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THE POLITICS OF ETHNIC NATIONALISM IN IRAN

by

Hamid Ahmadi, B.A, M.A.

**A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in particular fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

Department of Political Science

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

February 1995

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THE POLITICS OF ETHNIC NATIONALISM IN IRAN

submitted by

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in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Chair, Department of Political Science

Thesis Supervisor

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May 8, 1995

ABSTRACT:

This thesis presents a critical study of the questions of ethnic nationalism and ethnic identity formation in order to explain the causes and the origins of the Kurdish, Azari and Baluchi nationalist movements in Iran. By a critical look at existing literature on ethnicity and nationalism, it argues that concepts such as ethnicity, tribe, ethnic groups and ethnic nationalism are contested and thus should not be considered universal, given and bearing the same meaning across time and place. By criticizing the Western and Orientalist approaches to the study of ethnicity, tribalism and ethnic nationalism in the Middle East in general and Iran in particular, it places its emphasis on the historical specificities of the cases under study rather than ahistorical and universal theories and conceptual frameworks.

Following such a logic, and after a critical discussion of different theoretical frameworks on ethnicity and ethnic nationalism, this thesis argues that none of these sufficiently explain in themselves the formation of ethnic nationalist movements in the three Iranian cases. It then presents a theoretical framework in which three variables of state, elites, and international forces play key roles in the formation of ethnic identity and the politicization of linguistic, religious and racial ties, or the emergence of what social scientists call ethnic nationalism. In other

words, the roots of ethnic nationalism are sought in:

1) the rise of the modern secular centralized state and its confrontation with the traditional autonomous and powerful tribal chiefs; 2) the manipulation of religio-linguistic differences and the construction of ethnic identities by political and intellectual, both ethnic and non-ethnic, elites; and 3) the promotion of ethnic identity and the support/encouragement of secular nationalist tendencies by Western Orientalists and external forces.

Considering the historical experiences of the Iranian society, this theoretical framework is applied to explain the emergence of Kurdish, Azari and Baluchi nationalist tendencies and the formation of autonomist/separatist movements in these cases. Given the Iranian historical context, this study concludes that questions of ethnicity and ethnic nationalism are modern political phenomena and according to Eric Hobsbawm, "invented traditions". The existence of ethnic groups with distinct cultural and political identities are 'the states of mind', or according to Benedict Anderson, "imagined communities."

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Source: Statistical Centre of Iran, *A Statistical Reflection of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, (Tehran: Statistical Centre, 1986), 1.

Introduction:

With the increase in ethnic conflicts and their importance in international politics in the 1980s and 1990s, we have witnessed a growing interest in the question of ethnicity and nationalism in different branches of social science. The result of such interest in both academic and governmental circles has been the publication of hundreds of books and articles about the involvement of different linguistic, religious and racial groups in nationalist activities and their political struggles against the centralized state.

Students of ethnicity and nationalism have elaborated different conceptual and theoretical frameworks to explain the causes and the origins of a political phenomenon, which is generally known as "ethnic nationalism." However, these conceptual and theoretical frameworks have been uncritically applied in a number of cases around the globe. Originally introduced to study specific cases, concepts such as "tribe", "ethnicity", "ethnic groups" and "ethnic nationalism" have been used as universal and given terms in relation to what are often very different situations.

The Middle East, with its religious, linguistic and, at a lesser level, racial diversities, has attracted the attention of many students of ethnicity, nationalism and conflict. In many cases, they have applied broad concepts

and theoretical frameworks to study groups such as Arabs, Turks, Persians, Kurds, Baluchis, Azaris, Berbers, Alawites, Druze, Armenians, Pashtuns, Tajiks, Maronites and other religious, linguistic or racial groups. These works generally reflect a tendency toward universal generalizations and a lack of historicity toward the region. This thesis is an effort to explain the rise of autonomist or separatist political movements and the formation of distinct identities in three Iranian cases: Kurdistan, Baluchistan and Azarbaijan. In this study, I do not look at concepts such as ethnicity, ethnic groups, tribes, and ethnic nationalism as universal terms which have the same meaning in all cases across time and space. Concerned primarily with theory, my thesis is more an explanatory study than a descriptive account of the rise of autonomist and separatist movements in Iran.

Methodologically, I follow the tradition of historical sociologists such as Theda Skocpol, Reinhard Bendix and Barrington Moore who stress historical specificities rather than universal generalizations. As such, I avoid ahistorical approaches which characterize the quantitative cross-national and overgeneralized studies reflected in the work of scholars such as Ted Robert Gurr and Chalmers Johnson.¹ This thesis,

¹Ted Robert Gurr, "A Causal Model of Civil Strife: A Comparative Analysis Using New Indices," *American Political Science Review*, 27 (1968): 1104-24.; Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, (N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970).; Chalmers Johnson, *Revolutionary Change*, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1966).

thus, applies a *comparative historical method*- rather than a general *Social scientific theory*.² While it is a single case study insofar as it focuses on one country, it is a comparative work given that I apply one theoretical framework to study Kurdish, Azari and Baluchi ethnic nationalism in Iran. This is also an interdisciplinary approach which draws upon and borrows different theoretical traditions from political science, sociology, anthropology, comparative politics and international relations.

The thesis draws upon different theories in the general literature on ethnicity, nationalism and state formation. I begin with a critical review of the principal theories of ethnic nationalism to see to what extent they can help to explain the rise of autonomist and separatist movements in Iranian Kurdistan, Baluchistan and Azarbaijan. Given the historical specificities of the Iranian context, I then delineate my own theoretical and conceptual framework to explain the causes behind the politicization of religious and linguistic differences in these three Iranian cases.

I argue that the Western approaches to tribalism, ethnicity, ethnic groups and ethnic nationalism do not present

²Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1979), 34; For more details on comparative historical method and the works in which this method has been applied, see Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers, "The Use of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry," in Theda Skocpol, ed., *Social Revolutions in the Modern World*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 72-95.

enough insights to study the Iranian cases, nor does any other single theoretical model enable us to understand the complexities behind the emergence of nationalistic trends in these cases. Rather, I present a three-dimensional theoretical framework in which state, elites and international forces play the principal roles in politicizing religio-linguistic differences and the formation of the so-called ethnic nationalist movements in Iran.

I begin my thesis by discussing problems in conceptualizing ethnicity and tribalism. Here, I will argue that concepts such as ethnicity, ethnic groups, and tribes are contested. As I will discuss, the Iranian linguistic and religious minorities under study do not represent ethnic groups if these groups are to be defined as unified racial and cultural entities. Important sections of the present-day Iranian Kurds, Baluchis, Azaris, Turkmans, Arabs and many Persians had been organized around different smaller and larger tribal groups until the early twentieth century. Such tribal groups cannot be conceptualized, as some Western social scientists do, as kinship-based, isolated, homogeneous, and stateless societies which were in permanent conflict with the state. In sum, as far the Iranian context is concerned, tribes or ethnic groups with such characteristics are more states of mind than real entities. At the end of this chapter, I will clarify in what sense I use concepts such as ethnicity, tribes, ethnic groups and ethnic nationalism and

what are my preferred criteria for defining these concepts regarding the Iranian context.

In chapter two, I discuss the general and historical characteristics of the tribal groups in the Iranian context. These historical characteristics challenge the conceptualization of Iranian tribes as kinship-based, egalitarian, and homogeneous societies. Relations between the tribal groups and the traditional decentralized state in Iranian history until the 1920s is discussed to challenge the Western approaches which present tribes as isolated societies in permanent conflict with the state. As I will show, there have been constant relationships between states and tribes in Iranian history, and not only have important and powerful states been founded by tribal groups, but states in their turn have created powerful tribal confederacies. Moreover, tribal chiefs have been in permanent contact with the state by giving it significant financial and military services. As I will argue in detail, such formerly diversified tribal groups cannot be equated with the modern culturally and politically homogeneous ethnic groups.

Chapter three presents historical and political accounts of the socio-political situations in Iranian Kurdistan, Azarbaijan and Baluchistan through a discussion of the rise of the autonomist and separatist political movements in these three regions in twentieth-century Iran. My goal in this chapter is to provide the information required for a more

accurate understanding of socio-political conditions in these regions. As the Iranian history shows, there is little evidence to support the existence of nationalist political movements in Iranian Kurdistan, Baluchistan and Azarbaijan before the early twentieth century

In chapter four I present a critical discussion of the major theoretical traditions on ethnicity and nationalism. Focusing on the well-known Primordialist-Modernist debate in the literature, I argue that primordial attachments such as language, religion and culture have their roots in the pre-modern era. However, the politicization of such attachments in the form of nationalistic movements is a social construction and thus a modern phenomenon. Having discussed different theories of ethnic mobilization and ethnic identity formation, I argue that none of them by themselves present sufficient explanation for the politicization of linguistic and religious ties, and thus the rise of ethnic nationalist tendencies in Iranian Kurdistan, Azarbaijan and Baluchistan.

After discussing the shortcomings and the advantages of the existing theories, I present in the latter half of chapter four my own theoretical and conceptual framework with respect to the historical specificities of the Iranian context. In this theoretical and conceptual framework, the three variables of state, elites, and international forces play the key roles in politicizing ethnicity and the rise of ethnic nationalist movements. The modern state formation process and its

centralization tendencies had tremendous effects on the politicization of religio-linguistic differentiations in Iran. This change, however, was not an automatic development. In the process of their struggle against the modern centralized state for power and influence, intellectual and political elites played significant roles in the formation of ethnic identity and ethnic nationalist movements. International forces, finally, have provided necessary intellectual, political and material support for the emergence of ethnic nationalist tendencies among different minority groups in Iran. I will apply this theoretical framework to the three Iranian cases in the remaining chapters of the thesis.

Chapter five, thus, studies the effects which the process of modern state formation had on the politicization of linguistic and religious ties in Kurdistan, Azarbaijan, and Baluchistan. The chapter is divided into two sections. As the main point of emphasis is state-tribe relations in these regions, the first section focuses on the relations between Iranian decentralized states and tribal groups. The basic feature of these relations was the state's tolerance regarding the autonomy of the tribal groups and the mutual support and recognition between the two. This analysis is different from chapter two, where I analyze the basic characteristics of the Iranian tribal groups and their relations with the Iranian state in general. In chapter five, I place emphasis on the autonomy of tribal chiefs in Kurdistan, Azarbaijan and

Baluchistan.

In the second section of chapter five, I focus on the rise of the modern Pahlavi state in the 1920s. Along with his intellectual followers, Reza Shah, the founder of the Pahlavi dynasty, wanted to establish a modern bureaucratic state as the main instrument of national integration and modernization. Inspired by the idea of secular Western nationalism, they hoped to go through the same historical process of state formation which the West had experienced. By discussing Charles Tilly's theoretical arguments about the state formation process in Europe, and by comparing the historical conditions between Europe and Iran, I will argue that modern state formation was a contradictory process in Iran in the 1920s.

In contrast to the European context, there were no favourable conditions for the rise of the modern secular state in Iran. The most important impediment to state centralization and its monopoly of coercive force was the existence of powerful centrifugal forces in different parts of Iran. The modern state was determined to replace all existing loyalties with a national loyalty to the state. The strong and autonomous tribal chiefs, however, challenged the monopolization of power by the new state. The state, therefore, had to deal with such powerful tribal elites. Tensions between tribal and state leaders were resolved in a series of violent confrontations from 1921 to 1933. The

ultimate result of these clashes was the expansion of the state's control over all of Iran. Such a centralization and detribalization process, as well as the cultural policies of the modern state, had significant effects on the politicization of primordial ties of language and religion in areas in which non-Persian groups predominated. The defeated tribal elites and their descendants resorted to such differentiations in order to enlist the support of non-Persian groups in their struggle for power and political status against the modern central state.

Chapter six discusses the role of elites, both tribal and non-tribal, in the formation of ethnic identities and ethnic nationalist movements. As the three Iranian cases show, the former tribal elites and their descendants played important roles in political activities of the post-World War II period. A modern educated elite, whose emergence was the result of state centralization and detribalization policies, had the dominant intellectual and political role in the formation of ethnic national identities in these regions. However, as the Kurdish, Azari, and Baluchi cases show, these intellectual and political elites, either tribal or non-tribal, were concerned more with political power and influence than ethnic nationalism per se. This tendency supports the arguments of theorists of ethnicity and ethnic nationalism such as Paul Brass, who stresses that the elites manipulate ethnicity and nationalism in their own favour.

Finally, chapter seven focuses on the internationalization of ethnicity and ethnic nationalism. The chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section, I will discuss how ethnic elites in all three cases were influenced by an international universe of political discourse. In this regard, the Liberal and the Marxist notions of self-determination and autonomy had important effects on the nationalist orientations of the Kurdish, Azari, and Baluchi intellectual and political elite. In this section, I also discuss the vital role which the great powers and regional rival states played in the formation and the support of autonomist and separatist movements in Iran.

In the second section, I analyze the significant role of the international intelligentsia in the promotion of the idea of secular nationalism among different religio-linguistic groups in the Middle East in general and in Iran in particular. This international intelligentsia included the older generation of the Western Orientalists and the modern social scientists who have greatly shaped the nationalistic tendencies among the above mentioned groups through their policy-relevant publications. As I will discuss, the works of the Western Orientalists have inspired the intellectual and political elite of different minority groups in the Middle East in general and Iran in particular to become involved in ethnic nationalist movements. In this final chapter, I study the influence of the Orientalist works on the Kurdish, Turkish

(including Azaris), and Baluchi intellectual and political elite in Iran. Moreover, such Orientalist works have generally informed Western policy makers who have been looking for expert knowledge about different groups of peoples in their spheres of influence.

In sum, I argue that ethnic identity formation and the rise of ethnic nationalist movements in Iran was the result of the complex relations between these three variables -- namely, state, elites and international forces. By formulating such a conceptual and theoretical framework, I do not claim to present a general theory to explain the rise of ethnic nationalism. Nevertheless, I suggest that under similar circumstances, this theoretical framework may be applicable to other Middle Eastern cases.

Chapter One:

The Problematic of Conceptualizing Ethnicity in the Middle East

The increasing interest in the question of ethnicity in different branches of social sciences since the mid-1970s has transformed ethnicity as a subject to the level of a distinct field. While its study was restricted to anthropology and to a lesser extent to sociology in the early twentieth century, the late twentieth century has witnessed the incorporation of the study of ethnicity into other branches of social sciences, among them political science, particularly in its two subfields of comparative politics and international relations.¹ The study of ethnicity has also expanded in terms of the cases involved. While these studies were mainly limited to North America and Europe in the first half of this century, many students of anthropology, sociology, and political science later incorporated this concept into their

¹Among such books, in international relations, are Stephen Ryan, *Ethnic Conflict and International Relations*, (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1990); Edward Azar, *The Management of Social protracted Conflict: Theory and Cases*, (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1990); John W. Burton, *Global Conflict: the Domestic Sources of International Crisis*, (Sussex: Wheatsheaf Books, 1984); Astri Suhrke and Lela G. Noble, *Ethnic Conflict in International Relations*, (New York: Praeger, 1977). In comparative politics, more theoretical works have appeared. See for example, Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (London: Verso, 1983); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); Eric Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Anthony Smith, *Ethnic Origins of Nations*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).

studies of Third World societies.

However, there has been a vagueness and confusion around the definition of ethnicity or ethnic group from the beginning. This distortion has increased with the inclusion of ethnic studies into more disciplines and its application to more non-American and non-European societies. In other words, while the meaning of ethnicity and ethnic group was contested from the beginning, the creation of affiliate concepts such as 'ethnic identity', 'ethnopolitics', and 'ethnonationalism' or 'ethnic nationalism' in sociology and political science did nothing for the clarification of the concept, and in fact further muddled existing confusion. Indeed, this confusion is apparent when these concepts are applied to analysis of Middle Eastern and other Third World societies. Referring to such an inappropriate use of the term 'ethnic group', Richard Tapper writes:

...political scientists, politicians and to a lesser degree sociologists, writing about countries like Iran and Afghanistan, make the sort of category assumptions about 'ethnic groups' and maps that I have suggested we strongly reject.²

In this chapter, I will discuss the uncertainty and vagueness around the concept of ethnicity and the problems posed by its uncritical application to Middle Eastern cases in general and to Iran in particular. For this, I will raise the

²Richard Tapper, "Ethnicity, Order and Meaning in the Anthropology of Iran and Afghanistan," in Jean Pierre Digard, ed., *Le Fait Ethnique en Iran et en Afghanistan*, (Paris: Editions du CNRS, 1988), 31.

'problematic of conceptualizing ethnicity' and its affiliate concepts.

This chapter is in fact a kind of 'deconstructing' of the concept of ethnicity and its related terms. Such a deconstruction will pave the way for raising my argument regarding the causes of the politicization of linguistic and religious differences or, according to the students of ethnicity and political science, *ethnonationalism* in Iran.

The chapter has two sections. In the first section, I discuss the general problems regarding the concepts of ethnicity and tribe in the works of Western social scientists. The second section is devoted to an analysis of the problems which result from uncritical application of these concepts and their related terms to the Iranian and the Middle Eastern contexts. In the concluding remarks of this chapter, I present my defining criteria regarding the concepts of ethnicity, tribes and ethnic groups in the Iranian context.

I. ETHNICITY AND ETHNIC GROUPS: THE FLAWED CONCEPTS

The main problem of conceptualizing ethnicity is typically the lack of definition or the confusion over different criteria for defining ethnicity or ethnic group. About two decades ago, W. W. Isajiw pointed out that very few researchers of ethnic relations ever define the meaning of ethnicity. To find out how often social scientists use

explicit definitions of ethnicity in their empirical research, he observed that out of 65 sociological and anthropological studies dealing with one or another aspect of ethnicity, only 13 included some definition of the term, and 52 had no explicit definition at all.³ His assertion is still relevant to the works of many social scientists, especially those working on Third World societies such as the Middle East.

The main cause of such problems is the fact that the term 'ethnicity' is a relatively new concept in social science, and that the term's meaning has changed as the scope of ethnic studies has expanded. The definition given for ethnicity (or ethnic group) in the late nineteenth century encompasses different criteria than does its definition in the second half of the twentieth century. It is scarcely necessary to assert that the meaning of words is essential to the understanding of any ideology. As Elie Kedourie points out, an edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* compiled near the end of the last century defined the term 'ethnicity' as heathendom or heathen superstition⁴ -- an interpretation that is clearly obsolete for our purposes today.

The term "ethnic" originally had two meanings in *Webster's International Dictionary of the English Language*: 1.

³Wsevolod W. Isajiw, "Definition of Ethnicity," *Ethnicity*, 1, (1974): 111.

⁴Elie Kedourie, "Ethnicity, Majority and Minority in the Middle East," in Milton J. Esman and Itamar Rabinovich, eds., *Ethnicity, Pluralism and State in the Middle East*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 25.

pertaining to the Gentiles, or to nations not converted to Christianity; heathen; pagan -- as opposed to Jewish and Christian; 2. relating to a community of physical and mental traits in races, or designating groups of races of mankind discriminated on the basis of common customs and characters.

While the first meaning might be disregarded as obsolete, the second is important. It refers specifically to "races", "groups of races", and "physical and mental traits in races." In other words, by common usage, the earlier definition referring to "nations not converted to Christianity," has been relinquished in favour of that meaning devoted to "races of mankind."⁵

The replacement of a religious criterion by a racial one was not the only change in the literature. From the mid-twentieth century, social scientists began to consider cultural and other characteristics for the concepts of ethnicity and ethnic groups. According to Louis Snyder, so overwhelming was the use of "ethnic" in a cultural sense that the editors of *Webster's Third International Dictionary*, in its 1971 edition, added two secondary meanings: "1. ethnic having originated from racial, linguistic and cultural ties with a specific group, Negroes, Irish, Italians, Germans, Poles, and other groups; 2. ethnic, originating in an exotic primitive culture (music)." It is interesting that in the

⁵Louis L. Snyder, "Nationalism and the Flawed Concept of Ethnicity," *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism*, 10, n. 2 (1983): 225.

first of these secondary meanings the word "and" is used in "racial, linguistic, and cultural ties", and not the conjunction "or."⁶ Thus in this important distinction, the racial connotation of the basic definition of 'ethnic' is retained in 1971. By no means can the Irish, Italians, Germans, and Poles be classified as "races."

The interesting point, and a factor of distortion, is that by the inclusion of ethnic studies into other branches of social sciences -- especially sociology and political science -- the original religious and racial notions of ethnicity were largely ignored in favour of the more cultural aspects. Thus, Theodorson and Theodorson in their *Modern Dictionary of Sociology*, define ethnic group as:

...a group with a common cultural tradition and a sense of identity which exists as a subgroup of a larger society. The members of an ethnic group differ with regard to certain cultural characteristics from the other members of their society.⁷

It appears that the number and the type of attributes considered for defining ethnicity or ethnic group depends on the purpose for which one uses the definition. The fact is that there is no consensus among social scientists with respect to these attributes. Religion, language and separate social institutions -- but not race -- are the attributes of

⁶*Ibid.*, 255, 264.

⁷George A Theodorson, *A Modern Dictionary of Sociology*, (New York: Crowell, 1969), 96.

ethnicity in Ashley Montagu's definition. Montagu used these criteria in order to show that race was not an important criterion of human grouping.⁸ Milton Gordon included race, religion and national origin in his definition to argue that religious and racial groups form subsocieties within American society. On the other hand, Oscar Handlin included only culture in his definition inasmuch as the work for which he makes use of the definition attempts to show continuity of ethnic groups across generations through the transmission of culture.⁹

Yet this incorporation of cultural criterion has not been entirely accepted. Given its first racial and biological traits, some have criticized the consideration of cultural characteristics in the concept of ethnicity. According to these critics, there was no valid justification for appropriating a term concerned with inherited biological traits and giving it a foggy cultural base. Snyder, for example, emphasizes that the original definition of "ethnic" refers specifically to physical and mental traits in races or group of races. As such, it approaches a synonym for the term "racial" and hence encounters all the difficulties already associated with race. The problem was compounded somewhere along the line when "ethnic" began to be used to describe

⁸Ashley Montagu-- , "The Concept of Race," *American Anthropologist*, 64, (1962): 919-928.

⁹Oscar Handlin, *Race and Nationality in American Life*, (Boston: Little Brown, 1957).

cultural as well as racial characteristics. According to Snyder: "sociologists and anthropologists have taken 'ethnic' from its original meaning and applied it to culture, a practice that does not necessarily make it semantically legitimate."¹⁰

In sum, the problems related to the plurality of definitions and attributes of ethnicity, or the lack of any definition in many works, have distorted the whole concept of ethnicity and its affiliated concepts. Given this fact, when the distinguished sociologist Talcott Parsons sought to elicit the meaning of ethnicity, he found it to be "extraordinarily elusive."¹¹ Stressing the vagueness associated with the concept, Harold Robert said that "in a dictionary filled with imprecision, the word 'ethnic' is more imprecise than most."¹² Considering these problems, Snyder asserts that the trend toward popularizing ethnicity remains problematic, and concludes that "the term has assumed so many diverse meanings that it would be best to reject it."¹³

As mentioned earlier, the concept of ethnicity as a whole was introduced to study a specific historical context, namely

¹⁰Snyder, "Nationalism," 262.

¹¹Talcott Parsons, "Some Theoretical Considerations in the Nature and Trends of Ethnicity," in Nathan Glazer and Moynihan, eds., *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 53-83.

¹²Harold Robert Isaacs, *Idols of the Tribe: Group Identity and Political Change*, (New York: Harper, 1975), 36.

¹³Snyder, "Nationalism," 263.

the United States, where different racial, linguistic and religious groups with different original nationalities were living. In examining 27 definitions of ethnicity taken from subsequent theoretical works, Isajiw stressed that most of the 27 definitions were illustrated with North American ethnic groups.¹⁴ In fact, most of the early works on ethnicity and ethnic group were American case studies. This was the period of the popularity of the "melting pot" theory according to which different ethnic groups in this society were supposed to be assimilated into the American culture and way of life.

The interesting point is that the term 'ethnicity' became popular when Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan published their study of ethnic groups in the United States in 1975.¹⁵ It was destined to win universal usage. As Snyder writes:

...until this time the word "ethnicity" did not appear in any general dictionaries, nor was it mentioned in any social science encyclopedia or guide. There were indeed references to "ethnic", "ethnic groups", "ethnic identification", and "ethnic communities", but not "ethnicity." The new word caught on quickly, and began to appear again and again, especially in studies on nationalism.¹⁶

Works dealing with ethnicity on a cross-national basis began

¹⁴Isajiw, "Definition of Ethnicity," 113.

¹⁵Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan. *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).

¹⁶Snyder, "Nationalism," 260.

to appear in abundance.¹⁷ Kedourie neatly pointed to this fact:

The words "ethnicity" and "ethnic" appear to be chosen to denote the specific and peculiar characteristics of particular groups living in so-called plural societies -groups which are different in culture, language or physical characteristics from other, usually majority or dominant, groups in such societies. The United States is a plural society, and it is there, following the rise of black power and similar ideologies in the 1960s, that writers came to be preoccupied with ethnicity and its problems.¹⁸

The popularity of the 'melting pot' hypothesis encouraged dozens of case studies of different ethnic groups in the United States, and the way they were being assimilated into that society. A new wave of ethnic studies began with the fall of the 'melting pot' hypothesis, when in the early 1960s Glazer and Moynihan wrote *Beyond the Melting Pot*, a study of the persistence of ethnic identity of such groups as the Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City.¹⁹ About the same time, Marcus Lee Hansen's hypothesis

¹⁷Among such works are Milton J. Esman, *Ethnic Conflict in the Western World*, (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1977); Claude R. Foster, *Nations Without State: Ethnic Minorities in Western Europe*, (New York: Praeger, 1980); and Jaroslav Krejci and Viteslav Velimsky, *Ethnic and Political Nations in Europe* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981).

¹⁸Kedourie, "Ethnicity," 25.

¹⁹Nathan Glazer and Daniel p. Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot*, (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1963).

of the "third generation" on retention of ethnic identity²⁰ in America encouraged many students of ethnicity to study that phenomenon in the US.²¹ Since then the question of ethnic identity persistence has been the theme of hundreds of books and articles in academic journals devoted to ethnicity. Even when there was a shift from racial to more cultural aspects of ethnicity, the emphasis was heavily on studies of U.S. society. In the realm of theoretical aspects of ethnicity, most theories have been elaborated with respect to the experiences of North American ethnic problems. In the early works, most examples provided to support theoretical arguments for the two main approaches to theories of ethnicity²² (primordial vs. instrumental or modernist) were from North American or

²⁰According to this hypothesis, the second generation removes itself or rebels against its ethnic group and the third returns to it.

²¹Among them, J. Kramer and S. Leventman, *Children of the Gilded Ghetto: Conflict Resolutions of Three generations of American Jews*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961); Bernard Lazarewitz and L. Rowitz, "The three generation hypothesis," *American Journal of Sociology*, 69 (1964): 529-38; Stephen Sharot, "The Three Generation Thesis and the American Jews," *The British Journal of Sociology*, 24 (1973): 151-164; Wsevolod W. Isajiw, *Ethnic Identity Retention* (Toronto: Centre for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto, 1981).

²²These schools are discussed in detail in chapter 4. In sum, Primordial theories refer to ethnicity as primordial or basic human self-definition and affiliation. They focus on the importance of fundamental ties based on language, religion and race. Modernist or instrumental theories, on the other hand, hold that far from being natural or necessary elements in the fabric of society and history, ethnicity and the nation are pure modern phenomena, a product of strictly modern developments like capitalism.

European cases.

An important source of confusion over the whole issue of ethnicity stems from ascribing the adjective "ethnic" to different national groups who emigrated from Europe, Asia, and other parts of the Third World to North America. Considering all these immigrants as ethnic groups distorted the meaning of ethnicity. The famous *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (1980), for instance, included more than 100 "ethnic groups" in the United States, ranging from Acadians to Zoroastrians. In a similar way, *The Canadian Ethnic Groups Bibliography* (1972), published by the Government of Ontario, contains a list of more than 50 nationalities who emigrated to Canada as ethnic groups. This was an implicit equating of ethnic groups with nations. It was in the 1970s that a new generation of social scientists involved in political aspects of ethnicity tried to equate ethnic groups with "nations." New terms, such as ethnonationalism, ethnic nationalism, and ethnopolitics, which were invented by these groups, added to the whole confusion around the question of ethnicity. The central theme in these works, despite all their methodological and theoretical differences, was equating ethnicity with nationhood and state formation.

It is interesting that these terms were mostly invented in political science and that their rise was not the result of the evolution and developments of ethnic studies in anthropology and sociology. The people who introduced such

terms were preoccupied with other problems not related to ethnicity in its unpoliticized dimensions. Thus, the terms "ethnonationalism" and "ethnopolitics" were introduced respectively by political scientists Walker Connor and Joseph Rothschild who were mainly thinking of the question of nation-state (in the international arena) and state (in domestic politics). What increased the level of distortion and confusion in ethnic studies, especially when the internal problems of non-Western societies were explained by using the terms ethnicity, ethnic groups and ethnonationalism, was the inclusion of political dimensions of ethnicity and its connotations regarding "nation."

Even though the equation of ethnicity and nation was reflected in some studies before Walker Connor's works,²³ it was he who coined the term ethnonationalism and made it so popular and universal. In his article on "Nation Building or Nation Destroying ?",²⁴ he challenged Karl Deutsch's notion of nationhood and developmental studies. For Connor there was no such pure entity as nation-state, and that the real nation was an ethnic group. He criticized those who (like Glazer and Moynihan, Theodorson, and H.S. Morris) considered ethnic groups as minority groups, and "a group with a common cultural

²³Joseph Thomas Delos, *La Nation*, (Montreal, L'arbre, 1944), considered ethnic group as nation. For Delos an ethnic group was almost identical with a nation which has not yet become fully conscious of itself.

²⁴Walker Connor, "Nation Building or Nation Destroying," *World Politics*, 24. no. 3 (1972), 319-355.

tradition and a sense of identity which exists as a subgroup of a larger society."²⁵ Referring to the Greek etymological roots of ethnicity and Max Weber's definition of the term, which in both cases are identical with nation,²⁶ Connor bases his definition of nation as a self-conscious and self-aware ethnic group. According to Connor, ethnic group is a "basic human category (i.e., not a subgroup) characterized by unity of race and culture." The only factor which gives the nature of nationhood to an ethnic group is "self-awareness." Given this definition of nation, he criticizes those who define nationalism in terms of loyalty to the state. The most fundamental error involved in scholarly approaches to nationalism, he argues, has been a tendency to equate nationalism with a feeling of loyalty to the state rather than

²⁵Connor, "A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group, is a...", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 1, no. 2 (1978), 386.

²⁶Connor believed that Weber linked the two notions when he wrote that 'the concept of "nationality" [or "nation"] shares with that of the "people" (volk) - in the "ethnic" sense- the vague connotation that whatever is felt to be distinctively common must derive from common descent.' However, Connor confirms that elsewhere Weber made an important and useful distinction between the two. According to Weber: "the idea of the nation is apt to include the notions of common descent and of an essential though frequently indefinite homogeneity. The 'nation' has these notions in common with the sentiment of solidarity of ethnic communities, which is also nourished from various sources. But the sentiment of ethnic solidarity does not by itself make a 'nation'." See Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, Vol. 1, ed. by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), 395, 389, as cited by Connor, "A Nation is," 387-88.

with loyalty to the nation.²⁷ Therefore, the real term is not nationalism but "ethnonationalism" or loyalty to ethnic group. This term became so popular that few theorists paid attention to Snyder's criticism that Connor had only contributed to the distortion and confusion that already existed around the term nationalism:

Much difficulty has been caused by the application of term "ethnic" and its variations to the field of nationalism. Even without the term "ethnic", nationalism is already suffused with so many inconsistencies, contradictions and paradoxes, that there is small room for enlightenment when the myths of ethnicity are added to it. The basic definition consists in the false definition of race with nation. The problem here is that, if by suffix "ethno-" Connor meant "national", then we are faced with a redundant "national nationalism." If he meant "racial", then we are caught in the quicksand of race.²⁸

In fact, the Connorian criteria for equating ethnicity with nationhood provides a racial basis for nation, since for him ethnic group is defined in terms of the unity of race and culture. The idea of racial basis of nationhood brings about more problems and confusion regarding the existing realities in the world of nation-states.

Given this corollary of the equation between 'ethnicity' and 'race', the term "ethnonationalism" has been criticized as "an elusive, confusing term often tied to discredited racial

²⁷*Ibid.*, 378.

²⁸Snyder, "Nationalism," 259-260.

theories."²⁹ The fact is that the sentiment of belonging to a race is not the same as that of belonging to an ethnic group. As Anthony Smith points out, defining ethnicity, and thus nation, in terms of the unity of race presents "ethnic groups as biological units."³⁰ This has created such a confusion and distortion that Snyder advised that "the best possible procedure for social scientists would be to avoid using the term 'race' and leave it to the biologists."³¹

Tribe or Ethnic Group?

The same ambiguities, to a lesser extent, arise when the definition of tribe is considered. The main problem is that in some cases the same characteristics for ethnic groups are given to tribes as completely distinct groups within a larger society. This problem is more reflected in anthropological and sociological works which confuse the two concepts and disregard their differences.

For anthropologists the focus is on discrete groups and tribal societies as culture-bearing units, which are isolated and self-autonomous communities. In his famous attempt to develop a definition of ethnic unit, R. Naroll defines tribe as "that group of people whose shared, learned way of life

²⁹Louis Snyder, *Global Mini-Nationalisms: Autonomy or Independence*, (London: Greenwood Press, 1982), xvi.

³⁰Anthony Smith, *Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, (Oxford: Martin Roberston, 1979), 89.

³¹Snyder, "Nationalism," 259.

constitute a whole 'culture' rather than a mere 'subculture'."³² Patricia Crone, on the other hand, declares that:

...few would disagree that tribe is a species of that group of societies which create all or most of their social roles by ascribing social importance to biological characteristics, or in other words societies ordered with reference to kinship, sex and age. No society which makes extensive use of non-biological principles of organization is a tribal one, for all that kinship, sex and age may still regulate numerous aspects of it; conversely, no definition of the tribe which omits reference to the biological principle of organization can be said to do its job.... A tribe is thus a primitive society. It is primitive in that biologically based organization, however diversely elaborated, is given by nature in respect of its starting point."³³

Despite his criticism of the confusing notion of 'ethnonationalism' and the racial basis of nation, Snyder defines tribe and tribalism as equal to ethnicity in its non-racial version. By rejecting the concept of 'ethnonationalism' for describing loyalty to ethnic group, Snyder finds that 'tribalism' is the more appropriate term, defined as 'the sentiment of loyalty to an ethnic or linguistic group'. He thus called the French-speaking Canadians, Dutch-speaking Flemings and Basques 'a kind of

³²Raoul Naroll, "Ethnic Unit Classification," *Current Anthropology*, 5, no. 4 (1964).

³³Patricia Crone, "The Tribe and the State," in J.A. Hall, ed., *States in History*, (Oxford, 1986), 48-49.

tribalism' in the Western World.³⁴

The problem with Snyder's argument, as Ma Shu Yun points out, is that human groups are not differentiated according to their social, cultural and organizational characteristics. The terms 'tribe' and 'nation' differ only in location (the former refers to ethnic groups in Africa, the latter to those in the West) but not in nature. By this way of equating tribe with nation, he analyses 'the Clash between Tribalism and Nationalism'.³⁵ However, if the term 'tribe' is identical to nation, it follows logically that tribalism is the same as nationalism, and so how can there be any clash between them?³⁶

The likening of tribe to nation or ethnic group is reflected in the works of social scientists (sociologists, historians and political scientists) who have borrowed anthropological approaches to the question of tribe and tribalism. However, the fact is that there has been no agreement among anthropologists on the definition of tribe as long as "their epistemologies have been different."³⁷

³⁴Louis Snyder, *Varieties of Nationalism: A Comparative Study*, (Hinsdale: Dryden Press, 1976).

³⁵*Ibid.*, 170.

³⁶Ma Shu Yun, "Ethnonationalism, Ethnic Nationalism, and Mini-Nationalism: A Comparison of Connor, Smith and Snyder," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 13, no. 4 (1990): 533-534.

³⁷Richard Tapper, "Anthropologists, Historians, and Tribespeople on Tribe and State Formation in the Middle East," in Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner, eds., *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 48-51.

The early definitions of tribe considered it a culturally homogeneous and uniform group which speaks the same language, has a single and stable political and social system and a permanent territorial basis. A distinct common ancestry or kinship basis is considered the basic defining element of tribal groups. But Rudi Linder argues that subjugation of tribes to states in the twentieth century has led ethnographers to overemphasize kinship and ascribe to modern tribal organization a political and territorial stability and a kinship dominance that did not exist among nomadic tribes of the past.³⁸ In his influential study of tribal communities in Highland Burma, Edmund R. Leach proposed that the definition of a "tribe" (or "ethnic group") as a specific group with the same language, cultural uniformity, and social and political system stability, did not provide an adequate unit for ethnographic analysis, and that such an approach yielded a simplistic and often misleading definition of a "tribe" or "ethnic group." Thus he warned:

I would claim that it is largely an academic fiction to suppose that in a normal ethnographic situation one ordinarily finds distinct "tribes" distributed about the map in orderly fashion with clear-cut boundaries between them....My own view is that the ethnographer has often only managed to discern the existence of a tribe because he took it as axiomatic that this kind of cultural entity must

³⁸Rudi Paul Linder, "What Was a National Tribe ?," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 24 (1982): 689-711.

exist.³⁹

Another characteristic which most social scientists ascribe to "tribe" is its isolation from the central political system or state and its antagonistic relations with this institution. This dichotomy between tribe and state presents a conceptual division which has been widely accepted among social scientists. From this point of view, tribe and state are crude antitheses. The state is the source of order and productivity, while the tribal society is the source of rebellion. In the Third World, as R.O. Christensen points out, this view was accepted first among European colonial administrators whose training had given them clear ideas about the role of the state, and then among the native rulers, including the Middle Eastern rulers and officials, who were concerned with consolidating the power of their states. Thus, as Christensen points out, anthropologists and others elaborated the contrasts between the respective social orders represented by tribe and state:

³⁹E.R Leach, *Political System of Highland Burma*, (London: Percy Lund, 1954).

The tribe is socially homogeneous, egalitarian and segmentary; the state is heterogeneous, inequalitarian and hierarchically structured. The tribe is based on ties of kinship defined by descent patterns; the state is based on impersonal relationships and contractual ties. And so on. However, like all 'pure' models, these ideal types are only rough approximations of the social reality which they purport to explain.⁴⁰

Patricia Crone, whose definition of tribe as "a biological organization and primitive society" was discussed earlier, contrasts tribes with states by emphasizing that "whatever else the tribe may be, it is a stateless society...tribes and states are diametrically opposed" and that "tribes have to be destroyed in order to make way for states." For her, tribes have no evolution and play no role in state formation.⁴¹

By presenting such a notion of tribes -- their similarity with ethnic groups, their socio-cultural structure and their relation to the state -- social scientists justify and legitimate the way they equate tribe with ethnicity, and thus attribute to it the potential for becoming a nation. This is the case especially in relation to ethnic and tribal studies of the Middle East, though the reality of socio-cultural and political structure of these societies, including their so-called ethnic groups and tribal peoples, are different from

⁴⁰R.O. Christensen, "Tribes, States and Anthropologists", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 22, no. 2 (April 1986): 289-90.

⁴¹For a critique of Crone's works, see Tapper, "Anthropologists,".

what is presented in the academic world of social scientists.

II. ETHNICITY AND TRIBALISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST: THE ANACHRONISM OF THE WESTERN APPROACHES

The problems delineated regarding ethnicity and tribalism are reflected in the main theoretical works and case studies on the Middle East. These problems include the lack of a definition of ethnicity, ethnic group, nation or ethnonationalism; theoretical underdevelopment in explaining ethnonationalism;⁴² a tendency, in the case of more theoretical works, toward uncritical application of theories which have been elaborated originally to explain ethnicity or ethnonationalism in the Western world, and which therefore ignore the structural, socio-political and historical differences between the two systems; the implicit or explicit equating of tribes to ethnic groups which brings about inappropriate analysis of their role and their place in Middle Eastern societies; and finally, mispresenting and distorting the reality of state-tribe relations.

The result of such problems is that religio-linguistic and tribal groups are studied as distinct societies which have the potential for becoming independent nations. Absent here

⁴²For example, most of the works on the rise of nationalist tendencies among the Kurds and Baluchis are historical rather than having any theoretical framework.

is the elaboration of appropriate theoretical frameworks based on historical specificities of the Middle Eastern societies for explaining the politicization of religio-linguistic ties - the rise of autonomous or separatist trends.

The concepts of ethnicity and its affiliated terms have been considered universal phenomena and have been borrowed uncritically by some students of the Middle East to analyze the existing linguistic and religious diversity in the region. This universality or givenness, which is in fact the legacy of the 'behavioral persuasion'⁴³ and the tradition of ahistorical cross-national comparisons, persuade these theorists that they are free of presenting any definition of ethnicity, ethnic group or ethnonationalism with respect to the historical specificities of the cases under study. This problem is reflected in the works of many students of the Middle East.

Akbar Aghajanian, for example, argues for the existence of inequalities among Iranian "ethnic groups" in terms of education, public health, poverty, level of consumption, and the distribution of affluence among "ethnic" communities. While he effectively uses statistical data to illustrate such inequalities, he does not present any definition for ethnicity or any criteria for considering a community as an ethnic group. Though Aghajanian stresses that "Iran is a country of

⁴³See David Ricci, *The Tragedy of Political Science: Politics, Scholarship and Democracy*, (New Haven: Yale, 1984).

diverse 'ethnic' and 'linguistic' communities",⁴⁴ he does not go on to discuss his apparent distinction between linguistic and ethnic communities. He includes Turks, Kurds, Arabs, and Baluchis as ethnic groups, yet he does not acknowledge that the primary factor differentiating Azari Turks and Arabs from Persians is language and not religion. Thus, those whom Aghajanian identifies as 'ethnic groups' are not as such since by apply an "and" between ethnic and linguistic communities, he has made a distinction between them. Similarly, the other factor which separates Persians from Kurds and Baluchis is religion, but he does not clarify whether religion is a factor of ethnicity.

Another study by Farhad Kazemi on "ethnicity and Iranian peasantry" is devoted to the ethnic factor in this sector of the Iranian population. However, it is not clear what the author means by ethnicity, and worse, by ethnicity among peasants. In the beginning of his article, Kazemi argues that "differentiation based on ethnic, religious, or linguistic criteria has been a constant feature of Middle Eastern societies, and Iran is no exception to this general pattern."⁴⁵ What this sentence implies is that being 'ethnic'

⁴⁴Akbar Aghajanian, "Ethnic Inequality in Iran: An Overview," *International Journal of the Middle Eastern Studies*, 15, no. 2 (May 1983): 211.

⁴⁵Farhad kazemi, "Ethnicity and Iranian Peasantry," in Milton J. Esman and Itamar Rabinovich, eds., *Ethnicity, Pluralism and State in the Middle East*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 201.

is different from being 'religious' or 'linguistic'. The reader can ask what is 'ethnic' in Iran, because other than those two factors, there is no other factor such as race or skin colour which can differentiate Iranian ethnic groups.

A similar problem can be found in David Menashri's study. He emphasises that presenting 'Iran as a unified entity with a political history of twenty-five centuries' is just a 'myth'.⁴⁶ In his study on the policy of Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic Republic toward 'ethnic and religious minorities', one is left hanging in the air when he reveals nothing about ethnicity, its definition, or its various elements. Instead, as the title and the entire content of his article shows, he makes a distinction between 'ethnic' groups and 'religious minorities'. However, Menashri confuses everything when he considers only Jews, Armenians, Bahais and Zoroastrians among Iran's religious minorities. Why are not Sunnite Muslims religious minorities rather than 'ethnic' groups? It seems that the main criterion by which he identifies a minority group to be 'ethnic' is its political activity and its demand for autonomy and independence.⁴⁷ This is a factor that has not been considered an essential element of ethnicity elsewhere in the literature.

Even in theoretical works devoted to the question of

⁴⁶David Menashri, "Khomeini's Politics Toward Ethnic and Religious Minorities," in Esman and Rabinovich, 215.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 216.

ethnicity, the concept is not operationalized and defined. The best example is Hooshang Amir Ahmadi's well known article on Iran. Drawing upon the later works of Michael Hechter and the tradition of rational choice theory, he has presented an interesting and coherent theoretical framework for explaining "ethnic collective movements" in Iran.⁴⁸ Despite its theoretical richness, however, there is a lack of explicit conceptualization, and a definition for 'ethnic groups', 'ethnicity and 'ethnic nationalism' is noticeably absent. In spite of his sound knowledge of Iranian politics and society, Ahmadi has not considered the historical context in which those groups are and have been active.

In the more general case of the Middle East, such methodological flaws are abundant in studies of ethnicity. The work of Nader Entessar, a political scientist whose works are devoted mainly to Kurdish problems,⁴⁹ suffers under the same problems. Not only there is no theoretical discussion on the question of ethnicity, nationalism or ethnonationalism in his most important work on 'Kurdish ethnonationalism', but no single definition of the term is presented. Absent too is any discussion of the controversial term "ethnonationalism", which

⁴⁸Hooshang Amir Ahmadi, "A Theory of Ethnic Collective Movement and Its Application to Iran," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 10, no. 4 (Oct 1987): 363-391.

⁴⁹Nader Entessar, "Kurdish Identity in the Middle East," *Current World Readers* 34, no. 2 (April 1991): 270-282; "The Kurdish Mosaic of Discord," *Third World Quarterly*, 11, no. 4 (Oct 1989); "The Kurds in Post-Revolutionary Iran and Iraq," *Third World Quarterly*, 6, no. 4 (1984): 911-933.

he uses in the very title of his book.⁵⁰ Indeed, the reader who is familiar with the issue cannot find any mention of Walker Connor, who coined the term in the early 1970s. It is very clear that Entessar has taken this term as given and applied it uncritically as a universal factor.

Those works which directly or indirectly present some definition of ethnicity or the criteria for considering a group as 'ethnic' rely on broad definitional frameworks which can include different religio-linguistic groups within the Middle East. This approach which is used mainly to justify the application of the concept of 'ethnicity' tend only to add to existing confusion in the literature addressing ethnicity. In Gabriel Ben-Dor's general study on 'ethnopolitics and the Middle Eastern state' a primordial approach, following Clifford Geertz's, is applied to all Middle Eastern societies. Thus, six foci of primordialism are considered as the elements of ethnicity: assumed blood ties, race, language, region, religion, and custom. A problem occurs when this notion of ethnicity and general typologies, which originally had been developed for the study of different socio-historical context in the West, is applied to societies with different experiences. Considering the above mentioned criteria and given the historical shared experiences of Middle Eastern people in terms of religion, custom, blood ties, and even

⁵⁰Nader Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1992).

language it is not possible to find pure ethnic groups in this region.

Similar problems arise when the reader encounters an explicit definition of ethnicity such as that found in Esman and Rabinovich's edited volume on ethnicity in the Middle East. For the purposes of their argument, they define ethnicity as "collective identity and solidarity based on such ascriptive factors as imputed common descent, language, customs, belief system and practices (religion), and in some cases race or colour"⁵¹ -- a broad definition which considers both objective and subjective aspects of ethnicity.

The problem is that the presence of so many varied criteria tends to overstate subtle differences and to understate the many commonalities which exist among peoples who are thereby differentiated. Ignoring these commonalities leads to contradiction and distortion when the editors and contributors study many religio-linguistics groups in different Middle Eastern societies. In the study of Syrian and Lebanese society, for instance, they mention common language and ethnic descent as major characteristics of ethnicity without considering that the tribes of the Alawites, Druzes, and even the Palestinians (whom they qualify as an *ethnie*) not only share Arabic as a common language but also

⁵¹Esman and Rabinovich, 3.

claim common Arab ethnic origins.⁵²

Such disagreements about and confusions over the role of religion and language as elements of ethnicity in the Middle East reveal that it is more the researcher's task to determine whether a religious or linguistic group is 'ethnic' or not. For example, the question of ethnicity in Lebanon is a matter of religion, but in Iran, Pakistan, and to some extent in Afghanistan it is a matter of language. Thus, Shi'ite in Pakistan and Afghanistan are not ethnic groups, but in Lebanon they are.

The literature of Middle Eastern ethnic studies not only suffers from the problems associated with the definition of ethnicity and contradictory ascriptive criteria given for ethnic groups, but also ignores historical specificities of the tribal communities and their relations to the state. The main problem is that these studies usually confuse tribes and ethnic groups, and ascribe the characteristics considered for ethnic groups to tribal communities.⁵³ By this, they represent Middle Eastern linguistic and religious groups (most of which formerly had tribal organizations) as distinct ethnic groups which are in constant conflict with states in order to

⁵²Bassam Tibi, "The Simultaneity of Unsimultaneous: Old Tribes and Imposed Nation-States in the Middle East," in Khoury and Kostiner, 142.

⁵³This tendency is, for example, very obvious in Esman and Rabinovich, who employ the concept of ethnicity as a general framework and impose it on the Syrian context without a single reference to tribes.

transform their potential for nationhood into reality.

As Bassam Tibi argues, the terms tribe and ethnies cannot be used synonymously in the context of the Middle East. Social scientists concerned with the Middle East have adopted the concept of ethnicity as an analytical tool for depicting subsocietal divisions in nation-states without a national (homogenous) community. In answering why scholars talk of ethnies instead of tribes, Tibi stresses that European historians usually refer to social groupings in premodern periods of their own history as ethnies but disparagingly refer to similar entities in non-European history as tribes. Thus, tribalism is seen as an Arab or African social phenomenon, but not as something European. Social scientists in general, and students of the Middle East in particular, now avoid the term tribe, referring instead to prenational social groupings as ethnies, since they want to be free of the Eurocentric connotation of tribe.⁵⁴

However, some social scientists incorporate the same primordial approach applied in ethnic studies into their study of Middle Eastern tribes. Here, the emphasis is mainly on the kinship basis of tribal groups. In other words, tribes are defined in terms of kinship, by which social scientists usually mean descent. Lisa Anderson's study of state

⁵⁴Bassam Tibi, "The Simultaneity of the Unsimultaneous," 138.

formation in Tunisia and Libya,⁵⁵ for example, relies heavily on the notion of tribe as kinship group, whereas the evidence presented by other scholars⁵⁶ indicate that tribal groups in these two regions were more complex than she indicates. Anderson does not explain how kinship created these tribes, nor does she indicate what tribal distinctions might have been based upon other than "kinship". Moreover, she incorrectly identifies kin-ordered groups as acephalus and egalitarian. As Lois Beck points out, notions of kinship, one of a number of symbolic systems of classification (including tribe), were important in relationships among tribal people at the local level, but kinship ties alone did not form tribes or tribal politics. Hence, the definition of tribe as a kinship or kinship-based group is not sufficient or accurate, for it places too much weight on kinship and neglects other, more significant factors.⁵⁷

Many ethno-linguistic communities which are considered ethnic groups by the students of the Middle East were formerly subdivided and organized along tribal lines. This is the case of the Kurds, Baluchis, and Azari Turks of Iran, and also of other religio-linguistic groups in other parts of the Middle

⁵⁵Lisa Anderson, *The State and Social Transformation in Tunisia and Libya, 1830-1980*, (N.J: Princeton, 1986).

