The Kurds couldn't keep up because the fight against Baghdad required a force with far superior military power than its guerilla warfare and covert support from U.S. and its allies in the region. By 1974, the U.S., fatigued by the Vietnam war and many other issues such as presidential election, Watergate, etc., forgot Iraqi affairs. At this point, the Shah of Iran began to have doubt about the U.S.'s seriousness in Iraqi affairs. As a result the Shah no longer was willing to risk his relations with Baghdad due also to what he saw in Vietnam with the eventual retreat of the Americans. So he did not want to pursue a policy that

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 580.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 581.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 584.

might lead to any kind of aggression Iran would be left to face alone. So in March 1975 Shah reached an agreement with Saddam as a result of which he abandoned the Barzanis.⁸⁴ The U.S., whose covert operation regarding the Iraqi Kurds was conducted mainly through the Shah of Iran, had no objection to his plan. I discuss this episode in full in chapter six, here I consider Kissinger's role as a voice for realist theory and policy.

The Kurds made many desperate pleas to the Americans, particularly to Kissinger, but they got no answer. About that occasion Kissinger argued that, "[t]he reason I did not reply to the desperate pleas for help was because there was nothing I could say, and ... with the Iranian border closed to us, no emergency assistance was possible."⁸⁵ The fact is that all the neighboring countries except for Iraq were American allies. There was plenty it could have done but the Americans felt no obligation because that is the nature of covert operation from a realist point of view. It helps to remember once more Kissinger's remark to a congressional committee inquiring his role in Kurdish affairs: "[c]overt action should not be confused with missionary work." This is typical realist understanding of a political program. In 1999 Kissinger reflected on his relations with the Kurdish-Iraqi affairs this way:

Even from the perspective of two decades, I like the alternative to the course we pursued even less. Had we refused to undertake the Kurdish operation in 1972 and left the Iraqis free to concentrate their efforts on the Gulf, the subsequent course of Middle East diplomacy might have been quite different, especially during and after the October 1973 Middle East war. For the Kurdish people, perennial victims of history, this is, of course, no consolation.⁸⁶

To let the Kurds down in the 1970s was not just morally wrong; from my perspectives it was bad strategy. Saddam and the Baath party remain in power for three

⁸⁴ See *Ibid.*, 594.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 596.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 596.

decades. The history of these three decades shows that any alternative to the Baathism of Saddam's regime would have been a better choice for the Kurds and other Iraqis, the region and for the international community. The Kurdish movement was defeated because of a realist strategy based on the state-centrism of the international system which othered them as a nation without a state. Saddam and Baathist ideology were the victors of the 1970's making realism part of the technology of othering in the Middle East. This was clearly not good for the international community. Had the Kurds been helped and treated as an ally and not as pawns, the situation of the entire region would have been different. But the Kurds could not have been treated as allies and partners because of the technology of othering: the adoption of a covert operation was a technique of othering the Kurds. They were not treated as politically-significant, independent subjects by realist policy-makers. They were othered, used and, when no longer needed put aside as "standing reserve" for another episode. One may wonder why, if the Kurds were really independent political subjects, and had the maturity to be considered partners, they fell for the tricks of Realpolitik? They did so because they were utterly desperate and had literally no choice. When you are othered, your choices are taken away from you. And in the political technology of a state-centric international system, the Kurds are the "other" in multiple wars within Middle Eastern states created and manipulated by oil-seeking Western powers, within the regional and international state-system.

Conclusion

In this chapter I explored Arendt and Said's concept of imperialism, realist and neorealist theories of international relations as technologies of othering. I traced the views of Arendt

and Said regarding the expansionist nature of imperialism to its roots in the political 'science' of Hobbes. I also explored Hobbes's contributions to realism, especially his emphasis on power and the need to maximize power perceived by individuals and states. I argued that twentieth-century imperialism was an expansionist ideology and practice, which impacted the Kurds in dramatic ways. Western imperial powers defeated and dismantled the Ottoman Empire; as a consequence of which Kurdistan was partitioned among its neighboring states. This was the dramatic beginning of technologies of othering against the Kurds and the start of their encounter with nihilism of realist international relations theory and politics as well as expansionist imperialism.

I explained the Hobbesian roots of the idea that all politics is about power, and maximization of power. Imperialism became the international politics of an age defined by "the war of all against all." So the Kurdish dilemma began with the First World War which gave evidence to the notion of the "war of all against all." I also argued that this situation was the ground on which the realist theory was built. Realism reflects the concerns and dire condition of Europe between the two world wars, when nihilism and war techniques were devastating Europe. I conclude that realist international relations, as a reaction to those extremely difficult years, was not able to overcome the violent essence of what ravaged Europe. The harsh reality that realism was reacting against could not be overcome by a realist understanding of the situation. Realists were attracted to Machiavelli and interpreted their experiences through a Machiavellian perspective, of politics without ethical and moral responsibility. In this respect, I believe realism became a self-consciously a-moral international politics; a form of international politics that could easily justify using any part of humanity as "standing reserve." Through a

Machiavellian approach realism sponsored an a-moral study of international politics aimed at providing security against war. Through Hobbes's influence it became the proponent of survival in a world where there is a perpetual war of all against all. I believe in this respect realism became an instrument of political technology and nihilism. It became a part of political technology because it could reduce international politics to a series of subjectively-defined "causes and effects"; and it was nihilist because it devalued idealist principles such as Wilsonian defense of self-determination. It dismissed Wilsonian principles simply because they could not be implemented in an international system based on the "will to power."

I believe that realism's understanding of power overriding all other considerations contributed to a lawless international relations in which the non-allied states and the state-less nations can be treated as beyond moral or international laws. Realism's objection to morality in international relations is a contribution to supremacy of technique. In the realist vision of international politics a state maximizes its power to defend itself and its interest through technologies of war and politics.

Realism became a part of technologies of othering with regards to the Kurds on two levels. First realists dismissed the Wilsonian idealism which had recognized the Kurdish claim to statehood. Secondly realism modeled a system of international relations centered only around states. The stateless Kurds were left to fend for themselves in an international system with no ethics and only "power" as its ultimate goal. To be stateless in a state-centric world for the Kurdish nation was a first hand experience of nihilism; because the same forces which denied its right to statehood created the international state-centric system.

Neorealism shares basic principles of realism especially its state-centrism. Neorealism remains a nihilistic engagement with the awesome power of technique and its violent negations. Neorealism negates idealism contributing to the political technologies of othering. From a neorealist point of view, the ontological prerequisite for existence in the international domain is to be a "state." And since the Kurds are stateless, from both the realist and neorealist perspective they do not exist, they are "nil." The cause of this seeming deprivation was highlighted by realist denial that stateless nations are political actors. This "nothingness" of nihilism befell Kurdistan. It is important to understand this nihilist negation because it is due to this very philosophical contradiction that the Kurds are othered. I conclude that the political technologies of othering, neorealism being one of them, and the exhausting nature of nihilism have thrown the Kurdish case into the realm of "non-being." This makes the case for the ever-presence of nihilism in neorealism when it concerns Kurdistan.

I argued that realism as the guide to foreign policy is not limited to the West. In the Kurdish case the Middle Eastern countries often have been more 'realist' than their Western counterparts. In fact the realism of some Middle Eastern countries has let them manipulate even the U.S. foreign policies from time to time. From the 1970s up to the Iraq war of 2003, the regional powers managed to convince the U.S. that it was to the benefit of the regional balance of power and international security to keep a brutal dictator, Saddam, in power. Imagine if Saddam had been removed from power in the 1970s and the Kurds had received the support they needed. The Middle East would be a different region. The Iran-Iraq war and later the Kuwait invasion might not have happened. Halabja and the other genocidal campaigns against the Kurds might not have happened.

The state-centrism of international relations was an obstacle in U.S. policy. It did not allow the U.S. to be involved in Iraqi affairs in the 1970 in an open and legal manner. The U.S. involvement in those years was limited to covert operation. This situation left the script of the events to be written by the local actors, such the Shah and others, who manipulated the situation to the worst possible ends. They kept Saddam in power and abandoned the Kurds for mere confusion over self-interest and the phobia about having a Kurdish "state" or "quasi-state." I believe this phobia has imposed nihilist policies on Kurds from Ankara, Tehran, and Baghdad for almost a century now.

Kissinger's remarks and the failure of his 1970s policies, shows that realist inspired politics are not based on a "scientific" or "objective" understanding of the "world of reality." The events that led to Barzani's movements and its aftermath is dealt with extensively in chapter six. In this chapter, I dealt with the realist understanding of the issue. In this respect realist policy with its stubborn rejection of Wilsonian principles proved to be not only morally wrong but also in terms of strategy completely false. By keeping the Saddam and sacrificing Kurds, the region did not get any stability. Saddam created a totalitarian regime of terror; the Shah was toppled in a bloody revolution with an ideology spreading beyond the borders of Iran; and Turkey has been crippled by a civil war the human and economic costs of which are yet to be counted and not to mention the devastations of Iran-Iraq war and the Kuwait invasion. I conclude that realist international relations and expansionist imperialism have been major parts of the technologies of othering establishing an overwhelming condition of nihilism regarding Kurdistan. I also speculate that the disasters in the region show how deeply embedded nihilism is in realist-directed policies within and between states.

Chapter Three: Nationalism

In this chapter I examine how the discourses of nationalism contribute to political technologies of othering. In this respect, the question is how nationalism has othered the Kurds? I argue that theories about nationalism are misrepresented and misused regarding Kurdistan. I examine the original literature on nationalism and then show how scholars of the Kurdish issue misrepresent these ideas and the effect on the Kurdish case. My literature review shows that most Middle Eastern and some Western scholars have been trapped in the orthodoxy of early Western theories of nationalism now either refuted or reformed in current theories. I argue that this shows effects of “enframing” in which “things become entirely devoid of intrinsic meaning.”¹ I explained in chapter one the significance of “enframing” and its role in the technology of othering. In this chapter I show how through “enframing” and nihilistic devaluation the original meanings of concepts such as “imagined community” and “ethnic nationalism” are misrepresented from what their authors (Anderson and Smith, respectively) intended.

Scholars who have misrepresented these ideas contributed to the political technology of othering and in their theories nationalism has become part of the technology of othering. For example Anderson’s original point was that all nations are “imagined communities” not just those which have not achieved statehood. It is a distortion of his idea to argue that statehood has not been achieved for Kurdistan because the Kurdish nation is not real, it is “imagined.” Likewise it is also a misrepresentation of Smith’s views on “*ethnie*” or “ethnonationalism,” i.e. anything with the prefix “ethnic”

¹ Jean- Makrie Vaysse , Le Vocabulaire de Heidegger, (Paris: Ellipses, 2000): 162.

juxtaposed to “nation.” Smith rejects the dichotomy between ethnic/civic, arguing that all nationalisms at root are ethnic and not just the nationalisms of ‘others.’ But his views, like those of Anderson, are misused and misrepresented by many scholars regarding Kurdish issue. In what follows, I discuss the term *millat* and its connection to the term nation in its premodern conception. Then I explore modern nationalism as a form of politics. Finally I review the literature concerning Kurdish nationalism and show how it distorts these original ideas so that Kurdish nationalism is presented as the “others” nationalism.

Nation and nationalism are among the most contested concepts and subject to many interpretations and definitions. There is not a single agreed-on definition. Nationalism is difficult to define either as an ideology or theory, and has no founder.² This deprived nationalism of theoretical boundaries so, as an ideology, it serves goals which range widely from racist exclusion to emancipation. These extremes of nationalism result in many conflicting reactions. Nationalism is loved and hated; it can make you love and hate. It is a contradiction, therefore difficult to explain. In the following section I first deal with ‘nation’ in its premodern conceptions.

I. Nationalism prior to Modernity

In Arabic, Turkish, Persian and Kurdish the word for nation is *millat*.³ But *millat* originally meant ‘religion.’ Transformation of this term from a religious concept to a seemingly secular-ideological one, I believe, reflects the religious roots of many

² See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Community*, (New York: Verso, 2006): 5.

³ *Millat* is the feminine form of the masculine Arabic noun *milla*. In Turkish it is *millet* and in Persian and Kurdish only the feminine form is used. I use *millat* because it is the preferred form in Kurdish.

ideologies in the Middle East which tried to fill the gap left by the departure of religion as a political 'glue' after the collapse of Islamic empires. Bernard Lewis has an interesting analysis of the word *millat*.

The word *milla* ... occurs frequently in the Hebrew Bible, with the meaning of 'word' or 'utterance'. In the forms *milta* or *mellta*, it is used in ancient Jewish and Christian Aramaic texts in the same sense. In some Christian texts it appears as the equivalent of the Greek *logos*. In the Quran it denotes a religious group, perhaps in the sense of those who follow the word of God in a certain way.⁴

In the classical languages of Islam *millat* was a category used for the peoples of the Book such as the *millat* of Abraham or the followers of Abraham, etc. It was a term intended to include rather than to exclude. In a metaphysical sense Islam saw itself as the perfection of all previous monotheistic religions therefore it categorized those who believed in those religions; and the term *millat* performed this function. The Ottomans referred to *millat* [*millet*] in its original meaning rooted in Quran.

In the Ottoman Empire it [*millet*] came to be applied to the organized and legally recognized religious communities, such as the Greek Christians, the Armenian Christians, and the Jews, and by extension also to the different 'nations' of the Franks. Even as applied to the Frankish nations the term was at first understood as having a primarily religious sense. Thus, the English were recognized in the sixteenth century as the 'Lutheran nation', and non-English Protestants were regarded as being under their protection. In the Empire, there was a Muslim *millet*, but no Turkish or Arab or Kurdish *millets*; there were Greek and Armenian and Jewish *millets*, but as religious communities, not as ethnic nations.⁵

But the meaning of the term changed through time. Daryush Shayegan, an Iranian scholar, believes the meaning of *millat* changed from religious community to nation during the constitutional revolution in Iran around 1905, which impacted the rest of

⁴ Bernard Lewis, The Multiple Identities of the Middle East, (London: Phoenix, 1998): 84.

⁵ Bernard Lewis, The Emergence of Modern Turkey, (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002): 335.

Middle East. He argued that this shift of meaning reflected Muslim encounters with modernity resulting in secularized religious concepts.⁶ He claims that nationalism, while alien to the Middle East, gained popularity because it was an effective tool in fighting against imperialism and provided a new ground for power politics.⁷ He also claims, however, that the project of nationalism in the Middle East has been a failure because as an ideology nationalism is one of the masks of European nihilism.⁸ He warns against nationalism because he considers it to be alien to Middle Eastern cultures and believes its introduction has created unusual political anomalies.⁹

Kedourie also claims that the word "nation" changed meaning in European cultures, just as *millat* did in the Middle East.

Natio in ordinary speech originally meant a group of men [sic] belonging together by similarity of birth, larger than a family, but smaller than a clan or a people. Thus, one spoke of the *Populus Romanus* and not of the *natio romanorum*. The term applied particularly to a community of foreigners. Medieval universities were, it is well known, divided into 'nations': University of Paris had four nations: *l'honorable nation de France*, *la fidele nation de Picardie*, *la venerable nation de Normandie*, and *la constante nation de Germanie*; these distinctions in use within the university, indicated places of provenance, but in no way corresponded either to modern geographical divisions, or indeed to what is now understood by 'nations'. Thus the *nation de France* referred to speakers of Romance languages including Italians and Spaniards; the *nation de Picardie* referred to the Dutch, that of *Normandie* to those originating from North-Eastern Europe, and that of *Germanie* to Englishmen as well as to Germans proper.¹⁰

Kedourie claims that in Europe nation came to be the name for that body of people who were juxtaposed to the King and the Aristocracy, which gained recognition

⁶ Daryush Shayegan, *Asia darbrabar-e Gharb* [Asia confronting the West], (Tehran: Bagh-e Aiyne, 1992): 73. [Text in Persian, my translation].

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*: 79.

⁹ *Ibid.*: 80.

¹⁰ Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*, (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993): 5-6.

such that the King and the legislators were considered responsible to it.¹¹ That is, it became the basis of an ascending legitimization of political rule. Power came not down from God but up from 'the people' or 'the nation.' With the advent of modernity, the political significance of nation increased. Nevertheless according to Smith "neo-perennialists argue for the existence of nations and nationalisms even before the sixteenth century."¹² Smith argues that, according to neo-perennialists, "there *can* be premodern nations, and most of them were to be found in Western Europe, following the English prototype."¹³ Smith objects to the Eurocentrism of this view and considers the possibility that, using the same neo-perennialist criteria, some non-European peoples such as "Safavid Persia, already constituted nations in the medieval epoch."¹⁴ The neo-perennialists consider the Christian religion a significant source of nationalism in Europe and its settler colonies. Smith explains the views of Adrian Hastings, a neo-perennialist, regarding the Christian roots of nationalism as follows: "[T]he Church had sanctioned the use of vernacular languages; with the result that the message it preached was as much national as universal, because, alongside the Gospel the Church had adopted the Old Testament and its political ideal of sacred nationality and kingship."¹⁵ In this respect, according to Smith neo-perennialists sought the roots of nationalism "not primarily in the imaginations and inventions of elites"¹⁶ but in "literature, the clergy, the Church and biblical religion."¹⁷ Smith points out that neo-perennialist like Hastings may provide some explanations regarding the origin of nationalism in the West, but he believes that

¹¹ See *Ibid.*: 7.

¹² Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism*, (Malden: Polity Press, 2005): 97.

¹³ *Ibid.*: 96.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*: 99.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*: 98.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*: 97.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*: 98.

the non-West including some Asian nations must be also included in his account.¹⁸ Regardless of its origin nationalism made its way to modernity and became a self-conscious field of study.

II. Nationalism and Modernity

Modern Europeans came to understand nationalism as the political self-consciousness of nations. In a sense the European peoples became nations or they realized themselves as nations, a philosophic transformation which re-defined their identity. Arendt sees this transformation thus: "A people becomes a nation when it takes conscience of itself according to its history; as such it is attached to the soil which is the product of past labor and where history has left its traces."¹⁹ She further argues that, "[n]ationalism signifies essentially the conquest of the state through the nation."²⁰ She is critical of the conquest of states by nations and calls it "the evil of our time."²¹ She sees this relation between nation and state as a major problem and not an achievement, arguing that, "[t]he relations between Nation and State – or in more general and exact terms, between the political order and that of nationality – raise one of the essential problems which our civilization has to solve."²²

Arendt's condemnation of nationalism cannot be separated from her experience of the horrors of Nazi Germany and the experience of European racism. Arendt is talking about what became the dominant political form of modern Europe where nations became

¹⁸ *Ibid.*: 99.

¹⁹ Hannah Arendt, "The Nation," in Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954, Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism, (New York: Schocken Books, 1994): 208.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*: 209.

²² *Ibid.*: 210.

the ideal units of political organization²³ because sovereignty was believed to reside in the nation.²⁴ I believe it was due to this kind of transformation that the nation-state was born and made its way into politics both domestically and internationally. According to Kedourie this resulted in ideological politics in Europe after the French Revolution,²⁵ which he claims was the cause of nationalism.²⁶ Anderson expanding on his own famous claim that nations are 'imagined', also suggests the idea of the sovereignty of the nation is a product of French Revolution. He argues that, "[i]t [the nation] is imagined as *sovereign* because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm."²⁷

Hobsbawm also believes the idea of the sovereignty of nations originated in the French Revolution.²⁸ Indian post-colonial critic Chatterjee also considers nationalism a product of European political history,²⁹ ending in the sovereignty of the nation, was driven by the desire for freedom,³⁰ which had its roots in the idea of self-determination and autonomy. Smith argues that, "the real doctrine of national self-determination was elaborated in the first decades of the nineteenth century by Fichte and his followers, in their egoistic and idealist emendations of Kant's notion of autonomy."³¹ Kant's notion of

²³ Elie Kedourie, Nationalism, (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993): xv.

²⁴ *Ibid.*: 5.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, xiv.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁷ Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities, (New York: Verso, 2006): 7.

²⁸ See E. J. Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism since 1780, Program, Myth, Reality, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994): 10.

²⁹ See Partha Chatterjee, The Nation and Its Fragments, Colonial and Postcolonial Histories, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993): 4.

³⁰ See Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities, (New York: Verso, 2006): 7.

³¹ Anthony D. Smith, Theories of Nationalism, (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1983): 10.

self-determination and autonomy was a principle for individual ethics from which later thinkers known as the post-Kantians drew a political conclusion. Kant's point was that true virtue requires choice by free will of a self-determined individual, hence self-determination is a supreme political good.³² Guibernau believes that, "[t]he principle of autonomy stated by Kant means giving laws to oneself, being free from coercion and having the right to choose. He formulated his doctrine to defend the idea that individuals are an end in themselves."³³

With the elaborate background provided by Enlightenment, particularly Kantian philosophy, nationalists found intellectual tools and raw materials to construct a popular ideology in Europe, which sponsored important political movements that dominated Western Europe for a long time. However, the often-theorized link between modernity and nationalism is contested by neo-perennialists who believe identity of many nations continues from pre-modernity to the present.³⁴ Hasting, for example, shows the continuity of the meaning of the term "nation" in English from the fourteenth century onwards.³⁵ Regardless of its origin, nationalism was established as a form of modern politics as I examine in the next section.

³² See Elie Kedourie, Nationalism, (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993): 15-22.

³³ Montserrat Guibernau, Nations Without Sates. Political Communities in a Global Age, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999): 25.

³⁴ See Anthony D. Smith, Nationalism, (Malden: Polity Press, 2005): 95.

³⁵ See *Ibid.*: 93.

III. Nationalism as a Form of Politics

What made nationalism a powerful form of politics was the idea that the nation must be independent and congruent with a state and this meant sovereignty of the nation.³⁶ In other words the will to power resides in the nation. As Gellner argues, “[n]ationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent,”³⁷ an idea accepted by Hobsbawm.³⁸ The intellectual authors of this notion include J. S. Mill who wrote in 1872, “[i]t is, in general, a necessary condition of free institutions that the, boundaries of government should coincide in the main with those of nationality.”³⁹ This raises the question: which comes first nations or nationalisms? Hobsbawm believes that, “[n]ations do not make states and nationalisms but the other way around.”⁴⁰ Gellner agrees and argues that, “[i]t is nationalism which engenders nations, and not the other way round. Admittedly, nationalism uses the pre-existing, historically inherited proliferation of cultures or cultural wealth, though it uses them very selectively, and it most often transforms them radically.”⁴¹

Whether nationalism came first or nation is far from being resolved. It is almost impossible to provide convincing answer because of its political nature. In my opinion both nationalisms and nations are directly related to the issue of power. The

³⁶ See John Breuilly, Nationalism and the State, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982): 3.

³⁷ Ernest Gellner, Nations and Nationalism, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1983): 1.

³⁸ See E. J. Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism since 1780. Program, Myth, Reality, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994): 9.

³⁹ Mill, J. S. *Considerations on Representative Government*, London 1872. Quoted in Anthony D. Smith, Theories of Nationalism, (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1983): 9.

⁴⁰ E. J. Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism since 1780. Program, Myth, Reality, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994): 10.

⁴¹ Ernest Gellner, Nations and Nationalism, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1983): 55.

nationalists' ultimate goal is the conquest of an existing state or forming their own state.

But this struggle is not always successful. As a result, we have many nations without states. Guibernau explains:

By 'nations without states' I refer to nations which, in spite of having their territories included within the boundaries of one or more states, by and large do not identify with them. The members of a nation lacking a state of their own regard the state containing them as alien, and maintain a separate sense of national identity generally based upon a common culture, history, attachment to a particular territory and the explicit wish to rule themselves.⁴²

The struggle of nations for statehood is one of the most important political issues of our time. Nations without states are fighting for recognition both by the state encapsulating them and the international community.⁴³ The term *recognition* has various degrees. Some struggle to be recognized as fully independent states; others as limited or quasi-states. Some seek a measure of autonomy, or basic cultural rights; and some just want their individual human rights to be recognized. So all struggles for recognition are not about creating a separate state: some are as basic as fighting for humane treatment by the sovereign state that encapsulate them regardless of the fact that they do not share the same nationality or ethnicity. This struggle for recognition is sometimes a fight for equality in rights and the rule of law. As long as the state denies an encapsulated nation its political rights unrest and contention will continue. I believe the systematic denial of the cultural rights of a minority community may push them from a struggle for such basic rights to the level of struggle for independence. Guibernau argues:

A nation without state, as the term indicates, is based upon the existence of a nation, that is, a community endowed with a stable but dynamic core containing a set of factors which have generated the emergence of a

⁴² Montserrat Guibernau, Nations Without States. Political Communities in a Global Age, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999): 16.

⁴³ See *Ibid.*: 25.

specific national identity. The state, that is, the political institution with which the nation should ideally identify, is missing. This creates a picture in which we have the cultural unit but lack the corresponding political institution regarded as legitimate by the members of the nation. The relationship between nation and state seems to have shifted from a time in which the state and its role in nation-building was given pre-eminence.⁴⁴

Scholars disagree even on the reality of nation. Anderson calls nations 'imagined communities;' this suggests that nations need not be built on the objective reality rather he sees their existence as subjective and artificial. Anderson argues that, "[i]n an anthropological spirit, then, I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign."⁴⁵ Anderson believes that nationalism is a discourse located in textual narrative that created the political community by imagination.⁴⁶ He theorizes that national consciousness is based on print-languages,⁴⁷ which, "created unified fields of exchange and communication."⁴⁸ Furthermore he claims, "print-capitalism gave a new fixity to language, which in the long run helped to build the image of antiquity so central to the subjective idea of the nation."⁴⁹ And finally "print-capitalism created languages-of-power of a kind different from the older administrative vernaculars."⁵⁰ Anderson concludes that, "the convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*: 17.

⁴⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (New York: Verso, 2006): 5-6.

⁴⁶ See Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism*, (Malden: Polity Press, 2005): 79.

⁴⁷ See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (New York: Verso, 2006): 44.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*: 45.

morphology set the stage for the modern nation.”⁵¹ Moreover he believes the spread of nationalism also owes its success to profit-seeking capitalism of book-sellers.⁵²

Anderson’s theory, especially his concept of ‘imagined community’ is often used to defame nationalism and some nationalist movements in particular. In one sense, the notion of nations as ‘imagined’ has been distorted and misused to deny nationalisms of stateless nations while leaving nations with states secure. This distortion aims to deny certain nationalisms political space and reduce the grievances of the denied nations to social and psychological factors. In this regard Michael Billig wrote:

Building upon the ideas of Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson and Anthony Giddens, it is suggested that nation-states are not founded upon ‘objective’ criteria, such as the possession of a discrete language. Instead, nations have to be ‘imagined’ as communities. Because of this imaginary element, nationalism contains a strong social psychological dimension.⁵³

Language and text are central to Anderson’s theory. He believes members of ‘imagined’ nations meet on the planes of text and in fields of imagination. In real life, they may never meet. He wrote that, “[i]t [the nation] is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.”⁵⁴ This notion may be harmless regarding members of a large industrial Western country, but it may prove harmful if applied to many peripheral nationalisms and marginal peoples especially those separated by colonially-imposed borders. The sense of solidarity among such peoples is usually a lot more real than Anderson assumes.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*: 46.

⁵² *Ibid.*: 38.

⁵³ Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, (London: Sage Publications, 2004): 10.

⁵⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (New York: Verso, 2006): 6.

Billig distinguishes between Western and non-Western nationalism and describes Western nationalism as banal because it is taken for granted by its followers. He argues, "[o]ur nationalism is routinely forgotten, being unnamed as nationalism. Nationalism as a whole is projected on to others. But, again and again, not only 'their' nationalism seems to return; 'ours' does too."⁵⁵ Chatterjee also challenges Anderson's theory but from a postcolonial point of view as a continuation of colonial discourse which establishes the Western subject as the only subject of world history.

I have one central objection to Anderson's argument. If nationalisms in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain "modular" forms already made available to them by Europe and the Americas, what do they have left to imagine? History, it would seem, has decreed that we in the postcolonial world shall only be perpetual consumers of modernity. Europe and the Americas, the only true subjects of history, have thought out on our behalf not only the script of colonial enlightenment and exploitation, but also that of our anticolonial resistance and postcolonial misery. Even our imaginations must remain forever colonized.⁵⁶

Chatterjee believes post-colonial nationalism may not fit into Western concepts of nationalism. His case, while for the most part persuasive, nonetheless misses some issues relevant to Iranian and Turkish nationalism. Reza Shah of Iran and Ataturk of Turkey consciously imagined their nations mimicking Western countries. I examine these cases in chapter four, where I consider Ataturk's modernization and invoking Western-style nationalism and in chapter five, where I explain Reza Shah's modernization of Iran. Chatterjee has a point in reclaiming his postcolonial subjectivity but his analysis should not be generalized to the experience of modern nationalism in Iran and Turkey, particularly in the form of Persian and Turkish nationalism.

⁵⁵ Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, (London: Sage Publications, 2004): 49.

⁵⁶ Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments, Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993): 5.

IV. Othered Nationalisms

In the dominant Western democracies especially nationalism has had a negative image and is described as 'irrational', 'ethnic', 'racist', etc. As Smith notes "[t]he prevailing image of nationalism in the West today is mainly negative. As a result of two world wars and the Nazi horrors, it has lost much of its former appeal."⁵⁷ This reflects the contradictory nature of nationalism I referred to earlier. One contradiction is the element of racism which appears in extreme nationalisms. Guibernau claims the difference between racism and nationalism is that: "Nationalism wants to regenerate the nation, make its culture flourish and its people feel engaged in a common project that transcends their own life-spans. Nationalism is about building, dreaming and working for a better future for the new generations. Racism does not attempt to construct anything."⁵⁸ Although the presence of racism within the extreme nationalisms should not be dismissed, it is not the only contradiction with nationalism. One of the ideological tools colonized people used in their anticolonial struggles was nationalism, which is also another unresolved contradiction. Chatterjee argues:

[N]ationalism sought to demonstrate the falsity of the colonial claim that the backward peoples were culturally incapable of ruling themselves in the conditions of the modern world. Nationalism denied the alleged inferiority of the colonized people; it also asserted that a backward nation could 'modernize' itself while retaining its cultural identity. It thus produced a discourse in which, even as it challenged the colonial claim to political domination, it also accepted the very intellectual premises of 'modernity'

⁵⁷ Anthony D. Smith, Theories of Nationalism, (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1983): 8.

⁵⁸ Montserrat Guibernau, Nationalisms. The Nation-State and Nationalism in the Twentieth Century, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996): 90.

on which colonial domination was based. How are we to sort out these contradictory elements in nationalist discourse?⁵⁹

Chatterjee believes these contradictions in nationalism reflected its irrational nature. It has to be noted that his analysis reflects experience of violence and oppression due to the colonial experience of India and then its violent partition and the ongoing conflicts between India and Pakistan, over Kashmir, and Islamic and Hindu fundamentalisms when they act as or at the service of nationalist ideologies. Chatterjee believes that

Nationalism as an ideology is irrational, narrow, hateful and destructive. It is not an authentic product of any of the non-European civilizations which, in each particular case, it claims as its classical heritage. It is wholly a European export to the rest of the world. It is also one of Europe's most pernicious exports, for it is not a child of reason or liberty, but of their opposite: of fervent romanticism, of political messianism whose inevitable consequence is the annihilation of freedom.⁶⁰

These remarks likely reflect the frequent (but not universal) failure of nationalism to provide justice and freedom as it claims. Chatterjee's point is relevant to unfulfilled promises of post-colonial nation-states where the relationship between the state and its citizens remained unjust. Even after nationalist struggles for liberation from colonial rule most citizens still deal with the same problems of injustice, exclusion and poverty. Nasr, an Iranian scholar, argues that, "[t]he postcolonial state adopted European concepts of sovereignty and self-determination along with administrative features of the state to fashion itself in the mold of the European state, but it did not replicate the relationship between the state and its citizenry that is the hallmark of the European state."⁶¹ Nasr believes the reason for this continuity between colonial and postcolonial state is that "the

⁵⁹ Partha Chatterjee, Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986): 30.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*: 7.

⁶¹ Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, Islamic Leviathan, Islam and the Making of State Power, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001): 9-10

ruling bureaucratic elite that had managed the colonial state remained in control after independence.”⁶² In other words the governments changed but the style of governance stayed the same. Nasr argues that, “[t]he nationalist discourse did not reject foreign intellectual hegemony; rather, its struggle against colonialism remained focused on political control.”⁶³ In this respect nationalism either imported from Europe or rooted in local cultures was just another technique of power politics. Nasr’s thesis is applicable to the modern states of Iran, Turkey and later Iraq. But with regards to the Kurds they remain marginalized by the state power of their sovereign states.

Hobsbawm explains the phenomenon of incomplete or unfulfilled nationalism as “proto-national.” He argues that, “in many parts of the world, states and national movements could mobilize certain variants of feelings of collective belonging which already existed and which could operate, as it were, potentially on the macro-political scale which could fit in with modern states and nations. I shall call these bonds ‘proto-national’.”⁶⁴ Hobsbawm considers the Kurds, and some other peoples “proto-nations” arguing that they have no historic relation to modern nationhood and so no claim to a state. He argues that:

Nevertheless, ethnicity in the Herodotean sense was, is and can be something that binds together populations living on large territories or even in dispersion, and lacking a common polity, into something which can be called proto-nations. This may well be the case of the Kurds, the Somalis, the Jews, the Basques and others. However, such ethnicity has no historic relation to what is the crux of the modern nation, namely the formation of a nation-state, or for that matter any state, as the case of the ancient Greeks demonstrates.⁶⁵

⁶² *Ibid.*: 10.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ E. J. Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism since 1780. Program, Myth, Reality, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994): 46.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*: 64.

Proto-nation is not the only term used to juxtapose nation by scholars seeking to discredit 'others'' national claims. The term "ethnie" and "ethnic group" are frequently used to describe what is an "incomplete nation." Guibernau's explanation of the difference between nation and an ethnic group clarifies this problem: "A nation should be distinguished from an ethnic group whose members, ... , do not put forward specific political demands."⁶⁶ The notion of *ethnie* along with Kohn's original dichotomy of nationalism into Western/Eastern types underpins the contemporary widespread dichotomy between civic/ethnic types nationalisms. Smith argues that Kohn tried to uncover and understand the difference between virulent nationalisms, more common on the Eastern side of the Rhine in Europe, and the apparently more benign nationalisms on the Western side.⁶⁷ Today it is fashionable to divide nationalisms into civic and ethnic types,⁶⁸ but Smith considers such dichotomies as xenophobic.⁶⁹ He argues that the so-called benign civic nationalism does not recognize the rights of minorities as a community although it does recognize the rights of its citizens as individuals.⁷⁰ Smith believes that this dichotomy is misleading in any case because all nationalisms at root are 'ethnic,'⁷¹ moreover 'ethnicity' is a function of othering because "a common ethnicity is attributed to the population by outsiders,"⁷² and each civic nation-state retains an ethnic core which privileges the majority ethnic culture.

⁶⁶ Montserrat Guibernau, Nationalisms, The Nation-State and Nationalism in the Twentieth Century, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996): 100.

⁶⁷ See Anthony D. Smith, Nationalism, (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2005): 39.

⁶⁸ See *Ibid.*: 41.

⁶⁹ See *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ See *Ibid.*

⁷¹ See *Ibid.*: 101.

⁷² *Ibid.*: 108.

Whatever the focal point of any particular work on nationalism Jonathan Hearn concludes that there are five major aspects of nationalism. (1) Nationalism is a feeling. (2) Nationalism is an identity, therefore a way of anchoring the self in relation to others. (3) Nationalism is an ideology. (4) Nationalism is a social movement. (5) Nationalism is an historical process.⁷³ Smith identifies four major theoretical paradigms in the study of nationalism: modernism, perennialism, primordialism and ethno-symbolism. He starts with modernism and defines it thus:

Modernism comes in two forms, chronological and sociological. The first asserts, ... , that nationalism -the ideology, movement and symbolism - is relatively recent; the second, that nationalism is also qualitatively novel. Nothing like it existed before. ... a wholly new epoch and an entirely novel set of conditions. Nationalism, in short, is a product of modernity, nothing less.⁷⁴

He further explains that modernists believe that the national state and an 'inter-national' community also are novel products of modernity.⁷⁵ He claims the European scholarship on nationalism is dominated by modernist orthodoxy.⁷⁶ He, then, defines the second paradigm, perennialism. "Before the Second World War, many scholars subscribed to the view that, even if nationalist ideology was recent, nations had always existed in every period of history, and that many nations existed from time immemorial - a perspective that can be called 'perennialism'."⁷⁷ He elaborates that perennialist have based their claim on some empirical observations that at least some nations existed prior to modernity.⁷⁸ In comparison he defines the third paradigm, primordialism as follows

⁷³ Jonathan Hearn, Rethinking Nationalism. A critical Introduction, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006): 6-7.

⁷⁴ Anthony D. Smith, Nationalism, (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2005): 46.

⁷⁵ See *Ibid.*; 46-47.

⁷⁶ See *Ibid.*: 49.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ See *Ibid.*: 50.

'Primordialism', in contrast, tends to be the preserve of social scientists - and organic nationalists. Its origins can be traced to Rousseau himself, with his call to flee urban corruption and return to 'nature' to recover a lost innocence. This 'naturalistic' spirit soon entered into the very definition of nationhood.... Indeed, they share with God the attributes of existing before all things and of originating everything. In other words, nations are 'primordial'; they exist in the first order of time, and lie at the root of subsequent processes and developments.⁷⁹

In Smith's view the major debates have been between modernists and perennialists. As an alternative to these he defines fourth paradigm, ethno-symbolism.

Unlike the primordialists who had at most a metaphysical answer, ethno-symbolists propose historical and/or sociological explanations which address the reasons for the continuing emotional attachments of so many people to their ethnic communities and nations, and for their capacity for fanatical terrorism and self-sacrifice on their behalf.... [E]thno-symbolic paradigm can inspire alternative explanations of the intensity and contents of current ethnic conflicts to the usual economic and political accounts.⁸⁰

He explains that, "historical ethno-symbolism focuses particularly on the subjective elements in the persistence of *ethnies*, the formation of nations and the impact of nationalism."⁸¹ He also argues that ethno-symbolism "gives more weight to subjective elements of memory, value, sentiment, myth and symbol, and that it thereby seeks to enter and understand the 'inner worlds' of ethnicity and nationalism."⁸² Smith does not ignore the problem of resolving the *ethnie*/nation dichotomy. He tries to reconcile the two in the following manner

From one angle, nations can be regarded as specialized (territorialized, politicized, mass-public, etc.) forms of *ethnie*; from another angle, nations and *ethnies* are both forms of collective cultural identity that may coexist or compete with each other, with several *ethnies* often residing within the boundaries of the political community of the nation. Nationalism and nations, for this paradigm, far from being tied exclusively to modernity,

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*: 51.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*: 59.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*: 57.

⁸² *Ibid.*

are part of a wider ethno-cultural 'family' of collective identities and aspirations...⁸³

Smith believes his ethno-symbolist paradigm provides a chance for understanding 'othered' peoples' nationalism.⁸⁴ In this respect he considers it to be a viable alternative for explaining what was left out by other paradigms. He sums up his treatment of the four paradigms as follows:

The debates between adherents of the four paradigms have taken place on two levels: theory and history. Put baldly, of the four paradigms, the modernists have been strong on theory, but rather weak on history, whereas perennialists have been rather stronger on history, but weak on theory. Primordialism has either a flawed theory or none, and little or no history, being reductionist (sociobiology) or largely speculative or ahistorical (cultural primordialism). As for the ethno-symbolists, they have evolved no theory, only approaches. But, as one might expect, they are concerned with macrohistory and its sociocultural elements, and, as such, they provide, in my view, a necessary corrective to the often sweeping claims of adherents of the other main paradigms.⁸⁵

Although this may not resolve the various debates over nationalism and all its variables, it should help us understand the Kurdish issue and nationalism.

V. An Overview Of Kurdish Nationalism

Scholars of Kurdish nationalism have been influenced by one or a combination of some of the above-mentioned theories. In this section I provide their views and examine the treatment of Kurdish nationalism by Western, Middle Eastern and also Kurdish scholars. Although the West's encounter with the Kurds has a long history, the Kurdish issue is almost a newcomer in the field of nationalism scholarship. Most of the serious academic works about the Kurds started in the early 1990s, with many new works since the 2003

⁸³ *Ibid.*; 58.

⁸⁴ See *Ibid.*: 60.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*: 61.

Iraq war. There are limits on how the Kurds are studied, with the emphasis mostly on Iraqi Kurds since they have been on the news since the 1991 Gulf war and 2003 Iraq war. The Kurds in Turkey are sometimes studied and the Iranian Kurds are mostly understudied. This variety reflects both the political and academic trends of the contemporary world. But Kurds writing on the Kurds has its own history which I explore in the following section.

The early Kurdish writings on identity

The earliest writing on the Kurds by Kurds began in the sixteenth century. Written in Persian in 1597 the author Sharaf al-Din Bitlisi was a Kurd. The title of his book is *Sharafnama, or the history of Kurdish Nation*. The book is basically the history of six Kurdish kingdoms which ruled various parts of Kurdistan and in some cases outside Kurdistan from 991 to 1598: Marwanids (991-1096), Hassanwayhids (942-1067), Ayyarids (991-1174), Fadilwayhid (1095-1424), Zangina (1174-1598), and Ayyubids (1171-1498).⁸⁶ *Sharafnama* is divided into Four Books but so far M. R. Izady has translated only Book One into English. "Book One is on the rulers of Kurdistan who have raised the banner of kingship, and whom the historians have included among kings."⁸⁷ Book Two is the history of those rulers of Kurdistan who did not declare as kings but were independent, printed their own currency, and had the Friday Sermon read in their names. Book Three is a general survey of other rulers of Kurdistan. Finally Book Four is on the rulers of Bitlis, the ancestors of Sharaf al-Din Bitlisi.

⁸⁶ See Prince Sharaf al-Din Bitlisi, The Sharafnama, or, The History of the Kurdish Nation – 1597. Book One, English Translation and Commentaries by M. R. Izady, (Costa Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers, Inc., 2005): 255-261.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*: 18.

The author had a favorable view of all the kings he wrote about but was critical of Kurdish tribalism, violence, and disunity. I believe his work was an early attempt at self-critique based on a desire for social reform. In general, he was extremely critical of violence and civic unrest and he tried to provide a moral critique. He wrote that, "[i]n accordance (with the maxim), " [h]e who ponders on the outcome, cannot be courageous," they [the Kurds] are without plans and impatient in regards to worldly affairs, as also with their transactions and undertakings."⁸⁸ He further argues that "[w]ithin the Kurdish nation, none follows nor concurs with the other, nor is there solidarity among them."⁸⁹ As a prince, he favored monarchy but did not write about it directly. But he is mostly concerned with civic order and the rule of law. He believed that the lack of a sovereign caused the Kurds to be violent and anarchic. He argued that, "[w]hereas there is no sovereign whose orders are obeyed by [all of the] Kurdish nation, they have become mostly ruthless, audacious, and blood-letters."⁹⁰ In 1597 perhaps the only political alternative he knew to anarchy was monarchy. He criticized brutality and violence and never showed any hate or disdain for the common people. In fact he considered the Kurds of his time poor yet noble and proud. He described the spirit of the common people and their harsh environment as follows:

Whereas the land of Kurdistan and Luristan is mountainous and wooded, not enough is produced there to suffice its inhabitants and the populace. Consequently, in comparison to people of other lands, the Kurdish nation lives a hard and difficult life. They lack attachment to luxury and are free of its boasting. By nature they are a nation well-content, so that the commoners make do with rye and millet bread. In hope of "wheat bread" and acquiring wealth and status, they do not appear at the doorsteps of the statesmen and peoples of influence and charity.⁹¹

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*: 34.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*: 42.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*: 46.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*: 48.

He concludes that foreigners could not conquer Kurdistan and it was a mistake to underestimate its people. "If on occasions some kings have tried and endeavored for the conquest and occupation of the lands of Kurdistan, they have suffered untold pain and torment, and at the end have had to return it with repentance and disappointment to its [Kurdish] masters."⁹²

In short *Sharafnama* provides an interesting view of Kurdish kingdoms before modernity. Its validity has not been questioned; scholars agree on its authenticity, but it does not provide, or pretend to provide, a political philosophy for the Kurds. It mostly reinforces the ideal of monarchy and the desire for peace and security. Bitlisi had a clear idea about Kurdish nationhood and its right to self-rule and having its own sovereignty. Perhaps he knew that he was witnessing the end of the Kurdish kingdoms and this may have been why he wrote his book.

Almost a century later, a visionary poet named Ahmedi Khani echoed the same sentiment in his delightful epic poem of *Mem U Zin* (1694-5) written in Kurdish but employing the poetic style of Masnawi, favored and perfected by the great twelfth century Persian poet Rumi. Kurdish nationalists admire Khani for being the first to write an original Kurdish epic in their own national language. *Mem U Zin* is a tragic love story with layers of moral, political, and mystical context; something to offer to any one with any expectations. Almost a century after *Sharafnama* was written, Khani also criticizes Kurdish culture for the same reasons, expressing his frustration with the lack of intelligent leaders:

If we [the Kurds] had a patron,
a compassionate lover of intellect

⁹² *Ibid.*

My critique would have found currency
 rather than not being valued by cynicism
 No matter how pure and well-intentioned my critique
 It would only be valid when it is valued⁹³

Khani's criticism is mostly directed towards the lack of leadership and unity among Kurds and he saw all of society's ills as coming from that lack of unity and leadership. Only if united under the leadership of an independent king, he believed, would their problems go away.

If only there were unity among us, and we would
 obey one another, then all of the Ottomans and Arabs
 and Iranians would become our servants, we would
 reach perfection in religion and politics, and we
 would become productive in knowledge and wisdom.⁹⁴

Most Kurdish nationalists consider these few lines as the beginning of their nationalist sentiment. Whatever their definition of nationalism, and the context in which Khani wrote, the power of his words has mobilized many generations of Kurdish nationalists. Those who see Khani's nationalism as evidence of a Kurdish nation no doubt fit within the perennial paradigm explained by Smith. In the aftermath of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, one of the very first Kurdish organizations established was dedicated to Kurdish nationalism and its sole activity was to print Khani's *Mem U Zin*.

Kurdish nationalists have been attracted to Khani not because he provided them with a political ideology or a philosophy for state-building. They admire him because he distinguished Kurds from Arabs, Persians and Turks and asserted their right to their own king and country: a romantic political poet. Despite his criticisms of Kurdish society, he

⁹³ Ahmedi Khani, *Mem U Zin*, [Mem and Zin], Hejar, ed. (Paris: Paris Kurdish Institute Press, 1989): 20. [Text in Kurdish, my translation].

⁹⁴ Translated by Martin Van Bruinessen in Martin van Bruinessen, "Ehmedi Xani's Mem U Zin and Its Role in the Emergence of Kurdish National Awareness," in Abbas Vali ed., *Essays on the Origin of Kurdish Nationalism*, (Costa Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers, Inc., 2003): 44. See the original in *Ibid.*: 23.

clearly enjoyed being a Kurd and writing in the Kurdish language. He explained his reason for writing in Kurdish as enabling people to recognize that Kurds have their own books, language and forms of knowledge.⁹⁵

Martin Van Bruinessen believes if nationalism is to be taken as Gellner defines it then Khani cannot be considered a nationalist.⁹⁶ He elaborates following Gellner that, “[a] ‘national’ awareness may first emerge among the upper classes of a society, but as long as the middle and lower strata of that society do not share that awareness, it does not make much sense to speak of a ‘nation.’”⁹⁷ Gellner’s ideas have been repudiated by many Western theorists, nonetheless, his idea of a ‘high’ culture spreading in modernity to a whole society is often used to undercut the nationalisms of ‘others.’ Khani wrote in 1694-5 when, had he not been serious about his Kurdishness, he could have written his poetry in Persian, in which he was fluent and which was the prestige language of the time. But writing in the Kurdish language and on his chosen theme were political choices. He chose to engage his poetry in political matters and not stay abstract and mystical. The conflicts and intrigues of his poetry all deal with matters of power, influence, justice, tyranny, betrayal and the struggle for what is right. Kurdish nationalists admire Khani because he was a poet of the people. He describes their joys and sorrows realistically: his characters could exist today; his dilemmas could be of today. Following his example, most Kurdish patriots wrote poetic and artistic work to express their nationalism.

⁹⁵ See Ahmedi Khani, Mem U Zin, [Mem and Zin] (text in Kurdish), Hejar, ed. (Paris: Paris Kurdish Institute Press, 1989): 24.

⁹⁶ See Martin van Bruinessen, “Ehmedi Xani’s Mem U Zin and Its Role in the Emergence of Kurdish National Awareness,” in Abbas Vali ed., Essays on the Origin of Kurdish Nationalism, (Costa Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers, Inc., 2003): 45.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*: 55.

Kurds theorizing Kurdish identity

By the twentieth century, however, some Kurdish writers chose to engage in social and political discourse directly. In this section I deal with the Kurdish authors who theorized Kurdish identity in a direct manner. The first generation of modern Kurdish authors writing about Kurdistan was influenced by Marxist-Leninist ideology. The most prominent was Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou who founded the modern Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran in 1955 and remained its secretary general until 1989, when he was assassinated in Vienna by Iranian agents. He received a PhD in economics from Prague University in 1962 and wrote his dissertation on the economy of Kurdistan. In 1965, he wrote *Kurdistan and Kurds* explaining the Kurdish issue from a Marxist-Leninist point of view.⁹⁸ After giving an overview of the Kurdish history of struggle for independence and autonomy, he concludes that the solution to Kurdish problem lies in socialism.⁹⁹ He did not define Kurdish nationalism or nationalism in general. But he provides an interesting explanation of what paralyzed the Kurds and made them marginal so that they ended up being left out of politics. He saw the Kurdish problem back as early as the eleventh century:

Three big invasions strongly impaired the standing of the population in Kurdistan and in the whole area of the Near East: the Seljuq Turks who entered in 1051, the Mongols in 1231 and Tamerlane in 1402, who, in succession, occupied and ravaged the countries and were the cause of immense, and for a long time irremediable, economic and social difficulties.¹⁰⁰

He dates the first partition of Kurdistan between Iran and Turkey to the seventeenth century when the conflict between the Safavids of Iran and Ottomans ended

⁹⁸ Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan and the Kurds*, (London: Collet's Publishers Ltd., 1965).

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*: 292-3.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*: 36.

in 1639.¹⁰¹ Ghassemlou's writing was the beginning of Kurds writing about Kurdistan in exile. Since the end of the First World War there were only a few, brief periods when Kurds could write about Kurdistan in their own homeland, because of persecution against such scholarship. But after each uprising there were waves of emigration; and some Kurdish exiles showed an interest in research and scholarship on the Kurds, a few in political science. Hence Kurdish scholars focused on the Kurdish issue. Amir Hassanpour, a Kurdish linguistic scholar, draws the attention to the limits of Middle Eastern Studies departments as a context for the study of Kurdish.

With a few exceptions, none of the Middle Eastern studies departments in European and North American universities offers any Kurdish language courses. The majority teach only the four state languages of the region, i.e. Arabic, Turkish, Persian and Hebrew. It is not easy to break out of this vicious circle, which is sustained by the highly unequal distribution of power between a non-state people, the Kurds, and the nation-state system.¹⁰²

The state-centric international system has influenced the academic world. In the case of Kurdish studies, this also has a negative impact on the quality of the research.

Hassanpour maintains:

The closure of the Kurdish speech area to field researchers discourages students from conducting research on the language; it deters, in turn, faculty members from supervising student research not based on field work; in like fashion, research grants cannot be obtained for such topics, nor is the resulting dearth of research conducive to course offerings; this environment prevents publishers from investing in books and journals on the topic; library collections for Kurdish material are, therefore, necessarily poor.¹⁰³

Hassanpour also writes about 'linguicide,' the killing of languages, specifically the Kurdish language. His major focus is the relationship between language and nationalism:

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*: 36-37.

¹⁰² <http://www.cogsci.ed.ac.uk/~siamakr/Kurdish/KURDICA/2001/2/Hassanpour.html>
viewed September 2007.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

By “Kurdish identity,” I mean simply the feeling, idea, or experience of belonging to a collective entity called “Kurd.” This identification transcends, though it does not exclude, affiliation with one’s family, tribe, village, city, locale, region or dialect. Indeed, these “smaller” or particular entities assume a “larger” or universal identity, i.e., “Kurdishness.”¹⁰⁴

Hassanpour rejects some contemporary theories which try to deny the Kurds nationhood.

He argues that, since the writing of *Sharafnama*, Kurds have had a distinct sense of identity, even if it may not fit into some accounts of nationalism.¹⁰⁵

Hamit Bozarslan adopting Anderson’s concept of nations as imagined communities, argues that, “[s]ince the project of statehood failed in Kurdish struggles, the Kurdish project of nationhood, or even statehood, is one henceforth to be realized in the history books, history replaced the political and military battlefields.”¹⁰⁶ Perhaps Bozarslan reflects a general trends among the scholars influenced by misrepresentations and distortions of the doctrine of “imagined community.” He also believes Europeans followed Kemalist ideology which in the newly born Republic of Turkey rejected Kurdish nationalism along similar ideological lines. He argues:

Kemalism denounced Kurdish nationalism, along with any other manifestation of Kurdishness, as “feudal” and “reactionary”, opposed to progress and “civilization”; and this had its impact on world opinion. ... European countries also widely welcomed the Turkish power as a civilizing force in the Muslim world, and had on the whole a poor opinion of the “backward” Kurds.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Amir Hassanpour, “The Making of Kurdish Identity: Pre-20th Century Historical and Literary Sources.” in Abbas Vali, ed., *Essays on the Origin of Kurdish Nationalism*, (Costa Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers, Inc., 2003): 110.

¹⁰⁵ See *Ibid.*: 161.

¹⁰⁶ Hamit Bozarslan, “Some Remarks on Kurdish Historiographical Discourse in Turkey (1919-1980)” in Abbas Vali, ed., *Essays on the Origin of Kurdish Nationalism*, (Costa Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers, Inc., 2003): 32.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*: 29.

Hassanpour noted that the Ottomans had no problem with the word “Kurdistan” while Kemalists wanted to eliminate it from all maps.¹⁰⁸ Bozarslan also rejects the view that Kurdishness resulted in the marginalizing and othering of the Kurds by the Ottomans. He argues that, while the Kemalists excluded the Kurds, the Ottomans included them in their political system.

For the vast majority of the Kurds, “Kurdishness” was in fact another way of expressing their Muslim and Ottoman affiliations. For centuries, and particularly during the last decades of the Ottoman Empire, being a Kurd meant being a Muslim, by contrast with a non-Muslim, particularly Armenian—and to lesser extent, Assyrian.¹⁰⁹

He believes that, with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Kurdish elite like their Turkish and to some degree Arab counterparts, showed interest in the ideology of nationalism. That is, Bozarslan claims that, at the turn of the nineteenth century, the Kurdish elite showed the same interest and enthusiasm for Westernization and Western civilization as others,¹¹⁰ mainly because of the positive message of the Wilsonian doctrine.¹¹¹ But the trajectory of Kurdish nationalism was different from other Middle Eastern nationalisms. To create their own state, the Kurds faced the great obstacle of confronting multiple, aggressive nationalisms of the Arabs, Turks and Persians.¹¹² As a result, Bozarslan believes, Kurdish nationalism became a reaction to the nationalisms of the dominant regional nations which succeeded in creating their own nation-states.

¹⁰⁸ See Amir Hassanpour, “The Making of Kurdish Identity: Pre-20th Century Historical and Literary Sources.” in Abbas Vali, ed., Essays on the Origin of Kurdish Nationalism, (Costa Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers, Inc., 2003): 116.

¹⁰⁹ Hamit Bozarslan, “Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey: From Tacit Contract to Rebellion (1919-1925)” in Abbas Vali, ed., Essays on the Origin of Kurdish Nationalism, (Costa Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers, Inc., 2003): 171.

¹¹⁰ Hamit Bozarslan, La Question Kurde: États et minorités au Moyen-Orient, (Paris: Presses De Sciences PO, 1997): 103.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*: 104.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

Abbas Vali, another Kurdish scholar, writing on the origin of Kurdish nationalism, and using Smith's typology, divides accounts of Kurdish nationalism into primordialist, constructivist and ethnicist types. He defines them as follows:

For the primordialists, who believe in the antiquity of the nation, nationalism is a specific political effect of the nation, a vehicle for the realization of its historical rights to a national state. The constructivists, on the other hand, argue for the primacy of nationalism as the *prima causa* of the nation and national identity. For them, the nation is an effect of nationalist politics, a political invention and hence a modern phenomenon.... There is also another group, the ethnicist, who are posited somewhere in between the primordialists and constructivists.... The nation, they hold, has ancient ethnic roots which are then redefined by/in modern/nationalist political and cultural conditions to form the basis of the process and practices of the politics of state formation.¹¹³

Vali believes Kurdish understandings of their nationalism are either primordialist or ethnicist, whereas most Western scholars understand try to explain Kurdish nationalism within a modernist-constructivist framework.¹¹⁴ He believes the conflict over ideas about nations is between two trends of thought around the question: is the nation a modern political construct or a subjective ancient phenomenon?¹¹⁵ He believes this conflict results from failure to distinguish between nationalisms as discourses of origin and nationalisms as discourses of identity.¹¹⁶ For Vali, nationalism for the most part is a discourse of identity in which competing identities define themselves in relation to each other.¹¹⁷ Vali is critical of what he calls primordialists and ethnicists—he may be paraphrasing Smith's ethno-symbolists but Vali does not clarify his terminology. I think

¹¹³ Abbas Vali, ed. Essays on the Origin of Kurdish Nationalism, (Costa Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers, Inc., 2003): 2.

¹¹⁴ Abbas Vali, "Genealogies of the Kurds: Construction of Nation and National Identity in Kurdish Historical Writing," in Abbas Vali, ed. Essays on the Origin of Kurdish Nationalism, (Costa Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers, Inc., 2003): 59.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*: 64.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*: 67.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*: 68.

terms ethnic nationalism and *ethnie* have been repeated so often in writings about Kurds that most scholars just take their meanings for granted. I believe Vali uses the term 'ethnicist' to mean ethnic nationalist.

Western scholars and the Kurds

There is a limited number of Western scholars who have been writing on the Kurdish issue for years and those few names have done a great deal of work as pioneers. David McDowall and his famous *A Modern History of Kurdistan*, Robert Olson's *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism*, Gerard Chaliand, Martin Van Bruinessen, Michael Gunter, Kanan Makiya, and Peter Galbraith are only a few names among others writing about Kurds with consistency and courage. Moreover, scholarship on the Kurdish issue faces many obstacles. Only a handful of universities in France and the U.S. offer courses on Kurdish language, history, culture and politics. As a result scholarly work in the field is scanty. But the internationalization of the Kurdish issue within the last decade has produced a good number of journalistic works.

Most Western scholars treat Kurdish nationalism within Anderson's "imagined community" framework or consider it "ethnic nationalism" following Ignatieff's understanding of "ethnic nationalism," which will be examined later in this section. But the idea of ethnic nationalism seems to have more followers among the Western experts on Kurdistan.

Martin Strohmeier uses the notion of "imagined community," in his textual analysis of some important Kurdish literary texts. It might be fitting for him to use the concept of imagined community since he is dealing mostly with literary works. He starts

off with a negative approach regarding the definition of “what is” by way of “what it is not.” In a sense he claims that the Kurds define themselves by saying who they are not rather than saying who they are. He begins his approach to *Mem U Zin* by arguing that, “[t]he imagined community acquires contours as much through defining who it is **not** as who it is. The opposition facilitates a positive self-view, as weaknesses may be seen as the result of unjust treatment by the other.”¹¹⁸ He is referring to the opening lines of *Mem U Zin* in which Khani declares that he was not Arab, Persian nor Turk. Strohmeier does not elaborate on his technique or why it is important to draw to our attention that Khani tried to define the Kurds based on who they are not. Strohmeier believes that identity is a product of the mind and in my opinion this merits an investigation into what are objects of the mind as opposed to those of physical reality. But he does not perform such an investigation. Regarding national identity he simply notes that, “[n]ational identity is invented and constructed in the mind.”¹¹⁹ Although the notions of imagined and invented identity remain problematic, Strohmeier is right in assigning a political end to Khani’s effort.

Disdaining the language of the rulers, he [Khani] wrote in Kurdish so that people would not say “the Kurds are without knowledge, without origins”. The lines introducing the tale explain how the story of Mem U Zin [sic] is to be interpreted. The poet states he is using the story as a “pretext” and leaves no doubt that the tale is to be taken as an allegory of the Kurdish situation, an appeal to Kurds to throw off their oppressors.¹²⁰

It is true that Khani used the Kurdish language both to express linguistic independence and as a political discourse of struggle against oppressors. But Khani did not invent being Kurdish and nor did he invent the language of political independence.

¹¹⁸ Martin Strohmeier, Crucial Images in the Presentation of A Kurdish National Identity: Heroes and Patriots, Traitors and Foes, (Boston: Tuta Sub Aegide Pallas, 2003): 2.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*: 1.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*: 29.

Nor did he 'imagine' his community. A Kurdish language, politics and identity were already in existence. Khani's innovation is his critique of the Kurds. He points out the problems of Kurdish society, which were an obstacle to its unity. Ironically some of his criticisms remained valid until today.

Paul White also views the Kurdish issue within Anderson's framework of imagined community. He argues that "[m]ost members of a nation will never know each other, yet they share the same national myth. Thus, the nation has been referred to as an 'imagined community', since the 'image of their communion' exists in the minds of each inhabitant."¹²¹ White also repeatedly uses the adjective "primitive" to describe Kurdish style and the world "rebel" for their struggle.¹²² He argues that, "the Kurdish national movement, which originated as primitive rebellion, is today closer than ever to its popular roots."¹²³ Regarding the origin of Kurdish struggle he believes that, "[t]he first wave of Kurdish (and putatively Kurdish) rebels in Anatolia was extremely 'primitive'. Led by local religious authorities, these movements were really nationalistic only at their head; their rank and file was basically motivated by religion."¹²⁴ He concludes the Kurdish movement started with "primitive rebellion" then became PKK terrorism and the direction it takes now is "increasingly towards the practice of social banditry."¹²⁵

Maria T. O'Shea also considers the Kurdish issue from within Anderson's 'imagined community' framework. She argues that:

The close association of Kurdish identity with the imagined territory of Kurdistan is made explicit in the map of Kurdistan. In the Diaspora, it is

¹²¹ Paul J. White, Primitive Rebels or Revolutionary Modernizers? The Kurdish National Movement in Turkey, (New York: Zed Books, 2000): 4.

¹²² See *Ibid.*: 1, 2, 206 and 218.

¹²³ *Ibid.*: 2.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*: 206.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*: 218.

the most visible symbol of Kurdish national identity, which also satisfies Kurdish ethnocentric perceptions, placing themselves at the center of space, rather than in their usual marginal periphery. The extent of Kurdistan was largely an irrelevancy until the mid-twentieth century, before which time the Kurds relied on outsiders to map their territory. In the absence of an alternative territorial focus, the Kurds have been content to accept a fairly static cartographic image of Greater Kurdistan, which is based in part on outdated demographic investigations, but largely on hearsay.¹²⁶

She argues that the Kurdish nation is an 'imagined' ethnic group and maintains:

In the nationalism theorist Anthony Smith's terms, the identification of a group as an 'ethnie' involves the acceptance that 'the core of ethnicity ... resides in this quartet of myths, memories, values and symbols' and that 'ethnicity is largely mythic and symbolic in character'. [Smith, 1993]

An ethnie is defined by Smith as a group possessing a collective name, a common myth of descent, a shared history, a distinctive shared culture, association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity.¹²⁷

As I mentioned earlier treating Kurdish nationalism as "ethnic" is common among Western and other Middle Eastern scholars of the Kurdish issue. Although many before Ignatieff articulated, refuted or improved on the idea of "ethnic" nationalism, but his account has been quoted and paraphrased more than others. He explains nationalism as follows: "[a]s a political doctrine, nationalism is the belief that the world's people are divided into nations, and that each of these nations has the right of self-determination, either as a nation-governing units within existing nation-states or as nation-states of their own."¹²⁸ He repeats the civic and ethnic dichotomy arguing that, "[a]ccording to civic nationalistic creed, what holds a society together is not common roots but law."¹²⁹ In contrast, he describes ethnic nationalism as the claim "that an individual's deepest

¹²⁶ Maria T. O'Shea, Trapped Between the Map and Reality: Geography and Perception of Kurdistan, (New York: Routledge, 2004): 194.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*: 41.

¹²⁸ Michael Ignatieff, Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism, (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1994): 5.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*: 7.

attachments are inherited, not chosen,"¹³⁰ concluding that ethnic nationalism results in authoritarianism, while civic nationalism results in democracy.¹³¹ After outlining this framework based on, Gellner's dichotomy of nationalism as civic/ethnic, he then gives his view of the Kurds as follows:

As a people they [Kurds] have made the transition from a tribal to a national form of collective belonging within two generations, but their national consciousness is still shaped by the tribal bond. Their very backwardness, their stubborn enclosure within tribal loyalties, has protected them against assimilation and integration.¹³²

Ignatieff made this observation during his visit to Iraqi Kurdistan in the early 1990s when under UN protection the Kurdish Regional Government was formed. This regional government although not recognised as a state by any international organization or law, is still governing Iraqi Kurdistan. It is interesting that even Ignatieff does not recognize it as a functioning state. He reports his encounter with a Kurd, Behjat, and keeps imposing his view on Behjat saying 'you are a member of a tribe not a political party.' Ignatieff reports, "he says, we are a modern party. We are not a tribe. He doesn't like word 'tribal.' It strikes him as condescending."¹³³ Behjat refuses to be objectified, labeled and represented. He voices his own presentation of "self," yet Ignatieff cannot see Behjat as a member of a political party. From Ignatieff's view point he cannot be a member of a modern structure. He is already labeled as "backward" and "stubborn," not rational and civic like "us." He is Other. Ignatieff's dramatic conclusion is that what happens among Kurds in Kurdistan cannot be what is happening in a "civil society."

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*: 7-8.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*: 6-8.

¹³² *Ibid.*: 181.

¹³³ *Ibid.*: 190.

Kurdistan is other to “civil society.” The Kurds cannot be citizens with civic connections to institutions of power and politics.

Ignatieff tricks us by bringing us to an absurd conclusion. Through his eyes we don't want to be in Kurdistan, a place othered to us. Otherness achieved in an objectifying manner. Ultimately we are left with feelings of pity and charity, not respect and confidence; respect that they might be like us organizing themselves around civic institutions is not afforded to “them.” We cannot have confidence in “them” to have civic abilities like “us.” Ignatieff cannot recognize the Kurds on their own terms and keeps imposing his image of what a nation is on them.

Ignatieff groups the Kurds with peoples in a number of trouble spots in the world where he believes nationalism promotes ethnic cleansing and racism. His book is alarmist and mixes together many groups and categories which on closer observation are random.

Billig offers an interesting critique of Ignatieff's alarmist notions:

Ignatieff's message is one of warning. Concentrating upon six locations Croatia/Serbia, Germany, Ukraine, Quebec, Kurdistan and Northern Ireland - he describes how the irrational forces of ethnic nationalism are erupting to haunt the contemporary world. The collapse of communism and the growth of global communications, far from heralding a new world of cooperative rationality, seem to be unleashing a primordial reaction.¹³⁴

Billig points out Ignatieff's subjective divide which establishes “us” as the norm and “them” as outside the norm. “The rhetoric distances ‘us’ from ‘them’, ‘our’ world from ‘theirs’. And ‘we’, writer and readers, are assumed to belong to a reasonable world, a point-zero of nationalism. In these newspaper reports and in Ignatieff's book, nationalism is routinely and implicitly the property of others.”¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, (London: Sage Publications, 2004): 46.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*: 49.

Most scholars, Western and Middle Eastern alike, follow the idea that Kurdish nationalism is ethnic nationalism. For example David Romano defined Kurdish nationalism as follows

Kurdish nationalist challengers to the state belong to a subset of social movements known as ethnic nationalist movements. In order to understand what this means we must address the nature of ethnicity, a concept resistant to clear-cut definition. "Ethnicity" generally refers to a complex web of social and historical traits that combine to form someone's identity. Definitions currently in use generally highlight a group's emphasis on common origins and descent, as well as shared characteristics based on language, race, religion, territory, culture, values, or history.¹³⁶

Romano argues that despite more than twenty Kurdish rebellions¹³⁷ in the twentieth century; the Kurdish movement in general has failed to mobilize its masses and make them into citizens.

Fieldhouse has written about the British imperial involvement in Kurdistan after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. He, too, believes that, "[i]t would be difficult, in fact, to argue that in 1914 there was in any sense a Kurdish nation or a strong uniting sense of ethnic unity."¹³⁸ But he notes British concerns that led them to ignore Kurdish claims to statehood. In 1920 the British were initially open to the idea, but imperialist concerns changed their policy. In this regard Fieldhouse wrote:

[T]his British failure to maintain the apparently generous policy of 1920 towards Kurdish aspirations was due to two main factors. First, once the fiscal cut-backs of 1921 were in place, it was impossible to maintain sufficient British or Indian forces in Iraq to control and defend it. This made it essential to establish a viable Iraqi state under Faisal; and this in turn depended on incorporating the economically critical Mosul region. From Faisal's standpoint it was also essential to include the Kurds as fellow Sunnis to offset the numerical preponderance of Shias in the south.

¹³⁶ David Romano, The Kurdish Nationalist Movement. Opportunity, Mobilization, and Identity, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 5.

¹³⁷ See *Ibid.*: 4.

¹³⁸ D. K. Fieldhouse, ed., Kurds, Arabs and Britons: the memoir of Wallace Lyon in Iraq, 1918-44, (New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 2002): 37.

The Kurds were therefore sacrificed to the requirements of Iraq, though it was then reasonable to assume that an extended British Mandate would enable the High Commissioner and British officials to ensure that Churchill's prediction of Arab exploitation did not come true. Second, once Mustafa Kemal had won control of Anatolia in 1922, there was no point in Britain attempting to determine the future of Kurds in his territories. Britain urgently needed a peace treaty with the new Turkey, and the Kurds had therefore to be left out of it. After Lausanne all that remained was to determine the frontier between Iraq and Turkey, and that was to be the source of most problems in the Iraqi section of Kurdistan until 1926.¹³⁹

It is ironic that after so many years the Sunni – Shia conflict and concerns raised by Turkey are still unresolved and threaten to destabilize the region, resulting once more in sacrificing Kurdistan in the aftermath of 2003 Iraq War. No one can predict the outcome now, but the causes of any disturbing conclusion would be the same as a century ago. This is one of the prime examples of technologies of othering and Realpolitik. The prime concern of the neo-imperial powers was and is efficiency and the technicality of the matter at hand, to secure their own survival and dominance.

In a comparative study of Britain's imperialist objectives then and the U.S.'s neo-imperialist objectives now, Eisenstadt argues that "Britain's primary goal in Iraq was stability, which was necessary in order to secure British lines of communication with India; protect British interests in the potentially lucrative oil fields of Iran and Iraq; and preserve the political structures that underpinned the Iraqi monarchy, the main conduit of British influence."¹⁴⁰ These were all basic to Britain's continued power and security. It was not in the imperial interests of Britain to concern itself with Kurdistan. Eventually "[t]he British era ended with the 1958 coup that toppled the monarchy and forced the

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*: 38.

¹⁴⁰ Michael Eisenstadt, "Conclusion: Lessons for U.S. Policymakers," in Michael Eisenstadt and Eric Mathewson, ed., U.S. Policy in Post-Saddam Iraq: Lessons from the British Experience, (Washington: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2003): 67.

final departure of British advisors.”¹⁴¹ In comparison Eisenstadt explains the U.S. agenda as follows:

The political transformation of Iraq and the region lie at the heart of the Bush administration's approach. After ridding the country of Saddam's regime, U.S. officials have pledged to seek a stable, unified Iraq that is at peace with its neighbors; free of weapons of mass destruction and ties to terrorism; and led by a broad-based, representative government that is on the path to democracy.¹⁴² The U.S. agenda also includes leveraging regime change in Iraq to pressure and deter Iran and Syria; to serve as a hedge against instability in Saudi Arabia; to establish conditions conducive to the resolution of the Arab- Israeli conflict; and to encourage political reform throughout a region much in need of change.¹⁴³

To what extent these goals can be achieved is unclear. But what concerns the Kurds in Iraq is that history not repeat itself. Their hope is this time to get recognized and gain some measure of continuing self-rule. But the obstacles are many.

Robert Olson, an old veteran of Kurdish studies, argues that a major obstacle in achieving Kurdish political representation or Kurdish self-rule and the international recognition of a state of Kurdistan is the state policy of Turkey. Olson also mentions a shift in Turkish policy.

By 4 July 2004, Ankara had begun to treat the KDP and PUK as representing governmental entities. The Turks recognized that the KDP and PUK had strong armies of 50,000 or more fighters (*peshmerga*) and

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² President George W Bush, speech before the American Enterprise Institute, Washington, D.C., February 26, 2003 (transcript available online at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030226-11.html); Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Douglas J. Feith, testimony given during *The Future of Iraq: Hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee*, 108th Cong., 1st sess., February 11, 2003 (transcript available online at www.defenselink.mil/policy/speech/feb_11_03.html); Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Mark Grossman, testimony given during *The Future of Iraq: Hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee*, 108th Cong., 1st sess., February 11, 2003; National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, interview, *Face the Nation*, Columbia Broadcasting System, February 9, 2002.

¹⁴³ Michael Eisenstadt, "Conclusion: Lessons for U.S. Policymakers," in Michael Eisenstadt and Eric Mathewson, ed., U.S. policy in Post-Saddam Iraq: lessons from the British experience, (Washington: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2003): 68.

could raise that figure considerably, if needed. By June, the Turks were already aware that the Kurdish forces fighting alongside the Americans, and with U.S. approval, had captured substantial arms from Iraq's armed forces. The Kurds also received arms from the U.S. occupational forces. The supply of U.S. arms to the Kurds grew as the Americans became more dependent on the Kurds as their main allies in their war against the Iraqi resistance forces in late 2003 and throughout 2004 and 2005. In the major battles in Iraq's central cities from March 2003 through 2004 and into 2005, the Kurds were the only reliable force that the Americans could depend upon.¹⁴⁴

This indicates that the Iraqi Kurds are seen by the U.S. as reliable partners whose role can no longer be dismissed. But it also indicates to Turkey the Kurdish ability to function as a state with capacity beyond managing local and regional civic and economic affairs. Olson sees the Kurds able to handle a tough opponent such as Turkey. He argues that, "as early as May or June 2003 relations between Turkey and Kurdistan-Iraq began to take on the characteristics of state (Turkey)-to-government(s) (KDP and PUK) relations: a relationship prior to this time that had been characterized by a state-to-territory relationship."¹⁴⁵ Olson also recognizes the very young Kurdish Regional Government's achievements in re/building Iraqi Kurdistan's infrastructure.

Nascent industries were being constructed; the communication and computer and Internet networks were improving. By 2003 Kurdistan-Iraq had three universities—Sulaymaniya, Arbil (Hewler), and Dohuq—with others being planned. Sulaymaniya University had 6300 students and a teaching staff of 370, and the curriculum was largely in Kurdish with English replacing Arabic as a second language among most students. By 2003 many young people were no longer fluent in Arabic or able to read or speak it well. In 2002 alone, some 200 books had been published or translated into Kurdish (largely Sorani). More history books were being written from a non-Arab, non-Turkish, and non-Persian point of View. For the first time in their history, Kurds were coming into possession of their own cultural identity.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ Robert Olson, The Goat and the Butcher: Nationalism and State Formation in Kurdistan-Iraq since the Iraqi War, (Costa Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers, 2005): 2.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*: 3.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*: 10.

Unfortunately Olson's optimism is not shared by other scholars particularly scholars from the Middle East.

Middle Eastern Scholars and the Kurds

In this section I examine the views of Middle Eastern scholars who designate Kurdish nationalism as "ethnic." Nader Entessar's title *Kurdish Ethnonationalism* from the outset establishes his thesis. He argues that, "[a]s the history of Kurdish ethnonationalism clearly demonstrates, politicization of Kurdish ethnicity coincided with the formation of the modern nation-state system in the Middle East."¹⁴⁷ He does not report how he came to this conclusion, but takes it for granted as most scholars in the region seem to since it is repeated so much.

Denis Natali also uses the ethnonationalism concept which she defines as "a form of racial nationalism whereby a group differentiates itself according to its genealogical origins. One of the key questions in the ethnonationalist debate is why a group's national identity turns ethnic over time. Because each group has a distinct ethnic it has the potential to mobilize on an ethnonationalist level."¹⁴⁸ Natali's "racial nationalism" is problematic. There is no evidence of Kurds racializing their own identity nor does Natali provide any evidence as to how she has come to this conclusion. Instead she speculates:

National identity becomes ethnicized when a group senses it is not part of the dominant culture or when it considers itself distinct in regard to the notion of citizenship. Ethnicity became the basis of Kurdish identity not because it was rooted in some premodern past, but because it was the category of political identities used by central governments to determine inclusion and exclusion in the modern state system. Kurdish nationalism

¹⁴⁷ Nader Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, (Boulder & London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992): 1-2.

¹⁴⁸ Denise Natali, *The Kurds and the State: Evolving National Identity in Iraq, Turkey, and Iran*, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2005): xxii.

varies, therefore, because Kurds are divided among three different ethnically defined political communities-Arabs, Persians, and Turks-in differently endowed political spaces modified by external influences. Thus, as a political identity ethnicity cannot exist prior to some other exclusivist nationalist project. For the Kurds this project commenced in the state-formation period.¹⁴⁹

Natali's explanation fails to see that Kurdishness was politicized not just because Kurds were marginalized, but also because their existence was jeopardized. The oppressors of the Kurds have left an incredible record of intolerance and lack of respect for the human rights of Kurds and in most cases even for protections guaranteed by international law. The Kurds were othered and reacted against extreme rejection and intolerance of "difference" by oppressive governments.

Categorizing the Kurds using stereotypical notions and distorted definitions is common among Middle Eastern scholars. For example in 2005 Manafy described the Kurds as "brave, proud, quarrelsome, stubborn, and tough-minded, their character perhaps conditioned by the harsh mountainous areas they inhabit. Centuries of struggle have proven that no invader or conqueror has been able to convert or assimilate them."¹⁵⁰ One would think such characterizations of "the noble savage" out of fashion. The 'description' here becomes a tool for othering. Manafy describes the Kurds as objects with fixed characteristics to establish his dominance through the techniques of language. He further argues that, "it is also true that the Kurd's isolated mountainous existence has prevented the development of independently minded, political cohesive, and class-

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*: xxvi.

¹⁵⁰ A. Manafy, The Kurdish Political Struggles in Iran, Iraq, and Turkey, A Critical Analysis, (New York: University Press of America, Inc., 2005): 1.

conscious organizations in Kurdistan. The mountains, ... created an island of tribally oriented organization with conservative feudal and semi-feudal norms and values.”¹⁵¹

Obviously the author is unaware of the many Kurdish websites representing a tremendous and diverse array of Kurdishness which is urban and civic. The Kurds are not isolated; they are fully integrated in the world. The author’s observation is essentialist and based on taken for-granted subjective biases rooted in a century long political techniques of othering imposed on Kurds. The author goes so far as to say, “Although the Kurdish demand is a just one, its movement is reactionary.”¹⁵²

The state policy of rejecting the Kurds as a nation or a group capable or deserving of self-rule is a dominant ideology in the states under which the Kurds live. The rhetoric of these Middle Eastern scholars reflects the ideology of their states. Writing in 1966, Arfa argued that, “they [the Kurds] have always formed an entity and for the same reasons they consider themselves now entitled to be counted as a nation even if in the past this conception was alien to them.”¹⁵³ He believes, however, that, “[t]he political union of all Kurds, therefore, presupposes the complete disruption of the existing order of things in the Middle East, and this could be brought about only by the intrusion of Soviet Russia into these regions and the disintegration of Turkey, Iran and the Arab States.”¹⁵⁴

Arfa was not just a scholar, but also Chief of Staff of the Iranian army 1944-46 and Ambassador to Turkey 1958-61. He considered the Kurdish demand disruptive from his point of view as a statesman and a strategist. This line of thinking, i.e. seeing the Kurdish issue as damaging to the existing order, has left its mark to the present.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*: 2.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*: 17.

¹⁵³ Hassan Arfa, The Kurds: An Historical and Political Study, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1966): 155.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*: 156.

Scholarship regarding Kurdish nationalist discourse has been largely male-dominated. One exception is Shahrzad Mojab, an Iranian-Canadian feminist who critiques Kurdish nationalism, in a multilayered discursive engagement. She criticizes Western feminism along with Arab, Turkish and Persian feminism for marginalizing Kurdish women; and at the same time criticizes male-dominated Kurdish nationalism for also marginalizing them. She edited the first English-language book on Kurdish nationalism from a feminist perspective. In her introduction, she writes about, “[t]he solitude of the stateless: Kurdish women at the margins of feminist knowledge.”¹⁵⁵

Mojab’s critique crosses geographic borders and political boundaries. She criticizes the political discourse of nationalism both at the core and on the margins. She believes nationalism to be the priority of Turkish feminists despite the fact that “it divides women along ethnic lines and turns them into agents of the patriarchal, militant state.”¹⁵⁶ Regarding the so-called modernizing acts of the monarchs of Iran, she believes, that “the monarchy used women as a vehicle of nation- and state-building.”¹⁵⁷ She believes nationalisms in all shades—state-nationalism of Iran, Iraq and Turkey and the marginalized nationalism of the Kurds—are obstacles to the development of feminism and women’s rights in the region.

Feminists of the dominant nations, Turks, Arabs, Persians, have privileged the interests of their own patriarchal nationalism by supporting the state and its official feminism.

Kurdish feminists, too, have surrendered the women’s movement to the interests of the Kurdish nationalism. In all parts of Kurdistan, national liberation has fully overshadowed women’s emancipation. To the limited extent that Kurdish nationalism has been in power (in the early

¹⁵⁵ Shahrzad Mojab, ed., Women of A Non-State Nation: the Kurds, (Costa Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers, Inc., 2001): 1.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*: 6.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*: 7.

1920s in Iraq, in 1946 in Iran, and since 1991 in Iraq), its record is no better than paying lip service to gender equality.¹⁵⁸

The poor records of Iranian, Iraqi and Turkish and also Kurdish nationalisms, particularly in the autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan when independent, with its terrible record of honor killings and daily discrimination against girls and women, justifies Mojab's critique. The laws of the Kurdish Regional Government of Iraqi Kurdistan do not sanction those crimes or discriminations against women. In fact the major debate for the Iraqi Kurdistan Government to keep its de facto statehood is they do not want to be ruled by *Sharia*, the Islamic law, and in all their internal affairs they want to keep a civic code of law. The instances of violations of women's right usually happen outside the rule of law and reflect the weaknesses of the rule of law. In this respect Mojab's critique is valid both as a criticism of culture and serious lack of enforcement of laws. She does not, however, limit her critique only to Kurdistan. Regarding the West she writes:

It is a 'nativism' that, in its conflation of Western colonialism with feminism, often celebrates the oppression of women by 'their own' religion, nation, tradition and culture. It emphasizes 'difference' at the expense of similarities in the oppression of women worldwide. In this glorification of difference, solidarity among women of different backgrounds disappears, and patriarchal oppression is vindicated. The celebration of the particular turns into the celebration of patriarchy, and the universality of oppression is ignored by demonizing all universals as 'totalization,' 'essentialism' and even 'totalitarianism.'¹⁵⁹

Mojab's critique of the West is not limited to the official discourse of the Western states. It includes the impact that the state-centrism of the West has on its academic

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*: 8.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*: 10.

traditions as well, such that Kurdish women are excluded from Women Studies in the department of Middle East Studies in the West, just as they are in the Middle Eastern Universities.¹⁶⁰ Perhaps this is a reflection of what she means by “the solitude of the stateless women.”

Western politicians / advisors and the Kurds

The difficulty of finally determining what should be done about Kurdistan is a challenge that is not limited to the academic world of theory. Many political figures and involved policy-makers have written about the Kurds as I examine in this section. During the 1991 crisis in Kurdistan, the phrase “no friends but mountains” was coined to describe the Kurdish case.¹⁶¹ Since then the Kurds in fact found some friends in high places, especially Peter W. Galbraith, the first U.S. Ambassador to Croatia and a Senior Diplomatic Fellow at the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation. He first visited Kurdistan more than twenty years and recently advised the Kurds on how to protect their rights during the writing of the Iraqi constitution.¹⁶²

Galbraith has been in favor of Iraqi Kurdistan’s separation from the rest of the country for some time. Regarding the Iraqi crisis, he proposes a three state solution: one for Kurds, one for Sunnis and one for Shias.¹⁶³ He acknowledges that there is a de facto Kurdish state in Iraq, which basically is the only functioning government in Iraq. “The

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*: 11.

¹⁶¹ See John Bulloch and Harvey Morris, No Friend But the Mountains. The Tragic History of The Kurds, (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1993).

¹⁶² See Peter W. Galbraith, The End of Iraq: How American Incompetence Created a War Without End, (Toronto: Simon & Schuster, 2006).

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*: 191-207.

Kurdistan region of Iraq has functioned as a de facto independent state since 1991.”¹⁶⁴ He appreciates the Kurdish enthusiasm for building their own state.

In May 1992, Kurdistan's authorities held the only genuinely democratic elections in the history of Iraq. Residents of the new enclave queued for up to eight hours to elect the Kurdistan National Assembly and a president. Unfortunately, these elections ended in a near dead-heat between the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), led by Masoud Barzani, and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), led by Jalal Talabani. The two main parties decided not to have a presidential run-off election between Barzani and Talabani, but to share power in a Council of Ministers appointed by a parliament with 51 KDP members, 49 PUK members, and 5 members elected on the Christian minority lists. In the mid-1990s, these power-sharing arrangements broke down, in part over disputes about the sharing of revenue from smuggling. A nasty intra- Kurdish civil war ensued, which was ended in September 1998 thanks to American mediation.¹⁶⁵

Galbraith believes the full independence of Kurdistan is just a matter of time.¹⁶⁶

He further explains that, “[a]s a moral matter, Iraq’s Kurds are no less entitled to independence than are Lithuanians, Croatians, or Palestinians.”¹⁶⁷ Not once does he use terms such as “ethnonationalism” or “tribalism” in his description of Kurdistan. He never treated the Kurds as anything less than equals. He provided his generous advice in which he considered the interests of the Kurds, peace, regional stability and U.S. interests on an equal footing. Unfortunately the Bush Administration never welcomed his expertise.

Gareth R. V. Stansfield also has a favorable view of Kurdish achievements. A member of U.K. Iraq Commission, the British equivalent of the U.S. Iraq Study Group, he wrote: “Iraqi Kurdistan is not a state recognized by the international community, for example, yet a domestic political system has emerged which displays highly developed

¹⁶⁴ Peter W. Galbraith, “Kurdistan in a Federal Iraq,” in Brendan O’Leary, John McGarry, and Khaled Salih, ed., The Future of Kurdistan in Iraq, (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2005): 268.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*: 269.

¹⁶⁶ Peter W. Galbraith, The End of Iraq: How American Incompetence Created A War Without End, (Toronto: Simon & Schuster, 2006): 206.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

and increasingly sophisticated state-like institutions, attributes and characteristics.”¹⁶⁸ Stansfield outlines the limits of IR theory for understanding the Kurdish situation.¹⁶⁹ He believes the Kurdish Regional government is a state but points out the difficulty of recognizing such a quasi-state as state. He argues that, “[t]he classic definition of state is found in the 1933 Montevideo Convention on Rights and Duties of States. The convention identifies the state as possessing the following: (a) a permanent population; (b) a defined territory; (c) government; and (d) capacity to enter into relations with other States.”¹⁷⁰ But this definition does not provide the guidelines or license to create new states. According to Stansfield this creates a problem in the case of Iraqi Kurdistan because, while it has the above requirements to be considered a state, it is not recognized as one.¹⁷¹ In this respect the current situation of Iraqi Kurdistan in terms of recognition as state is an anomaly.¹⁷² He concludes the current status of the Iraqi Kurdistan is that of an “insurgent state.”¹⁷³

Conclusion

In this chapter I contextualized theories of nationalism both in their original forms and as deployed regarding Kurdish nationalism. I explored the fields of distortion and misrepresentation of these ideas particularly Anderson’s idea of “imagined community” and Smith’s “ethnie” and “ethnic nationalism.” I conclude that theories of nationalism in their distorted forms are part of the political technologies of othering. Anderson’s original

¹⁶⁸ Gareth R. V. Stansfield, Iraqi Kurdistan, Political Development and Emergent Democracy, (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003): 12.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*: 14.

¹⁷¹ See *Ibid.*: 15.

¹⁷² See *Ibid.*: 16.

¹⁷³ See *Ibid.*: 17.

point is that all nations are “imagined communities” whether they have achieved statehood or not. But his idea is misrepresented to mean that the Kurdish nation is merely “imagined” because it does not have a state to show its reality. Anderson’s other original point is that nations are born out of texts and it is through texts and discourses that nations are ‘imagined.’ But the misrepresentation of his ideas implies that since the Kurds, failing to actually create their own nation or state, tried to make up for it by writing creative texts, maps and symbols, therefore imagining themselves to be a nation when they are not.

Anderson also believes nations are part of print communities whose members are the customers of capitalist booksellers, and become a nation by a unified language. But I note that Khani and Bitlisi wrote before there was a print industry or capitalism of bookselling in any part of the Middle East. Many parts of Anderson’s theory basically do not apply to Kurds at all. And to distort his ideas to fit the Kurdish problem is a part of the broader problem of nihilism which has the capacity to void reality of its meaning. Nihilism robbed both Anderson and the Kurds of their original meaning. Anderson argues that most members of a nation never meet yet they have a sense of belonging which is “imagined.” This point is misused when applied to the Kurdish case. Members of the Kurdish nation often cannot meet because borders divide them, their homeland is partitioned by imperialist design, and members of Kurdistan are divided by aggressive states with awesome powers such as chemical weapons and totalitarian ideologies.

I also examined how Smith’s original ideas were distorted and the distortions substituted for his original in a perpetual repetition of the “Same” for the fear of “Difference.” Smith’s intentions was to overcome dichotomies of ethnic/civic and he

argued that all nations at root are ethnic, not just those which are “other” to “us.” The reason the term “ethnic” is objectionable is that, in the Kurdish case, it is used to imply two false notions: first that “ethnie” is a depoliticized entity with no political claims; and second that “ethnic nationalism” is “racialized,” “irrational,” “blood-bond” and “primitive” which stands against “civil,” “rational” and “democratic” nationalism. When applied to Kurdistan “ethnic nationalism” is made to be the “other” to a more “civilized” form of identity and political behavior. In this respect the term “ethnic nationalism” in its distorted form becomes a part of the political technology of othering, employed to other the Kurds.