⁵⁶See for example, John Davis, *Libyan Politics: Tribe and Revolution: An Account of Zuwaya and Their Government*, (London: Tauris, 1987).

⁵⁷Lois Beck, "Tribes and State in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Iran," in Khoury and Kostiner, 193.

East. However, as I discussed in the previous section, such tribal groups have not been homogenous, egalitarian, isolated and segmentary with a constant antagonistic relation with the state. In the case of Iran, for example, there have not been clear-cut boundaries between tribes and states and such a dichotomy has never existed. As Richard Tapper has stated "there has been 'state' within tribe, and 'tribe' within every state; state has been partly defined in terms of tribe, tribe in terms of state."⁵⁸

While it is true that tribe and state stand for divergent, and in some respects mutually exclusive forms of social order, it does not follow that conflict is a necessary feature of their relationship. In the Middle Eastern context especially, the division between tribe and state has often been far from clear-cut. Many states have been, in effect, tribal dynasties, and many tribal societies have formed mini-states. As Ibn Khaldun⁵⁹ argued, tribes and states maintained each other as a single system rather than functioning as two separate and opposing systems. It is true that there is political tension between them, but with this tension there also existed a considerable degree of interdependence,⁶⁰ as there have been constant relations between the state and

⁵⁸Richard Tapper, *The Conflict of Tribe and State in Iran and Afghanistan*, (London: Croom Helm, 1983).

⁵⁹Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, trans. F. Rosenthal (N.J: Princeton, 1967).

⁶⁰Christensen, 287.

tribes through their chiefs. As I will discuss in the next chapter, most tribal chiefs have been formally recognized, and in some cases appointed, as the head and representative of their tribes by the central states. They, in turn, have supported the state in terms of military power and tax collection.⁶¹

It was only with the rise of the modern centralized state, or as Anthony Smith points out, the *scientific state*, that the relations between state and tribes became antagonistic and mutually exclusive. This did not happen in the Middle East until the early decades of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, the resistance of the tribal groups to the aims of the state was not a struggle for independence, as many social scientists argue, but a struggle for survival. It was later, under the effects of foreign influences, both in terms of ideas and power politics, that this resistance took the form of a national struggle.

Conclusion

What I have proposed in this chapter is the argument that concepts such as ethnicity, ethnic groups, tribes and ethnic nationalism are widely contested. As the literature shows, there exists vagueness and confusion regarding these concepts, both in terms of their definitions and their changeable

⁶¹See Lois Beck, "Tribes and the State in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Iran," 185-226.

characteristics. While concepts such as "ethnicity" and "ethnic groups" were invented to describe specific native and mostly immigrant nationalities in the historical context of North America, they have subsequently been interpreted as universal, and thus were applied uncritically to analyze different religio-linguistic groups in the Middle East.

In this part of the world, however, different linguistic or religious minorities -- identified as "ethnic groups" in the literature -- have not been distinct nationalities who emigrated to the region from other parts of the globe. Instead, they have been inseparable parts of larger society in which many religio-linguistic groups lived together for hundreds of years. In such a long period, they have shared the same historical experiences and cultural heritage.

Considering the historical context of Iran, I argue that there are fewer racial and cultural criteria to distinguish between different existing linguistic or religious groups. It is therefore anachronistic to apply Walker Connor's notion of ethnic groups as unified racial and cultural entities to the existing linguistic and religious minority groups of Iran. Here, the existence of ethnic groups with distinct racial or cultural characteristics is more a state of mind than a historical fact.

Moreover, I do not consider ethnicity a fixed phenomenon. Instead, I emphasize the changeability of linguistic, religious and cultural features. As Frederick Barth points

out, there are no clear-cut boundaries between the so-called ethnic groups. Rather, boundaries are subjective factors and "the features that are taken into account are not the sum of 'objective' differences, but only those which the actors themselves regard as significant."⁶²

The fact is that Iranian linguistic and religious groups were organized around different tribal groups until the early twentieth century. Such groups have been indispensable, integral parts of Iranian society. In Iran, tribes have been more socio-political entities than biological and kinship based societies. It is in this context that I use the concept of tribe in my thesis. Indeed, Akbar Ahmad and David Hart have given a similar definition for tribal groups:

Tribes are rural groups that have a name and distinguish between members and non-members, which occupy a territory, and which within that territory assume either all responsibility, or at least a proportion of the responsibility, for the maintenance of order. In as far as they assume such responsibility both internally and externally, they can be said to possess political and military functions.⁶³

Defined this way, tribe does not have the same characteristics which some Western social scientists ascribe to it. In Iran, tribal groups have not been isolated,

⁶²Frederick Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1969), 14.

⁶³Akbar S. Ahmad and David M. Hart, "Introduction," in Akbar S. Ahmad and David M. Hart, eds., *Islam in Tribal Societies From Atlas To the Indus*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 1.

homogenous, distinct societies in permanent conflict with states, but rather parts of the larger societies in which they shared the same cultural and religious heritage and were in constant contact with the central state. Tribal groups in Iran have been either the founders of great dynasties with strong states, or have supported central states against their external enemies by contributing to the military forces of the kings.

Following the logical path of the arguments raised in this chapter, I turn now to discuss in more detail the basic characteristics of tribes and tribe-state relations in the historical context of Iran.

MAJOR CONCENTRATIONS OF IRAN'S MAIN ETHNIC MINORITIES

	Kurds		Baluchis
	Arabs		Luri
	Azeri Turks		Bakhtyari
	Turkomans		Qashqa'i

Note: Details on each of the minorities, including language, religion and their standing under Khomeyni's regime, are given in the text

Source: Colin Legum, *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, 1980-1981, Vol. 5, 553.

Chapter Two:

Tribes and States in Iran: A General View

In chapter one, the problematic of conceptualizing ethnicity, ethnic groups, and tribes was discussed. I argued that concepts such as ethnicity, ethnic groups and tribe are contested. The problem of conceptualizing tribes arises especially when they are presented as 'primitive', 'decentralized', 'egalitarian', 'kinship-based' and 'isolate' groups set apart from the state. This approach, which equates tribes with ethnic groups, gives the former a distinct status which enables them to become potential 'nations' with their own states. The historical experience of the Middle Eastern societies in general, and Iran in particular, challenges such conceptualizations of tribe and tribalism. In this chapter, the concept of 'tribe' will be discussed with respect to the Iranian experience. While important parts of the Iranian population in the past consisted of tribal peoples, their social structure and their relations with the various central states have made them different from those tribal categories presented as isolated, primitive, kinship-based groups.

Given these points, this chapter will present an analysis of Iranian society with respect to the main characteristics of its tribal peoples and their relations with the evolving central state. Several issues regarding the Iranian tribes

will be discussed to challenge the prevalent myths surrounding the question of tribes as kinship-based, politically decentralized, culturally cohesive and economically egalitarian organizations in permanent conflict with the state.

As I will discuss, the Iranian context does not support such an interpretation of tribe and tribalism. In contrast, the tribes in Iran have not been formed on the basis of kinship ties -- socio-political considerations have instead played an important role in their formation. Economically, they have also encouraged hierarchical and politically centralized forms of social organization. Culturally and politically, tribes in Iran have been fragmented and divided groups with many internal conflicts and rivalries. These groups have not been isolated from the state, nor have their relations with the latter always been conflictual and antagonistic. On the one hand, there have been many tribal groups who have founded strong and durable states in Iranian history, and on the other, states have created tribes for political reasons. For most of Iranian history, tribal chiefs have been the representatives of the kings, and historically their relationship is most accurately described as one of mutual support rather than conflict.

Tribes and Tribalism in Iran

Until the mid-twentieth century parts of the Iranian population could best be described as tribal in nature, as important parts of Iranian territory have been occupied by identifiable and politically significant tribal groups. In fact, the boundaries of Iran and its neighbours have been inhabited by tribal groups. Azari Turks, Kurds, Lurs, Bakhtiari and Arabs in the west; Azari, Kurds and Turkmans respectively in the northwest, north and northeast; and Baluchis in the southeast.

There is no precise statistic on the population of Iranian tribal groups, and different sources have given different estimates. In Jamal Zadeh's view, of an estimated Iranian population of 7.5 million in the late nineteenth century, 30% were nomads dispersed into tribal units.¹ Mas'ud Kayhan, the Iranian geographer, estimates the population of Iranian nomadic tribes at 4 million, or 32% of the Iranian population at the beginning of the twentieth century.² According to the estimates presented in different Iranian sources, tribal population in Iran has declined from 32% of total population of Iran in 1929, to 20% in 1935, 15% in 1956,

¹M. Jamal Zadeh, "An Outline of the Social and Economic Structure of Iran," *International Labour Review*, 63, no. 1 (January 1951): 24.

²Iraj Afshar Sistani, *Moghaddameh-i Bar Shenakht-e Ilha, Chadorneshinan va Tavayef-e Ashayeri Iran*, [An introduction to the understanding of tribes and pastoral nomads in Iran] (text in Persian) (Tehran: Nasl-e Danesh, 1989), 31.

10% in 1966, and 7% in 1976.³ According to the 1986 census, the total population of the tribal groups in Iran was 1,152,999 or about 2 % of the total population of Iran.⁴

In the late nineteenth century, as Abrahamian writes, the population of Iran in the central plateau was predominantly Persian, with an intermingling of non-Persian nomads: Qashqa'i Turks, Bakhtiari Lurs, Afshars, Arabs, and Mamasani Lurs. The villages in the Caspian region in the north were mostly Gilaki, Mazandarani and Taleshi, but there were also scattered settlements of Azaris and Persians, as well as tribal groups of Qajars, Turkmans and Kurds. The northwest was predominantly Azari, with some villages speaking Kurdish, Armenian and Assyrian, and some nomads belonging to Shahsevan, Afshar, and the Qara-Daghis tribes. The west and southwest were a mixture of settled, semi-settled, and unsettled Kurds, Lurs, Bakhtiyaris, and Arabs. The southeast was mostly Baluchi with some Arabs, Afshars and Afghans. Finally the northeast was an amalgamation of Persians, Turkmans, Kurds, Shahsevans, Afshars, Tajiks, and Timuris.⁵

However, important linguistic groups like Kurds, Azaris and Baluchis were not united in just one Kurdish, Azari, or

³Afshar Sistani, *Moghaddameh*, 32.

⁴Markaz-e Amar-e Iran, *Salnameh-e Amari Keshvar*, 1368, [Iran statistical yearbook, 1990] (text in Persian), (Tehran: Markaz-e Amar-e Iran, 1991), 35.

⁵See Ervand Abrahamian, "Oriental Despotism: the Case of Qajar Iran," *International Journal of the Middle East Studies*, 5, no. 1(1974): 15.

Baluchi tribe, but were organized in different tribal groups. The Kurdish population of Iran were members of important tribes like Zanganeh, Kalhur (partly Shiite), Mukri, Ardalan and Shakkak in the west. Elsewhere in the region Kurds intermingled with Azari Turks, tending to become Turkicized in language and religion -- Shadlu, Shaqaqi, Qarachurlu and Dunbuli belong to this type. The Azari population were partly organized in tribes such as Afshars, Qajars and Shahsevars.⁶ In Baluchistan, the Baluchis mostly belong to tribes like Yarahmadzai, Ismailzai, Marri, Narui, Mubarak, Rigi and Barakzai.⁷

It is also important to mention that geographical regions such as Kurdistan, Azarbaijan, and Baluchistan are not dominated absolutely by Kurds, Azaris, and Baluchis. There are, for example, Kurdish tribes in Azarbaijan, Khorasan, and Baluchistan,⁸ as there are Azaris in Kurdistan, and Baluchis among Turkman tribes in the northeast. While the beginning of modernization in Iran, which commenced with the rise of Reza Shah in the early 1920s, increased urbanization and forced

⁶Richard Tapper, *The Conflict of Tribe and State in Iran and Afghanistan*, 18-19.

⁷Harrison refers to seventeen major tribal groupings in Baluchistan (both Iranian and Pakistani) headed by a "Sardar" (chieftain) and some 400 tribal subgroups headed by lesser chieftains. See Selig S. Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow: Baluch Nationalism and Soviet Temptations*, (New York: Carnegie Endowment For International Peace, 1981), 9.

⁸See J.F. Bestor, *The Kurds of Iranian Baluchistan: A Regional Elite*, (MA Thesis, McGill University, 1979).

settlement of nomadic tribes, there were still important tribal groups in Azarbaijan, Kurdistan, and Baluchistan in the mid-twentieth century. In the case of Baluchistan, tribes are still important social organizations.

Basic Characteristics of The Iranian Tribes:

As I discussed earlier, some anthropological approaches to tribes consider them to be kinship-based, decentralized, egalitarian, stateless and cohesive organizational units of a larger society.⁹ The Iranian context, however, does not support such a characterization of tribal groups. In fact, some leading students of tribalism and ethnicity in Iran reject this type of categorization. For the most part, they challenge the notion of kinship as a fundamental criterion of tribal membership. Lois Beck, who has studied the Turkish Qashqa'i tribal confederacy in Iran, points out:

Social scientists define tribes in terms of kinship, by which they usually mean descent. Notions of kinship were important in relationships among tribal people at the local level, but kinship ties alone did not form tribes or tribal polities. Hence a definition of a tribe as a kinship or kinship-based group is not sufficient or accurate, for it places too much weight on kinship and

⁹See Philip C. Salzman, "The Tribes of Iran: Reflections on their Past and Future," in Charles J. Adams, ed., *Iranian Civilization and Culture*, (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1973), 71-77. Broadly speaking, Lisa Anderson's, *The State and Social Transformation in Tunisia and Libya 1830-1980*, (N.J.: Princeton, 1986), relies heavily on the notion of tribes as kinship ordered groups; See also, Patricia Crone, "The Tribe and the State," in J.A.Hall, ed., *States in History*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).

neglects other more significant factors.¹⁰

The question of kinship relations based on principles of descent and on affiliations by marriage or adoption are empirically evident only within the smaller units of the tribe: nuclear families, extended households, and local lineages. At higher levels of incorporation, clans and tribes often maintain a relationship of a more political origin: client or slave descent groups that have no proper genealogical connections but are nevertheless an accepted part of the tribe; alliance or rivalries between descent groups that appear to violate their genealogical charters; cooperation among networks of people that crosscut kinship relations; or the blatant rewriting (or re-reciting) of genealogies. It is specially at the confederacy level¹¹ that these anomalies are most stark.¹² As Albert Hourani argues, such large tribal groups:

...are not held together by genuine kinship. Few people in illiterate societies know their ancestors more than three or four generations back or can extend their relationships beyond whom they know

¹⁰Lois Beck, "Tribes and the State in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Iran," in Khoury and Kostiner, eds., *Tribes and State Formation*, 193.

¹¹Confederations are the highest level of tribal organization. A confederacy is usually the result of the alliance among different tribes. The leader of a tribal confederacy is an Amir, Sardar, Ilkhan or Khan.

¹²Thomas J. Barfield, "Tribe and State Relations: the Inner Asian Perspective," in Khoury and Kostiner, 156.

personally or see frequently.¹³

The Khamseh tribal confederacy (in southern Iran) is a good example in this regard, because it was formed out of five different groups of diverse origins. It was formed during the Qajar reign (1797-1925) under the leadership of Qavam al-Molk¹⁴ from five smaller tribes -- the Persian Bassari, an Arab group, and the Turkish speaking Ainalu, Nafar, and Baharlu.¹⁵

As Richard Tapper argues, defining tribes in the Middle East and central Asia as descent groups exclude most tribal groups in Anatolia, Iran (like Marri Baluch, and Basseri in southern Iran) and Afghanistan, which are mostly complex and heterogeneous chiefdoms. In fact, more recent Iranian tribes such as Qizilbash (who founded the Safavid dynasty), Shahsevan, or Qashqa'i were formed through a complex blend of political allegiance and cultural ideologies and owed their success and their continuity as much to the ambiguity and flexibility inherent in this blend as to the military prowess

¹³Albert Hourani, "Tribes and States in Islamic History," in Khoury and Kostiner, 304.

¹⁴He was a merchant governor who had no blood ties to these five tribes. In fact some have claimed that he was of Jewish descent. See A. Qasimi, *Khanevadeh-e Qavam al-Molk* [The Qavam al-Molk family] (text in Persian) (Tehran: Javidan, 1950), 5.

¹⁵See Abrahamian, "Oriental Despotism," 29.

of their leaders.¹⁵ In another study on tribes in Iran and Afghanistan, Tapper points out that tribal groups in a locality are capable of developing solidarity over time even when they might claim different ancestry and languages. In this way, even an ideology of common descent may be constructed out of political-territorial unity.¹⁷

In a similar argument, and regarding the studies of Basseri in southern Iran and Marri in Baluchistan, Rudi Lindner points out that tribes are essentially political groups, concerned about shared interests as much as blood ties. Lindner shows that the subjugation of tribes to states in the twentieth century has led ethnographers to overemphasize kinship and ascribe to modern tribal organization a political and territorial stability and a kinship dominance that did not exist among nomadic tribes in the past.¹⁸ Although the local ties of tribally organized people in Iran were created on a voluntary basis according to the principles and processes of kinship, marriage, economic and political associations as well as coincidence, these local ties still did not necessarily create tribes. Rather, tribes

¹⁶Richard Tapper criticizes Patricia Crone's definition of tribes as kinship based groups in the Middle East. See his "Anthropologists, Historians and Tribespeople," 63, 59.

¹⁷Richard Tapper, *The Conflict of Tribe and State in Iran and Afghanistan*, 65.

¹⁸Rudi Paul Lindner, "What Was a Nomad Tribe?" *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 24 (1982): 689-711.

were formed through the political affiliation of individuals and groups to local and in some cases higher-level groups and leaders.¹⁹ Thus, "most of Iran's tribal groups, particularly the larger ones, lacked notions of common descent for their members...and for the larger tribal polities, no kinship system was elaborate enough to encompass all members."²⁰

The lack of a kinship basis for tribes in Iran has been evident even in the early years of Turko-Mongol tribal formations in eleventh century Iran. As James Reid points out, authority relationships in Turko-Mongol tribes were determined by power relationships, not by kinship structure. The elaboration of kinship relationships such as Mongol prototypes is an anthropologist's dream, but does not portray anything more than a cultural ideal.²¹ Between the eleventh and eighteenth centuries, Turkic tribes in Iran, like Qizilbash, the founder of the Safavid Empire, Afshar and Qajar, were based less on kinship than upon power relationships. In her famous work on Mongol and Turkish tribes, Jean Cuisinier stresses that even the camp group (*oba*) in a tribe, far from being a tightly-knit kinship society, was a cluster of families and smaller camp groups which arrayed around an existing unity to which they had no blood

¹⁹Lois Beck, "Tribes and the State in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Iran," 190.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 194.

²¹James J. Reid, *Tribalism and Society in Islamic Iran, 1500-1629*, (Malibu, Calif: Undena, 1983), 8.

relationship.²²

The myth of kinship's centrality in the formation of Iranian tribal groups becomes very obvious if we consider the background of tribal leaders. In some cases these are strong figures who have no kinship relations with their tribal subjects. As Beck discusses, high-level leaders of the larger tribal polities in Iran were almost always somewhat distinct socially and symbolically (as well as economically) from the people they led. They were often said to originate from groups with whom the affiliated people traced no actual or fictive kinship ties. They invoked genealogies (distinct to their subjects) to define their exclusivity, and their lineages were often highly endogamous. A tribal elite claiming Kurdish origin and ruling over Baluch in Baluchistan demonstrate this, and one finds similar histories and legends of origins for other high-level tribal leaders in Iran.²³

In fact, when the notion of tribes in Iran is considered,

²²Jean Cuisenier, "Kinship and Social Organization in Turko-Mongolian Cultural Areas," in E. Foster and O. Ranum, trans. and eds., *Family and Society: Selections From Annals, Economies, Society, Civilizations*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976), 215., quoted in Reid, 8-9.

²³Beck, "Tribes and the State," 195. For more cases see J. F. Bestor, *The Kurds of Iranian Baluchistan: A Regional Elite*, (M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1979); Gene R. Garthwaite, *Khans and Shahs, A Documentary Analysis of Bakhtiari in Iran*, (Cambridge: Cambridge U.p., 1983); Martin Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State: On the Social and Political Organization of Kurdistan*, (London: Zed Press, 1992); B. J. Spooner, "Baluchistan", *Encyclopedia Iranica*, vol. 3, fascicle 6 (London: 1988): 598-632; and Lois Beck, *The Qashqa'i of Iran*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1986).

in most cases it refers to large tribal confederacies, made up of different smaller groups with diverse origins. In discussing the question of tribes in Iran, we should bear in mind that these groups consist of several hundred thousands or more people. Such groups lack comprehensive descent ideologies and are heterogeneous in origins and composition.²⁴

To conclude, it should be stressed that the entire discussion centring on the myth of kinship and descent in tribes has one important result which supports my argument in the former chapter: tribes should not be considered equal to ethnic groups with clear-cut genealogical boundaries and distinct identities. This proposition challenges the arguments of some current students of ethnicity who replace the former heterogeneous tribal people with the modern homogeneous notion of ethnic groups and present them as communities with their own distinct identities.

The fact is that a kinship and descent-based tribal identity, like ethnic identity, is an imagined identity based on a continually revised conception of history and tradition in the context of contemporary circumstances. Tribal people in Iran invented and reinvented traditions according to changing sociopolitical conditions. Each tribal group was composed of diverse ethnolinguistic origins, yet each group forged its own customs and created legends of origins.²⁵

²⁴Tapper, "Anthropologists, Historians," 53.

²⁵Beck, "Tribes and State," 189.

Distinct tribal identities based on kinship ties and common descent do not exist in Iran. A distinct tribal identity based on alternative criteria of cultural and political cohesiveness has serious problems as well.

Cultural and Political Diversity in Tribes

In this section, I will discuss the question of cultural cohesiveness and political integrity (as the two essential elements for creating a distinct tribal identity) of Iranian tribal groups. The fact is that Iranian tribes not only did not have a cohesive and distinct cultural heritage, but also were divided politically around the question of power relationships. Many centuries of forced and spontaneous movements of tribal and other people in and near Iran (especially along the borders), as well as the changing nature of tribal identities, affiliations and linguistic and cultural shifts all combine to make it difficult to conclude that groups labelled in a certain way (such as Baluch or Kurd, for example) necessarily demonstrate similar cultures or origins.²⁶

The creation of distinct cultures among tribes has been frustrated not only by the question of transformation, immigration and relocation of tribal groups all over Iran, but also by the great influence of Iranian customs, Persian literature and Islam among different tribal groups. These

²⁶*Ibid.*, 200.

important factors have led to changes in culture, language, kinship and descent based-identity. Lois Beck points to such cultural transformation:

The evidence indicates that in Iran people of diverse origins, cultural heritages, languages, and customs came together to form tribes and that cultural diversity continued to exist in well-established tribes. This process occurred throughout Iranian history, was ongoing and still occurs in the late 1980s. Tribes were sociopolitical entities with a history of development, and their members over time often came to proclaim what they perceived to be unique cultural traits. Such perceived uniqueness, serving political functions, often masked and did not necessarily erase, cultural diversity.²⁷

In fact, linguistic, religious and political divisions have been important means of delineating among different tribal groups in Iran. Apart from structural differences, Iranian tribes are divided among themselves by language and dialect, religion, and by the degree of their affinity or resentment toward the central government.²⁸ Alongside the inter-tribal rivalry and conflict, intra-tribal tensions have been an important feature in Iran. Studying tribal groups of southern Iran, Frederick Barth refers to the fact that a disagreement could easily lead to one section leaving to form a new unit or to join another camp.²⁹

²⁷*Ibid.*, 197.

²⁸Mehrdad Kamrava, *The Political History of Modern Iran: From Tribalism to Theocracy*, (New York: Praeger, 1992), 120.

²⁹Frederick Barth, *Nomads of South Persia: The Basseri Tribe of Khamseh Confederacy*, (Boston: Little Brown, 1961), 26.

These kinds of rivalries among tribal groups have enabled the central state to calm down any possible disobedience or rebellions among tribes by exploiting inter- and intra-tribal conflicts. As Lambton writes, the Qajars were able to survive so long because the *Ilkhans* (tribal confederacy chiefs) showed a "constitutional inability" to combine against them.³⁰ An early nineteenth century traveller observed shrewdly that the monarch was able to 'insure his own safety' by continually 'fomenting' and 'nicely balancing' the 'mutually jealous' tribal magnates against each other.³¹

The question of centralization and socio-economic hierarchy in tribal groups challenges the arguments which view tribes as decentralized and egalitarian communities. In most tribal confederacies, the ruling family of *Ilkhans* dominated the lower strata through a centralized social hierarchy and had most economic resources in their control. Such a mechanism of centralization and exploitation was intensified by the state-tribes mutual support.³² Tribal leaders tried to maintain their exclusivity through manipulating distinct genealogical backgrounds to legitimize their distinctive social position, material privilege, and political authority.

³⁰Ann Lambton, "Persian Society Under the Qajar," *Journal of Royal Central Asian Society* 48, no. 4 (July-October 1961): 130.

³¹See Abrahamian, "Oriental Despotism," 27.

³²Sekandar Amanollahi Baharvand, *Kooch Neshini Dar Iran*, [Pastoral nomadism in Iran] (text in Persian), (Tehran: Agah, 1989), 168-171.

During the Qajar era, tribal chiefs had great influence over their confederacies. As a general rule, the internal power structure of the tribes was highly centralized and the tribal leaders often wielded considerable autocratic powers over their followers.³³

To sum up, the basic characteristics of Iranian tribal groups present a category of tribes that failed and still fail to demonstrate what are considered to be basic tribal features in some anthropological approaches to tribe and tribalism. Tribal groups were and are not distinct societies with their own identity based upon kinship ties and cultural cohesion. The fact is that some students of ethnicity, tribalism, and social conflict inappropriately use notions of kinship ties and cultural integrity of the former tribally organized groups in order to call them today's ethnic groups. Thus, people who note that tribal identities are transformed into ethnic identities as part of the process of socio-economic change in the twentieth century often define tribes as kinship-based groups rather than socio-political entities.³⁴ However, the reality of socio-political structures and the cultural diversity of Iranian tribal groups, such as the Kurds, Baluchis, Azaris, Persians, and Turkmans, does not support this approach.

³³Ann Lambton, *Landlord and Peasants in Persia*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), 158.

³⁴See Beck, "Tribes and States," 196.

State-Tribes Relations in Iran

One basic point seems very evident in the works of some Western social scientists regarding the question of ethnicity in the Third World societies like Iran: in order to justify their arguments about the transformation of the former tribal groups to modern, culturally homogenous ethnic groups involved in permanent conflict with the state, it is necessary first to characterize tribes as isolated and closed groups invulnerable to cultural and political influences from outside, and second to stress the continuity of the antagonistic relations between tribes and states. In this way, tribes are presented as "primitive", and "stateless" societies within the framework of a tribe-state dichotomy.³⁵

By focusing on the Iranian context, I will challenge such a presentation of the state-tribe dichotomy in this section. As I will detail, tribes have not been isolated, primitive and stateless groups. On the contrary, they have either created great and powerful states or have been created by states themselves. Iranian history shows how these two institutions have been in permanent contact, and that this connection has not necessarily been conflictual. In the following pages I focus on the relations between states and tribes in Islamic Iran up to the rise of the modern centralized state in 1920s. We will find that tribal chiefs have in many cases been the

³⁵R.O. Christensen, "Tribes, States and Anthropologists," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 22, no. 2 (April 1986): 290.

representatives of the state, and by being the mediator between tribal people and states, have supported states financially and militarily.

Tribes As the Creators of States: Most of the local dynasties and national states in Islamic Iran have been created by tribal groups. Great dynasties like Ghaznavids (961-1186), Seljuqs (1040-1157), Safavids (1500-1722), Afsharids (1729-1747), Zand (1750-1796), and Qajars (1796-1925) were founded by tribal leaders. All ruling dynasties of Iran -- from the arrival of Seljuqs in the A.D. 1000s until Reza Shah Pahlavi in the 1920s -- were tribal in origin. State rulers were themselves originally tribal leaders or their descendants. States in Iran until 1921 emerged from, and were both sustained and undermined by, tribal power.³⁶ As Barfield shows, "beginning with early Islamic conquest itself, any list of the important empires and dynasties appear to be a roll call of tribes turned imperial conquerors: Seljuqs, Ghaznavids, Mamluks, Mongols, Timurids, Ottomans, Mughals, Qizilbash (Safavids) and Qajars, to name just some of the more prominent."³⁷

Tribes As Created by States: In some cases, tribes have been

³⁶Beck, "Tribes and State," 201.

³⁷Barfield, "Tribes and State Relations: the Inner Asian Perspective," 153.

created by states in order to achieve specific goals, particularly those related to the balance of power between states and rival tribes.³⁸ The reality is that no tribe was ever, at least in recent centuries, totally unaffected by the state, and an important theme in the literature is this state problem -- that is, the role of states in creating, transforming, or destroying tribal institutions and structures. In fact, a focus on the role of tribes in state formation in the Middle East needs to be complemented by awareness of the role of states in "tribe formation" and deformation.³⁹ The two most important examples of this have been the Shahsevans of Azarbaijan and the Khamseh of southern Iran. The former was created by Shah Abbas the Great (1587-1629) of the Safavid dynasty as a special tribe with personal loyalty to him and the Safavid dynasty.⁴⁰ The latter was created during Qajar rule out of five different tribes to challenge the Qashqa'i tribal confederacy.⁴¹

³⁸On tribes created by states in other parts of the world, see R. Cohen, "Introduction", in Ronald Cohen and Elman R. Service, eds., *Origins of The State*, (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1978), 16; Colson and Fried papers in Helm, *Essays on the Problem of Tribe* (Seattle: American Ethnological Society, 1968); and R. Cohen and J. Middleton, eds., *From Tribe to Nation in Africa* (Chandler: Scranton, 1970), 27.

³⁹Tapper, "Anthropologists," 52.

⁴⁰Shahsevan means 'those who love the Shah'. For more details see Richard Tapper, *Pasture and Politics: Economics, Conflict and Ritual among Shahseven Nomads of Northwestern Iran*, (London: Academic Press, 1979), 18-39.

⁴¹See Abrahamian, "Oriental Despotism," 29.

The state's intervention in the formation and evolution of tribes has other examples in Iran. Kurdistan's political history of the past five centuries shows how the important developments among tribes were always in response to developments at the state level. As Martin Van Bruinessen, the student of Kurdish studies, points out:

The conception of the tribe as a creation of the state, rather than as a social and political formation preceding it, gradually imposed itself on me in the course of my fieldwork, and more forcefully during my subsequent reading of historical sources. Certain tribal confederacies that I came across seemed to owe their very existence to deliberate interventions by one of the larger states. Kurds of Khorasan (northeast of Iran) have a tradition (corroborated by written sources) that their ancestors, who originated from various parts of Kurdistan but had Iranian sympathies, were made into new tribal confederation, Chemishgezek, by Shah Abbas, around 1600.⁴²

The important and noteworthy point is that despite these facts, some students of ethnicity lack the required historical sensitivity of the kind to which Bruinessen is referring for understanding complex state-tribe relations. The result of such insensitivity is that tribal groups are presented as the bearers of distinct cultures and identities. The existence of distinct tribal and ethnic identities are in fact states of mind created by Western social scientists. As Tapper puts it, the Shahsevan of Iran, an artificial tribe created by the Shah Abbas with personal loyalty to himself, are in fact just one

⁴²Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State*, 134.

of the well-documented cases in the Middle East of a tribal or ethnic identity created through the writings of historians and ethnographers.⁴³

State-Tribe Relations: Beside the question of tribes as creator-created, there have been permanent relations between tribes and states. Generally speaking, groups referred to as tribes have never, in historical times, been isolated groups of 'primitives,' remote from contact with states or their agents. Rather, tribes and states have created and maintained each other in a single system. Tribal people in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (and earlier) were associated with more complexly organized society -- the state -- and no local group was isolated.

In this section, I discuss different aspects of state-tribe relations. I will argue that: 1. the position of tribal chiefs has been recognized by the state; 2. chiefs were appointed as state's representatives in tribal areas, or sometimes were appointed as local governors; and 3. tribal groups have been supporting the states financially by collecting taxes for them and have been the main military suppliers of the Iranian army. The examples which I give here are from the Iranian context in general. The examples from

⁴³Tapper, "Anthropologists, Historians, and Tribespeople," 55; on this see also Jan Ovesen, "The Construction of Ethnic Identities," in Anita Jacobsen-Widding, ed., *Identity, Personal, and Social-Cultural*, (Uppsala: Uppsala Studies in Cultural Anthropology, 1983).

the Kurdish, Azari and Baluchi tribes of Iran will be provided in detail in chapter five when I discuss the state-tribe relations in these three cases.

As Beck points out, some scholars analyze the oscillations between, or the polar modalities of, "the land of dissidence" and "the land of government" or between a "tribal situation" and a "government situation."⁴⁴ These models, even though they are sometimes recognized as cultural constructs and seen as representing idealized situations, are of limited analytical value in the case of Iran, for they do not adequately represent the complexity of the relationships between tribes and states in Iranian history.

Throughout much of Iran's history, the state has played a direct role in tribal leadership by providing tribal leaders with resources and responsibilities (local law and order, tax collection, army formation) and attempting to install or replace tribal leaders.⁴⁵ The letter of Hossein Qoli Khan Ilkhani, the Ilkhan (the chief of tribal confederacy) of Bakhtiari Lurs, to Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar in 1878 is a revealing document regarding the services provided by a tribal chief for the state:

It is now thirty years that I have served and laboured dutifully night and day, and I have transformed the unruly Bakhtiari into the likes of the peasants of Lanjan. I have collected and

⁴⁴Lois Beck, "Tribes and States," 215.

⁴⁵Beck, "Revolutionary Iran and its Tribal Peoples," *MERIP Reports*, 87 (May 1980): 19.

submitted 31 taxes from the Bakhtiyari; the clearance of accounts are in hand.... I spend six months of the year on the Isfahan side of Bakhtiyari busy maintaining its order and collecting taxes. The other six months I am in Arabestan and Lurestan in the service of the governor with armed Bakhtiyari cavalry.⁴⁶

To be the chief of their tribes, the tribal leaders needed the support and the recognition of the state. In Kurdistan, in the periods of relative quiet, it was virtually impossible for ambitious chieftains to rise or maintain a position of effective paramount leadership of such large confederacies (like Shakkak), unless supported by a strong central state. The state in turn, might recognize the chieftain as the one and the only paramount leader of his tribe or confederation in exchange for a promise of 'loyalty'.⁴⁷ The Kurdish tribes in Khorasan and Baluchistan had the same relationship with the states. Philip Salzman provides examples of the Kurdish tribal leaders (Hakoms) in Baluchistan, as loyal to the Iranian crown and as agents of the crown who received encouragement and support from the crown.⁴⁸

⁴⁶Gene R. Garthwaite, "Khans and Kings: the Dialects of Power in Bakhtiyari History", in Bonine and Keddie, *Modern Iran*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), 170.

⁴⁷Martin Van Bruinessen, "Kurdish Tribes and the State of Iran: the Case of Simko's Revolt," in Tapper, *The Conflict of Tribe and State in Iran and Afghanistan*, 374-75.

⁴⁸Philip Carl Salzman, "Why Tribes Have Chiefs: A Case From Baluchistan", in Tapper, *The Conflict of Tribe and State*, 278-79.

This pattern was dominant in most periods of Islamic Iran. The Kings considered tribal chiefs as their representatives. During the Qajar period, for instance, tribal leaders used to have their representatives (or Vakils)⁴⁹ at the court to keep them informed of the matters concerning them. Fath Ali Shah Qajar (1797-1834) created a wide network of marriage alliances linking his family with those of the important tribal chiefs.⁵⁰ Tribal leaders, in fact, represented their people to the state. As Barth writes "perhaps the chief's most important function is to represent the tribe in its relation with the Iranian administration."⁵¹ Tribal leaders, thus, were representatives of the state power for tribal members, but at the same time they were spokesmen of the interests of the tribal polity to the state.

Iranian tribes, especially the larger ones, had powerful and wealthy leaders who formed part of the Iranian elite and participated in provincial and national politics. Through local influences and influences in the court, they became tremendously powerful in their region. The Ilkhan of Bakhtiyari Lurs, for example, was not only the official leader of the confederacy, but was also the governor (Vaali) of the Bakhtiyari and Chahar Mahal province in western Iran. Bakhtiyari leaders found important jobs, as evidenced by the

⁴⁹See Abrahamian, "Oriental Despotism," 25.

⁵⁰Tapper, *The Conflict of Tribe and State*, 21.

⁵¹Barth, *Nomads of South Persia*, 77.

Bakhtiyari chief Samsa ol-Saltaneh who headed the Foreign Ministry after the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906. Similarly, the Ilkhan of Turkish Qashqa'i confederacy served as the Vaali of the important province of Fars in southern Iran.⁵² In many cases tribal leaders were dispatched by the state as local rulers and governors not in their own regions but in other parts of Iran. Two Turkman tribal leaders, Saholi Khan Pornak and Muhammad Khan Mowsellu, were, respectively, the governors of Khorasan in the east and Sistan in the southeast of Iran during the Safavids.⁵³ The appointment of the Kurdish, Turkish, Baluchi Turkman and other tribal leaders to the governmental positions in other parts of Iran, far from their tribal areas, was a deliberate strategy to prevent them from becoming rebels in their native areas, and to make them more dependent on the state's support.

Historically, tribal groups have participated in the consolidation of states and the defence of the country against external threats by performing two other important functions. For these functions, they collected annual taxes and provided armed forces for the national army. The financial contribution of tribal groups was an important responsibility of tribal chiefs, who were recognized as the leaders of their groups. It was also considered a sign of their loyalty to the

⁵²Amanollahi Baharvand, *Kooch Neshini*, 169, 207.

⁵³See Eskandar Monshi, *History of Shah Abbas*, Trans. R. Savory, (Boulder: Westview, 1978), 224-7, 978.

state. A chief had duties to the government for which they typically collected tax and military levies, but such chiefs, with government support, could maintain their position more easily.⁵⁴ The tribal leaders, particularly the successful ones, became powerful with state support and came to form part of Iran's ruling elite. Following a long tradition of state rule in Iran, the Qajar rulers, for instance, recognized existing leadership positions or created them where they did not exist. They assigned to tribal leaders the responsibilities of collecting taxes, raising military levies, and establishing security in their own and surrounding areas in the belief that they were thereby less likely to form alliances against the state. Such tribal leaders were the vehicles for extracting wealth, and in fact they owed their position in part to the state's bequeathing this privilege to them.⁵⁵

An important portion of state revenues consisted of the annual taxes which tribal leaders collected from their tribal and sometimes non-tribal constituencies. Quoting from *Rustam al Hukama*,⁵⁶ Lambton provides interesting details of the revenue collected in the form of taxes from regions like

⁵⁴Tapper, *The Conflict of Tribe and State*, 56.

⁵⁵Beck, "Tribes and States," 203-204, 216.

⁵⁶Muhammad Hashim (Rustam al-Hukama) was a seventeenth century Iranian historian whose book *Rustam al-Tavarikh*, ed., Muhammad Mushiri (Tehran, 1969) gives interesting details of socio-political developments of Zand and Qajar era.

Azarbaijan, Kurdistan, Baluchistan, Mazandaran, Gilan and other parts of Iran in the time of Zand dynasty in the eighteenth century.⁵⁷ This means of raising national revenues through annual tax collections by tribal leaders was the regular system during most periods of Islamic Iran, especially after the establishment of the powerful and central dynasties of the Saljuqs, Safavids, Afshars,⁵⁸ Zands,⁵⁹ and Qajars.

Yet the role of tribal groups in providing armed tribal forces for the monarch's army was a much more important service. In fact, until the rise of the Pahlavi modern state in the 1920s, most Iranian rulers preferred to rely on tribal leaders and their military contingents to perform military and administrative functions rather than taking on the expenses and challenges of a standing army and centralized bureaucracy.⁶⁰ Nadir Shah, who was able to end the widespread anarchy in Iran in the aftermath of Afghan invasion and the

⁵⁷A. K. S. Lambton, "The Tribal Resurgence and the Decline of Bureaucracy in the Eighteenth Century," in Thomas Naff and Roger Owen, eds., *Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History*, (Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1977), 126.

⁵⁸Nasir Khan, the powerful Baluch leader of the eighteenth century, who was collecting taxes from other Baluchi tribes paid tributes to Nadir Shah the founder of Afshar dynasty in Iran. See Selig Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, 16-17.

⁵⁹For statistical details of revenue under Karim Khan, see John R. Perry, *Karim Khan Zand: A History of Iran, 1747-1779*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 229-237.

⁶⁰Garthwaite, "Khans and Kings," 160.

collapse of the Safavid dynasty in 1722, had a strong army which was in effect a composite of various Iranian religio-linguistic tribal groups. Lambton gives an interesting description of his army:

...his forces consisted mainly of Afghans, Afshars, and other Turkish tribes from the northeast and east, but not to any large extent from Guran, the Qajar stronghold. He also enroled in his army Baluchi and Kurds, who, like the Afghans, were Sunnites, Bakhtiyaris, and contingents from the various districts which he conquered.⁶¹

Karim Khan Zand, who was a Kurd⁶² and became the king (Padishah) of Iran (1747-1779) after the collapse of the Afshar dynasty, also based his power on existing tribal forces. His supporters in the beginning were the Kurdish and Lur tribes of the west. After his successes, others, like the Turkish tribes of Azarbaijan and Fars (Qashqa'is), joined his forces. Agha Muhammad Khan (1779-1797), the founder of the Qajar dynasty, also had tribal forces in his army.⁶³ During the Qajar dynasty in general,⁶⁴ Kurdish, Baluchi, Qashqa'i,

⁶¹Lambton, *Landlord and Peasant in Persia*, 131; Peter Avery describes how many tribal forces from Khorasan, (Kurds, Turkman, Afghan and Hazarh) Bakhtiyaris of the west and Azarbaijanis of the north participated in Nadir Shah's army during the siege of Baghdad in 1733. see Avery, "Nadir Shah and the Afsharid Legacy," *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol 7., 31-32.

⁶²He was from Kurdish Zands. See Nikitine, *Kurd Va Kurdistan*, 357.

⁶³See Lambton, "Tribal Resurgence," 110-111.

⁶⁴Abrahamian points out that Qajars did not have an official standing army, see Abrahamian, "Oriental Despotism," 11.

Turkish and Turkman tribal leaders provided remarkable numbers of armed forces in the Shah's army.⁶⁵ Sir John Malcolm, the British military advisor of the Iranian army during the Irano-Russian wars (1802-1828)⁶⁶ wrote that the tribal cavalry was the main fighting force in foreign wars, and that each levy was officered by its own tribal chief. Every chief of a tribe was obliged to furnish a quota proportionate to the number of his followers.⁶⁷

The important point regarding the contribution of tribes to Iran's military power was that they were mostly responsible for defending Iranian borders against incursions. It is not an exaggeration to mention that in such conditions, the Qajar Shahs owed the survival of their reigns mostly to the collaboration of the tribal chiefs.⁶⁸

⁶⁵Ann K. S. Lambton, *Qajar Iran: Eleven Studies*, (London: I.B.Tauris, 1987), 96.

⁶⁶At the result of these wars, in which Iran was defeated by a modern Russian army, two treaties were signed in 1813 and 1828. According to the first (Treaty of Gulestan) Iran lost many of its Caucasian provinces: Qarabagh and Ganja, Shirvan and Baku (the capital of the present Azarbaijan Republic), Georgia and parts of Talish. According to the second (Treaty of Turkmanchai) Iran lost khanates of Erivan (the capital of the present Armenia) and Nakhchivan (presently a republic between Azerbaijan and Armenia. For more details see Firuz Kazemzadeh, "Iranian relations with Russia and the Soviet Union, to 1921," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol 7., 331-340.

⁶⁷Abrahamian, 20, quoting from John Malcolm, *The History of Persia*, vol.II (London, 1829), 355.357.

⁶⁸Amoanollahi Baharvand, *Kooch Neshini*, 210-11.

Conclusion

This chapter presented an account of the basic characteristics of the tribal groups in Iran and their relations with Iranian states in the Islamic period until the rise of the Iranian modern state. Tribes in Iran have not been kinship-based -- rather, tribal formation and alliances have been mainly the result of power relations and pragmatic strategies. Having such a socio-political basis, Iranian tribal groups have not been isolated communities with cohesive cultural foundations. Indeed, the notion of tribes as egalitarian and decentralized groups does not fit the large, highly hierarchial and centralized Iranian tribes in which the political and economic powers have historically been laid in the hands of powerful tribal leaders and families.

Iranian tribes have been in permanent contact with the central states through their chiefs, who were formally recognized as the leader of their tribes by the Shahs. While most Iranian states were created by the tribal groups, the states in their turn created large tribal groups such as the Shahsevan of Azarbaijan, the Kurdish tribes of Khorāsan, and the Khamseh tribal confederacy of southern Iran. Moreover, tribal groups have contributed to the consolidation of states through annual taxes and the provision of manpower for Iranian armies.

Tribes with such characteristics and functions could not and cannot be seen to be isolated as stateless and culturally

distinct groups from other sections of the Iranian population. Extensive tribal transformations, inter and intra-tribal alliances/rivalries, and their permanent relationships with states made them culturally intermingled with and similar to other Iranians. Former Iranian tribal groups with such socio-political and cultural backgrounds cannot be considered 'ethnic groups.' Considering former tribally organized groups such as the Kurds, Azaris, Baluchis, Qashqa'is as distinct 'ethnic groups' with separate ethnic identities disregards the historical facts which challenge the equation of tribes with ethnic groups.

On the contrary, different tribal and non-tribal religio-linguistic groups in Iran have had common historical experiences and have shared the same cultural and political legacy over the course of many centuries. These cultural and political factors created a sense of Iranianness for different sections of the population in such a long period.

My argument, however, does not disregard the fact that contemporary Iran has experienced cases of political conflicts in which some religio-linguistic groups have been involved. These experiences, which mostly occurred in the twentieth century, have encouraged the students of ethnic conflict and tribal societies to apply Western theories and approaches to the case of Iran. As a result, Iran is considered as a conflict-laden society, in which different ethnic and tribal groups have been in permanent conflict with the state and with

each other. Such argumentation, which lacks historical insight, not only distorts the reality of Iranian society in the past but brings about inappropriate and insufficient explanations for the rise of recent cases of what is called ethnic conflict in Iran.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the rise of separatist and autonomous movements among three religio-linguistic groups in Iran -- namely, the Kurds, Azari Turks, and Baluchis.

Chapter Three:

Society, Politics and the Rise of Ethnic Nationalism:

Kurdistan, Baluchistan and Azarbaijan of Iran

In this chapter, I discuss the rise of autonomous and separatist nationalist trends among three linguistic minority groups in Iran -- Baluchis, Azaris and Kurds. While the explanation of such political trends is the primary goal of this thesis, the present chapter gives a mainly historical account of the political mobilization of these linguistic and religious minority groups. The chapter also provides a socio-political and historical background toward a general understanding of society and politics in Iranian Baluchistan, Azarbaijan, and Kurdistan.

KURDISTAN

The Kurds are considered to be the greatest minority group in the Middle East. Iranian Kurdistan is only one part of the greater Kurdistan which extends to northern Iraq, southern Turkey and eastern Syria. The Kurdish question has been more politicised compared with the Baluchi and Azari cases. However, Iranian Kurdistan ranks only third among the Kurdish nationalist movement in terms of the magnitude and the intensity of violent political activities. The preoccupation of the central state with the Kurdish problem has been more

acute in Turkey and Iraq. The Kurds live mostly in western Iran in the provinces of Kurdistan, western Azarbaijan and Kirmanshah.¹ Meanwhile, an important Kurdish population is located in northeastern Iran in Khorasan province, and a very small percentage in Baluchistan. The Kurds of Khorasan had migrated from Kurdistan to northeastern Iran during the reign of the Safavid king Shah Abbas the Great to prevent Ozbek invasions from the north.² While Kurdistan province in Iran is only 24,998 sq. km. in size,³ Kurdish territories extend to Western Azarbaijan and Kirmanshah. The Kurds in Kirmanshah, Khorasan and Baluchistan, however, have not shown any political sympathy with Kurdish nationalism in Kurdistan. The

¹Some Kurdish nationalists go beyond Kirmanshah towards the southwestern Iran and consider Bakhtiyari Lurs in Luristan and some parts of Khuzistan as Kurdish territories. According to this group, thus, Kurdistan has its own boundaries with the Persian Gulf. For such views, see N. Simko, "The Ethno Geographical Boundaries of the Kurds and Kurdistan," *Kurdistan Times*, 1. no. 2 (Summer 1992): 104-121. Nevertheless, the Kurdishness of Luristan and part of Khuzistan, where Lurs and Arabs are living, is seriously contested.

²Quoting from Minorsky (1927) and Iskandar Monshi the eighteenth century Iranian historian, Hassanpour mentions that 15,000 Kurds were deported by Shah Abbas to Khorasan. See Amir Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan, 1918-1985*, (San Fransisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992), 53.

³The total size of Kurdish territory in the Middle East is a matter of controversy. While Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou the former Iranian Kurdish leader considered the entire area of Kurdistan approximately 409,650 sq. km., Helga Graham, a Western scholar presents it as 500,000 sq.km. See Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan and the Kurds*, (London: Collet's, 1965), 14; for Graham's estimate see Sheri Laizer, *Into Kurdistan: Frontiers Under Fire*, (London: Zed Press, 1991), 1.

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main reason for this is the fact that Khorasani and Kirmanshahi Kurds are mostly Shi'ites while Kurds of Kurdistan and west Azarbaijan are Sunnite Muslims. As Izady points out, "the political culture of the southern (Kirmanshahi) and eastern (Khorasani) Kurds is Iranian in outlook, and far more easily understood in the context of the state's political culture than any pan-Kurdish one."⁴ There is also more affinity between Khorasani and Kirmanshahi Kurdish with the Persian language.

Most Kurds practised the Zoroastrian faith⁵ before the advent of Islam, at which time most of them converted to the new faith. Beside remarkable numbers of Shi'ites in Kirmanshah and a smaller number in Kurdistan, there exist the followers of Yazidi,⁶ Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrianism among the Kurds of Iraq, Turkey and Iran.⁷ Some Sufi sects

⁴Mehrdad Izady, *The Kurds: A Concise Handbook*. (Washington: Crane Russak, 1992), 208.