Regardless of Smith’s efforts, the problem with the terms “ethnie” and “ethno-symbolism” remain unresolved. “Ethnie” is still defined as “those with no political demands” as opposed to “nation” which has political demands. In this dichotomy, the Kurds remain the “other.” The problem with “ethno-symbolism” is that it is trapped in a metaphysical hierarchy, that preserves the realm of “real” and “serious” for the dominant dichotomy of modern/perennial paradigms. “Ethno-symbolism” is received only in a charitable manner so we can have a chance to see the “inner” world of “other” people’s “ethnicity” and “nationality.” It can provide us with an alternative to explain the “ethnic conflicts” that we have difficulty categorizing and capturing with our rigid concepts. I believe these notions are still a part of technologies of othering and do not offer any framework to overcome imposed hierarchies. I conclude that the discourse of nationalism itself and its fields of distortion are aspects of technologies of othering. It functions with the domineering power of eccentric subjectivity directed by nihilism and engaged in the practice of “enframing.” These are all modes of technology of othering.

Chapter Four:

The Dismantling of the Ottoman Empire, Creation of Iraq and the First Large-Scale Kurdish Uprising

The dismantling of the Ottoman Empire was a historic event that impacted the Kurds profoundly. The Kurdish experience of otherness began in a dramatic way with the Empire's collapse and reactions to its defeat. The events that followed contributed to the political technology of othering. One prime example of these political technologies is Turkish nationalism which became instrumental in othering the Kurds undertaken by the modern state of Turkey. In this chapter I explore Turkish nationalism as a technology of othering. I analyse the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire, and the creation of Iraq in connections to technologies of othering, asking how the Ottoman Empire's collapse contributed to technologies of othering? I argue that the creation of Iraq furnished the environment in which the political technologies of othering occurred. I also explore how and why Turkish nationalism become a technology of othering directed at the Kurds? I theorize above that these events were encounters with nihilism. In this chapter, I put flesh on the bones of that claim. I show that the first large-scale Kurdish uprising was formed under conditions of nihilism and the overwhelming power of technique.

In this chapter I first explore the condition of Kurdistan under the Ottomans and explain how the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire affected the Kurds. I also show how the creation of Iraq by Britain served its imperialist interests and its effects on the Kurds. Then I contextualize the development of modern Turkish nationalism as an imitation of

European national power politics. I conclude the chapter by explaining the Kurdish reaction to dismantling of the Ottoman Empire and Turkish nationalism through an analysis of Sheikh Said's rebellion.

I. The Kurds and the Ottomans

The Middle East as we know today is the product of decisions made by Europeans and Americans in the final days of the First World War on the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The fate of millions of peoples of this region, including the Kurds, was decided in Western capitals, by Western elected or appointed officials. This era in the West was the age of ideologies. Nationalism was already established as the state policy of many European countries but totalitarian ideologies of Fascism and Communism had not yet become State policy. So the Kurdish dilemma was born out of the chaotic situation in a world structured by the problematic of modernist politics which I explained in chapter two in terms of imperialism and realism. I claim that Western decision-makers were guided by modern political philosophy and Realpolitik which resulted in the severe problems the Kurds have had to deal with for a century.

Modernity presented a challenge for the Ottoman Empire well before its defeat and collapse. In particular, the great power of Western nation-states transformed its notion of collective identity. The Ottomans did not describe or define themselves in relation to ethnicity, nationality or nation-states as understood by modernists. The Ottoman system demanded the loyalty of its subjects based on faith and not ethnicity or nationality. Following the traditional view of collective identity found in classical Islam,

Ottoman political society was called *umma* or the Community of the Faith.¹ This political organization considered all Muslims regardless of ethnic or national origin equal under the Islamic law. They were all entitled to the protection under the Caliphate system². This had a great deal to do with Islam's vision of human beings and even more so of community

Until the First World War the Ottomans ruled over a multiethnic, multicultural and multireligious society. The Kurds were accepted as members of the *umma* and had their own place and role in the empire. In short they belonged. The level of tolerance was such that they could be anything they chose as long as they did not violate the rule of law, i.e. the Islamic law, and obeyed the commands of the Caliph, i.e. the Muslim sovereign. The Kurds were Sunnis as were the Ottoman rulers. In this context ethnicity meant nothing to the Ottomans. With respect to the tolerance of the Ottomans, Bernard Lewis has this to say.

A Virtue sometimes accorded the Turks—though by no means unanimously—was tolerance. ... [T]he Turk did not impose his doctrines by force but instead allowed his subjects to follow their own religions, provided that they respected Muslim supremacy and paid their taxes. The result was that in the seventeenth century the Turkish capital was probably the only city in Europe where Christians of all creeds and persuasions could live in reasonable security and argue their various schisms and heresies. Nowhere in Christendom was this possible.³

The Ottomans, however, had a particular intolerance for Shiites. The division between Shiites and Sunnis is a deep political divide. So it is no surprise that today, in the

¹ I explained *umma* and *millat*, etc. in chapters one and three. Here I only remind the reader of the basic concepts of collective identity in play before contact with the West and then the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire.

² In the Caliphate system the sovereign was called Caliph, which means the vicegerent of the prophet Mohammad. This concept was explained when I examined the difference between the Shiite and Sunni understanding of political sovereignty in chapter one. Here I remind the reader that the Caliph was the Muslim political sovereign.

³ Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993): 80-81.

aftermath of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Shiite/Sunni conflicts are at the center of the whole Iraq issue.

The majority of Muslims throughout the history of Islam have been Sunnis. Shiites live mainly in Iraq and Iran, both of which have substantial Kurdish minorities. Ironically, the Kurds have always been in the middle of Iran/Iraq wars as well as Shiite/Sunni conflicts. Most of the time, however they have been the buffer between the two and sometimes they have been that tricky element which changed the balance of power between the two. As a result the Kurds have both benefited and suffered from their position.

During the Ottoman era, Iran was ruled by the Safavids, the first Iranian dynasty to declare Iran officially Shiite, and claim the political leadership and protection of all Shiites in the Islamic world. Their claim included the Province of Basra and the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala, then under Ottoman rule. This province and these cities are now where the Shiite leaders' in Iraq hope to create a political system like the Islamic Republic of Iran. Throughout their history the Ottomans and the Safavids of Iran were at war. Some Kurdish scholars claim the first partition of Kurdistan happened during this period of conflict between the Ottomans and the Safavids,⁴ which continued until the 1920's when both countries became secular.

After the daring declaration of the Safavids, the Ottomans became more intolerant of their own Shiites. The Shiites posed a threat to the political rule of the Ottomans because they challenged the legitimacy of the Caliph. But such a threat did not come from Christians, Jews or ethnic minorities. The Kurds, also had a Shiite minority who had

⁴ See chapter three, where I examined the views of Kurdish scholars on the Kurdish issue.

blended into Kurdish society, but when the Ottomans oppressed Shiites, the tiny Kurdish Shiite community gradually migrated to Iran and now are Iranians.

Sunni Kurds had no problem with the Ottomans because they were considered Muslims before being Kurdish; moreover they were integrated into the Ottoman system. Because they were located on the border between Iran and the Ottoman territories, their role was to protect the Empires' eastern front. They also were integrated into the Empire as followers of the Caliph, and as followers of their Sheikh. While the Caliph was sovereign over the Empire, the Sheikh was the local leader and exercised considerable authority over his subjects. The Kurds relied on the Caliph for security and protection, but the Sheikh as arbiter of justice and for public wisdom and guidance in matters relevant to the life and continuity of their community. In short, with the Caliph and Sheikh behind them the Kurds had no anxiety regarding the survival of their community and its members. In return, all they had to do was to pledge allegiance to both the Caliph and the Sheikh. This provided the Kurdish tribesmen with jobs and duties. The tribal, religious Kurds led by Sheikhs were to cause a great deal of trouble for the Young Turks⁵ when the Empire fell. But in the late 1800s and well into 1900s, the Sheikhs led the tribal Kurds to support the Empire. The Sheikhs' allegiance, and the tribesmens' obedience created a stable environment, which would change when the Empire was defeated and dismembered.

The Ottomans were facing both external and internal crises. The external crisis was how to combat the ever-growing power of the modern states of Europe which had military, scientific and technological superiority. The Ottomans were weak and fragile by

⁵ The Young Turks were a radical nationalist group opposing the Ottomans who eventually replaced them and established the Republic of Turkey.

comparison, so Europeans gradually gained control over most of the Ottoman territory in North Africa and the Middle East. After losing most of the distant territories of the empire, the Ottomans faced the threat of direct invasion from the recently independent Greeks and Russians. These crises emerged just as the First World War began and its end was even more devastating. Whatever the causes of the First World War, one result was the destruction of the Ottoman Empire, and the end of its control over territories from the Balkans to North Africa. By the end of the war, the Empire was gone and what remained was modern Turkey, and a power vacuum in the Middle East quickly filled by the victorious Western allies.

In fact one could argue that one of the goals of the war was to dismantle the Ottoman Empire. On 18 December 1916, Woodrow Wilson issued a statement in which he asked the Allies to define their war goals. He received this response from the British Prime Minister Lloyd George: "The liberation of the peoples who now live beneath the murderous tyranny of the Turks, and the expulsion from Europe of the Ottoman Empire, which has proved itself radically alien to Western civilization."⁶ Consequently a key outcome of the war was the final dismantling of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of modern Middle East. The history of the Kurds therefore is linked to this war, which resulted in Kurdish territory being partitioned among three new states. Since the end of this war, the Kurds have lived in a world in which they are estranged from, and experienced a sense of alienation from Kurdistan and their identity because of geopolitical changes achieved first through military defeat and then through technologies of othering.

⁶ David Lloyd George, quoted in David Fromkin, A Peace to End All Peace, the Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East, (London: Phoenix, 2004): 254.

The promise of self-determination and autonomy in Woodrow Wilson's principles of self-determination⁷ in 1917⁸ raised Kurdish hope for statehood. Wilson had particularly mentioned the right to autonomy for the non-Turkish peoples of the Ottoman Empire, among whom he singled out the Arabs, Armenians and Kurds.⁹ The Arabs also were divided into many states including Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, etc. The surviving Armenians gained a Russian protectorate deal. The Kurds were divided among Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey, against their wishes. The Kurds believed, based on Wilson's principles, that after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire they were entitled to self-rule. General Sherif Pasha, president of the Kurdish delegation to the Paris peace conference on March 22, 1919 had this to say:

In virtue of the Wilsonian principle everything pleads in favour of the Kurds for the creation of a Kurd state, entirely free and independent. Since the Ottoman Government has accepted Mr. Wilson's fourteen points without reservation, the Kurds believe that they have every right to demand their independence, and that without in any way failing in loyalty towards the Empire under whose sovereignty they have lived for many centuries, keeping intact their customs and traditions...

We demand that independence which is our birthright, and which alone will permit us to fight our way along the road of progress and civilization, to turn to account the resources of our country and to live in peace with our neighbours....

We beg the Peace Conference to name an international commission, charged with tracing the frontier line in accordance with the principle of nationality so as to include in Kurdistan all those territories where the Kurds are in a majority; on the clear understanding, that if in the districts allotted to Kurdistan, sufficiently large agglomerations of other

⁷ See Joel Krieger, ed. The Oxford Companion to Politics of the World, (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993): 823.

⁸ I examined Wilsonian idealism and its rejection by realist and neorealist schools of international relations in chapter two. Here I recount it regarding the Kurdish reception of those Wilsonian principles.

⁹ Gerard Chaliand, ed. People Without A Country, the Kurds and the Kurdistan, (London: Zed Press, 1980): 150.

nationalities be found, provision shall be made for them in a special statute in conformity with their national traditions.¹⁰

The Kurdish delegation was not heard and Sharif Pasha's remarks were unnoticed. In fact there was no recognition of the Kurdish delegation by any European power involved in the Paris peace conference. Except for Wilson, no other Western leader was willing to recognize autonomy as a right of national minorities. The attitude of the designers of the new Middle East regarding the Kurds is best expressed by Mark Sykes: "The Kurds have no sense of nationality of any kind whatever. They have a subconscious sense of race and certain tribal instinct, but they are entirely uninfluenced by the idea of nationality as modern Europeans understand the word."¹¹ Sykes played a major role in designing the new Middle East, I examine his role in the creation of Iraq later in this chapter. His view on the Kurds is an example of the technologies of othering at play before and during the dismemberment of Ottoman Empire leading to the partition of Kurdistan. The Kurds are considered to be "other" to the idea and reality of "nation." This view was an imperialist legitimization based on the belief that only Western people could achieve national self-determination.

Wilson's principles of self-determination did not influence the realities of Middle Eastern politics. Instead of his idealism, a stubborn realism dominated international politics. In fact, soon after the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire, an exclusionary nationalist Turkish government came to power led by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. Ataturk explicitly rejected the principles of president Woodrow Wilson. "Mustafa Kemal replied

¹⁰ General Sherif Pasha, Quoted in Susan Meiselas, Kurdistan in the Shadow of History, (New York: Random House, 1997): 54.

¹¹ Lieutenant Colonel Sir Mark Sykes, "Proceedings and Appendices of a Committee Appointed by the Prime Minister," March 15, 1915 / British Public Record Office, Kew CAB27/1, Quoted in *Ibid*: 52.

that the principles of President Wilson were worthless for the people of the East (apparently referring to all the peoples, not just the Kurds) and suggested that the Kurds should cooperate with his nationalist representatives in the Dersim region.”¹²

In a sense, the Kurds missed out on everything. First the Ottoman Empire was defeated and destroyed; then they didn't get a state of their own and remained at the mercy of the fierce nationalisms of the Turks, Persians and Arabs marked by reactive nihilism all around them. In this respect, they were dispossessed, othered and exiled to the margins of history. Even today, strategic complexities and concerns over regional stability and Realpolitik make a viable Kurdish state something the West does not want.

Wilson's plan failed mainly because it came into conflict with the interests of Britain and France. What replaced Wilson's plan was the infamous imperialist package known in the history of the modern Middle East as the *Sykes-Picot* Agreement of 1916. The historical experience, which resulted in the plan, gave birth to a century of Middle Eastern distrust of the West such that its inhabitants viewed everything coming from the West as a plot to dominate the Middle East or even the Muslim world. This was because the *Sykes-Picot* Agreement carved up the remaining parts of the Ottoman Empire, which was the last symbol of Muslim self-rule in the mind of Muslim populations around the world. Sir Mark Sykes of England and his French counterpart Francois George-Picot were two orientalist experts, whose job was to carve up the Ottoman Empire into states Britain and France could control through surrogates. Imperial Russia was also involved in this project, but fighting revolutionaries then, whose ideology was anti-imperialist. So when the *Sykes-Picot* Accord was implemented, the Russians gained much of eastern

¹² Robert Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880-1920*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989): 28-29.

provinces of the Ottoman Empire and the control over the Straits that link Europe and Asia, thereby excluding Turkey from Europe. The Russian Bolsheviks refused to be a part of *Sykes-Picot* plan which they called an imperialist scheme. Italy was given southwest Anatolia and Greece the regions around Izmir. The British filled the vacuum left by the Russians and controlled the Caucasus, Armenia, Georgia and Kurdistan.¹³

In the aftermath of this pact, Britain created a Kurdish provisional government in what had been the Mousul province under the Ottomans. This was very similar to the Kurdish regional government in power since 1991 in Iraqi Kurdistan under the famous “no-fly” zone. Although in 2005 the president of the regional government of Kurdistan became the president of Iraq, this did not occur in 1917-18. At that time, Kurdistan was under British control and the head of its provisional government was Sheikh Mahmud Barzanji¹⁴. Unlike Jalal Talebani, Sheikh Mahmud wanted to rule over a united Kurdistan that included Iranian Kurdistan. At that time, Iraq had not yet been created. Britain appointed Sheikh Mahmud as the governor of the Sulaymaniya region to carry out British orders. He was mainly a symbolic leader since the British government appointed a very experienced general, E.B. Soane, who played a role similar to Paul Bremer’s after the U.S. occupation of Iraq in 2003. But the two scenarios unfolded differently, at least for the Kurdish actors.

In 1919, just a year and half after his appointment by the British, and contrary to British wishes and expectations, Sheikh Mahmud declared himself ruler of the whole of

¹³ See David McDowall, A Modern History of the Kurds, (New York: I.B. Tauris, 1997): 115-117.

¹⁴ See *Ibid.* : 118-119.

Kurdistan.¹⁵ What the British called Sheikh Mahmud's rebellion was crushed very easily since the British bombarded the areas under his control. His uprising was inspired by President Wilson's "self-determination" plan. A. T. Wilson wrote about Sheikh Mahmud at the time:

I had seen him in hospital when, with a magnificent gesture, he denied the competence of any Military Court to try him, and recited to me President Wilson's twelfth point, and the Anglo-French Declaration of 8th November 1918, a translation of which in Kurdish, written on the fly-leaf of a Quran, was strapped like a talisman to his arm.¹⁶

According to Sheikh Gharib, a close associate of Sheikh Mahmud, the partition of Kurdistan, which was a plan on paper as early as 1916, only became a reality after Sheikh Mahmud was defeated.¹⁷

Modern technology came to the Middle East on the back of tanks and warplanes, sweeping away anything that stood in its way. The awesome power of its negation was felt very soon in Kurdistan. After the Sheikh Mahmud affair, the British decided to remap the territories under their control. They created Iraq out of the three Ottoman provinces of Baghdad, Basra and Mousul, so now the Kurds were divided among the three hostile states of Iran, Iraq and Turkey, which represent three of the fiercest problems of our century. Turkey became the scene of the first modern genocide against the Armenians, although the word genocide did not even exist at the time. For a long time it was referred to as the crime without a name. Iraq later home to Baathist ideology, under Saddam Hussein arguably produced a regime which rivaled Nazi Germany for amoral horrors and

¹⁵ See Susan Meiselas, Kurdistan in the Shadow of History, (New York: Random House, 1997): 64.

¹⁶ A.T. Wilson, "Mesopotamia 1917-20: A Clash of Loyalties, 1931. Quoted in Susan Meiselas, Kurdistan in the Shadow of History, (New York: Random House, 1997): 73.

¹⁷ See Susan Meiselas, Kurdistan in the Shadow of History, (New York: Random House, 1997): 77.

treatment of minorities. And Iran was the birthplace of the first Islamic fundamentalist republic. The creation Iraq was a work of political technology which I examine in detail next.

II. The Creation of Iraq and the *Treaty of Sèvres*

Iraq was created at the Cairo Conference held in March 1921 to restructure the map of the Middle East.¹⁸ The basic blueprint was the famous *Sykes-Picot* agreement.¹⁹ The Middle East existed as a concept and a field of study in Orientalist schools in London and Paris before the geographical designation appeared on any map. In the British Foreign Office, there was a Middle Eastern department before the Middle East was on the map. Hence this restructuring of the Middle East is an example of “enframing,” which in chapter one following Heidegger I explained as ‘the essence’ of technology. Here in the recounting tail of the creation of Iraq I will show it as an example of political technology.

At the Cairo Conference in 1921, three famous British Orientalists decided the fate of an entire region, arguably promoting some of the ‘solutions’ which still trouble the region and the world. These experts on the Arab and Middle East affairs were T. E. Lawrence better known as Lawrence of Arabia, Sir Percy Cox and Gertrude Bell.²⁰ They interpreted the situation on the ground advising Winston Churchill. Churchill decided to create Iraq as a kingdom and install King Feisal as most effective solution to keeping peace in the newly created Iraq.

¹⁸ Christopher Catherwood, Winston's Folly. Imperialism and the Creation of Modern Iraq, (London: Constable & Robinson Ltd, 2004): 127-128.

¹⁹ See M. R. Izady, “Kurds and the Formation of the State of Iraq” in Reeva Spector Simon and Eleanor H. Tejirian, ed. The Creation of Iraq 1914-1921, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004): 98.

²⁰ See Christopher Catherwood, Winston's Folly. Imperialism and the Creation of Modern Iraq, (London: Constable & Robinson Ltd, 2004): 123.

The decisions taken in the Cairo conference of 1921 profoundly affected the Kurdish people. The creation of Iraq divided the Kurds among three states. As a result more than twenty major uprising have occurred in Kurdistan(s) since 1921 and with each uprising the level of reactive violence against Kurds became more severe and brutal. By creating Iraq and importing King Feisal from Saudi Arabia as its ruler, the British achieved two things. First an Iraqi army trained by the British was to take over the task of providing security so the British troops could go home. The second goal was lowering the cost of war to the British from twenty six million pounds a year to a mere six million pounds a year,²¹ which is exactly what the creation of Iraq did. Its troops went home and Britain saved money. And these two concerns are still at the heart of Iraq debate in our own time. The U.S. and British publics are tired of the current war in Iraq (2003) and complain about its cost. On August 27, 1921 the British put Feisal in power and assumed mandatory power over the country.²² Strategically it was important for the British to make Iraq a combination of the three provinces of Baghdad, Basra and Mousul, because Faisal was a Sunni Arab and without Mousul, i.e. the Kurds, Iraq would have a Shiite majority, which would not accept a Sunni King. To keep the balance in favor of the Sunnis, Mousul the Kurdish province, was included since the Kurds were Sunni as well. Besides Mousul is also the richest part of Iraq in terms of its newly discovered oil reserves which the British industry badly needed.

Because this configuration was not what the Kurds had expected, they felt betrayed. Prior to the Cairo conference, the *Treaty of Sèvres* promised a different destiny for the Kurds. So this episode is a constant reminder of betrayal in the mind of the Kurds.

²¹ *Ibid.* : 137.

²² Samir al-Khalil, Republic of Fear, the Inside Story of Saddam's Iraq, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989): xxv.

Any debate over what happened to the Kurds always goes back to a discussion on this treaty. The *Treaty of Sèvres* was signed between the victorious allies and the defeated Ottomans in August 10, 1920. It determined the fate of the regions in the Middle East previously controlled by the Ottomans. Articles 62-64 specifically are about the Kurds and the possibility of Kurdish autonomy.

Article 62

A commission sitting at Constantinople and composed of three members appointed by the British, French and Italian Governments respectively shall draft within six months from the coming into force of the present Treaty a scheme of local autonomy for the predominantly Kurdish areas lying east of the Euphrates, south of the southern boundary of Armenia as it may be hereafter determined, and north of the frontier of Turkey with Syria and Mesopotamia, as defined in Article 27, II. (2) and (3). If unanimity cannot be secured on any question, it will be referred by the members of the Commission to their respective Governments. The scheme shall contain full safeguards for the protection of the Assyro-Chaldeans and other racial or religious minorities within these areas, and with this object a Commission composed of British, French, Italian, Persian and Kurdish representatives shall visit the spot to examine and decide what rectifications, if any, should be made to the Turkish frontier where, under the provisions of the present Treaty, that frontier coincides with that of Persia.

Article 63

The Turkish Government hereby agrees to accept and execute the decisions of both the Commissions mentioned in Article 62 within three months from their communication to the said Government.

Article 64

If within one year from the coming into force of the present Treaty the Kurdish people within the areas defined in Article 62 shall address themselves to the Council of the League of Nations in such a manner as to show that a majority of the population of these areas desires independence from Turkey, and if the Council then considers that these peoples are capable of such independence and recommends that it should be granted to them, Turkey hereby agrees to execute such a recommendation, and to renounce all rights and title over these areas.

The detailed provisions for such renunciation will form the subject of a separate agreement between the Principal Allied powers and Turkey.

If and when such renunciation takes place, no objection will be raised by the Principal Allied Powers to the voluntary adhesion to such an

independent Kurdish State of the Kurds inhabiting that part of Kurdistan which has been hitherto been included in the Mosul Vilayet.²³

But neither the victorious allies, nor the Kurds realized, that out of the ashes of the Ottoman Empire a fierce Turkish nationalism was rising that would not accept the humiliation of the *Sèvres treaty*. The new leaders of the Turks rejected the *Sèvres treaty* and Wilson's 14 points. Mustafa Kemal Ataturk assumed leadership of the Turkish nationalist government and refused to accept any deal or agreement signed by the Ottoman government. Ataturk was an accomplished Ottoman general hostile to the policies adopted by his government. He accused the Sultan and the Caliph of being degenerates not deserving the loyalty of the Turkish nation. He accused the Sultan, Mehmed Vahideddin, of putting his own personal interests ahead of that of the nation. The Sultan's acceptance of the terms of treaties dictated to him by the Allies led an outraged Ataturk to develop a government in Ankara, which further undermined the authority of the Sultan in Istanbul.²⁴

It is important to understand where Ataturk got his credibility. After the humiliating defeats suffered by the Ottoman Empire, the remains of the empire were also under attack by the Greeks on its immediate borders. Ataturk defeated the Greek invasion which restored some sense of self-respect and confidence to the Turks. The loss of the empire and the Greek invasion in a sense forged nationalist feelings among the Turkish people. Ataturk was pivotal in this episode of Turkish history, as the only general who presented the Turkish nation with a sense of hope by winning the war against the Greek

²³ Quoted in David McDowall, A Modern History of the Kurds, (New York: I.B. Tauris, 1997): 459-450. And also in Kerim Yildiz, The Kurds in Iraq, the Past, Present, and Future, (London: Pluto Press, 2004): 173-174.

²⁴ Bernard Lewis, The Emergence of Modern Turkey, (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002): 246-247.

invaders. Moreover the effect of this victory was both national and international. At home Turkish nationalism promoted by Ataturk gained respect and full support, while the Ottoman sovereign was rendered weak and irrelevant. On the international stage as well, the Turkish nationalists proved that they would not tolerate the kind of humiliations that their Ottoman predecessors had endured.

Ataturk considered the province of Mousul a part of modern Turkey and launched an attack to regain it. British forces fought and established control over what today remains the border between Iraq and Turkey. This sealed the fate of the Kurds. Mousul was important because of its abundant oil resources. The British counted on the revenue from Mousul's oil reserves to pay for their expensive war. Likewise the U.S. government in 2003 also promised that Iraqi oil would pay the costs of the war and reconstruction. And the current government of Turkey fears that the autonomy and self-rule given to Iraqi Kurds will impact the Kurdish problem in Turkey as well. In any case, the Turk's refusal to sign the *Sèvres Treaty* gave birth to another, the *Treaty of Laussane* in 1923.

In the *Treaty of Laussane*, the idea of Kurdish autonomy was abandoned. This was the beginning of the end for Kurdistan, although the Kurds had 'protected' minority status on paper. Under the *Treaty of Laussane*, the Northern and Western parts of Kurdistan were considered part of the newly established Republic of Turkey. The Kurdish case was advanced only by article 39 which guaranteed language rights for all non-Turkish ethnic groups:

No restriction shall be imposed on the free use by any Turkish national of any language in private intercourse, in commerce, religion, in the press, or in the publications of any kind or at public meeting. Notwithstanding the existence of the official language, adequate facilities shall be given to

Turkish nationals of non-Turkish speech for the oral use of their own language before the Courts.²⁵

But the reality was something else. Less than a year later, an official Turkish decree banned the Kurdish language in all forms and places of application, including schools, the press, organizations and so on.²⁶ Lack of respect for the treaty shown in passage of a Turkish law in complete contradiction to some of its provisions happened in the shadow of British Realpolitik. At the time Britain was dealing with a rebellion in Iraqi Kurdistan, which was getting out of control. Any kind of cooperation or solidarity among the Kurds of Iraq and Turkey at that time was viewed as likely to undermine British control over Mousul. Britain could not afford any risk in this regard, so it did not protest the extreme measures taken by the Republic of Turkey regarding the denial of Kurdish minority rights.²⁷

In 1920, there were two simultaneous Kurdish uprisings. Sheikh Mahmud Barzanji in Iraqi Kurdistan fought the British, and Simqu fought both the Iranians and the Turks. These uprisings were crushed by technologically superior weapons produced in industrial countries. So the new era of neocolonialism had begun. In the Middle East, a series of new states had been created, ruled by regimes dependent on Britain, France or the United States, which aimed to dominate the natural resources of the dependencies to feed the enormous demands of the industries at home. Kurdistan was caught among the great powers' politics mainly because of the oil resources of Mousul. From the British

²⁵ Quoted in M. R. Izady, "Kurds and the Formation of the State of Iraq" in Reeva Spector Simon and Eleanor H. Tejirian, eds. The Creation of Iraq 1914-1921, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004): 102.

²⁶ See *Ibid.*: 104.

²⁷ See David McDowall, A Modern History of the Kurds, (New York: I.B. Tauris, 1997): 138.

perspective, Iraq was worth nothing without the oil wells of Mousul.²⁸ In fact the resources of Mousul were so rich that Britain was willing to give away 70 percent of its hold on the entire Iranian oil resources to the U.S. if they helped the British stabilize Iraq.²⁹ So in the face of such interests they sacrificed the minority rights of the Kurdish people by allowing the Turks to breach the international treaty created by the same 'great' industrial powers. This was a clear case of nihilism as devaluation of values. The treaties and principles were created and easily negated and denied simply because of the overwhelming presence of nihilism.

It is important to note that Mousul remains significant to the Iraq issue today. In the current U.S. invasion of Iraq, Mousul again emerged as an unsolvable problem. The Kurdish cities of Mousul and Kikuk, which is as oil-rich as Mousul, will make headlines after stories about insurgencies in the so called Sunni Triangle become old and familiar. In 1924 the British supported the new Republic of Turkey despite its policies repressing Kurdish language rights in order to stabilize Iraq and its rich province of Mousul. Kurds today call Mousul and Kirkuk their Jerusalem, indicating how far they are willing to go to reclaim control of these cities. To use the religious symbolism is not new in the Kurdish struggle. In fact it all began with reactions to certain policies of the Republic of Turkey related to religious concepts. In March 1924 Turkey declared itself a new modern state, repudiating all Ottoman polity and commitments. The new government abolished the system of the Caliphate, the last traditional tie between the Turks and the Kurds. Henceforth the loyalty of the subjects of the states was to be decided based on their language and ethnicity. According to this new ideology, minorities must assimilate or be

²⁸ See, *Ibid.*: 143.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

annihilated. The Kurds then launched a massive revolt known as Sheikh Said's revolt against Turkish assimilation.

III. Sheikh Said's Revolt

I begin by considering the politico-theological background of this type of unrest. What triggered Said's revolt was the abolition of the Caliphate, and the rule of Sharia Law, which Kurds understood as human translations of the absolute sovereignty of God. This was the point where the main clash between modernity and tradition occurred. To traditional Muslims the absolute sovereignty of God brings about the notion of 'human duties' rather than 'human rights.' Right exists only in relation to God; in fact the Arabic word for right is *Haq*, one of the adjectives used to describe God in the Quran. Within this context, revelation is also considered superior to reason and the Quran is considered the exact words of God revealed to Mohammed; and containing all possible wisdom and the answers to questions for all times. These qualities make Muslim thinkers assert that Islam is constituted by a comprehensive revealed law, which in turn also formed the principles of its political theology. Moreover the paradigm of Islamic thought does not allow any critique of these principles; that is because of the nature of political theology as opposed to political philosophy, which allows some secular treatment of religious texts.

With regard to political theology Muhsin Mahdi explains that:

The principles of political theology are derived from a particular revelation and divine Law; political theology has to accept and cannot question these principles.... More generally stated: the principles of political theology are the fundamentals of a particular religious polity.

These fundamentals were revealed for the sake of that body and they constitute its basic beliefs.³⁰

This treatment of the Quran and consequently Islamic principles prevents them from being the object of critical analysis, unless one is ready to pay the price of heresy, excommunication and maybe death. The paradigm of Islamic thought, therefore, is governed by two notions explained above: i) God is the absolute sovereign and His sovereignty supersedes that of any human; and ii) revelation is the dominant power and its authority is prior to and above that of human reason. In this context, the only form of collective identity can be *umma*, i.e. the community of believers. To be considered a Muslim, one must be a part of the Islamic *umma*. This notion of identity provides a paradigm in which individual or national attributes are deemed irrelevant. It claims a universalist quality, which depends only on Islamic faith. It is universalist in that it opposes any attention to ethnicity. Islamic paraphernalia, in ascribing collective identity, did not include ethnicity, race and nation.

The Westernization of the Islamic Middle East, however, also introduced modern nationalism. As I explained in chapter three, some Middle Eastern scholars believe nationalism could not be a product of the Islamic paradigm, but was an idea imported from the West and should be treated as an imported commodity. The Western concept came stripped of the critical ideas which were born along with it, some even more important than nationalism such as the idea of ascending power and the will of the people legitimizing political rule. Nationalism arrived into an environment different from that in which it developed. Its first offspring was Turkish nationalism.

³⁰ Ralph Lerner and Muhsin Mahdi eds., Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1991): 8-9.

Ataturk and the Turkish nationalists had won the military battle against the foreign invaders. It is true that they lost non-Turkish territories but they did manage to keep control of Turkish territory and prevented it from being occupied by foreign powers. So the birth of the new Turkish Republic demanded a clear national agenda which Ataturk undertook. Abandoning the pan-Islamic principle of the Ottomans, he built a new country based on his understanding of the modern ideology of nationalism. To do so Ataturk introduced a series of reforms that directly affected the Kurds.

The new Republic of Turkey's Western-style nationalism caused a chain of actions and reactions. As a consequence of, and in reaction to, Turkish nationalism the Kurdish national movement responded to the loss of the inclusive environment of the Ottoman Empire. The Turkish leaders adopted a nationalist agenda for building a strong Turkish nation as a remedy for the weakness of the Ottomans, and to establish Turkish hegemony over the remains of the broken empire.

Turkish nationalists decided to take on the project of Westernization of the country. They spoke of modern ideas but maintained a pre-modern attitude. There was no change in the idea of descending power of the sovereign; but it now excluded god and religion. The power was still top to bottom. It is true that they imported Swiss legal code but after almost a century of Ataturk's reforms, Turkey still is not the Switzerland of the Middle East. The nationalists had no plan for building a democratic relationship between the state and its citizens. Very soon their actions showed they had simply replaced the religious orthodoxy of the Ottomans with a new ideological orthodoxy. The scars of their intolerance are evident in the modern history of the Middle East, including the genocidal massacre of the Armenians and massive deportations afterwards. The Armenian massacre

occurred in 1915-16 when the Young Turks occupied most of the important positions in the Ottoman government and the army. Talaat Pasha, a powerful member of the Young Turks movement, who became Prime Minister in 1917³¹, presided over the massacre in 1915.³²

Turkish nationalists dreamed of a powerful Western-style state in which traditional values, particularly those of an Islamic Caliphate, had no place. In reality they failed to overcome the failures of the traditional rule which they rejected. Instead they perpetrated a tyranny of one-man rule, in which the new dictator found the source of his legitimacy in the nation and not in religion. Their reforms included changing the Turkish alphabet from Arabic to Latin script, banning the wearing of traditional headgear and requiring the public to adopt Western attire. They were forging a Turkish state and society following a modern European model but with little understanding of Europe or the secrets of its power. Modernity did not appear in Europe overnight imposed by young, frustrated and militant ideologues. As Daryush Shayegan explains:

Modernity was born out of a critique of Christianity (something to which Islam, and the other great religions of the planet, had never been exposed). While religious struggle still occupied center stage, the humanist critics formed a united front with the politicians; the common adversary was still religion and the ecclesiastical powers incarnating it.³³

Turkish nationalists' main concern was power and they wanted it with aggressive attitude. The point here is that nationalism came to the Islamic paradigm without the

³¹ Bernard Lewis, The Emergence of Modern Turkey, (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002): 226.

³² Samantha Power, A Problem from Hell, America and the Age of Genocide, (New York: Perennial, 2003): 1.

³³ Daryush Shayegan, Cultural Schizophrenia, Islamic Societies Confronting the West, (London: Saqi Books, 1992): 80.

body of critique that moulded the West. Consequently nationalism only caused chaos, confusion and fierce wars whose heavy price was paid by innocents.

It was in the chaotic environment of this Turkish project of superficial Westernization that the early religious-based Kurdish revolts started. The early Kurdish resistance movement was an odd mixture of nationalism and Islam; a mixture not adopted by choice, but in reaction to the strange and foreign reforms imposed by Turkish nationalists.

In the name of populism, the Kurdish language was forbidden in public places (1924); in the name of the abolition of feudalism, Kurdish aghas [chieftains], but also intellectuals, were sent into exile to western Turkey. A new law (Nr. 1505) made it possible to expropriate the land of Kurdish big landlords and give it to Turkish-speakers who were to be settled in Kurdistan.³⁴

From a Kurdish perspective, this was chaos and they responded with revolts they saw as seeking to correct injustice of the new Turkish rulers. The Kurds fought against attacks by the Turks on Kurdish religious and communal foundations and lands previously protected by the Ottomans. Much of Turkish Kurdistan revolted against the Ankara government in February 1925 under the leadership of Sheikh Said.³⁵ The Turkish nationalists scapegoated Said to suppress many different oppositions to their new regime around the country, some surprisingly from former allies of Atatürk. Atatürk proved to have very little tolerance for opposition. Twice he dismissed his prime ministers because they opposed his views. Finally he acquired dictatorial power for the government in a law

³⁴ Martin van Bruinessen, Agha, Shaikh and State. The Social and Political Structure of Kurdistan, (London and New York: Zed Books Ltd., 1992): 281.

³⁵ In Kurdistan the title 'Sheikh' denotes a saintly person and is used especially for leaders of the mystical orders. See *Ibid.*: 342.

called *Law for the Maintenance of Order* in March 1925,³⁶ which allowed summary execution of mainly Kurdish and Islamic dissidents. He used Sheikh Said's rebellion as an excuse for these extreme measures, but seized the opportunity to show that no opposition would be tolerated.

But who was Sheikh Said and what was his revolt? When it comes to Sheikh Said's revolt opinions differ. Turkish sympathizers regarded the revolt as merely religious and therefore reactionary. Kurdish Sympathizers regard it as nationalist movement.³⁷ Some Western Orientalists regard it as evidence of a symbolic relationship between nationalism and religion. William F. Tucker in his introduction to Robert Olson's book *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism 1880-1925*, for example, finds a parallel between Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic Revolution of 1979 in Iran and Sheikh Said's Islamic nationalism of 1925.³⁸ These assumptions are speculative since the only evidence that remains of Sheikh Said's revolt is a few lines in the newspapers of the time, mostly in the style of gossip columnists; and a picture of his dead body hung from a post in the public square of the Kurdish city of Diyarbakir in eastern Turkey.

From his title Sheikh Said was a religious leader. His goal apparently was to establish an independent Kurdistan ruled according to Islamic principles. His rebellion was called a *jihad* (holy war) and very quickly mobilized the peasants and religious masses against the abolition of the Caliphate, which also undermined the authority of the

³⁶ See Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002): 265-66.

³⁷ See Wadie Jawaideh, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement: Its Origins and Development*, Ph. D. diss., (Syracuse University, 1960): 610.

³⁸ See Robert Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880-1920*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989): xix.

Sheikhs. Robert Olson explains the authority and influence of Kurdish Sheikhs as follows:

In Kurdistan, in particular, it was the role of the shaikh [sic] as a holy man that allowed him to become so powerful. Many of his illiterate and fanatically religious followers (*Murids*) could readily see their shaikh as a *mahdi* (messiah), a savior come to bring justice and a better life. Such devotion and demands increased in times of social and political malaise and famine and economic hardship.³⁹

The Sheikhs of Kurdistan historically were moral leaders who maintained peace and stability. Their saintly genealogy goes back to the sages of medieval Baghdad; therefore the Kurdish mythic memory places them in a special place. Because of their religious role, they were considered impartial and fair in resolving local conflicts and problems. Consequently stripping them of their power caused tremendous social chaos and confusion. Ignoring these factors created a disturbing situation that is still evident in the social chaos of the Kurdish regions of Turkey.

It could be the case that due to the popularity of the Sheikhs and their office that the Kurdish uprising acquired a religious tone. Sheikh Said managed to mobilized the masses by transforming religious rituals and ceremonies to political rallies, and to promote political and military support for his cause. He used his annual visits and meetings in November 1924 to mobilize his campaign against Ankara. These annual visits were a ritual in which the Sheikh's followers renewed their vows by presenting him with gifts. Sheikh Said used the loyalty of his followers to create an army of Kurdish fighters willing to participate in his campaign and provide their own supplies and ammunition.

³⁹ Robert Olson, The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism, 1880-1925, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989): 3. Although Olson's note might suggest that there is a messianic tradition in Sunni Islam by equating the *mahdi* and messiah this is not the case. His emphasis on the saintly role of the Sheikhs in Kurdish society, however, is valid.

Sheikh Said was a unifying force whose call was received by people of different classes and categories in Kurdistan. Different segments of Kurdish society supported the rebellion for different reasons. The religious peasants simply followed Sheikh Said as a religious leader. The urban youth saw a national cause and responded to its call. The Kurdish landowners, and tribal chiefs, participated in the rebellion and encouraged their subjects to join as well. Since the new Republic of Turkey had been established their control over their livelihood and livestock had diminished and “[m]any of the leaders wanted to protect their land, their domination of markets for their livestock, and their control of the legal system, all or some of which seemed to be threatened by the secularizing and centralizing reforms of the central government in Ankara.”⁴⁰

From February to the end of March 1925, Shaikh Said and his men succeeded in gaining control over more than half of the western side of lake Van, which constituted a major part of Turkish Kurdistan (see figure 2, page 169). This massive victory marked his revolt as the first large-scale Kurdish rebellion,⁴¹ but also gave an excuse for the new leaders of Ankara to put an end to Kurdish resistance, and set a harsh example for the rest of the country that no resistance would be tolerated by the new government.

The Turkish forces had ended the rebellion by the end of March 1925 and started a violent campaign against the Kurdish people.

On September 4, 1925 Shaikh [sic] Said and forty-seven other leading Kurds were hanged in Diyarbakir. Thousands of less influential Kurds were slaughtered without a trial. The population of entire districts were deported to the west. The role of Shaikhs in the uprising was, moreover,

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*: 154.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*: 153.

Figure 2: Western Side of Van: areas under Sheikh Said's control in March 1925:

David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, (New York: I.B. Tauris, 1997): xiv.

the reason for a law ordering the closure of all *tekiyes*⁴², tombs and other places of pilgrimage (December 1925).⁴³

The aftermath of Shaikh Said's rebellion was a combined military and political campaign against any form of opposition in Turkey; a war against anyone who might undermine the official ideology of the Republic of Turkey. This was a period of intolerance and violence. In fact as soon as Ataturk came to power autocratic intolerance became the norm and due to this intolerance Sheikh Said's uprising was popular among almost all Kurds including those in the army. A large number of Kurdish officers who deserted the Turkish army due to discrimination joined the rebellion.

British intelligence interrogated a number of Kurdish officers who joined the rebellion in September 1924. Based on documents from those interrogations, Martin van Bruinessen reported that:

These [Kurdish] officers presented their British interrogators with a long list of complaints about the treatment of the Kurds by the Turkish government:

1. A new law on minorities aroused suspicion. Fears were that the Turks planned to disperse the Kurds over western Turkey, and settle Turks in their stead in the east.
2. The caliphate, one of the last ties binding Kurds and Turks together, had been abolished.
3. Use of the Kurdish language in schools and law courts was restricted. Kurdish education was forbidden, with the result that education among the Kurds was virtually non-existent.
4. The word 'Kurdistan' (used previously as a geographical term) was deleted from all geography books.
5. All senior government officials in Kurdistan were Turks. Only at lower levels, were carefully selected Kurds appointed.
6. Relative to the taxes paid, there were no comparable benefits received from the government.

⁴² *Tekiye* in Kurdish is a dervish lodge which is as sacred as mosque.

⁴³ Martin van Bruinessen, Agha, Shaikh and State. The Social and Political Structure of Kurdistan, (London and New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd., 1992): 291.

7. The government interfered in the eastern provinces [i.e., Kurdish provinces] in the 1923 elections for the Grand National Assembly.
8. The government pursued the policy of continuously setting one tribe against another.
9. Turkish soldiers frequently raided Kurdish villages, taking away animals; requisitioned food supplies were often not or insufficiently paid for.
10. In the army the Kurdish rank-and-file were discriminated against, and generally selected for rough and unpleasant duties.
11. The Turkish government attempted to exploit Kurdish mineral wealth, with the aid of German capital.⁴⁴

These grievances show the environment in which the rebellion took place. An extremist Turkish nationalism, laid the groundwork for the Kurdish rebellion. But the chaos and ethnic conflicts of this period revealed a more serious problem, which still exists in Turkey and the Middle East; the problem of modernity confronting tradition. The Turkish nationalist dream of modernizing Turkey developed because the events of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries showed that the old system had failed to adapt to the dramatic changes evident in the modern Western world. But regardless of their intentions, Turkish leaders certainly did not understand why the people resisted change. They failed to create a liberal and democratic modernity and instead focused on building a strong government with no protective mechanism for the citizens against the aggressions of this centralized government.

Although the new leaders at Ankara did not use conventional religious symbols in ruling, the spirit of their leadership differed little from that of the old regime they had opposed and replaced. Mustafa Kemal soon was called Ataturk, which means the father of the Turks, and became a secular version of a Muslim Sultan or Caliph. His hostility to Islamic symbols and ceremonies was a reversal of religious fanaticism. This was reactive

⁴⁴ 'Kurdish nationalist society in East Anatolia', report enclosed in FO 371, 1924: E11093/11093/65. In *Ibid.*: 282-3.

nihilism more than anything else. The atheism of his followers was and is a strong faith and a creed matching the strength of the faith of Muslim believers. The nationalists were strong in iron-rule but weak in winning the hearts of their people. There was no tolerance for political activism or criticism of the government. This state violence provoked more religiosity in reaction.