⁵On this see Ali Tamsen and Luri Tamsen, "Studies in Kurdish Society: A Lost Heritage and An Ancient Religion of the Kurds: Zerdushti, Zoroastrianism," *Kurdistan Times*, 1 no. 2 (Summer 1992): 137-150.

⁶There is a controversy over the nature of Yazidi sect. While some argue for the Zoroastrian origins of Yazidi, others consider them a Sufi branch of Islam. Yazidi is probably a mixture of Zoroastrianism and Islam. See Izady, 153-158.

⁷In Iran, the Kurdish Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians are living mostly in Sanandaj, the capital of Kurdistan. See Lina Malakmian, *Bar Rasi Jam'eyat Shenasi Aghalliathay-e Mazhabi dar Iran* [a demographic survey of the religious minorities in Iran] (text in Persian), (Tehran, Markaz-e Nashr-e Daneshgahi, 1983), 20-29.

such as the Ali-Allahis (those who deify Ali, the first Shi'a Imam), Naqshbandi, and Ahl-ol Haqq are numbered among Iranian and Iraqi Kurds.⁸

There is less certainty about the size of the Kurdish population. While Laizer and Graham suggest an apparently inflated figure of 25 million,⁹ others, including some Kurdish nationalists,¹⁰ usually emphasize around 20 million.¹¹ The same uncertainty and disagreement are found with respect to the Kurdish population within each country. In Iran, the Kurds are estimated at between 4 to 5 million individuals, or around 8 to 10 percent of the total population.¹² The population of Kurdistan province in 1986 was 1,078,415.¹³

The main factor contributing to a specific identity for

⁸Tabibi discusses about four Sufi sects in Iranian Kurdistan. See: Tabibi, *Kurdistan* (text in Persian), Tehran, 56-68. On Sufi sects in Kurdistan, see also: Raoof Salimi, *Tasavvof Dar Kurdistan* [Suffism in Kurdistan], (text in Persian), (Tehran, 1975).

⁹Sheri Laizer, *Into Kurdistan: Frontiers Under Fire*, (London: Zed Books, 1991).

¹⁰The Kurdish nationalists estimate that the Kurdish population in 1975-76 was 17,124,280. See Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan*, 13.

¹¹See for example John Bulloch and Harvey Morris, *No Friends But the Mountains: Tragic History of the Kurds*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 51-52.

¹²See Hassanpour, 12-17; Bulloch, 51-52.

¹³Markaz-e Amar-e Iran, *Kurdistan Dar Aeeny-e Amar* [Kurdistan in statistics mirror] (text in Persian), (Tehran: Markaz-e Amar, 1986); see also Markaz-e Amar-e Iran. *Salnameh-e Amari-e Keshvar*, 1368. [Iran Statistical Yearbook, 1989] (text in Persian), (Tehran: Markaz-e Amar, 1991), 32.

the Kurds is their language. This is among the rare elements in which the Kurds have shared experience. Kurdish is a subdivision of the Persian branch of Iranian languages which, like other north-western Iranian languages of Afghanistan, Baluchistan and Tajikistan, has an Indo-European origin. In spite of its similarities to Persian, Kurdish is nevertheless unintelligible for present-day Persian-speaking Iranians. Like Baluchi, Kurdish has maintained many characteristics of the Old Persian languages, like Pahlavi and Avestai, of Parthian and Sasanid Iran. According to Iraj Afshar Sistani, thousands of Pahlavi words can be found in today's Iranian Kurdistan.¹⁴ According to Herodotus, the ancient Greek historian, Kurdish and Persian were mutually comprehensible in ancient times.¹⁵

Kurdish, however, is not a unified language, and as Mehrdad Izady has argued, the Kurds do not have a "lingua franca."¹⁶ The existence of different dialects challenge the argumentation of Kurdish nationalists in favour of one unified Kurdish language. *Sharafnameh*, the oldest history of the Kurds written in the mid- eighteenth century by an Iranian Kurd, mentions four different languages in the whole of

¹⁴Afshar, *Moghaddameh*, 226-227.

¹⁵See John Bulloch and Harvey Morris, *No Friends but Mountains*, 56.

¹⁶Mehrdad Izady, "A Kurdish Lingua Franca?," *Kurdish Times* II. no. 2 (Summer 1988).

Kurdistan.¹⁷ Izady stresses that these differences are "far too great by any standard linguistic criteria to warrant the classification of these tongues as simply dialects of the same language. To the discomfort of any lay Kurdish patriot, and the gratitude of prudence, one should speak of Kurdish languages."¹⁸

There are four dialect groups in Kurdish: Kurmanji, Sorani, Hawrami or Gorani, and Kirmanshahi.¹⁹ A small part of northwestern Kurdistan in Turkey has another dialect called Zaza or Dimili. Kurmanji is the dialect of Kurds in Turkey, Syria, the former Soviet Union, and northern parts of Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan. Most of the Kurds of Kurdistan province in Iran and most parts of Iraqi Kurdistan speak the Sorani dialect. Hawrami is the dialect of some small parts along the Iran-Iraq border, and Kirmanshahi, which is more similar to Persian than other dialects, belongs to the Kurds of Kirmanshah province in western Iran.²⁰

These dialects are somehow mutually unintelligible. This

¹⁷Hamid Riza Jalaipour, *Kurdistan: Elal-e Tadavom-e Bohran An Pas Az Engheleb-e Islami*, [Kurdistan: the causes of the continuation of its crisis after the Islamic Revolution] (text in Persian), (Tehran: Daftar Motaleat-e Siasi Va Binolmelali, 1993), 95.

¹⁸Izady, "A Kurdish Lingua Franca ?," 13.

¹⁹Hassanpour, *Language and Nationalism in Kurdistan*, 19-20.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 21-23.

is the case of Zaza and Kurmanji dialects in Turkey.²¹ Oranski, the Russian linguist, points out that some Kurdish dialects are so different that they resemble independent languages.²² Moreover, the application of Latin script in Turkish Kurdistan, and Perso-Arabic in Iran, Iraq, and Syria has added to these problems. There is also a controversy and disagreement among Kurdish nationalists as to the dialect that should become the formal language of a great independent Kurdistan.²³

The question of the origins of the Kurds is a still more controversial issue than linguistic unity. Different views presented in this regard have both mythical and historical aspects. Nikitine provides different explanations according to which the Kurds are considered to be Iranians (from Aryan immigrants who settled in the western Iranian plateau), Arabs and Turks.²⁴ However, the proponents of the Arab and Turkish origins of the Kurds are rare among the Kurds themselves. Presently there are two dominant views, one mythical and the

²¹See Michael M. Gunter, *The Kurds in Turkey: A Political Dilemma*, (Boulder: Westview, 1990), 5-6.

²²A.M. Oranski, *Moghaddamey-e Figh-ol-Loghan-e Irani* [Introduction to Iranian philology] (text in Persian, Trans. Karim Keshavarz, (Tehran: Payam, 1979), 341.

²³See Ismet Sherif Vanly (Vanley), "The Question of Unification of the Written Kurdish Language: Kurmanji or Sorani ?," *Kurdistan (KSSE)*. (November 1959): 5-10.

²⁴Vassili Nikitine, *Kurd Va Kurdistan*, (text in Persian), Trans. Muhammad Ghazi, (Tehran: Niloofer, 1987), 34-73.

other historical, among the Western and Middle Eastern scholars and the Kurdish intellectuals.

The mythical arguments to which many Kurdish nationalists refer²⁵ are based on the story of *Zahhak* (or *Zohak-Dhohak*) and *Kawa* the Blacksmith as narrated by Iranian poet Firdowsi in his *Shahnameh*. According to Firdowsi, *Zahhak* was an evil tyrant with two snakes growing on his shoulders, who dominated Iran by force. The snakes were fed each day with the brains of two youths. After a while, one of the youths was released by the person in charge of the feeding who instead mixed a sheep's brain with the second youth's brain. The youth who fled to the mountains became the progenitor of all Kurds. *Zahhak* was killed by *Kawa* the Blacksmith and *Fereydun*, who became Iran's mythical king of Kings. Sharaf Khan Bedlisi, a Kurd historian who wrote the first, and now the oldest, history of the Kurds in the Persian language in the Safavid era at the end of sixteenth century (1596), has borrowed Firdowsi's view of the Kurds' origins.²⁶

The historical view of the origins of the Kurds is a modern interpretation elaborated by Western Orientalists such

²⁵See among them: Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan and the Kurds*, 33; Mustafa Al Karadaghi, *Kurdistan Times*, 1, no. 2. (Summer 1992), 274-277.

²⁶Some legends also relate the origins of the Kurds to the time of Noah and King Solomon. See Bulloch and Morris, *No Friends But the Mountains*, 57. See also, Margaret Kahn, *The Children of the Jinn: In Search of the Kurds and Their Country*, (New York: Seaview Books, 1980).

as Vladimir Minorsky.²⁷ According to this view, which is accepted as a dominant theory, the Kurds are descendants of the Medes, an Iranian (Aryan) tribal group who migrated with Persians and Parthians into the Iranian plateau. The Medes settled in the west and northwest, the Persians in the south, and Parthians in the east of the land which later was called Iran. The Medes, thus, were the founders of the first Iranian Empire (728-550 B.C.), the oldest historical political entity in Iran. The Medes were defeat in their turn by Cyrus the Great, a Persian whose mother was from the Medes, and who went on to establish the Achaemenid Empire (550-331 B.C.).²⁸

Notwithstanding the controversy over the ethnic origins of the Kurds, it is more certain that they were an integrated part of the Iranian Empires of the Achaemenids, Parthians (247 B.C.- 226 A.D.) and Sasanids (226-636). The warlike Kurds were enlisted as guardians of each of these dynasties.²⁹ The areas inhabited by the Kurds were the foci of the

²⁷See Vladimir Minorsky "Kurds and Kurdistan," *Encyclopedia of Islam*, (Leiden: Brill, 1969); "Les Origines des Kurdes," *Travaux du XXe Congres International des Orientalistes*, 1940, 143-152.

²⁸Despite all these intellectual interpretations, it is difficult to say that the present Kurds are direct descendants of the ancient Medes. The modern-day Kurds are almost certainly descended from a much more complex racial mixture than the Indo-European origin of their language would imply. This issue will be discussed in detail in the next chapters.

²⁹See Ali Asghar Shamim, *Kurdistan* (Text in Persian), (Tehran: Modabber, 1991), 45; also see Dana Adams Schmidt, *Journey Among Brave Men*, (Boston: Little Brown, 1964), 46

confrontations of Arab Muslims and Iranians. The Kurds, according to Minorsky, were allied with the Sasanids against the Arab invasion. The result of these wars was catastrophic for the Kurds and the Persians.³⁰ By the advent of Islam and the establishment of the Arab Caliphate, Kurdistan was part of the Ummayyid and Abbasid dynasties. During these periods, Iran itself was ruled by Muslim Arabs, and later by local Iranian dynasties.

For a short period, Kurdistan was ruled by Iranian Shi'ite Buyids or Bowayhids Dynasty (932-1055) which emerged from Gilan in northern Iran and whose political influence reached Baghdad. Kurds, however, rebelled against the last Buyid rulers. Ali Asghar Shamim, an Iranian Kurdish historian and also an Iranian nationalist, contends that the Kurds rebelled because Buyids acknowledged the Arab political authority in Baghdad.³¹ Nevertheless, it is probable that religious considerations -- Sunni Kurds versus Shi'ite Buyids -- were behind this rebellion. Large parts of Kurdish territory were integrated into Iran again during the Seljuq Empire. The name Kurdistan, denoting the land occupied by Kurds, was first applied by the Seljuq king Sultan Sanjar in the twelfth century when he created a large province by that

³⁰According to Minorsky (cited by Farzanfar, 77) about 500,000 families were exterminated in these confrontations (637-641). See Wladimir Minorsky, "Kurds and Kurdistan," *Encyclopedia of Islam*, (Leiden: Brill, 1960), 1135.

³¹Shamim, *Kurdistan*, 46.

name.³² It was in the same period that Saladin (Salah-ed-Din Ayyubi), the great Muslim hero (1137-1193), and originally a Kurd in the service of Seljuqs of Syria and later the Abbasid Caliphate, defeated the Crusaders in Palestine and established his own dynasty in Syria and Egypt.

Another period of resistance and submission occurred in Kurdistan by the start of the Mongol invasion and the advent of local Mongol-Turkman dynasties (1258-1501) in Iran and the former Abbasid Empire. It was a century after the Mongol invasion that Kurdish semi-independent principalities (Emirates) arose in Kurdistan.³³ According to Hassanpour, an Iranian Kurdish nationalist, some powerful principalities were independent enough that they struck their own coin and the *Khutbah* (Friday prayer sermon) was read in the name of the prince.³⁴ While the rise of the two strong Middle Eastern states of Ottoman and Safavid (in Iran) ended the life of many such principalities, some of them lasted until the nineteenth century.³⁵

The Kurds were caught up in what would become an enduring rivalry between the Ottoman and Safavid empires. The fact is

³²Derk Kinnane, *The Kurds and Kurdistan*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 21.

³³Bidlisi, the sixteenth century Iranian Kurd who wrote the first history of the Kurds in Persian, has given the detailed names of these principalities. See Bidlisi, *Sharafnameh*. See also Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*.

³⁴Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan*, 52.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 57.

that in this Sunnite-Shi'ite confrontation (which had as many political causes as it did religious), many Kurds sided with the Ottoman Sunnite against Shi'ite Safavids. The establishment of Shi'ism as the official religion of Iran by Shah Ismail, the founder of the Safavid dynasty, and the mistreatment of Kurds³⁶ by appointing Qizilbash (the formal Safavid armed forces) commanders as the local governors instead of Kurdish tribal chiefs, was the beginning of the Kurds' alienation from the Iranian state. As Van Bruinessen puts it, "....considering [Shah] Ismail's policy it is not surprising that the Kurds -- or rather, those traditional Kurdish rulers who survived -- were looking for help to the one big power that might liberate them from Safavid domination: the (Sunnite) Ottoman Empire."³⁷ According to Hassan Arfa:

The Kurds up to this time had considered themselves as Iranians, sharing the fate which befell the other inhabitants of what had been the Persian Empire, and keeping the historical and cultural tradition of Iran. The advent of the Safavid dynasty brought about among the Kurds a clash of loyalty which resulted in the gradual estrangement of the northern Kurds from the Iranian community.³⁸

During the Safavid-Ottoman rivalry, the powerful Kurdish tribal chiefs switched loyalties among the two powers and

³⁶On these situations, see Martin Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Skaikh and State*, 137-143.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 142.

³⁸Hassan Arfa, *The Kurds: A Historical and Political Study*, 14.

sometimes played one against the other. The zealous Safavid Shi'ites felt no great sympathy for the Sunnite Kurds, and it was in this period that Shah Abbas the Great ordered Kurds to migrate into Khorasan in northeastern Iran to guard the frontiers against the Ozbek-Turkman forays.³⁹

Iran lost most of the Kurdish territories west of the Zagros Mountains when Shah Ismail was defeated by the Ottomans in the Battle of Chalderan in 1515.⁴⁰ One result of the long lasting Irano-Ottoman wars in the Safavid era (1514-1516, 1534-1565, 1587-1628, 1636-1638, 1724-1732),⁴¹ was what Hassanpour calls "the first division of Kurdistan."⁴² This happened when the 1639 treaty was signed between Sultan Murad II of the Ottoman Empire and Shah Abbas II of Iran. According to this treaty, the boundaries of Iran and Ottomans were marked in the heart of Kurdistan. This boundary, more or

³⁹Ramesh Farzanfar, *Ethnic Groups and the State: Azaris, Kurds and Baluch of Iran*, (Ph.D. thesis, MIT, 1992), 56.

⁴⁰Before that mostly all Kurdish areas were parts of Iran. According to Van Bruinessen, the western boundaries of Safavids around 1512 were extended at the heart of the present Syria, included the whole present Iraq, to the north most parts of the present eastern Turkey, Armenia, and Georgia. For the map of Iran's western and northerns frontiers, see Bruinessen, *Agha, Saikh, and State*, 139.

⁴¹See Arshak Safrastian, *The Kurds and Kurdistan*, (London: Harvill Press, 1948), 21. More wars were waged between Iranians and Ottomans during Afsharid, Zand and Qajar dynasties.

⁴²Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language*, 53.

less, has remained the same until today.⁴³

Beside religious considerations, Kurdish tribal chiefs were looking for their own interests and switched loyalty to the side who gave them more political power in their own tribal areas. In this regard, the Ottomans treated Kurdish leaders more generously than the Iranians. The result of Ottoman policy was the rise of strong Kurdish tribal leaders who had a great deal of autonomy while still keeping loyalty to the Ottomans. A similar policy, to a lesser extent, was applied in Iranian Kurdistan with respect to Kurdish tribal chiefs. Thus, during the Qajars, the various Kurdish tribal leaders had accepted the suzerainty of different Qajar kings and the latter in turn granted them effective dominance in tribal regions.

The Qajars, especially since the mid-nineteenth century, were too weak to be able to control Kurdistan without the help of tribal chiefs. Despite the Qajars' efforts toward centralization since 1865, the policy was not successful and the Kurdish *Valis* continued their power while remaining loyal to the *Shahinshah* (the king of kings).⁴⁴ Qajar's instrument

⁴³For a short period during Nadir Shah Afshar (1727-1749), important parts of Ottoman Kurdistan were annexed to Iran, but the Ottomans were able to recapture them. The 1823 Treaty of Erzerum between Ottomans and Qajars in Iran restored the 1639 frontiers. See Stanford Sahw, "Iranian Relations with the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 7. 1991, 313.

⁴⁴Kinnane, *Kurds and Kurdistan*, 46.

for penetration in Kurdistan was a mixture of "carrot and stick" and "divide and rule" policy toward rival Kurdish tribal chiefs.

Iranian Kurds, in contrast to Azaris, did not play any active role in the socio-political upheavals of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution. In fact, while the Azaris were the guardians of the Constitutional Revolution against the tyrant Qajar Muhammad Ali Shah, Kurdish tribal chiefs were among his supporters.⁴⁵ One example was the support given by the tribal chiefs of the large Kurdish tribe of Kaihor to Salar al-Dowleh in his abortive military move against the Constitutional government in Tehran in 1911.⁴⁶

In the aftermath of the Constitutional Revolution, especially after the Russian occupation of Azarbaijan and some northern parts of Iranian Kurdistan in 1911, the powerful Kurdish tribal leaders filled the power vacuum created as the result of the absence of an effective Qajar presence in Kurdistan. The occupation of western Iran by the Ottomans (who were fighting with Russians in the north of Azarbaijan)

⁴⁵The historical enmity between Kurds and Azari Turks as a legacy of Safavid era, and the fact that Azari Turks were among the vanguards of Constitutionalism, might have caused the Kurds' dislike of the Constitutionalism in that time. Ahmad Kasravi, has given more details on the position of the Kurdish tribal chiefs against Constitutionalists in Azarbaijan and Tehran. See Kasravi, *Tarikh-e Hijdah Saleh-e Azarbaijan* [the eighteen years history of Azarbaijan] (text in Persian), (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1978), 514-517.

⁴⁶See William Eagleton, *The Kurdish Republic of 1946*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 7.

during the First World War years (1914-1917) increased the already existing anarchical situation in northwest and western Iran. It was during these periods that some Kurdish tribal leaders revolted against the central Iranian state. The emergence in the early 1920s of Reza Khan, later Reza Shah Pahlavi, intensified this movement.

The Rise of Kurdish Nationalism

As noted earlier, Kurdish nationalism in general has been less intensive in Iran than in Turkey or Iraq. Many Kurdologists explain this fact by stressing the cultural affinity of Kurds with other Iranians. Izady, a Kurdish nationalist historian and political scientist, points out that:

The reason for the divisions between the political culture of the Iranian Kurds and those of Iraq are obvious, though not widely known. So much attention has been focused on the modern, post-World War division of Kurdistan that most scholars have come to thoroughly neglect another, far older dividing line in Kurdistan, separating the Iranian Kurds from the rest. The Iranian Kurds have been living in that polity not since the end of World War I, but since at least 1514 and the Battle of Chaldiran. In fact, these Kurds have lived under many Iranian dynasties (some of them of Kurdish origin) since ancient times. In the process, the Iranian Kurds have absorbed from -- and contributed much to -- the Iranian national political culture and social ethos, more than to the larger Kurdish political culture.⁴⁷

While most students of Iranian or Kurdish studies refer

⁴⁷Izady, *The Kurds: A Concise Handbook*, 208.

to these cultural and historical affinities,⁴⁸ we should not forget as well the historical contexts, especially the international politics of the three countries in the early decades of the twentieth century. In Turkey and Iraq, the Kurds considered themselves as having rights equal to Arabs and Turks for establishing their own state in the aftermath of the Ottoman Empire's disintegration. Moreover, the Treaty of Sevres of 1920 recognized such a right for the Kurds of the former Ottoman Empire. In Iran such a disintegration did not occur. Ironically, however, it was in Iran that the Kurds did establish their own independent state in 1945-46. The existence of cultural ties among Kurds and Persians, thus, has not prevented the rise of Kurdish nationalism in Iran.⁴⁹

⁴⁸Derk Kinnane is one of the supporters of this view. According to him: "certainly much good will does exist toward the Persia among authentic Kurdish nationalists. There is a feeling that the Persians are less hostile towards the Kurdish identity than the Turks or Arabs. The Kurds are glad to acknowledge their cousinage with the Persians." See Kinnane, *The Kurds and Kurdistan*, 58. Many Kurdish nationalists, while confirming such affinity, stress that Iran has not been more sympathetic to Kurds' nationalist goals, and has not hesitated to apply suppressive policies toward Kurdish nationalists. They especially refer to the Shah's policy of wooing the Kurds by misusing such cultural similarities in favour of his suppressive policies. See for instance, Omar Sheikmons, "Trends in the Dynamics of the Geopolitical Environment of Kurdistan After World War II", *Kurdistan Times*, 1. no. 2 (Summer 1992): 124-136.

⁴⁹While confirming cultural affinity between the two groups, Entessar emphasizes that: "Iranian Kurds are culturally closer to other Iranian nationalities than to Kurds in Iraq or Turkey, This does not imply they have forsaken their Kurdishness. It simply means that cultural factors favouring secessionists are not operative among the majority of Iranian Kurds. On the other hand, the

A discussion of Kurdish nationalist movements in Iraq and Turkey goes beyond the scope of the present thesis. It is, however, noteworthy that Kurdish revolts first appeared in the Ottoman Empire in the mid-nineteenth century when the Ottomans, under the influence of new political and ideological developments in Europe regarding nationalism, started the policy of centralization and the elimination of the Kurdish tribal leaders' *Emirates*.⁵⁰ The rebellion of Sheikh Obeydollah of the Hakkari tribal confederacy in 1880 was the first great Kurdish revolt in the Middle East. The rise of Turkish nationalism under Kamal Ataturk and the denial of any Kurdish identity for "the mountain Turks" (as the Kurds were called) led to another great Kurdish revolt under Sheikh Said in 1925. Since the second half of the twentieth century, modern Kurdish nationalist groups such as the Kurdish Democratic Party of Turkey (KDPT) and the Kurdish Workers' Party (the *Partia Karkaren Kurdistan*, or PKK) have led the

secessionist tendencies are more prevalent among both Turkish and Iraqi Kurds. This is partly because Turkish and Arab cultures are more alien to Kurds than the Iranian culture." See Nader Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1992), 160-161.

⁵⁰According to Kurdish nationalist Nezal Kendal, in reaction to these efforts for centralization in Ottoman Empire, "over fifty [Kurdish] insurrections broke out during the nineteenth century." See Kendal, "The Kurds Under the Ottoman Empire," in Gerard Chaliand, ed., *People Without A Country: The Kurds and Kurdistan*, (Lonson: Zed Press, 1980), 22.

armed struggle against the Turkish state.⁵¹

In Iraq, the Kurdish national movement began when Shaikh Mahmud Barzanji was appointed by the British as the governor of Sulaymaniyya in 1919. He proclaimed himself king and declared the establishment of a Kurdish state in Iraq. As the British were opposed to this, they soon removed the Shaikh and exiled him to India. This happened before the establishment of Iraq under the kingdom of Faisal in August, 1921. Shaikh Mahmud, who returned from exile after this, revolted again in 1922, and after his defeat fled to Iran. He resorted to another revolt in 1930⁵² and demanded from the British government a united Kurdistan. The rejection of this demand led to extensive violence in Iraqi Kurdistan,⁵³ and the leadership of Iraqi Kurds after these events devolved to the Barzani tribe. Mulla Mustafa Barzani, the legendary Kurdish leader who formed the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) in Iraq, led the armed struggle against Baghdad up to his death in the

⁵¹On Kurds in Turkey see: Michael M. Gunter, "Turkey and the Kurds: New Developments," in *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* 15 (Winter 1991): 32-45; *The Kurds in Turkey: A Political Dilemma*, (Boulder: Westview, 1990); "Kurdish Militancy in Turkey: the Case of PKK," *Crossroad: an international socio-political journal* 29(1989): 43-59; Robert Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and Sheikh Said's Rebellion, 1880-1925*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989); Nader Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 81-113.

⁵²See Edmund Ghareeb, *The Kurdish Question in Iraq*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1981), 29-31.

⁵³For more details on Shaikh Mahmud see Othman Ali, *Great Britain and Kurdish Question in Iraq 1922-1932*, (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 1992).

late 1970s. Mas'ud Barzani, his son, is the present leader of the KDP. Other Kurdish organizations boasting a more modern intellectual background -- among them the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) formed in 1976 by Jalal Talabani -- play significant roles in the Kurdish national movement in Iraq.

While Iraqi Kurds have been in a sort of permanent rebellion, their armed struggle has intensified in historical periods such as late 1950s, in the early 1960s, from 1968 until 1975 in the aftermath of Ba'ath Party's ascendancy to power, and during the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-88. Kurds attracted more international support when Allied forces started to protect them from Iraqi suppression by declaring a no-fly zone in northern Iraq in the aftermath of the Gulf War in 1991.⁵⁴ It is interesting that despite Kurdish-Persian cultural ties, the Iraqi Kurds have had more cultural freedom than the Iranian Kurds in terms of publication in Kurdish language, especially in the pre-Ba'thist era.⁵⁵ It has also

⁵⁴On Iraqi Kurds see Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 49-81; Martin Van Bruinessen, "The Kurds Between Iran and Iraq," *MERIP Report*, 16 (1986): 14-27; Edmund Ghareeb, *The Kurdish Question in Iraq*; Sa'ad Jawad, *Iraq and the Kurdish Question 1958-1970*, (London: Ithaca Press, 1981); Edgar O'Bllance, *The Kurdish Revolt: 1961-57*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1973); C.J. Edmunds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs: Politics, Travel and Research in North-Eastern Iraq: 1919-1925*, (London: Oxford UP, 1957).

⁵⁵According to Amir Hassanpour, 918 books have been published in Kurdish in Iraq during 1920-1985. In Iran this number has been around 150, in Turkey no more than 10, in Syria 23, in USSR during 1921-80, a total of 377 titles have been published. See Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan*, 186-217.

been in Ba'ath-ruled Iraq (1968-) that the most repressive policies have been applied against the Kurds.⁵⁶

In Iran, Kurdish nationalism in its modern form appeared in the mid-twentieth century. Before this, Kurdish tribal revolts against the central state had less nationalistic nature than tribal rebellions. Shaikh Obeydollah invaded Iran during his rebellion in 1880 against the Ottoman Empire in order to attract the support of Iranian Kurdish tribes. However, there is no agreement among the students of Kurdish nationalism on the target of his revolt.⁵⁷ The Kurdish political movements in Iran can be studied in three historical periods: the reign of Reza Shah (1921-1941), Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi (1941-1979), and the Islamic Republic (1979-). The Simko revolt of the 1920s, the Kurdish Republic of 1945-46, and the Kurdish political movements since 1979 are the most important manifestations of Kurdish nationalism in Iran.

⁵⁶One example was the use of chemical weapons against the Kurds in Halabche in 1988 which led to the massacre of more than four thousands Kurds.

⁵⁷Arfa, *The Kurds*, 24, contends that he invaded Iran with the support of Sultan Abdul Hamid (1876-1909) the caliph of the Ottoman Empire. When his forces killed about three thousands Azari Shi'ites in Miandoab, a coalition of Iranian army and Turkish Shi'ite tribes of Khamseh and Shahsevan defeated him. Eagleton, *The Kurdish Republic of 1946*, 6-7, also believes that he invaded Iran with Ottoman support to avenge Qajar's mistreatment of the Kurds. The Kurdish nationalists, and some more recent sources, consider his goal a revolt against both Ottomans and Qajars to unify Kurdistan. See Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, "Kurdistan in Iran", in Gerard Chaliand, *People Without a Country: The Kurds and Kurdistan*, 117; Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 81-82.

Reza Shah Period (1921-1941): The end of the war in 1918-19 created a political and power vacuum in western and northwestern Iran. The disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Revolution of 1917 ended the presence of the Turkish and Russian armies in Kurdistan and Azarbaijan. Tehran was undertaking anti-British activities in protest of the Anglo-Persian Treaty of 1919, and in practice there was no organized Iranian army to challenge the Gilan Republic in northern Iran under the leadership of Mirza Kuchik Khan.

In such conditions, different Kurdish tribal chiefs had extensive autonomy in Kurdistan. Some of these chiefs had complete authority in their tribal areas and were involved in permanent efforts to extend their sphere of influence and military dominance in competing with other tribal chiefs or with the central government. Some strong tribal chiefs were also actively engaged in raiding, plundering and robbery in suburban villages and in some cases even in small towns.⁵⁸ Given the long-standing Azari and Kurdish hostility, a legacy of the Safavid-Ottoman time, it is not surprising that strong

⁵⁸One example was Shaikh Obeydollah's raid in the Azari town of Minadoab and the massacre of its Shi'ite Azari Turks. See Eagleton, *Kurdish Republic of 1946*, 6-7. These hostilities were not restricted to Kurdish-Azari groups, but in some periods Kurds, Azaris, Assyrians, and Armenians of the western Iran were engaged in bloody hostile activities. Ahmad Ksaravi, gives a good descriptive accounts of such hostilities in the late and early twentieth century in his *Tarikh-e Hijdah Saleh-e Azarbaijan*.

Kurdish tribal groups participated in such activities.

In such a situation, Ismail Agha Simko became one of the most powerful Kurdish tribal chiefs. Simko was the chief of the powerful Shakkak tribe, the second most powerful tribal confederacy in Iranian Kurdistan after the Ardalan tribal confederacy. The anarchical situation in Iran did not last for a long time. Very soon, a strong officer of Iranian Cossack forces launched a bloodless Coup in Tehran in 1921. He was Reza Khan Mirpanj, who was appointed as the new Iranian defence minister. As I will discuss with more details in chapter five, a fundamental expectation of Sardar Sepah (the master of the army), as he was called, was to organize a new, disciplined armed force for Iran and to put an end to rebellious warlords' power. As a part of these operations his army defeated Simko after continuous fighting throughout 1922.⁵⁹

Simko's revolt was the only significant Kurdish movement during Reza Shah's rule. With the rise of the modern bureaucratic Iranian state under him, and the creation of a modern army, the government's control stretched all over Iran, and Kurdish tribal chiefs were either disarmed or expressed their loyalty to the central government. It was only in the early 1940s and the abdication of Reza Shah that Kurdish leaders, tribal or non-tribal, could engage in Kurdish nationalist activities.

⁵⁹For more details see Kurdistan in Chapter Five.

The Kurdish Republic of Mahabad, 1945-46: The occupation of Iran by Soviet and British forces in 1941 following Hitler's invasion of Russia ended twenty years of Reza Shah's dictatorship. Suspected of having friendly relations with the Germans, Reza Shah was forced to abdicate in favour of his son, Muhammad Reza. Kurdistan, like Azarbaijan, was under the occupation of Soviet troops from 1941 to 1946. While some Azari elites were engaged in preparation for establishing an independent state, Iranian Kurdistan witnessed the rise of an autonomist movement in the city of Mahabad in the northern part of Iranian Kurdistan.

With the decline of the Iranian army's presence and the replacement of government employees by the city's middle-class Kurds, Mahabad came practically under the control of local Kurds. Earlier in 1942, several Kurdish elites, both tribal and non-tribal, organized a semi-secret Kurdish political organization *Komala-e Zhian-e Kurdistan* (the committee for the revival of Kurdistan). In about six months, Komala was to attract numerous Kurds from Mahabad and elected its central committee in April, 1943. Its membership expanded to other Kurdish areas in 1944. Komala was able to organize a meeting of the Kurds of Iraq and Turkey in August 1944, and to sign a pact, the so-called *Pact of the Three Borders*, "which provided for mutual support and the sharing of material and human resources in the interests of a greater Kurdistan."⁶⁰ Komala

⁶⁰Eagleton, 36.

gained another success when it invited Qazi Muhammad, a well-respected notable and judge of Mahabad, to become a member, eventually electing him leader of the organization.

Komala, which was reorganized and renamed as the Kurdish Democratic Party (*Hizb-e Democrat-e Kurdistan*) in August 1945, established friendly relations with the Azarbaijan Democratic Party. The KDP's program included several articles: self-government for the Kurdish people; recognition of the Kurdish language as the formal language of the Kurds; election of a provincial council of Kurdistan which would exercise control in Kurdistan; the election of Kurds as government officials; the establishment of friendly relations with the Azarbaijani people; the improvement of the economic situation of Kurdistan through the exploitation of Kurdistan's natural resources; and the spending of taxes collected in Kurdistan in Kurdish areas.⁶¹

The KDP also had the military support of Mulla Mustafa Barzani, the legendary Iraqi Kurdish tribal leader, who had several thousand well-trained tribal forces available for guerrilla wars. Barzani had crossed the Iranian border to provide military support for Komala in the aftermath of its formation.⁶² This was a challenge to Tehran's authority in

⁶¹Ghassemlou, *The Kurdistan and the Kurds*, 76. For the full text see Eagleton, 79-80; Arfa, 57.

⁶²For more information on Barzani and his arrival in Iranian Kurdistan, see Eagleton, *The Kurdish Republic of 1946*, 47-54.

Source: Izady, *The Kurds*, 66.

Kurdistan, and Iranians saw in it signs of separation. While the KDP considered the program compatible with the Iranian Constitution, for others, some of its provisions contradicted the Constitution and augured for a completely separate state in Kurdistan.

Tehran's concerns were justified when Qazi Muhammad, in a gathering of Kurdish tribal leaders, declared the formation of the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad in January 1946.⁶³ Qazi himself was proclaimed as the president of the Republic. The formation of the Kurdish Republic came after the declaration of the Azarbaijan Democratic Republic in Tabriz in the north of Kurdistan. Out of consideration for old Azari-Kurdish hostilities, an agreement was reached between Azarbaijan and Kurdistan Republics on April 23, 1946. In addition to an article suggesting the formation of a military alliance, the agreement stipulated that the two republics would not go into negotiation with Tehran without the acknowledgement of the other side.⁶⁴ Meanwhile, the military forces of the Republic attacked the Iranian army's garrisons in some Kurdish cities near the Iran-Iraq border.

With the conclusion of the Soviet-Iranian Agreement in 1946, the Soviet forces withdrew from Iranian territories in Azarbaijan and Kurdistan. This created a new situation with respect to the destiny of the two Republics. A Kurdish

⁶³Nader Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 20.

⁶⁴For the full text see Arfa, *The Kurds*, 87.

delegation was dispatched to Tehran, but, unlike the Azaris, was not welcomed by Qavam, the Iranian prime minister. They were told that the Kurdish Republic did not have any legal basis for autonomy, that Mahabad was a part of Azarbaijan, and that the Kurds should therefore negotiate with the Azaris. The Kurds were now placed in double jeopardy, as an ethnic minority in the Iranian state and as a minority in an Azari state.⁶⁵ The suggestion of negotiations with the Azaris became a moot point in any case after the Iranian army moved into Azarbaijan following the Soviets' withdrawal and the Azarbaijan Republic collapsed.

Witnessing such a destiny and knowing that Kurdish tribes west of Lake Urmeya had joined the Iranian army, Qazi Muhammad and the high ranking officials of the Republic went to the Azari town of Miandoab and surrendered to General Homayuni, the commander of the Iranian army on December 15, 1946.⁶⁶ Mahabad collapsed and the Barzani forces retreated to Iraqi territories. When faced with Iraqi's punishing policies for their 1945 revolt, they passed through Turkey and Iranian borders in the north into the Soviet Union and stayed there for eleven years. A military court in Mahabad condemned Qazi Muhammad and his brothers for treason and the murder of Iranian armed forces personnel. On March 31, 1947, they were executed in Mahabad's main circle, on the very spot Qazi had

⁶⁵See Nader Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 22-23.

⁶⁶ Eagleton, 113.

declared the formation of the Republic.

While the ill-fated independent Republics of Azarbaijan and Kurdistan faced the same destiny, they were different in at least two important aspects. The Kurdish Republic's leaders had preferred to stay in Kurdistan even when a group of KDP officials had proposed Qazi Muhammad join them in flight and asylum in Iraq or the USSR -- Qazi responded that he would stay with the people of Mahabad whom he had sworn to protect.⁶⁷ The Azarbaijani leaders, in contrast, had fled to the USSR before the arrival of the Iranian Army in Tabriz. The other significant difference between the two Republics is seen in their popular constituencies. Richard Cottam's comments illustrate this notion:

When Iranian troops marched into the Azarbaijan autonomous Republic and expelled the Pishavari government, they were greeted with wild enthusiasm, while the troops that entered Mahabad were greeted coldly. In Tabriz a spontaneous rising of the population against the pro-Soviet regime and a slaughter of the communist government officials preceded the arrival of Iranian forces. The people of Mahabad awaited the Iranian troops sullenly.⁶⁸

In the aftermath of Mahabad's fall, the government's control was restored and Kurdish publications and the use of Kurdish language in schools was disbanded. Many tribal chiefs who initially supported the Republic demanded pardon and explained that they were forced to join the Mahabad Republic

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 113.

⁶⁸Cottam, *Nationalism in Iran*, 73.

or were deceived by Qazi Muhammad and his Democrats who had told them that they were not at war with the central government.⁶⁹ In general, the Kurdistan situation until 1979 was calm and the tough control of the Shah's army and secret police (SAVAK) did not allow any significant Kurdish armed actions.

The Iranian KDP (KDPI), which had established its headquarters in Iraq, adopted a leftist program in the late 1950s and made contacts with Barzani's KDP in Iraq. KDPI broke with Barzani in 1967 and some young members such as Abdullah and Sulaiman Moini (sons of the interior Minister of the Mahabad Republic), Mulla Avareh (Mulla Hasan Salmasi) Ismail Sharif Zadeh, a student in Tehran University, and Muhammad Amin Saraji, a law student at Tehran University, formed a new guerrilla movement⁷⁰ to initiate armed struggle in Iran.⁷¹ This group, which attracted approximately 200 members and was active in guerilla war in the northern part of Iranian Kurdistan, was defeated by Iranian gendarmery in 1968.⁷² At its third conference, the KDPI elected Ghassemlou, a socialist intellectual teaching in Paris, as its secretary

⁶⁹Arfa, *The Kurds*, 103.

⁷⁰Hamid Mo'meni (M. Bidsorkhi), *Dar Bareh-e Mobarezat-e Kurdistan* [On the Kurdistan's struggles] (text in Persian), (Tehran: Shabahang, 1979), 51.

⁷¹Hamid Riza Jalaipour, *Kurdistan: Elal-e Tadavom-e Bohran An Pas Az Engheleb-e Islami*, 57.

⁷²According to Jalaipour, 104 members were arrested, 23 were killed and 28 surrounded to the Iranian forces. *Ibid.*

general.

In the early 1970s, the Shah supported the Barzani Kurds in their struggle against Baghdad. According to a supporter of Jalal Talabani, the leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan in Iraq, "the Iranian aid to Barzani during the fighting against the Iraqi government improved the Shah's image among Iranian Kurds, but his agreement with the Iraqi government in 1975 at Barzani's expense revived Kurdish antagonism toward the shah."⁷³

The Iranian Revolution and the Kurds: The Islamic Revolution of 1979, in which the Iranian Kurds eagerly participated, provided a new opportunity for the Kurdish leaders to seek autonomy for Kurdistan. The Iranian KDP (KDPI) and *Komala*⁷⁴ "began pressing the new and weak central government in this direction."⁷⁵ According to leaders of the Revolution, however, such nationalistic demands were incompatible with

⁷³Edmund Ghareeb, *The Kurdish Question in Iraq*, 14.

⁷⁴A Marxist group different from the *Komala* of the 1940s. The new *Komala* was formed by Kurdish and non-Kurdish students in the late 1960s. While *Komala* had Maoist trends in the beginning, it condemned Maoism in the early 1980, and in 1983/84 in collaboration with other small leftist organizations, such as Sahand, established The Communist Party of Iran (*Hizb-e Komonist-e Iran*) which had ideological tendencies toward Albania and North Korea. For more details on *Komala*, see Alaolmolki, "The new Iranian left" *Middle East Journal*, 41, no. 2 (1987), 231-233; Entessar, "The Kurdish Mosaic of Discord", *Third World Quarterly*, 11, no.4, (October 1989): 90; *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 44-45.

⁷⁵Ghareeb, *The Kurdish Question in Iraq*. p. 14.

Islamic ideology. Witnessing such discussions and demands in the early days of the Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini stressed:

Sometimes the word minority is used to refer to people such as Kurds, Lurs, Turks, Persians, Baluchis, and such. These people should not be called minorities, because this term assumes that there is a difference between these brothers. In Islam, such a difference has no place at all. There is no difference between Muslims who speak different languages, for instance, the Arabs or the Persians. It is very probable that such problems have been [created] by those who do not wish the Muslim countries to be united.... They create the issues of nationalism, of Pan-Arabism, Pan-Turkism, and such isms, which are contrary to Islamic doctrines. Their plan is to destroy Islam and Islamic philosophy.⁷⁶

While demanding regional autonomy for Kurdistan, the Kurdish groups did not wait for the new state's answer and started to bring Kurdistan under their control. They were able to arm themselves with various weapons after attacking the army's garrisons, especially the important barracks of Mahabad, a few days after the victory of the Islamic Revolution of February 21, 1979. Kurdish resurgence thus began in March, 1979, about one month after the Revolution. Ayatollah Khomeini issued a message for the Kurdish people on March 19 in which he declared those who attacked the army's barracks to be anti-Islamic and foreign agents. He stressed that "Sunnite and Shi'ite brothers are the members of a single

⁷⁶Cited by David Menashri, "Khomeini's Policies Toward Ethnic and Religious Minorities," in Esman and Rabinovich, 217.

Quran."⁷⁷

Mehdi Bazargan, the prime minister, had already sent a delegation headed by Daryush Foruhar, the Labour Minister and a Kurd, to negotiate with Kurdish groups. The Kurds proposed an eight-point program which included a demand for the formal recognition of Kurdistan's autonomy in the new Iranian constitution. It was emphasized that beside Kurdistan, three other provinces of western Azarbaijan, Ilam, and Kermanshsh should be part of an autonomous Kurdistan.⁷⁸ Recognition of Kurdish as the formal language of Kurdistan was also stressed. Furthermore, it was suggested that the central government should control defence, foreign policy, the national economy and long-term economic planning.⁷⁹

However, further events in Kurdistan did not allow these negotiations to come to fruition. In April, Sanandaj, the capital of Kurdistan province, became the first major town to be taken by Kurdish rebels. They formed a Provisional Revolutionary Council in May and June of 1979. Marivan, Naghadeh, Bukan and Paveh soon followed suit, and by August

⁷⁷Ghareeb, 17.

⁷⁸In February 1980, Ghassemlou presented a new plan to President Bani Sadr. In this plan, he dropped the insistence on including these provinces as parts of Kurdish autonomous area. See Entessar, 39.

⁷⁹For the full text see Ghareeb, *The Kurdish Question in Iraq*, 15-16.

Saqiz too had joined them.⁸⁰ The immediate resort of the Kurdish armed organizations to hostile actions in the early days of the new regime created fear among other Iranians and support for the Kurds failed to develop. In fact, many Iranians interpreted these events as a foreign-inspired conspiracy against the Revolution. The situation deteriorated when a group of Revolutionary Guards were besieged in Paveh by different Kurdish and non-Kurdish leftist armed groups in August 1979. Revolutionary Guards demanded help from Ayatollah Khomeini, and, losing his patience, the Ayatollah ordered the Iranian army to move into Paveh. In other parts of Iran, many supporters of the Revolution volunteered to be dispatched to Paveh. Thus, most of the towns in the control of armed Kurdish groups and their leftist supporters were recaptured by the army.

Kurdish groups and leftist organizations had centred around Sheikh Ezzoddin Hosseini, a Sunnite religious leader of Mahabad, who had socialist tendencies and supported Kurdish autonomy and Marxist groups.⁸¹ Officials and clergy in Tehran

⁸⁰Mohammed H. Malek, "Kurdistan in the Middle East Conflict," *New Left Review*, (May-June, 1989): 85.

⁸¹Hosseini's stance toward leftist groups was among rare cases in the Middle East where a religious authority supports Marxists. The revolutionary officials and Shi'ite clergy suspected his religious commitment and considered him a person looking for political power. In Tehran, the Revolutionary Guards published documents which claimed Hosseini had been in contact with SAVAK, the Shah's secret police before the Revolution. According to the document, he had been appointed as the Imam of Mahabad by the Shah. For these documents, see Daftar Siasi Sepah Pasdaran, *Kurdistan*:

and Qum recognized Ahmad Mofti Zadeh, the Imam of Sanadaj, as the representative of the Kurds. He rejected armed conflict with Tehran and stressed political action. Moreover, his "Islam first, Kurds second" approach endeared him to the Shi'ite Ulama.⁸² Ideologically in conflict with KDPI and Komala, he had one thing in common with them in that he looked for autonomy for Kurdistan.⁸³ With the fall of the Provisional Government of Bazargan in the aftermath of the American Hostages episode on November 4, 1979, the Kurds' hope for achieving autonomy through negotiation faded away. Ghassemlou presented a new plan to Bani Sadr, the new elected president, in which the Kurds moderated their views, especially with respect to the size of the autonomous region.⁸⁴ Bani Sadr was positively inclined toward the Kurdish demands, but he insisted that there could be no progress toward settlement of the Kurdish issue until the Kurds laid down their arms and ended their military

Imperialism va Goruhay-e Vabasteh [Kurdistan: Imperialism and the dependent groups] (text in Persian), (Tehran: Intesharat-e Sepah, 1980), 120-128.

⁸²A.H.H. Abidi, *Iran at the Crossroads: the Dissent Movement*, (New Delhi: Patriot Publishers, 1989), 190.

⁸³For his opinions on Kurdish autonomy see: Ahmad Mofti Zadeh, *Dar Bareh-e Kurdistan* [on Kurdistan] (text in Persian), (Tehran: Nur, 1980), 34-42.

⁸⁴Later, Ghassemlou reinsisted in Kurds' demand for the unity of four provinces of Kurdistan, western Azarbaijan, Ilam, and Kirmanshah into one province. See "Abdul- Rahman Qassemlu, Interview by Fred Halliday", "KDP's Qassemlu: the clergy have confiscated the Revolution," *MERIP Reports*, 98, (July-August, 1981): 17.

confrontation with the government forces. Ghassemlou insisted that they would not disarm until their autonomy goals were achieved. Both sides parted company and new rounds of fighting broke out throughout Kurdistan.⁸⁵

Further developments, such as the power struggle in Tehran, the preoccupation of the Islamic Republic with the hostage crisis, and finally the Iraqi invasion of Iran on September 22, 1980, relegated the Kurdish issue to secondary importance on the Iranian domestic agenda. During the Iran-Iraq war Kurdish groups allied themselves with Baghdad. This led to a split within the KDPI in protest of Ghassemlou's support of Iraq in the war.⁸⁶ As the result of the necessity of war, the Iranian armed forces in Kurdistan were reinforced.⁸⁷ In November 1981, the KDPI joined the *National Council of Resistance* formed in Paris by Masud Rajavi, the leader of Mujahedin Khalq Organization (MKO) and Bani Sadr,⁸⁸ the deposed president. By mid-1984, the government managed not only to push the KDPI out of Iranian territories, but also to penetrate the north-western sector of Iraqi territory at

⁸⁵Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 39.

⁸⁶Muhammad Malik, "Kurdistan in the Middle East Conflict," 85.

⁸⁷See Charles G. McDonald, "The impact of Gulf War on Iraqi and Iranian Kurds," in *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, Vol 7, (1982-83), 261-271.

⁸⁸Later, Bani Sadr left NCR in protest to MKO's reliance on Baghdad for military and financial support.

Haj Omran near Turkey's border.⁸⁹ Iraqi Kurdish organizations such as KDP, and the Socialist Party of Kurdistan-Iraq (SPKI) supported the Islamic Republic and helped in the fight against Iranian Kurdish groups.⁹⁰

By the end of the Iran-Iraq war in 1988, the KDPI, mediated by the Iraqi PUK, approached the Islamic Republic to negotiate a peaceful solution for Kurdistan. A group of 15 KDPI members split from the party in April, 1988 in protest of this rapprochement.⁹¹ On July 13, 1989, during the second round of negotiations with Tehran's representative in Vienna, Ghassemlou was assassinated along with two other Kurds. This was five days before a planned trip to the U.S.A by Ghassemlou.⁹² While most Iranian opposition forces blame Tehran for this assassination, no definite evidence exists about the identity of the murderers. There are several circumstantial theories which assume, variously, that Ghassemlou was murdered by: a death squad dispatched by MKO; the Iraqi government, fearful of the KDPI-Tehran

⁸⁹By the establishment of *Hamza Sayyed al-Shohada* military base in Kurdistan during military operations against Iraqi forces, Iranian military forces could bring all Kurdish area under their control and push Kurdish *Pishmerge* (guerrillas) into Iraqi Kurdistan. This was done during a three years period from 1982 to 1985. See Jalaipour, 67.

⁹⁰See Maleki, 84-86.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁹²Nisan Mordechai, *Minorities in the Middle East, A History of Struggle and Self-Expression*, (North Carolina: Mcfarland, 1991), 41.

rapprochement; a hardliner faction in Iran intent on weakening Rafsenjani; by Rafsenjani's order, after luring KDPI into a trap;⁹³ or by a radical Kurdish faction within the KDPI.⁹⁴

Ghassemlou's successor, Sadiq Sharafkandi, was assassinated in Berlin in 1991, and similar questions hang over his murder. A splinter group called KDPI-Revolutionary Leadership allied itself with MKO in 1992 and is engaged in armed struggle against Tehran.⁹⁵ In an Interview in 1992, Mostafa Hejri (known also as Kak Mostafa), the new leader of the KDPI, expressed his separatist tendencies by suggesting the idea of the separation of Kurdistan from Iran.⁹⁶ presently, a number of Iranian Kurdish groups have military bases in Iraq, but they are not powerful enough to raise a serious challenge to Tehran. Commenting on Iranian Kurdish groups in early 1990, Van Bruinessen wrote "they seem not to

⁹³For the detail of the negotiations, the assassination and these speculations, see Bulloch, John and Norris Harvey, *No Friends But the Mountains: Tragic History of the Kurds*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 190-197.

⁹⁴Masud Barzani the leader of Iraqi KDP has pointed out that "the aim of those who committed the crime was to disrupt the rapprochement of KDPI with Iranian government. Money was a possible factor behind the event." See Laizer, *Into Kurdistan*, 132-133.

⁹⁵MKO's National Liberation Army is supplied by Saddam Hussein and has launched unsuccessful operation in Iran-Iraq borders against Revolutionary Guards and Iranian army.

⁹⁶For more information, and a critique of his separatist views by the *Iranian National Front*, see "Chera Dar Rah-e Tajziyeh-e Iran Gaam Barmidarid ?," [why do you move toward the disintegration of Iran ?] (text in Persian), in *Kayhan Havai*, 1029 (May 5, 1993): 25.

have any clear strategies."⁹⁷

BALUCHISTAN

Like Kurdistan, the Iranian Baluchistan is only one part of the region which contains Baluchis. Originally, the Baluchis were located in Iran. However, during the Seljuq reign in Iran (1040-1157) and in the aftermath of the Mongol invasion, a massive immigration of Baluchis occurred towards the east in the direction of Sind and Punjab in present-day Pakistan.⁹⁸ In general, Baluchistan as a territory is divided between Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Iranian Baluchistan is the second largest after Pakistan's Baluchi area. The largest and politically most self-assertive branch of Baluchis, occupying 40% of the total Baluchi territories, lives in Pakistan.⁹⁹ Baluchis share their home territories with many non-Baluchis: Persian-speaking Sistanis in Iran,

⁹⁷Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, 42.

⁹⁸Aijaz Ahmed, "The National Question in Baluchistan," in S. Akbar Zaidi, ed., *Regional Imbalances and the National Question in Pakistan*, (Lahore: Vanguard, 1992), 200.

⁹⁹Robert G. Wirsing, *The Baluchis and Pathans*, (London: The Minority Rights Group, 1987), 3. There is less consensus on the total size of Baluchistan as a whole. While Selig Harrison, gives 207,000 sq miles, Hosseinbor, a Baluchi nationalist, stresses on "more than 240,000 sq miles." See Selig S. Harrison, *In The Afghanistan's Shadow*, 7; Muhammad Hassan Hosseinbor, *Iran and Its Nationalities: The Case of Baluch Nationalism*, (Ph.D. thesis, The American University, 1984), p. 15. Brian Spooner gives the following numbers for the size of Baluch territories: 300,000 sq km in western Pakistan, 200,000 sq km in southeastern Iran, and 100,000 sq km in southwestern Afghanistan. See Spooner, "Who are the Baluch ?", 93-94.

sizable number of Pathans (from Afghanistan), and Punjabis and Brahuīs in Pakistan.¹⁰⁰ A significant number of Baluchis dwell outside of Baluchistan, living as immigrant workers in Arab Shiekhdoms of the Persian Gulf, and in the northeast of Iran in Gorgan Province and its adjacent areas of Turkmanistan. According to Harrison, the total number of Baluchis in the mid-1970s was around five million,¹⁰¹ although there are disagreements on this issue. According to the recent census (1986) in Iran, Iranian province of Sistan and Baluchistan had a Baluchi and non-Baluchi population of 1,197,059.¹⁰²

There is no consensus on the ethnic origins of Baluchis. Two views will serve to outline the debate: the Iranian (Aryan) and the Arab Schools.¹⁰³ The pride in Arab origin, namely being descendants of *Hamza*, the uncle of Muhammad,

¹⁰⁰Robert G. Wirsing, *The Baluchis and Pathans*, (London: Minority Right Group, 1981), 3.

¹⁰¹Selig Harrison, "Nightmare in Baluchistan," *Foreign Policy*, 32 (Fall 1978): 13.

¹⁰²Markaz-e Amar-e Iran, *Salnameh-e Amari-e Keshvar*, 1368, 32.

¹⁰³Inayatullah Baloch presents three views on this: Altaic (Turkman and Kirghiz branches), Aryan (Iranian and Indian branches), and finally Semitic (Chaldean and Arab branches). However, the dominant views are centred around Aryan and Semitic origins. See Inayatullah Baloch, *The Problem of Greater Baluchistan: A Study of Baluch Nationalism*, (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1987), 36-42.

Source: Wirsing, *Baluchis and Pathans*, 1.

prophet of Islam, was popular in the past,¹⁰⁴ especially among tribal groups such as the Mubaraki¹⁰⁵ in Iran, and the Mari and Bugti in Pakistan.¹⁰⁶ Contemporary Baluchi nationalists, however, reject this idea as insufficient¹⁰⁷ and lacking historical evidence.¹⁰⁸ They stress their Iranian origins instead.¹⁰⁹ Presently, the idea of Iranian origin is the most widely accepted.¹¹⁰ Before the advent of Islam, the majority of Baluchis were Zoroastrian.¹¹¹ Today, the majority of Baluch are of the Islamic faith and belong to the Sunnite sect.¹¹²

Such a disagreement is not to be found with respect to the Baluchi language. Baluchi is classified as a member of

¹⁰⁴This was reflected in some Persian poems by Baluchi poets in eighteenth century. See Longworth M. Dames, *Popular Poetry of the Baloches*, (London: 1907), 1-3.

¹⁰⁵See Iraj Afshar Sistani, *Moghaddameh-i Bar Shenakht-e Ilha, Chadorneshinan va Tavayef-e Ashayeri Iran* [An introduction to the understanding of tribes and pastoralism nomads in Iran] (text in Persian), (Tehran: Nasl-e Danesh, 1989), 942.

¹⁰⁶Aijaz Ahmed, 196.

¹⁰⁷Akhtar Husain Siddiqi, *Baluchistan (Pakistan): Its Society, Resources, and development*, (Lanham: University Press of America, 1991), 18.

¹⁰⁸Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch, 4.

¹⁰⁹See for example, Janmahmad, *The Baluch Cultural Heritage*, (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1982), 1-16.

¹¹⁰Farzanfar, 66.

¹¹¹See Janmahmad, 124-133; Inayatullah Baloch, 70.

¹¹²Inayatullah Baloch, *The Problem of Greater Baluchistan*, 70.

the Iranian group of the Indo-European language family, which includes Farsi (Persian), Pashtun, Baluchi, and Kurdish,¹¹³ and indeed there is a close similarity between Baluchi and Persian. Janmahmad, a Pakistani Baluch nationalist, considers Baluchi a sub-division of Persian branch of Iranian Languages.¹¹⁴ However, Baluchi is much closer to Old Persian (Pahlavi, Avestan,¹¹⁵ and the Medes), which was prevalent during the pre-Islamic Iranian Empires of Medes, Achaemenids, and Sasanids. Thus, one can find more original Persian words in Baluchi than modern Persian. Kambuzia, an Iranian-Kurdish scholar who was banished by Reza Shah to Baluchistan and lived there for most of his life, has written:

If you open a dictionary of Pahlavi (the language of Iran during Parthian and Sasanid Empires) for a Baluch, and read him some words from it, he would say Pahlavi means Baluchi language.¹¹⁶

Baluchi has several dialects, from which linguists usually agree to identify two major dialects -- Eastern Baluchi and Western Baluchi. The former is spoken in the eastern part of Pakistan, and the latter in western Pakistan,

¹¹³Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, 11.

¹¹⁴Janmahmad, 20-21.

¹¹⁵The language of Avesta, the Zoroastrian Holy Book.

¹¹⁶Amir Tawakkol Kambuzia, *Baluchistan va Elal-e Kharabi-e An* [Baluchistan and the causes of its destruction] (text in Persian), (Tehran: Marvi, 1984), 20.

Iran,¹¹⁷ Turkmanistan, and the Arab Sheikdoms of the Persian Gulf.¹¹⁸ Western Baluchi is more the product of the infusion of Persian words, and therefore differs slightly with the dialect spoken in the Eastern Baluch highlands. The Eastern dialect, as Muhammad Sardar Khan points out, "corresponds to a great extent with the Achaemenian dialect of ancient Persia."¹¹⁹ However, Baluchi lacks an extensive literary heritage -- indeed, before the late nineteenth century, it was an unwritten language used mainly in conversation. Baluchis used to write in Persian, as in India of pre-modern times and in Central Asia.¹²⁰ Most of the literary heritage of the Baluchis, both poems and written communications, are in Persian.¹²¹

¹¹⁷Iraj Afshar Sistani mentions that in Iranian Baluchistan, there are two dialects of northern (Sarhaddi), and southern (Makrani) Baluchi. The Baluchis in these two area pronounce the words differently, but both understand each other. See Afshar, *Moghaddameh-i Bar Shinakht-e Baluchistan*, 954.

¹¹⁸See Inayatullah Baloch, 49-50. See also, Brian Spooner "Notes on the Baluchi Spoken in Persian Baluchistan," *Journal of Persian Studies*, 5, (1967); J. Elfenbein "Baluchi," *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 1: A-B (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967), 1006-1007.

¹¹⁹ Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch, *The History of Baluchi race and Baluchistan*, 262-263.

¹²⁰Inayatullah Baloch, *The Problem of Greater Baluchistan*, 51.

¹²¹The most famous Baluchi poets, especially before 20th century, such as Ghulam Muhammad, Syed Muhammad Taqi Shah, Mirza Ahmad Ali, Mullah Muhammad Sadiq, and the most important among them Gul Muhammad Magassi have made their poems in Persian. On this, see Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch, *The History of Baluch Race and Baluchistan*, 197-214.

Although diverse in terms of land forms and temperature, Baluchistan is uniformly arid and low in productivity. Rainfall does not exceed five or six inches per year. The only source of water, therefore, consists of a few water channels known as *Qanat* or *Karez* dug out from hill slopes and fed by melting snows.¹²² As a result of these natural conditions, settlement throughout the area is sparse, highly localized, and the vast distances between settlements are exploited by small groups of pastoral nomads.¹²³

Iranian Baluchis live mostly in the southeastern part of the country in Sistan and Baluchistan province. Part of this Baluchi-dominated region has historically been called *Makran* since the pre-Islamic Iranian Empire of Achaemenids (550-331 B.C.). *Makran*, which used to include Kirman as well as the present Baluchistan, was the original homeland of Baluchis after their immigration from the extreme northern provinces of Iran (adjacent to Black Sea and Caspian region in pre-Islamic era)¹²⁴ and before their movement toward the east in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries. The total size of Iranian Baluchi areas is 173,461 sq. km.,¹²⁵ the borders of which

¹²²Inayatullah Baloch, *The Problem of Greater Baluchistan*, 23.

¹²³Brian Spooner, "Who are the Baluch ?," 106-107.

¹²⁴Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch, *History of Baluch Race and Baluchistan*, 17.

¹²⁵Iraj Afshar Sistani, *Baluchistan va Tamaddon-e Dirineh-e An*, [Baluchistan and its ancient civilization] (text in Persian), (Tehran: Vezarat-e Ershad, 1992), 25.

reach Sistan and Afghanistan in the north, the Sea of Oman in the south, Pakistan in the east, and Kirman and Khorasan provinces in the west. Northern Baluchistan, the *Sarhad*, is more suitable for agriculture than the southern part, which is mostly arid. Baluchistan is one of the hottest regions in Iran, with an average of 40 centigrade. Other than urban centres such as Zahidan (the capital), Saravan, Iranshahr, Khash, and Chahbahar, most of Baluchistan has maintained a tribally organized structure.

Baluchis all lived within the boundaries of Iran up to the middle of the eighteenth century. The division of Baluchistan between Iran and British India in the 1870s was the result of the imperialist policies of Great Britain, which occupied Baluchistan in the first half of the nineteenth century in the midst of the *Great Game in Asia*,¹²⁶ in which Russia and Britain were competing over spheres of influence in Afghanistan and India. Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch traces the earliest tracks of Baluchis to 6th century B.C., when Cyrus the Great, the founder of the Achaemenid Empire in Iran, made them

... settle in the northern provinces of Persia conterminous with the Black Sea i.e. Kurdistan, Armenia and Gilan. For more than one thousand years, they lived in these mountain regions, and [resorted] to arms, [and] served as the elite of

¹²⁶For different dimensions of this policy see Edward Ingram, "Approaches to the Great Game in Asia," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 18, no. 4 (1982): 449-458.

the armies of Achaemenian and Sasanids sovereigns.¹²⁷

In the late Sasanid era, and close to the advent of Islam, they had migrated from the north and northwest to southern Iran in Kirman. They stayed there up to the Mongol invasion in the thirteenth century A.D. when they once again moved to the east, where they are presently settled.

The oldest source which refers to the term "Baluch" is *Shahnameh* of Firdowsi, the Iranian national epic written in the tenth century A.D. Firdowsi describes Baluch warriors as the backbone of the Iranian army in their wars against Turanians during Kaikaus and Kaikhusrow¹²⁸ in ancient Iran. We also learn from *Shahnameh* that Achaemenian sovereigns employed the Men of Gilan (northern Iran), Alan, Saroch, Koch, Baluch and Kurdistanis.¹²⁹ Firdowsi describes disastrous ravages made by "Baluch" during the reign of Anushirvan (531-589 A.D.), the great Sasanid King.¹³⁰ At the same time, he mentions that they were part of Anushirvan's military forces when he ordered his army to receive the ambassador of China with a royal guard consisting of the men of Gilan, Alan and

¹²⁷Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch, 29.

¹²⁸Abulghasim Firdowsi, *Shahnameh*, (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1964), 164.

¹²⁹Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch, 26.

¹³⁰Firdowsi, *Shahnameh*, 437-438.

Baluch bedecked with golden shields.¹³¹ Tabari, the famous historian of the early Islamic period, mentions that Makran (later Baluchistan) was part of the kingdom of Ardeshir (Artaxerxes) Papakan (d. 241 A.D.), the founder of the Sasanid Empire.¹³² Shahpoor I (d. 272 A.D.) another Sasanid king, mentioned Makran as part of the territories under his rule in Iran Shahr (Iran).¹³³ That was the case during the late Sasanid era when Khosrow Parviz (591-628 A.D.) re-established the previous boundaries of his empire toward the Indus.

Makran, like other parts of Iran, was conquered by Arab Muslims during the rule of Umar, the second Caliph of Islam in 651. For about two centuries, Makran was ruled by Muslims who probably were appointed by or had connections with the Umayyid and Abbasid Caliphates in Damascus and Baghdad. Arab-Iranian Islamic Historians like Al-Beladhuri (d. 892), Tabari, Mas'udi, Istakhrī (all historians of the tenth century), Mustawfi (the fourteenth century) and Nasih (the twentieth century) describe periods of resistance and interference by Arab Muslims in the region.¹³⁴

¹³¹Muhammad Sardar Khan, 31.

¹³²Muhammad Jarir Tabari, *Tarikh-e Tabari* [the History of Tabari] (text in Persian), Trans. Abulqasim Payandeh, (Tehran: Asatir, 1983), 584.

¹³³W.G. Lukonin, *Tamaddon-e Iran-i Sasani*, [the Sasanid Iranian Empire] (text in Persian), Trans. Inayatullah Riza, (Tehran: Bongah-e Tarjomeh, 1971), 204.

¹³⁴See Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch, 31-34; and Iraj Afshar Sistani, *Baluchistan*, 108-109.

With the rise of local Iranian dynasties during the Abbasid period, Makran (Baluchistan) became part of their reign. This was the case of the Saffarid dynasty (861-900) which emerged from Kirman and Makran and ruled the eastern parts of Iran including Makran, Sistan, Muletan, and Sind (both in present-day Pakistan).¹³⁵ Saffarids also ruled Fars in southern Iran, and they used to appoint a governor for Kirman and Baluchistan (Makran).¹³⁶ Samanids (900-999), another local Iranian dynasty of Transoxiana which defeated the Saffarids, were not anti-Caliphate as the Saffarids were. Moreover, Samanid's rule was unofficially recognized by Baghdad. Except for a short period of twenty years, Samanids ruled Baluchistan, Fars, Kirman, Sind (now in Pakistan), Khorasan, and Transoxiana.¹³⁷

In some periods, Kirman and Baluchistan were the centres of violent conflicts over power and influence between different local Iranian dynasties. That was the case when the Buyids of northern Iran tried to capture Makran and Sistan from the remaining Saffarids in the tenth century,¹³⁸ and when

¹³⁵Ibrahim Bastani Parizi, *Ya'qub-i Lays*, (text in Persian), (Tehran: Ibn-i Sina, 1974), 120-121.

¹³⁶Afshar Sistani, *Baluchistan*, 111.

¹³⁷Abubakr Muhammad ibn-i Ja'far al-Zashahi, *Tarikh-i Bukhara*, [the history of Bukhara] (text in Persian), ed., Moddaris Razavi, (Tehran: Toos, 1983), 127-137.

¹³⁸For the details, see Khuda Bakhsh Bijarani Marri Baloch, *Baluches Through Century*, 18-20; also Afshar Sistani, *Baluchistan*, 113-114.

Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi, the great king of Ghaznavid dynasty in northern and eastern Iran, defeated Khalaf bin Ahmad of Saffarids in Sistan in the eleventh century and successfully subdued the Baluchi tribes.¹³⁹ It also happened that in several cases the governors who were appointed by the kings for Makran, Kirman, or Sistan revolted against their own masters, or resisted when another governor was appointed by the same king, or a new king of the same dynasty. The latter case was most prevalent, and one example among many took place in the Seljuq period (1040-1157), when Malik Qarud was appointed by an early Seljuq king, only to be poisoned after 24 years by Malakshah the great king of Seljuq (1072-1092). Qarud's sons, however, ruled Kirman and Makran until they were defeated by Seljuq kings.¹⁴⁰

The Mongol invasion of Iran in the thirteenth century not only caused massive Baluchi migration to the east and to the Indian sub-continent¹⁴¹ (present Pakistani Baluchistan), but also brought about a period of violent conflict and anarchy into southeastern Iran. Makran and Sind, centres of Iranian resistance against the Mongols, were led by Jalal al-Din

¹³⁹Nizam ol-Mulk, the great Vazir of Seljuqs present a detailed account of Baluchis' defeat by Ghaznavids, in *Siyasat Nameh or Siyar ol Mulook* (translated by Hubert Darke as *Book of Rules for Kings*), (Tehran: Elmi va Farhangi, 1985), 90.

¹⁴⁰Ahmad Ali Khan Vaziri Kirmani, *Tarikh-i Kirman (Salareyyeh)* [The history of Kirman], ed by Bastani Parizi, (Tehran: Ibn-e Sina, 1973), 271-281.

¹⁴¹Khuda Bakhsh Bijarani Marri Baloch, 35.

Kharazm Shah of the Khwarazmshahid dynasty (1172-1220). As the Baluchi nationalist Inayatullah Baloch puts it, the Mongol invasion (1219) and the emigration to the east, led to the formation of the first Baluchi tribal confederation by Mir Jalal Khan.¹⁴² This was probably the beginning of semi-autonomous local Baluchi rule, particularly in Kalat in the Indian sub-continent. The golden age of Baluchi rule was the era of Mir Chakar Rind, who ruled Kalat, Kharan and Las Bela in eastern Baluchistan from 1487 to 1511.¹⁴³ This confederacy, however, did not last and would be divided into three separate tribal reigns in the aftermath of Rind's death.¹⁴⁴ The story of eastern Baluchistan became one of changing local rule¹⁴⁵ by Baluchi Sardars (tribal chiefs) who variously paid tribute to Iranian, Afghan and Indian kings, and later to British rulers in India.

For most of the Safavid Dynasty (1501-1722), Baluchistan, particularly the western part, was reabsorbed into Iran. During the Afghan invasion into Iran (1722-1727), Nadir Shah Afshar, the Iranian emperor who invaded India (1739), appointed governors for Baluchistan (both western and

¹⁴²Inayatullah Baloch, 94-95.

¹⁴³Muhamad Sardar Khan Baluch, *The Great Baluch*, 112-140.

¹⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 97-98.

¹⁴⁵An exception was the Mir Nasir Khan Baluch, who paid tribute to Nadir Shah Afshar, Iranian Emperor (1727-1747), but after his death established a unified Baluchi rule in eastern and parts of Iranian Baluchistan.

eastern), but his death ended Iranian control over the area. It was after some decades that Muhammad Shah, the Qajar king in Iran (1834-1848) tried to reintegrate the whole of Baluchistan into Iran. He was not successful, since these efforts coincided with the intervention of British forces into eastern Baluchistan and Afghanistan, the centres of the Russian-British rivalry.

Baluchistan came to notoriety in international history as a stalemate in 'The Great Game in Asia'.¹⁴⁶ The result of this diplomatic draw was the division of Baluchistan by Britain between Iran, Afghanistan, and India in the 1870s. However, while the Iranian part was officially ceded to the Qajars, the area witnessed alternate periods of rebellion and calmness for a full century. During this time, many Baluchi tribal chiefs (*Sardars*) were recognized as loyal autonomous rulers of Baluchistan, duly collecting taxes and providing manpower to the Iranian armed forces. This period, however, terminated with the rise of Reza Shah (1921-1941) the founder of Pahlavi dynasty (1921-1979), who was determined to destroy the powers of all tribal chiefs throughout Iran and to establish a modern Iranian state.

As I will discuss in chapter 5, Baluchi tribes were disarmed through a series of armed conflicts and Baluchi *Sardars* were either militarily defeated or converted to the service of the central state. Those who resisted were

¹⁴⁶Brian Spooner, "Who Are the Baluch," 104.

imprisoned, exiled to other parts of Iran, and some, like Dust Muhammad Khan, were executed.

The Rise of Baluchi Nationalism

Iranian Baluchis have been in the margins of Baluchi nationalism. As Harrison notes:

Iranian Baluch have been on the fringes of Baluchi political life throughout history and continue to be so today. The Iranian Baluch were never able to produce a unified political or military grouping of their own, even for a brief period.¹⁴⁷

The cradle of Baluchi nationalism has been eastern Baluchistan in Pakistan, and few Iranian Baluchi nationalists have looked to the east for inspiration. One reason for the lack of strong nationalist tendencies among Iranian Baluchis has been the close historical, linguistic, and cultural affinities between themselves and Persians. The growth of Baluchi nationalism in the east was partly the result of the British presence in eastern Baluchistan since the early nineteenth century. British authorities, preoccupied with the Russian expansion, invaded Baluchistan and, in a series of military confrontations, defeated a coalition of Baluchi Sardars. Later, however, they gave political and financial

¹⁴⁷Selig Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, 17.

support to Baluchi Sardars¹⁴⁸ and treated them as autonomous and independent rulers. Such a relationship did not exist in Iranian Baluchistan.

From the death of Muhammad Shah Qajar (1847) to the rise of Reza Shah in 1921 and especially in the aftermath of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906,¹⁴⁹ the ever-weakening Qajar rule recognized the Baluchi Sardars and relied on them for collecting taxes. This, however, did not give to Iranian Baluch Sardar the same autonomy and independence which eastern Baluchi Sardars enjoyed as the result of British strategies.

Unlike Pakistan, thus, there never emerged in Iran a strong Baluchi nationalist movement that could mobilize Baluchis against the Iranian state. The symbol of Baluchi nationalism according to most Pakistanis and some Iranians was Dust Muhammad Khan, but he was an example of a traditional Baluchi Sardar who wanted to have his local reign in tribal

¹⁴⁸I will discuss this important fact in chapter 7 to show how the international politics have promoted the idea of Baluchi autonomy.

¹⁴⁹This was the first popular protest in Iran against the tyranny of the monarchical system. Different segments of the Iranian society, including Shi'ite clergy, intellectuals, Bazaar, and the middle and lower classes participated in this movement. Later, different Iranian tribal groups such as Bakhtiyaris played important role in the support of the Constitutional government. As the result of the constitutional Revolution, the Qajar king Muzaffar ol-Din Shah had to accept the Constitutionalists' demand for establishing a parliament (*Majlis*) in Iran. For the role of Azarbaijan in the Constitutional revolution, See Richard Cottam, *Nationalism in Iran*, 118-122.

areas and maintain good relations with the central state at the same time. It was in fact Reza Shah who did not tolerate Dust Muhammad's autonomous reign, rather than the opposite situation.

Some nationalist tendencies emerged during Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi's reign (1941-1979). These were primarily under the influence of the Baluchi nationalist milieu in Pakistan. A group called the Baluchi Liberation Front (or BLF) was formed in 1964 by Jumma Khan, a "dynamic young Baluch who had roots in both Pakistan and Iranian Baluchistan, and a small group of leading Iranian Baluchi political exiles in Pakistan joined him."¹⁵⁰ The Front was later supported by Mir Abdi Khan, the chief of the Sardarzai tribe in Iran, and also by some Arab countries. With such support, it could launch sporadic guerrilla attacks led by Mir Mauladad and other tribal notables who acted under the Front's name. The BLF, was able to continue its activities until the mid-1970s, when it suffered a devastating blow as the result of the Iran-Iraq agreement and the reconciliation of some of its leaders (such as Abdi Khan) with the Shah's regime.

The *Democratic Party of Baluchistan*, formed in Baghdad in the 1960s, was the Baluchi branch of the National Front of Iranian People, a coalition of members of the Tudeh Party (the Communist party in Iran). It advocated a "national democratic government" in Baluchistan that would be a provincial

¹⁵⁰Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, 105-106.

component of a "federal, socialist" Iran. It demanded a demarcation of provincial boundaries of Iran on a linguistic basis and the right to use Baluchi as a medium of instruction in the schools.¹⁵¹ This orthodox communist group was in conflict with Jumma Khan's BLF over the questions of independence of Baluchistan and armed struggle against the Iranian state.¹⁵² As Harrison writes, these groups actually disappeared in the mid-1970s after the Algerian mediated Treaty of 1975 between the Shah and Saddam Hussein which ended Iraqi support of Iranian Baluch and Iranian support of Kurds in Iraq. In mid-1978, the Iranian Baluch were leaderless, disorganized, and politically quiescent. They were keenly watching unfolding events in Tehran but played a relatively marginal role in the tumultuous final months of the anti-Shah struggle.¹⁵³

The advent of the Iranian Revolution in 1979 which temporarily weakened the central state's presence in Baluchistan, led to the rise of several Baluchi political organizations. With the exception of *Hezb-e Ittihad ol-Muslemin* (the Party of Muslim Unity) a religious, semi-

¹⁵¹Mahmoud Panahiyan, "Political Programme of the Democratic Party of Baluchistan," in *Farhang-e Gughraphia-e Melli Baluchistan Iran*, [the national geography of Iranian Baluchistan] (text in Persian), (Baghdad: n.p., 1971), 8, 11, 15-19. This program was ratified at the first and only conference of the Democratic Party of Baluchistan (Iranian), 20-23 February 1972. See Harrison, 212.

¹⁵²*Ibid.*, 109.

¹⁵³*Ibid.*, 112.

political group, other political groups with nationalist or leftist tendencies did not enjoy much popular support. Led by Mowlavi Abdulaziz Mulla Zadeh, the Party was less the symbol of Baluchi nationalism than the representative of Baluchi Sunnites in a Shi'ite-dominated country. Mowlavi was the representative of Baluchistan in the Majlis (Iran's Islamic parliament). He ordered his followers to vote for the establishment of an Islamic Republic in Iran in April 1979, but later boycotted the referendum for a new Islamic Constitution in December 1979 in which Shi'ism was declared the official religion in Iran.

The Party was optimistic about the Islamic regime in the beginning, and Mowlavi, unlike Kurdish Sunni religious leader Sheikh Ezzoddin Hussein, did not support anti-regime opposition groups in Baluchistan.¹⁵⁴ He met Ayatollah Khomeini in March of 1979 and told Baluchis that "all your national and religious wishes have been accepted."¹⁵⁵ Mowlavi also called on Baluchis to vote in the Presidential elections of January of 1980. His party did not have a role in the violent events in Zahidan, the capital of Baluchistan, in

¹⁵⁴In fact Mowlavi openly criticized Hussein for this and for "excessive zeal in his action." See the English translation of his interview with Persian newspaper *Ayandegan*, (July 22, 1979), in *Review of Iranian Political Economy and History*, 4, no. 1 (1980): 75.

¹⁵⁵"Sunni Leader in Baluchistan," *FBISDR*, (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Report), (28 March, 1979): R-13; and "Baluchi Movement Congratulates the Revolution," *FBISDR*, (Iran), (February 12, 1979): R-32, cited in Harrison.

December 1979, which began as a protest against the Islamic Constitution in which Shi'ism and Persian were to become the official religion and language of Iran. Despite its disillusion toward Tehran, the Party refused to take a radical stance toward the central state. A small group of nationalist Mowlavis, led by Mowlavi Nezar Muhammad and Mowlavi Aman-ullah¹⁵⁶ broke away from the Party in late 1979 because of the "conciliatory policies" of Mowlavi Abdul Aziz. After the events of the late 1979, Baluchistan never did witness much anti-regime political violence.¹⁵⁷

Few other leftist and nationalist groups sprang up in Baluchistan in the early years of the Revolution, and those that did were mainly connected to the nationwide Marxist organizations in Tehran. *Sazeman-e Demokratik-e Mardom-e Baluchistan* (Baluchistan People's Democratic Organization, or BPDO) an umbrella organization for various leftist factions headed by an engineer, Rahmat Hosseinbor,¹⁵⁸ brought together

¹⁵⁶Both took refuge in Pakistan in 1980. See Hosseinbor, *Iran and Its Nationalities: The Case of Baluch Nationalism*, 171.

¹⁵⁷An exception was the public protests of the Baluchi Sunnites in 1994 in Zahidan against the destruction of the Faiz Mosque in Mashhad by the Municipality agents. The Municipal authorities apparently had destroyed an old place (*Karvansaray-e Faiz*) in Mashhad to replace it by a modern building. In this place, there was a room where the Sunnite Muslims used to pray. This event led to the violent protest in Zahidan in the following week. See *FBIS*, [NES] (February 7, 1994): 066.

¹⁵⁸Hosseinbor, 158.

leftist adherents of *Fadaiyan-e Khalq* and *Paykar*, the two nationwide Marxist movements, as well as an assortment of freewheeling intellectuals. BPDO was linked with a short-lived monthly in Baluchi, *Makran*, a journal published by Khalidad Arya, a Baluchi intellectual. *Makran* dedicated itself to the revival of Baluchi and its literature, and proclaimed that it belonged to all Baluchis in Pakistan, Afghanistan, the Soviet Union, and the Persian Gulf Sheikdoms as well as Iran.¹⁵⁹ Another small nationalist circle, *Kanoon-e Siyasi-Farhangi Khalq-e Baluch* (Baluch People's Political and Cultural Centre) was active in 1979 in Zahidan. As a poorly organized group it relied mainly on Baluchi students in the University of Baluchistan and ties with the Baluch Student Organization in Pakistan. These groups did not enjoy mass support like the religious Party of Mowlavi Abdul Aziz, however.

Some small guerrilla movements operating in the tribal vastness of Iranian Baluchistan were active in the early 1980s. The Baluchistan Liberation Front led by Rahim Zardkoui considered itself the continuation of Jumma Khan's legacy of the 1960s but disintegrated as the result of armed clashes with Revolutionary Guards. Another group, the *Baluch Pesh Marga* (Baluch Volunteer Force or BPM), was organized by Amanollah Barakzai. As a Baluchi aristocrat, he was a direct descendant of Dust Muhammad Khan and had peaceful relations

¹⁵⁹Harrison, 117.

with the Shah. BPM tried, unsuccessfully, to unite with *Jebh-e Vahdat Baluch* (Baluch Unity Front), another group with a tribal basis.

Several Sardars who had collaborated closely with the Shah, like Karim Bakhsh Saidi, a former member of the Shah's Majlis (Parliament), approached U.S. and other non-Communist sources to organize guerrilla activity in Baluchistan¹⁶⁰ in 1979 and 1980. According to Baluchi nationalist Hosseinbor, by early 1982 an estimated 3,000 Baluch, most "accused of belonging to the Baluch separatist movement," had crossed the border to seek refuge in Pakistan.¹⁶¹ A new Baluchi Marxist group, *Baluch Raj-e zorombesh* (Baluch People's Movement) was formed in Pakistan by pro-Moscow elements of the BPDO, and called for the "recognition of the right of self-determination for all peoples of Iran including the right to separation" in a "federal-socialist" Iran.¹⁶² These groups were underground and in fact disappeared with the consolidation of Tehran's revolutionary regime. Because of their lack of mass support, they were never able to challenge the state's power in Baluchistan.

In sum, Baluchi nationalism in Iran never acquired the

¹⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 118-119.

¹⁶¹Hosseinbor, 171.

¹⁶²Baluch Raj-e Zorombesh, 1983, *Barnameh-i Khod Mokhtari-e Baluch Rej-e Zorombesh Baray-e Baluchistan-e Iran*, [the platform of Baluch People's Movement for self-determination of Iranian Baluchistan], (text in Persian), Pakistan, 5, mentioned in Hosseinbor, 172.

same momentum as it did in Pakistan. New nationalist and leftist groups established after 1979 were small elite circles which did not enjoy popular Baluch support because of either their anti-religious ideology or their foreign connections. Some of these groups were led by former Baluch Sardars who worked with the Shah's regime and could not legitimize themselves in the context of the country's new revolutionary environment. It is also necessary to mention that the sporadic armed clashes between *Pasdaran* (Revolutionary Guard) and Iranian Gendarmes did not have much political importance. These are mostly the result of drug smuggling activities of Baluchi armed gangs active in the eastern part of Iranian Baluchistan, near Afghanistan.¹⁶³

AZARBAIJAN

Iranian Azarbaijan is the largest segment of the territories which presently bear the name Azarbaijan. The present Azarbaijan Republic -- the former Soviet Republic of Azarbaijan, historically known as Aran -- was part of Iran

¹⁶³Facing unemployment and poor economic conditions, smuggling drug and other merchandise has become a popular activity for revenues in Baluchistan. According to Qurab, Iranian Baluchistan is Iran's paradise of opium and heroin. Ninety percent of the population, he argues, rely on smuggling to earn their living. See Kamal ol-Din Qurab, *Baluchistan Yadegar-e Matrood-e Qorun*, [Baluchistan: the abandoned remnant of past centuries] (text in Persian), (Tehran: Kayhan, 1985), 87-95, quoted in Farzanfar, *Ethnic Groups and the State: Azari, Kurd, and the Baluch of Iran*, 445-449.

before Tsarist Russia's conquest of the area during the Irano-Russian wars (1812-1828). The result of those wars was a disastrous political and territorial defeat for Iran. Aran became part of the Russian Empire from the Russian conquest in 1828 until the October Revolution of 1917. In the aftermath of the revolution, an independent state called Azarbaijan was declared, though this was forcibly reintegrated into the modern Soviet Union in 1920.¹⁶⁴ It was only in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 that the northern territory finally regained its independence.

Azarbaijan is located in northwestern Iran, sharing borders with Turkey in the west and Armenia and the Azarbaijan Republic in the north. In terms of regional administration, Iranian Azarbaijan was traditionally divided into two provinces of Eastern and Western Azarbaijan,¹⁶⁵ and in 1992, Eastern Azarbaijan was itself divided into two provinces, one called Ardabil and the other retaining the former name of

¹⁶⁴See Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905-1920: The shaping of National Identity in a Muslim Community*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 165-190.

¹⁶⁵In the first decade of the 20th century, Azarbaijan, with Khorasan, Kirman-Baluchistan, and Fars, was one the four administrative regions (Eyalat) of Iran. In 1937, Iran was divided into 10 provinces, in which eastern and western Azarbaijan were the third and the fourth Iranian provinces. In 1960 Iran was divided into 14 provinces, but no change made with respect to Azarbaijan. See Muhammad Javad Mashkour, *Nazari be Tarikh-e Azarbaijan Va Asar-e Bastani Va Jami'at Shenasi An*, [A look at the history of Azarbaijan, its ancient monuments and its demography], (text in Persian), (Tehran: Bahman, 1970), 57.

Eastern Azarbaijan. It is not easy to present an accurate population of Iranian Azaris since, in contrast to Baluchis and Kurds, they are geographically dispersed all over Iran, and have, through marriage, been so intermingled with other Iranians (especially Persians), that it is difficult to present clear-cut geographical boundaries between Azaris and others. While Eastern Azarbaijan, with Tabriz as its capital, is mainly an Azari-dominated province with a population of 4,114,084¹⁶⁶ Western Azarbaijan with a total population of 1,971,677,¹⁶⁷ has an important percentage of Kurds and some Assyrians and Armenians in its western and southern regions. Altogether, it is estimated that of 60 million Iranians, 12 to 15 million are Azari.¹⁶⁸

In sharp contrast to Baluchistan, Azarbaijan is one of the most important agricultural and industrial centres in Iran. It ranks first among all Iranian regions in terms of all agricultural products except rice.¹⁶⁹ Aside from its important oil refinery, which supplies much of the fuel for other western provinces, Tabriz is a manufacturing centre for automobiles and tractors. Overall, Azarbaijan, especially the

¹⁶⁶ This is according to 1986 census. See Markaz-e Amar-e Iran, *Salnameh-e Amari-e Keshvar*, 1368, 32.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ See David Nissman, 2; and Farzanfar, 48.

¹⁶⁹ Rabi'e Badei, *Geographya-e Mofassal-e Iran*, [A detailed geography of Iran] (text in Persian), (Tehran, 1983), 458.

eastern part, has long been a settled and mostly urban area, boasting a number of economically and politically important cities. Indeed, Tabriz played a significant role in the Constitutional Revolution of 1906 and the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Before the rise of Tehran, Tabriz was the most important economic and trade centre in Iran since it acted as the central point for trade with the Ottoman Empire, the Mediterranean and Russia. It is also believed that Azarbaijani traders were heavily involved in developing Tehran into a major commercial centre, and they maintain a strong influence there today.¹⁷⁰

Except for the question of language, Azaris share with Persians many other commonalities, including Shi'ism and cultural heritage. Despite the fact that the question of Turkish language in Azarbaijan has been a factor of distinctness vis-a-vis the dominant Farsi- (Persian-) speaking Iranians, this has not prevented many Azari and other Iranians from considering the people of Azarbaijan culturally and historically Iranian. In fact, the question of language has been, and still is, a factor of controversy between Azari nationalists in the former Soviet Azarbaijan (the present Azarbaijan Republic), and Iranian Azarbaijan.

The dominant view is that the present Turkish dialects

¹⁷⁰Farhad Malekafzali, and Robert G.Moser, "Primordial and Instrumental Identities of Ethnic Collective Movements: The Case of Azari Nationalism," *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism*, 19, nos. 1-2 (1992): 34-35.

replaced the native language of Azarbaijan during the continuous waves of Turk invasions from Central Asia (Seljuqs to the Mongols) from the eleventh to the thirteenth century. It is argued that before these invasions the language of Azarbaijan was a branch of Iranian called *Azari*. It was Ahmad Kasravi, an Iranian historian and linguist from Azarbaijan, who elaborated on this issue, and many others, both Iranians and Western scholars, were attracted to his argumentation. In his classic work of 1925¹⁷¹ based on extensive Arabic, Persian and other historical sources, Kasravi argued that the language of Azarbaijan has been *Azari Pahlavi*, a remnant of the language of Sasanid Iran. The present Turkish was gradually introduced to Azarbaijan by Turk immigrants from Central Asia during the Seljuq period and the Mongol invasion. The reign of the Mongol Ilkhanid and Timurid dynasties facilitated the replacement of *Azari* by the present Turkish,¹⁷² while the rise of the Safavid dynasty consolidated the transformation.

Berengian, an *Azari* researcher, challenges the use of the term "*Azari*" for referring to the present Turkish language. She stresses that:

¹⁷¹Ahmad Kasravi, *Azari Ya Zaban-e Bastan-e Azarbaijan*. Soon after the publication of Kasravi's book, Sir Denis Wright, the famous English orientalist and diplomat, translated it into English and published it by "The Royal Asiatic Society." The famous *Encyclopedia of Islam* paid much attention to Kasravi's theory and used it in its post-1930 editions. See Ahmad Kasravi, *Zendegani-i Man*, [my life] (text in Persian), (Tehran: Now Bonyad, 1956), 245.

¹⁷²*Ibid.*, 17.25.

Historical and linguistic studies of the present century have definitely determined that by "Azeri", the early writers meant the post-Islamic, pre-Mongol Iranian language of Azerbaijan. Southwestern Oghuz-Turkic or what we today call Azeri-Turkic was the language of those Turks who, in the course of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, migrated into Azerbaijan and some other parts of Iran as well as the areas comprising today's Soviet Azerbaijan, Eastern Anatolia and parts of today's Iraq. Azeri-Turkic did not take its definite form as a literary idiom until after Mongol invasion in the early thirteenth century, when various other Turkic tribes joined the already settled and assimilated Oghuz Turks; the fresh influx of Turkic elements in the area enabled Azeri-Turkic to replace the original "Azeri", or Medic, the older Iranian language of the area.¹⁷³

The strong historical evidence behind this theory has made it so popular that some Iranian Azaris have proposed the promotion of the Persian language to replace the imposed Turkish Azari. Beside Kasravi who strongly proposed the replacement of what he called "half-languages" like Turkish, Arabic, Kurdish, and Gilaki by Farsi as a national language,¹⁷⁴ Dr. Taqi Arani, an Iranian Azarbaijani and the founding father of Communist movements in Iran, insisted that Azarbaijanis wished to learn Farsi which they had forgotten as a result of successive Mongol invasions.¹⁷⁵ Sayed Hasan Taqi

¹⁷³Sakina Berengian, *Azeri and Persian Literary Works in Twentieth Century Iranian Azarbaijan*, (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1988), ix.

¹⁷⁴Ahmad Kasravi, "Azerbaijan," in *Karvand-e Kasravi*, (text in Persian) (Tehran: Jibi, 1973), 541.

¹⁷⁵Ervand Abrahamian, "Communism and Communalism in Iran: The Tudah and the Firgah-i Dimukrat," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 1, no. 4 (October 1971):

Zadeh, the famous and controversial modernist Azari intellectual and politician of twentieth century Iran, advocated the adaptation and strengthening of Persian as a means to revitalize the nation.¹⁷⁶

On the other hand, the Pan-Turkist circles of the former Soviet Union argue for the nativeness of Turkic in Azarbaijan and argue that the Turks were living there long before the emergence of Islam. A. M. Mamadov, Abdukarim Alizadeh, and Towfiq Hajeyov, formerly members of the Soviet Academy of Science in Azarbaijan, looked for the roots of the Turkic language and the settlement of the Turks in the centuries before the 'Common Era'.¹⁷⁷ Most Azaris, even those who argue for the promotion of Azari Turkic in Iran, reject such Pan-Turkist views. Referring to the arguments regarding the Turkish origins of Azarbaijan's language, Rahim Raisnya, an Iranian Azari historian writes that "the logic of those who support the Turkish origins of Azarbaijan in B. C. Millennia is based on vague and invalid data sources."¹⁷⁸

A similar controversy exists with respect to the origins of the very name Azarbaijan. In this regard, there are three

297-298.

¹⁷⁶Farzanfar, 237.

¹⁷⁷Rahim Raisnya, *Azarbaijan dar Sayr-i Tarikh-i Iran: Az Aghaz Ta Islam*, [Azarbaijan in Iranian history: from the beginning to Islam] (text in Persian), (Tabriz: Nima, 1990), 864-880.

¹⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 880.

views. The first view holds that Azarbaijan comes from the term Azar which means fire in Persian. The region was one of the main strongholds of Zoroastrianism and the religious holy centre of ancient Iran. Not only was Zaratostra born in Azarbaijan but also many Zoroastrian temples (fire places), like the famous Azargoshnasb,¹⁷⁹ were built there.¹⁸⁰ Thus, the toponym "Azarbaijan" means, literally, "land of fires" and refers to the perpetual flames which intrigued Greek and Arab geographers in ancient times.¹⁸¹ Famous Islamic historians like Tabari and Yaqut Hamavi, contemporary Zoroastrian historian Faravashi and some Western Iranologists support this view.

The second view rejects this idea and attributes the name to the Iranian hero Atropate, who resisted the Greek invasion led by Alexander the Great. It is believed that Atropate and his descendants ruled northeastern Iran for a long time.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹According to Ibne Khurdad, the Islamic historian of the tenth century, this was the most famous Zoroastrian temple in ancient Iran and most Sasanid kings used to have their coronation and start their kingdom at this place. See Afshar Sistani, *Moghaddameh*, 61.

¹⁸⁰Bahram Faravashi, *Iranvaij* [Iran as mentioned in Avesta, the Zoroastrian holy book] (text in Persian), (Tehran,), 151-154.

¹⁸¹David B. Nissman, *The Soviet Union and Iranian Azarbaijan*, 11.

¹⁸²There are two other views on this issue: that he compromised with the Greeks and was appointed as the governor or "strap" of the northeastern Iran; and that he was in fact a Greek who became the vassal of Alexander in this region. See Farzanfar, 39.

Because of him, the region was called *Atropategan*. Later on, during the Islamic period, it was changed to *Azərbayjan*.¹⁸³ Since *Atropate* means "protected by fire" this second view comes close to the first.

The third view belongs to the Pan-Turkist circles of the former Soviet *Azərbayjan* like Seyyedov who were looking to find a Turkish meaning for *Azərbayjan* as the "blessed and strong father."¹⁸⁴ The first and the second views are more popular in the literature. Most Iranian writers and historians, Azari and Persian, have asserted the first two views in order to invalidate the Soviet claims as to the uniqueness and distinct national identity of the people of *Azərbayjan*.¹⁸⁵

Historically, *Azərbayjan* has been part of Iran throughout its history. During the Medes and Achaemenids dynasties, it was the northern part of the kingdom. Pirniya calls *Azərbayjan* "the centre of Iranianness against Greekness" during the Greek Selucid dynasty in Iran.¹⁸⁶ For Sasanids, *Azərbayjan* had both strategic and religious importance, since it was not only the stronghold of Zoroastrianism, which became

¹⁸³Many Iranian and Western scholars, such as Ahmad Kasravi, Ebrahim Pourdavood, Muhammad Moin, Ali Akbar Dehkhuda, Minorsky, Girshman, Barthold, and Hertsfeld support this view.

¹⁸⁴Raisnya, *Nazari be Tarikh-e Azərbayjan*, 98-100.

¹⁸⁵Farzanfar, 39.

¹⁸⁶Hasan Pirniya, *Iran-e Bastan* [the ancient Iran] (text in Persian), (Tehran: Donyaye Ketab, 1983), 2623.

the state religion under the Sasanids, but was also one of their main military bases against the Roman Empire with which they were at war for several decades.¹⁸⁷

Azarbaijan was part of the Islamic Caliphate in the period between Arab invasion and the rise of local Iranian dynasties. In this period, however, some important political movements against the Caliphate, such as the *Babak Khurramdin* revolt, occurred in Azarbaijan.¹⁸⁸ Azarbaijan was reintegrated into Iran under the Ghaznavids, and the Seljuqs, but in the aftermath of the Mongol invasion, Azarbaijan was the capital of the Mongol Ilkhanid dynasty. It was Hulagu Khan who, with the advice of his Iranian Vazir (prime minister) Nasir al-Din Toosi, invaded Baghdad, and by killing Caliph Al Mu'tasim in 1258, put an end to the Abbasid Arab Caliphate.

Azarbaijan found its lasting historical significance when the Safavid dynasty took power in Iran in 1501. Originally from Azarbaijan, Safavid declared Shi'ism the state religion in Iran. From the Saljuqs (1050) to the end of Qajars in 1921[-24], Iran was ruled for most parts by dynasties of

¹⁸⁷There were exhausting wars between Iran and Rome, and later between Iran and Byzantium which continued throughout the Sasanid period. See Donald N. Wilber, *Iran: Past and Present*, 33-36.

¹⁸⁸Babak was a Zoroastrian who led the popular revolt against the Arab rulers in Azarbaijan in the early days Arab rule in Iran. He was killed by the Caliph's forces.

Turkic origins.¹⁸⁹ Azarbaijan, and in particular its capital Tabriz, was the residence of Qajar princes. It was the nation's most important economic and trade centre, and the military stronghold of Iran in its war with Ottoman Empire and Russia. While in the nineteenth century the Qajars chose Tehran as their capital, Tabriz still maintained its importance. Tabriz played a vital role in Iranian Constitutional Revolution and its defence against the last Qajar Shah, Muhammad Ali, who, with the support of Russia, bombarded the Iranian Parliament in 1911. The resistance of Tabriz, as Cottam put it, revitalized liberal nationalists everywhere in Iran and was indirectly responsible for Muhammad Ali's abdication.¹⁹⁰ It was only during Pahlavi rule (1921-1979) that Tehran gained supremacy over Tabriz. It is also interesting that the most ardent Pan Iranists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century -- Ahmad Talib Zadeh (Talibov), Fath Ali Akhon Zadeh (Akhondov), Ahmad Kasravi, and Hasan Taqi Zadeh -- were all natives of Azarbaijan.

The Azari contribution to Iran is not restricted only to economic and political matters. The role of Azaris in the spread and the promotion of Iranian culture -- and in particular, Persian literature -- is remarkable. It is noteworthy to recall that many classical and modern Persian

¹⁸⁹The Zand, a Kurdish dynasty (1750-1796), was an exception. It is believed that Nadir Shah, the founder of Afsharid dynasty (1729-1747), was also a Kurd from Khorasan.

¹⁹⁰Richard Cottam, *Nationalism in Iran*, 121.

literary works in the realm of poetry have been produced by Azari Iranians. Such figures include classics like Nizami Ganjavi, Khaghani Shirvani and Saeb Tabrizi. Indeed, the latter was the founder of the Indian Style in Persian poetry. In the contemporary era this contribution is more remarkable. Iraj Mirza of Tabriz (1874-1925) is considered "possibly the most brilliant figure of Persian poetry, not only of the constitutional period but of the twentieth century in general."¹⁹¹ Muhammad Hussein Shariar (1906-1986) had a comparable position. He always reminded Azari and non-Azari Iranians not to forget that Azarbaijan has been not merely an inseparable part of Iran, but in fact "its head."¹⁹² His importance is all the more noteworthy when one considers the pressures and encouragement of the Soviet Pan-Turkist Azaris for him to create Turkic Azari nationalistic poems, though Shahriar never did accept that Azarbaijan could have a distinct identity without Iran. Indeed, Parvin E'tesami (1906-1941), originally an Azari from Tabriz and the popular poet of humanistic and philosophical poems, is considered the greatest female poet of Iranian history.