Kurdish national resistance in this period was very religious and saw the solution as a return to the old system of the Caliphate. The Kurdish movement was unable to provide an alternative to Turkish nationalism because it desperately tried to preserve the past, making it no match for the new technologies of power. This period of both Turkish and Kurdish nationalisms was simply full of reactions. The Turkish nationalism was a reaction to European supremacy and the Kurdish resistance was a reaction to Turkish nationalism. No critical movements existed, only movements expressing ideological reaction to religion and vice versa. In the real life of the people, this resulted in catastrophic wars and massacres of which Sheikh Said's defeat was the first of many to come. The psychological outcome of this massacre left such a scar on Turkish / Kurdish relations and they spent the twentieth century fighting a brutal civil war. As a result the people in Kurdistan, experienced an environment that, once ruled by their inclusion and tolerance, became the battlefield of opponent ideologies throughout the twentieth century. Underlying this conflict of ideologies is a more serious problem, which still haunts the Islamic Middle East, the problem of modernity confronting tradition. As these two forces collide they deform each other and cause a number of anomalies. Turkish nationalism was the result of a series of problems, especially the inability of the old system to compete with the modern Euro-American states. Turkish nationalists reacted in hysteria

and tried to change the country overnight. They misunderstood modernity, and believed they could throw away tradition all together. Their reforms deformed the country and produced a perverted modernity. The Turkish nationalists simply imported Western suits, the Latin alphabet and military technology but skipped bringing about the rule of law, individual liberty, tolerance and freedom of speech and conscious. They banned the wearing of veil and yet the tradition of honor-killing still exists in Turkey. Nationalist ideology without the institutional and critical elements that make modernity a reality was a contradictory exercise. The experience of modernization in Turkey did not produce liberal and democratic modernity because Turkish modernization was a reactive movement. It was reactive because Turkish Nationalists reacted against the overwhelming power of European military technology. In reaction Turkish nationalism embraced modern military technology as a symbol of power.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I contextualized the conditions of othering created by Turkish nationalism. Turkish nationalists' policy of banning many aspects of Kurdish identity such as language and attire contributed to the political technology of othering. The methods of the Turkish state in othering the Kurds were in essence technological at many levels. It employed state technique to punish an "otherness" which did not exist before. During the Ottoman Empire, the Kurdish difference was not a problem, i.e. it was not perceived as "otherness." Under the nationalism of the Turkish Republic, all linguistic and cultural differences were perceived as "otherness" and hence punished. This intolerance for otherness became a major part of the state's political technology.

The Turkish severe attitude towards the “other” was a function of nihilism as well. The Turkish state negated the “otherness” that it created. The Ottomans did not create “otherness” out of Kurdish difference, although they had their own others, i.e. Shiites and etc. The Ottoman did not have a problem with Kurds because the Kurds were not seen as “other.” So the Turkish state-nationalism created “otherness” out of differences that were not an issue for the previous regime.

I conclude that Turkish nationalism best fits Anderson’s description of “imagined community.” Ataturk imagined a European identity for Turkey and was ready to destroy everything in his path if it didn’t fit his “imagined” nation. Turkish intolerance for “other” was born out of this “imagined” vision of nation. Anderson in fact refers to Ataturk’s attempt in romanizing the Turkish alphabet as an example of print technology and its role in creating the “imagined community.”⁴⁵

Turkish nationalism used language as a politico-technological instrument of othering. By banning the Kurdish language, it made the very medium of self-expression an instrument of otherness. The Kurds were othered for speaking. Many Kurds even today can only communicate in Kurdish. Banning Kurdish was a political technique to silence dissent and suffocate Kurdish cultural-public life. Banning Kurdish became a forceful instrument of nihilism by throwing Kurdishness into the realm of non-existence. For the Kurds language became an existential matter. Under the Ottomans people were not threatened or perceived as a threat for being Kurdish. Under conditions of nihilism Turkish nationalists made being Kurdish simultaneously threatened, and perceived as a threat to Turkish national identity.

⁴⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Community*, (New York: Verso, 2006): 45-46.

I conclude that the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire created a cyclical movement of nihilism and reactive nihilism. The Ottomans were defeated by the awesome power of Western technology. This led a generation of young Turks under Ataturk to admire the essence of the very force that had negated their traditional mode of life. Consciously or unconsciously they admired their conquerors and tried to mimic them. When European technology defeated the Ottomans, it was active negation. But when the Turks negated the Ottomans it was reactive negation; and when the Kurds rebelled against Turkish nationalism it too was a reactive negation. I believe this negation of the "self" by the Turks was the beginning of reactive nihilism, a reactive devaluation of self-values. But this was inevitable because the hard reality of technique already had negated the Ottomans and excluded them from twentieth century. Turkish nationalists wanted to enter the powerful technical world of the twentieth century but since this was motivated by reaction it became a force of reactive nihilism. This made the young Turks recoil into an "imagined" self with extreme orthodoxy and zero tolerance for "difference." In recoiling back to Turkishness, nationalism was nihilistic on two levels; first because it was "imagined" identity, and second because it was a force to negate all other sources of "self" identity. Turkish nationalism reacted this way, I believe, because it was fatigued by defeat at the hand of Europeans and 'imagined' a country like them powerful and victorious. Reaction became the essence of their movement which could not progress to the level of their mighty opponents. They could only get a limited distance by mimicking appearance and importing technique. That limited distance was enough to create an "imagined" nation which dealt with "other" nihilistically. In this respect Turkish nationalism began by a technology of othering.

I also conclude that the creation of Iraq was an example of “enframing” because the whole experience of Cairo conference was to apply technique. Both the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire and creation of Iraq involved the will to power expressed through technology. “Enframing” as the essence of technology, was expressed in the discourse and practices of Orientalist experts and advisors to Churchill; shaping his will to recreate the map of the Middle East. By the creation of Iraq and the establishment of the Republic of Turkey the fate of the Kurds was sealed. They were left with “nothingness” because a system of inter-state relations had been created, but no state represented the Kurds. Kurds facing the “nothing” of nihilism, which made them devalued by the state policy of Turkey, the creation of Iraq and the imperial design of Britain, recoiled back to a fleeting past. The Kurdish traditional rulers, Sheikhs, facing the loss of their authority, created a movement with elements of religion and nationality combined. One could trace elements of primordialism and perennialism, using Smith’s paradigms, in the Said’s revolt. But the more urgent question is, “was it a part of nihilism that took over the Middle East after the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire?” I believe the answer is yes. Said’s uprising did not overcome the nihilism of Turkish nationalism, being itself a reaction to European nationalism as expressed in imperialism⁴⁶. Said revolted against Turkish nationalism in a reactive way and as a result participated in reactive nihilism rather than overcoming it. When Turks reacted to European nationalism they recoiled back to an “imagined’ self, and when the Kurds reacted to Turkish nationalism they recoiled to a fleeting past. One still could argue the Kurdish nationalism of Said’s uprising expressed perennial aspirations and used religion to mobilize the masses. But I believe the true nature of

⁴⁶ See chapter two where I use Arendt to explain the link between nationalism and imperialism.

Said's movement may never be known. He did mobilize his people, and he was fighting for Kurdish rights, i.e. language, cultural, religious and etc. He was defeated because his movement was no match for the awesome forces of technology and nihilism. Nihilism, however, can defeat you from inside, as though your hands and feet were tied, and so that your struggle as you sink into water contributes to your demise. What can you do to save yourself? I believe you don't get your hands tied; that is you try not to participate in reactive nihilism. The tragedy of Said's rebellion was that the Kurds for the first time encountered technique and nihilism which were in the Middle East to stay. Through Turkish nationalism reactive nihilism dominated the Middle East, revealing itself in many different forms. Nihilism for the most part became the instrument and the logic of technologies of othering.

Chapter Five:

Modernization of Iran and the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad (1946)

In this chapter I use the concepts that I developed in theorizing political technologies of othering to explain Reza Shah's policies regarding the Kurds. I also use the concepts developed in chapter three regarding nationalism to analyse first Reza Shah's nationalist project, and then the Kurdish nationalist responses to this type of state-nationalism. I also use the concepts and critique that I developed in chapter two regarding realism and imperialism and their particular roles in technologies of othering.

Political technologies of othering reveal themselves in many guises; state-nationalism is one of them. In this chapter I explore, Iranian state-nationalism and the politics of modernization under Reza Shah of Iran, to show how Reza Shah's policies contributed to technologies of othering. I show how his modernization project acted as an instrument of othering. And I outline the Kurdish nationalist response to the techniques of othering used by Iranian state. In this respect I examine the conditions that led to the creation of the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad and what contributed to its demise, including British imperial interest in the region. I argue that had the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad succeeded and unified Kurdistan(s) it would have posed a serious threat to British control over Iraqi Kurdistan where the oil was. Moreover, without the Kurdish oil, Iraq would have been destabilized threatening British ability to communicate with its Asian colonies. I also show how the discourse of nationalism in Mahabad changed from separatism to seeking regional autonomy, but that this transformation made no difference to the outcome.

I proceed as follows: First I outline Iran's encounter with modernity through the coming to power of Reza Khan via a military coup d'état. Then I show how his imposed 'reforms' undermined and violated Kurdish identity. I then explore the Kurdish response to those policies. Next I examine how the events of the Second World War led to the Allied occupation of Iran and the creation of a free zone in Kurdistan allowing the establishment of the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad. Finally I examine the causes of its defeat and its impact on Kurdish nationalist discourse.

I. Iran and Modernity

Modernity came to Iran through a military coup d'état, and was established through a rapid series of top-down reforms, which created a backlash in most parts of Iranian society. In Iran, as in Turkey, the First World War was a turning point. At the time of the War, Iran was run by a weak and unstable state. There were many factions in Iranian society who were fighting for political dominance over the country. One was Bolshevik in tendency, worrying the Western powers particularly Britain. The Bolshevik element was a direct threat to British interests in the Middle East, so the British backed regime change in Iran in 1921 when Reza Khan overthrew the Qajar dynasty in a coup d'état.¹

Reza Khan was the commander of the Iranian arm forces in Qazvin, a major city near the Russian border. In his fight against the Bolsheviks in Qazvin, Reza Khan proved to be not just a capable military commander, but also a committed anti-Bolshevik. These qualities made him a trusted ally of the British and hence a preferred candidate to lead the coup to install a new regime in Iran which would protect British interests in the region.

¹ See Cyrus Ghani, Iran and the Rise of Reza Shah, from Qajar Collapse to Pahlavi Rule, New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 2000): 180-183.

Reza Khan also introduced the ideology of Persian nationalism as state policy. One might argue that nationalism existed prior to Reza Khan or that Iran had a national state previously. The Safavid dynasty five hundred years before, however, and the dynasties after them, ruled Iran in the name of the Shiite religion. Although the Safavids were not Persian, they were Azeri in origin; but that did not matter because religion was the source of legitimacy not nationality. But with the reign of Reza Khan it was ethno-nationalism that became state policy. His brand of nationalism centered around himself. He declared himself the Shah² of Iran making the Shah the focal point of Iran's state-nationalism. Reza Shah's understanding of nationalism imitated the Western appearance. He was a military commander and ruled over Iran from 1921 until 1941 with the iron fist of a dictator. A contemporary and admirer of Turkey's Ataturk, Reza Shah also imposed a series of reforms mostly aimed at modernizing Iran overnight including: use of uniform language and attire throughout the country, and banning the veil for women and a religious appearance for men. The result was religious and ethnic uprisings in various parts of the country. Like Ataturk, Reza Shah did not tolerate anyone who opposed his reforms. He established a modernized military and an effective police force to crush all opposition. After eliminating all opposition, Reza Shah began to establish a centralized state with all the power vested in the Shah. In less than five years, he built himself up from soldier to the minister of war (1921), Prime Minister (1923) and finally the king of the country (1925). In 1941 he was deposed by the Allied forces.

One of the contradictory aspects of Reza Shah was his obsession with modern Western attire in the name of Persian nationalism. He was so obsessed with the

² Shah in Persian means king.

appearance of the nation that he passed laws and applied punishment for those who did not comply with his laws regarding public appearance. How one should dress in public became the political issue of the twentieth century Iran. By imposing a dress code on Iranians Reza Shah was trying to Persianize the entire country, which was made of a number of diverse cultures and ethnicities. He aimed to show that Iran was no longer a traditional society. But he also had another target: ending the ethnic diversity of Iran. The imposing of Persian language and Western attire was a policy of assimilation towards the Kurds, as the new Shah in Tehran attempted to marginalize and other the Kurds as a people. The dress reform policy of Reza Shah focused on the unveiling of women, which upset the clergy class. Furthermore, it is also being blamed for causing the popularization of political Islam, which resulted in the formation of Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979. But the effects of unveiling Iranian women to show a modern face had a different scenario to deal with in Kurdistan. Kurdish women were never veiled until the advent of Islamic Republic in Iran (1979). So throughout the 1920s and 1930s Reza Shah's reforms in Kurdistan were perceived, not as liberation from tradition, but as a forced assimilation policy targeting Kurds. While veiled Persian women in Tehran were arrested for wearing the veil, unveiled women in Kurdistan were arrested for wearing Kurdish dress.³ This unveiling or so-called liberation of women is a clear example of contradiction and hypocrisy. Throughout the reign of Reza Shah women in Iran never acquired the right to vote or occupy political office. The 1934 law banning the veil,⁴ moreover had negative consequences for poorer women, who could not afford Western attire and were forced to

³ See Shahrzad Mojab, ed., Women of A Non-State Nation, The Kurds, (Costa Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers, Inc.2001): 7.

⁴ See Elton L. Daniel, The History of Iran, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2001): 137.

stay home to avoid police harassment or arrest. This did not 'emancipate' Kurdish or Persian women it marginalized them. So, in this period both poor Persians and ethnic minorities were removed from public spaces because of new dress code. This period with its imposed superficial reforms created bondage and harassment more than it ever contributed to liberty and emancipation.

Laws imposing the Persian language also marginalized Kurds. Indeed it was a political technique to eliminate or marginalize them because few Kurds then spoke Persian. Consequently they were excluded from many economic and political activities. These laws were aspects of the political technology of othering aimed at Persianizing political society. Furthermore, Reza Shah's tribal policy also disrupted the Kurdish socio-political order.⁵ To Persianize Kurdistan, many Kurdish tribes were transplanted to Persian parts of the country, and their lands and property given to Persian and Turkish families imported from other parts of the country.⁶ These policies were carried out with great violence and cruelty. These extreme measures prevented a liberal and democratic modernization of Iranian society. Furthermore this perverted modernity and militant secularism radicalized the religious class which subsequently resulted in its radical support for the current theocracy. I examine this issue in chapter seven but here I note that Reza Shah's reforms produced the opposite effect of the modernization he hoped for and thus was nihilistic and reactive in nature.

Reza Shah's brutal style created a political environment of resentment and anger among many different sectors of Iranian society; creating a negative and resentful backlash among the clergy, in particular, who were the leaders of the traditional classes.

⁵ See Wadie Jwaideh, The Kurdish National Movement. Its Origin and Development, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006): 243.

⁶ See Ibid., 244.

Prior to Reza Shah's 'reforms,' the Shiites traditionally favored monarchy over any other political system.⁷ But Reza Shah's harsh treatment of Shiite clergy, and their sanctuaries, changed the views of Iranian Shiites. The young Khomeini's ideology was formed in this environment of intense political intrigue and a brutal fight for dominance over Iran, affecting his ideas regarding politics. He denounced monarchy and developed a new theory based on the rule of the Shiite clergy known as *Velayat-e Faqih* (guardianship of the jurist).⁸ Reza Shah's brutal treatment of the clergy involved a clash between two forms of dictatorship: Reza Shah's Persian supremacy via ethno-nationalism; and Khomeini's supremacy of Shiite clergy via *Velayat-e Faqih*. Born in 1900 and raised in Iran's so-called modern era Reza Shah's reforms revolutionized the young Khomeini and through him Shiite Islam. I maintain that Islamic fundamentalism and modernity came to Iran simultaneously as two strong opposing political forces, catalyzed by a program of forced modernization and centralization. The results shaped twentieth century Iranian politics.

Reza Shah imposed his rule over Iranian society, the clergy, and ethnic minorities through fierce, bloody confrontations. He then focused on foreign policy and commercial relations with the outside world. Most of his supporters admired his anti-colonial attitude and forgave his despotism. He first challenged the British government's imperial dealings with Iran through the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. In 1932 and 1933, he doubled Iran's income from royalties on oil.⁹ This made him popular with Persian nationalists but angered the British, so he looked to other European nations to acquire Western

⁷ See Vali Nasr, The Shia Revival, How Conflict within Islam Will Shape the Future, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006): 121.

⁸ *Ibid.*: 125-6.

⁹ See Elton L. Daniel, The History of Iran, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2001): 140.

knowledge and technology. Until then the British had dominated Iranian commerce, and natural resources, but Reza Shah established a relationship with Germany. He developed an interest in the Aryan myth, and approved of Germany's anti-Bolshevik and anti-British views. Reza Shah was attracted to Germany largely because it had no colonial history in Iran. Moreover Hitler's Aryan myth served Reza Shah's ethno-nationalism. In 1935, Reza Shah changed the country's name from Persia to Iran, believing that 'Persia' was associated with the backwardness and decadence of previously weak regimes, whereas Iran literally means the land of the Aryans.¹⁰ His alliance with Germany cost him his kingdom in 1941, when Germany attacked Soviet Union.

II. The Second World War and the Prelude to the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad

The German Attack on Soviet Union brought Iran face to face with the Allied forces. Iran shared a long border with the Soviets on its northern frontiers and in the south was connected to the oil rich lands of the Persian Gulf. Iran's strategic position and its oil reserves determined the outcomes of the war on the U.S.S.R. front. The Allies worried that Reza Shah's friendship with Hitler meant he would let the Germans launch further attacks on the Soviets from Iran or cut them off from the Allies' help. And the new machines of war heavily depended on oil for their fuel. The Allies demanded that Iran break all ties with Hitler and expel all German nationals. When Reza Shah refused, the Allied forces invaded Iran on 25 August 1941. Reza Shah was deposed in September the same year and his son Mohamad Reza was installed by the Allies, which retained continuity through the image of dynastic succession to avoid social unrest during Allied

¹⁰ See Ali M. Ansari, Modern Iran Since 1921. The Pahlavis and After, (Toronto: Pearson Education, 2003): 65-66.

occupation. Mohamad Reza remained Shah of Iran until he also was deposed by the Islamic revolution of 1979 led by Khomeini. After the abdication of Reza Shah, the Allied forces divided Iran into three zones for the duration of the Second World War. The Soviets occupied the north, just south of their borders; the British occupied the south where the Iranian oil fields are located, but the central part was a free zone uncontrolled by the Allies and out of Iranian control. This zone was where most of Iranian Kurdistan was located; so providing the opportunity for the Kurds to establish self-rule. The Allied occupation of Iran faced no resistance from the Iranian people or the army,¹¹ indicating the unpopularity of Reza Shah's despotic rule. The Kurds established an independent republic in Mahabad (see figure 3, page 186).

Almost a year after the abdication of Reza Shah, the seeds of the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad were planted. Between 1941 and 1946, the Kurds mobilized their forces and established the political and military infrastructure needed to build a state of their own. The republic lasted from December 1945 to December 1946. On September 16, 1942, a group of middle-class Kurds gathered in the Kurdish city of Mahabad to form a political organization with the aim of establishing an independent Kurdistan.¹² The founding of *Komala Zhiani* Kurdistan (The Committee for the Revival of Kurdistan) marked the beginning of the modern Kurdish national movement based on political ideas and political organization. While *Komala* was male-dominated, the women of Kurdistan were not completely excluded. At the time 'the woman question' was framed by communism and nationalism, and women's participation was limited by the misogyny embedded in the ideas derived from Russian and French intellectual sources.

¹¹ *Ibid.*: 82-83.

¹² See William Eagleton Jr. *The Kurdish Republic of 1946*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1963): 33-34.

Figure 3: The areas under the control of the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad

The formation of Komala was fundamental to the creation of the first modern state in Kurdistan. Despite its shortcomings, Shahrzad Mojab has this to say regarding the significance of the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad:

The struggle for statehood has been at the center of Kurdish nationalist movement during the twentieth century. The most important experiment, which can be distinguished from pre-modern state formations, was the Kurdish republic of 1946, established in northeastern Kurdistan, now part of northwestern Iran. This state can be distinguished from its pre-modern predecessors not only by its republican form, which was administered by a political party and a cabinet, but also by its modern educational system, modern media, national army, tax system, national anthem, national flag, national language, and mobilization of women into educational, cultural and political life.¹³

Komala provided a form and a context for the continuity of Kurdish politics and its entry to the contemporary discourse of identity politics. Very soon *Komala* became a household name in all parts of a Kurdistan divided by borders imposed by imperialist powers. It was the event in modern Kurdish history which dared to defy these imposed borders and fight for Kurd's self-rule in their own homeland. Soon there were branches of *Komala* active in Iraqi and Turkish Kurdistan despite deadly dangers.¹⁴ Leaders and activists associated with *Komala* were aware of the significance of rebuilding ties among all parts of Kurdistan and restoring the devastating divide imposed by local despotic governments. This was a dangerous project but *Komala* was up to the task.

In August 1944 a symbolic affirmation of greater Kurdish unity took place at Mt Dalanpar where the frontiers of Iraq, Iran, and Turkey intersect. Kurdish delegates from the three countries met there to sign a pact, the *Peman i Se Senur*, or the pact of Three Borders, which provided for

¹³ Shahrzad Mojab, "Women and Nationalism in the Kurdish Republic of 1946," in Shahrzad Mojab ed., *Women of A Non-State Nation, The Kurds*, (Costa Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers, Inc.2001): 71.

¹⁴ See Archie Roosevelt Jr., "The Kurdish Republic of Mahabad," in Gerard Chaliand ed., *People Without A Country, The Kurds and Kurdistan*, (London: Zed Press, 1980): 136.

mutual support and the sharing of material and human resources in the interests of a greater Kurdistan.¹⁵

The political significance of *Komala* and its agenda is that the modern Kurdish national movement started as an anti-colonial struggle. Its defiance of arrangements imposed by imperialist powers was an indication of this awareness and *Komala* was the leading political engine for this.

The British concern was mostly about their control over the oilfields particularly around the Iraqi Kurdish city of Kirkuk. And now with the Kurdish desire for a homeland including all parts of Kurdistan the British were worried that any change which affected the balance of power could disrupt their control over the oilfields of the Middle East. So they watched the events carefully. But the Soviet's interests were ideological as well as expansionist. They were interested in spreading their ideology to as many parts of the Middle East as possible; and to create as many satellite states as possible around their borders. They already were present in Azerbaijan in northern Iran with much Soviet influence and authority. At the time when *Komala* was created (1942), a government in Azerbaijan had declared its independence from Iran, with Soviet backing. There was and remain two Azerbaijanis. Then the Iranian Azerbaijanis hoped to join their Soviet counterpart. Moreover, the dictatorial nationalism of Reza Shah also was greatly resented by Azerbaijanis, in backlash against his Persianization policies. The Soviets hoped events in Kurdistan would take a similar turn. But they were cautious. They created a cultural club, the Kurdish-Soviet Cultural Relations Society, to provide an environment for political and cultural activists to keep a closer eye on the events in Kurdistan and

¹⁵ William Eagleton Jr. The Kurdish Republic of 1946, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1963): 36.

influence them as much as possible. Up until this point *Komala* was an underground political organization. But in April 1945 *Komala* declared its program and its existence openly in the Kurdish-Soviet Cultural Relations Society's clubhouse. At this meeting Qazi Mohamad, the future president of the Republic of Mahabad, became a member of *Komala*. Qazi was a famous judge and belonged to the most prestigious family of Mahabad.

Qazi modified *Komala*'s strategy regarding the creation of a greater Kurdistan, bringing the focus back to the Kurdish region of Iran because it was possible to create an autonomous region there in the free zone; whereas Iraqi Kurdistan was under the British control and Turkish Kurdistan was under Ataturk's control. The Kurds at this point were no match for those who occupied their lands. Furthermore Qazi was interested in a political solution believing Kurds should organize themselves around a modern political party. He also changed the name of the organization to the Kurdish Democratic Party, which still exists and usually is referred to as KDP. Under Qazi, the KDP demanded human and civil rights for the Kurds in Iran. He tried to bring the Kurdish issue into mainstream politics. The manifesto of the KDP listed Kurdish demands as follows:

1. The Kurdish people in Iran should have freedom and self-government in the administration of their local affairs, and obtain autonomy within the limits of the Iranian State.
2. The Kurdish language should be used in education and be the official language in administrative affairs.
3. The provincial council of Kurdistan should be immediately elected according to constitutional law and should supervise and inspect all state and social matters.
4. All state officials must be of local origin.
5. A single law for both peasants and notables should be adopted and the future of both secured.
6. The Kurdish Democrat Party will make a special effort to establish unity and complete fraternity with the Azerbaijani people and the other

peoples that live in Azerbaijan (Assyrians, Armenians, etc.) in their struggle.¹⁶

7. The Kurdish Democrat Party will strive for the improvement of the moral and economic state of the Kurdish people through the exploration of Kurdistan's many natural resources, the progress of agriculture and commerce, and the development of hygiene and education.

8. We desire that the peoples living in Iran be able to strive freely for the happiness and progress of their country.¹⁷

These were the political conditions that made the creation of the Mahabad Republic possible. But there was also a military aspect to the situation. The Kurds needed to provide security for themselves. And the Kurdish security forces came from two different sources: Kurdish members of the Iranian army who deserted after the abdication of Reza Shah; and the Barzanis, a militia of Iraqi Kurdish origin, who escaped persecution from the Iraqi state and sought refuge in Iranian Kurdistan. The Barzani Movement is examined in the next chapter. They were the military backbone of the Kurdish republic of Mahabad.

III. Declaration of the Republic of Mahabad

On January 22, 1946, the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) under the political leadership of Qazi Mohamad, and with the military backing of the Barzanis, declared the establishment of the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad. Although the republic lasted only a year, this period was the beginning of modern Kurdish nationalism. Between 1941 and

¹⁶ Reza Shah's policy of assimilation resulted in the deportation of hundreds of thousands Kurds and put in their place non-Sunni, non-Kurdish ethnic and religious groups. This was a continuation of a Safavid policy to eliminate the Sunni support for the Ottomans. As a result, the majority of the people in cities of northern Kurdistan such as Khoy, Shahpour, Mandoab and Rezayeh (Orumiyeh) are non-Kurdish and the Kurds are just a minority. The city of Mahabad and its neighboring cities had and still have a minority of non-Kurdish ethnic groups.

¹⁷ Archie Roosevelt Jr., "The Kurdish Republic of Mahabad," in Gerard Chaliand ed., People Without A Country. The Kurds and Kurdistan, (London: Zed Press, 1980): 140-141. See also Gerard Chaliand, The Kurdish Tragedy, (New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd., 1994): 76.

1946 much of Kurdistan including Mahabad was neither under the Soviet occupation nor British control (see figure 3, page 186). The Kurds established self-rule making Tehran uneasy. Moreover the situation of Azerbaijan also made Tehran want to dispatch forces to re-establish the authority of the central government. The Soviets were suspicious of Tehran's motivations, however, since the recent head of the Iranian state, Reza Shah, was a Nazi sympathizer. So the Soviets did not want any troop activity on their southern borders, but also did not want to police the Kurdish region. So they let the tribal and local urban authorities manage their own security. It was during this period of autonomy that modern Kurdish nationalism emerged and in turn giving birth to the first modern Kurdish state.

In September 1945, Qazi along with a few leading members of Kurdish society were invited to Baku the capital of Soviet Azerbaijan. Qazi was always looking for support from outside. The Soviets wanted to present their case vis-à-vis Kurdistan. They made it clear that they did not support a separatist Kurdish movement. Consequently upon his return, Qazi adopted the goals of autonomy for Kurdistan and democracy for Iran. It is important to note that democracy became the central theme of KDP's discourse.¹⁸

Although modernity had come to Iran in the form of a coup d'état and the establishment of the military dictatorship of Reza Shah, in Kurdistan the struggle was for democracy. In the very short time that they had to establish such system the republic of Mahabad achieved more than expected, including incorporating women in the Republic. From the first day of the Republic, urban women were involved and encouraged to

¹⁸ See Shahrzad Mojab, "Women and Nationalism in the Kurdish Republic of 1946," in Shahrzad Mojab ed., Women of A Non-State Nation. The Kurds, (Costa Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers, Inc.2001): 78.

participate in the political process, although peasant men and women were not. Mojab writes:

If the leadership of the Republic denied the peasants, the majority of the population, democratic rights, the other half of the population, the women, were given considerable prominence in the life of the capital city. During the celebration of the independence (*serbexoyi*) of Kurdistan on January 18, 1946, which was reported in several issues of the newspaper *Kurdistan*, twenty-three major figures of the Republic addressed the audience. Two out of the sixteen who gave a talk were women, and the girl's school was one of the four schools which performed patriotic songs.¹⁹

The women speakers talked about the significance of the Kurdish Republic and emphasised urban women's participation in the social and political life of the Republic. They focused on the significance of education for girls and their preparation for active lives. Ismat Qazi, the president's daughter gave a passionate speech regarding Kurdish women's love of freedom.²⁰

In the first week after the declaration of the Republic of Mahabad, a women's conference was announced to be led by the first lady of the republic, Yay Mina.²¹ Qazi Mohamad, the president of the Republic, was a modern man whose wife and daughter were actively involved in the politics of the city and were partners to men. And this was not just some bourgeois privilege reserved for women with means and connections. Women of lower and middle classes also used this opportunity and some became members of parliament, journalists, critics and grass-roots activists. The women's conference was a success, concluding that the creation of a women's political organization was urgently needed. On March 15, 1946, less than three months after the declaration of the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad, the Democratic Party of the Women of

¹⁹ *Ibid.*: 79.

²⁰ See *Ibid.*: 79-80.

²¹ See *Ibid.*

Kurdistan was formed.²² The party organized many educational activities. In fact, one of primary goals of the Republic of Mahabad and its president was promotion of women's education and status.²³ Women's situation in the Republic of Mahabad was much better than the situation of women in other parts of Middle East especially in Iran and Arab countries. But this does not mean there was a Western-style feminist movement in Kurdistan at the time. The Kurdish women's movement and struggle for freedom was a sub-branch of the nationalist and civil rights movements in this period. Both its success and failures were connected to the situation of the Kurdish national movement. But in these aspects, the Republic of Mahabad was the beginning of Kurdish democratic modernity and an ongoing struggle in tune with civil rights movements elsewhere at the time.

The experience of the Republic of Mahabad is very significant in terms of the practice of aspects of modernity other than those the Middle East generally encountered through imperial domination. In the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad, the ideas of freedom, self-rule, equality, political participation and inclusion were part of the introduction to modernity. The oppressive regimes of Reza Shah in Iran and Ataturk in Turkey created a political psychology of resentment and reaction against modernity. But in Kurdistan there has always been a good feeling about modernity, because Kurds welcomed democratic modernity as freedom from domination. Whenever the Kurds had the opportunity they tried to practice democratic modernity, but almost always fell victim to the politics of power and domination. The fate of the Kurdish republic of Mahabad was no different. With all its hopes, in the end it collapsed in part because of international politics and the

²² See *Ibid.*: 81.

²³ *Ibid.*: 82.

self-interest of colonial powers and their client regimes. In its short existence, the Mahabad Republic achieved a representative government, built a Kurdish army, created a civil bureaucracy, formed a cabinet and council, built cultural institutions such as a Kurdish library, radio, cinema, printing press and journals, created a women's party and many youth centers.

But the main failure of the Republic was its failure to include and improve the lives of its large peasant population. This failure at the end contributed to the downfall of the republic. The rural tribal and peasant opposition to the Republic had many causes, but the most important was economic hardship. The Kurdish peasants and tribesmen depended on tobacco crops for their livelihood. But during the occupation they were deprived of commerce with the rest of Kurdistan and Iran.²⁴ So they suffered from a shortage of food and many other basic necessities. The presence of the Barzanis of Iraqi Kurdistan in large numbers was also an extra burden on the economy of Mahabad. It was difficult enough for the people of Mahabad to feed themselves let alone share what little they had with the Barzanis who came from Iraqi Kurdistan to help the Republic. As a result there was resentment against the Barzanis but the Republic needed the battle-experienced Barzani forces to defend itself. The situation became even more complicated when tribal leaders in the south opposed Qazi Mohammad as the president of the Republic, and the republicans threatened to use the Barzani forces against them, contributing to the resentment and anger against the Republic and the president. The resentment of the excluded tribes was later exploited by the Iranian authorities to destroy the Republic of Mahabad.

²⁴ See Archie Roosevelt Jr., "The Kurdish Republic of Mahabad," in Gerard Chaliand ed., People Without A Country. The Kurds and Kurdistan, (London: Zed Press, 1980): 147.

In the end the republic could only count on a few urban educated groups for support. For national consciousness required education as well as a viable economic base. Otherwise the uneducated masses would follow tribal loyalties and rivalries. To be loyal to a government of their own required national rather than tribal awareness. The Qazi's government emphasised education, knowing that an illiterate populace is easily manipulated. But the very program of eliminating illiteracy and educating women threatened the tribal and patriarchal structures of rural Kurdistan. The tribal leaders did not want to lose power and had no loyalty to the republic with its democratic tendencies.

During the short-lived Republic, democracy flourished in the urban centers but the republic did not have any program or enough time to include the peasants and tribes. It is not a surprise that on the day of declaration of the Republic of Mahabad the president of the republic announced the opening of a high school for girls, the first of its kind in Kurdistan.²⁵ This was unlike the so-called reforms of Reza Shah, who did not even pretend to care about educating Kurdish women. And this is important regarding both the Kurdish issue and women's issues. What Reza Shah offered was a violent, state-sponsored ethno-nationalism, which according to Shahrzad Mojab, created only division among women along ethnic lines.²⁶ Qazi Mohamad perhaps was the first Middle Eastern politician who was genuinely aware of the dreadful situation of women in a patriarchal society. Even before the establishment of the republic and throughout its short existence, Qazi's house was always a shelter for battered women and young girls escaping forced

²⁵ See Wadie Jawaideh, The Kurdish National Movement. Its Origins and Development, (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2006): 253.

²⁶ See Shahrzad Mojab ed., Women of A Non-State Nation. The Kurds, (Costa Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers, Inc.2001): 6.

marriages or seeking refuge from the punishment for choosing their own partners.²⁷ In his own private life he defied patriarchal traditions expected from a man of his stature. He married a divorced woman, a practice frowned on in patriarchal societies of Middle East. Their marriage was based on true love and partnership. Qazi was a judge both in civic as well as religious matters. As a judge he was expected to abide by the rules of patriarchal traditions, but he did not. Not just because he married a divorced woman, but more so because his wife was a free individual. She became his partner in politics of Kurdistan and was founder and chairperson of the second women's organization in the history of Kurdistan and the first of such organization in Iran.²⁸

Compared to Ataturk and Reza Shah, Qazi Mohammad was educated and had a large personal library, which was filled with books in many different languages. He valued Islamic virtues and modern morality and tried to establish a high standard for his followers. Pelletiere explains that:

Qazi Mohammad received no salary as president -- indeed he refused one. Other cabinet members took sixty-five dollars a month. Whenever the tribes were billeted outside Mahabad in defense of the republic, an officer of the Mahabad army was assigned to provide food. Thus the evil tendency of Kurdish tribesmen to loot was overcome -- a tendency that ordinarily, in the absence of any other means of provisioning was inevitable.²⁹

Qazi Mohammad placed a great emphasis on education. This was a significant improvement in a region where education was almost non-existent. He legislated free

²⁷ See William Eagleton Jr. The Kurdish Republic of 1946, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1963): 31.

²⁸ The first women's organization in Turkey was founded in 1919 in Istanbul by Kurdish immigrant women. This organization was destroyed by Ataturk, the so-called liberator of women, along with all other Kurdish organizations. See Shahrzad Mojab ed., Women of A Non-State Nation, The Kurds, (Costa Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers, Inc.2001): 86.

²⁹ William Eagleton The Kurdish Republic of 1946, (London: Oxford University Press, 1963): 87-92, quoted in Stephen C. Pelletiere, The Kurds: An Unstable Element in the Gulf, (Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1984): 108-109.

education along with free clothing, food and textbooks as the right of every child in Kurdistan, and his government practiced it while he was in power.³⁰

Publication of Kurdish books, journals, magazines and a daily paper began as soon as the Republic imported printing equipment from the Soviets. The printed materials, mostly communist propaganda, also included nationalist literature.³¹ Nevertheless the Republic of Mahabad was an open society with all kinds of possibilities for urban Kurds. The major cause of the failure of the republic was the illiteracy of the rural populace left from years of Iranian neglect and oppression. Qazi Mohammad tried his best to acquire autonomy and self-rule for his people by legal means. Throughout his rule he never favored violence as a method of acquiring power. It is significant to know that the birth of Kurdish nationalism was truly the birth of civil rights and democratic demands in Iran. In an interview with a French press agency Qazi Mohammad said, "[t]he Kurds would be satisfied if the central government decided really to apply democratic laws throughout Iran, and recognized the laws now in force in Kurdistan concerning the education of the Kurds and the autonomy of the local administration and the army."³²

Qazi's approach was negotiation and dialogue. This was the general attitude for the most part of the Iranian Kurdistan. And throughout their history the Iranian Kurds always tried diplomacy and dialogue but received only violence in return. Even a few

³⁰ Wadie Jwaideh, The Kurdish Nationalist Movement: Its Origins and Development, (Ph. D. dissertation, Syracuse University, 1960): 733.

³¹ *Ibid.*: 734.

³² Kurdish League, *Memorandum sur la situation des Kurdes*, 41; "Resumé du memorandum sur la situation des Kurdes," Bulletin du Centre d'Etudes Kurdes, no. 2 (1948), 19 *Summary of the Memorandum on the Situation of the Kurds and Their Claims* (Paris: Imprimerie Louis Jean-Gap, 1949), 23. Quoted in Wadie Jawaideh, The Kurdish National Movement, Its Origins and Development, (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2006): 253.

months after the establishment of the Republic of Mahabad, a group of Kurdish notables addressed the political demands of the Kurds to Tehran in a civil manner. And yet they did not receive any response. Qazi Mohammad and his family were very much interested in democracy for Iran. Qazi's younger brother Sader was a refined politician, who in 1943 remained a member of the Iranian Parliament.³³ His socialist views and open challenging of state policy eventually brought him to his demise at the hands of the Iranian regime. The Iran in those days was a dictatorship and demands for freedom and democracy were considered a crime.

IV. The Fall of the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad

Despite the efforts of the Qazi and his family, the Iranian authorities never yielded to Kurdish democratic demands. The only reason that the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad could sustain its power briefly was that the authority of the Iranian central government had been undermined by the occupying Allied forces. The Kurdish Republic was located just to the south of the Soviet zone of influence, and they would not allow any Iranian military activity. But this situation did not last. The Soviets were interested in an oil deal with Iran, and when they got their deal in 1946 they agreed to leave.³⁴ After the departure of the Soviet troops, the Kurds were left to fend for themselves.

After the departure of the Allied forces, Tehran established its control over the country again. This was the beginning of the end for the Republic of Mahabad. Qazi Mohammad saw that the situation might become critical and dispatched a delegation to Tehran to discuss the Kurdish question constitutionally; i.e. to negotiate legal rights for

³³ See William Eagleton Jr. The Kurdish Republic of 1946, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1963): 32.

³⁴ David McDowall, A Modern History of the Kurds, (New York: I.B. Tauris, 1997): 243.

Kurds in the constitution. It should be remembered that in 1945 Qazi changed *Komala* to KDP when he also establish its political agenda from separatism to Kurdish autonomy within Iran. The main slogan of the party then became "democracy for Iran and autonomy for Kurdistan." And when in 1946 he dispatched the Kurdish delegation to demand Kurdish autonomy by legal and constitutional means he was hoping his case would be understood and accepted. But a meeting with the delegation was rejected, and the claim to Kurdish autonomy denied. The Iranian Prime Minister Qavam sent a message to the delegates that there was no legal and constitutional basis for the autonomy since Mahabad was part of the province of Azerbaijan in Iran.³⁵ Because of linguistic and religious differences this was not acceptable to the Kurds. But according to Iranian law Mahabad, and some other Kurdish cities are a part of the province of Azerbaijan even today. Reza Shah's administrative policies further divided Kurdistan into three parts: (1) the north, where Mahabad was located, was annexed to Azerbaijan³⁶, (2) the south annexed to Kermanshah³⁷ and (3) the middle part considered Kurdistan. This internal partition of Kurdistan was adopted by both the Shahs and the Islamic Republic to undermine Kurdish identity with the goal that it might be swallowed up by Azerbaijanis

³⁵ Hamid Ahmadi, "The Politics of Ethnic Nationalism in Iran," (Ph. D. thesis, Carleton University, 1995): 109.

³⁶ Azerbaijan is the largest province of Iran located in the north-west of the country bordering in the north with the U.S.S.R. and in the west with Turkey. Azerbaijanis are of Turkish origin, their language is slightly different from that of Turkey but it is basically the same linguistic group. But unlike the Turks Azerbaijanis, are Shiites. Azerbaijan also has a strong nationalist movement and in the present-day Iran, they are also fighting for either their own state or to be annexed to the existing state of Azerbaijan, previously Soviet Azerbaijan located in the west of the Caspian Sea bordering Georgia and Armenia.

³⁷ Kermanshah is an oil-rich province in the west of Iran and south of Kurdistan. Their language is similar to Kurdish with a strong Persian influence. Some Kurdish nationalists consider the Kermanshahis Kurds but they never involved in any Kurdish nationalist activity or struggle. On the contrary they have been loyal to both the Shah and the Islamic Republic because they are also Shiite. Their religious differences with the Kurds have been an obstacle in achieving solidarity with the Kurds.

and Kermanshahis. When Tehran recaptured Azerbaijan in November 1946, the balance of power dramatically changed. The Mahabad Republic had lasted from January to December 1946.³⁸ Mahabad surrendered peacefully because Qazi Mohammad wanted to avoid bloodshed. The fact that major Kurdish tribes cooperated with the Persian army played a significant role in Mahabad's final collapse. Qazi Mohammad did not ask the Barzanis for military help because it was Kurdish blood which would be shed. Qazi Mohammad chose to surrender to avoid a fight between urban Kurds and tribes collaborating with Tehran.

On December 12, 1946, Sadr Qazi (Qazi Mohammad's brother) met General Homayuni in Miyandoab to arrange for the peaceful surrender of Mahabad, on agreement that the Barzani forces leave the region. Shortly after the Barzanis left, the Iranian army headed by the three Kurdish tribes of *Dehbokri*, *Mamesh*, and *Mangur* occupied Mahabad. To avoid widespread disorder, Qazi Mohammad ordered the withdrawal of the other tribes loyal to the Republic. His orders were followed and those left in Mahabad surrendered peacefully.³⁹ After their surrender, Qazi Mohammad along with several other leaders of the Republic were hanged in the public square of Mahabad on March 31, 1947. Their bodies were displayed in a medieval fashion to teach others the harsh lesson of not challenging the authority of the monarch.⁴⁰ Among those who were executed was Qazi Mohammad's brother Sadr Qazi who had been asked by Iranian authorities to mediated but otherwise not involved in the Republic and was in Tehran during the 1945-1946.⁴¹

³⁸ Gerard Chaliand, *The Kurdish Tragedy*, (New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd., 1994): 74.

³⁹ Wadie Jwaideh, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement: Its Origins and Development*, (Ph.D. dissertation, Syracuse University, 1960): 760-761.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*: 78.

⁴¹ Archie Roosevelt Jr., "The Kurdish Republic of Mahabad," in Gerard Chaliand ed., *People Without A Country. The Kurds and Kurdistan*, (London: Zed Press, 1980): 149.

V. The Social and Political Causes of the Republic of Mahabad

The political and social problems that led to the events of Mahabad were rooted in Reza Shah's policies of modernization. An uneducated man, Reza Shah was impressed by the military and technological power of the Western countries. Like Ataturk, he believed he could transform Iranian society into a modern one through rapid, forced changes. He centralized the state by detribalizing the society to undercut local traditional leaders. In the then tribal society of Kurdistan,⁴² this had a devastating effect on the social and economic life of the people. The Kurdish tribes mostly had a nomadic and pastoral lifestyle and therefore were constantly on the move. Reza Shah needed agriculturist peasants who were obedient taxpayers and tried to transform the nomadic tribesmen of Kurdistan into agrarian peasants. He also wanted a homogeneous Persian society and ignored the fact that the fabric of Iranian life was built on a multiplicity of different ethnic groups. He forced the Kurds to wear Persian style clothes and speak Persian. The result was grave impoverishment, heavy losses in livestock and disorientation.⁴³

The Kurds, the Azerbaijanis and many other ethnic groups in Iran were waiting for an opportunity to rebel against Tehran. The reason for this kind of sentiment was that Reza Shah had come to power through a coup d'état. He lacked legitimacy and his brutality had made him highly unpopular. His military dictatorship was an obstacle to a democratic modernization. The Kurdish Republic was demanding the democratic rights of the people but in its short experience it faced many obstacles the gravity of which the

⁴² In that time there were few cities and the majority of the population in Kurdistan, as well as most other parts of Iran, were tribal and lived in villages. The educated urban class in Kurdistan and also other parts of Iran were in a minority.

⁴³ Wadie Jwaideh, "The Kurdish Nationalist Movement: Its Origins and Development," (Ph. D. dissertation, Syracuse University, 1960): 710-713.

leaders of the Republic neither realized nor had the time and resources to resolve. Years of neglect and underdevelopment could not be remedied in one year with no resources and expertise. One might argue that the Iranian Kurds were divided between those loyal to Tehran and the nationalists. This contradiction in Kurdish society was noticed by both Bitlisi (1597) and Khani (1694). The tribal conflict that these two early Kurdish writers noticed was still a factor in Kurdistan in 1946. This factor along with the lack of support from the peasants contributed to the defeat. But in my opinion even with the support of all the tribes and peasant the Republic could not stand against Tehran. The Kurdish demand for autonomy was mostly a demand for democratic rights and modern development. Wadie Jwaideh reports the views of Qazi Mohammad expressed in an interview with a French journalist on June 1, 1946:

The Kurds would be satisfied if the central government decided really to apply democratic laws throughout Iran, and recognized the laws now in force in Kurdistan concerning the education of the Kurds and the autonomy of the local administration and the army... if the Kurds now claim autonomy it is because of the indifference of the Central Government to their interests.⁴⁴

Certainly the major weakness of Qazi Mohammad was his unpopularity among peasants and tribesmen while he was very popular among urban classes. The tribes were a major force but unlike the urban Kurds they had no conception of belonging to a Kurdish nation.⁴⁵ And both the party (KDP) and the Republic failed to transform the tribesmen and the peasants into citizens. They could not be persuaded to join the party or to unite with the Barzanis. They did not trust the party, the Republic or the Barzanis because they

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*: 736-737.

⁴⁵ Hamid Ahmadi, "The Politics of Ethnic Nationalism in Iran," (Ph. D. thesis, Carleton University, 1995): 322.

only had a narrow sense of loyalty to their own tribe. They were openly hostile to the Kurdish national regime and felt threatened by the presence of Barzanis.⁴⁶ The tribesmen were used to obeying their chiefs and traditional heads of the tribes. They did not recognize a party leader as a leader and resented the fact that Qazi was the leader and not one of their familiar tribal leaders. Qazi's leadership was only respected by the urban classes and he had no idea how damaging it could be not to have the tribal support.

Regardless of his shortcomings, Qazi's major achievement was founding of the first modern Kurdish political party, i.e. KDP. It was not appreciated at the time but historically it is significant because it modernized the politics of Kurdish nationalism. The very idea of building a republic in a country which had only seen Kings was also a modern attempt to empower people. The Republic of Mahabad was a turning point in the history of Iranian Kurdistan because it founded the first modern Kurdish administration, introduced Kurdish education, tried to eliminate discrimination against women, developed the Kurdish press and gave birth to the first modern Kurdish nationalist political party. All within less than a year. The Mahabad Republic was built on an historical opportunity, but when the situation returned to normal, it disintegrated. The experience was exceptional but it did not leave much impact on Kurds or Iranians. Its ideas were developed by a few men who established democratic rule in the absence of Iranian authorities. In this period, Kurdish nationalism failed to mobilize rural people and tribal leaders. Seen as a threat to the traditional rulers of Kurdish tribes, solidarity against Tehran was not forthcoming.

⁴⁶ Wadie Jwaideh, "The Kurdish Nationalist Movement: Its Origins and Development," (Ph. D. dissertation, Syracuse University, 1960): 747-748.

Qazi sought the support of the Soviets who used the Kurds only as bargaining chip.⁴⁷ The Republic received no Soviet support, nonetheless, the Iranian government portrayed the Republic of Mahabad as the handiwork of the Soviets for two reasons. First, the Iranian government was bent on undermining the threat of modern Kurdish nationalism in part because of the democratic nature of the movement, which had the potential to bring genuine reform to the despotic state of Iran. The other reason was to gain support of its Western allies for re-establishing the status quo by depicting Kurdish nationalism as a Soviet plot for expansion. At the beginning of the Cold War opposition to anything communist found support from the West. The Kurdish Republic of Mahabad was not a work of the Soviets, but a Kurdish response to years of denial of their civil and democratic rights. Moreover the leaders of the Republic of Mahabad were not communist; they were democrats and nationalists. However, the Iranian government managed to get the support of the United States for repressing the Kurds.⁴⁸ The defeat of the Republic began a long period of persecution and hardship for the Kurds by the Shah's government with Western complicity.

VI. The Aftermath

When the Second World War ended, both the British and the Soviets left Iran and the Iranian government regained control over the country. With its regained power, the Iranian government wiped out all signs of Kurdish self-rule. All evidence of a Kurdish

⁴⁷ See Borhanedin A. Yassin, Vision or Reality? The Kurds in the Policy of the Great Powers, 1941-1947, (Malmö: Lund University Press, 1955): 177.

⁴⁸ See *Ibid.*: 179.

press and identity such as flags, posters, libraries, clubhouses and so on were burned.⁴⁹ Kurdish schools were closed, Kurdish press and publications banned marking a new round of persecution. The defeat of Mahabad was also the defeat of any democratic movement in Iran and a new chapter in dictatorship because the Shah imported modern military hardware and from then on Iranian Kurdistan was heavily militarized. Shah and his secret police suppressed any sign of opposition or democratic movement.

The first stage of democratic Kurdish nationalism apparent in the discourse of *Komala* defied the borders imposed by imperial powers. The discourse of this period which promoted the creation of an independent Kurdistan was anti-colonial and a threat to the larger neocolonial interests in the region, as well as to Reza Shah and Ataturk. Neo-colonial powers, particularly Britain, had vested interests in the oil-rich Kurdish region. The discourse of nationalism from Iranian Kurdistan demanded the reunification of all parts of Kurdistan, including Iraqi Kurdistan, was perceived as a threat to British and later U.S. interests in the region. Although Kurdish nationalists in Iran soon changed their discourse from separatism to regional autonomy, it was still perceived as destabilizing. Therefore, the British wanted any form of Kurdish nationalism shut down because any form of modern Kurdish nationalism challenged the status quo. The arrangements in the Middle East were far too profitable to the interests of the great Western powers, and their client states. So they did not hesitate to sacrifice Kurdish interests. Indeed they are still worried about the effects of separatist nationalism aimed at creating a greater Kurdistan out of the Kurdish regions of Iran, Iraq and Turkey, which

⁴⁹ Chris Kutschera, Le Mouvement National Kurde, (Paris: Flammarion, 1979): 181-182.

would disturb their interests. So the Kurds were denied any political existence. The ultimate form of othering was simply to not acknowledge them in any way.

Conclusion

From the outset, the Iranian encounter with modernity was an experience of nihilism that took them by surprise and spiraled into unpredictable forms that have dominated Iranian politics for almost a century. I believe the first Iranian encounter with modernity that can be defined as nihilistic was the 1921 coup d'état by Reza Shah. This violent take-over of power started an overpowering encounter with nihilism such that its lasting effects, directly or otherwise, are undeniable. I explore this issue more in chapter seven when I examine the Islamic revolution as a reaction to Reza Shah's reforms. In the present chapter I contextualized his national reforms and their effects on the Kurds. As an uneducated military man obsessed with Western military technology and appearance his reforms remained in the realm of military and public attire. This was nihilistic because it introduced Iran to a reactionary form of modernism as opposed to a progressive form with democratic and liberal ideals. This reactionary modernism devalued and negated democracy and liberalism, but embraced technology especially military hardware. I believe another aspect of Reza Shah's nihilism was his imposition of 'Western' dress. He "imagined" what an Iranian should look like and imposed this on the masses. But his 'imagined' Iran was a poor country's version of European style. This superficial makeover of the country was the symbol of his nihilism. In the name of nationalism, he despised traditional Persian attire. His contradictions created many anomalies that turned Iranian politics into a laboratory of political technology. His harsh techniques only

created otherness and alienation, especially alienation from what was taken to be 'Western modernity.'

I conclude that Reza Shah's project combined technique and nihilism as shown in his attraction to Hitler and the "Aryan myth." This myth, of Iran as the land of Aryan race and therefore superior to all others, became the foundation of Reza Shah's "imagined" nation, for which he even changed the name of the country from Persia to Iran, the Aryan Land. In my opinion, this was the climax of his nihilism. He was an ethno-centric Persian nationalist and yet he refused to be called a Persian because he believed it had the connotation of the traditional past and he wanted to be associated with a powerful present and future. And in his confusion, he saw his future with Hitler so he named his "imagined" nation the Aryan land, Iran. He even changed his own family name to Aryamehr, literally lover of the Aryan.

Reza Shah's pro-German policies led to his downfall and the Allied occupation of Iran. The Kurdish region was left to its own devices and Mahabad declared a Kurdish Republic, which showed the desire of urban Kurds to rule themselves. But the project of a Kurdish state was not acceptable to the regional and international powers, especially to British interests. In this respect, the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad became the "other" to a state-system designed by technologies of power and guarded rigidly. This was the new status quo and the British would not allow it to be disturbed. The Kurds were "other" to all the concerns regarding the region and the "great" powers' interest. Although the Republic's influence was limited to the urban classes of one city, the very idea and practice of Kurdish statehood threatened the regional and international order. The very

idea and possibility of a Kurdish state, regardless of its short existence and limited influence, was a major event because it presented an alternative to the status quo.

I also noted the difference between Sheikh Said's uprising and the Republic of Mahabad. Said's movement mobilized the peasants who almost formed an army but there was very little or no presence of the elite. In Qazi's case the urban elite and masses were mobilized, but the peasants and tribesmen were excluded. Both movements fought states armed with military technologies far superior to anything the Kurdish militia had. They also were fighting an efficient political technology of the state acknowledged by the international system. The international system in the long run accepted Ataturk's "civilizing" project and the Shah's "restoring order" seemingly against communist threats. Hence the Kurdish republic was perceived as a part of communist expansionism. I conclude that the Kurds were facing the awesome power of technology and the overwhelming force of nihilism. Reza Shah's project was nihilistic because it negated and devalued modern rights and liberties and affirmed authoritarianism and despotism. It was nihilistic because it was conducted in the name of modernization, while in reality it perverted modernity. While a progressive modernity could be liberating and empowering, Reza Shah's reactionary modernity was debilitating and despotic. In this respect, the account of Kurdish failure is better explained in the following manner. Western imperialism sets the context. Its powerful technology defeated the Ottomans and removed their protection of the Kurds by creating new states, none of which are friendly to the Kurds. Facing such powerful military forces the Shah wanted Western power and like Ataturk initiated top-down, superficial forms of 'modernization.' In this process, he denied Kurdish democratic rights. Consequently the urban Kurds demanded democratic

and progressive modernity. But they were defeated by the awesome power of the technology of othering exercised through military power, international Realpolitik, the modern state-system, and the Iranian state ideology of ethno-nationalism.

Chapter Six:

The Barzani Movement in Iraqi Kurdistan (1958-75)

British control in Iraq ended with a coup d'état the ideology of which was Baathism¹. This I believe introduced a new phase of the technology of othering which I explore in this chapter. I address the question of how Baathism contributes to technologies of othering, and the connection between nihilism and Baathism. I argue that Baathism is the meeting place between technique and nihilism in the Middle East.

I use the theoretical concepts I developed in chapters one, two and three. I first examine Baathism using the theoretical concepts of technology, nihilism and nationalism. I explore Iraqi politics' transformation from neocolonial mandate to coup d'état and then Baathism. I show how these transformations produced political technologies of othering especially regarding the Kurds. I also explore Iraq with regard to realist theories of international relation and imperialism. I argue that Iraq is an interesting case because its violent reaction to imperialism produced political technologies of othering that contributed more to nihilism and violence than to any liberation from imperialism. To make this case, I examine the treatment of the Kurds under the three Iraqi regimes: Faisal (kingdom), Qassim (coup d'état) and Baathism (technique-nihilism).

I examine the Barzani uprisings against each of these three regimes in turn to show the continuity in the Kurdish national struggle. The Barzanis were a leading element in the Kurdish national struggle for three generations throughout the entire

¹ Baathism is also spelled "Ba'thism" and "Bathism." There is no preferred way since there is no real equivalent for the Arabic sound of a deep "a" known as *aein*. I prefer to use "aa" to emphasize the deep "a."

twentieth century. While historically consistent the locations of Barzani actions changed. Nevertheless it was the same movement; confusion results because the partition of Kurdistan locates each uprising against a different state.

I also examine the Barzani's role in Kissinger's covert operation which I discussed in chapter two. I examine the Barzani's defeat in a broader international relations perspective as framed by the realist school of international politics, and suggest another possible explanation. First I outline the creation of Iraq through the political engineering of the British. Then I explore the formation of Baathist ideology and its coming to power. Then I examine the formative period of the national resistance movement in Kurdistan. Finally I outline the Barzanis 'entrance' into the politics of Iraqi Kurdistan, the nature of the uprising and the outcome.

I. The Creation of Iraq and Centralization of Power

Iraq came into existence in 1921 but it had a prior history, as a meeting place of many conflicting histories from time immemorial. One of the great problems of Iraq is that it has many conflicting histories, under many different names: Mesopotamia, Babylonia, al-Jazira and finally al-Iraq. In Arabic, the name al-Iraq has three interesting meaning: hard cliff, shore, and the place of deep roots.² Perhaps these refer to Iraq's being the frontline of the many different empires, which ruled the region. The Greek empire saw the significance of Iraq in that it was located between the two great rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates, so gave it the name Mesopotamia—the land between two rivers. This is not merely poetic; Iraq is the place where many cultures flourished between these rivers and

²See Reeva Spector Simon and Eleanor H. Tejirian eds., The Creation of Iraq, 1914–1921, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004): 2.

lived side by side from antiquity to modernity. It was home to Arabs, Persians, Kurds, Turks, Jews, Christians, Muslims, and many other peoples. For hundreds of years, Byzantines and Persians fought bloody wars to dominate it. In 1534 the Ottoman Sultan, Suleiman the Magnificent, conquered it; and for more than three hundreds years the Ottomans fought the Persians for it. Their conflict lasted into modern times when the British and Ottoman Empires fought over Iraq.

At the beginning of the First World War, Iraq was at the intersection of the three declining empires of the Ottomans, Persians and Russians. The vacuum created as these declining empires imploded was filled by three competing 'great' powers: Britain, France and Germany. Russia was taken over by the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, and left the scene. Iran barely made it through the war without being torn apart, and also left the scene. The Ottomans allied themselves with the Germans and with the German defeat all the Ottoman territories were seized by the French and the British except those which became the Republic of Turkey.

Under the Ottoman Empire, Iraq was merely the three provinces of Baghdad, Basra and Mosul (see figure 4, page 213). After the Ottoman Empire collapsed these provinces were divided between France which got Mosul and Britain which got Baghdad and Basra.³ By 1920, Britain was the dominant power and in 1921 created what we now know as Iraq, with a king, a constitution and British advisers under a League of Nations mandate. In 1932, it was recognized as an independent state by the League.⁴

³ See *Ibid.*: 11.

⁴ The British literally imported Faisal, son of Sharif Hussein of Mecca to Iraq to be king and dictated the Iraqi constitution. See Joel Krieger, ed. The Oxford Companion to Politics of the World (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993): 469.

Figure 4: The three provinces of Baghdad, Basra and Mosul Under the Ottoman Empire.

Since the British engineered Iraq, it has been in war within itself and with others. Britain decided Iraq would be more stable as a monarchy. Therefore it brought Faisal, an anti-Ottoman rebel leader, from Saudi Arabia and made him the first king of Iraq. Faisal was favored by the British and perhaps was the first of the puppet rulers in the Middle East. In August 1921, when he was pronounced King of the newly invented country, there was no Iraqi national anthem to play, so the British military band played "God Save the King."⁵ This was a symbolic indication that Iraq was British property.

It was around this time that the Kurds were promised their own country in the Treaty of Sèvres, which I examined in chapter two. But the British then discovered the oil rich reserves of Mosul, in the heart of Kurdistan, so the Kurds did not get their state. Mosul initially was to be under the French mandate, but the British gave Syria and Lebanon to the France in exchange for Mosul. This city had other suitors including Ataturk. But the British fought a bloody war against the Turks and formalized an internationally recognized border between Iraq and Turkey, which is still in force today. Turkey has never accepted its defeat and is always waiting for an opportunity to occupy Mosul. As for Iraq, it became a fragile kingdom. The British military force was now in charge of providing security for Iraq, but the costs were paid by the oil revenues of Mosul and Kirkuk, as agreed between king Faisal and the British. During this period the Kurds of Mosul rebelled, but the British Royal Air Force bombed the area with chemical weapons on the order of Winston Churchill.⁶ This kind of response would be experienced by the Kurds in Iraq for almost an entire century. It is symbolic that it was the British

⁵ See Liam Anderson and Gareth Stansfield, The Future of Iraq: Dictatorship, Democracy, or Division?, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004):15.

⁶ See *Ibid.*: 23. Also see Christopher Catherwood, Winston's Folly, Imperialism and the Creation of Modern Iraq, (London: Constable & Robinson Ltd, 2004): 85.

who first used weapons of mass destruction on the Kurds, since many of Iraq's problems result from British imperialist tampering with its new creation.

One of the side effects of planting King Faisal in Iraq was to establish a Sunni, Arab monarch in a country where the majority were Shiites and Kurds. This policy represented the political technique of divide and rule. The Kurds never accepted the rule of the Hashemite kingdom, which ruled Iraq for almost a quarter of a century. The British who backed the Hashemite kings made two major mistakes that have crippled Iraqi politics from its beginning. The first was to attach the Kurdish province of Mosul to the newly invented, Arab Iraq. This mistake will have even more devastating effects for years to come, and may cause Turkey, Iran and Iraq to enter into a serious confrontation in the future. The second mistake was to attach the Shiites to a Sunni-led Iraq and this may be the gravest mistake. Because of this imposed and artificial state connecting together those who have nothing in common, Iraq has had dictator after dictator able to keep these three groups together only through force. The Hashemite dynasty resulted in Sunni Arab control of Iraq. In 1958, Abdul Karim Qassim toppled the Hashemite dynasty in a successful coup d'état.⁷ Qassim was a Sunni Arab, but his mother was a Shiite Kurd. But what one family could achieve proved impossible on the national level.

After Qassim's coup, Iraq remained a violent place with no stability. The only new phenomena on the political scene were military rule and mob violence. This period was uneasy throughout the Middle East. It was the era of the Cold War, the creation of the state of Israel, the coming to power of Gamal Abdul Nasser in Egypt through a coup d'état, the Suez crisis, and the beginning of Pan-Arab nationalism.

⁷ See Joel Krieger, ed. The Oxford Companion to Politics of the World (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993): 469.

The Iraq that Qassim inherited had many problems. British neocolonial role was the most noticeable, but Iraq was also torn apart among many conflicting ideologies and political interests. On the one hand, there were the Arab nationalists fighting for a solely Sunni Arab dominance over the whole of Iraq. Gradually they were dissolved into the Baathist movement. The other problem related to the creation of Israel and the Nasserist movement of Egypt, which was trying to create a United Arab Republic out of Egypt, Syria and Iraq. There was no land connection between Iraq, Syria and Egypt. Israel was in between Egypt on one side and Iraq and Syria on the other. Nasser was openly challenging the existence of Israel. Qassim who just came to power in Iraq did not like this idea, but a strong and vocal number of Iraqis wanted to be a part of United Arab Republic. And this was a big problem for Qassim. And then there were the Kurdish issues of autonomy, cultural and political rights. Qassim was cornered by all sides and decided to use the Kurds since he had few political friends in Iraq. He promised much but delivered nothing. It is important to note that in the middle of these crises in the Middle East no one had time for the Kurdish question. Literally it disappeared due to all the Realpolitik considerations in the region. But the Kurds had a short-lived truce with the new rulers of Iraq. The Middle East and North Africa were in great turmoil. There was a bloody war of independence going on in Algeria, Lebanon was also on the verge of a bloody civil war.

Nasser and his anti-Western government was in power in Egypt and constantly making the headlines, and above all there were heavy-handed confrontations between Khrushchev and Eisenhower over the fate of Germany. In the middle of these no one

noticed the Kurdish issue and its significance. This was a dangerous time because in Iraq the situation was prepared for the coming to power of the deadly ideology of Baath.

II. Baathist Ideology

Perhaps the most destructive thing that happened to Iraq was the development of the ideology of Baathism, imported from Syria and created by Michel Aflaq (1910-1989), a Christian Arab with higher French education.⁸ Although the Iraqi Baath Party was founded in 1952, Baathist ideology began earlier in Syria. While Turkish ethno-nationalism was primarily an import, Baathist ideology was a homegrown product of Arab ideological politics and its essence is pan-Arab nationalism. The word *Baath* in Arabic means “renaissance.” The Baath Party’s goal was an Arab renaissance. But it became the most violent thing in Arab history, akin to Nazism in Europe.

Michel Aflaq, was born in a country under the violent occupation of French colonialism. His hometown of Damascus during the 1920’s was notorious for its extreme violent reaction to French colonizers. And it was during this time that Bath ideology, a system of thought based on the legitimacy of violence and admiration for its purifying effect. Aflaq studied at the Sorbonne in Paris in the early 1930’s. Upon his return to Syria, he became extremely pan-Arab nationalist. His book *Fi Sabil al-Bath*, literally “on the way to renaissance,” inspired many young Arab students looking for an ideology to guide them in their fight against colonialism. His personality also inspired many young radical fighters. He was a full-time revolutionary with no interest in financial gain or self-

⁸ Amatiza Baram, Culture, History and Ideology in the Formation of Ba’thist Iraq, 1968-89, (New York: St. Martine’s Press, 1991): 9.

interest.⁹ By contrast to the Arab puppet regimes, this attracted frustrated students. By the 1940's, the Baathist ideology attracted people from many strata of Arab societies. In Iraq the followers of Baathist ideology were mostly middle-class, Sunni Arabs,¹⁰ who heeded the message of using violence to fight against colonialism and its corrupt native collaborators.

The goal of Baathist ideology was to unify all Arabic nations, linking all Arab territories in North Africa and Middle East into one political unit. In this project, nationalism, anti-imperialism, socialism and hatred for Israel were fused together.¹¹ Aflaq defined Arab unification as a moral priority, explaining:

Unity is not an automatic act which comes into being by itself as a consequence of circumstances and development. Circumstances do not help it and development may run counter to it, towards a false crystallization of fragmentation. According to this, unity is efficiency creation, going against the current, and a race with time. In other words, unity is a concept of overthrowing and an act of struggle. The onslaught of imperialism and Zionism is practically confined to preventing Arab unity. Imperialism does not need direct intervention to counterfeit democracy and progressivism since fragmentation guarantees this as long as its position and logic tempt every part to exploit it with a view of attaining certain illusory benefits at the expense of the other parts.¹²

In Baathist ideology, all the twenty-two Arab countries are one entity. In Arabic, they are usually referred to not as countries but as *Qutr*, which has two meanings to Baathists; "region" and "drop." The second meaning is a metaphorical reference to each as a drop in the same ocean: each without the others cannot be complete. Aflaq repeats the idea of unification as the solution for achieving Arab liberty. He sees that unity as the

⁹ See Samir al-Khalil, Republic of Fear, the Inside Story of Saddam's Iraq, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989): 186.

¹⁰ See *Ibid.*: 187.

¹¹ Amatiza Baram, Culture, History and Ideology in the Formation of Ba'thist Iraq, 1968-89, (New York: St. Martine's Press, 1991): 9-10.

¹² Michel Aflak, Choices of Texts from the Ba'th Party Founder's Thought, (Italy: Cooperative Lavoratori Officine Grafiche Firenze, 1977): 10 - 11.

solution to the fragmentation of Arab civilization caused by colonial occupation and imperialism.¹³ Even those countries which rid themselves of colonial occupation, he argued, cannot sustain that independence unless they unite with the rest of Arab world.¹⁴ Arab unity for him is the over-arching metaphor that can explain everything and is the key to everything. He believed that Arab unity had a variety of significance such as the solution for the economic problems of the Arab world, a cause for revolution, a platform for the fight against imperialism, a call of history and a new birth.¹⁵ Aflaq's ultimate goal was the creation of a new pan-Arab nation and the Baath Party was his chosen agent. He argued that, "[t]he real party, the living party which can perform a mission in the present age for the Arab nation is the one that has as its goal the creation of a nation or its revival, provided that it realizes this in itself first, that is, it becomes itself a nation which it aspires to revive."¹⁶

In Aflaq's conception, 'party' and 'nation' become one: the party defines the nation, or the identity of the nation. It is likely that he had a one party dictatorship in mind. The goal of the party, then, was to create a totalitarian regime, assuming the Baath party's dominance over the very nation it claimed to revive. Aflaq created a web of ideas which on the surface contradictory to his claim to rid Arabs from their bondage. Little by little he theorized the Baath party's control over every aspect of life as though the party could be the solution for everything. Within the party, the "leader" had all the power while the nation had absolutely no power. His ideas about the relationship among the nation, leader and society are the most disturbing.

¹³ *Ibid.*: 16.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ See *Ibid.*: 18 - 23.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*: 78.

Nation is not a numerical sum, but an "Idea" [read Spirit] embodied either in the total or in part of it. Nations are not destroyed by a reduction in the number of their numbers, but by constriction of the "Idea" amongst them. The numerical total is not a holy thing in and of itself, but only insofar as it is an embodiment of the "Idea" of the nation, or, insofar as it has a potential to embody it in the future.... The Leader, in times of weakness of the "Idea" and its construction, is not one to appeal to a majority or to a consensus, but to opposition and enmity; he is not one to substitute numbers for the "Idea," but to translate numbers into the "Idea": he is not the ingatherer, but the unifier. In other words he is the master of the singular "Idea" from which he separates and casts aside all those who contradict it.¹⁷

Aflaq clearly had a leader like Saddam Hussein in mind. His recommendations on how to run a country under the dictatorship of a leader and the Baath party were practiced with extreme violence by Saddam. Aflaq's idea of a leader was clearly realized in Saddam and his idea of a country for Baathist ideology was Iraq.

Baathist ideology represented the most violent forms of racism in Iraqi history and perhaps in the whole history of the Middle East. This ideology racialized every political, historic and religious concept, because it explained everything with a simplistic formulation of it being in the service of, or a result of Arab supremacy. For example, article 20 of Baath party constitution states that political rights belong only to Arabs who have been faithful to the homeland.¹⁸ Article 14 declares that all freedoms and intellectual activities are to be in the hands of the state.¹⁹ Aflaq was very open about implementing his ideology with cruelty, stating: "[w]hen we are cruel to others, we know that our cruelty is in order to bring them back to their true selves, of which they are ignorant."²⁰

¹⁷ From a 1944 article entitled "The New Arab Generation," 64, quoted in Samir al-Khalil, Republic of Fear, the Inside Story of Saddam's Iraq, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989): 195 – 196.

¹⁸ See Samir al-Khalil, Republic of Fear, the Inside Story of Saddam's Iraq, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989): 197.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Aflaq, *Fi Sabil*: 103, Quoted in *Ibid.*: 206.

These ideological and psychopathic concepts were implemented by Saddam Hussein once he gained power.

III. The Coming to Power of Baath Party In Iraq

Although Baathists had very strong ideas about politics and power, they were never a strong party in Iraq until the 1960's. When the monarchy was overthrown in the 1958 coup by Qassim, other groups had a better chance of gaining control over the country than the Baathists. The Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) was the most popular political force among Iraqis. Qassim's regime, which overthrew the British-backed monarchy, saw the communists as a bigger threat and the serious challengers to its authority. In the Cold War era, communism was perceived as a serious threat outside the Soviet Bloc. While Qassim was busy cracking down on communists, the Baath party had the opportunity to grow. In the early years of Qassim's regime, Baathists began to infiltrate the Iraqi military and in 1962 the Baath party created its own military wing. A year later they overthrew Qassim in a well-organized, military-led coup d'état under the leadership of General Aref.²¹ The Baath party's rise to power in Iraq also resulted from Qassim's unwillingness to join Egypt and Syria in the United Arab Republic. Baathist activists mobilized both the street mob and the army around the idea of pan-Arab nationalism and won over many Iraqis, replacing the Communist party in terms of popularity on the streets. The communists focused on the political struggles in Mosul and Kirkuk and were mostly absent from the streets of Baghdad and Basra. Compared to Baghdad, a government city, or Basra, a religious port city, Mosul and Kirkuk were packed with oil-

²¹ See Liam Anderson and Gareth Stansfield, The Future of Iraq, Dictatorship, Democracy, or Division?, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004): 37.

workers because of their abundant oil fields, and were more diverse. The Baathists focused on the military and the Arab mass. They used the rhetoric of pan-Arab nationalism popularized by Nasser to oppose the creation of Israel. They had the loyalty of a group of diehard Baathist officers who later formed the infamous militia the National Guard. Aref and his diehard Baathists had particular hatred for the Qassim's regime. Only a few years earlier Qassim had put on TV the trial of 57 Baathists, including Saddam Hussein, who were charged with treason for supporting Nasser's plan.²² Although these diehard Baathists were facing a death sentence, their public defiance of Qassim's regime on TV made them look like heroes in the eye of Arabs on the streets of Baghdad. After their successful overthrow of Qassim, the Baathist had their revenge. They broadcast live on TV, the killing of Qassim and his followers. These brutal forms of politics, cruelty and publicizing the intimidating images became a norm under the long rule of the Baathists.

The Bathist takeover was bad news for all Iraqis but especially for the Kurds and other minorities. Because the Baathists were pan-Arab nationalists, the Kurds became the ultimate other. The harsh treatment of the Kurds had two causes: First the Kurds had helped Qassim came to power; and Baathist ideology granted political rights for Arabs only. Hence the coming to power of the Baathists became a nightmare for the Kurds. The Baathists took advantage of the chaotic political scene in Iraq in their attacks on the Kurds. The Barzanis had offered to help Qassim after he came to power, in order to return from exile. They trusted Qassim partly out of desperation. He was an Arab nationalist, but opposed pan-Arabism as well as Faisal's British-backed regime. Faisal

²² *Ibid.*

had no support among Iraqis because he was installed by the British and he wasn't even from Iraq. The Barzanis also trusted Qassim partly because his mother was Kurdish. But after their return, the Barzanis received only shallow promises from Qassim's regime.

In this period, the Kurds were divided by tribal politics. Gathering under the umbrella of two major tribes, Kurdish nationalists followed the Barzanis and the tribalists were the followers of the Zibari tribe, whose agenda was to compete with the Barzanis. The Zibaris had no problem collaborating with anyone who opposed the Barzanis. The Barzanis had fought for the democratic rights of Kurds since the creation of Iraq. Frustrated with the empty promises of the Qassim's regime, they started a rebellion in the early 1960's. The Zibaris collaborated with Qassim. So when the Baathists overthrew Qassim they used the Zibari collaboration with Qassim as a pretext to attack all Kurds. This was a brutal technique on the part of the Baathist and showed what shrewd politicians they are. But the Kurds also made the fatal mistake of not have studying the Baathist and so were unaware of their dangerous ideological stands. The Kurds knew that there were many groups in Iraq fighting for power including the Baathists, the Iraqi nationalists and the Nasserists. All were trying to overthrow Qassim and the Barzanis were fighting Qassim as well. The only problem with the Kurds was that they promised all other groups in the case of their attempt to overthrow Qassim the Kurds would not exploit the chaos and stay out of the way until all Arab Iraqis resolve the issue of political sovereignty.²³ This was a mistake. Because it provided an easy environment for the Baath party to take over the country by dissolving the different brands of Iraqi nationalism and eliminating the Kurds from the political scene. After the coming to power of the

²³ David McDowall, A Modern History of the Kurds, (New York: I. B. Tauris, 1997): 313.

Baathists, the Kurds demanded autonomy and cultural right for the Kurds in exchange for maintaining the territorial integrity of the country.²⁴ But the respond from the new rulers of Baghdad was violent. This began a new cycle of violence against Kurdistan.

Baathists' violence against the Kurds was only the beginning. But the Kurdish leadership should have known better. Because this political ruse of manipulating the Kurds has been a recurring technique and a major cause of political defeat of the Kurds throughout their struggle. Nevertheless the Kurds now faced a long period of political and military conflict with the Baathist regime in Baghdad. This period of Kurdish struggle is marked by the leadership of the Barzanis and the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iraq. But the Barzanis were a part of both Iraqi and Kurdish political scene for a long time. I explore the role they played in this respect in the next section.

IV. The Barzanis and the Formative Iraqi Kurdish Nationalism

The *Sheikhs* and chiefs of the Barzan tribe have played a central role in Kurdish uprisings in Iraq since the 1930s. Mulla Mustafa Barzani, the leader of the Barzanis, started fighting with Baghdad during the summer of 1945, in response to Baghdad's decision to open police stations in Sulaymaniya, a major Kurdish city in Iraqi Kurdistan. Barzani was defeated in this fight due to the lack of support from rival tribes and sought refuge in Iranian Kurdistan where the Barzanis joined the short-lived Republic of Mahabad. After the downfall of Mahabad Republic, Barzani and his tribe had nowhere to go. He was a wanted man in Iraq, and now the situation in Iran, in deed in all parts of Kurdistan, was worse than ever. In Turkey the ethno-nationalist Kemalist government was in power and

²⁴ See Liam Anderson and Gareth Stansfield, The Future of Iraq, Dictatorship, Democracy, or Division?, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004): 38.

persecuting the Kurds. In Iran, the Shah was no friend of the Kurds, especially after their failed attempt at statehood. And Iraq was headed toward a dictatorial regime, with no love for Kurds. The Barzanis were stuck in the middle of three hostile governments.

Barzani and his tribe made their legendary march through all three parts of Kurdistan to the Soviet Union hoping for refuge there. They started their journey on April 17, 1947 and walked from Iraq to the Soviet Union arriving June 18 the same year, chased by the Iraqi and Iranian forces from the ground and bombarded by Turkish air force from above. This historic march was only possible because of the help from local Kurds in all three parts of Kurdistan, showing how unreal the borders that divide Kurdistan sometimes are. (See figure 5, page 226).

The Barzanis were a small and economically poor tribe located at the intersection of the borders of Iran, Iraq and Turkey. They were disliked by all three governments because their very existence was testimony to the unjust partition of Kurdistan. In a sense, the Barzanis were a miniature of the entire Kurdish tragedy. Kurdistan was divided into three parts just as the Barzan region was. So the Barzanis could fit into any part of Kurdistan and were willing to fight in any part of Kurdistan whenever there was a Kurdish uprising.

During the march to the Soviet Union, Barzani was 35 years old, yet he had a strong moral and military command over his tribesmen. His efforts to take his 580 tribesmen to the Soviet Union safely amidst many uncertainties makes him a legend in modern-day Kurdish memory. The final leg of his march was across the river Aras, at the crossroads between Iranian and Soviet Azerbaijan. During the Barzani march, the three

Figure 5: Barzani's march from Barzan to U.S.S.R. (1947)

governments of Iran, Iraq and Turkey were in communication and tried to eliminate the Barzanis whenever they appeared on their side of the border.

Early on 27 May the local commander of Iraqi forces informed the Iranian army that the Barzanis had crossed into Turkey and appeared to be heading towards Iran....

Iranian officers detailed to lead presumably loyal Iranian Kurdish tribes were unable to bring them into action against the Barzanis but did manage to keep the intruding forces under observation. One of their reports indicated the Barzanis were moving slowly, with nearly everyone including Mulla Mustafa on foot. Only the wounded and essential belongings were on the backs of horses and mules.²⁵

The three governments encapsulating the Kurds did their best to annihilate the Barzanis but it was impossible because they were traveling in their own homeland despite the artificial division and borders. It is interesting to know that the Shah of Iran at the time was in the region monitoring the situation personally. But he did not have the loyalty of the local Kurds who had recently suffered a terrible defeat of their short-lived independent state. Eagleton continues:

The Shah, ... , issued instructions that the Barzanis should immediately be engaged in battle. He gave warning that commanders who did not perform their duty would be tried by military courts. Other messages from the army Chief of Staff were written in an even more reproachful tone. ...

On 10 June they [the Barzanis] were sighted twenty-five miles southwest of Mt Ararat overlooking the Aras river plain and the Soviet frontier that lay less than ten miles to north. ...

During the next five days Iranian army units moved up from Khoi and from Maku to converge on the Barzani positions. When they reached the Aras on 18 June, however, they found that all their foes had crossed into the Soviet Union during the previous two days leaving behind a few rifles and grenades, some ammunition, and the bodies of two men who had drowned in the river.²⁶

The last few days of the Barzani's march were the most difficult part of their journey. In the words of one of the few survivors of the march, Kazem Shandri, it was a

²⁵ William Eagleton Jr., The Kurdish Republic of 1946, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963): 128.

²⁶ *Ibid.*: 128-129.

miracle that they survived against all odds and amidst all the uncertainties. In his recently published memoirs of the events said:

June 17, 1947.

Today was the most difficult day of our march. It has been more than three days that we have been on the march with no food and no rest. We have arrived at the river separating us from Soviet territory. Most of us do not know how to swim. So far we have managed to cross with makeshift boats and the help of those who can swim. We don't know what is awaiting us on the other side of the border. Mustafa Barzani our leader was the last to cross. He waited until the last one passed to safety and then he joined us.²⁷

When the Barzanis arrived to the Soviet side of the river they did not received exactly a hero's welcome. They were kept in a refugee camp in the Soviet Azerbaijan with few facilities. Their wounded were not attended to for a long time. They were separated from each other and sent to different parts of the Soviet Union. They were not reunited until the time of Stalin's death and the changing of the leadership in Russia.²⁸

The Barzanis were in exile in the Soviet Union for eleven years. After Qassim's successful coup d'état in 1958, Barzani sent Qassim a telegram and offered his help to the new regime.²⁹ Qassim welcomed his offer and soon after Barzani and his tribe made the long journey back to Iraq. This time the Barzanis made the sixteen-day journey by ship across the Black Sea, Bosphorus, Mediterranean Sea, Suez Canal, the Red Sea, Indian Ocean, Persian Gulf, finally landing in the port city of Basra. They were welcomed by the Arabs and Kurds alike in a warm reception.³⁰ It was expected that the Barzani would

²⁷ Kazem Shandri, "Rawayat Kazem Shandri az Rahpeimaii," [The Memoirs of Kazem Shandri about the March] (Text in Persian) in Morteza Norbakht, Az Kurdistan Iraq Ta Ansoye Rode Aras, Rahpeimaii Tarikhi Mulla Mustafa Barzani, 1947, [From Iraqi Kurdistan to beyond the Aras River, the Historic March of Mulla Mustafa Barzani, 1947] (Text in Persian), (Tehran: Shirazeh, 1997): 55-56.

²⁸ *Ibid.*: 31.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

rejoin the political process. But his story is a bit more complicated. But first I examine the political formation and ideas that gave shape to the Barzani movement.

V. Barzani and the Politics of Kurdish National Resistance

The Barzanis had been involved in the politics of Kurdistan from the early 1930's, but mostly as traditional tribal leaders. This situation changed when the Barzanis became involved in the short-lived Republic of Mahabad. From then on, they began to be the political leaders of Kurdistan, and not just leaders of one tribe. This change was not easy since the social structure of Iraqi Kurdistan was still tribal and the rival tribes did not appreciate the Barzani's attempt to dominate the political matters in the region. Hence the Barzanis always had to face an enemy on two fronts: the central government in Baghdad and the rival tribes. Nonetheless the Barzanis' leader Mulla Mustafa Barzani tried to acquire as much as experience as possible to build alliances and promote autonomy for the Iraqi Kurdish region. Influenced by the experience of the Mahabad Republic and its political instrument (the Iranian KDP), Barzani in 1946 created the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iraq (KDPI) along the lines of its Iranian counterpart. The ideological sources of the KDPI were the Iranian KDP and the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP). Except for the goal of Kurdish autonomy, the KDPI's goals were similar to those of the ICP.³¹

During the Barzani's stay in Mahabad, there were many socio-economic problems as well as shortages due to the Second World War. To prevent tensions between the Iranian Kurds and the Barzanis, Qazi and Barzani, decided to have an organized way of dealing with potential conflicts. Since the Mahabad Republic was an experiment in

³¹ Ismet Sheriff Vanly, "Kurdistan In Iraq," in Gerard Chaliand ed. People Without A Country, The Kurds and Kurdistan (London: Zed Press, 1980): 164.

representative democracy, both parties agreed the Barzanis needed political representation even if just a committee. This idea became the basis for the first Iraqi Kurdish national party, the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iraq (KDPI). This idea became bigger and bigger to the point that the underground Kurdish activists in Iraq welcomed the birth of the new Kurdish party and dissolved many existing smaller organizations into this new party. Eventually on August 16, 1946 the first congress of the KDPI was held in Baghdad underground. The delegates elected Barzani as the president of the party though he was in exile in Iranian Kurdistan.³² This indicates the respect Barzani enjoyed among Iraqi Kurds.

The creation of KDPI was a new beginning in the history of modern Iraqi Kurdistan. Previously, Iraqi Kurds were for the most part members of small Kurdish groups, which were more like student associations and had little national presence. And those segments of the Kurdish population who had broader socio-political interests were members of the Iraqi Communist Party. While most of the smaller groups joined the KDPI, only a few of the Kurdish members of the ICP did. Iraq in those days was at a dangerous crossroad and the Kurds were right in the middle of it. The tension against the Kurdish existence in Iraq was getting worse everyday and police repression was everywhere. So in 1947, when Barzani was in exile and the general staff of the party were arrested, what remained of the KDPI was controlled by the ICP. Consequently the KDPI became overly Marxist-Leninist and its Kurdish nationalist agenda was overshadowed by its communist one. The party adopted the ICP's idea of self-determination for Kurdistan

³² David McDowall, A Modern History of the Kurds, (New York: I. B. Tauris, 1997): 295-296.

but rejected separatist beliefs.³³ This new agenda caused resentment among different segments of Kurdish society, as KDPI became more a working class than a nationalist organization where there was not much of an industrial working-class.

It was during this period of tensions that Abdul Karim Qassim overthrew the monarchy and proclaimed the Republic of Iraq on July 14, 1958.³⁴ Qassim's coup d'état was significant to the Kurds because he announced that from then on Iraq would be the homeland of Arabs and Kurds alike. This was a new beginning for the Kurds because, at least on the surface, for the first time in modern history the Kurds were recognized by their rulers. The KDPI was legalized and Barzani was welcomed as a hero on his return from exile. In return, the KDPI like the rest of the Iraqi opposition supported Qassim's regime. A new constitution was proclaimed on July 27, 1958 which granted democratic rights to the Iraqi people: "Iraqi society is based on complete co-operation between all its citizens, on respect for their rights and liberties. Arabs and Kurds are associates in this nation; the constitution guarantees their rights within the Iraqi whole. (Article 3)"³⁵

This awakened fresh hopes in Kurdistan. Barzani tried to build as many alliances as he could to defend the rights thus granted to the Kurds. So he built strategic alliances with the new regime of Qassim on the one hand and the ICP on the other. Barzani also saw these events as an opportunity for the revival of the Kurdish nationalist movement. But the new alliances required Barzani to be a party to a new reform movement to undermine the power of Kurdish landowners and undercut their traditional tribal control over the population of Kurdish villages.

³³ Gerard Chaliand, The Kurdish Tragedy, (New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd, 1994): 55.

³⁴ Ismet Sheriff Vanly, "Kurdistan In Iraq," in Gerard Chaliand ed. People Without A Country, The Kurds and Kurdistan (London: Zed Press, 1980): 165.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

Despite Barzani's hopes and tactics, the new government's policies were not welcomed by the Kurdish tribes, and in May 1959, the Kurdish leaders of Rawandiz revolted against agrarian reforms and the arrival of communist militias. Barzani concluded that the growing stranglehold of the ICP on the KDPI was undercutting Kurdish national unity, so he began to purge the party of communists. As a result, when Qassim outlawed the ICP in January of 1960 Barzani sustained his power and the KDPI remained a legal party.

Barzani was still loyal to the ideal of creating a homeland for the Kurds. But the passing of the time and events disappointed him greatly. When he came back from the Soviet Union he was as enthusiastic as in the days of the Mahabad Republic a decade earlier. On his return, he tried to host an international Kurdish congress to rebuild solidarity among the Kurds of Iran, Turkey and Iraq,³⁶ but did not succeed. This was a big disappointment for him. But I believe it was to be expected, since after coming to power, the Shah of Iran and Ataturk in Turkey had wiped out the Kurdish intelligentsia. For more than a decade in Iran, and two decades in Turkey, anything Kurdish had been outlawed, and all Kurdish political organizations disbanded. Publication in Kurdish was illegal, and in Turkey even conversing in the Kurdish language was punishable. In both countries, wearing Kurdish attire also was a crime. Under these circumstances, it was not a surprise that Barzani's enthusiasm for rebuilding support for a united Kurdistan attracted no attention. Barzani had been away too long, and he would learn that, although the monarchy had been overthrown in Iraq, and the new regime had welcomed him, Iraq remained hostile to his ideas.

³⁶ See Edgar O'Ballance, The Kurdish Revolt: 1961- 1970, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1973): 69.

Barzani's problem was not just the lack of support from the Kurds of Iran and Turkey. He had no friend among the great powers of either the Western or the Eastern Blocs. Despite the years spent in the Soviet Union, he could not convince the Soviets to back his movement. He was tolerated only as a refugee. Even after the death of Stalin, nothing changed. But even more disappointing, he had no friends among the major Kurdish tribes of Iraq. In fact, Qassim created further divisions between the Barzanis and their rival tribes, the Zibari and Bradoost, aiding them against the Barzanis.³⁷ Little by little, Qassim took back all political freedoms and banned all political parties. Despite the KDPI's legal status in 1960, there was much tension between Qassim and Barzani on the issue of Kurdish autonomy. As the situation became more difficult, Barzani sought aid from Moscow and discussed the matter with Khrushchev.³⁸ Again he did not receive any response. Barzani was alone. Qassim's only response to Kurdish demands was to strengthen Arab dominance over Kurdistan. He launched several attacks on the Kurds. Since Barzani and Qassim were equal in military capability, each attack was shortly followed by a truce in which each side acknowledged that it was not stronger than the other.³⁹

In the vast region of Barzan, covering the border areas of Iran, Iraq and Turkey, Barzani was still loved and recognized as the Kurdish national leader, not just another tribal leader. This promoted a renewed confidence and he sent a petition to the central government in Baghdad, supported by the KDPI. This petition, demanded two basic rights: that the Kurdish language be taught at schools of Kurdistan, and the oil revenues

³⁷ See *Ibid.*: 72.