With such contributions to Iranian political and cultural life, Azaris have rarely considered themselves distinct from Iran. According to Higgins, the Turkic-speaking

¹⁹¹Berengian, *Azari and Persian Literary Works*, 86.

¹⁹²See Asghar Fardi, "Shahriar va Adabiyyat-e Hasrat," [Shahriar and the literature of lament] (text in Persian), in *Kayhan Havaee*, no. 1050 (September 1993): 4-5.

Azarbaijanis are "a well integrated linguistic minority"¹⁹³ in Iran. The Turkish speaking dynasties that ruled Iran for many generations have contributed to the process of integration.¹⁹⁴ There is notable agreement in the literature that Azarbaijanis do not see themselves as a separate nation but rather identify closely with Iran.¹⁹⁵ Nevertheless, this does not mean that Azarbaijan has been devoid of any separatist or autonomist movements.

The Rise of Azari Autonomist/Separatist Movements

The short periods of the two World Wars in the twentieth century witnessed political unrest and the rise of autonomous/separatist movements in Iranian Azarbaijan. During both periods northwestern Iran was under occupation by foreign armies. However, while there was no clear demand for autonomy in the case of Sheikh Muhammad Khiabani (1920-21), in the second episode (1945-1946), the Azarbaijan Democratic Party demanded autonomy from Tehran and took a clear step toward separation by declaring an Azarbaijan Democratic Republic.

Azarbaijan was under tremendous socio-political and

¹⁹³Patricia Higgins, "Minority-State Relations in Contemporary Iran," *Iranian Studies*, 17 (Winter 1984): 59.

¹⁹⁴Farhad Kazemi, "Ethnicity and Iranian Peasantry," 213.

¹⁹⁵Leonard Binder, *Iran: Political Development in a Changing Society*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), 160-61; Cottam, *Nationalism in Iran*, 27, 119, 131; Katouzian, *The Political economy of Modern Iran*, 149; and Wimbush, "Divided Azarbaijan," 74-76.

economic pressure since the volatile years of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution in 1906 and the socio-political unrest during the resistance against the counter-revolutionary activities of Muhammad Ali Shah and Russia in 1908-1909. This situation was worsened by a wave of foreign military occupation, first by Russia after 1909, and then by the Ottomans during World War I. During these years, the central government in Tehran was too weak to have an effective presence in Azarbaijan. In fact, Shoja' al-Dowleh, the governor of Azarbaijan from 1909 to 1914, was no more than a Russian puppet.¹⁹⁶ The Russian troops who had been in the region since 1909 had to withdraw on the eve of the War in 1914. This gave Turkish Ottoman troops the opportunity to fill the Russians' place.¹⁹⁷

The October Revolution of 1917 created new situations. The October Revolution was welcomed in Iran in general and in Azarbaijan in particular, as Lenin had declared all colonial treaties with Iran, such as that of 1907, null and void. It was in the aftermath of the Ottoman collapse in 1918 and political unrest in Tehran over the Anglo-Persian agreement of 1919 that Khiabani's movement got momentum in Azarbaijan. Indeed, not only in Azarbaijan, but all over Iran, there were

¹⁹⁶Richard Cottam, *Nationalism in Iran*, 122.

¹⁹⁷Rose Greaves, "Iranian Relations with Great Britain and British India, 1898-1921," *Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 7, 422.

protests against this treaty.¹⁹⁸

The Khiabani Movement and Azadistan: In the absence of directives from Tehran, Sheikh Muhammad Khiabani assumed leadership in Tabriz. Khiabani, an ex-clergy activist in the Constitutional Revolution, was a member of the second Majlis (the Iranian parliament) in 1909-1911 and belonged to the Democrat Faction, a liberal nationalist minority party in the Majlis.¹⁹⁹ For a short period he lived in Caucasia during the Russian occupation of Azarbaijan and also was banished by the Ottomans. He launched a harsh attack against the Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919 and criticised Tehran's dependence on foreign powers. On April 10, 1920 he openly broke with the Tehran government over this agreement.

By forming a group called *Firgheh Democrat-e Azarbaijan* (Democratic Faction of Azarbaijan)²⁰⁰ Khiabani managed to control Azarbaijan's affairs and defy Tehran's orders. In

¹⁹⁸This agreement provided for extensive financial and military assistance to Iran, under the supervision of British officials. In the preamble Iranian independence and territorial integrity was guaranteed, but the terms of the agreement clearly indicated that Iran would enter a protectorate status in all but name. See Sir Percy Sykes, *A History of Persia*, (London: Macmillan, 1963), 520-524. On Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919 see William J. Olson, "The Genesis of the Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919," in Elie Kedourie and Sylvia Haim, eds., *Towards a Modern Iran: Studies in Thought, Politics and Society*, 185-217.

¹⁹⁹Cottam, 122.

²⁰⁰Many students of Iranian politics, have translated "firgheh" into Party, while its real meaning is faction. Party is, however, the English translation of "hizb."

June 22 1920, the Democratic Faction passed a resolution to establish a government. The next day a government was formed headed by Khiabani and the name of the Iranian Azarbaijan was changed into "Azadisetan" (the land of liberty).²⁰¹ According to Ali Azari, for Khiabani and his Democratic movement Azarbaijan had always been the heart of liberation movements in Iran and the creation of Azadistan was the first step of spreading liberty all over Iran.²⁰² Iranian nationalists had to think twice and suspect Khiabani's aims when he refused to negotiate with Mushir al-Dowleh Pirniya, a liberal nationalist who replaced Vosoogh al-Dowleh's government which signed the Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919. This defiance made Azaris like Ahmad Kasravi criticize Khiabani,²⁰³ while Tehran's response was to dispatch a division of Cossack military forces into Azarbaijan. The factional disagreement in Khiabani's Democratic Faction, the hesitance of Azaris to support him, and the alliance between the Shahsevan tribal forces and Tehran led to the collapse of the Khibani movement. Facing

²⁰¹David N. Nissman, *The Soviet Union and Iranian Azerbaijan*, 21.

²⁰²Ali Azari, S., *Qiyam-e Sheikh Muhammad-e Khiabani Dar Tabriz*, [the revolt of Sheikh Muhammad Khiabani in Tabriz] (text in Persian), (Tehran: Safi Ali Shah, 1965), 156.

²⁰³Kasravi, a member of Khiabani's Democratic Faction criticised Khibani's policies before the declaration of Azadistan. See Kasravi, *Zendegani Man*, 86-90; also see Kasravi, *Tarikh-e Hejdah Saleh Azarbaijan*, 878.

growing opposition within Azarbaijan,²⁰⁴ he was killed during the Cossacks' arrival in Tabriz in September of 1920, and his movement collapsed immediately.

The contemporary Pan-Turkists of the Azarbaijan Republic consider Khiabani's movement a symbol of Azari nationalism. However, many Iranian Azaris and students of Iranian politics such as Kasravi, Raisniya, Cottam, and Entessar, disagree with this view. Even Ahmad Kasravi, who resented Khiabani's policies, has defended him as an Iranian nationalist. According to Kasravi, changing the name of Azarbaijan to Azadistan by Khiabani was a deliberate strategy to prevent any confusion of Iranian Azarbaijan with the newly created Soviet Republic of Azarbaijan.²⁰⁵ Khibani, like other Iranian Azaris, did not welcome the adoption of the name Azarbaijan for the northern territories which were historically called Aran, not Azarbaijan.

As mentioned earlier, the historical Azarbaijan is the present Iranian Azarbaijan. Famous Islamic, Arab and Iranian geographers and historians such as Ibn Faqih, Ibn Hawqal, Al Muqaddasi (a tenth-century traveller), Yaqut al-Hamawi (the thirteenth-century geographer), and the anonymous tenth-century geographical work, *Hudud al-Alam*, have called Aran the area in the north of the Aras (Araxes) River where the present

²⁰⁴Louise L. Fawcett *Iran and The Cold War: The Azerbaijan Crisis of 1946*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), 12.

²⁰⁵Kasravi, *Tarikhe Hijdah Saleh*, 874.

Azarbaijan Republic is located. According to them, Azarbaijan was located in the southern flank of the Aras River, where the present Iranian Azarbaijan is. Aran was also called Albania of the Caucasia.²⁰⁶

In fact, Khiabani chose Azadistan to distance himself from the new regime in Baku.²⁰⁷ According to the Iranian Azari historian, Rahim Raisnya,²⁰⁸ Khiabani strongly rejected the Pan-Turkist ideas of *Hezb-i Ittehad-e Islam*²⁰⁹ (the party for the unity of Islam) and its call for the spread of Azari Turkish instead of Persian during the Ottoman military presence in Tabriz. Supporting this interpretation, Cottam points out that Khiabani "was a cultured man with a deep love for Iranian history and traditions, and nothing in his early career suggests that he had ever entertained any Azarbaijani separatist ideas."²¹⁰ As a matter of fact, Khiabani never

²⁰⁶For a good account of this issue, see Touraj Atabaki, *Azerbaijan: Ethnicity and Autonomy in Iran After The Second World War*, (New York: St Martin, 1993), 7-9.

²⁰⁷Younes P. Bonab, "Tabriz in Perspective: A Historical Analysis of the Current Struggle of Iranian Peoples," *RIPEH*, II (1978): 14; also see Tadeusz Swiettochowsky, *Russian Azerbaijan; 1905-1920: The Shaping of National Identity in a Muslim Community*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 187 .

²⁰⁸See Rahim Raisnya and Abdul Hussein Nahid, *Dow Mobarez-e Jonbesh-e Mashrooteh* [Two combatants of the Constitutional Movement] (text in Persian), (Tehran: Agah, 1976), 235-40.

²⁰⁹This party was formed by the Young Turks before World War I in order to encourage the Muslims' support for the ottoman Caliphate.

²¹⁰Cottam, 122.

expressed any Pan-Azərbayajani ideas during his life.

Azərbayajian Democratic Republic (1945-46): One of the consequences of World War II and the occupation of Iran by Russian, British forces in the aftermath of Germany's invasion into the Soviet Union in June 1941 was the removal of Reza Shah by allied forces because of his apparent affection for Germany. On August 25, 1941 the Red Army moved into northern Iran. At the same time Great Britain, acting to protect its oil interests, occupied southern Iran. Pische Vari took the leadership of an Azari separatist movement and issued the manifesto the ADP²¹¹ (Azerbaijan Democratic Party) on September 3, 1945.²¹² Two days later, the Azarbayajani branch of the Iranian Communist Party (Tudeh Party) merged with it.²¹³ The Azari Turkish newspaper *Azarbayajian* became the new party's official organ. In the first congress of the

²¹¹It was called, following Khiabani's movement of 1920, *Firghe Democrate-i Azarbayajian*, the real English translation of which is The Azarbayajian Democratic "Faction." In the literature, however, it is mistakenly called "Party", as it is the case for Khiabani's movement.

²¹²For this manifesto see Jami, (Iran's Peoples Freedom Movement), *Gozashteh Cheragh-e Rah-e Ayandeh Ast*, [The past is the light which shows the future path] (text in Persian), (Tehran: Nilloofar, 1978), 251-254.

²¹³Despite this alliance, there were some disagreements between the two parties on the question of national integration, Azarbayajian autonomy, and Iranian national unity. For different views on Azarbayajian Democratic Party and Tudeh relations, see Ervand Abrahamian, "Communism and communalism in Iran: The Tudah and the Firgah-i Dimukrat," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 1, no. 4 (October 1970): 291-316.

Azarbaijan Democratic Party in October 1945, the political demands of the Azarbaijan Democratic Party were elaborated and approved. Among them, autonomy for Azarbaijan, democracy for Iran, the formal use of Azari Turkish in schools and government institutions, appointment of Azaris for administrating internal affairs, and the formation of an Azari military force were the most important.²¹⁴ A national Assembly was formed in December 1945 and its members elected Pishe Vari as the prime minister of the autonomous Republic of Azarbaijan. Soon after, a new Democratic Army was created by the Azarbaijan Democratic Party, and the force started to occupy Azarbaijani cities such as Mianeh and Ardabil. In Ardabil, Soviet forces overtly supported the Azarbaijan Democratic Party army, which otherwise could not have resisted Shahseven tribal forces defending the city.²¹⁵

While the Azarbaijan Democratic Party clarified that its aim was autonomy rather than separation from Iran, Tehran's reaction was to declare the Azarbaijan Democratic Party illegal and dispatch the Iranian Army to restore order and government authority in Azarbaijan. The Soviets disagreed

²¹⁴For more details see Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 400-401.

²¹⁵See Najaf Quli Persian, *Marg Bood, Bazgasht Ham Bood: Tarikhche Ferghehe Democrate Azarbaijan Va Hezbe Kumlehe Kurdistan* [there was death, but there was also the return: the history of Azerbaijan Democratic Party and Kurdish Komala Party] (text in Persian) (Tehran: Chap, 1948), 27, 82-87, 115-116.

with and prevented this military move. At the same time, as the result of a series of negotiations in Tehran and Tabriz, some concessions were made to the Azarbaijan Democratic Party.²¹⁶ After the Soviet's withdrawal, and in a series of armed operations in November-December 1946, Azarbaijan was controlled by the central government. In Tabriz, little resistance was encountered, and most of the Azarbaijan Democratic Party's leaders including Pische Vari fled across the Soviet border.

While the earlier reforms of the Azarbaijan Democratic Party brought about significant popular support, later economic problems and the fact that the Azarbaijan Democratic Republic was formed under foreign occupation led Azarbaijanis to withhold their support from the Azarbaijan Democratic Party. In fact, most Azaris eagerly welcomed the Iranian army in Tabriz. According to Cottam: "even in Tabriz, the capital of Pische Vari's government, prior to the arrival of the army, the populace rose and executed all the Democratic officials they could lay their hands on."²¹⁷ A western eyewitness of the events describes the extent of popular welcome of the

²¹⁶Azarbaijan Democratic Party, however, did not accept those concessions: among them the use of Azari Turkish language in schools, recognition of the right of Azarbaijan provincial Council to elect its officials. See Fawcett, 61-62. For more details see Faramarz Fatemi, *The U.S.S.R. in Iran: the Background History of Russian and Anglo-American Conflict in Iran, its effect on Iranian Nationalism, and the fall of Shah*, (London: A.S. Barnes, 1980), 135-138.

²¹⁷Richard Cottam, *Nationalism in Iran*, 128.

Iranian and Shahseven tribal forces:

I was in the first car which travelled north from Mianeh after the campaign, and I was in Tabriz twenty-four hours before the army arrived. Except in France in 1944, I have never seen such violent and spontaneous enthusiasm.... Mob hysteria is catching in towns but not in villages, and it was the villages that I saw the wildest excitement over the turn of the events. I believe there was the most genuine pleasure possible on the part of the people at the termination of the Russian-sponsored regime.²¹⁸

After the collapse of the Azarbaijan Democratic Republic, Azarbaijan did not experience any organized separatist or autonomous movement. In fact, Azarbaijan supported Mussadiq's movement against Britain and the Shah in 1950-53 more ardently than any other Iranian province. It was also Tabriz that, following the lead of the holy city of Qum, set the fire of Islamic Revolution in 1978. Other Iranian provinces followed Tabriz's pattern until the collapse of the Shah's regime in February of 1979. During the early days of the Revolution a new party, *Hizb-e Khalq-e Musalman* (the Party of Muslim People), was formed by the son of Ayatollah Shari'at Madari, one of the high ranking Azari Ulama of Qum. This party resorted to Azaris for political support against the dominant Islamic Republic Party, led by Ayatollah Khomeini's disciples such as Beheshti, Rafsenjani, and Ali Khamenei. Azaris did not react when the Party of Muslim People was dissolved by government proclamation in 1980, and even when Ayatollah

²¹⁸Christopher Sykes, "Russia and Azerbaijan," *Soundings*, (February 1947), 51-52, quoted in Cottam, 128.

Shariat Madari was isolated by Ayatollah Khomeini. Altogether, Iranian Azarbaijan has not witnessed any significant political movement for the cause of separation or autonomy after the collapse of the Azarbaijan Democratic Republic of 1945-46.

Conclusion

As the socio-political and historical conditions in Iran show, the rise of separatist or autonomist movements, or ethnic nationalism according to the social scientists, is a modern phenomenon which has its roots in the twentieth century. Before this, Iran had never experienced the formation of political nationalist movements among its religio-linguistic minorities. In other words, the existence of linguistic and religious diversity was not a factor for the formation of political movements which claimed distinct cultural and political identities in Iranian Kurdistan, Azarbaijan and Baluchistan.

In a comparative perspective, the scope and the intensity of so-called ethnic nationalism have not been identical in all of these three areas. Azarbaijan, except for a short period during World War II, did not witness any serious political movements toward autonomy or independence. In contrast to both Azarbaijan and Kurdistan, Baluchistan has not had a strong nationalist movement. Of these three cases, only the

Kurdish political movements have been able to maintain a sort of continuity with respect to their political demands.

As far as the relations between these three regions with other Iranians are considered, religion and language play important roles. While both the Kurds and Baluchis have more relations with Persians by virtue of shared language, Azaris, whose language is totally different from Persian, have been even more integrated into socio-political life in Iran. This indicates that religious divisions between Shi'ite and Sunni groups have played a more significant role in perpetuating differentiation within Iranian society.

This factor by itself, however, cannot provide a sufficient theoretical framework to explain the rise of nationalist movements in Azarbaijan, Baluchistan and Kurdistan. Such explanation requires the application of a much more sophisticated approach to the question of nationalism in general and ethnicity and ethnic nationalism in particular. This will form the core of my discussions in the next chapter. I will critically discuss the existing theories of ethnicity and nationalism to see to what extent they explain the rise of nationalist trends in Iranian Kurdistan, Azarbaijan and Baluchistan in the twentieth century. After such a critical appraisal of the existing theories of ethnicity and nationalism, I will present a theoretical framework with respect to the peculiarities and the historical specificities of the Iranian context to explain the rise of

the autonomist or separatist political movements in Kurdistan, Baluchistan and Azarbaijan.

Chapter Four:

Theories of Ethnicity and Nationalism:

Toward a Theoretical Framework

The main subject of this chapter is a discussion of the major theoretical frameworks about the politicization of linguistic, religious or racial differences and the rise of the phenomenon known as "ethnic" nationalism. Such a discussion is necessary for explaining the rise of nationalist tendencies among Iranian religio-linguistic groups. As discussed in chapter three, the politicization of socio-cultural differences based on language or religion was mainly a legacy of the twentieth century.

Before that, the Iranian socio-political structure was mainly tribal, and different religio-linguistic groups such as the Kurds, Baluchis, Arab, Turks, or Turkmen were organized more around different religious and tribal identities rather than political phenomena like Kurdish, Baluchi or Azari nationalism. Socio-political differentiations based on tribal loyalties tended to divide the same linguistic or religious groups into rival tribes which were competing over economic resources and political power. It was, for instance, usual for a Kurdish or Baluchi tribe to ally with the central government or a non-Kurdish and non-Baluchi tribe against

another Kurdish or Baluchi tribal group.

As I discussed in chapter 3, since the mid-twentieth century Iran witnessed the emergence of new political movements in Kurdistan, Azarbaijan, and Baluchistan. By emphasizing linguistic and, if necessary, religious differences, these movements looked for either territorial and political autonomy or independence. To give sufficient explanation for the rise of this phenomenon, we need to discuss critically different theoretical arguments in the literature to find an appropriate theoretical framework for explaining the Iranian experience. This chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section, I will discuss the major theoretical arguments on the question of ethnicity and ethnic nationalism. In this critical review, the advantages and the shortcomings of these theories will be discussed with regard to the Iranian context. Given this critical appraisal, in the second section, I will delineate a theoretical framework for explaining the politicization of linguistic and religious differences and the rise of autonomist or separatist movements in Iran.

I. THEORETICAL DEBATES ON ETHNICITY AND ETHNIC NATIONALISM:

Two main theoretical areas in the study of ethnicity and ethnic nationalism are relevant in discussing the causes of nationalist movements in Iranian Kurdistan, Azarbaijan and

Baluchistan. In one area, there are different schools of thought on the nature of ethnicity and nationalism, and in the other, theoretical controversies on the causes of the politicization of ethnicity dominate. The two main schools of primordialism and instrumentalism represent much of the theoretical debate on the nature of ethnicity and nationalism. In this section, I first discuss these two main views and present a critical evaluation of their credibility regarding the Iranian cases. I will then go on to focus on theories of ethnic mobilization, or the way linguistic, religious or racial differences are politicized.

1. Ethnicity: Primordial or Instrumental?: Students of ethnicity are divided on the nature of ethnicity and nationalism. While primordialists stress that ethnicity and nationalism are age-old phenomena, the instrumentalists (or situationalists/ modernists as some call them) argue that these are the product of modern times, and in particular the last few centuries. The notion of primordialism has been used in the literature to describe the origins and the strength of ethnic attachments. The proponents of primordialism make two claims: they argue that nations and nationalism are perennial, and that they are natural and therefore universal. The term primordialism was originally coined by Edward Shils and developed by Clifford Geertz in the 1950s. Later, the students of ethnicity in other disciplines, like Van Den

Berghe, Masters and Walker Connor contributed new perspectives to the primordial school. Those who emphasize the primordial aspects suggest a link between ethnicity and kinship, together with strong emotional ties which link people who believe in their common ancestry and sometimes, also, their special cosmic destiny. Ethnic identity is seen as a core element in the development of personality, intimately linked with the perception of self, early socialization, language learning and/or religious and political indoctrination.¹

Edward Shils, one of the first social scientists who applied the term Primordialism to ties of kinship, stressed that

modern society is held together by an infinity of personal attachments, moral obligations in concrete contexts, professional and creative pride, individual ambition, primordial affections and a civil sense which is low in many, high in some and moderate in most persons.²

Geertz used the nature of primordial ties to elaborate a view of ethnicity. He expanded the application of this concept beyond kinship to large-scale groups, such as those based on common territory, language, religion, and other customs. In most emerging nations the only bases for delimiting political

¹Anthony H. Richmond, "Ethnic Nationalism: Social Science Paradigms," *International Social Science Journal*, 39, no.1, (1987): 3.

²Edward Shils, "Primordial, Personal, Sacred, and Civil Ties," *British Journal of Sociology*, 8 (1957): 131.

units are blood, language, race locality -- all components of primordial attachments -- so that these of necessity are used to define political groups that are then raised to the level of national politics. These ties are not antithetical to the idea of state but are the bases for power blocs which then compete for state control. Integration occurs through the building of larger and larger units on the basis of original primordial ties. Ethnic blocs then become the functioning units of the nation, and eventually the consciousness of kind or primordial solidarity is extended into the consciousness of the developing order.³

Pierre Van den Berghe applies biosocial theories in examining the place of man in society and the nature of ethnic phenomena. He argues that there are certain universal tendencies in human behaviour such as reference to kin, aggression, domination, and territoriality that cannot be explained by learning alone and which must be understood as part of human nature.⁴ Berghe treats ethnicity and race as extensions of the idiom of kinship which should be understood as an extended and attenuated form of kin selection.⁵ Tribes

³Clifford Geertz, "Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States," in Geertz, ed., *Old Societies and New States*, (New York: Free Press, 1963), 112-114, 154-155.

⁴Pierre Van Den Berghe, *Man in Society: A Biosocial View*, (New York: Elsevier, 1975), 19.

⁵Van den Berghe, "Race and Ethnicity: A Sociobiological Perspective," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 4 (1978): 403.

and ethnic groups, according to Berghe, are both kinship based.⁶ As I discussed in chapter two, Iranian history does not lend much support to the conceptualization of tribal groups as kin-based organizations. Tribes in Iran, as in other parts of the Middle East, are less kinship structures than socio-political formations. For Van den Berghe, ethnic solidarity is an extension of nepotism. He defines a nation as a "politically conscious ethny" and the state as "a collectivity headed by a group of people who exercise power over others." For him, nationalism is an ideology expressed by an ethny that claims the right to statehood by virtue of being an ethny.⁷

Walker Connor, as one of the most important proponents of the primordial school, stresses the political implications of ethnicity as a natural phenomena of human life. He regards "ethnic nationalism" as a particular form of nationalism,⁸ and in his sharp attack on the proponents of modernization and communication theories, he describes the prevailing pattern of contemporary world politics as a process of "nation destroying" rather than "nation building".⁹ Rejecting the

⁶*Ibid.*, 403-404.

⁷Pierre Van Den Berghe, *The Ethnic Phenomena*, (New York: Oxford, Elsevier, 1981), 61.

⁸Walker Connor, "A nation is A Nation, is A State, is An Ethnic Group, is A," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 1, no. 1 (1978).

⁹Walker Connor, "Nation Building or Nation-destroying," *World Politics*, 24. No. 3 (1972).

saliency of the concept of nation-state, he relates the nation to ethnicity, and considers true nationalism as ethnic nationalism.

For Connor, nation is a self-conscious or self-aware ethnic group.¹⁰ He defines nation as "a group of people whose members believe they are ancestrally related. It is the largest group to share such a myth of common descent."¹¹ The real national identity, he explains, is a kindred identity, and "when a non-kindred identity is perceived as in irreconcilable conflict with one's national identity, it is the latter that customarily proves the stronger."¹² Primordialists, in sum, believe that there is nothing new or particularly modern about ethnicity and nationalism, nor is it likely to disappear with any marked alteration of modern conditions.¹³

While primordialism can explain the persistence of ethnic identity over time, it cannot address the issue of why such identity can be differentially distributed at a given moment of time throughout a single group -- a deficiency that primordialists believe is remedied by their focus on social

¹⁰Walker Connor, "The Politics of Ethnonationalism," *Journal of International Affairs*, 27, No. 1 (1973):3.

¹¹Connor, "The Nation and Its Myth," in Anthony D. Smith, ed., *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, (Lieden: E.J. Brill, 1992), 48.

¹²*Ibid.*, 53.

¹³Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Revival in the Modern World*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 12.

circumstances surrounding this identity, or rather, on changing social circumstances.¹⁴ The major problem inherent in the primordial perspective, as Olzak argues, is that the majority of ethnic movements are fundamentally "new", making claims to ethnic traditions that are mythical or that no longer exist.¹⁵ Moreover, as Gupta puts it, a difficulty with primordialism is that it ignores the possibility that an ethnic identity may be felt or adapted for rational as well as affective reasons to preserve one's existence or to pursue advantage through communal action.¹⁶ Primordial theories provide no explanation for the resurgence of ethnic nationalism in the twentieth century or the varieties of factors which have been conducive to their success and failure in different countries.

These are the factors with which the modernist (situational/ instrumental/circumstantial/structural) schools deal and for which they find answers. These alternative approaches frequently provide implicit criticism of the notion

¹⁴George M. Scott "A Re-synthesis of the Primordial and Circumstantial Approaches to Ethnic Group Solidarity: Toward an Explanatory Model", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 13, no. 2 (1990): 149.

¹⁵Susan Olzak, "Ethnicity and Theories of Ethnic Collective Behaviour," *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*, vol. 8 (1985): 65-85.

¹⁶Prasanta Sen Gupta, "Toward Understanding Ethnicity, Ethnic Group and Ethnic Conflict: A Liberal Perspective," in Arun Gosh and Radharaman Chakrabarti, eds., *Ethnonationalism, Indian Experience*, (Calcutta: Chatterjee Publishers, 1991), 10-26.

of primordialism by pointing to the counter examples -- cases of ethnic attachment that vary over time and according to circumstance, hence undermining the contention that such loyalties could be considered to be primordial. For critics, the term primordial is "unsociological, unanalytical, and vacuous."¹⁷ Of course, there is no single modernist/instrumental school. These approaches differ, and range from Marxist perspectives to modernization and rational choice theories. The underlying assumption in these approaches is that ethnic identification is a peripheral loyalty which can be readily manipulated in a rational way for pursuing political and economic goals.¹⁸

Marxist approaches to ethnicity and nationalism differ, but their common point is the attribution of ethnicity and nationalism to the capitalist era. For Wallerstein, not only ethnicity and race, but also nation and nationalism are the products of the capitalist world system, and all are major institutional constructs of historical capitalism.¹⁹ The capitalist world economy has benefited from the presence of

¹⁷Jack, D. Eller, and Reed M. Coughlan, "The Poverty of Primordialism: the Demystification of Ethnic Attachments", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 16, no. 2 (1993): 183.

¹⁸James McKay, "An Explanatory Synthesis of Primordial and Mobilizational Approaches to Ethnic Phenomena", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 5 (October 1982): 396.

¹⁹Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Construction of Peoplehood: Racism, Nationalism, Ethnicity," in Wallerstein and Etienne Balibar, eds., *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, (London: Verso, 1991), 84.

multicultural units (ethno-racial groups) since they have facilitated the expansion and the consolidation of the world capitalist economy.²⁰ Like him, Etienne Balibar,²¹ the famous contemporary French Marxist, attributes the ideology of nation and nationalism to the capitalist and bourgeoisie class. Other Marxist theorists like Michael Reich and Sidney Wilhelm analyze the ethnic phenomenon within the context of the Capitalist mode of production.²²

Among non-Marxist modernist theorists of ethnicity, Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner, and Eric V. Hobsbawm²³ have presented innovative ideas. For Anderson, ethnicity and nationalism have risen as ideologies of modern times with the death of the universal religions and the tradition of monarchy. Indeed, he holds that nationalism is the product of "print capitalism". Nations are *imagined communities* which come to serve the vital psychological as well as economic needs in the peculiar modern conditions of secular

²⁰Wallerstein, *Capitalist World Economy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 81.

²¹Etienne Balibar, "The Nation Form: History and Ideology," in Wallerstein and Balibar, eds., *Race, Nation, Class, Ambiguous Identities*.

²²On these views, see Richard Thompson, *Theories of Ethnicity*, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), 153-172.

²³Hobsbawm's ideas on ethnicity and nationalism brings him close to the Marxists, and in fact some consider him as such.

capitalism.²⁴ Through the printed world, individuals who do not know each other can appear to inhabit the same homogeneous, empty time and an identifiable space belonging to an imagined community and posterity. For Ernest Gellner, nations and nationalism are purely modern phenomena. Pre-modern "agro-literature" societies had no place for nationalism, since their elites and their food-producing masses were always separated along cultural lines, and this type of society was unable to generate an ideology which could overcome this divide.²⁵

The most controversial modernist approach to ethnicity and nationalism has come from the mind of Eric Hobsbawm. In his book *The Invention of Tradition*, he argues that:

...invented traditions are highly relevant to that comparatively recent historical innovations, the 'nation' with its associate phenomena: nationalism, the nation-state, national symbols, histories and the rest. All these rest on exercises in social engineering which are often deliberate and always innovative, if only because historical novelty implies innovation.²⁶

He does not regard the nation as a primary nor as an unchanging social entity. It belongs exclusively to a

²⁴Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (London: Verso, 1983), 17-25.

²⁵Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, (Ithaca: Cornell University press, 1983), 137-143.

²⁶Eric Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983), 13.

particular and historically recent period.²⁷ Like Frederick Bar, Hobsbawm argues that "the genetic approach to ethnicity is plainly irrelevant, since the crucial basis of an ethnic group as a form of social organization is cultural rather than biological."²⁸

The modernist approaches are not free of analytical defects and shortcomings. While they can explain why ethnicity fluctuates over time, they are less able to account for the fact that despite its temporal fluctuations, ethnicity often persists, sometimes over centuries.²⁹ Moreover, most of the Marxist approaches are reductionist to the extent that they tend to explain ethnicity and nationalism solely in terms of economic factors. The record of the ethnic attachment or nationalist trends go well beyond, in contrast to modernist claims, the pre-capitalist and pre-modern era. In contrast to Gellner's claim, nations do not come after nationalism, and it is not the state and nationalism that in all cases make nations. Therefore it is an overgeneralization to state that ethnicity and nation are totally "invented traditions." As John Armstrong³⁰ points out, there have been nations before

²⁷Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1870; Programme: Myth, Reality*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 10.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 63.

²⁹Scott, "A Re-Synthesis of Primordial and Circumstantial Approaches to Ethnic Group Solidarity," 149.

³⁰John A. Armstrong, *Nations Before Nationalism*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982).

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nationalism, and as Anthony Smith puts it, "an older generation of historians, particularly in the Continent, looked for and found nations even in antiquity, among Greeks, Jews, Persians, and Egyptians."³¹

One important difficulty in the modernist approaches, particularly those of the Marxists, Anderson, and sometimes Hobsbawm, is their heavily structuralist perspective and their rejection of the role of human agency in social change. Central to the concepts of "invention" (Hobsbawm) and "imagination" (Anderson) is the idea of social transformation. The role of intellectual narrators and artist-celebrators in such transformations, particularly in the making of nations and nationalism, as Smith argues, is far more circumscribed than these approaches suggest.³² A more important difficulty embedded in the modernist approaches is their ethnocentrism, and their lack of attention to the rise of nations and nationalism in the Third World. The modernists, for instance, disregard the fact that Third World nationalism rarely has much to do with capitalism, and that it is much more an anti-colonial and anti-imperialist form of nationalism. As Chatterjee points out, the most creative results of the nationalist imagination in Asia and Africa are posited not on

³¹Anthony D. Smith, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 73.

³²Anthony D. Smith, "The Nation: Invented, Imagined, Reconstructed," *Millennium*, 20 (1991): 364.

an identity, but on a difference with the modern West.³³

By these critiques, nevertheless, I do not tend to discard the significant analytical and explanatory advantages of modernist approaches. The above discussion indicates that both primordial and modernist theories have something to offer for the analysis of contemporary ethnic nationalism in the world. In fact, while I disagree with primordialists in their insistence on primordial ties as underlying causes of nationalism or ethnonationalism, I also reject Eller's and Coughlan's proposition for "dropping primordialism as a concept from the sociological lexicon."³⁴

To explain, therefore, the rise of regional nationalism in Iran, I suggest a synthesis of the two schools. I argue that while a human being's sense of belonging to racial, linguistic and religious attachments have a pre-modern background and, in some cases, go well beyond it to ancient times, the politicization of such attachments, especially the idea of creating nation-states for religio-linguistic or racial minority groups, has modern roots which go back to the emergence of the Western secular nationalist world order and its universe of political discourse which replaced more universal identities and political institutions.

Some students of ethnicity have in fact such an 'in

³³Partha Chatterjee, "Whose Imagined Community ?," *Millennium*, 20 (1991).

³⁴Eller and Coughlan, "The Poverty of Primordialism," 183.

between' view of ethnicity and nationalism. This tendency is reflected in the works of James McKay, Edward Spicer, and Anthony Smith. In his 'matrix model', McKay stresses that the primordial perspective is useful for understanding the emotional bases of ethnicity and the tenacity of ethnic bonds. However, he discards its utility as a comprehensive theoretical explanation of ethnic phenomenon first because of its "psychological reductionism, which renders it unable to account for social change, and secondly for its disregard of political and economic influence."³⁵ Spicer in his 'oppositional approach' integrated the two approaches in order to explain the reasons for ethnic interaction and solidarity.³⁶

One systemic effort to combine primordial and modernist schools is found in Anthony Smith's work. For explaining the relations between the type of nationalism and the process of modernization,³⁷ he considers nationalism to be "ethnic nationalism" and argues that it is both traditional and modern.³⁸ While a nation as a named community of history and culture, possessing a common territory, economy, mass

³⁵James McKay, "An Explanatory Synthesis of Primordial and Mobilizational Approaches to Ethnic Phenomena," 310.

³⁶Edward Spicer "Persistent Identity Systems," *Science*, Vol. 4011 (1971): 795-800.

³⁷Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 6.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 256.

educational system and common legal right is a relatively modern phenomenon, its origins can be traced back to pre-modern ethnic communities. Such named *ethnies* with their myth of common descent, common memories, culture and solidarity, and association with a homeland, are found in both the ancient and medieval periods in many areas of the world.³⁹

By criticizing the modernist approaches, Smith emphasises that "the real trouble with the modernist picture of nationalism, is a certain historical shallowness."⁴⁰ He stressed in his earlier studies that nationalism as a political movement is the product of modernity but includes the pre-modern historical dimension of ethnicity. However, it is rather the impact of the process of modernization upon historical communities and categories, and upon mass sentiments often associated with them, that can alone help to account for the rise and diffusion of ethnic nationalism in the last two centuries.⁴¹

Concerning the case of regional nationalism in Iran, I argue that the affectional loyalties of different (formerly tribal) groups to their cultural heritage are natural and pre-modern phenomena, but the politicization of these loyalties and the mobilization of religio-linguistic minority groups for

³⁹Anthony D. Smith, "The Origins of Nations," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 12, no. 3 (1989): 340.

⁴⁰Smith, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 74.

⁴¹Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Revival in the Modern World*, (Cambridge: Cambridge U.p., 1981), 51-52.

local autonomy or independence is modern and has its roots in the twentieth century. Here, following Masipula Sithole (1986), I would like to distinguish between *tribe in itself* and *tribe for itself*.

Studying African ethnic politics and drawing upon Marx's notion of the "class in itself" and the "class for itself", Sithole stresses that:

...a tribe can exist as a 'tribe in itself'. Ethnic [primordial] traits only define a 'tribe in itself'. The salience of tribalism comes when a tribe moves from being a 'tribe in itself' to a 'tribe for itself'. At that stage, there is conscious mobilization for tribal or ethnic interests.⁴²

This important point brings us to the second theoretical area of ethnic studies, i.e., ethnic mobilization theory. In fact, the main challenge for students of ethnic nationalism and primordialist scholars is the search for the underlying causes behind the politicization of pre-existing primordial ties in the form of new nationalist rationalizations.

2. How is Ethnicity Politicized? Ethnic Mobilization Theories: As in the first theoretical area, there are different approaches to ethnic mobilization. These approaches include: an emphasis on social structures and economic development as the key explanatory variables, as in the work

⁴²Masipula Sithole, "The Salience of Ethnicity in African Politics", in A.C. Paranjpe, ed., *Ethnic Identities and Prejudices: Perspectives from the Third World*, (Leiden: A.J.Brill, 1986), 52.

of Wallerstein and Michael Hechter; *cultural pluralism* as the key variable, as in the work of Joseph Furnival and M.G. Smith; an emphasis on *resource competition*, as seen in the works of Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan, Frederick Barth and Susan Olzak; *elite competition* theory, as elucidated by Anthony Smith, Joseph Rothschild, and especially Paul Brass; and finally, *rational choice* theory as presented in the later works of Michael Hechter, and Michael Banton.⁴³ All these theoretical schools try to explain the way ethnicity is politically mobilized in modern times.

While most theories of ethnic mobilization are located in the modernist category, primordialism has its own explanation in this regard. The underlying argument, as reflected in Geertz and Berghe, is that primordial identity and sentiments in a group cause ethnic collective mobilization. Primordial sentiments, as I noted earlier, are not sufficient for the politicization of ethnicity. As Joseph Rothschild writes:

It is...insufficient -- though partially correct -- to explain the persistence and even the revival of ethnicity into and in the modern era as reflecting a primordial "need to belong" to supposedly more enduring, more nearly comprehensive, more organic, more supportive psycho-cultural collectivities than the admittedly secular, specific, functional, utilitarian ones generated in modern societies around the foci of profession, occupation, legal claim, and other rational interests.⁴⁴

⁴³Michael Banton, "Ethnic Groups and the Theory of Rational Choice," *Sociological Theories: Race and Colonialism*, (Paris: Unesco, 1980).

⁴⁴Joseph Rothschild, *Ethnopolitics: A Conceptual Framework*, (New York: Columbia University, 1981), 248-249.

It is important here to distinguish, as Nagel and Olzak do, *ethnic differences* among a population, such as differences in language, religion, physiology or culture, from *ethnic mobilization*. The former are potential bases for the latter, but their simple presence does not guarantee mobilization.⁴⁵ The Iranian experience discards the primordial perspective for political mobilization of the Kurds, Azaris, and Baluchis. While the awareness of being a Kurd, Azari, or Baluchi existed in the Iran of centuries past, such awareness did not lead to the rise of Kurdish, Baluchi, and Azari nationalism before the twentieth century. In Iran, the politicization of differences and the creation of political movements has modern roots, as instrumental interests have been key to the transformation of primordial ties.

A discussion of all these approaches goes beyond the scope of this study. However, it is useful to focus on the main theories of ethnic mobilization, especially those focusing on economic aspects, the role of elites, and also the role of the state in the politics of ethnicity. In the economic sphere, resource competition theory and internal colonialism theory are noteworthy.

Resource Competition Theory: This approach maintains that political incorporation of ethnic groups within a given

⁴⁵Joane Nagel and Susan Olzak, "Ethnic Mobilization in New and Old states: An Extension of the Competition Model", *Social Problems*, 30, no. 2 (December 1982): 130.

nation-state establishes the context in which competition for resources -- especially for government jobs -- becomes the motive for inter-ethnic conflict.⁴⁶ Ethnic identification is created or maintained as a basis for collective action when there are clear competitive advantages attached to an ethnic identity. This inter-ethnic competition promotes ethnic mobilization, resulting in the formation of ethnic organizations and the enhancement of ethnic identities.⁴⁷

According to Glazer and Moynihan, ethnic groups are to an unprecedented extent emerging as a means for the expression and advancement of economic and political interests. They argue that with the rise of the welfare state and the concomitant tendency of state apparatus to serve as arbiter of competitive economic and political claims, ethnicity acquired enhanced strategic efficacy as a basis for anchoring and advancing material interests.⁴⁸

Susan Olzak, another student of ethnic collective action has provided a similar argument According to her:

⁴⁶Reed Coughlan, "Ethnicity and the State: Five Perspectives," *Choice*, (November 1985): 414.

⁴⁷Joare Nagel and Susan Olzak, "Ethnic Mobilization in New and Old States: An Extension of the Competition Model," 130.

⁴⁸Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, eds., *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).

Resource mobilization and competition theories use a fluid and situational conceptualization of ethnicity and ethnic boundaries which enable them to take into account the dynamic of ethnic collective action and its decline.⁴⁹

Racial and ethnic conflict and collective action will occur when two or more ethnic populations come to compete for the same value resources. To the extent that ethnic populations compete with majority or other minority ethnic populations for the same jobs the result is ethnic competition. Under conditions of stable or shrinking resources, this competition leads to ethnic collective action.⁵⁰

Resource mobilization/competition theories have mostly been elaborated with respect to the experiences of ethnic groups in advanced industrial societies. Most of these theorists, such as Glazer and Moynihan, have applied the theory to American society. These theories face serious difficulties when applied to Third World societies where the state is not an arena for the struggle of different ethnic groups, or is controlled by one dominant ethnic group.

Internal Colonialism Theory: Elaborated mainly by Hechter the

⁴⁹Susan Olzak, "Ethnicity and Theories of Ethnic Collective Behaviour," 65.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 76.

internal colonialism approach stresses that ethnic solidarity may be strengthened within an emerging national polity as a result of exacerbation of regional inequalities between a culturally distinct core and its periphery. The overriding concern of the core's elite is to maintain the "instrumental dependency" of the peripheral population. As a consequence, cultural markers do not remain primordial attributes; they are transformed into politicized discriminators. Members of the peripheral groups seek to use the cultural markers as levers to end or to delegitimize prevailing arrangements. Structural challenges by a peripheral-subordinate group may take the form of secessionist claims, either as a strategic goal or as a bargaining stance, when the group is geographically concentrated in a particular region.⁵¹

The internal colonialism thesis has been criticized from different perspectives.⁵² The main problem with this approach is its assumption that ethnic solidarity and mobilization will occur in the most culturally and economically exploited regions. However, counter-examples of ethnic movements based on well-developed regions, such as the Basque and Catalan provinces in Spain, Quebec in Canada, and Scotland in Great Britain question the credibility of Hechter's theory. This

⁵¹Rothschild, *Ethnopolitics*, 55.

⁵²A special issue of *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2, no. 3, (July 1979) was devoted to the discussion of internal colonialism theory.

approach does not present enough explanation, for instance, for the rise of a separatist movement in a relatively developed region such as Iranian Azarbaijan in 1945-6. Moreover, as Coughlan pointed out, the weakness of this approach lies in its imprecise articulation of the mechanisms by which the state is said to perpetuate uneven regional development and patterns of ethnic stratification.⁵³

The idea that economic inequalities between ethnic groups in the centre and periphery produce ethnic mobilization and conflict is problematic. In fact, some argue just the opposite -- that a reduction of inequalities can produce ethnic mobilization among depressed groups⁵⁴ that benefit from the reduction. While the economic factors are important, ethnic mobilization and ethnic conflict have more political causes.⁵⁵ Hechter, in his later works, accepted the weaknesses and limitations of his approach. He stresses that:

...my first book, *Internal Colonialism*, which attempted to explain the causes of nationalism in modern British history, was heavily influenced by structural reasoning. Subsequently, however, I have become increasingly aware of the limitation of the approach. Structural explanations are not appropriate for every kind of analytical problem. They are less helpful in explaining just how

⁵³Coughlan, "The Poverty of Primordialism," 411.

⁵⁴Joane Nagel and Susan Olzak, "Ethnic Mobilization in the New and Old States," 128.

⁵⁵See Milton J. Esman, "Economic Performance and Ethnic Conflict," in Montville, ed., *Conflict and Peacemaking in the Multiethnic Societies*, (MA: Lexington Books, 1990).

specific groups will react to their circumstances.⁵⁶

Rational Choice Theory: Hechter considers rational choice theory an approach that "offers the best hope of arriving at a higher degree of theoretical consensus in the field (of ethnicity and race relations)."⁵⁷ Members of any ethnic group, he argues, will engage in collective action only when they estimate that by doing so they will receive a net individual benefit.⁵⁸ Most students of rational choice theory argue that ethnic collective movements can only take place if a sufficient numbers of individuals agree to participate and that rational individuals will only do this if their expected benefits exceed their expected costs.⁵⁹

One important point in rational choice theory, which distinguishes it from the primordialist approaches, is its emphasis on the role of human agency vis-a-vis structural constraints (whether cultural or socio-economic). This was M.

⁵⁶Michael Hechter, "Theories of Ethnic Relations", in John F. Stack *The Primordial Challenge, Ethnicity in the Contemporary World*, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 267.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 265.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 271.

⁵⁹Hooshang Amir Ahmadi, "A Theory of Ethnic Collective Movement and Its Application to Iran," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 10, no. 4 (October 1987): 364.

Olson's main point,⁶⁰ as he attempted to explain why some people in the same structural position are free riders. In criticizing the structuralist approach to ethnicity, Hechter argues that:

...rational choice considers individual behaviour to be a function of the interaction of structural constraints and the sovereign preference of individuals. The structures first determine, to a greater or less extent, the constraints under which individuals act. Within these constraints, individuals face various feasible courses of action. The course of action ultimately chosen is selected rationally.⁶¹

In a similar way, Hudson Meadwell, argues that cultural approaches are structuralist, leaving little room for intentional explanations. In contrast, collective choice theory is intentionalist and political economic in orientation.⁶² Working on the case of Iran, Hooshang Amir Ahmadi recognizes the importance of this perspective as an important factor for "transforming latent ethnic collectivities into actual movements." He contends that "existing literature (on ethnic collective movements) fails to acknowledge that the actualization of ethnic collective movement depends on expected gains of the ethnic community

⁶⁰Mancur Olson, *Logic of Collective Action: Public Good and the Theory of Groups*, (Mass: Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1971).

⁶¹Hechter, "Theories of Ethnic Relations," 268.

⁶²Hudson Meadwell, "Cultural and Instrumental Approaches to Ethnic Nationalism", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 12, no. 3 (1989): 309.

from confronting the central government."⁶³

I argue that, while rational choice has the advantage of paying attention to the role of human agents, its weakness stems from the fact that it relies on the cost-benefit calculation, economic or non-economic, for explaining the participation of individual in ethnic nationalist movements. Serious difficulties emerge by the application of such an approach to the case of Third world countries, and specially the Middle East, where mass participation in collective movements goes beyond the cost-benefit rationalization. Here the role of traditions (culture and religion) relating to the relations between the masses and the leaders are vital questions to be considered. Rational choice theory ignores the psychological factors which consolidate the relationships between the masses and their leaders. Rational choice may at best explain when and why ethnic groups may resort to collective action against a central government. However, it is not a comprehensive theory for explaining the politicization of primordial ties and the rise of ethnic nationalist movements. It is especially silent on the importance of cultural and primordial factors which facilitate the construction of ethnic identity -- a significant legitimating basis for any ethnic nationalist movement. Indeed, discussion of the role of elites and intellectuals in ethnic mobilization and the construction of ethnic national

⁶³Amir Ahmadi, 367, 365.

identity is a fundamental step toward explaining ethnic nationalism.

Elite Competition Theory: The role of elites in nationalist movements has been analyzed by theorists like Hans Kohn⁶⁴ and more systematically by Anthony Smith. For the latter, the role of urban intelligentsia is especially pivotal. The spread of state control and ancillary tendencies toward centralization produce the preconditions for ideological mobilization led by the scientific intelligentsia.⁶⁵ John Breuilly⁶⁶ also regards nationalism as a special and successful form of modern politics used by elites to capture state power from ruling classes.

However, a more complex analysis of the role of ethnic elites in the mobilization of people and the formation and the manipulation of ethnic identity is reflected in the work of Paul Brass. For him, ethnic elites not only construct a distinct identity for the group out of its cultural heritage, but also create divisions within ethnic groups in their competition for political power. He argues that earlier scholarship gave insufficient attention to these struggles and

⁶⁴Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in its Origins and its Background*, (New York: Macmillan, 1944).

⁶⁵Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Revival in the Modern World*.

⁶⁶John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, (Manchester: University Press, 1982).

divisions within ethnic groups.⁶⁷ According to Brass:

...in the process of transforming cultural forms, values and practices into political symbols, elites in competition with each other for control over allegiance or territory of the ethnic group in question, strive to enhance or break the solidarity of the group. Elites seeking to mobilize the ethnic group against its rivals or against the centralizing state, strive to promote a congruence of a multiplicity of the group's symbols, to argue that members of the group are different not in one respect only, but in many, and that all its cultural elements are reinforcing.⁶⁸

In contrast to extreme instrumentalists, and rational choice theorists too, the advantage of Brass's instrumentalist approach is that he does not disregard or discard the cultural forms, values and practices of distinct ethnic groups. He argues that political and economic elites who make use of ethnic group attributes are constrained by the beliefs and values which exist within the group, and that this limits the kind of appeals which can be made.⁶⁹

While Brass's theoretical framework is useful for the analysis of local or ethnic nationalist movements in the Middle East, it disregards some important factors. First, he discusses only the role of ethnic elites and does not pay much attention to the fact that non-ethnic elites play important roles in ethnic mobilization and conflict. I will discuss

⁶⁷Paul Brass, *Ethnic Groups and the State*, (London: Croom Helm, 1985).

⁶⁸Paul Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Theory and Comparison*, (London: Sage, 1991), 15-16.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 16.

this important factor when I analyze the role of non-ethnic elites in the Iranian cases. Second, Brass disregards the role of external forces in stirring ethnic conflict and their contribution in the creation of ethnic nationalism and ethnic identity.