³⁸ Gerard Chaliand, *The Kurdish Tragedy*, (New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd, 1994): 56.

³⁹ It should be remembered that the Iraqi army became powerful only during the 1980's when it got many support from the West due to the Iran-Iraq war.

of the Kurdish cities of Mosul and Kirkuk be shared with the Kurds.⁴⁰ These demands were immediately rejected by the Baghdad government. This was Barzani's last political attempt. Thereafter he began mobilizing his forces for a full-scale rebellion. He knew that he could not rely on the tribes of Kurdistan or any foreign power so he focused on his own forces whose loyalties had been tested in Mahabad, their march to the Soviet Union and their life in exile. He was under pressure from all sides. Although theoretically still president of the party, the KDPI's younger leaders Jalal Talabani and Ibrahim Ahmad, took over effective leadership of the KDPI. As a result, Iraqi Kurdistan was divided into two parts: with Barzani controlling the north and the KDPI controlling the south.

Talabani and Ahmad were younger and representative of non-traditional rule. They opposed Barzani's tribal authority. But Barzani by his military achievements won back the leadership of the party. During this period, all of Kurdistan was under severe attack by the Iraqi army, so all Kurds were looking for someone to lead their fight against the Iraqi army. This popularized Barzani, and he used his influence to build a Kurdish Revolutionary Army numbering about 5000 *peshmargas*, Kurdish militia⁴¹. Barzani was quite successful in mobilizing the Kurds and by September 24, 1961 they controlled the entire north of Kurdistan from Zakho to the Iranian frontiers, one-third of the entire Iraqi territories.⁴² (See figure 6, page 235).

Barzani knew that his victories were not permanent and understood that only foreign aid could help him to sustain his power. He appealed to the Soviets for help, but Moscow's priority in 1960's was the Persian and Turkish nationalist movements. As a

⁴⁰ See Edgar O'Ballance, The Kurdish Revolt: 1961- 1970, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1973): 73.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*: 74.

⁴² *Ibid.*: 76.

Figure 6: Areas under Barzani's control:

David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, (New York: I.B. Tauris, 1997): xiv.

result, Barzani's relations with the USSR deteriorated.⁴³ At the same time, the KDPI sent a letter to the United Nations reporting the Iraqi government's excessive use of force against the civilian population as an act of genocide.⁴⁴ KDPI's demand for an investigation into the matter by an international commission received no response. At this point neither foreign aid nor international organizations could make any difference in Barzani's situation because Iraq was completely unstable.

Barzani's control of such a vast territory made Qassim to realize he could not defeat Barzani. So in March 1962, while the fight was still going on, Qassim sent a message to Barzani that he would grant him and his men amnesty if they lay down their arms. Barzani's response was he would do so only if Iraq became a representative democracy and Kurds granted full autonomy.⁴⁵ Barzani's demand for Kurdish autonomy and not separation won him some Arab Iraqi sympathy. And his demand for democracy for Iraq was a new element in Iraqi politics. Until then Arab Iraqi political organizations were simply nationalist, Baathist, Pan-Arabist or communist. So the discourse of democracy in Iraqi politics started with Barzani. But unfortunately the idea of representative democracy never gain any momentum in Iraq and any assault on Kurdish rights has been simultaneously an assault on the democratic project.

The political violence of this period in Iraq would take a dramatic turn that changed regional security concerns profoundly. The violence of this period exploded in a military coup d'état of February 8, 1963. The principle architect of the coup d'état was

⁴³ Gerard Chaliand, The Kurdish Tragedy, (New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd, 1994): 57.

⁴⁴ See Edgar O'Ballance, The Kurdish Revolt: 1961- 1970, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1973): 80.

⁴⁵ See *Ibid.*: 81-82.

the Baath party and its first act was a bloody anti-communist witch-hunt. This reign of terror resulted in the massacre of some 7000 communists.⁴⁶

As for the Kurds, the Baathist regime started with peaceful methods and after negotiations agreed to some national rights for the Kurds on March 9, 1963. But this agreement did not last long and ended with a Kurdish uprising which lasted from June until November 1963. The main cause of the uprising was Baath's administrative reforms which divided Kurdistan into two provinces: Sulaymaniya and Kirkuk. This was the beginning of an Arabisation policy in Kurdistan, since the Baath regime expelled 40,000 people from the Kirkuk area and replaced them with Sunni Arabs to secure Kirkuk's oil resources in loyal Arab hands.⁴⁷ The Baathists started new offensives in Kurdistan targeting mostly civilians especially in cities like Sulaymaniya, the center of Kurdish nationalism.

The Iraqi army did not defeat the Kurds, but the fighting ended when Baath party leadership changed in November of 1963. The new ruler in Baghdad, General Aref, started negotiations with Barzani and even promised him Kurdish autonomy. Eventually on February 10, 1964, Aref and Barzani reached an agreement and the fighting was over.⁴⁸ In the KDPI, Barzani, Talabani and Ahmad were in disagreement. Talabani and Ahmad were still procommunist and did not want any deal with the anti-communist Aref. They criticized Barzani for signing an agreement with Aref. But since Talabani and Ahmad could not match Barzani's militia the two ended up in exile in Iran, where they remained until 1965. Barzani regained control of the KDPI, evicting communists. The

⁴⁶ Gerard Chaliand, The Kurdish Tragedy, (New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd, 1994): 58.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Ismet Sheriff Vanly, "Kurdistan In Iraq," in Gerard Chaliand ed. People Without A Country, The Kurds and Kurdistan (London: Zed Press, 1980): 167.

agreement with Aref which caused so much crisis in the KDPI actually did not last long. Fighting resumed in April of 1965, but this time Barzani established a Kurdish stronghold, which held almost for a decade. Barzani then became the dominant power in this stronghold, situated in the border area between Iraq, Turkey and Iran.⁴⁹ Shortly after fighting resumed, Aref died in a helicopter accident and his brother General Abdul Rahman succeeded him and continued the fighting in Kurdistan.

At this time the KDPI had more than 15,000 guerrilla fighters, which was a substantial number for an opposition movement considering that the entire Iraqi army consisted of 50,000 men. These fighters knew every corner of their battlefields, and most importantly were receiving heavy weapons from the Shah of Iran.⁵⁰ This war therefore became the most serious concern of the Iraqi regime.

Although this war mobilized a large number of Kurds under the leadership of Barzani it divided the Kurdish leadership more than before. In the beginning of 1966 Talabani and other ex-leaders of the KDPI including Ahmad returned from exile and joined the Iraqi army in fighting Barzani; justified as fighting against the tribal nature of Barzani's rule. But in fact this war was their only opportunity to retaliate against Barzani's control over events. It ended in a ceasefire on June 29, 1966. Negotiations with Barzani began and as a result the Kurds were granted national rights, which included the recognition of Kurdish as the official language of Kurdistan. The *peshmargas*, the Kurdish militia, were also allowed to remain armed and a general amnesty was granted to all Kurdish fighters.

⁴⁹ Gerard Chaliand, The Kurdish Tragedy, (New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd, 1994): 59.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

After the 1966 ceasefire, Kurds obtained some autonomy, which enabled Barzani to conduct his own political and diplomatic maneuvers. Kurdistan was calm at this point because of the high tension in the Arab World regarding the Israeli issue. Iraq like the rest of the Arab World was hyped up with concern over Arab – Israeli conflict, which ended up with the Six Day War. In the Arab-Israeli war of 1967, Barzani refused to send any number of his fighters to aid the Iraqi army against Israel. He supported Israelis and possibly received arms and aid from them,⁵¹ mostly through the Shah of Iran.

In the meantime Iraq was caught up in the Six Day War fiasco. The defeat of Arab countries in such quick fashion was a surprise. Although the Iraqi army played a very insignificant role, the defeat had a devastating effect on Iraqi Arabs. On June 5, 1967, the anti-Israeli Aref ordered a brigade of the Iraqi army to move to the border between Iraq and Jordan to aid the Jordanian forces. Before they even got close to the border, the Israeli Air Force wiped them out in matters of minutes.⁵² This swift defeat was a tremendous shock for all Iraqi nationalists and caused popular unrest, and used to justify another coup d'état in June 1968, which returned the Baathist hardliners to power. The coup leader, Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr, took over the government as president and chose Saddam Hussein as his vice President. This was not a good sign for Barzani since the new Baathist regime could not forgive Barzani's relations with the previous regime or his pro-Israeli stand. Finally in April 1969 the new regime launched a new attack on Kurdistan, which ended with a cease-fire on March 11, 1970.

The Baath government then adopted a different policy in this period. They appointed two Kurds, loyal to Barzani, as government ministers. But it also supported the

⁵¹ *Ibid.*: 60.

⁵² See Edgar O'Ballance, The Kurdish Revolt: 1961- 1970, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1973): 143.

KDPI dissidents Talabani and Ahmad.⁵³ This was a point of contention because Barzani who agreed on every point presented by the government insisted that the government should end its relation with the Talabani-Ahmad faction of the KDPI and disband their armed guerrillas. The government eventually complied with Barzani's terms.⁵⁴

The agreement included legalization of KDPI, dismantling of militias loyal to Ahmad and Talabani, granting of a general amnesty to Kurdish fighters. But the government would not make Kirkuk part of Kurdistan which had caused contention between the Baath party and the KDPI in the first place.⁵⁵ But the price of this short 'peace' was quite high: "According to a United Nations missions, 40,000 houses had been destroyed in 700 villages. 300,000 people had been displaced or made homeless. Others estimated 60,000 casualties, killed and wounded."⁵⁶

The greatest cost of war was imposed on the civilians who were caught in the crossfire or the targets of several massacres by the Iraqi army. But the Kurdish people were hopeful and started a new life. One year after the agreement, construction of houses, schools and hospitals had begun and everything seemed to be going in the direction of success. But in reality the authorities of both sides were still suspicious of the plan. The Kurdish ministers were marginalized and excluded from the decision-making process. The policy of Arabization was still in place and tension was still there. David McDowall reports that:

Certainly each side doubted the sincerity of the other. In summer of 1972 Barzani, encouraged by Iran, the United States and Israel, consolidated his

⁵³Gerard Chaliand, The Kurdish Tragedy, (New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd, 1994): 60.

⁵⁴David McDowall, The Kurds, A Nation Denied, (London: Minority Rights Publications, 1992): 91.

⁵⁵Gerard Chaliand, The Kurdish Tragedy, (New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd, 1994): 61.

⁵⁶David McDowall, The Kurds, A Nation Denied, (London: Minority Rights Publications, 1992): 91.

control of the Kurdish area, and increased his demands to include wider military and political authority, making provocative statements about foreign support. The difficulties with Baghdad centered on particular issues, such as the delineation of the Kurdish area, the manner of KDP [KDPI] participation in government, and continued Kurdish relations with Iran. It was on account of the latter that the Baath refused the candidature of the KDP's [KDPI's] secretary as Vice-President.⁵⁷

Another bone of contention was Iraq's deportation of some Kurds it claimed were not Iraqi citizens but were brought into the region to tip the demographic balance of critical areas such as Kirkuk.⁵⁸ The situation became more critical when Iran occupied a few oil-rich islands in the Persian Gulf. Eventually clashes occurred between Barzani's and government forces. The Kurds claimed that they felt threatened by the increasing presence of the government forces in Kurdistan; the government's response was that they were building defenses against possible Iranian aggression.⁵⁹ The Baathist regime believed Barzani was acting against the state from the earliest days of the agreement of March 11, 1970. The acts they cited were: "[t]he establishment of a sophisticated intelligence apparatus with the help of Iranian SAVAK [the Iranian intelligence] and Israeli Mossad in order to gather intelligence on Iraq and its armed forces; a public promise to turn Kirkuk oilfield over to American companies in return for US aid."⁶⁰

Following a second assassination attempt on Barzani in July 1972 (the first was in September 1971), the Kurdish ministers resigned their government posts and left for Kurdistan.⁶¹ This ended communications with Baghdad and marked the beginning of full-scale war. The Baath party worried that another war could pave the way for the military

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*: 92.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*: 93.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*: 94.

⁶¹ Ismet Sheriff Vanly, "Kurdistan In Iraq," in Gerard Chaliand ed. People Without A Country, The Kurds and Kurdistan (London: Zed Press, 1980): 172.

wing to take over the whole party, which could trigger an anti-Baathist coup d'état.⁶² Once more Iraqi and Kurdish politics became intertwined with Cold War politics. The U.S. and its allies in the region supported Barzani, while the Iraqi regime was supported by the Soviets.⁶³

In order to reach a negotiated agreement with the Baathist regime, the KDPI dispatched a delegation to Baghdad on January 17, 1974. There were major disagreements on many issues. On the Kurdish side, the key points of involved territorial and institutional definitions of the region, the question of a referendum, Arabization policies particularly in Kirkuk, and having a share of the oil revenues. No agreement was reached and negotiations ended. Another attempt was made by the KDPI on February 22, 1974 which also failed.⁶⁴ Eventually on March 11, 1974, the Baathist regime issued its own law regarding autonomy for Kurdistan without consulting the KDPI. The government believed the KDPI's demands would break up the country and create a state within the state, which could support foreign interests. They therefore rejected KDPI's demands.⁶⁵ The problem was that the KDPI was divided and undecided about the government's plan for Kurdish autonomy.

New splits had occurred within Kurdish ranks in early 1974. Two KDPI Central Committee members broke with Barzani, accusing him of rejecting democratic practices, and of identifying the destiny of the Kurds with himself... One of these, Hashem Aqrawi, took his followers into the Baath's Progressive National Front, on account of Barzani's accepting US

⁶² David McDowall, The Kurds, A Nation Denied, (London: Minority Rights Publications, 1992): 94.

⁶³ *Ibid.* See Ismet Sheriff Vanly, "Kurdistan In Iraq," in Gerard Chaliand ed. People Without A Country, The Kurds and Kurdistan (London: Zed Press, 1980):173, and Gerard Chaliand, The Kurdish Tragedy, (New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd, 1994): 61.

⁶⁴ Ismet Sheriff Vanly, "Kurdistan In Iraq," in Gerard Chaliand ed. People Without A Country, The Kurds and Kurdistan (London: Zed Press, 1980): 176.

⁶⁵ David McDowall, The Kurds, A Nation Denied, (London: Minority Rights Publications, 1992): 94.

and Israeli aid. Mulla Mustafa's [Barzani's] own son, Ubaidallah, also broke with his father.⁶⁶

Barzani's son, Ubaidallah, believed Barzani was not interested in the future of the Kurdish people but was rejecting the law of autonomy because it would end his absolute rule in Kurdistan.⁶⁷

The law of autonomy issued by the Baathist regime was a more limited version of the 1970 agreement. Nevertheless it was more than anything granted by the Iranian or Turkish governments to their Kurdish minorities. David McDowall summarized the twenty-one articles of the Autonomy Declaration of 1974 as follows:

1. The area of Kurdistan shall enjoy autonomy, limited by the legal, political and economic integrity of the Republic of Iraq. The area shall be defined in accordance with the 11 March 1970 manifesto, and 1957 census records.
2. Kurdish will be the official language beside Arabic in the region, and the language of education, although the teaching of Arabic will also be compulsory.
3. The right of non-Kurdish minorities within the region will be guaranteed, with proportional representation in local autonomy.
4. The judiciary will conform with the legal system of Iraq.
- 5-9. These covered fiscal aspects of autonomy, within the financial integrity of the state.
- 10-15. These provided for the establishment of a Legislative and an Executive Council as governing organs of the autonomous area.
- 16-21. These established the relationship between the Central authority and the Autonomous administration, defined by the government as one of supervision and co-ordination.⁶⁸

Barzani claimed that he rejected the autonomy law because of disagreement with the Baathist regime over the issue of Kirkuk. But in reality he had made a deal with the

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*: 95.

⁶⁷ Edmund Ghareeb, The Kurdish Question in Iraq, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1981): 2; quoted in *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ David McDowall, The Kurds, A Nation Denied, (London: Minority Rights Publications, 1992): 95-97.

Americans that he would fight Baghdad if he received aid from them.⁶⁹ Eventually fighting resumed in February 1974 and Barzani called on all Iraqi Kurds to join him. In addition to the U.S. aid channeled through Iran, he also had more than 60,000 militiamen. Despite their numbers, the Kurds were not a match for the new Iraqi air force, with Soviet-piloted Tupolev 22s.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the Iranian heavy guns and missiles made these Iraqi fighters helpless. The Kurds, using Iranian artillery, held their positions and shelled the Arab regions of Iraq. Baghdad worked to cut off Barzani's support. Iran was supporting Barzani to put pressure on Iraq for a revision on the 1937 treaty concerning the control over the Shatt al-Arab river and to reduce Iraqi power. But finally the Shah and Iraqi Vice-President Saddam Hussein reached an agreement at the 1975 OPEC summit in Algiers, redefining their borders to the benefit of Iran with the condition that the Shah end his support of Barzani.⁷¹ This made the collapse of the Kurds inevitable. Barzani and several thousands of his men withdrew to Iran, after which he went to the United States. Many of his men turned in their weapons and returned to Iraq.⁷² McDowall reports:

The human cost of the war had been enormous, at least 7000 dead and 10,000 wounded on the Iraqi side. The KDPI admitted losing 2000 men but probably lost a good deal more. The grand total, for the killed and wounded on both sides, probably totalled something in the order of 50,000. It also resulted in enormous civilian hardship. Up to 250,000 Kurds fled across the border to Iran. The total number of displaced persons was probably in the order of 600,000.⁷³

⁶⁹ See Edmund Ghareeb's documents in *Ibid.*: 95.

⁷⁰ Gerard Chaliand, *The Kurdish Tragedy*, (New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd, 1994): 63.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² David McDowall, *The Kurds, A Nation Denied*, (London: Minority Rights Publications, 1992): 99.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

With the Barzani's exile, another chapter of the Kurdish national movement ended. Barzani's movement had dominated Kurdish politics during the 1960's and 70's. His movement was tangled with political intrigues of the Cold War and he fought surrogate wars for the superpowers. Barzani put his trust in the United States and its allies in the Middle East for good reasons. He had experienced the betrayals of the Soviets both during the reign of Stalin and after. His grim memories of the fall of Mahabad in the late 1940's, his unpleasant exile in the Soviet Union throughout the 1950's all were reasons to distrust the Soviets. Besides, he had seen first hand the results of communism while in exile in the U.S.S.R. So when he returned to politics, he tried to gain U.S.'s friendship, which had a heavy price. He had to have a relationship with the Shah of Iran, a dictator who was oppressing the Iranian Kurds in an extremely violent way. But Barzani had no other regional ally, as the rest of the Middle East—Turkey, Iran and the Arab states—all opposed the Kurds.

The Arabs had no sympathy for the Kurds because pan-Arab nationalism, enflamed by the Arab-Israeli conflict, was very popular in the Arab world. The Sunni Arabs in Iraq particularly were attracted to this ideology in part because of extreme poverty and the political corruption of the Iraqi politics. The Iraqi Sunni Arabs were willing to expel, and even exterminate the Kurds to gain vital resources. The Sunni Arabs are located in regions of Iraq with no oil or other resources such as water. But they consider themselves entitled to all of Iraq's resources. This does not mean that the poor Sunni Arab population ever had a share of the national wealth, which always was diverted into the private property of their dictators and their supporters. But the Sunni Arabs assumed they are the only group in Iraq entitled to privilege while the rest are

entitled to nothing. This state of mind is directly related to the condition that the British imperial adventures in Iraq created. When the British planted a Sunni King in Iraq, they established in effect Sunni Arab rule in a country in which the majority were either Shiites or Kurds. The seeds of tyranny were planted in Iraq from that moment onwards. When the Kurds demanded rights over their own resources, the Sunni Arabs as Hashemite monarchs, Qassim's military rule or the Baathist regime realised they could only impose their rule beyond the Sunni Arab group by violence. They knew if they let the Kurds have true autonomy or if democracy were established in Iraq, the minority Sunni Arabs would no longer enjoy their privileged position.

The Baathist discourse about annexing Kuwait related to this same issue. With oil-rich Kuwait as a 'province,' the Sunni Arabs could solve their problem of being located in the poor part of Iraq. Even the Iraqi motivation for invading Iran was a dispute over three major oil-rich islands located between the two countries. From the creation of Iraq by the British, the Sunni Arabs faced the dilemma of not having any of the precious resources for which Middle East is famous, and not being able to come up with a political system resembling that of a modern democracy in which resources are shared fairly and legally. Unfortunately the Iraqi Kurds are stuck in the middle of this seemingly never-ending problem.

Throughout the 1960's and the 1970's, the West was preoccupied with Cold War security issues and fears of a communist take-over of the 'third' world, the Vietnam war, the Algerian war, the Cuban war and the Arab-Israeli conflict. The U.S. and British failure to understand and acknowledge the Kurdish issue contributed to the coming to power of the Baathists ideology in Iraq. If the Kurdish demands and pleas were

understood and responded to based on international law Kurdish demands and rights might have formed the basis for democracy and the rule of law in Iraq. But both Kurdish rights and to a large extent the Iraqi future fell victim to the Western hunger for oil and the political mistakes that stemmed from it.

Conclusion

Political technology reveals itself gradually. It takes time for this phenomenon to show its real face. In the previous cases considered, the political technology of othering was easier to detect because of their brutal actions and dictatorial style. It was also easier to miss because it could be mistaken for any form of dictatorship or colonially-administered brutal rule. But in fact it was a political technology employed by local forms of nihilism. With Baathism, however, political technique and nihilism reveal themselves more easily. The most noticeable aspect of the alliance of technique and nihilism in Baathist ideology is the elevation of the party to the highest esteem revealing its totalitarian tendencies. With Aflaq, the Baath party supercedes the nation. This is nihilistic because Baathist ideology claimed to be saving the nation from colonial tyranny. But in Baathism the nation was sacrificed for the party. The value that the Baathism claimed immediately was devalued by Baathism itself. I see Baathism as a full expression of nihilism which makes it the ground of *totalitarian-party-technology*. I use this *totalitarian-party-technology* contraction to express the three-fold nature of Baathism: it is totalitarian and it uses the political technology of the party to dominate the nation it claims to defend.

Baathist ideology established itself based on the Arab resentment against imperialism. Reacting to the racism in imperialism, Baathists became racist in turn by

creating a racist vision of Arab supremacy, which goes beyond pan-Arabism. Aflaq's ideas about the relationship between leader, party and the nation are almost identical to those of Hitler and National Socialism. Baathism was a nihilist attempt to remedy Arab bondage in the age of imperialism, but it became racist itself. This is the complex of nihilism, which becomes what it negates because all it is so consumed with is awesome negation that it negates its original position. It is like trying to put out a fire by adding more fuel to it.

The central aspect of Baathism is its technique, i.e. the party and the cult of the leader. It created a party that made possible the continuity of ideology. The idea of "party" in Baathism was an efficient political technology. It created a cult with the leader as god. It is important to remember Nietzsche: "God is dead; but given the way of men [sic], there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his [sic] shadow will be shown."⁷⁴ In Baathism, the party was "the cave of shadows," i.e. creating the new religion and the leader was the shadow of god. Party and the leader were mythologized by Aflaq to the point that Baathism became a 'religion.' Baathism created a set of undisputable dogmas such as leader, party and Arab supremacy such that any crime eventually became permissible in their names.

In this chapter I examined the Barzani movement in Iraqi Kurdistan to show the continuity of the Kurdish national struggle. To an outside observer, this continuity of a century-long national struggle is not apparent because of the partition of Kurdistan. I argued that the Barzani movement in Iraqi Kurdistan was the continuation of the Mahabad struggle. Barzani's movement happened during the Cold War. Neither the

⁷⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science, trans. Walter Kaufman (New York: Vintage Books, 1974): 167.

Eastern bloc nor the Western Bloc cared to support his movement. Kurds were othered by all sides and their movement failed. They mobilized, sought alliances, fought and posed a serious challenge to Iraqi government. But in the end they were not a match for the technologies of othering in the combined policies of Iraq and Iran. In the years that Barzani spent in U.S.S.R., he never got the Soviets to support his movement. The technologies of othering were overwhelming and nihilism was at the door. It is true that the Kurds were divided along tribal lines but internal Kurdish divisions could have been resolved within a progressive, democratic form of modernity. But there was no support in the outside world for promoting a progressive democratic movement in Kurdistan. And the Kurds themselves did not have the resources necessary for such a democratic evolution. In Iraq the state monopolized everything: educational institutions, cultural and news media, publications, etc. Moreover the tribal division of Kurdish society was manipulated to serve the regional Realpolitik and the politics of divide and rule. Barzani introduced the discourse of democracy to Iraqi politics. Regardless of his shortcomings, his message of democracy was a much better alternative to pan-Arabism, communism and Baathism. It is true that even his own son with some other Kurdish leaders disagreed and eventually separated themselves from him. But he accepted opposition, which was the beginning of political pluralism in Iraqi Kurdistan. For the first time tribal divisions became transformed into political opposition.

I argued that in this episode, the realist school of international relations particularly Kissinger, made a fatal mistake in sacrificing the Kurds whatever their reasons. In hindsight, many regional and international crises would have been avoided had the Kurds been supported in their fight against the Baathists. The fatal mistake of the

time may have been justified by the logic of Realpolitik, but the political technologies of othering were the misleading force leading the “great” powers to errors in their assessments of so-called “objective reality.” In chapter two, I pointed out the errors of Kissinger and in this chapter I outlined details of Barzani’s movement. This movement potentially presented Iraq and the region with a better alternative than what Iraqis got. Had Barzani’s movement been given the support necessary to win against the Baathists the history of the last three decades would have been different.

But the Kurds were not supported because they were confronted with nihilism, which distorted the visions of Western decision-makers who deemed them irrelevant and insignificant. The international system was exhausted by issues of Cold War, Vietnam, and the Arab-Israeli conflict and this lassitude was fertile ground for nihilism. This international political exhaustion devalued those values that might have helped Western observers to see Kurdish issues more clearly. But instead the Kurds were objects of observation through the essence of technique, i.e. “enframing,” and the values of their cause were devalued and negated through negative and reactive nihilisms on different levels. They managed to survive on their own for a while but eventually were led to take the desperate measure I detailed in the end of chapter two, especially seeking the Shah of Iran’s support. But those actions must be viewed and examined in relation to the conditions that created them; conditions which had rendered the Kurds desperate and vulnerable in the face of awesome combinations of technique and nihilism.

Chapter Seven:

The Kurds and the Islamic Republic of Iran

The Kurds have been at the receiving end of political technologies of othering for the century in which these technologies developed. Since 1979, Iranian-style Islamic fundamentalism is the latest entry in the catalogue of political technologies of othering. With Islamic fundamentalism and the formation of the Islamic Republic, othering of the Kurds became more complicated. The Kurds are now othered on the bases of both religious and ethno-national differences. In this chapter I argue that Iranian Islamic fundamentalism constitutes a technology of othering. I also theorize the connection between technology and nihilism in Islamic fundamentalism. I outline the intellectual roots of Islamic revolution in Iran and demonstrate its connection to nihilism, using the concepts developed in chapter one. I argue that the Islamic Republic of Iran constitutes a new political technology. I show how Western-educated Iranian intellectuals formed the basis for the revolution of 1979 and developed the ideology of Iranian Islamic fundamentalism as reaction to Western modernity. I show how reactive nihilism led to the construction of fundamentalism as a political technology in Iran. I explore these ideas to show how these political technologies formed the basis of the Persian Shia project of othering the Kurds.

On the eve of the Islamic revolution, The Kurdish activists knew they must secure their rights by transforming Iran into a democracy. In the aftermath of the Islamic revolution, the Kurds immediately demanded autonomy for Kurdistan, and democracy for

Iran. But they were not a match for the political technology of Iranian Islamic fundamentalism. They were othered from the beginning of the revolution because they did not fit into the political and cultural domains fundamentalism created. The essence of Iranian fundamentalism is that sovereignty in reality is vested in a council of Shiite clergy known as the "Guardian's Council." These Guardians are above the law and government; and are the ultimate source of regime's legitimacy. One of their most important tasks is the appointment of the "Grand Leader." Khomeini was the first "Grand Leader," but after his death, the top Shiite clerics created the Guardian's Council to keep real power in the hands of the clergy. I believe this institution can only be understood as political technology. Its efficient techniques have kept the clergy in power since 1979. The republic's political institutions include non-clergy, but ultimately the clergy rule through intricate technologies of state and discourse designed to maintain continuity of the rule by Shiite clergy. But the ideas for creating a religious state for the most part originated with non-clerical intellectuals. First I explain the formation of the ideology that gave birth to the Iranian Islamic revolution. I examine the formation of the Islamic Republic as a new system of politics in Iran. I also explore the Kurdish situation in the post-revolutionary Iran and Kurdish life under the rule of Islamic Republic. Finally I examine the effects of the Iran-Iraq war on the Kurdish issue as a whole.

I. The Ideological Foundations of the Islamic Revolution

In February 1979, Iran made the headlines by overthrowing the monarchy and establishing an Islamic Republic under the political leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini. A top Shiite cleric, he led the Islamic revolution of Iran from abroad. On the eve of the

Islamic revolution, he returned to Iran after 12 years in exile. But it was not merely Khomeini who engineered the revolution. Although he was the leader of the Islamic revolution, the ideas that gave birth to the Islamic revolution were in the formation for many years by many different individuals. The Islamic revolution in Iran has a prehistory. Prior to the coming to power of the Ayatollahs, the Iranian opposition to the Shah was divided into three major groups: Persian nationalists, the urban left, and Shiite revolutionaries. But gradually the Shiite revolutionaries dominated post-revolutionary Iran and little by little eliminated all opposition to their rule. It is important to make the religious aspect of Iranian revolution quite clear. It must be clearly called by what reveals its identity, and that is 'Islamic' revolution of Iran. By this, the leaders claimed the revolution for Shiites. But Iran is home to many religions and not just Shiites who are but perpetual revolutionaries. For Shiites all political systems are variations of tyranny. According to them, the return of the Mahdi, the occulted Imam who vanished a thousand years ago, can guarantee a politically just system. Therefore Shiites are in a perpetual state of disapproving of any government in power. Iranian Sunnis, Bahaiis, Iranian Jews, Zoroastrians, Iranian Christians, Ismaelis, Alioallahies, are all in practice pacifist, although some in secret. Despite years of persecution, they all reject violence and revolution. But Iranian Shiites are revolutionaries and often at war with other brands of religious extremism in the Arab world, and in Asian Muslim countries. They see themselves as the leaders of the Shiite world.

The left in Iran was primarily Marxist-Leninist, and disappeared when the Soviet Bloc was defeated in the Cold War. Persian nationalists, however, survived for a while after the revolution but mutated into a hybrid of Shiism and Persian nationalism, an easy

transformation because Shiism is primarily a Persian religion. Although there are many Shiites in the Arab world, and to a lesser extent in Asia and elsewhere, they are always outnumbered by the Sunnis. Iraq is also an exception because it is the place where all the dramas of Shiite sacred history took place. Nevertheless Iran has always been the primary site of revolutionary Shiite ideas and actions. In the early days of Islam, this revolutionary attitude was directed against the Sunni majority of the broader Muslim world. But in modern times, the Shiite revolutionaries' targets were the colonial powers, modernity and the West. The anti-colonial sentiments of the Shiites were so strong that historically they were in the lead of anti-colonial struggles.

The Shiite revolutionary leadership was clear during the Islamic revolution of 1979, when the Ayatollahs mobilized and led leftists and nationalists under one simple slogan: "Death to America!" Perhaps this was the only thing the Ayatollahs did: come up with a slogan that made all factions believe their ideological differences were insignificant in the face of a so-called greater enemy. The Ayatollahs dwarfed all other conflicts in favor of the fight against the U.S. and its puppet, the Shah. But the Ayatollahs did not play a role in the formation of a political program for the Islamic revolution until much later. This was the task, surprisingly of the early nationalists and pseudo-intellectuals of Iran from the 1950's.

II. The Lay Intellectual Component of the Islamic Revolution

The most influential thinker among the Persian nationalists who contributed to the Islamic revolution was Mehdi Bazargan. He was the oldest veteran of Persian nationalist movement perhaps the oldest human rights activist. He gained his political credit by

being associated to Dr. Mosaddeq, Iran's Prime Minister from 1951 to 1953.¹ Mosaddeq was the most popular political figure in Iran, because he challenged both the monarchs of Iran and the British Empire through legal and parliamentary means. His famous book *Capitulation and Iran* published in 1911, was a manual on how to debate and defending the political and legal rights of Iran under imperial rule.² He distributed it, like most of his other books, free of charge. The original copies still bear his stamp which reads: "[t]his book is free of charge and any one is allowed to own, print or translate it free of charge."³ In fact in Egypt, Turkey and Pakistan they used his ideas in struggles against colonial powers. This made Mosaddeq an icon of anti-colonial legal and political struggle.⁴ His greatest achievement for Iran, which inspired other colonized nations in the Islamic world, was nationalization of the Iranian oil industry. He basically ended the British Empire's control of Iran's oil industry through legal and parliamentary means.⁵ Bazargan gained political credit among Iranians as Dr. Mosaddeq's Deputy Prime Minister. Iranians of all creed respected Bazargan for his association with the democratic, liberal and modern Mosaddeq who was loyal to the interests of the Iranian people. Mosaddeq was in power less than three years, but achieved more than any other political figure in the modern history of Iran. His short-lived government was toppled by a U.S. backed coup d'état in 1953.⁶ Dr. Mosaddeq did not want to topple the Shah's

¹ See Ali M. Ansari, Modern Iran Since 1921, the Pahlavis and After, (New York: Pearson education Limited, 2003): xi.

² Mohammad Mosaddeq, Capitulation Va Iran, [Capitulation and Iran] (Tehran: Mosaddeq, 1911). [Text in Persian, my translation.]

³ *Ibid.*: 1.

⁴ See Ali Rezaquli, Jameeshenasie Nukhbekoshi, [Sociology of Eliticide] (Tehran: Nashre Nei, 1988): 188. [Text in Persian, my translation.]

⁵ See *Ibid.*

⁶ See Ali M. Ansari, Modern Iran Since 1921, the Pahlavis and After, (New York: Pearson education Limited, 2003): 125.

regime in the 1950's, but he believed that the Shah should be a limited monarch not the absolute sovereign he was.⁷ But Shah was a dictator, and wouldn't accept anything short of absolute rule. And Dr. Mosaddeq was perceived by the West as a threat to their colonial power imperial interests. So he was toppled in a coup. This event is ever fresh in the minds of Iranians and was so particularly during the revolution. The 1953 coup created feelings of resentment and betrayal that planted the seeds of hatred for America throughout the outwardly calm years of the Shah's rule. Consequently the first prime minister after the Islamic revolution was Bazargan: a deputy of Iran's long gone but still beloved prime minister who had stood up for the rights of the people against the British Empire.

Bazargan

Bazargan was an engineer educated in Paris. As a young student in Paris he volunteered for the French Army and fought against the Nazis. For this, he was loved and welcomed in France throughout his life. He was an author whose essays were about political sociology and identity politics. Although he joined the revolution, historically he had been a believer in non-violence. He was the first Iranian statesman involved in the struggle for human rights in Iran. His Iranian *Human Rights Association* worked closely with *Amnesty International*. During the 1960's and 70's, he was arrested by the secret police several times and throughout the Shah's regime he was persecuted. After the Islamic revolution of 1979, Khomeini appointed him as the first prime minister of the

⁷ See Mehdi Bazargan, *Inqilab-i Iran dar do Harakat*, [*Iran's Revolution in two Acts*] (Tehran: Bazargan, 1984): 21. [Text in Persian, my translation.]

Islamic Republic. The various factions supported his government, but pressures from Shiite hardliners forced him to resign in less than a year.

Bazargan was only seven years younger than Khomeini, and both lived through the period of forced modernization, and the occupation of Iran explored in chapter three, both World Wars, the Cold War and the Iran- Iraq war. Bazargan's intellectual work made a substantial contribution to the idea of an Islamic state. For most of his life Bazargan believed that politics and religion are inseparable.⁸ Gradually he changed his mind after observing what had happened in post-revolutionary Iran. But it was too late by then. His ideas regarding the inseparability of religion and politics contributed to the creation of a fundamentalist state in Iran that no one could stop. Bazargan spent the last eight years of his life criticizing the Islamic Republic; criticizing even Khomeini's understanding of internal and international politics. But that only made him the public enemy of the radicalized youth who eventually took over the government and public life in Iran.

There were two major reasons for why Bazargan trusted the revolutionary Shiites at the beginning. First, he believed that the Islamic revolution would be anti-colonial. The revolutionary slogan "neither West nor East" was attractive to him. East and West in the slogan referred to the two opposing political blocs of the Cold War. It meant Iran would be neither communist nor capitalist. He understood this as a desire for independence. It also reflected his dislike for the Soviet bloc, which had not supported Iran in the 1953 U.S. and U.K. inspired coup. The second reason was the anti-monarchical stance of the revolution. Bazargan remembered from Dr. Mosaddeq's experience not to trust the Shah

⁸ Mehdi Bazargan, *Bazyabi-e Arzeshha Jeld (1)*, [*Rediscovering of Values*, vol. (1)] (Tehran: Bazargan, 1985):70 – 71. [Text in Persian, my translation.]

and the institution of the monarchy. Bazargan remembered the fate of Mosaddeq and was attracted to the Islamic revolution because the Shiite revolutionaries were serious about getting rid of the Shah.

Bazargan was well connected to Western organizations and media. His efforts on the diplomatic and public-relations fronts contributed to the overthrow of monarchy in Iran particularly, during the last stages of the revolution. Just two months before the revolution, around January 1979, he wrote a significant letter to the Iranian people and foreign governments regarding the human rights abuses of the Shah's regime. Through human rights organizations, his letter gained a lot of publicity and as a result the Shah of Iran lost the support of many Western countries. In the letter he expressed three basic things: (1) the Shah must step down, (2) his government is illegal, and (3) Western governments must stop supporting Shah because his regime violates human rights, so defending him involves violating human rights.⁹ His letter triggered the final blow, which resulted in deposing the Shah and his regime. His expertise was also very important to Khomeini in exile. Khomeini had been exiled in Iraq for nearly twelve years until Saddam Hussein expelled him because of his influence on Iraqi Shiites. Bazargan made sure the French government would allow Khomeini to go to Paris after being expelled from Iraq. Being in Paris gave Khomeini a historic opportunity to lead the Islamic revolution. With no restrictions in his access to media, Khomeini had a better chance in Paris than anywhere else to lead the revolution. With all the harassment and security risks in both Iran and Iraq, Khomeini had a safer headquarters for his revolutionary campaign in Paris. During November 1978, Khomeini gave a series of interviews to foreign press,

⁹ *Ibid.*: 36.

which are interesting to note. On November 5, 1978 in an interview to a Dutch TV Khomeini said the following:

There will be a just regime replacing the monarchy. The future regime of Iran has no counterpart among Western regimes. Perhaps there are some similarities between our ideal regime and those of Western democracies, but our ideal democracy does not exist in the West. Islamic democracy is superior to Western democracy.¹⁰

When Khomeini returned to Iran he never mentioned democracy, Western, Islamic or any other kind. What he spoke of was the rule of clergy over every aspect of politics and life. But while in exile he spoke of some kind of Islamic democracy, which he never explained. He was always ambiguous about what kind of regime would replace the monarchy. There were all kinds of factions and ideologies in Iran during 1979, each demanding its own desired regime; but none had the power and influence of Khomeini. He mobilized all organizations and factions under a few simple slogans, mostly anti-American and anti-Israeli. The Iranian factions delayed the debate over what kind of regime should replace the monarchy until they had gotten rid of monarchy completely. But the Western media were more curious to know Khomeini's plan for Iran. On November 9, 1978 Khomeini told a group of international journalists who questioned him regarding the rights of people and his own role in the future regime this:

The Islamic government is a true democracy. Everyone will be allowed to express his or her opinion. The Islamic government will respond to reasonable opposition with reason. And as for me, I will not have any government position. I will remain as I am. And when the Islamic government is formed I will be playing the role of guidance.¹¹

¹⁰ Quoted in *Ibid.*: 52.

¹¹ Quoted in *Ibid.*: 55.

Eventually the revolutionary Shiites took over and formed their desired government, i.e. an Islamic Republic. And as in post-revolutionary America, that Republic was not a democracy.

Bazargan approved of the Islamic Republic and participated in its success both actively and theoretically. Even when a group of radical students took over the U.S. embassy he approved of their actions which he believed were anti-Imperialist. He only parted with the revolutionaries during the hostage crisis. These young radicals called themselves *Daneshjooyan peirov-e khate Imam*, which means *The Student followers of Khomeini*. They were radicals who respected no one but Khomeini, and did not stop at taking the U.S. Embassy's staff hostage. They started a Cultural Revolution, closed down the universities and attacked anything and anyone Western. This caused the biggest brain drain in Iranian history. The hostage crisis brought the dangers of the new regime to international attention. But the Cultural Revolution showed Iranians just what it meant to live under a fundamentalist regime. These events happened during Bazargan's time as Prime Minister. The Cultural Revolution was a reaction to the complex relations between religious schools and the universities, between the clergy and the intellectuals. Eventually the radicalism of Khomeini students took over and Bazargan was completely marginalized and then disappeared.

Jalal Al-e Ahmad

Jalal Al-e Ahmad was the individual in the center of a dangerous discourse that involved radical rejection of Western culture and Westernization. He created the vocabulary and language of anti-Western discourse that even Khomeini used. Al-e Ahmad perhaps is the

most controversial and contradictory intellectual of contemporary Iranian history. He was born in 1923, the year Reza Shah established his rule and began his 'reforms,' so he was part of the first generation raised in 'modernized' Iran. And he died just ten years before the Islamic revolution toppled the monarchy. Al-e Ahmad came from a family of clerics. His father was a top cleric and so was his elder brother. Literally all the men in his family became clerics except for himself and his younger brother. Al-e Ahmad was supposed to become a cleric as well. At the age of twenty he was sent to Najaf in Iraq, renowned for its seminary schools, to begin his religious studies. He stayed for only three months and returned to Iran having abandoned the idea of becoming an Ayatollah and instead enrolled in the Teacher's College in Tehran.¹² This rejection of the family calling was the first step in his identity crisis. Even as a teenager, Al-e Ahmad dressed as clerics do. His father had never accepted the modernity imposed by Reza Shah. As a result even in his living room Al-e Ahmad had to deal with the clash between the Iran of a military dictator and the Iran of autocratic Shiite Ayatollahs. In 1943 at the age of twenty he joined the Tudeh Party, Iranian's communist party at the time.¹³ His literary talent and passion for struggle were recognised and well exploited by the party. But he became disenchanted with the Stalinist Tudeh Party during the occupation of Iran when it showed more loyalty to the interests of Kremlin, than Iranian people. After a period of trying other aspects of leftist activism, Al-e Ahmad gave up political activism in disappointment. He then started a family and dedicated his life to writing, staying out of politics until the 1950's. He realized the significance of Mosaddeq's movement and passionately joined the cause

¹²Shams Al-e Ahmad, Jalal az Cheshm-e Baradar, [Jalal From a Brother's Perspective] (Tehran: Badihiye, 1997): 175. [Text in Persian, my translation.]

¹³ Ali Mirsepassi, Intellectual Discourse and the Politics of Modernization. Negotiating Modernity in Iran, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000): 99.

until the bitter defeat of the national movement by an U.S.—backed coup. Al-e Ahmad died in 1969, having lived almost all his life under dictatorship and political failure. This produced a deep resentment that shaped the radicalism of his writings.

Al-e Ahmad wrote some forty books including translations of Western authors such as Albert Camus, André Gide, Jean-Paul Sartre, Dostoyevsky, Ernst Junger and Eugene Ionesco. He also wrote many essays, short stories and novellas. In his writings, he was critical of the class distinctions in Iran. In most of his stories he masterfully exposed the impossibility of any spiritual fulfillment and earthly happiness as long as there is a gap between the poor and rich classes.¹⁴ He criticized the half measures recommended by newly emerging, Westernized authors and individuals. He promoted the idea of revolutionary acts and glorified martyrdom.¹⁵ Disenchanted with modernist ideologies and tactics he reverted to traditional political modes, rejecting political parties or the activism of modern intellectuals and promoting the leadership of the traditional clerics. He argued that modern intellectuals had betrayed the cause of liberty and independence, whereas historically clerics led successful opposition to local tyrants and foreign aggressors.¹⁶

Al-e Ahmad began to discover his own style of criticism and writing; both were very simple and accessible to the first generation of graduates of Iran's public education system. His analysis was not scholarly but popular—even populist. He provided a resentful generation with tactics and vocabulary to express their anger. Basically he

¹⁴ See Jalal Al-e Ahmad, *Did wa Bazdid*, [The Visit] (Tehran: Entesharat Ferdows, 1999): 54-66. [Text in Persian, my translation.]

¹⁵ Jalal Al-e Ahmad, *Non wa-al Qalam*, [the letter "N" and the Pen] (Tehran: Entesharat Jamehdaran, 2005). [Text in Persian, my translation.]