State and Ethnicity: An important theoretical discussion on ethnicity and nationalism relates to the role of state in nationalism in general, and in ethnic conflict in particular. This issue has been studied from different perspectives, one of which, the resource competition approach, was discussed earlier. While important contributions have been made on the relationship between the state and nationalism,⁷⁰ the more relevant question here is the role of the state in ethnic identity formation and ethnic political mobilization.⁷¹

One relevant theoretical tradition is the *cultural pluralism* of Joseph S. Furnival and M.G. Smith, who regard the state as an instrument of naked coercion and political domination. Within "plural society," as they label it, the state is regarded as an essential tool through which one group

⁷⁰See for instance, John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*.

⁷¹Joseph Rothschild, for instance, studies seven types of relations between state and ethnic groups. Here, however, the focus of discussion is how these two use each other in the society. He does not discuss the way state's policies may contribute to the spread of ethnic political mobilization and nationalist tendencies. See Rothschild, *Ethnopolitics*, 213-227.

asserts and maintains dominance over other groups in society. The state, thus, is seen as an independent variable, controlling and shaping ethnic groups in conflict.⁷²

Furnival and Smith define the "plural society" as a social order consisting of institutionally segmented cultural groups living 'side by side, yet without mingling, in one political unit'. One cultural section monopolizes power, controls the state apparatus,⁷³ and dominates over other cultural groups. This characterization of society was based on Furnival's study of colonial societies created by conquest and regulated in the interest of the colonial capitalists⁷⁴ and Smith's analysis of post-colonial societies.

This approach's main failing is that it treats the state as an instrument of domination and does not consider the probability that the state can be autonomous from ethnic groups -- a prize and resource over which ethnic groups engage in a continuing struggle. Moreover, as Anthony Smith puts it, the primacy and the autonomy of political process is important.

As far as the Iranian context is concerned, the plural society approach does not present a strong model to explain the role of state in ethnic identity formation. Historically,

⁷²See Coughlan, "Ethnicity and the State," 413-414.

⁷³M.G. Smith, *The Plural Society in the British West Indies*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 86-88.

⁷⁴Paul Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 252.

the state apparatus in Iran has not been thoroughly controlled by one ethnic group and thus in contrast to, for example, the former white dominated South Africa, it has not been an instrument for domination of one group over others. Depending on each specific historical period, a combination of Azari, Persian and in some cases Kurdish political and tribal elites have ruled the country. Thus, while the Shah used to be an Azari Turk or a Kurd, his ministers, his high level advisors or his governors were Persians, Azaris, Kurds or Baluchis.

Before the rise of the Modern Pahlavi state in the 1920s, the traditional decentralized Iranian states were headed by Azari and in one or two case Kurdish tribal elites.⁷⁵ Even in the Pahlavi state (1921-1979), Azaris played an active role in the state's apparatus alongside Kurdish elite, though the latter participated to a lesser degree. In post-revolutionary times, Azaris had a stronger position in the state, occupying such high level positions as the *Vali Faqih*, or spiritual leadership of the country (Ali Khamenehei since 1989), the presidency (Ali Khamenei 1982-89) and the Prime Minister's office (Hossein Musavi 1982-1987).

To provide a better understanding of the state's role in the politicization of primordial ties and the rise of ethnic nationalism in societies such as Iran, we should study the modern state formation process and its effects on traditional

⁷⁵These were the Zand and Afsharid dynasties. See footnote 189 in Chapter Two.

society. The modern, centralized state -- or, according to Anthony Smith, the *scientific state*⁷⁶ -- changed the traditional decentralized socio-political structures of Iranian society. The politicization of religio-linguistic differences in Iran was one consequence of the formation of the modern Western state.

Internationalization of Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict: This significant element has been disregarded or underestimated by most students of ethnicity and ethnic nationalism. They tend to look mostly for domestic factors of ethnic mobilization and the rise of ethnonationalism, while the role of external factors are often dismissed or not accounted for at all. The international politics of some Third World regions such as the Middle East speaks to the important role played by catalyst elements outside the boundaries of the states in question. A recent study on the causes of ethnic mobilization in Lebanon pointedly accuses the present dominant approaches in the literature of just such a "state-centric" bias:

The level of analysis of these approaches focuses on the dynamics of inter-group relations inside the state. Furthermore, because they are state-centric, these models are based on the conceptual assumption that the state is a closed unit. This is not the case for most states and certainly not

⁷⁶See Anthony Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*.

the case for the Middle Eastern states.⁷⁷

The existing literature on the relationship between ethnic conflict and international relations has mostly focused on the causes of foreign intervention in domestic conflicts, the role and the influence of different ethnic groups in a state's foreign policy,⁷⁸ or the fact that International Relations Theory has largely disregarded the question of ethnicity. Students of international relations like John W. Burton,⁷⁹ who had blamed political Realism for these shortcomings, have taken a primordialist approach to ethnicity.⁸⁰ Others, like Stephen Ryan and Edward Azar, have made the same argument with respect to the silence of IR theory towards ethnicity, and have suggested ways in which international organizations can be helpful in solving ethnic

⁷⁷Rejean Hallee, *Regional Intervention, Regional Intervention, Group Mobilization and Intra-Communal Conflict: The Cases of the Iranian, Syrian and Israeli Interventions and Amal-Hezbollah Conflict in Lebanon*, (M.A. thesis, Carleton University, Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, 1993), 14.

⁷⁸For these issues, see Rothschild, *Ethnopolitics*, 173-212.

⁷⁹John W. Burton, *Conflict: Resolution and Prevention*, (New York: St. Martin, 1990).

⁸⁰The best example in this regard is John Burton, who presents a genetic or sociobiological perspective on ethnicity in his "human needs" approach. For a good critique of his works on this issue, see: Deirdre Collings, *Conflict and Identity: Palestinianism and the Politics of Being*, (M.A. thesis, Carleton University, 1988), 32-52.

conflict.⁸¹ The fact, however, is that while Realism in theory disregarded ethnicity and ethnic conflict, the practice of power politics in international relations promoted such struggles. The domination of power politics in the contemporary era has encouraged foreign intervention, both political and military, in ethnic conflict. In some cases, as Middle Eastern historical experiences show, this intervention has had a significant effect on the rise of separatist movements and the spread of the idea of ethnic nationalism.

II. TOWARD A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

While not denying the contributions of the approaches discussed in the last section, I argue that they by themselves cannot present a sufficient explanation for the politicization of religio-linguistic groups in Iranian Kurdistan, Baluchistan, and Azarbaijan in the mid-twentieth century. Focusing solely on one of these approaches creates the methodological problem of "the fallacy of single causal explanation." To avoid such a trap, I argue for a theoretical framework which combines three different approaches to ethnic mobilization in order to present a fairly sufficient explanation for Iranian experience in the realm of ethnic nationalism.

⁸¹Stephen Ryan, *Ethnic Conflict and International Relations*, (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1990); Edward Azar, *The Management of Protracted Social Conflict: Theory and Cases*, (Aldershot Dartmouth, 1990).

The state formation, elite competition, and international context models present useful insights which can help to explain the causes of nationalist movements in the three Iranian cases in question. By drawing upon these three models, I present a theoretical framework in which three variables -- namely, the state, elite, and international forces -- play important roles in the politicization of ethnicity and the formation of nationalist movements among religio-linguistic minority groups.

This theoretical framework is suggested by Iranian political history. Indeed, the rise of the modern centralized state in Iran challenged and abolished the socio-political power of the strong tribal elites in the society. To resist the state's policies of centralization and detribalization, the traditional tribal elites (tribal chiefs and their modern educated descendants) resorted to primordial ties such as language and religion to mobilize people against the central state. Meanwhile, international forces have promoted the idea of secular nationalism and have supported the formation of nationalist political movements among different religio-linguistic minority groups.

There is, however, a need for a more detailed elaboration of these issues in order to demonstrate the important contribution of these three primary factors to the rise and the spread of local or ethnic nationalist tendencies in Iran.

1. The Modern State Formation Process and State-Tribes Relations:

With the rise of the modern nation-state system in the West and the spread of that idea in the Middle East, and especially in light of the complexity of socio-economic developments in the contemporary era, the trend toward centralization of the state accelerated. This centralization tended to destroy all loyalties except allegiance to the state. Thus, the traditional relationship between ethnic elite (mostly tribal chiefs) and the state changed. Before the rise of the centralized state, tribal chiefs had extensive autonomy in their tribal areas, and their relations with the central state, as I discussed in Chapter two, was a mutual pattern of recognition. The tribal chiefs expressed their loyalty and offered their tribute to the central state, and in many cases collected taxes and provided military forces for it. The state, in its turn, formally recognized them as the representatives of their tribes.

This pattern of state-tribes relations changed in the 1920s with by the rise of Reza Shah, the founder of the Pahlavi dynasty.⁸² The Pahlavi modern state was different

⁸²Reza Khan, an officer of the Cossack Brigade, led a bloodless coup, with British support, on 21 February 1921 when Iran was at its highest level of weakness, anarchic situation, and foreign influence. He became the minister of defence, and following the deposition of the Qajar dynasty by the Majlis in October 1925, he was nominated by the unanimous vote of Majlis (Parliament) in December 1925 as the Shahanshah of Iran. Ahmad Shah, the young Qajar Shah was in France, and stayed there until his death. For more details, see L.P. Elwell-Sutton, "Reza Shah the Great: Founder of Pahlavi Dynasty," in George Lenczowski, ed., *Iran*

from pre-modern states under the Safavids, Zands, and Qajars.

Beck provides a good description of the new state in Iran:

When Reza Khan became Shah in 1926 and established the Pahlavi autocracy, he did so on the basis of a modern, Western-style military and bureaucracy. State centralization was to bring about key changes in government and society, which included a nationalist ideology, economic development and control, modernization, Westernization, and secularization.⁸³

At the same time a number of developments were paving the way for the spread of nationalist ideas in Iran: several decades of national shame beginning with the conquest of Iranian territories in the Caucasus by Russia; foreign influence and interference; and the penetration of the idea of Western-style liberal nationalism. With the ascendancy of Reza Shah:

...all tribally-organised peoples were perceived by Reza Shah to be incompatible with national unity, a menace to internal security. This attitude provided the normal justification for a series of measures which demanded nothing short of a complete destruction of the social, economic and political foundation of the tribal societies.⁸⁴

Reza Shah's policy of centralization hinged on three strategies: annihilation of the powers of the tribal chiefs,

Under The Pahlavis, (Californian: Hoover Institution Press, 1978); Gavin R. Hambly, "The Pahlavi Autocracy: Reza Shah, 1921-1946," *Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 7, 213-244.

⁸³Lois Beck, "Tribes and State," 191.

⁸⁴G. Reza Fazel, "Tribes and States in Iran: From Pahlavi to the Islamic Republic," in Haleh Afshar, ed., *Iran a Revolution in Turmoil*, (London: Macmillan, 1985), 81-82.

the settlement of the nomadic tribes, and disarmament of the tribal forces.⁸⁵ As the result of this centralization, local autonomous elites such as the tribal chiefs, Shaykhs, and Aghas lost their autonomy, and their formerly, typically peaceful relations with the state become conflictual.

The most important consequence of such policies was the alienation of many tribal leaders from the state. As Beck emphasizes, "many victims of Reza Shah's severe policies came to have for the 'first time' a politicized sense of ethnic and tribal identity."⁸⁶ Linguistic and religious differences between the group and the state accelerated such a process of politicization. Leading dissatisfied elites, including the tribal chiefs, considered such harsh state policies to be a manifestation of cultural discrimination toward themselves. Ethnic elites tended to perpetuate inter-group differences in order to mobilize their constituencies against the state and its policies. Ethnic mobilization, thus, was partly the result of state policies against the tribal groups. In turn, tribal elites used the linguistic and religious differences in order to gain political support and economic resources in their struggle against the state.

2. Elite Struggle for Power and National Identity Formation:

Ethnic identity formation and ethnic nationalism as an

⁸⁵Kiyavand, 116.

⁸⁶Beck, "Tribes and State," 206.

ideology are, in many respects, the result of the activities of ethnic and non-ethnic elites. In the course of their competition and their struggle for political power and status, elites construct, and in fact manipulate, linguistic, religious and the cultural differences in society to provide the required resources and support for their own political ends.

Thus the tribal elite, having lost their military and political powers, turn to educated followers who have been influenced by the ideology of nationalism and especially the idea of the self-determination of minority groups, and invent a distinct national identity for mobilizing masses of religio-linguistic minority groups in a struggle against the central state. They use the existing regional economic inequalities to mobilize the members of the group to achieve political goals. Ethnic elites thus mobilize their ethnic constituencies on the basis of their collective underdevelopment in a context of perceived unfair competition.⁸⁷ These ethnic elites go further, however, and in their competition for political power "create images or perceptions of regional inequalities and discrimination by magnifying minor cases of discrimination or specific instances of regional inequality."⁸⁸ Many of these young elites had the opportunity and financial capability to study in Western

⁸⁷Joseph Rothschild, *Ethnopolitics*, 43.

⁸⁸Paul Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 293.

universities. Even in the early twentieth century, most Iranian Ilkhans and tribal chiefs used to send their sons to receive a modern education outside of Iran.⁸⁹ Facing the consequences of the centralization policies of the Pahlavi regime, they preferred to struggle for the formation of a unified notion of ethnic identity out of the formerly divided tribal groups. Such modern, educated tribal -- or according to Izady, "neo-tribal leaders"⁹⁰ -- established or actively participated in the new leftist guerrilla movements since the 1960s, as Lois Beck explains:

The leftist core of some tribal groups consists partly of sons and daughters of former or established tribal leaders. They are usually Western educated, were active in leftist groups abroad, and have contacts with leftists movements within and outside Iran.⁹¹

Most approaches to ethnicity take the ethnic group as a monolithic and unified phenomenon and do not pay enough attention to intra-ethnic group divisions. Indeed, the important role of elites in creating internal divisions in ethnic groups -- thus discrediting the notion of a unified ethnic identity -- is entirely disregarded, despite the fact that the internal conflict within ethnic categories for control over the material and symbolic resources of the group

⁸⁹Baharvand, *Kooch Neshini dar Iran*, 169.

⁹⁰Mehrdad Izady, *The Kurds: A Concise Handbook*, (Washington: Crane Russak, 1992), 206.

⁹¹Lois Beck, "Revolutionary Iran and Its Tribal Peoples," *MERIP Reports*, 87 (1980): 20.

are of critical importance.⁹² In their competition for power within the group and also with respect to their position vis-a-vis the central state, ethnic elites redefine and revise their own perceptions of ethnic identity.

Ethnic identities cannot therefore be seen as fixed, but as variable and subject to change according to context and circumstances.⁹³ Ethnic nationalist identity, thus, is not a "primordial" phenomenon but more correctly a "situational identity" evoked in certain structural circumstances to advance the material and political interests of actors whose primary allegiances and purposes are not ethnic."⁹⁴ In competition with other elites within their own groups or with elites from other ethnic groups, it matters a great deal how effective competing elites are in interpreting, reinterpreting, and manipulating the symbols of the group for purposes of political mobilization.⁹⁵ The irony is that the disagreement and diversity among elites of the same religio-linguistic group over power and influence actually cause intra-group divisions. This contradicts their cherished and avowed goal of creating a unified and distinct ethnic national

⁹²Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 264.

⁹³*Ibid.*, 269.

⁹⁴David Carment and Patrick James, "The International Politics of Ethnic Conflict: A Canadian Perspective on Theory and Policy," unpublished paper presented for the 1994 CPSA annual meeting, in *Learned Societies Conference* in Calgary, Canada, June 1994, 17.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, 293.

movement.

Ethnic elites, or according to Sithole, "tribalists," resort to ethnic and sometimes non-ethnic questions in their struggle for power. On the other hand, non-tribalists (non-ethnic elites) also resort to ethnic issues and ethnic questions to raise support and resources in their struggle against the central state for political power and influence.⁹⁶ The contribution of non-ethnic elites to the promotion of ethnic identity and the engineering of political goals such as self-determination or autonomy for minority groups needs special attention. The literature has disregarded such important phenomena, though the Iranian context provides some interesting examples in this respect. Some non-Persian provinces, such as Gorgan, where Turkmans are living, Baluchistan, Khuzistan, where Arabs are numerous, Azarbaijan, and especially Kurdistan, have been important bases for the activities of leftist groups such as *Fadaiyan Khalq*, *Paykar*, and *Mujahedin Khalq*. These are Persian-dominated groups who are struggling against the central state and find remarkable resources and support in those regions. Iranian leftist groups have been organizing and leading peasant protests and

⁹⁶Masipula Sithole, Masipula, "The Saliency of Ethnicity in African Politics: the Case of Zimbabwe," in Anand C. Paranjpe, ed., *Ethnic Identities and Prejudices: Perspectives From the Third World*, (Lieden: Brill, 1986), 56.

encouraging land questions in areas like Turkmansahra⁹⁷ and other places which have non-Persian and especially non-Shi'ite population. The Marxist group *Sazeman-e Cherik'hay-e Fadaiy-e Khalq* (or *Fadiyan Khalq*), for instance, took the lead in forming 300 Peasant Councils and *Shorayeh Chariki* (the Freedom Fighters' Rural Councils) with a membership of about 15,000 peasants in Turkmansahra.⁹⁸ For the first time, such leftist groups promoted autonomy for Iranian Turkmans. In sum, the support and promotion of ethnic issues such as separation or autonomy by non-ethnic elites is less an authentic belief in the problems and the grievances of specific ethnic groups than an instrumental strategy in the service of their own interests and political goals.

By emphasizing the role of elites, I do not disregard factors as important as regional economic inequalities or the richness or paucity of available cultural symbols within a group. These are not totally invented or solely the result of elite imaginations and manipulations. However, all these factors are but resources for elites to draw upon and to exaggerate for their own political purposes. To the extent that ethnic and non-ethnic elites are greatly involved in the

⁹⁷On this see Ahmad Ashraf, "Dehghanan, Zamin va Enghilab," [Peasants, land and Revolution] (text in Persian) in *Ketabe Agah, Masa'el-e Arzi Va Dehghani* [Land's and peasant's questions], (Tehran: Agah, 1982), 28-29.

⁹⁸Haleh Afshar, "An Assessment of Agricultural Development Policies in Iran," in Haleh Afshar, ed., *Iran a Revolution in Turmoil*, 75-76.

formation of ethnic identity and the mobilization of minorities in achieving political goals, ethnic nationalism should be considered a movement directed "from above" rather than "from below."⁹⁹

While the existence of traditional tribal bonds in minority groups provide elites with some popular support, much of its potential impact is eroded by the presence of the old factional and regional divisions on the one hand, and the deterioration of socio-economic life as the result of protracted armed conflicts between the state and ethnic guerrilla organizations on the other. Lacking enough financial, military, strategic and political resources, ethnic elites usually look for external support in the struggle against the central state. In many cases, according to Carl Brown, they keep "an eye to provoking outside intervention."¹⁰⁰ This will accelerate the people's alienation from the elites. External forces, in their turn, have their own rationale for becoming involved in favour of the ethnic groups and in the domestic affairs of multi-ethnic countries. This important fact brings us to the third important variable in my theoretical framework for explaining the rise of nationalist movements in Iranian cases.

⁹⁹Eric Hobsbawm uses these two terms in order to argue that nationalism as an invented tradition is not a popular based movement, but an elitist phenomenon.

¹⁰⁰L. Carl Brown, *International Politics and the Middle East: Old Rules, Dangerous games*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 58.

3. International Forces and the Promotion of Ethnic Identity:

The role of international politics in ethnic conflict, ethnic identity formation and ethnic nationalism has not been adequately studied in the literature -- indeed, International Relations as a discipline has disregarded these issues. While a discussion of the causes of this neglect goes beyond the scope of my study, it suffices to point out that most students of ethnic conflict and International Relations blame political Realism, as the dominant school of thought in the field, for this failing. According to them, the problem stems from the fact that:

From a Realist perspective, the international system is anarchial rather than hierarchical. It is characterized by interaction among units with similar functions. The distribution of capabilities varies across system over time and there is an implicitly rational orientation that seems to deny the relevance of ethnicity.¹⁰¹

However, it is not only the discipline of International Relations which is to be blamed. Ethnicity, ethnic studies, and also nationalist studies as distinct fields share this neglect in common. The fact is that most students of ethnicity and nationalism have disregarded the important role of international politics in the creation of ethnic nationalism and ethnic conflict. However, those who have

¹⁰¹David Carment and Patrick James, 10; see also works of Edward Azar, John Burton, and Stephen Ryan mentioned in the last section.

discussed the role of external forces (Said¹⁰² and Simmon, Ryan, Shiels,¹⁰³ Suhrke and Nobel¹⁰⁴ and Hallee) have mainly concentrated on their role in ethnic conflict, and not on their contribution in creating and encouraging distinct ethnic identity formation and ethnic national movements.

I argue , however, that international involvement in ethnic affairs has greatly contributed to the rise of separatist minority nationalism in the Middle East.¹⁰⁵ The role of international politics in the socio-political developments of Middle Eastern societies has been analyzed by some Western scholars in a general way, as Middle Eastern strategic and economic assets have inspired increasing international intervention in the region ever since Napoleon's invasion to Egypt in 1798. In fact, since Napoleon's invasion until the early twentieth century, the Middle East witnessed a series of Western aggressions: Algeria (1830), Tunisia (1881) and Morocco (1906-12) by France, and Yemen (1839),

¹⁰²Abdul Said, and Simmons, L.R., *Ethnicity in an International Context*, (New Jersey: Transaction, 1976).

¹⁰³F.L. Sheils, *Ethnic Separatism and World Politics*, (Lanham: University Press of America, 1984).

¹⁰⁴Astri Suhrke, and Noble, Lela G., *Ethnic Conflict in International Relations*, (New York: Praeger, 1977).

¹⁰⁵One of the best examples in the Middle East is the role played by Britain and its allies during and after the first World War in supporting and encouraging the Arab nationalist and separatist movement in the Ottoman Empire. For such role see George Antonious, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement*, (New York: Capricorn Books, 1965).

Malta (1815), Cyprus (1878), and Egypt (1882) by Britain.¹⁰⁶

L. Carl Brown notes that such policies, first undertaken with the beginning of the Eastern Question in the eighteenth century, have continued to the present day. Ever since the beginning of the Eastern question, Brown argues, the great powers have acted on the assumption that the Middle East possesses a strategic interest appreciably greater than other regions.¹⁰⁷ More recently, Richard Falk (1991) pointed out that "the Middle Eastern countries have been caught in a geopolitical trap throughout this century -- a trap mainly not of their own making."¹⁰⁸ According to Bassam Tibi, Middle Eastern societies "have been subject to foreign influence since the colonial penetration, and their social formations are no longer the product only of a domestic social dynamic."¹⁰⁹

Foreign influence in the Middle East has rarely been more observable than in the case of minority uprisings. Many tribal chiefs who would later take an anti-state position were at first in contact with foreign powers and were supported by them. With the development of imperialistic rivalry between

¹⁰⁶See George Lenczowski, *The Middle East in World Affairs*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 40-43.

¹⁰⁷L. Carl Brown, 258.

¹⁰⁸Richard Falk, "The Cruelty of Geopolitics: the Fate of Nation and State in the Middle East," *Millennium*, 20 (1991): 383.

¹⁰⁹Bassam Tibi, "Islam and Arab Nationalism," in *The Islamic Impulse*, (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 62.

Britain and Russia in the Ottoman Empire and Iran, the two European powers would encourage tribal chiefs in their rival's sphere of influence to rebel and separate.¹¹⁰ As Cottam points out, during the Mussadiq era (1950-53) when Iran was involved in an anti-British struggle over oil nationalization, Britain was accused of supporting Iranian tribal groups and encouraging them to revolt against the central state, and indeed, Britain did support tribal groups in southwestern Iran to protect the oil pipelines.¹¹¹ The British especially supported Bakhtiari tribes in this regard,¹¹² while the Soviet Union actively encouraged the Turkman tribal revolts of 1925.¹¹³ Lois Beck has outlined how foreign powers such as Britain and Russia used tribal chiefs against the Iranian state, and in some cases they even appointed their favourite persons as tribal chiefs.¹¹⁴ According to her, Britain, Russia, and Germany had more influence than the Iranian state among Iranian Tribes during World War I.¹¹⁵ As Kamrava observes:

¹¹⁰On this issue, see Sekandar Amanollahi Baharvand, *Kooch Neshini Dar Iran*, 934-935.

¹¹¹Richard Cottam, *Nationalism in Iran*, 57, 62-63.

¹¹²See Hasan Arfa, *Under Five Shahs*, (London: John Murray, 1965), 442.

¹¹³Robert Olson, "The Turkoman Rebellion in Eastern Iran in 1924-25: the Soviet Union's Reaction," *Central Asian Survey*, 12, no. 4 (1993): 525-529.

¹¹⁴Lois Beck, "Tribes and State," 204-205.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, 205-206.

Up until World War II, tribalism was in fact so effectively exploited by foreign powers, especially during the Qajar era, that it was difficult not to identify a tribal confederacy with an outside power. The policy of lending military and political support to different tribes was pursued by Germany and Great Britain in particular, with the British helping the Bakhtiari confederacy and the Germans aiding the Qashqais.¹¹⁶

The international dimension of ethnic nationalism can be analyzed both in the realm of political action (international politics either in terms of regional inter-state relations or in terms of a more global international system), and in the realm of political ideas (in the framework of an international universe of political discourse). In the course of real political action, the role of foreign states -- especially the great powers on the one side, as well as regional rival states on the other -- is important in promoting and encouraging ethnic nationalism and ethnic conflict. In the realm of ideas, there existed an *international universe of political discourse* in the early twentieth century in which the ideology of nationalism and self-determination provided significant encouragements and motifs for many linguistic and religious minority groups. Under the influence of this international universe of political discourse, the intellectual and political elites of such groups perceived among themselves a distinct ethnic identity, and so for the first time considered

¹¹⁶Mehran Kamrava, *The Political History of Modern Iran, From Tribalism to Theocracy*, (New York: Praeger, 1992), 123.

their groups deserving of the status of a distinct nation with its own state.

George Antonius has shed light on this issue with respect to the rise of Arab Nationalism in the Ottoman Empire. He demonstrates how Western powers like America, France, and especially Britain played important roles in the rise of Arab separatist movements. He stresses, for instance, that "the Arab national movement opens...in 1874 with the foundation in Beirut of a modest literary society under American patronage."¹¹⁷ In the twentieth century, both superpowers were promoting such ideas.

The most complete manifestations of these ideas are the Wilsonian school of self-determination of minority groups developed in the aftermath of World War I, and the Marxist-Leninist notion of nationality and self-determination. While the idea of self-determination for "national" groups developed as a natural corollary of developing nationalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth century,¹¹⁸ it got its real momentum when Woodrow Wilson included it in his well-known 14 principles in 1919. The Wilsonian school had vigorously promoted the idea of "self-determination" for all nationalities living within the boundaries of the defunct empires of the Germans, Austrians, Ottomans, and Russians --

¹¹⁷George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 13.

¹¹⁸Hurst Hannum, *Autonomy, Sovereignty, and Self-Determination: the Accomodation of Conflict Rights*, (Philadelphia: University of Pensilvania Press, 1990), 27.

a position that led Woodrow Wilson to categorically and repeatedly demand independent states for the "Arabs, Armenians, and the Kurds."¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, as Hannum stresses, "it should be underscored that self-determination in 1919 had little to do with the demands of the peoples concerned, unless those demands were consistent with the geopolitical and strategic interests of the Great powers."¹²⁰

In his fight against the Imperialist forces in the West, Lenin found a great opportunity to gain the friendship of hundreds of millions of Asiatics and Africans through allying the Soviet Union and Marxists all over the world with these peoples' national aspirations and extending to them the right of national self-determination, which included the right to use their own language and to an education in that language.¹²¹ According to the Marxist Leninist school: "The right of self-determination means that a nation can arrange its life on the basis of autonomy. It has the right to enter into federal relations with other nations. It has the right to complete secession."¹²² Most tribal chiefs and later, the

¹¹⁹Mehrdad R. Izady, *The Kurds: A Concise Handbook*, 59.

¹²⁰Hannum, *Autonomy, Sovereignty, and Self-Determination*, 28.

¹²¹Walker Connor, *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 32, 36.

¹²²Joseph Stalin, *Marxism: Selected Writings*, (New York: International Publisher, n.d.), 23.

elites of the Middle Eastern linguistic and religious minority groups, including Iranian Kurds, Azaris, and Baluchis, have been inspired and encouraged by such ideas in their struggle for autonomy or separation.

In such an international universe of political discourse, the contribution of international intelligentsia -- namely, Western Orientalists and social scientists (anthropologists, sociologists, and political scientists) -- in the promotion, encouragement, and creation of the process of ethnic identity formation for different former tribal groups has been significant. As I discussed in Chapter one, some Western anthropologists present divided tribal groups as homogenous closed societies in permanent conflict with states. By stressing the dichotomy between tribes and states, they consider tribes as socially and culturally homogeneous, egalitarian, segmentary, and unified entities, while characterizing states as heterogeneous, inegalitarian, hierarchically structured, and diverse. As Richard Tapper notes, Western ethnographers who used to study tribal groups in Iran and Afghanistan "treated them as isolated communities and underplayed their relations with surrounding communities and the state."¹²³

The Western powers such as Great Britain, France, Russia,

¹²³Richard Tapper, "Ethnicity, Order and Meaning in the Anthropology of Iran and Afghanistan," in Jean Pierre Digard, ed., *Le Fait Ethnique en Iran et en Afghanistan*, (Paris, Editions du CNRS, 1988), 30.

and later the Soviet Union and the U.S. have included in their policies an encouragement of and support for spreading the ideas of self-determination and ethnic nationalism. These powers sowed the seeds of nationalist sentiments in the region. As Richard Allen observes, "when Christian Russia conquered the Caucasus and created a Russian Armenia, a nationalist movement came to life among Armenians in Turkey."¹²⁴

The role of Western social scientists in the construction of distinct ethnic identity for different linguistic and religious tribal groups should not be underestimated. Many of these -- who have worked extensively on different tribal groups in Iran as well as other Middle Eastern countries -- have created a portrait of them as distinct cultural and ethnic entities with unique characteristics different from other groups of people in the same country. Such works have greatly provided the intellectual inspiration for educated elites of minority religio-linguistic groups to claim ethnic distinction, and thus to legitimize their demands for independence and self-determination. These intellectuals and *ethnic entrepreneurs*, have usually had friendly relations with the tribal chiefs and educated tribal elite, and have received their hospitality during long periods of studies in tribal areas.

¹²⁴Richard Allen, *Imperialism and Nationalism in the Fertile CRESCENT*, (New York: Oxford, 1974), 138.

The classical studies of distinguished anthropologists like Frederick Barth on Basseri tribes of southern Iran, for instance, demonstrate these very characteristics.¹²⁵ His book's entire analysis is based on data provided to him by the Khans' tribal chief.¹²⁶ The same is true regarding Gene Garthwaite's work on the Bakhtiয়ারis, the narrative of which is concerned almost entirely with the vicissitudes of the Bakhtiয়ারi Khans to the exclusion of the equally important question of internal relations between the Khans and their rank-and-file. Garthwaite has written what amounts to a Khan-centred narrative whose implicit premise seems to be that it was the tribal elite alone who counted in Bakhtiয়ারi politics. His approach also takes little account of the complex interrelationships of internal and external political factors¹²⁷ while dwelling too long on the attitudes of tribal leaders and tribal elites.¹²⁸

The educated generations of tribal groups have benefited from reading the works of these anthropologists and have used them as holy scriptures in their efforts to prove their

¹²⁵Frederick Barth, *Nomads of South Persia: The Basseri Tribe of Khamseh Confederacy*, (Boston: Little Brown, 1961).

¹²⁶See Richard Tapper, "Anthropologists, Historians," 60.

¹²⁷R.O. Christensen, "Tribes, States, and Anthropologists," 291.

¹²⁸See Gene R. Garthwaite, *Khans and Shahs. A Documentary Analysis of Bakhtiয়ারi in Iran*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

"imagined" distinct national identity. As Jan Ovesen stressed, "ethnographers, historians and political scientists play a crucial and largely unrecognized role as creators and manipulators of [ethnic] identities."¹²⁹ The role of foreign powers and international intelligentsia is easily traceable in the rise of Arab, Armenian, Azari, Kurdish, Turkish, and Baluchi nationalism in the Middle East.

Conclusion

The theoretical framework elaborated above can be depicted in the form of a triangle, each corner devoted to one of three critical variables: state, elites and external forces. The complex and mutual relations among these three factors in multi-religio-linguistic societies led to the politicization of primordial ties and the rise of autonomist and separatist movements. The more these three factors exist in a society, the stronger is the separatist or autonomous nationalist tendencies. The scope and the intensity of nationalist trends are at their highest level where these three factors express themselves strongly together. However, the question remains unanswered in terms of the importance of each factor. In other words, the application of this

¹²⁹Jan Ovesen, "The Construction of Ethnic Identities: the Nuristani and Pashai of Eastern Afghanistan," in Jacobson-Widding, Anita, ed., *Identity: Personal and Socio-Cultural*, (Upsala: Upsala Studies in Cultural Anthropology 5, 1983): 321-331, mentioned in Tapper, "Ethnicity, Order, and Meaning," 30.

theoretical framework in a case by case basis will demonstrate in each case which factor is most vital for the rise of separatist/autonomist trends.

In the following chapters, I will study the rise of such tendencies in Iranian Kurdistan, Azarbaijan, and Baluchistan with respect to the theoretical framework elaborated in this chapter. In a comparative approach, I will apply the three variables discussed here to the Kurdish, Baluchi, and Azari nationalist movements in Iran. Chapter Five, will study the rise of the modern Pahlavi state and its effects on the tribal groups in Kurdistan, Baluchistan, and Azarbaijan. The effects of the centralization and tribalization policies of the modern state on the politicization of linguistic and religious differences in all three cases will form the focal point of this chapter. Chapter Six will study the role of the elite, tribal and non-tribal, in the formation of ethnic identities. I will discuss how such elites make use of the existing linguistic and religious differences in order to construct, and in many ways to invent or manipulate, distinct ethnic identities, and how they use such invented traditions to provide political support and material resources for their struggle against the central state.

In Chapter Seven, I will study the role of international factors in the rise of nationalist tendencies in multi-religio-linguistic societies. The chapter will discuss the promotion of ethnic identity by Western Orientalists and the

fact that international politics and inter-state relations, on both a regional and global level, have directly and indirectly encouraged the formation of ethnic nationalist movements in the present century.

Chapter Five:

The Modern State Formation Process in Iran:

From Tribal Autonomy to State Centralization

In this chapter, I will discuss the process of modern state formation in Iran and its effects on the politicization of linguistic and religious ties in three Iranian cases. The focus of the chapter is the effects of the modern state-building process on the socio-political structures of the tribal groups in Kurdistan, Baluchistan, and Azarbaijan. In this process, the former decentralized Iranian state was replaced by a modern, centralized, bureaucratic state.

This modern emerging institution did not tolerate the powerful autonomous tribal leaders who ruled different parts of Iran and who were usually recognized as the local rulers or the governors by the decentralized Iranian states during the Qajar dynasty and earlier. The rise of the modern state, thus, led to the emergence of conflictual relations between the tribal elites (Khans, Amirs, and Sardars) and the modern central state.

The main concern of this chapter is to show the way Reza Shah's modern state changed the former pattern of Iranian state-tribe relations. Inspired by the European secular idea of modern nationalism and encouraged by a group of modernly educated Iranian intellectuals, Reza Shah was determined to

replace traditional loyalties to religion and tribes with a more compelling loyalty to the state.

Drawing upon the theoretical approaches to state formation in the modern world, especially in Europe, I will briefly compare the Iranian situation with that of Europe on the eve of the rise of the modern states. The arguments of the leading theorists of modern state formation regarding the historical experiences and the socio-political structures in the European context indicate that modern state formation required the existence of specific socio-political and economic conditions. As I will argue, such conditions did not exist in Iran of the 1920s. Given this important fact, the modern Iranian state faced serious challenges regarding the centralization and monopolization of power in the country.

The existence of the powerful tribal chiefs was the main challenge to Reza Shah's goal of national integration and monopolization of coercive force. As I will discuss, Reza Shah campaign against these chiefs was mainly successful in attaining this objective. The elimination of the autonomous tribal chiefs, however, had important effects on the politicization of social and cultural differences based on language and religion in Iran.

The most important issues on which the present chapter will focus are the effects which the process of modern state-building and centralization policies had on the politicization of the already existing socio-cultural differences between

different religio-linguistic groups in Iran. The chapter is therefore divided into two sections. In the first section, I will concentrate on relations between the traditional decentralized Iranian state and the autonomous tribal chiefs in Kurdistan, Baluchistan, and Azarbaijan. In the second section, I will discuss what effect the rise of the modern, centralized Pahlavi state and the state's confrontation with the powerful tribal chiefs had on the politicization of primordial ties of language and religion, and in turn, on the emergence of nationalist movements in the Iranian cases.

I. TRADITIONAL IRANIAN STATE AND THE AUTONOMOUS TRIBAL CHIEFS In Chapter Two, I analyzed the general characteristics of state-tribe relations in Iran before the rise of the modern centralized state. However, I did not discuss the relations between the tribal groups and the Iranian decentralized states in Kurdistan, Baluchistan and Azarbaijan. Absent, too, in that chapter, was an analysis of the autonomy of the tribal chiefs in Iran. This section thus concentrates on state-tribe relations and the autonomy of tribal groups in Kurdistan, Baluchistan and Azarbaijan before the rise of the modern centralized state in the 1920s.

As I argued in Chapter Two, tribes had not been, as some social scientists tend to present them, isolated and stateless societies. On the contrary, Iranian tribal groups were in

permanent contact with the state. The tribal chiefs used to collect taxes for the government and provide armed forces to the Iranian army. To illustrate, it is noteworthy that the armies of Nadir Shah Afshar, Karim Khan Zand, and Agha Muhammad Khan Qajar, the founders of the Afsharid, Zand, and Qajar dynasties, were composed mostly of tribal forces. According to Safi Nejad, the Iranian army in the late Safavid era was composed of 180,000 soldiers, of which 110,000 were mobilized by the tribal chiefs (Ilkhans, Khans, and Il Baig).¹

The Iranian monarchs, in turn, recognized the tribal chiefs as the local rulers, and in many cases nominated them, by their formal appointments as governors, representatives of the central state in tribal areas. In many cases, such tribal leaders could not legitimate their position of chief (*Ilkhans, Beglar Baigi, Amir*) without the formal recognition of the Shah. The tribal chiefs, thus, were powerful local rulers who had absolute military and economic authority in their sphere of influence.

In many cases the Shah owed his throne to the cooperation and the support of the autonomous tribal chiefs.² According to Shahrough Akhavi, the state was so weak that its control

¹Javad Safi Nejad, *Jam'iyat-e Ashayer-e Iran az 1128 ta 1220 H.Gh (Az Ahd-e Shah Sultan Hussein Safavi ta Fath Ali Shah)* [The tribal population of Iran from Shah Sultan Hussein to Fath Ali Shah Qajar- 1715-1835] (text in Persian), (Mashhad: Astan Qods Razavi, 1988).

²Baharvand, 210-212

did not go beyond the capital during Qajar rule.³ In some cases tribal chiefs were influential political elites in the capital and held high- ranking governmental positions.⁴ Moreover, they had local political positions such as governorships.⁵ The chiefs of the tribal confederacies (*Ilkhans*) had in fact complete autonomy in their area of influence.⁶ As Ervand Abrahamian has written, the Ilkhans, during the Qajars:

...were virtual kings within their own tribes, governing without intervention of outside authorities, administering their own laws, collecting their own taxes, and being only 'nominally' subject to the central government. Sometimes, this 'subjection' took the form of sending a meagre contribution to the royal treasury.⁷

Arfa also elaborates on the autonomy of the tribal chiefs in the Qajar period:

Most of the border regions were under local hereditary chiefs who, although acknowledging allegiance to *Shahanshah* (king of the kings), were practically independent and had their courts, their

³Shahrugh Akhavi, "State Formation and Consolidation in Twentieth Century Iran: the Reza Shah period and the Islamic Republic," in Ali Banuazizi and Myron Weiner, eds., *The State, religion, and Ethnic Politics: Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan*, 202

⁴See Beck, "Tribes and States," 190; Baharvand, 196.

⁵On this, see chapter two.

⁶For more elaboration on the autonomy of Iranian tribal chiefs, see ; Philip Salzman, "National Integration of the Tribes in Modern Iran," *The Middle East Journal*, 25 (1971): 328-329; Iliya F. Harik, "The Ethnic Revolution and Political Integration in the Middle East," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 3 (1972): 305.

⁷Ervand Abrahamian, "Oriental Despotism," 11

armed forces, regular and irregular. These chiefs even conducted correspondence with foreign powers and the central government as if they were truly independent. They were the Khans, the Amirs, the Sardars, the Valis in Azarbaijan, Kordestan, Lorestan, Khuzistan, Baluchistan, Khorasan and Mazendaran, and in that part of the Caucasus which belonged to Iran, before it was annexed by Russia.⁸

Considering the existence of such autonomous tribal groups, most Iranian states since the mid-sixth century have been, more or less, decentralized states. Referring to this question, Akhavi goes so far as to consider only three centralized states in Iranian history -- namely, those under the Achaemenids (550-331 B.C.), Sasanids (226-636), and Pahlavi (1921-1979).⁹

The movement toward centralization and the creation of the modern state changed that pattern. While the first efforts for centralization and movement against the tribal chiefs began under Muhammad Shah Qajar, who tried to bring Turkman tribal chiefs and powerful Baluchi Sardars under his control in the early nineteenth century,¹⁰ that policy was not successful partly because of his sudden death. Fath Ali Shah Qajar, who feared the power of the tribal chiefs, followed that experience with his own unsuccessful attempts. Some

⁸Arfa, *Under Five Shahs*, 1.

⁹Akhavi, 203.

¹⁰See Aziz Kiyavand, *Hukumat, Siyasat va Ashayir*, [Government, politics and the tribes] (text in Persian), (Tehran: Intisharat-i Ashayiri, 1989), 90-91.; Brian Spooner "Who Are the Baluch."

argue that his distrust of tribal chiefs was a factor in his army's defeat in the Irano-Russian Wars (1802-1828).¹¹ The Iranian tribal forces, who were important elements for the success of Shah Abbas of Safavid and Nader Shah of Afshar, were not given a significant role in Fath Ali Shah's armed forces in the war with Russia.

The importance of the autonomous tribal groups is reflected in the fact that most Iranian dynasties such as the Safavid, Afshar, Zand, and Qajar were all established by powerful tribal leaders. While some of these tribal leaders did not establish such dynasties, they did, however, have important roles in socio-political upheavals like the Constitutional Revolution of 1906 and its aftermath. The role of the Bakhtiari Ilkhans in the overthrow of the Qajar dynasty is one example.¹² Kiyavand neatly summarizes the power of the tribal groups over Iran's history:

Until the present century, the Iranian nomadic tribes have had either the control of the states or have shared the power with the state and were supporting it. Sometimes they had claims over the state and were its rivals. In other cases, they resisted the state's tyranny and were fighting against it.¹³

Autonomous tribal groups headed by a chief existed in

¹¹See Baharvand, *Kooch Neshini dar Iran*, 211.

¹²See Hossein Golabian, *An Analysis of The Underdeveloped Rural and Nomadic Areas of Iran*, (Stockholm: The Royal School of Technology, 1977), 229.

¹³Kiyavand, 37.

most parts of Iran. They were in fact the only authority in their areas and the state usually did not interfere in tribal affairs or the authority of the Khan, provided he remained loyal to the Shah. These chiefs had so much authority and autonomy that William Douglas who lived among Iranian and other Middle Eastern tribes, was moved to remark:

The Ilkhan of each tribe was a king; the Shah of Persia was the king of kings. The Ilkhans constituted a council of nobles who governed with the Shah. The tribes paid the taxes to the Shah and furnished soldiers to the Persian Army. But each tribe had a large degree of autonomy, greater in fact than the separate states of our nation.¹⁴

In the remaining part of this section, I will focus on a discussion of the autonomy of the tribal groups and the position of the powerful tribal leaders in Kurdistan, Baluchistan, and Azarbaijan.

KURDISTAN

The existence of powerful tribal groups headed by powerful chiefs demonstrating remarkable autonomy has been an important fact of Kurdish political life until the early twentieth century. While Kurdish tribal leaders enjoyed such an autonomy, they were in contact with the central government, especially the Shahs in Iran and the Sultans of the Ottoman Empire. This was especially true after the rise of these two Middle Eastern and Islamic rival states in the sixteenth

¹⁴ William O. Douglas, *Strange Lands and Friendly People*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), 54.

century. When Iran lost most parts of its Kurdish territories to the Ottomans in the Battle of Chaldiran (1514), different powerful Kurdish tribal leaders relied on one or the other of these rival powers for political and military support. The Kurdish leaders, thus, enjoyed extensive autonomy since the Iranian dynasties and the Ottomans used to give more autonomy and political power to the Kurdish tribal groups in return for their loyalty. The Ottomans were more generous in this regard, since they wanted to encourage the Kurdish Khans to remain under Ottoman patronage rather than backsliding into the loyalty they had traditionally offered Iranian Shahs of the pre-Safavid era.

The fact that the Kurds were mostly Sunnite Muslims and the Iranian states since the Safavid period were primarily Shi'ite encouraged the Kurdish tribal chiefs to ally with the Ottomans. Before the Battle of Chaldiran, the biased Shi'ite Safavids tended to depose the Sunnite Kurdish leaders and replace them with non-Kurdish, and mainly Turkish, Shi'ite elites. Nikitine, the Russian historian, writes that when eleven Kurdish chiefs met Shah Ismael, the founder of the Safavid dynasty, he imprisoned most of them and appointed in their place his supporters as the rulers of the Kurdish principalities (*Emirates*).¹⁵ The Safavids' defeat in the Battle of Chaldiran in 1514 was a turning point in Kurdish

¹⁵Vassili Nikitine, *Kurd Va Kurdistan*, (text in Persian), Trans. Muhammad Ghazi, (Tehran: Niloofar, 1987), 395.

history, since according to Kurdish nationalist Badir Khan, about 23 Kurdish Emirates signed a friendship treaty with the Ottomans according to which the Kurdish chiefs were recognized as the local leaders of their tribal areas in return for a promise of loyalty to the Ottoman Sultan.¹⁶ The *Sharafnameh*, the oldest historical work on the Kurds, mentions that some twenty Kurdish *Mirs* (local tribal rulers) had sent a declaration of submission to Salim the Ottoman Sultan before his campaign against the Safavids. According to the *Sharafnameh*:

The Kurdish *Mirs* sent Idris Bidlisi, a well known Kurd, to the Sultan with the demand of *recognition of their hereditary rights over their respective territories* and with the request to appoint one from their midst as the *Biglerbegi*.¹⁷

The Iranian dynasties also gave much autonomy to the Kurdish Emirates in order to encourage their loyalty. One important example was the Ardalan Emirate, which was under the leadership of a Kurdish *Vali* loyal to Iran. The Ardalan Amirs were recognized as the rulers of Iranian Kurdistan by the Safavid kings and held their autonomous position until Nasir Al-Din Shah Qajar in the mid-nineteenth century. Their sphere of influence in Iranian Kurdistan, namely the Sanandaj, Marivan and Baneh areas, were formally called "the Kurdistan

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 396.

¹⁷Amir Sharaf Khan Bedlisi, *Sharafnameh*, mentioned in Martin Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State: On the Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan*, (London: Zed Press, 1992), 143-144.

of Ardalan."¹⁸

Not all Kurdish autonomous local rulers were equal in terms of the power they wielded. By differentiating among these local rulers, Amir Sharaf Khan, the author of *Sharafnameh*, reveals a hierarchy among Kurdish autonomous authorities. The most powerful category consisted of those Kurdish principalities (Volat) who claimed kingship - historians considered these as Sultans. Bedlisi mentions five of such principalities, including, the rulers of Diar Bakr and Jazireh, the rulers of Dinvarah and Shahre Zul (or Hosnuyeh), the rulers of Fazluyeh (or the Great Lur), the rulers of the Lesser Lur, and the Sultans of Egypt and Sham (Syria) known as the Ayubids (a dynasty founded by the famous Saladin).¹⁹

The second level within the hierarchy were those who did not claim kingship but sometimes put their names on coins and had them read *Khutbah* (Friday prayer sermon). Here Bedlisi mentions the rulers of Ardalan, Hakkari (known as Shanbu), Imadiyeh (known as Behadinan), Jazireh (who consisted of the Amirs of Azizan, Kurkil, and Fanik), and finally the rulers of Hasankaif (known as Malkan).²⁰ Of this second category, Ardalan and probably Hakkari were under Iranian suzerainty.

In a third category, Bedlisi mentions "other Amirs and

¹⁸Hamid Mo'meni, (M. Bidsorkhi), *Dar Bareh-e Mobarezat-e Kurdistan*, 22.

¹⁹Bedlisi, *Sharafnameh*, 19-82.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 82-162.

rulers of Kurdistan," and describes three groupings in this regard. In the first faction, he mentions dozens of local rulers. In the second faction, he talks about twelve rulers, of which the rulers of Mukri, Baradust, Mahmudi, Kalhur, and Baneh were in Iran. He devoted the third faction to what he called "the Kurdish Amirs of Iran," who were divided into four branches: the Amirs of Siah Mansur, the Amirs of Chakani, the Amirs of Zanganeh, and the Amirs of Pazuki.²¹ Since most of these names -- Ardalan, Baban, Hakkari, Dunboli, Kalhur, Mukri, Zanganeh, Pazuki and others -- are the name of the Kurdish tribes or tribal confederacies, it is clear that most of these Emirates were in fact local tribal ruling families who were either loyal to Iran or to the Ottoman Empire.

Some of these local rulers, especially those ruling the great principalities, had vast areas composed of many other Kurdish tribal domains under their control. From these, only a few Kurdish principalities, like Ardalan and Mukri, were in Iran after the Battle of Chaldiran. Other important principalities, like Baban, Bitlis (or Bidlis), Milan, Bahdinan, Hakkari, and Bayazid were in the Ottoman Empire.²² Some of these principalities, especially those in Ottoman territory, were so strong that their Mirs (princes) defied both Ottomans and Iranians. Writing on Bitlis, the French

²¹*Ibid.*, 10-11.