¹⁶ Ali Mirsepassi, *Intellectual Discourse and the Politics of Modernization, Negotiating Modernity in Iran*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000): 105.

offered a program of simplicity, much welcomed by a populace lost in the complexities of the 1950's and 60's. In his most celebrated and controversial book, he even coined a word as its title and major thesis: *Gharbzadegi*. This strange word made him famous and defined the intellectual trend of an era. The best translation is "Westoxication." This book was so influential that it was read and praised by many famous clerics including Khomeini, Ayatollah Khameneii, the current supreme leader of Iran, Bazargan, and many others.¹⁷

Al-e Ahmad believed he discovered the source of Iran's problem or what he labeled "Iran's sickness." His simple diagnosis was that Iran's culture and identity was intoxicated by the import of Western things, ideas and attitudes. He called this general condition Westoxication or *Gharbzadegi*. He believed Westoxication is like a monstrous sickness with two ends: one end is 'us' here, and the other is 'them' in the West. He described the West as the producer of industry and 'us' as the importers of industry. He explains that he does not reduce industry only to technological commodities but also includes the cultural industries as well.¹⁸ He believed even spirituality and religion in a Westoxicated society became part of the problem, approving of religion only if it is revolutionary and anti-colonial. He believed Westoxication to be a condition related to modernity:

Westoxication is the characteristic of a historical period when we have not yet mastered the mysteries and organization of the Machine. Westoxication is the characteristic of a period in our history when we have not mastered modern science and technology. Westoxication is the characteristic of a period in our history when, under economic pressure

¹⁷See Shams Al-e Ahmad, *Jalal az Cheshm-e Baradar*, [Jalal From a Brother's Perspective] (Tehran: Badihiye, 1997): 457- 471. [Text in Persian, my translation.]

¹⁸ Jalal Al-e Ahmad, *Gharbzadegi*, [Westoxication] (Tehran: Entesharat Jamehdaran, 2005): 17. [Text in Persian, my translation.]

and market regulations and oil industry, we had no choice other than to become the importers and consumers of the machine.¹⁹

In these simplistic definitions, he captured the minds of so many people who like himself were part of the first generation experiencing imposed modernity. They were promised progress and change but they got dictatorship and tyranny.

Al-e Ahmad believed what happened in Iran was all modernity had to offer, basically Western domination over Iran and its resources in exchange for a market full of imported products for which Iranians had no need. Al-e Ahmad experienced the Shah's project of modernization as an eyewitness; and tried several tactics and modern ideologies of resistance. He tried communism with the Tudeh Party but saw its failure. He participated in the nationalist movement of Dr. Mosaddeq, but saw how vulnerable it was to the military might of a super-power. He tried liberal individualism, and resorted to his own talent as a writer; but saw little progress result. He was anxious for change, for progress. He needed a solution, but there was none. It was at the end of his existential blind ally that he thought the solution might not be ahead but behind him. So he regressed. He concluded that Iran had a unique institution in the Shiite clergy class but since imposed modernity had lost its connection to it. So he began to write about how urgent it was for young people and intellectuals to build an alliance with the clergy and accept the fact that the cure for their alienation lay with the Shiite clergy.

The writing of Al-e Ahmad's *Gharbzadegi* or *Westoxication* did not happen in a vacuum. While the events around him had a major impact other things were involved. The most important, in my opinion, was his trip to Israel in 1961-62. He was incredibly impressed by what he saw there. On his return, he gave a few lectures, wrote a few

¹⁹ *Ibid.*: 28.

articles and a book about his experience called *The Journey to Israel*. After the Islamic revolution, it became rare and in the eyes of Shiite revolutionaries it remains unexplainable that he had a favorable view of Israel. He was amazed by the experiment of the kibbutz with its egalitarian nature, practicality, and return to nature and simplicity as opposed to big bourgeoisie and city attitudes. He found the whole experience refreshing, compared to Iran's experiences with communism and nationalism. In Israel he believed a minority of persecuted Europeans had created the utopia for which he and his fellow Iranians had been dreaming all their lives. He concluded the kibbutz the basic unit on which Israel was built.²⁰ But what impressed him the most was the wisdom of Israeli politics in harmonizing religion and politics without alienating each other. He saw in Israel no contradiction between progress and religion. Whereas in Iran, he saw dictators creating so much unnecessary tension between religion and politics. Al-e Ahmad's account of Israel was one of the very first books on Israel in Persian.

Following his return from Israel he understood that Iran had an identity crisis, in the tension between secular politics and religion. On the one hand religion had become superstition, and not a source of enlightenment. And on the other, politics involved dictatorship, tyranny and dependency on foreign powers. In my opinion, when Al-Ahmad was writing *Gharbzadegi*, (*Westoxication*), he was unconsciously trying to invent some kind of Islamic/Iranian Zionism, but he did not have the philosophic and theoretical background for such a task. And as a result his work became a haphazard ideological expression of political anger, which became one of the cornerstones of Islamic fundamentalism in Iran.

²⁰ See Shams Al-e Ahmad, *Jalal az Cheshm-e Baradar*, [*Jalal From a Brother's Perspective*] (Tehran: Badihiye, 1997): 403-407. [Text in Persian, my translation.]

Al-e Ahmad saw that in the young Israel there was no pressure on people to change their attire or appearance to become modern. In fact he saw the issue of what kind of attire people chose to wear had nothing to do with their abilities to function within the modern world. And yet he saw how Iran had become a battleground for what is acceptable to wear and what is not. In his *Westoxication* he criticized simplistic mimicking of Westernness.²¹ He believed that imposition of such simplistic symbols were part of the problem. He also criticized the clergy who had forgotten that they are the source of Islamic values. If they had forgotten how to fight, he thought, no wonder Iran was in such poor shape.²² He concluded by asking the use of concepts such as *martyrdom* and *Sharia* if they are not employed politically.²³

Al-e Ahmad believed the clergy class had the solution for the ills of Iran if only they realized it themselves. Of course the clergy at the time of the revolution had heard of Al-e Ahmad. Khomeini in particular was familiar with Al-e Ahmad's book and on several occasions praised him and his book. In 1962, Khomeini started a political riot in the religious city of Quom, where the top seminary schools in the Shiite world are located. Khomeini politicized the clergy by this act and did not stop until he had toppled the Shah. The 1962 riot was a reaction to Shah's so-called White Revolution, aimed at land reforms all over the country. The clergy were major landowners and stood to lose a great deal of land. This riot by clerics was the beginning of Islamic revolution in Iran. Al-e Ahmad never lost touch with the clergy and in the rest of his writing developed the

²¹See Jalal Al-e Ahmad, *Gharbzadegi*, [*Westoxication*] (Tehran: Entesharat Jamehdaran, 2005): 40. [Text in Persian, my translation.]

²² *Ibid.*: 41.

²³ *Ibid.*: 42 and 57.

discourse of “alienation from Self.” But what was the “Self?” This became the intellectual dilemma addressed by Dr. Ali Shariati.

Dr. Ali Shariati and Revolutionary Shiism

Al-e Ahmad had diagnosed the problem of Shiite identity, but Dr. Shariati prescribed the medicine for recovery, by creating the ideology that later developed into Iranian Shiite fundamentalism. More than anyone else, he was responsible for creating the discourse of “the return to the authentic Self.” He created the Shiite revolutionary self-consciousness. His wife Dr. Poran Shariat Razavi, the author of the most reliable biography of him, has this to say: “Shariati is the undisputed ideologue of Islamic revolution. He considered his greatest achievement to be the transformation of the culture and tradition of his people from an inherited unconscious to a chosen self-conscious school of thought.”²⁴

Shariati was born in 1933 and died mysteriously a little more than a year before the Islamic revolution of 1979, which like Al-e Ahmad, he did not live to see. The fact that both Al-e Ahmad and Shariati died before the revolution made them the objects of fascination for different camps within and outside the circle of power of the Islamic Republic. Shariati lived a relatively short life, yet produced the largest body of work ever dedicated to a single idea in Iran. He created a 35 volume encyclopedic work covering literally every aspect of the ideology of revolutionary Shiism. He made it his life’s mission to provide Iranian youth with an alternative ideology to the then dominant Marxism, nationalism and liberalism. He was the prototype of the Shiite ideologue because he was demanding that Shiite individuals ask themselves who they are and what

²⁴ Poran Shariat Razavi, *Tarhi az yek Zandegi*, [Sketches of a life] (text in Persian) (Tehran: Entesharat Chapakhsh, 1997): 15. [my translation].

they are supposed to do. He was preoccupied with changing the status quo in preparation for a Shiite revolution.²⁵

According to Bazargan, the Islamic revolution of 1979 had two leaders: the spiritual leader, Khomeini and the ideological leader, Shariati.²⁶ To be the ideological leader of the Islamic revolution was not an easy job. He prepared himself for the task from early on. At the age of thirteen (1946-47) he had his intellectual awakening and his fascination with philosophy and metaphysical questions began. Politically these were very significant years in Iran. As a teenager he experienced the hubbub of Reza Shah's imposed modernization, but also the Allied occupation of Iran, explored in chapter three. In 1958 he got a degree in literature and went to the Sorbonne for his Ph.D., which he finished in 1963. His youth was spent also in the exciting period of Dr. Mosaddeq's anti-colonial movement and he was a student in Paris in the 1960's. These formative periods and experiences with ideological politics helped him form his own unique ideology.

While in Paris, Shariati immersed himself in French society to gain a first-hand experience of European life. In his autobiographical notes, he mentions that he intentionally cut all contacts with the Iranian community in Paris to have an authentic French experience.²⁷ He learned French and translated *La Prière* by Alexis Carrel on the significance of prayer for the modern individual by the end of his first year in Paris. He also learned about the liberation movements of Asia, Africa and the Algerian war of

²⁵ See Daryush Shayegan, *Qu'est-ce qu'une révolution religieuse?*, (Paris: Albin Michel, 1991): 222.

²⁶ See Mehdi Bazargan, "Introduction" in Jafar Saidi, *Shakhsiat wa Andisheye Doctor Ali Shariati, [Personality and ideas of Doctor Ali Shariati]* (Tehran: Chapakhsh, 1997): 19. [Text in Persian, my translation.]

²⁷ See Ali Shariati, *Goftogohaye Tanhaee, Majmoaye Asar, 33 Bakhsh Awal, [Solitary Conversations, Collected Works, Vol. 33, Part One]* (Tehran: Entesharat Agah, 2001): 50. [Text in Persian, my translation.]

independence fascinated him especially. In 1961 he participated in a demonstration organized by the African community to protest against the murder of Patrice Lumumba during the Congo crisis. The demonstration turned violent and Shariati was arrested. Prison was another educational experience for him. Soon he became a star among African activists and made many political friends. His political debates with his African friends were recorded and later published in many African anti-colonial papers, making him so famous that faced with his deportation if convicted, the judge who was a socialist acquitted him.²⁸ This was not his only experience of prison. Upon his return to Iran, he was arrested several times by SAVAK, the Shah's notorious secret police. In fact, he was harassed by the Iranian secret police for the rest of his life. Perhaps his encounter with the dangers of political activism under an autocratic regime motivated him to design an entire theory of martyrdom. His theory of martyrdom in fact was a great tool used by the Ayatollahs to recruit young people for the revolution, and also for the war against Iraqi invasion shortly after the revolution.

Shariati developed his theory of martyrdom by direct reference to the archetype of Shiite martyrs Imam Hussein, the grandson of prophet Mohammad. As a minority the Shiites lost the battle for sovereignty over the Muslim polity, but when Islam was only 60 years old and none of the founders were still alive, another battle happened in Karballa, in present day Iraq. This battle was the climax of the Shiite-Sunni conflict. The leader of the Shiites was Hussein, the grandson of Prophet Mohammad, who was killed with his supporters. Hussein's death in Karballa became the archetype of Shiite martyrdom. The

²⁸ See Poran Shariat Razavi, Tarhi az yek Zandegi, [Sketches of a life] (Tehran: Entesharat Chapakhsh, 1997): 71. [Text in Persian, my translation.]

famous elaborate processions, self-flagellations and passion plays we see each year in major Shiite cities of Iraq and Iran commemorate that day when Hussein was martyred.

Shariati used the historic event of Karbala and the figure of Hussein to design a modern theory of martyrdom. First he explained that the Islamic Shiite revolution was begun by Hussein in Karbala. He explains martyrdom in an interesting manner explaining how certain transformations occur. He argued that having a deep knowledge of an idea or person makes that idea or person part of us.²⁹ He then explains how the ordinary is transformed to a higher level of existence, using analogies. For example, if a person sacrifices his or her time or money for justice, that money or time, are no longer ordinary phenomena. They are no longer meaningless but become ennobled and elevated to the level of justice itself because they become part of a whole, which is justice. This transformation gives money and time a noble meaning and elevates them from their meaningless materiality. Then he explains that if mundane and ordinary things can become noble, so can ordinary people become sacred through such transformations.³⁰ He described a martyr thus:

Shaheed, martyr, is someone who negates his/her entire physical existence on the way of a sacred ideal. And that Sacred ideal is the very origin of all things sacred. Therefore when an individual sacrifices himself/herself the sacred essence of that ideal, which he/she sacrificed himself/herself for, is transferred entirely to his/her negated existence. It is true that in the moment his/her physical existence has been reduced to "nothing" but at the same time he/she acquires the value of his/her ideal. Now that sacred ideal is he or she in an absolute manner. And it is due to this transformation that the martyr is now remembered as a holy person and not just a normal individual. He/she becomes absolutely sacred. It is in this

²⁹ Ali Shariati, *Hussein Wareth-e Adam, Majmoaye Asar*, 19, [Hussein the Inheritor of Adam, collected works, Vol. 19.] (Tehran: Entesharat Qalam, 2004): 198. [Text in Persian, my translation.]

³⁰ *Ibid.*: 199.

manner that a relative individual, an ordinary person, is transferred into an absolute individual or eternal person.³¹

Shariati wrote these lines to create a generation of fighters who were not afraid of death. In the 1970's, there were many poor, desperate young people in Iran who found in Shariati's teaching a shortcut to a meaningful afterlife and an easy way out of their inherited misery. Shariati created a cause and a way out. He gave birth to three genres of martyrs: (i) those who sacrificed themselves to win the revolution of 1979; (ii) those who sacrificed themselves in the fight against Iraq in the dreary years of Iran-Iraq war; and (iii) the early Shiite suicide bombers who were disenchanted with the revolution and wanted to rule over the Islamic Republic and its direction. These were early urban Shiite revolutionaries who wanted a Shiite fundamentalist regime to have a socialist economy; they were declared counter-revolutionaries by the Ayatollahs and terrorist by U.S. security agencies.

Shariati politicized the concept of martyrdom and made it a part of political vocabulary of the Shiite revolutionaries. He made simple individuals feel part of a grand project of Shiite history, creating a mission for them. In his writings, he emphasised that when a sacred school of thought or ideal is in decline, risks being lost forever, it is through the sacrifice often of a single individual that it can be restored and saved from oblivion.³² Shariati argued that martyrdom is the final stage of human evolution because through martyrdom the individual can join the absolute and the perfect.³³ In this way Shariati made the forgotten strata of Iranian society an instrumental part of a cosmic plan

³¹ *Ibid.*: 201.

³² *Ibid.*: 202.

³³ *Ibid.*: 210.

and design, not just in an existential and spiritual way, but more so in an ideological and political manner.

Shariati repeatedly refers to the martyrdom of Hussein as a political act, unlike any other, and the start of a permanent Shiite revolution.³⁴ He invokes a seventh century event in Islamic history and draws conclusions for the present time. To be a perpetual Shiite revolutionary creates the authentic Self to which he was trying to bring everyone else back. Hussein's act was in defiance of Sunni sovereignty over Muslim affairs in the seventh century. And Shariati tells us that this struggle is never over. For him there is no separation between religion and politics, so the question becomes who has the right to rule Iran now? To answer this question, Shariati developed another ideological concept, which has defined the political destiny of Iran to date. Using ideas from the early days of Islam, he created an ideology for the twentieth century Shiites based this time on *Imamat*. In the first chapter, I explained that when the prophet of Islam died, he did not leave any instructions regarding how subsequent rulers should be chosen. The difference of opinion regarding this is the heart of Shiite/Sunni division. The Shiites called the leader of the community *Imam* and this type of rulership is called *Imamat*. *Imam* is an Arabic word that for the Sunnis means just leader or the one who leads the prayer. It is neither a title nor anything more profound than its dictionary meaning, i.e. leader, any leader. But for Shiites, this is a fundamental concept. *Imam* distinguishes a Shiites believer from any one else. The Shiite's religious duty is to submit to the religious and political leadership and guidance of the *Imam*. That is one of the most famous fundamentals of the Shiite doctrine. Traditionally there were twelve *Imams* and the last one went into occultation

³⁴ See *Ibid.*: 204.

one thousand years ago. Ever since, the concept of *Imam* was an esoteric idea. But Shariati brought this idea into the twentieth century to serve as a model for modern political rule for the Shiites.

In 1969, Shariati wrote his significant essays regarding the concept of *Imamat* and, therefore, laid down the ideological framework of political rule in Shiite fundamentalism. His writing in this period was a clear rejection of modern democracy as the source of just rule. He saw democracy instead as a source of colonialism. He argued, "Colonialism, as the crime of Europe against non-European nations, was the product of democracy and liberalism. Crimes of colonialism were the crime of democracy and Western liberalism in the nineteenth and twentieth century."³⁵ It is in these writings that he proposes the system of *Imamat* as an alternative to communism and democracy. But his main theme is criticism of democracy and liberalism. He believes that *Imamat* can lead society toward absolute good.³⁶ And if this means a measure of inconvenience and discomfort for the majority so be it, for *Imamat* is a rejection of democracy.³⁷ In his explanation of *Imamat* Shariati went back to the beginnings of the conflict between the Sunnis and the Shiites. He believed the Sunnis who won the struggle in early Islamic history acted unjustly and diverted from the true path. He wrote that they strayed away from the truth of Islam by succumbing first to democratic rule and second to the separation of religion from politics.³⁸ Shariati believed that, from then on, Muslims went astray because Sunnis practiced democracy. Then Muslim rulers became kings and sultans, which basically instituted secular rule and separated politics from religion.

³⁵ Ali Shariati, *Ali, Majmoaye Asar, 26, [Ali, collected works, Vol.26]* (Tehran: Nashre Amon, 2005): 474-5. [Text in Persian, my translation.]

³⁶ *Ibid.*: 391-2.

³⁷ *Ibid.*: 390.

³⁸ *Ibid.*: 449.

Shariati was writing these ideas when Iranians were ruled by a secular tyrant, and were very unhappy with him. Ten year later Iranians established an Islamic regime which openly violated and negated democratic and liberal values.

Shariati revived the old and almost forgotten concept of *Imamat* and elaborated it as an ideal for Shiites. He put the Imam beyond democratic accountability. People should have only one relation to *Imam* and that is absolute obedience. Their acceptance or rejection is a sign of their faith or the lack of it.³⁹ Shariati strips people of rational choice; indeed warns them against the exercise of reason and urges them to follow faith. The late 1970s was a turbulent time in Iran. Despite increased oil revenues, the nation was getting poorer, with agriculturalists and urban merchants suffering the most. There was no economic prosperity in the villages resulting in a mass migration of peasants adding to the unemployed masses living in the slums of big cities. One cause was that in the economic deals to achieve oil exports to the Western countries, Iran had to import many commodities which left traditional merchants and producers out in the cold. These along with radical students and many other disenfranchised strata of Iranian society were an eager audience for Shariati and also for Khomeini's messages and speeches.

At this time, Khomeini was in exile in the Iraqi city Najaf. In the mid and late 1970's Iranians in large numbers went to Najaf for pilgrimage, and they always visited Khomeini and listened to his sermons. They were usually illiterate and recorded his sermons on audiocassette tapes to bring back to Iran as souvenirs. Soon an underground network of recording and distributing these tapes started. Khomeini was basically leading the revolution of 1979 through these tapes. Shariati also gave many lectures in mosques

³⁹ *Ibid.*: 446-7.

and Shiite gathering places (*Husseiniey*) around the same time. His lectures also were recorded on tapes and distributed massively and later printed as books. These tapes called for an end to monarchy and a Shiite revolution. Shariati died mysteriously in 1977 on his way to England, when Khomeini's eldest son also died mysteriously, both deaths Iranians blamed on the Shah's secret police. These deaths contributed to the popularity of the messages of Khomeini and Shariati.

III. The Islamic Revolution of 1979

It is important to recall the two concepts developed by Shariati: martyrdom and *Imamat*. By now devout Shiites were calling Khomeini *Imam* Khomeini, a title not used for a thousand years. By 1977 there was no doubt in the minds of the devout Shiites of Iran that Khomeini had acquired the status of a saint. So the Shiites believed he should be their sovereign, not a Shah who didn't care about them. By the late 1970's Iranian Shiites were demanding radical regime change. They believed the Shah had no respect for their beliefs. In 1976, Shah changed the Islamic calendar to a Persian imperial system indicating a break with Islam and return to the pre-Islamic monarchy. The actions of his regime were unlike those of true ancient monarchy of 25 centuries earlier when Cyrus, founded the ancient Persian Empire. Cyrus did not persecute his subjects for their religious beliefs, but liberated them. And furthermore Cyrus only called himself a king when he had turned his country into a superpower. Both Iranian nationalists and the Shiites knew these facts and the Shah's actions did not approximate the actions of the respected ancient monarch. In 1977, rallies and demonstrations began, finally moving toward a full-scale revolution against the Shah's rule. In 1978, martial law was

announced, but people were not intimidated. They had a leader whom they considered the *Imam* and not to follow him would be contrary to their religious beliefs. They did not hesitate to sacrifice their lives believing they would be martyrs. The Shah's regime completely underestimated the power of this kind of belief system. The final clash came when people ignored martial law and gathered in *Jaleh* Square, in a poor district in Tehran. The military opened fire on the crowd. Hundreds died, creating the first group of martyrs, who received an incredible funeral like those of ancient martyrs. The army fired again and again until the people exhausted the army and the Shah was left with no choice but to flee the country in February 1979.

Khomeini came back to Iran after eleven years in exile. Immediately, a temporary government was established when Khomeini appointed Bazargan as the temporary prime minister. The job of his provisional government was to write a constitution and prepare for the establishment of an Islamic system of governance. During this period, the destiny of the whole country and of the Kurds would be determined.

IV. The Kurds and the Islamic Republic

The Kurds identified neither with Persian nationalism nor with the Shiite revolution. At this point, they still remembered the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad, discussed in chapter three, when the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) established itself as the political party of the Kurds. And now after three decades the KDP returned to the scene demanding democracy for Iran and autonomy for Kurdistan. In the ideological framework of Iranian Shiite fundamentalism, however there was no room for the Sunni Kurds. The Kurds were othered both for their ethnicity and their religious denomination. Moreover, in the

political environment of the Islamic revolution of 1979, speaking of democracy had become heresy. Shariati had produced much ideological literature against democracy, and after the revolution Khomeini also openly rejected democracy:

Those who want to redirect this revolution from its Islamic path, are traitors both to Islam and the country. Those who want to eliminate the Islamic element from our republic are traitors to our country and want to split us. Those who desire to add democracy to our regime are nothing but a confused group influenced by Westoxication.⁴⁰

Khomeini's thought synthesized the ideas of Al-e Ahmad and Shariati. The Islamic regime would tolerate no talk of democratic demands. In this environment the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) returned to the political scene in 1973 when Abd al Rahman Qasemlo assumed its leadership. Qasemlo was a French-educated, European-style socialist who led the KDP under the banner of "Democracy for Iran and Autonomy for Kurdistan." After the 1979 revolution, he also returned from exile and rebuild the party in the Iranian part of Kurdistan so it became the dominant political organization. The fall of the Shah made everything easy. The KDP organized its members in the most strategically efficient way possible. They attacked the military garrisons in all major Kurdish cities seizing the arms and ammunitions; and built the military wing of the party. And now they were demanding autonomy and self-rule in the context of democracy.

In the early days of the revolution, the Ayatollahs had not yet established their power, and there were many factions and political organizations. Even among the religious parties, there was a diverse range of opinion. This led Khomeini to put the fate of the future regime in Iran to a referendum on 30-31 March 1979. The nation was

⁴⁰ Khomeini, Dar Jostojoye Rah az Kalame Imam, Daftar 11. Meligaraee, az bayanat wa Ealamiyehaye Imam Khomeini az sale 1341 ta 1361, [Searching the Path from the Speeches by Imam, Vol. 11. Nationalism, from speeches and writings of Imam Khomeini from 1962 to 1982] (Tehran: Entesharat Amir Kabir, 1983): 43. [Text in Persian, my translation.]

supposed to choose between monarchy or an Islamic Republic. The Kurds found this limited choice troubling. They found it anti-democratic since their preferred choice, i.e. democracy was not on the list. The ideology of Shiite fundamentalism rendered democracy irrelevant and now the Kurds found themselves facing a big challenge. Under the leadership of KDP, the Kurds boycotted the referendum, which went on; and the majority of Iranian Shiites voted yes. As a result on April 1, 1979 Khomeini declared Iran an Islamic Republic.⁴¹ The Kurds lost their first democratic demand. Now the Islamic Republic of Iran was established and the government of Bazargan was to write a constitution. The Kurds demanded that Kurdish autonomy be established in the constitution. But the constitution made no mention of Kurdish autonomy, treating the Kurds as the Shah had done with no respect for the distinct identity of the Kurds.

Around March 1979, a Kurdish delegation went to meet Khomeini in person and presented to him their demands for autonomy, which he rejected outright.⁴² The Kurds were trying all the civic venues possible to get their voice heard. They knew time was crucial if they were to legalize their status and get their rights guaranteed by the new regime. But the Ayatollahs had their own agenda. They were institutionalizing rule by the clergy and their dominance over every aspect of political life. Khomeini had adopted and theorized an idea which parallel Shariati's *Imamat, Velayat-e Faqih*, guardianship of Shiite jurist. This idea became an obstacle within the political system of the Islamic Republic to meaningful democracy because it established an absolute monopoly of power in the hands of the grand Ayatollah, who could override any other political authority.

⁴¹ See Edgar O'Ballance, The Kurdish Struggle, 1920-94, (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1996): 107.

⁴² Nader Entessar, Kurdish Ethnonationalism, (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publisher, Inc., 1992): 32.

This absolute rule by a theologian King, became and still is the biggest obstacle to reform and democratization. At the time, Iranians were unaware of the ramifications of locating such autocratic authority in the hands of clerics. But the Kurds who were eager for self-rule and autonomy, and so sought weaker central government, rejected such rule. The first opposition to *Velayat-e Faqih* came from a Kurdish cleric, Sheikh Izz al-Din Husseini. He denounced *Velayat-e Faqih* as anti-democratic and a disguised form of dictatorship.⁴³ Izz al-Din was a very unconventional Kurdish cleric who openly advocated the separation of religion and state. He argued the mixing the two would end up in oppression and tyranny because politics and government are about difference and opposition, while religion is about dogma and the absolute. The mixing of the two, he believed, does a disservice to both.⁴⁴ He was immediately demonized by the Ayatollahs.

Regardless of the opposition to their demands, the Kurds assumed autonomy and self-rule to be their natural right. So they ignored the Ayatollahs and held local elections for city councils in every Kurdish city. The democratic nature of these city councils attracted political organizations from all over Iran, which all found a safe haven in Kurdistan. As a result, Kurdistan became the recruiting ground for all Iranian opposition political organizations. Soon it became clear that the newly formed Islamic Republic had no authority in Kurdistan, which became the stronghold of opposition to rule by the Ayatollahs. In this period the KDP along with many other smaller organizations provided security and order in Kurdistan. As a result, the government in Tehran denounced the KDP, its secretary general Qasemlo and Izz al-Din as counter-revolutionaries, a charge that carried an automatic death penalty. The Kurds were targeted by the Ayatollah

⁴³ David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, (New York: I.B. Tauris, 1997): 271.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*: 272.

because of the alternatives they were offering: democracy. The government propaganda was that the Kurds are separatists, but since 1973 the KDP had abandoned separatism from Iran as a goal, and claimed to respect the territorial integrity of the country. But Tehran only had a military response to the demands of the Kurds.

During the Bazargan government, several delegates came to Kurdistan trying to resolve the issue, but based on the principle of *Velayat-e Faqih* neither Bazargan nor the delegates had any real authority to resolve the Kurdish issue. The history of attempts at reform in Iran in the last three decades, show that it is impossible to achieve any substantial change in the face of edicts by a supreme leader answerable to no one and whom all must obey. In my opinion this ended politics in post-revolutionary Iran.

One devastating impact of the Pahlavi dynasty had been the Persianization of most parts of Kurdistan. During the reign of the Shah, Kurdistan was carved up into the four Iranian provinces of Kermanshah, western Azerbaijan, Ilam and Kurdistan. In every negotiation with the government, the Kurds would bring up the issue of restoring the integrity of the Kurdish areas and but always faced rejection, including a full-scale war against the Kurds in March 1979. The government forces occupied and pushed Kurdish militia out of the major cities. There were summary executions and Kurdistan became a militarized zone. Despite the brutalities of the new regime, the situation still was not under control, so negotiations began again. This time a sympathetic cleric, Taleghani, was sent to negotiate a peace deal. He seemed to understand the plight of the Kurds, perhaps because he had been a prisoner of conscience under the Shah's regime. He agreed with the Kurds on three major points: recognition of Kurdish language; Kurdish authority in the administration of Kurdistan; and Kurdish participation in drafting of a

new constitution.⁴⁵ But Taleghani who promised many things to the Kurds died mysteriously and the Kurdish issue remained unresolved.

In early August 1979, the KDP sent an open letter to *Ayandegan*, a respected secular newspaper, indicating that the Kurds were not separatist, and wished direct talks with Khomeini to clarify any misunderstanding regarding demands for Kurdish autonomy.⁴⁶ The KDP did this for two reasons; first to try to educate the Persian majority about their issue; and second because they knew only Khomeini had the authority to make any political deal. But instead of a meeting with Khomeini another round of fighting started. The leader of the KDP outlined the perceived confusion of the Iranian authorities over the political terminology used about Kurdish autonomy negotiations, and the hardship created for the Kurds as follows:

From August to November 1979, we had war with the central government. At the end of this period we forced them to negotiate with us. There was no central authority in Tehran. Added to this was the problem that Shiite theory does not accept the concept of nationality—we are supposed to be united as Muslims. At one point I was negotiating with a religious leader over what term to use for autonomy. He would not accept the Persian word *Khodmokhtari* (“self-choice”). I proposed that we use the European word *autonomia*, but that was rejected because it was foreign. I then suggested the Arabic term *Hokm-i dhati* (“self-rule”). But that was no good, and in the end he proposed “Islamic *Khodmokhtari*.” I willingly accepted. But there were others who were preparing a fresh offensive, and in the end their hard-liners won out.⁴⁷

The frustration express by Qasemlo reveals two interesting points. First you could make a deal with any authority including the president, prime minister, or any other government officials, but it meant nothing because one word from Khomeini rendered the

⁴⁵ Nader Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publisher, Inc., 1992): 36.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*: 37.

⁴⁷ Dr. Abdul Rahman Qasemlo, interview by Fred Halliday, *Merip Reports*, July-August 1981. Quoted in Susan Meiselas, *Kurdistan in the Shadow of History*, (New York: Random House, 1997): 284.

deal null and void. The concept of *Velayat-e Faqih* theorized by Khomeini means the ultimate authority resides with a self-appointed *Imam*, Grand Ayatollah or Supreme Leader. Any of the titles designate who is in power based on the principle of *Velayat-e Faqih*. The other point of frustration was the army of unemployed peasant Shiites who could give meaning to their miserable lives only by a so-called meaningful death, i.e. martyrdom. They wanted war no matter what, and Kurds were the first victims and targets of these dangerous ideas, which revealed their truly destructive nature gradually in our time. By the end of September 1979, all of Iranian Kurdistan was subject to the rule of the Islamic Republic and controlled by its Revolutionary Guards, an infamous militia organization built on loyalty to Khomeini whose members were ready to be martyrs any time.

The Kurdish militia were forced into the countryside and the cities were ruled by the forces of the Islamic Republic. At this time period, a reign of revolutionary terror started. Public executions, torture and harassment became a norm. It was as if the whole country was mesmerized by radical Shiite ideas. The radicalism of this period made the headlines in Western media only when a group of radical Shiite students attacked the U.S. embassy on November 4, 1979 and held most of the staff hostage for 444 days. Only then did the world knew what Iranian, Shiite Islamic fundamentalism involved.

The atrocities against the Kurds continued unchecked without notice since the hostage crisis now dominated the media. The Kurds had tried to introduce the discourse of democracy and rule of law to Iranian politics, but found no takers. Soon the Islamic republic eliminated all other rivals from politics, if they would not submit to the absolute rule of the *Imam*. Literally all the members of the early administration of the Islamic

Republic were eliminated one by one: some were executed; others were victims of assassinations but most ended up in exile. They were Shiites who played crucial roles in the success of the revolution, such as Sadegh Qutbzadeh, Khomeini's right hand during his exile in Paris, who was executed. Hassan Banisadr, who was the first president of the Islamic Republic and in whose residence in Paris Khomeini stayed while in exile, ended up in a humiliating exile in France. Daryush Foruhar was assassinated along with his wife. Some negotiations with Kurds had taken a hard line against the Kurds and their demands. The political naïveté and confusion of the time was frustrating for the Kurds. The internal struggle for power among Persian Shiites got worse until the Ayatollahs had established themselves as the dominant group in every area of Iranian politics. The Shiite public was completely radicalized in what essentially had become a fascist state.

The occupation of the U.S. embassy exposed Iran's new political nature, but this did not help the Kurdish cause. In fact it escaped the West's notice that the Kurds were the only secular force opposing the fundamentalist regime from the beginning. They received no recognition or aid despite their lonely struggle against this new phenomenon that would become an international problem.

The 1980's was a complicated period in the history of the Middle East. After the Islamic Republic was established, Afghanistan was invaded by the Soviet Union. In response, a U.S.-backed armed resistance emerged, which later became Taliban. In Iraq Saddam Hussein came to power in 1979 and the same year a fierce rebellion took place in Saudi Arabia, which failed but almost toppled the government. The rebels were sympathizers of Osama Bin Laden. Khomeini initiated a new discourse regarding the export of the Islamic Revolution. This meant trouble for Iraq with a Shiite majority.

Khomeini openly called for the “liberation” of Jerusalem and Karbala, picking a fight with Israel and Iraq at the same time. His goal was Shiite expansionism and Muslim rebellion. Saddam would not stand for this rhetoric and in September 1980 attacked Iran. An eight-year war followed.

V. The Kurds and the Iran-Iraq War

From the beginning of the Islamic revolution it was clear that whether Tehran was ruled by the Shah or Khomeini, Iran would not grant autonomy to Kurds. Nevertheless both the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iraq (KDPI) and the Patriotic Unity of Kurdistan (PUK) supported the 1979 revolution because of Iran’s opposition to Saddam Hussein. The Iraqi Kurds for most of the 1980s ruled themselves while Saddam was busy fighting Iran. Baghdad also used the Iranian Kurds against the Islamic Republic, but still was not too pleased about the actions of Iraqi Kurds.

By 1988, eight years of devastating war had had an enormous effect on the economies of both countries. Ahmad Chalabi gave the following account of its impact on the Iraqi economy:

In 1980 Iraq had \$30 billion dollars in cash, \$35 billion in civilian commodities and at least \$11 billion in weapons. By 1989 Iraq had a foreign debt in excess of \$100 billion and virtually no cash reserves. In the same period Iraq received more than \$119 billion in new oil revenues. If one selects the relevant items and adds the figures, one can see that Iraq spent the staggering sum of \$295 billion between 1980 and 1989.⁴⁸

Iraq was outnumbered by Iranian troops. In post-revolutionary Iran it was seen as a religious duty for people to sacrifice for their beliefs. The Iranian fronts were filled with

⁴⁸Kanan Makiya, Cruelty and Silence (W. W. Norton & Company: New York, London 1993): 275.

eager volunteers and Iraq could not compete. The Iranian leaders decided to use the Iraqi Kurdish opposition to attack Iraq at strategic points, such as the border town of Halabja. The strategic importance of Halabja had been ignored by both sides because the concentration of military activities were mostly in the south around the oil wells and closer to the Persian Gulf.

Halabja with its powerful river of Sirwan and the vital Darbandikhan dam was not just another city, and “ [t]he Iraqi generals [had] been advising President Saddam Hussein to abandon the territory laying east of the lake behind the Darbandikhan dam, south-west Solaymaniya, so as to have that stretch of water as a defense line in front of them. Clearly the president did not accept that advice.”⁴⁹ Only a very small number of Iraqi soldiers were stationed at the eastern side of the lake and therefore the Iraqi Kurds and Iranians were able to capture the whole town with little effort. Iran’s major objective in occupying Halabja was to control the Darbandikhan dam, and the electricity it generated, which meant control of north-eastern Iraq and more importantly control over the supply of electricity to Baghdad. On March 16, 1988 Iraq attacked Halabja with chemical weapons and massacred almost the entire population of the city. This attack was so horrifying it ended the Kurdish resistance.

The Reagan Administration, allied to Saddam, deliberately misinformed the public by suggesting that Iran might have attacked Halabja, thereby indirectly condoning the Baathist campaign of mass killings.⁵⁰ The Reagan Administration wanted Saddam to win the war because Iran then was seen as the enemy. On March 23, 1988 Charles

⁴⁹Godfrey Jansen, "Iraq & the Kurds, Inexcusable, " Middle East International, No. 322, (2 April 1988): 10.

⁵⁰ See Joost R. Hiltermann, A Poisonous Affair. American, Iraq, and the Gassing of Halabja, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 205.

Redman, State Department spokesman, without providing evidence, implied that Iran also have been involved in the attack,⁵¹ which Iraqi officials interpreted that they could get away with any crimes they wished in Kurdistan without incurring U.S. objections. During this campaign of terror from the massacre in Halabja until the invasion of Kuwait (1988-91), more than 80000 Kurdish civilians were killed.⁵²

Today we know that it was the Saddam regime which gassed Halabja and that Reagan supported Saddam against Iran regardless. It did not matter in realist terms what Saddam did to the Kurds. An alliance with him against Iran was more important to Reagan on 'realist grounds than any moral questioning of his actions. Acts such as Halabja were permissible in realist terms. The Kurds are the "other" and so did not count in the face of self-interest. Technologies of othering function on multiple levels. In the Halabja attack, one can see many levels of othering simultaneously. The Kurds were othered by the Arab world because they were fighting against an Arab nation. The Iranians' goal was to use the Kurds as a tool against Saddam regardless of the consequences. The Reagan Administration did not care because it wanted Saddam to defeat Iran in whatever way necessary, hence what happened to the Kurds was of little consequence. So the Kurdish civilians became the victims of a mass killing because one Kurdish political party, Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), had collaborated with Iran. The horrors of Halabja terrorized the Kurds in both Iran and Iraq.

The Iran-Iraq war ended shortly after the Halabja attack and both Iran and Iraq focused more on fighting against Kurdish dissidents. By the end of the war, the Islamic Republic had eliminated all of its internal and external oppositions and established a solid

⁵¹ US Department of State, "Daily Press Briefing," March 23, 1988. quoted in *Ibid.*: 7.

⁵² See *Ibid.*: xiii.

religious autocracy in Iran. The Iranian Kurds did not make any headway with Tehran, and the Islamic regime outlawed any Kurdish nationalist activities.

Conclusion

In this chapter I explored the ideology of Islamic fundamentalism as a technology of othering, arguing that it combines technique and nihilism. Most observers of the Islamic revolution in Iran confuse the issue by using terms such as “theocracy,” “Sharia,” “Jihad” and “Jihadist; etc. In my opinion there is more to it than these obvious expressions convey. The Islamic revolution was not just the result of a fanatic mass of people following their Ayatollahs. Universities, political meetings and rallies organized by modern political parties were also involved. I also demonstrated that there was an intellectual background of Western-educated ideologues to show the impact of nihilism on the revolution. I argue that Islamic fundamentalism in Iran devalued Islamic values. This may not be obvious because on the surface Iran after the revolution underwent an Islamic makeover. This surface aspect of Iran—how people dress and behave in public—does not mean it is a country that restored Islamic values. On the contrary, it is a country in many ways far from Islamic values. To remain on the surface and judge Iran by how it looks limits our observation to visual ideology. We must see beyond the veil.

What happened in Iran was another combination of technique and nihilism. As in other cases I have examined, it is a reactive nihilism which negated imperialist domination. Imperialism itself was nihilism which trapped Iran into a cycle of nihilism, operating on multiple levels. The first wave of nihilism came with British imperialist domination, which rendered Iran weak, poor and resentful. Then came Reza Shah’s

reactive nihilism, explored in chapter five. It continued with his son until it exhausted itself completely. By its overpowering negations, nihilism exhausts people both in discourse and in practice. By the late 1970s, Iran was exhausted by reactive nihilism in the form of oppressive reforms which remained superficial. This exhaustion exploded into a religious revolution, again a reactive nihilism, as a reaction to an aggressive reactionary form of modernization.

The forced modernization period in Iran had by the time of the revolution lasted more than half a century (1921-1979), but had not manage to modernize Iran in any meaningful way. The masses then turned the clock back, in a manner of speaking. Tired and exhausted they wanted to return to themselves. I developed the idea of recoiling back as reactive nihilism in chapter one, here I apply it to the Iranian Islamic revolution. I argue that Islamic revolution is also reactive nihilism. Although there were differences between Reza Shah's banning of the veil and Khomeini making it compulsory, they are like a pair of scissors which although opposed cut the same thing. Reactive nihilism is capable of creating its own opposite to do its job.

I argued that Al-e Ahmad's texts in the name of anti-imperialism contributed to hatred for the West, and that Shariati promoted hatred of democracy. Both were reactive nihilists. Shariati provided the theoretical ground for the absolute rule of the Ayatollahs by reviving the terms *Imam* and *Imamat*. Prior to his writings Imam was mostly a part of Shiite mythology and could not be perceived as a real person. Shariati gave the concept of *Imam* a reality and a project: a modern Shiite revolution. In this respect, political technology and nihilism were the foundations of Iranian Islamic revolution. The Kurds were the first target of revolutionary violence in Iran but the U.S. hostage crisis happened

and so the Kurds did not get much attention. They were targeted because they demanded autonomy and democratic rule in Iran, and challenged the regime's legitimacy. Since the Kurds were not Shiites, the rule of the clergy had no legitimacy for them. Besides the Kurds received the memories of Mahabad Republic from their parents' generation and the demise of the monarchy brought hope that they might get some kind of self-rule. But they did not and the wars went on.

Kurds again were confronted with nihilism in their fight against Iran's Islamic revolution. The Kurds were mobilized by participating in modern political parties and organizations, and were more progressive than the rest of Iran because of their recent history of political opposition. They failed partly because political technology of othering and the overpowering forces of nihilism overwhelmed them; consequently all Kurdish nationalist activities became clandestine.

When the Kurdish uprisings resumed in 1980s, the international community was exhausted with issues and crowded by realist international politics. Even the chemical attack on Halabja was viewed with confusion and ambiguity. This incident was the ultimate experience of nihilism and technology. Halabja was a horrible combination of military and political technology. With Halabja the awesome negating force of technology was revealed and many Kurds were othered by extermination. The Kurds also were othered by discourse, diplomacy and international relations theory. They came face to face with nihilism and ultimate power of technology of othering.

Chapter Eight:

The Gulf Wars (1990-2003) and Kurdish Destiny

The Baathist aggression that ended with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in the 1990 had its roots in the militarization of the Iraqi state in the 1980s. The Iraqi alliance with U.S. and its further militarization due to the war against Iran, was the background for the Kuwait invasion. And the economic hardships suffered due to the long Iran-Iraq war gave Iraq the motivation to invade Kuwait. To what extent was the neorealism of the U.S. foreign policies regarding Iraq in this period responsible for Iraq's aggressions? In what ways did Realpolitik unfold in the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait? How was the U.S.'s relationship with Saddam an expression of Realpolitik? What role did Baathist ideology play; and what effects did the aggression have on the Kurds?

In this chapter I examine the U.S.-Iraqi alliance to demonstrate its neorealist nature. I argue that U.S. foreign policy with regard to Iraq in the 1980s was nihilistic in that it produced a result opposite to its intended goals. In this period the technologies of othering employed took the most horrible forms experienced since the Nazi regime, including the use of weapons of mass destruction, gross violations of human rights and eventually the crime of genocide committed by Saddam's regime. His acts were largely ignored because of his strategic importance in fighting the Iranians. I use the theoretical framework developed in chapters one and two exploring in particular relationships among nihilism, technologies of othering, realism and neorealism. I consider the 2003 Iraq invasion from the international relations perspective and show its relations to

nihilism and political technologies of othering arguing that the cycle of violence this war created continues because of the reactive nature of nihilism. I also explore the Kurdish situation vis-à-vis the two Gulf wars. I examine the Kurdish uprising during the 1990 invasion of Kuwait, which ended tragically with a mass exodus. Then I explain the conditions that led to creation of a no fly-zone by the U.S. and de facto Kurdish independence from Baghdad. And finally I examine the second gulf war, which ended with the fall of Saddam, his trial and ultimately his execution. I conclude with the situation of the Kurds regarding the possibilities for the future from what so far has been experienced.

I. The First Gulf War

On August 2, 1990 Kuwait was invaded by Iraqi troops. At the time, many people believed that Gulf War, the first major post-Cold War conflict, was a result of which was the U.S.'s "New World Order " policy. Coined by the first Bush administration (1989-1993), it announced that the U.S. as global hegemon would ensure a new world order of prosperity and peace in which aggression or invasion would be stopped quickly. But the reality of the post-Cold War period showed this to be a dream. Nevertheless the Gulf War was very internationalized, so produced hope that UN forces could provide security around the world with U.S. might behind them. But the events of the war and the politics around it showed this also was unrealistic.

Saddam invaded Kuwait for several reasons. Economic reasons were one of the principle causes of the War. First, the summer of 1990 was a critical period for the Iraqi economy. Eight years of devastating war with Iran had depleted its economy and the

entire economic infrastructure of Iraq was subordinated to a militarized state. In 1990, despite Iraq's desperate need for foreign currency, all of its foreign exchange was spent on debt repayment and military spending. The termination of U.S. credits and the lack of domestic industries other than oil added to the crisis. The Iraqi military state was extremely costly and totally dependent on oil revenues. Therefore oil prices and oil politics became a principle axis of the Gulf crisis. Iraq considered the Kuwaitis' plan, supported by the Gulf Sheikdoms, to lower oil prices an act of economic war. Saddam openly threatened war against Kuwait and finally invaded it on August 2, 1990.