²²For a list of these principalities with their geographical location, see Mehrdad Izady, *The Kurds: A Concise Handbook*, 53.

traveller Tavernier observed in 1676 that the prince of Bitlis "recognized neither Shah [i.e., Persia] nor Padisha [i.e., the Ottomans], and could put into field a force of 20-25,000 cavalry." According to Fleurian, writing in 1694, the Jesuits who visited the city of Bitlis in 1683 reported that the nominal vassalage of the ruler to the Ottomans was preserved only in that he sent them tribute on his accession.²³

The autonomous Kurdish Emirates (principalities) lasted less than two centuries. When the Ottoman Empire was defeated in Vienna (1683), Kurdish rulers were replaced by Turk governors and Kurdish Emirates became Turkish *Velayah* (province). As Nikitine points out, the Kurdish tribal chiefs maintained only a nominal autonomy. This situation intensified in the mid-nineteenth century during Sultan Abdul Hamid's reign. The last Kurdish Amir was Badir Khan of Jazireh, who after a series of defeats which he imposed upon the Turks, was defeated as the result of his cousin's treason.²⁴ In Iran, Ardalan Amirs -- the main great Kurdish autonomous rulers -- gradually lost their advantages and power. Finally a Qajar prince replaced the Ardalan Amirs in 1860.²⁵

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴Nikitine, 397-398.

²⁵*Ibid.*; Izady writes that the Ardalanans (founded in 1168) were forced out of their capital of Senna (modern Sanandaj) in 1867 in favour of direct Persian rule from Tehran. See Izady, *The Kurds: A Concise Handbook*, 56.

Despite the fact that such Kurdish principalities had remarkable power and autonomy, they were not totally independent of the Ottoman or Iranian Empires. It is true that they defied both powers in some periods, especially when the central state was weak, but the general pattern was that they were loyal to and allied with one against the other. The most telling manifestations of this loyalty were the taxes they collected for the government and the armed tribal forces they gave to the Ottoman or Iranian armies. As Qassimlou writes about Iranian Kurdistan:

Two kinds of taxes were levied on every Kurdish tribe: In addition to the tax levied on cattle and pastures, soldiers had to be provided for the army, often including the full equipment, hussars with horses and clothing, in many cases the soldiers expenses during the service had also to be covered by the tribe.²⁶

Baba Mardukh Rohani, an Iranian Kurd, points out that during Nadir Shah Afshar's war against the Ottomans around Baghdad in 1733, military forces provided by the Vali (ruler) of Ardalan were in the vanguard.²⁷ According to Nikitine, Shah Abbas (of Safavid), Nadir Shah (Afshar), and Fath Ali Shah (of Qajar) relied on the armed forces of Mukri Kurdish Emirate in their wars against the Ottomans, Afghans, and

²⁶Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou gives more details about the tax levied on cattle. See Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan and the Kurds*, 107-108.

²⁷Baba Mardukh Rohani (Shiva), *Tarikh-e Mashahir-e Kurd: Urafa, Ulama, Udaba, Shoara*, [The history of the famous Kurds: Mystics, Ulama, writers and poets] (text in Persian), (Tehran: Soroush, 1985), 233.

Russians.²⁸ Quoting from the Soviet historian, I. Averianov, Ghassemlou writes that "in the Russo-Iranian wars at the beginning of the nineteenth century, two thirds of the troops of Abbas Mirza, formed by conscripts, comprised only Kurds."²⁹ Ghassemlou also writes that, "in 1885, of the 35,000 members of the Iranian conscript army, 20,000 were Kurds."³⁰ Regarding the Ardalan principality, Nikitine argues that:

...the Khans of Ardalan accepted the title of *Vali* (ruler) given to them by the Iranian kings and were always loyal to them. The only thing that Iranian Kings wanted of them was specific numbers of armed forces and they always met this demand.³¹

Kurdish autonomous leaders also collected taxes and provided military forces for the Shah. For such important services, the Shah rewarded the tribe by giving it land.³² The tribal chiefs were rewarded and formally recognized as the local rulers by both major powers. Muhammad Mardukh Kurdistani, an Iranian Kurdish historian, mentions that Nadir Shah Afshar used to give the title "Sultan" to the Kurdish leaders in response to the policies of the Ottomans who had

²⁸Nikitine, 356

²⁹Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan*, 107-108.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 108.

³¹*Ibid.*, 361.

³²*Ibid.*, 112.

given them the rank of 'Pasha'.³³ The Kurdish chiefs were also formally appointed to political positions in both states. When, for example, the local Kurdish leader Eskandar Sultan participated with the Safavid king Shah Abbas the Great in the conquest of Yirvan (the capital of the present Armenia), the Shah formally recognized him as the ruler of Baneh, a Kurdish city in Iranian Kurdistan.³⁴ Nadir Shah also offered such a position to Salim Khan Ardalan.³⁵

Kurdish tribal leaders were given other important military and political positions outside Kurdistan. One example is found in the person of Aziz Khan of Mukri, who was the governor of Azarbaijan and also the chief of staff of the Iranian army against the Ottomans under the Qajars in 1853. Later he was appointed as the governor of Tehran,³⁶ and finally as the Minister of War by Nasir al-Din Shah.³⁷ Another example is Mahmud Pasha Khan Kalhur, who was appointed by Muhammad Shah Qajar as the governor of Gilan Gharb in

³³Muhammad Mardukh Kurdistani, *Tarikh-e Kurd Va Kurdistan Va Tawabe'e*, [The history of Kurd, Kurdistan and its Suburbs] (text in Persian), (Sanandaj: Qoreyfi, 1974), 68.

³⁴Muhammad Rauf Tavakkoli, *Jografia Va Tarikh-e Baneh-e Kurdistan*, [Geography and the history of Baneh of Kurdistan] (text in Persian), (Tehran, 1984), 110-111.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 112-113.

³⁶See Nikitine, 358.

³⁷Tavakkoli, 125-127.

western Iran.³⁸ Like the Valis of other parts of Iran, the Kurdish Valis, and especially the Valis of Ardalan, were powerful political elites in Iran. Quoting Vilchowsky, Nikitine writes that the "Valis had so much authority that they could give the title of *Khan* to other tribal leaders in the absence of the Shah."³⁹

The decline of the Kurdish principalities in Iran and the Ottoman Empire did not bring Kurdistan under the complete control of the central state. While the Kurdish Emirates such as Ardalan, Betlis, or Baban disappeared in the mid-eighteenth century, other Kurdish tribal leaders managed to maintain their autonomy at a reduced level. In fact, Van Bruinessen argues that Kurdish history has witnessed three levels of Kurdish autonomous rule: the reign of Amirs of tribal confederacies such as Ardalan; the reign of Aghas or feudal landlords, Shaikhs or religious leaders; and the reign of lesser tribal chiefs.⁴⁰

In addition to the large tribal confederacies, Izady mentions many Kurdish tribes in Iran and the Ottoman Empire.⁴¹ While powerful tribes like the Shakak, Jalali, Harki, Mukri,

³⁸Ruhani (Shiva), 379.

³⁹Nikitine, 362.

⁴⁰Martin Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*. Ghassemlou writes that *Mir* or *Bag* was the chief of tribe (*Ashirat*), and *Agha* was the head of the clan (*Taifa*, *Bar*, *Tira*). See Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan*, 106.

⁴¹Izady, 74-85.

Mangur, Dumboli, Jaf, Guran, Kalhur and other Kurdish tribes in Iran did not have the military-political position of the Ardalan Emirate, they did enjoy some degree of local autonomy.⁴² They had their own armed forces, and their chiefs were in contact with the central government. The period of the Kurdish principalities headed by large tribal confederacies was the golden age of the local Kurdish autonomous rule.

While the Kurds were never united under one Emirate, and the existing Emirates fought each other in favour of the Ottoman or the Iranian states, the end of the Kurdish principalities, such as Ardalan and Mukri,⁴³ intensified such divisions. Freshteh Koochi-Kamali provides a clear account of the situation:

Until the mid-nineteenth century, a large part of the Kurdish region [in Iran] was divided into principalities with a mixed population of tribal and non-tribal townspeople. These principalities, which had enjoyed considerable autonomy, were abolished under the centralization policy of the Qajar Shahs, and the last of the princes was deposed in 1865. As a result, Kurdish princes -- or chieftains, as they later became -- lost some of their freedom of manoeuvre. None the less, because they continued to retain substantial armed forces they could still exert power and influence, which they used sometimes in support of the ruler, and sometimes to press their own demands. However, the disintegration of the larger tribal confederacies

⁴²On the important Iranian Kurdish tribes of Jaf, Guran, and Kalhur and their powers see Nikitine, 367-375.

⁴³C.J. Edmonds, C.J., *Kurdha, Turkha, Arabha* (Persian translation of Kurds, Turks, Arabs: Politics, Travel and Research in North-Eastern Iraq, 1919-1925), Trans by Ebrahim Younesi, (Tehran: Roozbehan, 1988), 13-14.

brought the focus of tribal power down to the level of the smaller tribal chiefs who were in constant conflict with each other.⁴⁴

The abolition of the autonomous Kurdish principalities created a power vacuum which was filled by religious leaders such as Mullahs, Qadis [judges], and Shaikhs. As Izady stresses, after the mid-nineteenth century, only religious and tribal leaders led the Kurds against increasingly intrusive state presences.⁴⁵ All Kurdish revolts against the centralized policies of the Ottomans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century or against the British or Iraqis were led by Kurdish religious leaders such as Shaikh Obeydullah, Shaikh Said, Shaikh Mahmud Barzanji and Shaikh Ahmad Barzani. In a different, and non-religious, category there were Aghas, some of whom were popular tribal chiefs in Iran. Hamza Agha, the chief of the Mangur tribal confederacy who revolted against the Qajars during 1880-1881, was a good example.⁴⁶ Another example was Ismael Agha Simko, the powerful chief of the Shakak Confederacy, who revolted in 1920-24.

By the early decades of the twentieth century, however,

⁴⁴Freshteh Koochi-Kamali, "The Development of Nationalism in Iranian Kurdistan," in Philip G. Kreyenbroek and Stefan Sperl, eds., *The Kurds: A Contemporary Overview*, (London: Routledge, 1993), 171-172.

⁴⁵Izady, 205.

⁴⁶For more details see Iraj Afshar Sistani, *Moghaddameh*, 196-199.

only local tribal leaders remained of the original sources of authority in Kurdistan. This was the case in Iranian Kurdistan where tribal leaders such as Ismael Agha Simko, Hamza Agha Mangur, Mahmud Khan Kani Sanan and Hama Rashid were powerful Kurdish elites. These chiefs not only had well-trained tribal fighters, but possessed economic resources by controlling vast agricultural lands, collecting taxes from their tribal subjects, or robbing and pillaging neighbouring villages, towns or caravans. Qajar rulers, particularly in the chaotic wake of the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, were not able to fully consolidate their control in Kurdistan.

In the period between the death of Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar (1896) and the rise of Reza Shah Pahlavi in the 1920s, Kurdish tribal chiefs gained more autonomy. Most such tribal chiefs were recognized as the defacto rulers, and some, like Mahmud Khan Kani Sanan and Hama Rashid, were semi-official governors of their tribal areas in Kurdistan.⁴⁷

BALUCHISTAN

Unlike Kurdistan, Baluchistan was not fully caught up in the rivalry between the two powerful states, and its tribal leaders enjoyed significant autonomy from the time of the Mongol invasion until the mid-nineteenth century.⁴⁸ Writing on Qajar Iran, Ann Lambton points out that:

⁴⁷Ramesh Farzanfar, *Ethnic Groups and the State*, p. 271.

⁴⁸Brian Spooner, "Who Are the Baluch ?", 96.

Sistan, Baluchistan, and Makran, although nominally under Persian domination, were not directly administered until the second half of the nineteenth century.

While Qajars could extend their control over Baluchistan, they were not able to abolish the powerful Baluchi tribal Sardars. Muhammad Shah and Nasir al-Din Shah, both from the Qajar dynasty, could have brought the Baluchi Sardars fully under their control,⁵⁰ but they preferred securing the Baluchs' allegiance to destroying their power base, as Baluchi military forces and tax collection structures were both of great value to the Iranian state. Lambton notes that like Kurdish and Turkish chiefs, Baluchi tribal leaders were present in the armies of Nadir Shah, Karim Khan, and Agha Muhammad Khan -- the founders, respectively, of the Afsharid, Zand, and Qajar dynasties in Iran.⁵¹

For this service, they were rewarded political positions such as the governorship of Baluchi and other parts of Iran. Nadir Shah, for example, not only appointed Nasir Khan Baluch to Beglar Baigi of Baluchistan⁵² because of his military

⁴⁹Ann K.S. Lambton, *Qajar Persia: Eleven Studies*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1987), 44.

⁵⁰On the reintegration of western Baluchistan's into Iran during these two Qajar kings in the mid-nineteenth century, see Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch, *History of Baluch Race and Baluchistan*, 256-257.

⁵¹Ann K. S. Lambton, "The Tribal Resurgence and the Decline of Bureaucracy in the Eighteen Century," 110.

⁵²See Spooner, "Who Are the Baluch ?," 105.

services during Nadir's invasion of India, but he also gave the governorship of Kohguluye in western Iran to Muhammad Khan Baluch, who had participated in his campaign against the Ottomans.⁵³ More recently, in 1843, Amir Kabir, the prime minister under Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar, appointed Baluchi Sardar Muhammad Reza Khan Nakhai as the governor of Sistan.⁵⁴ Regarding their contribution to the collection of taxes, Richard Tapper writes while Baluchi tribes paid taxes to the central government, they enjoyed extensive autonomy until the 1920s.⁵⁵

The brutality employed against the Baluchi tribes by the Qajars, however, left a legacy of hatred toward the central government in Baluchistan. In fact, the Qajar's policies were so brutal that the Baluchis used to refer to all non-Baluchi forces using suppressive policies against the Baluchis as "Qajars." During Muhammad Shah Qajar's rule, the lands which were controlled by the Sardars were confiscated by the government and were treated as Crown Lands (*Khaliseh*). The government rented other lands to Baluchis Sardars, provided the Sardars paid taxes.⁵⁶

The pressure on Baluchi tribal leaders to collect taxes

32. ⁵³See Peter Avery, "Nadir Shah and the Afsharid Legacy,"

⁵⁴Iraj Afshar Sistani, *Moghaddameh*, 897.

⁵⁵Richard Tapper, "Introduction," 23.

⁵⁶Iraj Afshar Sistani, *Moghaddameh*, 941.

for the government was so heavy that some of them revolted against Qajar rule in the late nineteenth century. In 1897, for example, Baluchis under the leadership of Hussein Khan, chief of the Narui tribe, rose against Qajars in Sarhad, Saravan and Bampur. They demanded a reduction of taxes, from one third to one tenth (of their production, it is assumed).⁵⁷

Qajar control started to decline after the death of Nasir al-Din Shah. The chaotic political situation in Iran from the Constitutional Revolution to the rise of Reza Shah in the early 1920s loosened the Qajar presence in Baluchistan and increased the powers of Baluchi tribal leaders.

Tribalism has been one of the important features of Baluchi socio-political life. Baluchis have been organized around dozens of large and small tribes. According to Jahanbani, Baluchis were organized into about 150 large and small tribes as of the mid- twentieth century.⁵⁸ Larger tribal groups (*Tayefeh*) were divided into smaller units (*Tireh*). Tribes (*Tayefeh*) ruling different parts of Iranian Baluchistan have consisted of dozens of *Tirehs*, and among these have been the Baranzai (or Barakzai), Lashari, Narui, Mubaraki, Nushirvani, Riki (or Rigi), Ismailzai (later Shahbakhsh), Yarmuhammadzai (Yarahmadzai, or later,

⁵⁷Inyatullah Baloch, 143-144.

⁵⁸Amanullah Jahanbani, *Sargozasht-e Baluchistan va Marzhaye An*, [the history of Baluchistan and its boundaries] (text in Persian), (Tehran: Majlis Publications, 1959).

Shahnavazi), and the Gamshadzai.⁵⁹ Their Sardars, like Dust Muhammad Khan of Baranzai (Barakzai), were among the most powerful local rulers in the area.

The degree of autonomy of Baluchi tribal leaders has differed over time depending on the political situations in Iran, Afghanistan and British India. In some periods, when there was no powerful central state in these countries, the leaders of the Baluchi tribal confederacies or larger tribes were free of significant state intervention. In other periods they were under the suzerainty of Iranian Monarchs and paid tribute to them. For example, Nasir Khan, the powerful Baluchi leader, was loyal to Nadir Shah Afshar and was appointed as the *Beglar Baigi* and the ruler of Kalate. As Selig Harrison relates:

Nasir Khan paid tribute during the first several years of his reign to the powerful Persian emperor Nadir Shah, who had conquered the warring tribes of adjacent Afghanistan and had helped him to win the Kalat throne in the face of the rival claims to the succession. Nasir Khan repudiated his tributary status following Nadir Shah's assassination in 1747 and the subsequent decline of centralized power in Iran.⁶⁰

In some periods, Baluchi leaders like Mir Shikar Rind in the sixteenth and Mir Nasir Khan in the mid-eighteenth

⁵⁹For a detailed study of these tribes see Iraj Afshar Sistani, *Moghaddameh*, 906-955; For a list of Baluchi tribes of Iran, see Inyatullah Baloch, *The Problem of Greater Baluchistan*, 43-45.

⁶⁰Selig Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, 17.

centuries had remarkable autonomy, but like the Kurdish Amirs or Khans, they were unable to unify Baluchis under one Baluchi rule. Baluchi Sardars, even under these two charismatic leaders, were in permanent conflict over power and influence.⁶¹

It is noteworthy that the Baluchi tribal leaders of eastern Baluchistan (now in Pakistan) had more authority than the Baluchi leaders of Iran. The best example of the Baluchi autonomous -- and in some periods, independent -- rulers were the Khans of Kalat who ruled for some centuries. In Iran, powerful Baluchi tribes such as the Baranzai (Barakzai), though able to capably govern some part of Iranian Baluchistan, were still not as powerful as the Khans of Kalat. Baluchi Sardars of Iranian Baluchistan were, in contrast to the eastern Baluchi Sardars, less influenced or controlled by the British colonial rule in India, as is evidenced by something of an anti-British tradition in Iranian Baluchistan. Indeed, during the First World War years, Iranian Baluchi tribes of the Sarhad (Yarahmadzai, Gamshadzai, and Ismaelzai) fought against British forces commanded by Brigadier-General

⁶¹On the inter-Baluchi conflicts during and after Mir Shakar Rind see Muhammad Hassan Hosseinbor, *Iran and Its Nationalities: The Case of Baluch Nationalism*, 37-40; On such conflicts during and after Nasir Khan, see A. W. Hughes, *The Country of Balochistan: Its Geography, Topography, Ethnography and History*, (London: George Bell and Sons, 1877), 179-237.

Dyer.⁶²

An important difference between the two main geographical areas of Iranian Baluchistan, namely Sarhad and southern Baluchistan, has directly affected the structural bases of the Baluchi tribal chiefs' authority. The difference stems from the fact that while southern Baluchistan -- consisting of four regions: the coastal plain, the Makran, the Jaz Murian, and the Saravan -- has generally organized its agricultural production along feudal lines, the Sarhad region in the north has been considerably more tribal.⁶³ Because of the agricultural richness of southern Baluchistan, Baluchi autonomous leaders (*Hakom*) in these areas were powerful landlords. Before the Iranian government took over the effective administration of the area, each *Hakom* had a fort in the agricultural centre under his control.

The southern Baluchi *Hakom's* power and income thus derived from four sources: the produce of the land he personally owned; a tithe (*dah-yak*) on all agricultural produce of the settled people whom he controlled; service (*sren-bandi*) from all nomadic Baluch who acknowledged his position, which was generally military or quasi-military; and finally a tax (*maliyat*) from both settled people (*shahri*) and

⁶²Dyer wrote the details of his campaigns against these three Iranian Baluchi tribes. See C.E.M. Dyer, *The Raiders of the Sarhad*, (London: H.F. and G. Witherby, 1921).

⁶³On this difference see Philip C. Salzman "Adaptation and Political Organization in Iranian Baluchistan," in *Ethnology*, 10 (1971): 434-235.

nomadic Baluch.⁶⁴ These *Hakoms* were so powerful and rich that they had several tribal leaders (Sardars) under their allegiance. The *Hakom* would confirm the appointment of the Sardar by "tying on the turban," and in some cases he was able to influence the decision between rival candidates.⁶⁵ One example of such a powerful Baluchi leader was Dust Muhammad Khan of the Baranzai tribal confederacy who ruled Bampur in the early decades of twentieth century.

While there existed feudal-like structures in southern Baluchistan, the Baluchis in Sarhad were, and are, tribally organized. The Sarhadi tribal chiefs (Sardars) did not have the same power as *Hakoms*, primarily because they did not have the rich agricultural lands to provide enormous earnings. Instead, they engaged in robbery against the Persian peasant villages in Kirman or Khurasan, and in raiding trade caravan routes passing north of Sarhad. As Philip Salzman writes, "the exploitation of these resources provided substantial income for the tribesmen. This raiding fitted the tribesmen's self conception as warriors rather than labourers."⁶⁶ The famous Baluchi tribes of Sarhad, like Yarahmadzai, Ismailzai, Gamshadzai, and Rigi, were in just such a situation. The

⁶⁴See Brian Spooner, "Politics, Kinship, and Ecology in Southeast Persia," *Ethnology*, 8, no. 2 (1969), :140-141; See also, Salzman, "Adaptation and Political Organization in Iranian Baluchistan," 438-440.

⁶⁵Spooner, "Politics, Kinshship," 142.

⁶⁶Salzman, "Adaptation and Political Organization," 442.

chiefdom was, however, hereditary for both southern Hakom and northern Sardar.

As mentioned earlier, despite the Qajars' efforts to bring Baluchistan under their control, the power of the Baluchi local rulers and tribal leaders did not wane. Spooner explains the Qajar king's failure by pointing to the fact that their efforts coincided with the beginning of the "Great Game in Asia" and the occupation of eastern Baluchistan by British forces.⁶⁷ In the beginning of the twentieth century, thus, there were powerful Baluchi Hakoms and Sardars in different parts of Baluchistan. The Baluchi nationalist historian, Muhammad Sardar Khan remarks that:

...the beginning of this century saw the entire Persian Baluchistan split up into four small and mutually hostile independent Baluchi principalities -- Bampur, Dashtiari, Dizak and Jask. Neither the ties of blood, nor the surprising pressure of necessity could reconcile the internal quarrels and disunity of Baluchi chiefs, all of whom fell one by one before the wanton aggression of the Pehlavi despot [Reza Shah]."⁶⁸

According to Hassan Arfa, when Reza Shah came to power in 1921, several Baluchi tribes were out of the central government's control. These included Sadozai (Sardarzai) under the leadership of Sardar Said Khan in Makran, Baranzais in Bampur under Sardar Bahram Khan and later Dust Muhammad Khan, several tribes in Saravan, and Ismaelzai, Gamshadzai,

⁶⁷Spooner, "Who Are the Baluch ?," 104.

⁶⁸Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch, *History of Baluch Race and Baluchistan*, 260.

and Yarahmadzai in Sarhad.⁶⁹

AZARBAIJAN

While Azarbaijan, like Kurdistan and Baluchistan, has witnessed the rise and fall of powerful tribes, the diversity of tribal groups, their socio-political influence in Azarbaijan, and the political power of their leaders has been less than that of the Kurdish and Baluchi chiefs. Moreover, Azarbaijan has played a more active political role in Iranian history. In contrast to the other two regions, Azarbaijan has been one of the most advanced parts of Iran in terms of socio-economic development. Unlike Kurdistan and Baluchistan, Azarbaijan has not fallen out of the central government's control in any period since the rise of the Safavids in 1500. Meanwhile, because important Iranian dynasties such as the Safavid and Qajar originally emerged from Azarbaijan and have practised Shi'ite Islam, the Azari tribes have had more friendly relations with the central states.

Compared with tribes of the former Soviet Azarbaijan Republic, tribal structure within Iranian Azarbaijan has endured longer. As Wimbush points out, unique to Iranian Azarbaijan is the persistence of the nomadic tribal unit within the Azari population, divisions that had disappeared in the north as the results of the Soviet's distinctive

⁶⁹Hassan Arfa, *Under Five Shahs*, 444-445.

mobilization techniques.⁷⁰ Some traditionally powerful tribes like Shahsevan have survived in the north until now, but other important groups such as Qajar or Afshar, or smaller tribes like Muqaddam, Bayat, Shaqaqi,⁷¹ Karapapakh,⁷² Javanshir Karadagly, and Kemgerlu⁷³ no longer exist there as strong tribal groups.

Tribes in Azarbaijan have mostly supported central states in Iran. Ruling dynasties like Safavids and Qajars have founded their powers on armed tribal forces. One source, for example has listed 32 tribal groups, including Qajar and Afshar, as early supporters of the Safavid dynasty.⁷⁴ Moreover, powerful tribal confederacies were created by the

⁷⁰S. Enders Wimbush, "Divided Azerbaijan: Nationality, Assimilation and Mobilization Between Three States," in William O. McCagg and Brian Silver, eds., *Soviet Asian Ethnic Frontiers*, (New York: Praeger, 1979), 76.

⁷¹Richard Tapper consider Shaqaqi and some other tribal groups in Azarbaijan as "Turkicized Kurds," See *The Conflict of tribe and State*, 18.

⁷²According to Iraj Afshar, this tribe consisted of 550 families in 1970 and had its own chief. See *Moghaddameh-i Bar Shenakht-e Ilha, Chadorneshinan va Tavayef-e Ashayeri Iran*, 176-177.

⁷³Writing in 1979, Wimbush considered the population of Azarbaijani tribes as follow: Shahsevan (18,000 to 20,000), Karadagly (8,000), Kemgerlu (35,000), Karapapakh (20,000), and Qajar (30,000). See Wimbush, 74. According to the 1986 census, Shahsevan (the name of which has been changed to Ilsevan) had a population of 47,248. For Qaradaghi, this number was 31,350. See Markaz-e Amar-e Iran, *Salnameh-e Amari-e keshvar*, 37.

⁷⁴Auruji Baik Bayat, *Dungeon Irani* [the Iranian Dungeon] (text in Persian), Trans by Masud Rajabnia, (Tehran: Bongah-e Tarjomeh, 1959), 67-68.

state. The best example of these was Shahsevan, which was created by Shah Abbas the Great (1587-1629). He used Shahsevan as a counterforce against *Qezilbash* forces who were the military backbone of the Safavid dynasty in its early years, but which had become threatening to the Shah's authority.⁷⁵

In Azarbaijan, the powerful tribal chiefs had mostly allied themselves with the traditional central power structure, the kings. As allies to centrist authorities, they were usually against progressive social movements in the country. That was the case when most of the Shahsevan joined a coalition of rebellious tribes against the Constitutional government during 1905-1911. Shaikh Muhammad Khiabani, who led the democratic movement in Azarbaijan against Tehran's pro-British government in 1919-21, faced a coalition of tribal chiefs of Qaradaqi supporting Tehran.⁷⁶ Because the Azarbaijani tribal chiefs supported the Iranian states, particularly in their wars against the Ottomans and the Russians, they enjoyed much autonomy and political influence

⁷⁵Tapper argues that the name Shahsevan did not appear until years after Abbas reign. As a confederacy, its name appears when Nadir Shah (1736-1747) united some of the tribes of north Azarbaijan under a particular chief Badr Khan Sharikhanbeglu Shahsevan. See Richard Tapper, *Pasture and Politics: Economics, Conflict and Ritual among Shahsevan Nomads of Northwestern Iran*, (London: Academic Press, 1979), 18.

⁷⁶H. M. Zavesh, "Nehzat-e Khiabani," [the Khiabani movement] (text in Persian), *Keyhan Havaee*, 1072 (March 2, 1994): 15.

in the region. Having strong military and economic power, these tribal chiefs controlled practically all of the non-urban areas of Azarbaijan. Tribal groups such as Shahsevan retained the control of the northeastern reaches of Iranian Azarbaijan until the rise of Reza Shah.⁷⁷

In sum, the powerful tribal chiefs had extensive autonomy in Iranian Kurdistan, Baluchistan and somehow in Azarbaijan before the emergence of the modern Pahlavi state. While state centralization in Iran began during the Qajars, it could not effectively abolish the power of the strongest, most independent tribal chiefs found in a number of different parts of the country. Indeed, the Qajar rulers were not able to extend their direct authority so long as they were militarily and financially dependent on the tribal forces.⁷⁸ As Akhavi points out, "the Qajar state resembled more a confederation of ministates loosely joined by whatever symbolic allegiance the Shah could generate toward his *dawlat-i 'aliyyah-yi shah-in-shahi* (eminent imperial state)."⁷⁹

The centralization process was postponed by the decline of Qajar power from the mid-nineteenth century, and during the

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 21.

⁷⁸See Lois Beck, "Tribes and State in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Iran," 203.

⁷⁹Shahrough Akhavi, "State Formation and Consolidation in Twentieth Century Iran: the Reza Shah Period and the Islamic Republic," in Ali Banuazizi and Myron Weiner, eds., *The State, religion, and Ethnic Politics: Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan*: (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 203.

chaotic era of the Constitutional Revolution of 1906 and related events leading up to the end of the World War I. In such conditions, the Qajar state was too weak to pursue this policy. In fact, "by 1920 the situation in Iran had sunk to its lowest level for over a century."⁸⁰ According to Katouzian⁸¹ the period before 1921 was one of total economic and financial, as well as socio-political, chaos. Considering the situation Shahrough Akhavi writes:

Iran had come perilously close to the threshold of total state collapse, facing a situation of foreign domination, internal immobilism, notoriously corrupt elite behaviour, the complete absence of central authority, and tribal assertiveness among Turkomans, Bakhtiari, Qashqa'is, Baluchis, Kurds, Lurs, and Arabs. In 1919 the British seized the chance to create a protectorate in all but the name out of the country.⁸²

It was in these conditions that Reza Khan's coup d'état of 1921 occurred.

II. THE FORMATION OF THE PAHLAVI MODERN STATE AND DETRIBALIZATION OF IRAN

The main goal of Reza Shah and his modern educated intellectual supporters was the modernization of Iran. The

⁸⁰L.P. Elwell-Sutton, "Reza Shah the Great: Founder of Pahlavi Dynasty," 8.

⁸¹Homayoun Katouzian, *The Political Economy of Modern Iran: Despotism and Pseudo-Modernism, 1926-1979*, (New York: New York University Press, 1981), 92.

⁸²Akhavi, "State Formation and Consolidation in Twentieth-Century Iran," 204.

state was considered the main instrument of modernization, and Turkey's experience after its birth in 1918 seemed a useful model.

Ataturk was an officer of the Ottoman army who came to power because of his military merits. Dissolving the Caliphate system in 1922, he became the president of the Republic of Turkey. As a military officer in the Qajar dynasty, Reza Kahn considered himself as a person who could claim the same virtues that Ataturk had. For Reza Shah, Ataturk was, in fact, a good pattern to imitate.⁸³ Indeed, before becoming the Shah of Iran, Reza Khan even considered the establishment of a republican system instead of a monarchy in Iran.⁸⁴

Reza Shah, like Ataturk, was imitating the Western pattern of nation-building, or put a better way, state-formation. His main instrument in this regard was the military force of the Cossack Brigade, and later the *Artesh-e Nowin-e Iran* (The Modern Army of Iran), which he commanded. Moreover, he started to build a bureaucratic structure as the administrative arm of the modern state. The introduction of

⁸³I do not argue that the situation in Iran and the Ottoman Empire/Turkey was the totally similar. There were important differences between them, including the fact that Iran was not involved in the World War I directly. Moreover, Ataturk's rise to power was the result of his military and political performances, but Reza Khan's coup d'état was more a British planned episode.

⁸⁴After facing the disagreement of the Shi'ite Ulama, and other domestic forces, he abandoned the idea of the republic.

a unified modern educational system all over Iran was an important, long term instrument in his nation-building efforts. In sum, Reza Shah and his supporters wanted to build a modern state which could achieve national integration through the centralization of power in Iran.

Nevertheless, the historical context -- the socio-political and economic structures of Iran in the 1920s -- were not similar to the conditions existing in Europe in the sixteenth century. Indeed, a brief comparison between the two cases can explain why Iran of the early twentieth century was not an appropriate setting for the emergence of the modern centralized state in its Western form. Charles Tilly's theoretical statements on the rise of modern states in Europe can help to provide such a comparison. Tilly defines the state as:

...an organization, controlling the principal means of coercion within a given territory, which is differentiated from other organizations operating in the same territory, autonomous, centralized and formally coordinated.⁸⁵

It is clear that, at least in its early formulations, Reza Shah's state could not claim all of these basic criteria. Most obviously, the Iranian state did not have a monopoly of coercion within the territorial boundaries of Iran, as many tribal groups were armed and controlled important parts of the

⁸⁵Charles Tilly, *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 638.

country.

Yet still more important is whether Iran's socio-economic and political structures were favourable for the rise of the centralized modern state and for its achievements in bringing about national integration or socio-political and economic development. Charles Tilly's pre-conditions of modern state-formation were: the cultural homogeneity of the area in which the first powerful nation-state arose;⁸⁶ a largely peasant economic base with a ruling stratum of landlords rather than a tribal or lineage base;⁸⁷ and a highly decentralized political structure.⁸⁸

While Iran of the 1920's could claim a largely peasant economic base and a decentralized political structure, it could not pretend to have two more important preconditions to the rise of modern state. First, Iranian society was far from having the required homogeneity as long as there existed long-standing religious (Shi'ite-Sunnite) and linguistic divisions within it. Second, Iranians did not look to a few dominant landlords, but was composed of many different tribal groups led by powerful autonomous chiefs who challenged the state's authority and resisted its centralization policies.

In the European context, there were also several conditions favouring the rise of modern national states.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 19.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 19-21.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 21-25.

These conditions were: first, the efficiency of the centralized state, once it was seen to work, as a political organization superior to others; second, a special geopolitical factor, namely, the freedom of much of Europe from external pressures; and third, the growth of cities, urban trade and a merchant class, which allowed wealth to accumulate and, through taxation, helped the merging states to finance their military and bureaucratic operations and activities.⁸⁹

Again, there were no such favourable conditions for the rise of the modern national state in Iran of the 1920s. Iran, first of all, had been under heavy external pressure and influence since the mid-nineteenth century.⁹⁰ In 1907 Iran was formally divided into two spheres of influence: Russian in the north and British in the centre and the south. Another treaty in 1915 reinforced the same division, and even Reza Shah's ascendancy to power in 1921 was planned and supported by British forces. Iran also lacked prosperous urban centres in which merchant classes could dominate economic and trade

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 25-31. Summarised by Anthony D. Smith, *State and Nations in the Third World: The Western State and African Nationalism*, (New York: St. Martin, 1983), 24-25.

⁹⁰The Irano-Russian wars of 1812-1828, in which Iran lost important parts of its territories in Caucasia, was in fact the beginning of foreign pressure. The more explicit and direct external pressure, however, appeared in 1856, when British Navy invaded Iranian ports and cities in the Persian Gulf to make Nasir Al-Din Shah Qajar retreat its forces around Herat in eastern Afghanistan and withdraw its claim over that city as a part of Iran.

activities. As mentioned earlier, at that time Iran was a rural society with an agricultural economic basis. Reza Shah's state was not financially dependent on civil society, but could achieve financial independence by controlling oil revenue and by monopolizing external trade and important domestic economic sectors.

According to state formation theorists, one more important factor facilitating national state formation was the relationship between war and state formation. Charles Tilly, for example, treats war as one of the most important forces in the development of national states in Europe. In fact, the importance of war as a factor is given such an importance that Tilly argues that "war made the state, and the state made war."⁹¹ Such a relation between war and state formation has been emphasized by theorists like Theda Skocpol, Franz Oppenheimer and Reinhard Bendix.⁹² But while this relationship existed in the case of Turkey -- where Ataturk's state was in one way or another a product of the Ottoman

⁹¹*Ibid.*, 42; see also Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," in Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol, eds., *Bringing the State Back In*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University press, 1985).

⁹²Franz Oppenheimer, *The State*, (New York: Free Life Editions, 1975); Reinhard Bendix, *Kings or People: Power and the Mandate to Rule*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1978). For a good discussion on this issue see Darryl Roberts, "War and the Historical Formation of State," in Michael Banks and Martin Shaw, eds., *State and Society in International Relations*, (New York: Harvester, 1991), 137-169.

Empire's defeat in World War I -- in the case of the emergence of the modern state in Iran we cannot find such a relation between war and state formation.

In sum, while Reza Shah and his external and domestic supporters intended to modernize Iran through the creation of a modern centralized and bureaucratic state (thereby imitating the Western experience in terms of both the process of state formation and socio-political development), the structural differentiations between Iran of the twentieth century and Western Europe of the sixteenth century did not provide the pre-conditions and favourable conditions for the emergence of the modern state in Iran.

As Anthony Smith points out, the Western model of state formation was unique and could not illuminate the social and political experience of peoples on other continents.⁹³ In contrast to the European experience, in Iran of the 1920s there existed strong centrifugal forces which challenged the authority of the modern state, and the leadership of different chiefs among many tribal groups was the most important impediment to the state's monopolization of power and its national integration policies.

One of Reza Khan Shah's highest priorities was to undermine these existing centrifugal forces, and the powerful tribal Khans were, thus, the first targets of Reza Khan's

⁹³Anthony D. Smith, *State and Nation in the Third World*, 16.

policies. He dispatched his small but well trained, modern army to Gilan and Azarbaijan -- areas which were out of Tehran's control. He continued this policy after being appointed by the parliament (Majlis) as the Shah of Iran in 1926. The modern Iranian army showed that it could destroy the military forces of tribal chiefs in Khorasan, Kurdistan, Baluchistan, Fars, and Khuzistan. In order to bring autonomous tribal leaders under state control, Reza Shah soon started a movement for disarming tribes all over the country. Subsequent forced sedentarization or settlement of nomadic tribes (*Takhte Qappu*) was a further blow to the tribal chiefs. Lambton outlines Reza Shah's policy toward the nomadic tribes and their settlement:

The annual migration of the tribes from winter to summer pasture was prevented. Suitable areas in which to settle the tribes were not always chosen, adequate provisions for health and education were not made, and sufficient facilities by way of agricultural training and the provision of agricultural implements were not given to the tribesmen... The tribal policy of Reza Shah, ill-conceived and badly executed, resulted in heavy losses in livestock, the impoverishment of the tribes, and a diminution of their numbers.⁹⁴

By the spread of national army's control, the state began administrative re-organization of the country by establishing its bureaucratic presence throughout Iran. For this, the old administrative regions or *Ayalat* (states) were replaced by *Ostan* which did not exactly match the linguistic and religious

⁹⁴Ann K. S. Lambton, *Landlord and Peasants in Persia*, 285-286.

divisions of the country. Moreover, Reza Shah introduced new reforms which not only challenged the power of the tribal Khans, but the traditional cultural expressions of different religio-linguistic groups in Iran.

The most important reforms in this regard were: compulsory conscription for the Iranian Army; changes to traditional dress and its replacement with European dress; and finally, the introduction of formalized, mass education. While many non-tribal groups such as Shi'ite clergy protested such reforms, these protests were more visible among tribal and linguistic groups in different parts of Iran. The formerly autonomous tribal groups were not only disarmed but had to spend two years in the service of the modern Iranian army.

Reza Shah's main instruments for centralization were his large, modern army and a growing state bureaucracy -- together, they began to suppress any possible tribal revolt.⁹⁵ The reorganization of Iranian armed forces began rapidly:

The 12,000 men of the Gendarmerie were merged with the 7,000 Cossacks, and the foreign officers of the former were replaced by Iranian officers from the Cossack Brigade, in many instances, old cronies. A new army, 40,000 strong, was recruited, trained and disciplined under his personal supervision, and it began to acquire an *esprit de corps* hitherto rare

⁹⁵Nikki Keddie, "Religion, Ethnic Minorities and the State in Iran: An Overview," in Ali Banuazizi and Myron Weiner, eds., *The State, Religion, and Ethnic Politics*, 1986, 163-164.

among Iranian fighting men.⁹⁶

It was through the use of such a modern army that the central state started the settlement of the nomadic tribes in different parts of Iran as a key step in bringing the tribal groups under the state's control. The Iranian Parliament (Majlis) approved a bill for the settlement of the nomadic tribes in Baluchistan, Kurdistan, Khuzistan, Luristan, Azarbaijan, and other parts of Iran in 1931. Despite strong disagreement from deputies such as Ayatollah Muddaris in Majlis, the policy was carried out.⁹⁷ Meanwhile, Reza Kahn extended the presence of the Iranian army to most parts of the country, deploying the army to Azarbaijan and Fars in 1922, Kermanshahan and Kurdistan in 1923, Baluchistan and Luristan in 1924, and to Mazendaran and Khorasan in 1925.

The growth of new educational institutions throughout the country was remarkable. While the traditional schools (*Maktab Khaneh*) drew on both religious (Quranic) teachings and classical texts in Persian literature, the modern national schools relied on a more modern syllabus, and Persian became the official language of education. Education in any other, local language was forbidden in all parts of the country, and

⁹⁶Gavin R. G. Hambly, "The Pahlavi Autocracy: Riza Shah, 1921-1941," 221-222.

⁹⁷He delineated the negative effects of such policy on Iran's economy. See Eskandar Deldam, *Zendegi Pormajaray-e Reza Shah*, [the adventurous life of Reza Shah] (text in Persian), (Tehran: Nashr-e Golfam, 1992), 246-249.

it was not permitted to publish books or newspapers in any language other than Persian. Regarding the growth of educational institutions, one source offers the following numbers:

Year	No. of Schools	Total Enrolment
1924-1925	3,285	108,959
1939-1940	8,281	457,236 ⁹⁸

In addition to these reforms, the construction of new roads and the national railway, the establishment of communication technologies such as radio, and finally increases to state income through oil exports and taxes intensified the process of state centralization and national integration. In order to increase its economic power further, the state began the monopolization of external trade and the confiscation of significant amounts of domestic agricultural land and light industry. To bring the domestic trade under its monopoly, Reza Shah's state controlled the production of four critical domestic products: rice, tobacco, tea and silk.⁹⁹ The revenue the state earned from these resources

⁹⁸Reza Arasteh, *Education and Social Awakening in Iran*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1962), 50, cited in Farzanfar *Ethnic Groups and the State*, 230; see also Manuchehr Ganji and A. Milani, "Iran: Development During the Last Fifty Years," in Jacqz, J. W., ed., *Iran, Past and Future*, (New York: Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies, 1976), 45.

⁹⁹Jami, (Iran's Peoples Freedom Movement), *Gozashteh Cheragh-e Rah-e Ayandeh Ast*, 29-30.

reduced its financial dependency on civil society and thus enabled it to pursue the process of centralization with more intensity.

Policies like national conscription, the settlement of nomadic tribes, a unified national tax, and the disarmament of tribal forces directly affected the authority of powerful tribal Khans and Sardars in different parts of Iran. After disarming the tribal forces, Reza Shah exiled, and in some cases executed, the powerful rebellious tribal Khans. According to Garthwaite:

In the first decades of his reign, Reza Shah undercut the military and political power of the tribes by destroying their confederational political structures, imprisoning and executing leaders, confiscating pastures and lands, attempting to implement forced sedentarization, and replacing indirect administration by direct rule.¹⁰⁰

For those tribal groups whose chiefs were exiled or executed, new chiefs were appointed from among the military officers.¹⁰¹ In many cases, these non-tribal chiefs mistreated the tribal people under their control.

In some cases, the disarmed tribal chiefs accepted the state's authority and maintained their power through reconciliation with the Pahlavi state. Since some of these tribes had helped Reza Shah to disarm other tribes, they were

¹⁰⁰Gene R. Garthwaite, "Khans and Kings: The Dialect of Power in Bakhtiari History," 159.

¹⁰¹Baharvand, *Kooch Neshini dar Iran*, 242.

allowed to keep their arms so long as the state considered it necessary. The loyal tribal chiefs became powerful landlords¹⁰² and acted as middlemen between their tribal subjects and the central state. The state, in its turn, advantaged these loyal tribal leaders in order to bring the remote tribal areas under its control.

The abdication of Reza Shah in 1941 provided an opportunity for the exiled tribal chiefs to return to their homes and reorganize their power structures. The tribal groups who had been disarmed by the state during Reza Shah's reign re-armed and brought their regions under control -- the disintegration of the Iranian army's command structure during the occupation of Iran by allied forces in 1941 left the tribal groups with a free hand to do so. Meanwhile, the sons and closest relatives of the executed or exiled tribal chiefs claimed the leadership of their tribal groups.¹⁰³ Moreover, the loosening of the state's control encouraged nomadic tribal people who had been forcefully settled by Reza Shah to leave their villages and resume nomadic life, as Habibullah Payman has detailed:

After 1941 all nomadic tribal people who had been forcefully settled during Reza Shah started destroying their settled houses and with an unprecedented anger revenged whatever related to the settlement period. Farms were destroyed, the

¹⁰²Freshteh Koohi-Kamali, "The Development of Nationalism in Iranian Kurdistan," 173.

¹⁰³Lois Beck, "Tribes and State in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Iran," 189.

trees were uprooted, all manifestations of the settlement period were eliminated and the nomadic life was started once again.¹⁰⁴

During, and a few years after, the occupation of Iran, the main tribal groups enjoyed a newly-regained degree of autonomy under their chiefs.¹⁰⁵ From 1941 to 1949 a new era of conflict erupted between armed tribal groups and the central government in different parts of Iran. Such conflicts occurred in Kurdistan, Fars, and Buyer Ahmadi,¹⁰⁶ but this period did not last long. Soon after the withdrawal of the allied forces from Iran, the centralization policies of Reza Shah's son, Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, who had become the Shah of Iran after the abdication of his father in 1941, began to take effect. Tribal forces were disarmed once again and the nomadic life was left aside in favour of settlement and sedentarization. Tapper gives a good description of the new Shah's policies:

During the 1950s and the 1960s, after the downfall of Musaddiq, Muhammad Reza Shah resumed his father's policy to the tribes, though more cautiously. The chiefs were deposed, chiefships were abolished, nomad settlement was encouraged and aided by the instigation of irrigation projects in tribal territories, and the land Reform of the 1960s had some success at least in undermining of the economic power of tribal chiefs. Resistance, such as the 1963 revolt of Qashqai and Boyr Ahmad

¹⁰⁴Habibullah Payman, *Il-e Qashqaie*, [Qashqaie tribe] (text in Persian), (Tehran: Institute of Tahghighat-e Behdashti, 1968), 445-446.

¹⁰⁵Tapper, *The Conflict of Tribe and State*, 28.

¹⁰⁶For more details, see Aziz Keyavand, 125-127.

in Fars, was ruthlessly suppressed. Often the very existence of 'tribes' and even 'nomads' was officially denied.¹⁰⁷

The land reform of 1962 (known as the White Revolution), once again weakened the power of the landlord tribal chiefs. Those leaders who had tribal subjects were no longer living in tribal areas or on their land. They were mostly urban dwellers who maintained their connection with the rural areas to earn revenue from their lands. The loyal tribal chiefs, however, were given many rewards and became part of the political elite. They were given positions such as the membership in the parliament or in other governmental institutions.

The Islamic Revolution of 1979 represented the latest significant blow to the tribal chiefs in Iran. While the collapse of the Shah and the early weakness of the Islamic Republic provided an opportunity for some tribal groups in Baluchistan, Kurdistan, and Fars to reorganize as armed groups, the consolidation of the state's power undermined the power of tribal chiefs in these regions. Since many of them were supporting the Shah's regime and received great advantages for such services, the tribal chiefs were discredited in both tribal areas and in revolutionary circles.

In sum, the whole process of centralization in Iran

¹⁰⁷Tapper, *The Conflict of Tribe and State*, 29.

brought the Iranian state and its tribal groups into conflict. Autonomous tribal leaders found the spread of the state's control a threat to their authority, and in response, they mobilized their tribal subjects in a lopsided confrontation with the modern Pahlavi state. To present a more accurate account of the effects of such processes on the rise of nationalist tendencies in Kurdistan, Baluchistan, and Azarbaijan, I now address the effects of the modern state formation process on the authority of tribal chiefs in each of the three cases. The focus of this study is the effects of centralization policies on the autonomy of the tribal chiefs.

KURDISTAN

Like other parts of Iran, Kurdistan was composed of different autonomous tribal groups. Tribal confederacies such as the Shakak and strong tribes like the Milan, Mangur, Herki, Jalali, Mamesh, Zarza, Piran, Begzageh and Haydaranli were effectively controlling important parts of Iranian Kurdistan, especially in its northern regions. It was in this situations that Reza Khan (later Reza Shah) came to power.

The most militant Kurdish leader in this period was Ismael Agha Simko, the chief of the Shakak tribal confederacy. The Shakak consisted of 25 tribes of quite unequal size, three of which -- the Avdovi, Mamedi (or Mamodi) and Kardar -- were the most important. There was an intense rivalry among these tribes for the leadership of the confederacy. In the second

half of the nineteenth century, when other Kurdish tribal confederacies were in decline, the Shakak grew into a strong confederacy. Through the control of crown land (*Khaliseh*), the collection of taxes from the settled non-tribal Kurds, and raids against nearby Azari and Assyrian villages or towns, the Shakak could gain significant income.¹⁰⁸

As Bruinessen writes, the growth of the Shakak was partly due to the fact that the Iranian government had encouraged them to conquer frontier districts of Somay from other Kurdish tribes in league with the Ottomans. To reward the Shakak for this and also for preventing its raids from without, the Qajars had appointed Shakak chieftains as governors of the frontier districts.¹⁰⁹ Simko himself was supported by Iqbal al-Saltaneh, the Qajar governor of Maku, to fight against the constitutionalists in Azarbaijan, and as a reward Simko was made sub-governor of Qotur district. In spite of Simko's continuing raids, the central government in Tehran confirmed the appointment.¹¹⁰

In the anarchical situation of the post-War period, during which the Qajars were on the threshold of collapse and the Ottoman Empire had disintegrated, Simko was able to promote his autonomous rule through the capture of arms from

¹⁰⁸Bruinessen, "Kurdish Tribes and the State of Iran: the Case of Simko's Revolt," 380-381.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, 381.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 383.

retreating Russian forces, and by expanding his sphere of influence to more tribal areas from which he could take tribute.¹¹¹ As a young and dynamic tribal chief and "thanks to his strong personality and reckless bravery, Simko had gained an uncontested authority among neighbouring tribes."¹¹² He dominated extensive territories well beyond his tribal area and ruled over populations outnumbering his own Shakkak Kurds by a factor of three.¹¹³ Simko's antagonism with the government increased when his brother, Ja'far Agha, was killed by the governor of Tabriz in Azarbaijan in 1907.¹¹⁴

As Kasravi mentions, Simko fought against the Constitutionalists in Tabriz in support of Muhammad Ali Shah, the pro-Russian tyrant Qajar king.¹¹⁵ Apparently he was appointed governor of his region as a reward. In the later years of World War I, Simko engaged in anti-Assyrian assaults. With the support of the Ottoman Turks, he killed the leader of the Assyrian tribes of the Hakkari region who, with Russian support, were engaged in anti-Ottoman activities.