There were also socio-political reasons for the first Gulf war. Arab nationalism and Saddam's claim to lead the Arab nation was another motive for invading Kuwait. Frustrated Arabs, disappointed in their own leaders, believed in Saddam's ability to lead the Arab people. This and support from the masses and intellectuals boosted Saddam's belief in his invincibility. Hisham Djaïet, a graduate of the Sorbonne and Tunisia's best known intellectual said in an interview with *L'Express*:

Iraq and Saddam Husain [sic] bring hope to the Arab world. For twenty years, the Arab world has been stuck in a frigid, depressing, virtually rotten order: a Saudi-American order whose vision does not go beyond petrodollars. Henceforth a new perspective is opening up, that of unification. And Iraq is its pole and motor.¹

Djaïet's view was shared by many other Arab intellectuals at the time of the first Gulf war. Their support of Saddam's invasion of Kuwait ignored his history of human rights violations and brutalities against citizens of Iraq including Kurds and Shiites. They were simply caught up in the moment and overwhelmed by their anti-imperialist beliefs and

¹ *L'Express*, February 7, 1991. Quoted in Kanan Makiya, *Cruelty and Silence* (W. W. Norton & Company: New York, London 1993): 242.

closed their eyes to Saddam's totalitarian goals. These intellectuals fell into the traps of reactive nihilism. In response to the *L'Express* interviewer, Djaïet explains how he would justify the annexation of Kuwait:

I don't have to tell you, as Europeans, that your nations were born out of wars. In annexing Kuwait, Saddam Husain has entered into the dynamics of history. He was trying to make sure of a source of wealth for himself, material means. In addition, he was undertaking the beginning of the unification of the Arab world. Sometimes legitimacy is more important than legality.²

Arab nationalists were so frustrated by the then-current situation that they would submit to a tyrant like Saddam and portrayed him as an idealized leader. Most of the literature from this period by Arab intellectuals speaks of forgetting the tyranny of Saddam and submitting to his leadership for the sake of the Arab fatherland. The support for Saddam reached levels that worried the governments of Egypt, Morocco and Syria which had condemned Saddam's invasion of Kuwait.

Another thing that Saddam exploited to great effect was linking the Palestinian problem to Kuwait. When his invasion of Kuwait became an international crisis, Saddam agreed to withdraw from Kuwait with the condition that Israel withdraw from occupied Palestinian territories, which brought him a lot of support from Arab masses. Saddam's attempt to relate the Gulf crisis to the Palestinian problem enflamed anti-imperialist and anti-Israeli sentiments among Arab nationalists, making nationalism the main concern of the Arab intellectuals during the Gulf crisis of 1990. This nationalism acting as reactive nihilism ignored Saddam's tyranny, his violations of human rights and brutalities. Saddam used Arab nationalism as a political technique to expand his leadership in the Arab world. I explained earlier that the nihilism of imperialism created reactive nihilism in Iraq in the form of Baathist ideology. During the 1990s, this reactive nihilism

² *Ibid.*

expanded into blind support for Saddam among other Arabs as his leadership cult spread.

As Kanan Makiya puts it:

This world of attitudes, emotional responses, and cultural images does not need a well-constructed political ideology to make itself felt in speech and intellectual discourse. An "issue" is all that it takes to bring that flameless emotional amalgam bursting out into the open. On August 2, 1990, Kuwait became that issue. In less than two weeks, "linkage" fused Kuwait onto the Palestinian question. The most ominous sentence in the Djaïet interview -- "legitimacy is more important than legality"³ -- was a sentiment shared by every Arab who couldn't see what all the fuss over Kuwait was about, but could only see the unfolding of yet another grand Western design against the Arab world.⁴

Admiration for Saddam's leadership against Western powers made many Arab observers forget or forgive his totalitarian regime. In fact one reason for Saddam's attack on Kuwait lay in the totalitarian nature of the Iraqi state. Throughout his rule over Iraq, Saddam constructed a fierce police state in which no form of opposition was tolerated. What emboldened Saddam was that his crimes against the Kurds either went unnoticed or were forgotten far too quickly. Two years before his invasion of Kuwait Saddam let loose his campaign of genocide against the Kurds. After many debates, investigations and collection of evidence finally in 1993, Middle East Watch, a division of Human Rights Watch released its report on Iraqi Kurdistan and concluded that Saddam's regime was guilty of crimes of genocide against Iraqi Kurds. The Middle East Watch report indicated that "the attack on Halabja, in March 1988, in which up to 5,000 Kurdish civilians died,"⁵ was only the tip of the iceberg.

Middle East Watch has recorded forty separate attacks [using poison gas] on Kurdish targets, some of them involving multiple sorties over several days, between April 1987 and August 1988.... By our estimate, in Anfal at least 50,000 and possibly as many as 100,000 persons, many of them

³ Reference to Djaïet's interview with *L'Express*.

⁴ Makiya, Kanan, *Cruelty and Silence* (W. W. Norton & Company: New York, London 1993): 252.

⁵ Human Rights Watch, *Genocide in Iraq, the Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds, a Middle East Watch Report*, (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1993): xiv.

women and children, were killed out of hand between February and September 1988.⁶

Anfal is the code name for the Kurdish genocide of 1987-1989. Anfal, is the title of eighth verse of Quran which mean 'the Spoils.' To use a Quranic term for such a heinous crime is the utmost expression of nihilism. The Middle East Watch report draws a parallel between Nazi and Baathist bureaucratic techniques in their methodic crimes of genocide and concludes that, "Iraq's crimes against the Kurds amount to genocide, the "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such. "⁷ "⁸ The report further elaborates on the characteristics of Anfal as follows:

The campaigns of 1987-1989 were characterized by the following gross violations of human rights:

- Mass summary executions and mass disappearance ...
- widespread use of chemical weapons, ...
- wholesale destruction of some 2,000 villages, ... at least a dozen larger towns ...
- wholesale destruction of civilian objects by Army engineers, including all schools, mosques, wells and other non-residential structures ...
- looting of civilian property and farm animals ...
- arbitrary arrest of all villagers ...
- arbitrary jailing and warehousing for months, in conditions of extreme deprivation, of tens of thousands of women, children and elderly people, without judicial order or any cause other than their presumed sympathies for the Kurdish opposition.
- forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of villagers upon the demolition of their homes,
- destruction of the rural Kurdish economy and infrastructure. ⁹

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ As defined in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (hereinafter the Genocide Convention), 78 UNTS 277, approved by GA Res. 2670 on December 9, 1948, entered into force January 12, 1951.

⁸ Human Rights Watch, Genocide in Iraq, the Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds, a Middle East Watch Report, (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1993): 5.

⁹ *Ibid.*: 4-5.

The report concludes that, “[t]o use the language of the Genocide Convention, the regime's aim had been to *destroy the group* (Iraqi Kurds) *in part*, and it had done so. Intent and act had been combined, resulting in the consummated crime of genocide.”¹⁰

Throughout the 1980's, Saddam's campaign of terror went unchecked. Throughout this period, the U.S. regarded Saddam's atrocities against the Kurds as Iraq's internal affairs or side effects of the Iran – Iraq war.¹¹ In fact, the U.S. wanted a strong Saddam to intimidate and preferably defeat Iran. The U.S. had been supplying Iraq with money and goods to wear out the Iranians. But Saddam used the opportunity to massacre Kurds. During 1987-88 more than 100,000 Kurdish civilians were massacred.¹² The U.S. saw this as a government dealing with rebels and traitors. Saddam was seen as America's man who was dealing with the Ayatollahs. So, despite some efforts to stop him, Saddam received considerable support from the U.S. even when his gas attacks on Kurdish civilians became known.

Between 1983 and 1988, the United States had supplied Iraq with more than \$500 million per year in credits so it could purchase American farm products under a program called the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC). After the September 1988 attack, Senator Claiborne Pell introduced a sanctions package on Capitol Hill that would have cut off agricultural and manufacturing credits to Saddam Hussein as punishment for his killing of unarmed civilians.... But the Bush administration, instead of suspending the CCC program or any of the other perks extended to the Iraqi regime, in 1989, a year *after* Hussein's savage gassing attacks and deportations had been documented, doubled its commitment to Iraq, hiking annual CCC credits above \$1 billion.¹³

This filled Saddam with confidence that he could do anything and get away with it. On April 2, 1990 Saddam acknowledged that he had chemical weapons and openly

¹⁰ *Ibid.*: 20.

¹¹ See Samantha Power, A Problem from Hell, America and the Age of Genocide, (New York: Perennial, 2003): 172.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*: 173.

threatened to use them against Israel. Even then, the first Bush's administration, and many in the Republican Party, did not understand what Saddam was about. In mid-April 1990 a congressional delegation including senator Bob Dole, met with Saddam and reported that he was a good friend of the U.S. and president Bush.¹⁴ When Saddam invaded Kuwait on August 2, 1990, and made his cousin Ali Al-Majid, who had gassed the Kurds, military governor of occupied Kuwait, the U.S. and its allies finally understood. Eventually the United State and some of its allies went to war with Saddam on January 17, 1991. The U.S. goal was to liberate Kuwait and prevent Saddam's possible aggression against Saudi Arabia, however, the Bush administration still did not want to remove Saddam. Frankly to this date no one knows just what the Bush administration intended. On the one hand, they easily could have removed Saddam, and yet left him in power, while encouraging uprisings in Iraq. The Kurds and the Shiites did rise up against Saddam but received no support. The Kurds rebelled against Saddam and from March 6 to March 30, 1991 held much of Iraqi Kurdistan. But then the U.S. forces let Saddam loose again. Perhaps because the Sunni Arab neighbors of Iraq were afraid the increased Shiite and Kurdish power would destabilize the traditional balance of power in the region. In any case, Saddam extracted heavy revenge. For more then two weeks in the freezing cold more than 1.3 million Kurds were scattered throughout the mountains on the Turkish and Iranian border. Eventually on April 16, 1991 with the help of NATO's air power, a No-Fly zone was created to protect the Kurds from Saddam's planned revenge and let them return to their homes in the Kurdish cities of Iraq. Their return was a major relief. Saddam's revenge from the uprising was avoided and they now could

¹⁴ See *Ibid.*: 235.

manage their own affairs. The major reason for NATO's creation of No-Fly zone, however, was Turkish concern that a further flood of Kurdish refugee would cross its borders. No one could predict the impact on Turkey's Kurds if more than a million Iraqi Kurds took refuge in Turkish Kurdistan. The result could have been solidarity between the two Kurdish populations and unrest beyond Turkish control. Regardless Turkey refused to house the Kurdish refugees from Iraq. There was no alternative for them other than to stay in Iraqi Kurdistan but to prevent Saddam from bombarding them. For the first time the international public had seen what Kurds were going through making it impossible to ignore the situation. The creation of No-Fly zone freed the Kurds from Saddam's tyranny and helped them gradually establish their own autonomous regional government.

II. The Kurdistan Regional Government

When the Kurds return from their days in the mountains they did not just come to their houses they came back to their "country." The experience was so hard on them that some kind of almost collective spiritual awakening occurred. They worked hard with very little to build their own regional government. Since 1991 they have been building and bettering this government of their own which hasn't been much recognized.

Under protection of NATO airpower, the Kurds put together the main elements of a political and civic order in less than a year and created conditions in which to build a representative democracy for most of the traditionally Kurdish territory of Iraq (see figure 7, page 299.) In May 1992, the Kurds held their first election. But Kurdish efforts to win

Figure 7: The areas under the control of Kurdish Regional Government since 1991.

Brendan O'Leary, John McGarry, and Khaled Salih, ed., *The Future of Kurdistan in Iraq*, (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2005): 25.

recognition and monitoring assistance from United Nations failed. To this date, the UN has not acknowledged any of the achievements of Kurdish people in Iraq. The United Kingdom and United States welcomed the election, but both warned against separatism. The European Union encouraged the Kurdish effort for autonomy.¹⁵

The Kurds have waited for self-rule throughout their modern history. So when the opportunity presented itself, they held two elections: one for a Kurdish National Assembly and one for the presidency of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). By July 1992, the Kurds had established all of the ministries and processes necessary for a representative democracy. Since then a free press has emerged and the full practice of freedom of speech has developed in Kurdistan laying part of the basis for a liberal democracy. The government is transparent, and includes minorities and women in ruling, and representing all segments of society, as best as it can.

Although the Kurdistan Regional Government is almost independent from Baghdad it has not declared Kurdistan as an independent country. Since its establishment in 1992, the Kurdistan parliament has insisted that the Kurdistan Regional Government is in a federal union with the rest of Iraq. But will they hold to this position in the future? The problem of declaring an independent state or not has much to do with the political conditions in the countries surrounding Kurdistan. The nation-states of Iraq and Turkey were created in the twentieth century in part as products of colonial engineering of the region's geopolitics. The states of Iran, Iraq and Turkey are the major obstacle to the creation of an independent Kurdistan. Their continuous threats and military capability to carry out these threats create an environment of intimidation and insecurity such that no

¹⁵ Karim Yildiz, The Kurds in Iraq, the Past, the Present and the Future, (London: Pluto Press, 2004): 44-45.

one in the international community wants to entertain the possibility of a fully independent Kurdistan. In the absence of such support the Kurdish leadership also has given up this idea, at least for the moment. Given the difficulties and hardship that the Kurds have endured, most stateless nations would choose independence. But instead the leaders of Kurdistan Talabani and Barzani have said that they would not pursue full independence for Kurdistan. In 1992, Barzani said in a radio interview: "The situation in the world today is such that it will not permit any changes in regional borders. Nor will it stand for any partitioning."¹⁶ Talabani said the same thing for a Turkish newspaper. "We do not want to break away from Iraq; we [only] want a democratic Iraq."¹⁷ But none of these statements made life any easier for the Kurdish public.

The Kurdish public, who hoped for a better life away from Saddam's tyranny faced the grim reality that life is not going to be that easy. Because both Saddam and the other regional adversaries of a Kurdish state were functioning within the system of international relations which let them abuse their powers as states to control the destiny of the Kurds. This Kurdish enclave was only accessible by land – roads connected Kurdistan to Turkey, Iran and Saddam-controlled Iraq – until the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq. While Turkey, Iran and Saddam controlled Kurdistan's connection with the outside world, the Kurds suffered tremendous economic hardships. On the northern side, Turkey was in full control of the flow of goods and commodities vital for day-to-day life in Kurdistan. And inside Iraqi, Saddam's regime was still in control, because the Kurdish enclave was still considered part of Iraq. Iraq was under economic sanctions which

¹⁶ Quoted in Michael M. Gunter, The Kurdish Predicament in Iraq, A Political Analysis, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999): 133.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Saddam's regime passed on by establishing its own embargo on the economy of Kurdistan. Kurdistan was under two economic embargos, which the Western countries and international organizations ignored. Establishing a functioning economy to match its functioning political and civic infrastructure became a major dilemma for the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), especially regarding which currency the KRG should use and rely on. Sheri Laizer notes:

In May 1993, Saddam Hussein abolished the 25-dinar note, the currency most in use in Kurdistan. Saddam gave the Iraqi people only five days during which to exchange their old money for the new Baghdad issue note. He promptly closed the internal borders with Kurdistan, as well as those with external states, cutting Kurdistan off from the rest of the country, and left the Kurds to watch helplessly as their money and savings were literally lost overnight.

That morning following this announcement the main streets of Arbil [the seat of KRG] were chaotic with Kurds mobbing the banks to register their 25-dinar notes before the expiry of the deadline. The scene remained unchanged during the next four days. But after registering their old 25-dinar notes there was no guarantee of compensation. Chaos ensued. The abolition of the dinar note threw the economy into confusion and inspired the fear that other denominations currently in use might suffer the same fate.¹⁸

To date, the issue of a reliable currency has remained unsolved in the Kurdish region of Iraq. So-called free Kurdistan as declared by the KRG Kurds was subject to (i) the UN's confused and ineffective policies, (ii) Saddam's economic control and (iii) the Turkish border control. This resulted in economic isolation and no political recognition of KRG.

For the Kurds it was a big disappointment that every aspect of their economic life still depended on decisions made in Baghdad and Turkey. Although Kurdistan was rich in energy resources, yet energy was scarce throughout the 1990's. By controlling the

¹⁸ Sheri Laizer, Martyrs, Traitors and Patriots: Kurdistan after the Gulf War, (London & New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd., 1996): 110.

electricity supply, for example, Saddam reminded the Kurds that he still held power and they were never beyond his reach.

The government had cut the municipal electricity supply to Kurdistan. In Dohouk province, the town of Zakho and Dohouk, and every point between, had been deprived of electricity since the onset of autumn. After February 1994, a small amount of electricity was supplied on an irregular basis by Turkey. Before that time, the power went on and off according to Baghdad's whim. Afterwards, the Turks played with it in the same fashion.

Ironically most of the region's electricity is generated from within Kurdistan itself – from Dokan and Dabendikhan (not including the Mosul generator, which lies outside the liberated area) – but supply lines conducted it directly into the area still under Iraqi government control. The regime could therefore choose whether or not to supply this power back to Kurdistan. The Kurdish administration needed to be able to reroute the supply from Dokan and Darbendikhan directly to their own towns in order to control the electricity themselves. But certain vital components required for the hydroelectric stations could not be obtained because of the UN sanctions.¹⁹

UN sanctions, Baghdad's and Turkish control made every aspect of life unbearable in Kurdistan. Fuel, food and medicine were all in short supply, or when available so expensive that they were beyond the reach of ordinary Kurds. These hardship came after the arduous and almost biblical exodus the world had witnessed in the 1991. That experience seemed to continue, although in a different way and away from the cameras and reporters. The world was tired and ready to move on to another exhausting story about misery and pain elsewhere in the world. In 1993 George H. Bush lost the White House to Bill Clinton. Soon the headlines were about war in the Balkans, the disasters of Yugoslavia, genocide in Rwanda and the ongoing Arab- Israeli conflict. The Kurds were left on their own to deal with whatever came. It was easy to forget them because at the time the infrastructure to support any telecommunication was lacking.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*: 112.

News of any kind could not get out. Literally there was no way to connect with the outside world. There were no phone services and few mail services. Neither in telecommunication, nor energy production – oil or electricity – could one see any improvement due to UN sanctions and Iraqi and Turkish control over the affairs of Kurdistan. The situation continued in this way until September 11, 2001 when everything changed. George W. Bush and his group of neo-conservative advisors came to power in 2001 and shortly after a terrorist attack on U.S. soil led a dramatic shift in U.S. foreign policy that would affect Iraq beyond anyone's expectations.

III. The Second Gulf War (March 2003)

If the discourse of the First Gulf War was about “the new world order,” the Second Gulf War started with the discourse of a “war on terror.” On September 11, 2001, the U.S. was attacked on its own soil by 19 Al-Qaeda terrorists mostly of Saudi citizenship. This event changed the strategy and the outlook of the United States of America forever to the point that its government adopted a new “preemptive strike” strategy. The ideology of regime change became the new political buzzword in the U.S.. Terrorism became the new source of panic and a possible combination of terrorism with weapons of mass destruction became the embodiment of apocalyptic terror for U.S. citizens.

As a result the U.S. government built a case against Saddam Hussein on two charges: first, the possession of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and second of supporting Al-Qaeda. The intelligence on which these charges were based later was to be found false, and as a result most European governments and other international observers found the basis for invading Iraq in March 2003 unlawful. The irony is that the case of

Saddam's chemical attack on Kurdistan was used to build the argument against him after the September 11 attack. But no U.S. official ever used the word Kurdistan in his or her arguments, only in passing remarks about what Saddam had done to "his own people." Because Saddam at the time of Halabja chemical attack was an ally of the United States, none of this was explicitly mentioned. This is a perfect example of how the Kurds were used as "standing reserves." Using Heidegger's analysis I explained in chapter one that technology reduces humanity to a "standing reserve." Here precisely in 2003 it was political technology of othering that was reducing the Kurds to "standing reserve." The incident of Halabja was used but with such techniques of language that the names Kurds, Kurdistan and Halabja were rendered invisible. Otherwise the fact of the U.S. being an ally of Saddam's at the time could not have been ignored.

Iraq was attacked in late March 2003 and in less than a few weeks Saddam's regime was toppled. Centralized regimes are easy to defeat and yet order is extremely difficult to restore in them afterward. Saddam's regime was no different; easy to defeat, but order still has not been restored almost five years after the invasion. On December 13, 2003 Saddam was found and later put on trial. His humiliating arrest, dismal trial and final execution on December 30, 2006 were messy. Instead of exposing him as a war criminal, the whole affair was shown to be of failure in policy and judgement of the new Iraqi government.

In the end, no weapons of mass destruction were found in Iraq. No prior link with Al-Qaeda was found. Instead Iraq has become a hotbed of terrorism, resentment and ongoing sectarian violence. The nihilism and desperation for analysis of situation in Iraq has been ridiculously reduced to technical debates about whether it is a civil war or not;

or if a military 'surge' will work. And the fact that more than 60,000, and still counting, Iraqi civilians are dead is not a point even considerable by analysts and policy makers. Even the most responsible U.S. TV network – PBS – counts and names U.S. deaths but not those of Iraqis. The fact that Saddam did not stand trial for his heinous crimes against the Kurds is not considered important. Justice for the Kurds was again ignored as irrelevant.

Now the question is how the U.S. can get itself out of this mess. Shortly before Saddam's execution, an Iraq Study Group was formed by Bush Administration to design an exit strategy. The findings and the suggestions of the group showed no regard about the future of the Kurds, who were not mentioned at all. It is once more another case of denial and convenient oversight.

Throughout the eighty years of artificially patching together Iraq as a neo-colonial invention, it has never seen stability or peace. Peter Galbraith is quite right when he writes, " [l]ooking at Iraq's eighty-year history, it should be apparent that it is the effort to hold Iraq together that has been destabilizing."²⁰ Galbraith is one of the few U.S. observers who believes it is more practical to provide a secure condition for the partition of Iraq. In my opinion, partition has already happened. What has not happened is the recognition of it. The major obstacle is Turkey's response to the idea of Kurdistan. Turkey has threatened many times that, in the case of Iraq's break up, it will occupy the oil-rich cities of Mosul and Kirkuk. This policy is based on outdated expansionist politics. Turkey cannot justify its claim with legal arguments defensible in the international arena. All of the Kurds' neighbors respond in a similar way. They all reject

²⁰ Peter W. Galbraith, The End Of Iraq, How American Incompetence Created A War Without End, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006): 162.

the creation of any Kurdish political entity, whether an independent country or an autonomous region, because fear their own Kurdish populations will demand the same.

For the most of their modern history, the Kurds have suffered from internal colonialism. Never colonized directly by European or the U.S., they have lived under colonial conditions during long periods of colonization by Arabs, Persians and Turks. Only when the countries which rule Kurdistan lose their authority or control are the Kurds able to form their own limited governments. When the foreign occupiers leave, the central governments reassert their authority and Kurdistan is occupied again. This cycle has been repeated with every major shift in the international balance of power, whether it be world war or a major regional war. Once a settlement is reached the Kurds' fate is left in the hands of their local occupiers.

Can this cycle be changed? At the moment the Kurds, have a safe haven because of the occupation of the rest of Iraq. But when the Americans leave, will the Kurds be able to maintain their self-rule? The answer is evident as the Turkish army masses on the border and bombs Kurdish villages. The borders created to protect Western imperial interests gave Turks, Persians and Arabs their own states, but have separated Kurds from one other. This situation has been devastating for the Kurds, and in my view has resulted in disaster for the region. At least now in the Kurdish region of Iraq, the Kurds have some measure of self-government. But the Kurds have been there before. In 1958, as in 2003, the Kurds held many significant government position in the Iraqi administration. But those positions gradually became meaningless, because Iraq fell victim to new cycle of nihilism. Because of new techniques of othering, those Kurds in the central Iraqi government, whether in 1958 or 2003, are not independent actors, in that they cannot

exercise political subjectivity as Kurdish politicians, as any Arab, Shiite or Turk can. The Kurdish politician in a government position is there as an Iraqi politician. The Kurdish politicians in the Iraqi administration in Baghdad can only be part of a bigger technical machine of politics, within which, politics are reduced to “technologies of power.” Politicians, whose Kurdish origins are only known to expert journalists, are not Kurdish in a nationalist sense. Because in the face of the adversaries these politicians cannot not truly claim their political identity. They simply are parts of a “technology of power” with roots elsewhere sometimes in a non-political Kurdistan.

In the Iraqi system of politics, as in most other political systems, a politician must obey certain conventions that come with the job. Such conventions are technical rules that lend action to the know-how of a specific political goal. But it should be noted that the technical rules imposed on the politicians are mostly set by the actors, ideas and institutions that commission their work. In other words Kurdish politicians must act as members of an Iraqi government, not as Kurdish nationalists exercising a pro-Kurdish state-nationalism. On the other hand it is normal for Arabs, Shiites, Persians and Turks act as pro-Turkish, pro-Arab, etc. exercising state-nationalism in their governments.

Another major obstacles for the Kurds has been confronting a three front war, that is to be fragmented into three states, none of which they control. In this respect they have an extremely difficult situation. This strategic difficulty was created by the complications of the post-Ottoman era. To fight three strong enemies simultaneously is extremely difficult given that the international system only recognizes the rights of sovereign states. The Kurds have been in the middle of major events of the region from the First World War, making them highly vulnerable to changes in policy and strategy in the region.

Because they are stateless, without a government to represent them in the international community, the Kurds are always in danger of war, torture, mass deportation, depopulation and finally genocide internally and of being marginalized and forgotten internationally.

The acts of extreme violence against the Kurds have gone on for almost an entire century. As time goes on it seems the only aspect of modernity that the Kurds have experienced is the efficacy of modern violence and the devastations inflicted in the names of its ideologies. It also seems that the Kurds have been trying to push the governments in Tehran, Baghdad and Ankara towards meaningful democracy in which minority rights are respected and civic politics rather than militarism, totalitarianism and dictatorship. The Kurds have introduced to the politics of Iran, Iraq and Turkey some of the most interesting civic ideas, and their resistance to dictatorships has provided democratic engagement in the region. But unfortunately these efforts have never been recognized or supported. When the Kemalist ideology legitimized dictatorial politics in Turkey, the Kurds resisted and tried to maintain the pluralistic aspect of politics that had existed before the modern militarism of Ataturk. When Reza Shah started his military dictatorship and was followed by his son, the Kurds introduced the idea of “democracy for Iran and autonomy for Kurdistan.” When the Baathist regime engaged in its totalitarianism the Kurds fought for federalism and decentralized government. When Iran moved toward Islamic fundamentalism, the Kurds brought the discourse of democracy and human right back to the agenda of politics. And now that Iraq is drawn into the most devastating civil war in its history, it is only in the Kurdish region that a level of stability

and civic politics exist. In each case the Kurds had tried to survive the intolerable regimes of the Middle East.

If there is a chance for the Middle East to democratize itself, that road may start in Kurdistan. Perhaps this is how the destiny of the Kurds can be understood. It is as if its through their suffering and struggle that the regions can truly remedy the malaise of tyranny and injustice and finally find the way home to peace, stability, prosperity and coexistence with other nations. It is as if the coexistence and acceptance of the Kurdish nation is their test for a better coexistence at home and in the world. Iraq and Iran truly are destabilizing elements in the Middle East, moreover Turkey has failed to meet its obligations towards all its Kurdish citizens.

The politics of genocide may have stopped for now, but are never too far away in the volatile region of Middle East, with its highly charged aggressions and civic disorder. In my opinion, the horrors of the future may be far more graphic and unmanageable than we think. There is a possibility that the conflicts originating in Iraq could spill over to the broader Middle East and beyond. If that happens, Kurdistan will be the first causality. To many observers the problems of the Middle East have been reduced to the Sunni-Shiite divide, on the one hand, and the Arab-Israeli conflict, on the other. Again the Kurds are forgotten; the crimes against them already history. But one must neither forget the 1988 mass murders nor the 1991 exodus. There is no mechanism in place to prevent them from happening again.

Conclusion

In this chapter I contextualized the first Gulf War within the perspective of U.S. foreign policy which reflects the neorealist school of thought. I argue that the U.S. policy of alliance with Saddam during the 1980s emboldened Saddam in committing many atrocities against the Kurds. The neorealism of the U.S. foreign policy in the 1990's was to establish a unique hegemony called "the New World Order." This policy was nihilistic in the sense that the 1990s policy was a negation of the 1980s policy. I call it nihilistic because the U.S. helped Saddam build his military state and then a decade later destroyed it. This is nihilism because its cycle of violence does not end. I explained earlier the contradictory nature of nihilism in that it creates its own opposite. It devalues the values that it created before. It goes against itself. In this case the movement of nihilism broadens its circle. It is easier to see the progression of this nihilism from the 1980s to 1990s. And the violence of nihilism has not ended since it extended to 2003 war and still is present. The seemingly endless cycles of violence in Iraq result from these nihilistic policies.

I argue that after the first Gulf War ended, the violence was dormant and waiting to resurface, because none of the essential issues was resolved. All of the problems that led to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait remained, including: the economic problems, the socio-political issues, the Arab frustration and the regional issues. All these issues resurfaced in the aftermath of the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. The unrest in the Sunni/Shiite conflict, Baathist insurgents and international Jihadists are all leftovers of unresolved issues of the past. They keep coming back in old and new forms; and they all represent reactive nihilism. They all justify their violence based on some anti-imperialist cause. They all react to some negation they have suffered from imperialism and in return they negate the

current situation. It is this cycle of negation that is reactive nihilism. This unending devaluation is mixed with modern technique and its project is mere negation. This problem is going to grow because of the reactive nature of nihilism. Reaction does not stop and is not predictable, because modern techniques are available to all factions. With the modern techniques of both guerilla violence and imperialist war, an enormous force of negation was released.

I conclude that in the midst of all the conflicting issues in this volatile region Kurdish security remains uncertain. Kurdish claim to autonomy though have made some headway but remain largely unrecognized. I argued that the state-centrism of the international system is an obstacle because it cannot easily recognize Kurdish claims. It is very hard for the international state system to adopt any view outside the prism of state interests. I also argue that the strategic alliance of the West, particularly the U.S. with Turkey, is another major problem. Turkey's anti-Kurdish policies are largely ignored by the international state system. And since there are so few allies of the west in the Middle East, Turkey has been given a great deal of license in its dealings with the Kurds. This is a reflection of Realpolitik and neorealism. The Turkish state has taken advantage of its unique relationship with the U.S. and is emboldened to the point that its policies regarding the Kurds may cause serious international problems.

Saddam was emboldened by his relations with the U.S. during the 1980s. The Realpolitik at the time limited the U.S.'s ability to see how far Saddam was capable of acts of violence. It seems this is the case now with Turkey. Realpolitik at present also results in underestimating how far Turkey may go. The Kurds at the present are in their most vulnerable position. They are collaborating with a highly unpopular U.S. occupation

and invasion of Iraq. This makes the Kurds highly unpopular in the region, particularly among Arab nationalists. The Kurds were drawn into the Realpolitik of the region three decades ago, as I examined in chapter two regarding Kissinger's role in Kurdistan, and in chapter six regarding the Barzani movement. The same ideology dominates international relations. The Realpolitik of the Nixon administration showed a lack of concern for the lives of the Kurdish people when supporting them stopped serving U.S. interests. Realpolitik today adheres to the same basic principles and the Kurds fear they might be abandoned once more. The Kurds may not be subject to the same level of violence from an Iraqi regime but because they are stateless and have no international recognition of their political sovereignty, they are at the mercy of others. Turkey seems determined to take advantage of this situation and turn the clock back for the Iraqi Kurds. I conclude that the technologies of othering the Kurds are still at work until they get some kind of internationally legal recognition.

Conclusion

In this thesis I theorized the concept of technologies of othering as a way of understanding the marginalization and persecution of the Kurds over an entire century. I contextualized these technologies using the philosophic frameworks provided by Nietzsche's critique of modernity and Heidegger's conception of technology. I focused on the function of "enframing" as how the technological mode of thought orders humanity and nature. In this respect I argued that these modes of thought and practice devalue their objects of inquiry or domination. I used both the concepts of Western philosophy, i.e. critiques of West from within, as well as looking at the Kurdish case from inside to understand what happened to Kurds.

I assert that nihilism has been the condition of thought and the direction of the politics of othering experienced by the Kurds since the beginning of the twentieth century when the 'Kurdish problem' took a dramatic turn. Utilizing Deleuze, I theorized that the nihilism of imperialism provoked reactive nihilism in response. In this regard, the Kurdish encounter with modernity was an encounter with nihilism. The modernity of Ataturk and Reza Shah was not democratic; it was a highly distorted ideological experience at the hands of state violence and denial. The new states of Turkey, Iran and later Iraq transformed "difference" into "otherness" making being a Kurd (i.e. speaking and dressing as Kurds) punishable by law. As the result of modern state ideologies at the beginning of the twentieth century in Turkey, Iran and later Iraq Kurdishness became a crime. The persecution of otherness through state technology was so extreme that, despite

numerous attempts, the Kurds could not change the situation. Technologies of othering through state machinery and ideology were too powerful to defeat.

My thesis was that examining the effects of technologies of othering best explains the Kurdish case. These are a series of discourses, practices and policies the effects of which are entrapment, distortion, subjugation, and extermination. Their range is a field of violent possibilities. Negation is their style since they are linked to nihilism. And devaluation and destruction of meaning is their effect.

I explored the international relations aspects of these technologies of othering by examining imperialism, realist and neorealist theory and policy. I conclude that twentieth century imperialism's expansionist practices were aspects of nihilism. The Western powers defeated the Ottoman Empire with superior military technology, resulting in the partition of Kurdistan. This was the dramatic encounter with realism and imperialism. I argued that Western Middle East policies were shaped, not by idealism of Wilson but by realist theory, influenced by the awful experiences of the First World War. Realist theory gained more momentum through the horrors of the two world wars. Imperialist self-interest recommended by realist policy advisors resulted in the defeat of Wilsonian idealism and Kurdish right to self-determination.

Realism reflecting the ideas of political philosophers like Machiavelli separated the realms of politics and ethics. In a world system, in which war was always possible with no hegemon and no universally-valid system of ethics, international politics was understood as a Hobbesian desire to maximize power. And the only unit of power recognized within this system was state. In such an environment, the fate of the stateless

Kurds was decided in other people's capitals. The Kurds were denied representation in and by the same international state-system, and had to rely on others to speak for them.

Realism became part of technologies of othering on two levels. First it rejected Wilsonian idealist principles which had recognized the Kurdish claim to self-determination; then it built a system entirely centered around states. In this respect, realism othered the Kurds both on the level of discourse and that of practice. Realism reformed itself into neorealism but its principles, as far as the Kurdish issue was concerned, did not change. Neorealism is also centered around the state and does not recognize the rights of the stateless.

Realism as the basis for foreign policy is not limited to the West. It also characterizes the politics of those Middle Eastern states encapsulating Kurdistan. From the 1970s to the 2003, regional states have dealt with the Kurds within a realist framework of international politics. The Barzani movement in the 1970s shows how the states of Iran and Iraq treated the Kurds according to realist principles. Realism also was manifest in world events through advisors like Kissinger who theorized and conducted realist policies regarding Kurdistan. I conclude that his views regarding the Kurds demonstrate realism's state-centrism and amoral approach to politics. He also provides a perfect example of how confused and misguided policies of realism can be while claiming to maintain "scientific objectivity." From a realist perception, it was deemed preferable to keep the Baath regime in power (1970s to 2003) in Iraq than to support the Kurds. If the realists had supported the Barzanis, the situation in the Middle East, I speculate, would have been quite different. Many lives could have been saved and many crimes could have been prevented.

I also examined theories of nationalism, and concluded that, for the most part when applied to Kurdish nationalism, these theories become part of technologies of othering. Key concepts in these theories have been distorted and misrepresented to discredit Kurdish national claims, especially Anderson's idea of "imagined community" and the concept of "ethnic nationalism." In the case of some Middle Eastern scholars, I argue, these theories are distorted and misrepresented in order to be used in the technologies of othering. For example, Anderson's original idea that all nations are "imagined" is distorted when biased scholars claim that because Kurdish nation is merely "imagined," the Kurds failed to build a state, hence their national claims have no reality. The idea of "ethnic nationalism" is also used to reject and discredit the Kurdish nation by labeling it "ethnic" and not "civic" or "rational." Other scholars assert that Kurdish nationalism is "racial," a complete misrepresentation of Kurdish nationalism supported by no evidence. Such dichotomies in which established state-nations are categorized as "civic" but the stateless Kurdish nation as "ethnic," "tribal" or "racial" only serve as technologies of othering. Such distortions of ideas, and the devaluation of their original values, are clear evidence of nihilism.

I contextualized the technology of othering in the particular case of Turkish nationalism. I showed how Sheikh Said's uprising in 1925 was the first major Kurdish revolt against technologies of othering. I argued that, after the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire, a virulent ethnocentric nationalism took over Turkey, which I consider to be a reactive nihilism. Turkish nationalism centered around Turkishness sought (and seeks today) to realize an imagined "self" in response to the humiliations of being defeated by European superior technology.

The severe attitude of the new Turkish nation-state towards “others” targeted the Kurds in a political-technological effort to create an “imagined,” homogeneous Turkish nation. The Turkish state transformed Kurdish “difference” into “otherness” and made it punishable by law. In its reactive nihilism, the Turkish state banned the use of Kurdish language and other signs of non-Turkish nationality to create the kind of powerful state able to mobilize a homogeneous nation. Atatürk, awed by Europe’s superior technology “imagined” his nation to be European, and changing the alphabet and the attire of the nation were examples of this “imagining.” In his “imagined” nation the Kurds were othered because there was no room for them as Kurds. Atatürk’s policy of assimilating or annihilating was nihilism and merely served as a technology of othering.

The Turkish state used language as a politico-technological tool to other the Kurds. Banning the Kurdish language made Kurdish ‘other’ to the national language as part of a technology of exclusion and persecution. This policy was to silence the Kurds and deny them a presence as Kurds in the political discourse of the nation. Turkish nationalism started a Kurdish reaction in the uprising of Sheikh Said, which also was a response to being excluded from the realm of power and influence. State-imposed ‘reforms’ ended the traditional rule and authority enjoyed in the Ottoman system by the Sheikhs including Said. Said’s response was to go back to Muslim tradition by building a Kurdish state around religious tradition. Most ‘experts’ on Kurdish nationalism deny that Said’s response was a form of nationalism because of the modernist belief that religion and nationalism are incompatible. I conclude that Said’s uprising was moved as much by nationalism as it was by religion. Its religiosity was particularly Kurdish. I argue that his understanding of religion as a Sheikh was very Kurdish.

Sheikh Said, I conclude, provides the missing link in the genealogy of Kurdish nationalism. He used his religious influence for the national mobilization of the Kurds. He wanted to preserve his authority as a Sheikh, but won the support of many parts of early twentieth century Kurdish society. Prior to Smith, theories of nationalism excluded Sheikh Said's uprising from the history of nationalist movements in Middle East. In mainstream nationalist discourse regarding Middle Eastern nationalisms, Said's uprising is either missing or misrepresented as merely a "backward" and "reactionary" religious movement. This is far from the truth. Said's uprising fits well into Smith's theory of the paradigms of nationalism as theorized by some perennialist theorists, especially regarding non-European nationalisms.

I conclude that the Kurdish aspiration for statehood never stopped and resurfaced whenever opportunity presented itself. The case of Kurdish Republic of Mahabad (1946) is the most celebrated among Kurds everywhere. The symbolism of this republic is so strong that even today the Kurdish Regional Government in Iraqi Kurdistan flies the flag of the Mahabad Republic as its national symbol. The Mahabad Republic is also a perfect example of Kurdish resistance to international denial of their right to statehood. Compared to its Persian counterpart, the nationalism of Mahabad Republic was progressive. At the time, the Persian nationalism of Reza Shah was influenced by the "Aryan" myth and Hitler's racism. In fact the allied forces deposed Reza Shah because of his support for Hitler, occupying Iran which provided an opportunity for the brief Kurdish Republic. Most analysts view the Mahabad Republic in a biased way, however, arguing that the Kurds show their nationalism only when there is a crisis in the central government of their encapsulating sovereign state. While the Kurds usually gain some

self-rule when there is break-down of the central government control due to regime change or an international crisis, these theories do not explain why is it that when the authorities of Tehran or Baghdad cannot reach Kurdistan physically the Kurds build civil and political structures. Instead of falling into chaos and disaster or reverting to lawlessness they organize themselves politically and establish the rule of law. Of course there have been exceptions, but most Kurdish experiences of autonomy have been cooperative and civil. The Republic of Mahabad did fail to integrate the rural classes, and some analysts concluded that the republic failed as a result. I disagreed arguing that the republic failed because of the state-centric nature of international system, Realpolitik and the awesome power of state technology. The president of the Republic, Qazi Mohamad, sacrificed himself and his close associates to save the Kurdish people from suffering state retaliation. Moreover the republic still lives as an idea and its flag is still flying.

To establish the value of my concept of technologies of othering, I examined Baathism as a strange combination of technique and nihilism. I argued that Baathism proved the most fearful aspect of technologies of othering. It engineered mass killings in a way that shocked international observers. The Baathist actions against the Kurds of Iraq provide a permanent record of the use to which such technologies of othering are put. The long march of the Barzanis from Kurdistan to U.S.S.R. (1970s), the mass killings in Halabja and Anfal campaign of genocide(1980s) and the mass exodus of the 1990s, all were examples of the dreadful technologies of othering, nihilism and persecution engineered by Baathism. From discourse to practice, Baathism was a horrifying ideology. Based on Arab resentment against Western imperialism, it evolved into explicit racism, targeting Kurdish people as "other" in a racist paradigm of "self." What made Baathism

so destructive was that it was built on the techniques of single party rule, leader worship and racist nationalism. Baathists terrorized Kurds for more than three decades in an environment of realist international relations. This environment was part of the technologies of othering and the Kurds paid a heavy price.

The most recent technology of othering affecting the Kurds is Iranian Islamic fundamentalism. This ideology found its full expression in the bloody revolution of 1979. It was consumed by reaction after reaction to the point where it became a fully reactionary politics in revolt against a distorted vision of modernity. Islamic fundamentalism provides a perfect example to how a distorted vision of modernity (Reza Shah's imposed reforms) can create its opposite (Khomeini's revolution). This I believe is best understood using the concepts of nihilism and reactive nihilism. I concluded that Islamic fundamentalism in Iran is an expression of reactive nihilism, and an ideology of resentment against imperialism and modernity. It utilizes Shiite religious principles but combines them with many of the modern techniques of politics. The political technology of Shiite fundamentalism is centered around actualizing the myth of *Imam* which it transforms into the concept of the "Grand Leader." In this ideology, the Kurds are othered both by their religion and their nationality. Kurds are Sunni and therefore are othered from the political discourse in Shiite Iran. They were othered because of their national difference from Persians since the coming to power of Reza Shah (1921), but since the Islamic revolution they also are othered for their faith as well.

I showed that most of the intellectual tools of Islamic fundamentalism were provide by Shariati and Al-e Ahmad, both non-clerics and yet designing ideology suited to rule by clerics. They both reacted to the identity crisis created by rapid and militant

top-down modernization projects of Reza Shah and his son, based on a distorted understanding of what the West and modernity are. Reza Shah and his son (1921-1979) never built any democratic relations between the state and its citizens. They maintained a traditional despotic style and only modernized institutions of police and military. Their banning of the veil and emphasis on the pre-Islamic ancient monarchy created a deep sense of resentment that exploded into the revolution of 1979. The situation for the Kurds before and after the revolution differed little as they were the "other" in both regimes. With the fall of the Shah, the Kurds tried to gain some political self-rule, but their demands were met with severe violence. The Kurdish uprising in Iran did not gain any international support and their issue was overshadowed by many other international issues, especially the U.S. hostage crisis, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the Iran-Iraq war. Nor has the Kurdish struggle against fundamentalism yet been recognized. I conclude that Islamic fundamentalism in Iran is a severe form of the political technology of othering.

As the twentieth century ended at least the Iraqi Kurds had made some headways by building an autonomous Regional Government in Iraqi Kurdistan, in power since 1991. It has survived so far but with the situation getting more complicated everyday in Iraq and in the Middle East, it faces grave challenges. While it may not face another aggressive Iraqi state Turkey may cause trouble for the Kurds in the future. The Turkish government's anti-Kurdish policy is seriously damaging to the stability of Iraqi Kurdistan. Realist international relations theory again ignores the Kurdish issue due to regional balance of power. Very few observers of the situation favor outright Kurdish independence from Iraq due to outdated realist and neorealist observation of the case.

Regardless of the situation of international relations the Kurds in Iraq are highly organized. They are more visible than previous episodes in history and there is more awareness about them in non-governmental international organizations. They also have managed to find friends in high places both in London and Washington. If trouble come they will suffer but it is unimaginable that it could be as bad as in the 1980s or 1990s. They are now recognized as diplomats and deal makers. Their neutrality in Iraq's Sunni-Shiite conflict has established them as fair negotiators. Their peaceful region is attractive to foreign investors. So they are unlikely to loose all of that because of Turkish insecurity provided the U.S. sees a Kurdish partner to stabilize Iraq as more effective than its reliance on Turkey regarding the same issue. In this respect, a Turkish attempt against the Kurds would be unwise. But the Turkish threat is serious and could be damaging for the whole region. This indicates that regardless of the progress made, the Kurds still are confronted by political technologies of othering.

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