As Eagleton writes, Simko's forces, backed by the Turkish army, annihilated and destroyed the "Assyrian nation" in

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, 384-385.

¹¹²Hassan Arfa, *The Kurds*, 48.

¹¹³Bruinessen, "Kurdish Tribes and the State of Iran," 380.

¹¹⁴Arfa, 50.

¹¹⁵Kasravi, *Farikh-e Hijdah Saleh*, 729.

western Iran.¹¹⁶ Ghassemlou, the former leader of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) and a well-known Kurdish nationalist, argues that "British agents managed to goad Simko against the Assyrians, as a result of which he murdered their chief M. Shamun. This, of course, led to the weakening of his own position."¹¹⁷ As Kinnane points out, "in the aftermath of the first World War, with Russians, Turks, Assyrians, and Persians gone, Simko was recognized by Persians as Governor of the Kurdish area west of Lake Urmieh."¹¹⁸

When Simko faced new appointments from Tehran in his spheres of influence in Kurdistan, he revolted and killed six hundred Persian gendarmerie in an attack on Sauj Balaq.¹¹⁹ According to Hassan Arfa, machine guns and defensible mountainous positions allowed Simko and about 10,000 well-armed Kurdish warriors under his command to defeat several attempts of Government forces to penetrate into his area of control.¹²⁰

Ultimately, however, Simko was defeated after a series of skirmishes with elements of the Iranian army supported by Azari and Takkman tribes of Azarbaijan. Witnessing the

¹¹⁶Eagleton, *Kurdish Republic*, 11; for these events see also, Arfa, *The Kurds*, 50-55.

¹¹⁷Abdulrahman Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan and the Kurds*, 72.

¹¹⁸Derk Kinnane, *The Kurds and Kurdistan*, 47.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, 47.

¹²⁰Arfa, *Under Five Shahs*, 440.

4

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strong, new Iranian forces assembled under Reza Shah, the Kurdish tribal chiefs and Simko's allies eventually preferred to join the government against Simko.¹²¹ Facing their betrayal, Simko retreated into Turkey's interior, where he was disarmed and arrested in 1922.¹²² In 1930, he returned to Iran. Unable to attract Kurdish tribal groups to his cause,¹²³ he was ready to surrender to Iranian forces. He set off to make his submission and to receive the pardon of the government but was killed en route in an ambush set by Reza Shah's armed forces.¹²⁴

Beside the Shakak, other Kurdish tribes were the targets of Reza Shah's centralization policies. When the Milani and Jalali tribes in the north were disarmed and their leaders exiled, Reza Shah forced nomadic tribesmen to settle in villages and build mud houses and underground caves for their cattle.¹²⁵ The Kurdish tribes of Piranduz were also disarmed and their chiefs executed.¹²⁶ In Kirmanshah, the strong Sanjabi tribe was disarmed and its leaders exiled.

¹²¹See Farhad Kazemi, "Ethnicity and Iranian Peasantry," in Esman and Rabinovich, eds., *Ethnicity, Pluralism and State in the Middle East*, 207.

¹²²For a detailed account of these confrontations, see Arfa, *The Kurds*, 55-63; and Arfa, *Under Five Shahs*, 118-141.

¹²³*Ibid.*, 63.

¹²⁴Kinnane, 47.

¹²⁵William O. Douglas, *Strange Land and Friendly People*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), 70.

¹²⁶Iraj Afshar Sistani, *Moghaddameh*, 358-359.

In the process of disarming and settling tribes, Reza Shah exploited existing divisions between rival tribal chiefs. To fight against the Sanjabi and Javanrudi Kurds, for example, he recruited the Kalhur tribal confederacy.¹²⁷ This tactic was applied against the Shakak tribal confederacy when Simko's former allies and other rival tribes joined Reza Shah's forces.¹²⁸ The loyal Kurdish tribes were given rewards and were allowed to keep their arms. Hassan Arfa, a commander of the Iranian army in the campaign against Kurdish tribal groups refers to this fact:

(Reza) Shah decided the time had come to bring the unruly Kurdish frontier tribes definitely under control....The Kurds did not fight for independence or autonomy, and at the end of the campaign the rebel tribes were disarmed. Those who had helped us, however, were allowed to keep their arms for the time being.¹²⁹

Some rebellious Kurdish tribes faced forced emigration. According to Lambton, even as Golbaqi tribesmen were being moved into the central regions of Iran, their territory was being re-settled with Azari Turks.¹³⁰

The forced immigration of tribes had disastrous consequences for many. According to Ghassemlou, "of the 100,000 members of the Jalali tribe (living on the borders of

¹²⁷*Ibid.*, 254.

¹²⁸Richard Cottam, *Nationalism in Iran*, 70.

¹²⁹Arfa, *The Kurds*, 65-66.

¹³⁰See Baharvand, 238-239.

Iran, Turkey, and the USSR) deported to the central areas of Iran, only a few hundred returned in 1941, all the rest having died."¹³¹ Reza Shah's policy of forced transfer and settlement of nomads officially began in 1932. According to Touraj Atabaki:

Under very harsh conditions, tens of thousands of the Kurds were settled in Mazandaran (north region of Iran), as well as in Khorasan (northeast) and Isfahan and Yazd (central Iran). Azarbaijanis were driven into Kurdistan, while Bakhtiyari and Lurs were forced to settle in the central and southern parts of Iran.¹³²

State agents forced Kurdish nomadic tribes to abandon their tents, build houses in villages, and cultivate land, and the Iranian frontiers in the west were closed in order to prevent the traditional summer and winter migration of Kurdish tribes. The result was a remarkable increase in the number of the villages in Kurdistan. In Baneh, for example, this number increased from eight villages in 1851 to 161 villages in 1951. The increase over the same period for the Marivan area was 9 to 121 settlements.¹³³

The administrative reorganization of Iran re-aligned some northern Kurdish areas to the Western Azarbaijan province. This became a controversy in post-revolutionary Iran, when the KDPI considered Western Azarbaijan a part of Kurdish

¹³¹Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan*, 109.

¹³²Touraj Atabaki, *Azerbaijan*, 59.

¹³³Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan*, 111.

autonomous areas. Both tribal and non-tribal Kurds risked the brutality of Reza Shah's forces if they resisted the introduction of European dress or new taxation policies introduced in the name of detribalization (sedentarization) and centralization in Kurdistan.¹³⁴

Reza Shah's policies against the tribes in Kurdistan effectively reduced the power of the tribal chiefs. With the pacification of the region and the exile, execution and imprisonment of rebellious tribal chiefs, other tribal leaders quickly cooperated with the central state of Reza Shah. These chiefs -- among them Asef Divan and Mo'tamed in the Sanandaj area -- became the landlords for whom former tribesmen worked as agricultural labourers. Those who did not surrender -- like Jafarsan (Ja'far Sultan) in Marivan and Uraman -- were defeated by a modernized Iranian army in 1931.¹³⁵

As in other parts of Iran, Kurdish tribes re-armed and regained the control of the area soon after the fall of Reza Shah. The occupation of Azarbaijan and parts of Kurdistan by Soviet forces and the decline of the Iranian army's presence in the region increased the power of Kurdish tribal leaders. Mo'meni writes that the following Kurdish tribal chiefs retained much power in Kurdish areas: in Uraman, Karim Beg and Muhammad Amin Beg, the sons of Jafarsan; in Dezli, Hossein

¹³⁴Muhammad Rauf Tavakkoli, *Jografia va Tarikh-e Baneh-e Kurdistan*, 188-193.

¹³⁵Hamid Mo'meni, *Dar Bareh-e Mubarezat-e Kurdistan*, 26.

Khan; in Marivan, Mahmud Khan Kani Sanan; in Javeh, Muhammad Ali Ghabzeh; and in Baneh, Hama Rashid.¹³⁶

Some of them, like Hama Rashid of Baneh, revolted against the government during World War II and controlled parts of Kurdistan thereafter. He and other Kurdish tribal chiefs played an important role in the rise and fall of the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad in 1945-46. Like other regions in the country, Reza Shah's son pacified most tribal groups in Kurdistan. In August 1950, for instance, the Iranian army was sent to fight the Javanrudi tribe, after they provided just the latest expression of tribal autonomy in the region.¹³⁷

The Land Reforms of the early 1960s did not effectively end the power of the tribal chiefs. Some loyal chiefs and most powerful landlords could still maintain control of vast agricultural lands and villages. It was for this reason that some chiefs, such as the leader of the Shakak tribe, gained military power and participated in Kurdish political movements after the Islamic Revolution of 1979. These tribal chiefs, however, never again became as powerful as they once were.

BALUCHISTAN

As mentioned in the last section, the steady decline of Qajar power in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century neutralized the state's centralization efforts in

¹³⁶*Ibid.*, 34.

¹³⁷Douglas, 85.

Baluchistan. In the absence of a meaningful state presence, different Baluchi Hakoms and Sardars consolidated their position as the local rulers of Iranian Baluchistan. When Reza Khan came to power in Tehran, the Baranzai tribal confederacy under the chiefdom of Dust Muhammad Khan had important parts of southern Baluchistan under its control. Dust Muhammad was in fact the biggest challenge for Reza Shah in Baluchistan. Other strong Baluchi tribes, like the Yarahmadzai, Gamshadzai, and Ismaelzai, were dominant in Sarhad in northern Baluchistan.

As the most powerful Iranian Baluchi chief of the time, Dust Muhammad Khan ruled Bampur. He was from the Baranzai (or Barakzai) tribal confederacy, whose chiefs had been the local rulers of parts of Baluchistan since the time of Nadir Shah Afshar. According to Iraj Afshar, when the Qajar-appointed governor of Baluchistan moved to Kirman in 1907, he gave the government's ruling centres in Bampur and Iranshahr to Baluchi Sardars Bahram Khan Barakzai and Said Khan Balidehi. Later attempts by the government to bring Bahram Khan under control did not succeed until the British¹³⁸ persuaded him to obey the central government in Tehran.¹³⁹

¹³⁸The British had the control of the southern and eastern parts of Iran. In the Treaty of 1907, the Russians and the British formally divided Iran into their sphere of influences. The northern parts of Iran were under the Russian control. On this treaty see Firuz Kazemzadeh, "Iranian Relations with Russia and the Soviet Union, to 1921," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol 7., 314-350.

¹³⁹Iraj Afshar Sistani, *Moghaddameh*, 936.

Dust Muhammad Khan became the leader of Barakzai after the death of Bahram Khan Barakzai in 1920, and it was expected that he could bring important parts of Makrar in southern Baluchistan under his control. Established in his fort in Bampur, Dust Muhammad Khan ruled much of Iranian Baluchistan and gave the rule of Saravan to his father and brother. As Afshar writes, Dust Muhammad Khan hoped to avoid the direct intervention of the central government in Baluchistan's affairs.¹⁴⁰ He was more than a Hakom or Sardar, since he made other Hakoms and Baluchi Sardars pay tribute to him. His revenues came from the traditional tithes levied on crops and other individual income, from Crown Lands belonging to the central government, and from his large agricultural estates.¹⁴¹ His military resources, composed primarily of Baluchi tribal forces, supplied him with 5,000 armed men to guard his major forts.¹⁴²

As Reza Khan was undermining the power of the tribal forces in Kurdistan, Azarbaijan, Khorasan, Khuzistan, and Luristan, Dust Muhammad Khan was consolidating his authority in Baluchistan. Baluchistan, in fact, was the last region to be purged of the autonomous tribal chiefs and local rulers. Unlike the Qajars, the nominal loyalty of these chiefs and the taxes they would pay to the central government did not satisfy

¹⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 838.

¹⁴¹Hosseini, *Iran and Its Nationalities*, 87.

¹⁴²*Ibid.*, 88.

Reza Shah. What he wanted was the abolition of their authority and the establishment of the state's direct administrative, bureaucratic and military presence. So, Reza Shah rejected Dust Muhammad Khan's offer for paying tax to the government provided that it would leave him alone with his local rule.

In 1927, Reza Shah decided to bring Baluchistan under his direct control. 1928, the Iranian army began its move against Dust Muhammad Khan. At the same time, with the promise that the state would reward him for his services in Baluchistan, Reza Shah's government invited Dust Muhammad Khan to come to Tehran and surrender. After he rejected this proposition, the central government deposed him and appointed other Baluchi Sardars in his place.¹⁴³ Following a series of battles, he was defeated and surrendered.

After meeting the imprisoned Khan in Tehran, Reza Shah designated a monthly salary for him and ordered that he be allowed to live there under supervision. After several months, he made an unsuccessful escape attempt, killing a government guard in the process. For this he was executed in early 1930.¹⁴⁴

As in Kurdistan, some Baluchi Sardars, especially those of the Sarhad who had resisted the rule of Dust Muhammad Khan,

¹⁴³Hussein Makki, *Tarikh-e Bist Saleh-e Iran* Vols. 4-5 [the twenty-years history of Iran] (text in Persian), (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1983), 129.

¹⁴⁴For more details see Afshar, 939.

soon moved to join Reza Shah's army. Among these Baluchi Sardars were the chiefs of the Yarahmadzai, Ismaelzai and Rigi tribes. The tribal chiefs of Sarhad, however, were not allowed to maintain their autonomous position as armed groups, and not long after Dust Muhammad Khan's downfall, Reza Shah started to disarm them. The most important of these tribes was the Ismaelzai under the leadership of Jum'a Khan Ismaelzai, who revolted against the state in 1934. Facing Reza Shah's army dispatched from Kirman and Khorasan, he finally agreed to be disarmed on the condition that there should be an amnesty, and that the flocks which had been taken from him would be given back.¹⁴⁵ He was exiled to Fars with his tribesmen and lived there under supervision for a long time.¹⁴⁶ After this, two other important tribes of the Sarhad, namely the Gamshadzai and Yarahmadzai, showed a desire to come to terms with the central government. The chief of the Rigi tribal confederacy, Sardar Aidu Khan,¹⁴⁷ was also exiled to Fars but was later pardoned.

As mentioned above, these Sardars joined Reza Shah against Dust Muhammad Khan, but the mistreatment of the tribesmen by some army commanders -- General Alborz, who committed extreme cruelty against Baluchis, in particular¹⁴⁸ -

¹⁴⁵Arfa, *Under Five Shahs*, 255-25

¹⁴⁶Afshar Sistani, *Moghaddameh*, 902.

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 916.

¹⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 257.

- was one factor for their later revolt. According to Jahanbani, as commander of the army's operations against the rebellious Sardars, General Alborz had ordered the execution of a group of Khans and Sardars in Kuhak in 1928. This created a hatred among Baluchis that remained with them for a long time.¹⁴⁹

Reza Shah extended the state's power in Baluchistan through bureaucratic and administrative policies, but its presence was conveyed to Baluchis most directly by a military presence, as barracks were set up in Baluchistan's main cities of Zahidan, Iranshahr, Saravan, and Khash. By 1938, military garrisons and stations had been established in smaller towns like Bampur, Magas, and Pahra.¹⁵⁰ The port of Chahbahar in the south was turned into an important military base and home port to a large proportion of Iranian naval forces.

Despite the fact that they were disarmed, Baluchi tribal chiefs were not completely disempowered. Tribalism remained the main basis of social organization in Baluchistan, and the tribal chiefs were able to maintain their socio-economic power. This was especially true with the loyal tribal Sardars or the rebellious ones who declared their loyalty later. Such tribal chiefs acted as the middlemen between the state and their tribes during the reigns of Reza Shah and his son

¹⁴⁹Amanullah Jahanbani, *Sargozasht-e Baluchistan va Marzhaye An*, [the history of Baluchistan and its boundaries] (text in Persian), (Tehran: Artesh, 1959), 68-69.

¹⁵⁰For more details, see Hosseinbor, 101-102.

Muhammad Reza Shah. After the pacification of Baluchistan, the state used these middlemen and by recognizing them as Sardars, and holding them responsible for the establishment of law and order in tribal areas. Given the social structures of the tribal areas and the role of tribal chiefs, it was easier for the state to control the area this way. As Philip Salzman explains:

From an administrative point of view, tribes with indigenous centralized structures can be more easily encapsulated than tribes with indigenous decentralized structures...and that the agents of encapsulating power, if possible, make use of the indigenous structure and personnel in a traditionally centralized tribe.... He [Sardar] was a mediator, attempting to bring the tribe and the representatives of the government to some mutually agreeable position in regard to many policy matters and their administration.¹⁵¹

Insurgency did not follow the fall of Reza Shah in Baluchistan as it had in Kurdistan. Indeed, Baluchi Hakoms in the southern parts of Baluchistan and tribal Sardars in the north continued to function as mediators and were mostly given economic and political advantages by the central state. Some of the tribal chiefs who had not enjoyed privileged positions revolted against the state and formed or joined Baluchi opposition groups during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The Islamic Revolution of 1979 undermined the power of these traditional Baluchi elites, and as Hosseinbor writes,

¹⁵¹Philip Carl Salzman, "The Tribal Chiefs as Middlemen: the Politics of Encapsulation in the Middle East," *Anthropological Quarterly*, 47, no. 2 (April 1974): 204.

"inflicted the most significant blow to the influence of Hakoms and Sardars."¹⁵² As I will explain in the next chapter, most, but not all, Baluchi political groups which have been, or are, active in the post-revolutionary period were formed or were supported by these Sardars and Hakoms.

AZARBAIJAN

Compared to Kurdistan and Baluchistan, state centralization under Reza Shah did not spur much tribal insurgency in Azarbaijan. The difference is that Azarbaijani tribes were not as political as tribes of the other two ethnic groups. While the tribal chiefs of Kurdistan and Baluchistan always held the potential to act as centrifugal forces, Azarbaijan tribes were comparatively loyal to the state -- indeed, the Shahsevan, Afshar and other tribal confederacies had traditionally been effective fighting forces in Iranian armies during wars with Ottomans or Russians.

Reza Shah's agenda for centralization took note of Azarbaijani tribes, and especially the Shahsevans, not as political as potential social problem makers. In the chaotic years of the late Qajar period, Shahsevans used to raid neighbouring areas, villages and roads, yet did not make great demands for autonomous political power. Tribal chiefs like Zaafer Nizam (the chief of Inanlu tribe), Amir Ashair (in Khalkhal district), Amir Arshad, Sardar Egbal-os-Saltaneh (in

¹⁵²Hosseini, 126.

Maku district), Jan Shah Khan Amir Afshar (the chief of Afshar tribes) were out of state control in the aftermath of the Constitutional Revolution to the time of Reza Shah. These tribes used to raid not only in Iran, but also sometimes in Russian territories of the Moghan steppe.¹⁵³

Most of these tribes were pacified by Reza Shah's army. Some of the tribal chiefs, like Amir Ashair Khalkhali and Bahador-os-Saltaneh Afshar, were caught and hanged, and some others, like Zargham Haj Alilu (Sardar Ashair) were disarmed.¹⁵⁴ The Shahsevars were also attacked, defeated, and forced to submit to the central government.¹⁵⁵ Despite this, tribes in Azarbaijan remained politically loyal to the central state. Even after the abdication of Reza Shah they continued to be so. In fact, tribes such as the Shahsevars and Zolfaghari were used by the central government against the communist Tudeh Party and the Azarbaijan Democratic Republic during 1945-46.¹⁵⁶

The state's centralization policies were not restricted

¹⁵³See Hassan Arfa, *Under Five Shahs*, 54-55.

¹⁵⁴He was arrested and disarmed in 1922, when Muhammad Mussadiq was the Governor general of Azarbaijan. See Muhammad Mussadiq, *Khaterat va Ta'allomat-e Mussadiq* [Mussadiq's memories] (text in Persian), (Tehran: Elmi, 1987), 148-151.

¹⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 172.

¹⁵⁶See Gholamreza Mosavvar Rahmani, *Kohne Srbaz: Khaterat-e Siasi Va Nezami*, [the old soldier: political and military memories] (text in Persian), (Tehran: Mo'asseseh-e Khadamat-e Farhangi Rasa, 1988), 358; Touraj Atabaki, *Azerbaijan*, 97; Arfa, *Under Five Shahs*, 340-342, 378-380.

to tribes -- they also targeted non-tribal centrifugal forces. These forces were in fact stronger than those of the tribal groups. The Khiabani movement of 1919-1920, discussed in the previous chapter, is a good example, but was suppressed before the rise of Reza Shah. The more relevant example was the case of Lahuti. The commander of the gendarmerie in Tabriz, he revolted against the central state by seizing government offices in Tabriz and establishing the National Committee. His revolt was quickly suppressed and Lahuti himself fled from Tabriz to the Soviet Union where he began his career as a revolutionary poet.¹⁵⁷

One important aspect of the state's centralization was its negative economic and industrial effects on Azarbaijan. Since Tehran became the commercial, trade and industrial centre, Tabriz the capital of Azarbaijan, lost its advantageous position. According to Farzanfar, "the decline of Azarbaijan, compared to prosperity of Tehran, created a great deal of resentment among the Azaris who considered their province as the 'bread basket' of Iran."¹⁵⁸ While Azarbaijan had been the most prosperous and advanced area in Iran until late in the Qajar era, Reza Shah's focused his efforts at industrialization on central Iran and Mazandaran in the north. According to one report:

During the period 1931-1941, of the twenty new

¹⁵⁷Atabaki, 54.

¹⁵⁸Farzanfar, 236.

factories set up in four Azarbaijani cities, only two of them were directly sponsored by the government. During the same period, the Iranian government invested in twenty of the one hundred and thirty-two factories which were set up in the central and northern provinces of the country.¹⁵⁹

Many Azarbaijanis believed that Reza Shah's economic and developmental policies disregarded Azarbaijan in favour of the central and northern parts of Iran, and they expressed their dissatisfaction with such policies after Reza Shah's fall. One Azarbaijani, for example, wrote:

If those who have visited Azarbaijan twenty years ago travel for a few days to the area they will believe what I am saying. Azarbaijan was the eyes and the heart of Iran before the recent [Reza Shah] period. Now it seems nothing but an isolated and ruined place. While we were suffering the burden of taxes, less attention was paid to the construction of Azarbaijani cities and the welfare of Azarbaijani masses. The monopoly of trade [by the central state] was to the detriment of Azarbaijan more than any other region in Iran. The construction of a national railway not only did not benefit us, but was to our detriment in several aspects. We who cultivated wheat more than any other Iranians, had to eat oatmeal bread.¹⁶⁰

Another Iranian Azarbaijani compares the rate of development in Azarbaijan with Mazandaran, the birth place of Reza Shah:

At the same time that the Centre [Tehran] hesitated to repair the Tabriz Dam in Azarbaijan, tens of cement dams and hundreds of iron and steel bridges were constructed in Mazandaran's villages and Savad

¹⁵⁹W. Floor, *Industrialization in Iran 1900-1941*, Occasional papers series, no. 23, (University of Durham Press, 1984), 58-63, cited in Atabaki, 60.

¹⁶⁰Khosrow Arasteh, in *Tajaddod-e Iran*, no. 3263 (October 29, 1941), quoted in Jami, 259-260.

Kuh. The budget for such constructions was allocated from the taxes which were collected in Azarbaijan.¹⁶¹

The cultural aspects of centralization, especially the ban on writing and educating in Turkish, was another factor for public dissatisfaction. To promote the Persian language as the official language of Iran in Azarbaijan, any expression of Turkish language was prohibited. The label *Turk-e Khar* (the donkey Turk) was used by Persian speaking groups to refer to Azarbaijani Turks. Even some official authorities were using this insulting term. Abdullah Mustowfi, the Governor General of Azarbaijan under Reza Shah, for example, used to refer to the Tabriz census as "the enumeration of donkeys."¹⁶² Zoghi, the chairman of The Azarbaijan Culture and Education, ordered those Azari students or teachers who spoke Turkish instead of Persian to pay cash fines as a penalty.¹⁶³

However, the issue of language in Azarbaijan has become a controversial question. While many Azari intellectuals -- Ahmad Kasravi, Hassan Taghizadeh, Yahya Zok'a, Ra'di Azarakhshi and others -- supported the state's policy on language at the time of Reza Shah and later, Azari nationalists have been criticizing the state's promotion of

¹⁶¹Sultan Zadeh Tabrizi, "Azarbaijan is the Precocious Piece of Iran," in *Setareh*, no. 1198 (November, 11, 1941), cited in Jami, 262.

¹⁶²*Ibid.*

¹⁶³*Ibid.*, 263.

the Persian language. The question of language became a political issue during the Azarbaijani separatist movement of 1945-46.

Conclusion

To sum up, Iranian society witnessed an important socio-political transformation in the early twentieth century -- a transformation from a decentralized to a centralized bureaucratic state. This process was a contradictory phenomenon so long as the preconditions of modern state formation did not exist and favourable situations for its consolidation were not available in Iran of the 1920s. Moreover, there existed important centrifugal forces, namely, powerful tribal chiefs who challenged the state's monopolization of power. It was at this point that Iranian society witnessed what Bassam Tibi calls *the simultaneity of the unsimultaneous*, "the parallelism of modern nation-state and old tribes."¹⁶⁴

The reason for such a contradiction was that, in contrast to the European experience, the modern nation-state in Iran did not develop out of similar or comparable process of social change. The simultaneity of old tribes and externally imposed nation-states can only be understood within this historical context. A nation-state requires more than the submission of tribes to a central authority; it also requires national integration, which affects the autonomy of tribes.¹⁶⁵

The basic feature of a tribe is its autonomy, and that of

¹⁶⁴Bassam Tibi, "Old Tribes and Imposed Nation States," 146.

¹⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 140, 132.

a modern state is the monopoly of power and the replacement of all other loyalties, including tribal loyalty, by a loyalty to nation-state. Tribes with such characteristics could and did coexist with the traditional decentralized state, but not with a real modern centralized state. Traditional states also could tolerate the power and the autonomy of the tribes, but the modern state could not. At this point, the main task of the modern state becomes the destruction of powerful and autonomous tribal groups.

The Iranian context has presented a good example of such a confrontation between the modern state and the old tribes. Since powerful tribal groups existed in non-Persian and non-Shi'ite areas of Iran, this state-tribe conflict had important consequences regarding the politicization of linguistic and religious differentiations and the rise of modern autonomist and separatist movements, or what social scientists call ethnic nationalism. As I discussed in this chapter, Reza Shah started such a confrontation in 1921 and successfully terminated it in 1933. During this period most autonomous tribal groups were disarmed, and their chiefs were exiled, imprisoned or executed. Thus, Reza Shah's efforts to minimize the powers of various tribes and to bring them under state control, significantly reduced the powers of the chieftains and the Khans. Tribal leaders saw their power decreased steadily. The cruelty with which the tribal forces were suppressed along with the mistreatment of tribal people by

Reza Shah's army led to the people's alienation from the state. Such resentment was stronger in areas where non-Persian and non-Shi'ite populations dominated. The state's eventual success in eliminating the frequency of the tribes' raids on villages and caravan roads further reduced the political power of the tribal chiefs, both within the tribal confederacy and in the relation to the government. Many tribal chiefs in Baluchistan, Azarbaijan, Kurdistan and other parts of Iran became middlemen between the state and tribal groups, acting not only as messengers to their people of the state's wishes, but the representatives of their people to the state. As a result, "tribal leaders came to increasingly symbolize and represent the identity of their tribal followers."¹⁶⁶

Most tribal chiefs, however, were more interested in political power and influence rather than the best interests of their group. Thus, many tribal chiefs preferred to reconcile with the state in order to maintain their power in tribal areas. The state, in turn, welcomed such tendencies and rewarded the loyal tribal chiefs or those who accepted its authority. This group of chiefs became powerful landlords and had formal contacts with state representatives -- especially military authorities such as gendarmerie commanders.

Comparing the three case studies in this chapter, the

¹⁶⁶Mehran Kamrava, *The Political History of Modern Iran, From tribalism to Theocracy*, 120.

process of modern nation-state building created more state-tribe conflict in Baluchistan and Kurdistan than Azarbaijan, though even Kurdistan and Baluchistan had different experiences. The state-tribe confrontation found political dimensions in both cases. Powerful tribal leaders such as Dust Muhammad Khan or Ismael Agha Simko were later considered national heroes and the symbols of Baluchi and Kurdish national struggle. Since the predominance of Sunnite Islam differentiated the Kurds and Baluchis from the Shi'ite Iranians, the state-tribe confrontation had more political repercussions in these two regions.

These two cases have not been equal in terms of the scope, intensity and the persistence of tribal social organization. Due in part to Baluchistan's general socio-economic underdevelopment, tribal structures and tribal chiefs persisted into the post-Reza Shah period, allowing the Baluchi Hakoms and Sardars to continue to play a significant political role. In contrast, relatively greater socio-economic development in Kurdistan coupled with and the decline of its tribal structures due to increasing urbanization decreased the socic-political positions of tribal chiefs as the leaders of political movements. This factor is reflected in the fact that tribal chiefs have had more significant political roles in Baluchistan than Kurdistan in the post-Reza Shah period.

However, despite these important differences among Azari, Kurdish, and Baluchi cases, what they had in common was that

nationalist tendencies emerged in each in the post-Reza Shah period. The state-tribe confrontation during Reza Shah's reign did not reflect ethnic nationalist characteristics -- most tribal chiefs were not looking to achieve nationalist goals in its modern notion (i.e., the creation of distinct nations with their own states).

These Ilkhans, Khans, Aghas, and Sardars were more preoccupied with the spread of their political and economic autonomy and the promotion of their personal powers and interests. The fact is that different rival chiefs were competing over power and status at the same time. Most tribal chiefs in the early twentieth century were engaging in robbery and raids into neighbouring areas, and if necessary, they would do the same with co-religious and linguistic groups. Many of them were also cooperating with the central government against rival tribes. In short, there is hardly a document left from this period to indicate that these chiefs were concerned with nationalist goals.

It was mostly in the early years of the post-Reza Shah period that nationalist trends started to appear in Azarbaijan and Kurdistan. In Baluchistan this phenomenon did not emerge until the late 1960s and early 1970s, when social and cultural differentiations such as language and religion were politicized as the basic justifications for nationalistic claims.

The politicization of ethnicity as a new phenomenon,

however, was mainly the product of the intellectual and political activities of political elites. These elites belonged to both traditional strata of the Kurdish, Baluchi and Azari society -- namely the former tribal ruling classes -- and a modern, educated middle class which was mostly the product of the state building process. On the one hand, the intellectual background of these emerging middle class elites made them aware of the modern nationalist and revolutionary ideas promoted by liberal and Marxist schools of thought in the twentieth century. On the other hand, the historical experience of the former autonomous tribal entities, the struggle of tribal leaders against the central state, and the existing linguistic and religious differences between the local people and the Persians facilitated their efforts to articulate and construct distinct identities as a necessary requirement to justify ethnic nationalism.

In the next chapter, I will study the role of elites -- both the traditional tribal and a new modern, educated elite -- in the rise of ethnic nationalist movements in Kurdistan, Baluchistan and Azarbaijan.

Chapter Six:

Intellectual and Political Elites: The Construction and the Manipulation of Ethnic Identity

In this chapter, I will discuss the role of elites in the politicization of religio-linguistic ties in Iran. As mentioned in the last chapter, the existence of linguistic or religious differences in Iran has not been a factor in ethnic nationalist tendencies until the middle of the present century. These differences, however, became the basic justifying elements of the nationalist movements in the post-Reza Shah period. Reza Shah's centralization policies targeted all autonomous tribal chiefs in Iran, but it was in areas inhabited by non-Persian and non-Shi'ite populations that the state policies instigated nationalist tendencies. The modern state formation process dissatisfied the tribal chiefs and created a modern urban-based educated elite who constructed and elaborated the idea of ethnic nationalism.

It was as the result of the intellectual and political activities of such elites that the defeated, exiled, imprisoned, and especially the executed chiefs were depicted as the national heroes whose basic preoccupation had been national liberation. To present such an interpretation, historical events were selectively dealt with, and a great deal of intellectual manipulation, construction and

imagination were employed to create the myths of distinct ethnic identities and national struggle.

Three groups of elites were involved in politicizing ethnicity in Iran in post-Reza Shah period: tribal chiefs, whose power and authority were threatened by the state's centralization policies; a modern educated elite of a typically, but not necessarily, middle class background; and finally, non-ethnic elites who instrumentally used ethnic issues in the course of their struggle against the state over political power and status.

On the one hand, the tribal chiefs who survived Reza Shah's detribalization (sedentarization) policies revived their former power and influence and claimed the leadership of the tribal people. Determined to retain their advantageous positions, members of this first group played significant roles in ethnic nationalist movements, especially in Baluchistan and Kurdistan. In many cases, they actively participated in the formation of autonomist or separatist movements. They also mobilized their forces as the military backbone of the emerging nationalist movements in which they were given important political or military positions.

However, the leading role in the rise of the nationalist tendencies in Kurdistan, Azarbaijan and Baluchistan was played by a modern, urbanized political elite that was mainly the product of the state's centralization and detribalization (sedentarization) policies. These rising elites, who were

often the sons and close relatives of the tribal chiefs, had experienced modern education, and some were graduated from Western universities. In his study of nomadic tribal groups in Iran, Baharvand points out that most Ilkhans and tribal chiefs used to send their sons to study in the West.¹ Most such elites were well aware of the modern nationalist and revolutionary ideas and used them as prophetic guidelines or justifying elements in their political activities.

The third category of elites who have promoted the question of nationalities, and thus encouraged and supported ethnic nationalist movements, were non-ethnic activists. These elites -- mainly Persians, rather than Kurds, Azaris or Baluchis -- participated actively in the revolutionary and mostly leftist political movements and resorted to linguistic and religious issues in Iran in order to provide support and resources for their struggle against the central state. During the reign of Muhammad Reza Shah (1941-1979) and in post-revolutionary Iran, such leftist non-ethnic elites had a remarkable presence in Kurdistan, Baluchistan and partly, in Azarbaijan. As Ervand Abrahamian writes:

...[leftist organizations such as] *Fedayian* (*Khalq*) and *Paykar* have sided with the ethnic minorities against the central government, have demanded autonomy for provinces and have sent volunteers to help the Kurdish, Turkaman, Arab and

¹Baharvand, *Kooch Neshini dar Iran*, 169.

Baluchi rebels.²

A group of rightists and mainly monarchist non-ethnic elites who emerged after the collapse of the Shah in 1979 used ethnic issues as an instrumental means against the Islamic regime. These groups were especially active in Kurdistan and Baluchistan. Generally speaking, the non-ethnic elites were concerned primarily with power rather than ethnicity and the promotion of ethnic nationalism *per se*.

The basic goal of the elites -- traditional, modern, educated, or non-ethnic -- was to gain political power and influence vis-a-vis the central state. The problem was that they usually lacked the required political support and material resources to carry on their struggle against the state's apparatus. It is in the process of such struggles that elites engage in ethnic identity creation and the formation of ethnic nationalism. As Paul Brass explains:

When elites in conflict lack the bureaucratic apparatus or the instrument of violence to compete effectively, they will use symbolic resources in the struggle. When elites in conflict come from different cultural, linguistic or religious groups, the symbolic resources used will emphasize those differences.³

One important aspect of the elites' activities is their

²Ervand Abrahamian, "The Guerrilla Movement in Iran: 1963-77," in Haleh Afshar, ed., *Iran: A Revolution in Turmoil*, 170.

³Paul Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Theory and Comparison*, (New Delhi: Sage, 1991), 275.

effort to create and present a unified notion of ethnic identity within the group. This is necessary for turning the group into one mobilized and unified entity in confrontation with the central state -- which they think is controlled by a rival ethnic group. What these elites are looking for through the mobilization of the group's members is to make the central state give them political concessions which consolidate the elites' power and status.

The modern educated elites in particular will promote language, culture, customs, religion or whatever makes the group different from other groups. There is a great deal of interpreting, reinterpreting, and manipulating of symbols by the group for the purposes of political mobilization -- the construction of myths of distinct ethnic roots, national heroes, and a tradition of continuous national struggle for achieving national liberation. One important aspect of the elites' efforts is their intentional emphasis on conflictual, rather than harmonious, relations between the group and the outsiders. This mainly reflects the elites' state of mind rather than factual and historical realities. Such construction, or according to Hobsbawm, "invention of tradition," is necessary for the elites in order to mobilize the group's members in support of their political goals. The problem is that different elites are competing for power and status within the group at the same time. The irony is that their struggle for gaining support and resources within the

group divides the group in one way or another and shatters it, ultimately contradicting their cherished goal of unity and consolidation of the group. This division of elites within the group itself leads to intracommunal elite competition for the right to speak for the group or to represent it.

The elites' struggle for power and status brings about another ironic result which contradicts the goals espoused by the elites. This stems from the fact that the elites in some cases decide to accept the political and material concessions offered by the state, and thus abandon their cherished goals. This has been one of the dilemmas of contemporary ethnic nationalist movements around the world.

In this chapter, the above theoretical guidelines regarding the role of intellectual and political elites in the rise of nationalist movements, or the politicization of linguistic and religious ties in general, will be discussed in the cases of Kurdistan, Baluchistan, and Azarbaijan from the fall of Reza Shah to the present time.

KURDISTAN

The most important consequence of Reza Shah's modern state-building policies was the creation of conscious political elites and the politicization of ethnic differentiations in Iran, and Kurdistan experienced such developments. The state-tribe conflicts, the suppressive policies of the national army against tribal chiefs, the

mistreatment of the peasant and urban citizens by the gendarmerie forces and state bureaucrats, and the cultural and nationalistic policies of the modern state all helped to politicize segments of the Kurdish population and mobilize them against the central state. While the state's authoritarian control did not allow these elements to reveal themselves en masse, Reza Shah's sudden fall in 1941 did.

It was in the post-Reza Shah period, therefore, that for the first time in Iranian history, Kurdish political movements with ethnic nationalist trends emerged. This was not a spontaneous phenomenon, but resulted mainly from the efforts of a group of active Kurdish political elites. The politicization and the rise of such elites were themselves products of the modern state-building process.

Two groups of Kurdish political elites appeared in the aftermath of Reza Shah's fall. The first, composed of former tribal chiefs who had been exiled or imprisoned by the central state, returned to Kurdistan and reorganized their tribes as powerful, armed organizations. They were the recipients of an ethnic national consciousness created first by state detribalization policies and then the rise of nationalistic Kurdish movements in Turkey and Iraq. The second group, a modern, educated elite produced in part by the state's centralization policies, emerged in the late years of Reza Shah's reign and in the post-Reza Shah period. These two groups played active roles in the politicization of the

Kurdish question and the mobilization of the Kurds after 1941.

The tribal chiefs who participated in the Kurdish nationalist movements of the post-Reza Shah era, however, did not have the extensive socio-political position they enjoyed in the pre-Reza Shah period or in the early years of the 1920s. They lacked the earlier chiefs' socio-economic and political bases of power and influence. Moreover, the Kurdish society did not consider tribal chiefs the sole representatives of the Kurds. In such a situation, a modern educated elite emerged to play the leading role in the rise of the modern ethnic nationalism in Iranian Kurdistan.

State centralization brought about socio-economic transformations which imposed new conditions on the formerly tribal societies. Despite the fact that many settled groups resumed nomadic life in the years immediately following the collapse of the Reza Shah regime, the socio-economic transformations which occurred during the modern state-building process made the revival of the former nomadic life impossible. These transformations not only weakened the power of the tribal chiefs, but also eroded tribal loyalties and identities. Instead, a sense of belonging to a larger society started to emerge with the spread of urbanization and other socio-economic political developments. Koohi-Kamali presents a good account of the process:

Two groups at opposite extremes of society were the first to become settled -- the top level becoming landowners and the bottom level landless peasants working for others. This economic transformation

had an important impact on the social and political outlook of the community. It disturbed the strong sense of belonging and loyalty which had existed until then. Earlier tribal society had been characterized by personal relationships of kinship and obligation. After the transformation described here these societies lost their cohesiveness. The function of the chief changed rapidly. While nomadic, tribal society has a limited outlook, and limited political demands, the disintegration of self-sufficient tribal units led to a feeling of dislocation, but also to an awareness of belonging to a larger, wider community. This larger community, however, was predominantly defined by an urban, detribalized intelligentsia, and appealed chiefly to a detribalized urban community.⁴

The emergence of the new educated elites as the political representatives of Kurdish society was not an immediate phenomenon after the fall of Reza Shah. Their rise to power was a gradual process closely related to the socio-economic developments in the country in general and in Kurdistan in particular. In other words, the presence of the intellectual elites was more evident after the mid-1960s than in the early 1940s. This indicates that while non-tribal elites had the leading role in the Kurdish movement of the mid-1940s, the traditional tribal elites had important place in the movement.

Meanwhile, what made the presence of the tribal factor more visible was what I call "the tribal connection." The fact is that while most contemporary Kurdish political elites have modern and higher education, they also share a tribal background. The reason is that the tribal chiefs in Iran were

⁴Freshteh Koohi-Kamali, "The Development of Nationalism in Iranian Kurdistan," 174.

usually the first group to send their family members abroad for a modern education. Referring to the Kurdish experience, Izady points out that:

Tribal leaders are by no means reactionary or uneducated country folks. College education, often at Western universities, is almost universal among the family members of the chiefs. As the older generation passes, the new Kurdish tribal chiefs boast as much education and worldliness as any national-level politician in a recognized state.⁵

The tribal connection, or the role of the tribal chiefs in modern nationalist movements, is even more evident in Kurdish regions outside Iran. The leaders of such movements are either tribal chiefs or the direct descendants of the former tribal leaders and notable tribal elites.⁶ In a general remark on this issue, Izady writes:

Almost anyone of political importance in Kurdistan carries a tribal title for his surname. Jalal Talabani, Mustafa Barzani, Masoud Barzani (all Iraqi Kurdish leaders) Rasul Mamand (Turkish Kurd) and Abdul-Rahman Qassemloo (the former leader of KDPI in Iran), all of whom carry the names of their

⁵Mehrdad Izady, *The Kurds*, 205.

⁶Since the politicization of the Kurds in Turkey and in Iraq began much sooner than in Iran, the role of the tribal elites in modern nationalist trends was more visible in these societies in the early twentieth century. The first Kurdish newspapers, such as *Kurdistan* and *Hatavi Kurd* (the Kurdish Sun) for instance, were published by the tribal elites who belonged to Badr Khan's family and Shaikh Abdul Qadir, the son of the famous rebellious Kurdish chief Shaikh Ubeydullah in Turkey. See Nikitine, 414-415. It is also noteworthy that *Khoyboun* (also spelled as *Hoybun*, i.e., independence) the first modern Kurdish nationalist political movement, was organized in Turkey in 1919 by a group of Kurdish aristocratic intellectuals and modernists (including tribal leaders and some descendants of the old Kurdish princely houses). See Izady, 62.

respective tribes as their last names, are only the best known.⁷

The Iranian experience also confirms the presence of the tribal connection in the modern separatist or autonomist Kurdish nationalist movements. Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, the former secretary general of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) was a good example. Ghassemlou⁸ was a sub-tribe (*Tayefeh*) of the Mukri tribal confederacy.⁹ Some powerful members of this Kurdish sub-tribe, like Rustam Khan Ghassemlou, Reza Qoli Ghassemlou, and Imam Qoli Ghassemlou were the governors (*Baiglar Baigi*) of Urumeyyeh¹⁰ in Kurdistan during the Zand dynasty (1747-1779). Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou himself was born in a landowner family in 1930, and after the collapse of the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad in 1947 left Iran for France.¹¹ Later he obtained a PhD in economics in Prague

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸Different sources give several spellings regarding the name Ghassemlou. Qasimlu, Qassemlou (both in Izady), Ghassemlou (Koohi-Kamali), and Qasimlou are some examples. In his own book, Ghassemlou is used.

⁹Izady, 79, consider Qasimlu as a tribe. Amir Hassanpour, however, disagrees with him. See Amir Hassanpour, *CIRA (Centre for Iranian Research and Analysis) Newsletter*, vol. 9, no. 1, (Fall 1993), 15.

¹⁰John R. Perry, *Karim Khan Zand: A History of Iran, 1747-1779*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 230.

¹¹Farzanfar writes that Ghassemlou belonged to the Kurdish feudal elite. See Farzanfar, 352.

and taught that subject at universities in Prague and later in Paris.¹²

In practice, the modern, urban-based, educated Kurdish elites could not lead nationalist movements independent of tribal chiefs. To provide enough resources -- especially military resources -- to challenge the central state, these elites had to rely on tribal forces. Izady presents a radical view in this regard:

While no modern Kurdish party leader has been the test of a ballot, Kurdish political parties are legitimized through their dealings with the traditional tribal representatives, who allow them to learn of the views of the common people....The modern leaders therefore must gain information and support from traditional tribal leaders in order to survive and be able to speak for some portion of the common Kurdish citizenry.¹³

Good examples can be given with respect to the presence of the traditional tribal elites in modern Kurdish nationalist movements. According to Roosevelt,¹⁴ when *Komala*, the first nationalist group in Iranian Kurdistan, was formed by a small group of middle-class Kurds in 1942, many Kurdish tribal chiefs and Aghas joined it and actively supported the group.¹⁵

¹²Koohi-Kamali, "The Development of Nationalism in Iranian Kurdistan," 180-181.

¹³Izady, 205.

¹⁴Archie Roosevelt, Jr., "The Kurdish Republic of Mahabad," *Middle East Journal*, 1, no. 3 (July 1947): 250.

¹⁵Among them were the leaders of Shakak, Zaza, Herki, and Mamash tribes. According to Eagleton, by 1945 almost all Kurdish tribal chiefs had joined the party. See William Eagleton, *The Kurdish Republic of 1946*, 35-36.

That was also the case with the KDPI which was formed in 1945. As Farzanfar points out, "the KDPI that was underground throughout the rule of Muhammad Reza Shah, boasted many feudal and tribal leaders among its members."¹⁶ Stronger evidence still comes to us from the contemporary Kurdologist Martin Van Bruinessen, who states that the founding members of the KDPI all belonged to the tribal elite.¹⁷

Although Qazi Muhammad, the leader of KDPI and the president of the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad in 1946 was a non-tribal, middle class elite, many Kurdish tribal chiefs participated in the formation of the party and the Republic itself. To reward the tribal chiefs, Qazi Muhammad appointed four Kurdish chiefs from among the Shakak, Begzadeh, Herki, and Barzani¹⁸ as the Marshals of the Kurdish Army.¹⁹ One of these marshals was Hama Rashid, the chief of the Beigzadeh tribe of Baneh who had revolted against the state in the late Reza Shah period. Umar Khan Sharifi, the chief of the Shakak tribal confederacy, was appointed the Republic's Minister of War.²⁰

¹⁶Farzanfar, 351.

¹⁷Bruinessen, "Kurdish Tribes and the State of Iran," 393.

¹⁸Mulla Mustafa Barzani, the chief of Barzani tribal confederacy in Iraq, joined with thousands of his armed forces to the Republic.

¹⁹See Roosevelt, 257.

²⁰William O. Douglas, *Strange Lands and Friendly People*, 59.

The post-revolutionary KDPI also had to rely on -- though of course to a lesser degree -- the Kurdish tribal chiefs. It was only with the help of the tribal armed forces that the KDPI was able to seize the Iranian army's garrisons, gendarmerie posts and police stations in Kurdish areas in the early days of the Iranian Revolution.²¹ Indeed, the chiefs of Kurdish tribes like the Shakak, Herki and Baigzadeh were KDPI's allies during the early 1980s.²² Alongside the traditional tribal chiefs, the more urbanized and modern educated tribal elites have played an important role in the Kurdish nationalist movements. Quoting a Kurdish source, Jalaipour mentions that some intellectual founding members of the new Komala²³ were the descendants of the former tribal leaders who left behind their tribal interests and supported lower class peasants and labourers.²⁴

While the tribal leaders who participated in the nationalist movements of the post-Reza Shah period hoped to revive the former autonomous power they used to enjoy, the preoccupation of the modern urbanized intellectual elites, even those with visible tribal connections, was not the

²¹See *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, Vol. 3 (1978-79), 527.

²²See *JPRS*, 79558, Dec 1, 1981, 56.

²³Formed in the mid-1960s, it became the Kurdish wing of the Communist Party of Iran in the early 1980s. This was different from the old Komala formed in the early 1940s.

²⁴Hamid Reza Jalaipour, *Kurdistan: Elal-e Tadavom-e Bohran An Pas Az Enghelab-e Islami*, 60.

revival of the old political structures of Kurdish society abolished during the late Qajar and Reza Shah periods. These groups of Kurdish intellectual and political elites had less tribal than national loyalties, and were looking either for the establishment of a modern nation-state or a non-tribal autonomous Kurdish region in a modern federal Iran.

For mobilizing the ordinary populace and especially the modern, urban, middle class sectors of Kurdish society, the Kurdish political elites needed to legitimize and justify their political struggle against the state. Justification was found in the state's suppressive policies, especially its campaign against the Kurdish tribes, the socio-economic backwardness of Kurdistan comparing to developed regions of Iran, and the ban on the use of the Kurdish language. The Kurdish elites, however, had to go beyond this as long as they claimed to struggle for the national rights of the Kurds and independence or autonomy. This required convincing not only their people but the international community as well that the Kurds have a distinct identity and national character which entitles them to the rights of self-determination and independence. Mere political action and military struggle have not been enough to do this. Rather, it has required a complicated intellectual and cultural campaign, the responsibility of which was upon the Kurdish elites.

It is mainly in this strategy that primordial factors such as religion, language, blood ties, common history, and

race are politicized and used to construct national identities as the basic mobilizing force to legitimize political and military actions. Since historical realities do not always fit the elites' purposes, they engage in the art of social construction and manipulation. Dealing selectively with history, the elites have become involved in interpreting and reinterpreting historical realities. In this way they created and presented distinct ethnic and racial roots, a legacy of continuous political rule and national struggle, and national heroes for the group.

On the one hand, this strategy requires that elites present their group as a unified entity with cultural homogeneity and social harmony. On the other, this often requires that they characterize the group's relations with others as conflictual. As I will detail in the following pages, the Kurdish elites have been involved in such attempts to create a distinct notion of Kurdish identity. The rise of Kurdish ethnic nationalism has been, as such, partly the result of the intellectual activities of the modern Kurdish political elites.

One important aspect of the intellectual activities of the Kurdish elites has been their search for ancient Kurdish political connections. It is interesting that most sources used in this regard are the modern historical findings of Western Orientalists. Their reluctance to use the older classical works stems from the fact that such works either do

not exist or do not provide explicit enough material for the purposes of modern nationalistic interpretations.

The most popular and common approach among modern Kurdish nationalist elites is their emphasis on the Median roots of the Kurds.²⁵ One reason the Kurdish intellectual elites are attracted to the Median thesis is the fact that this brings them a great political legacy, and so legitimates and justifies their claims to national rights and a nation-state. The Medes are said to be the first historical Iranian (Pryan) kingdom (700-550 B.C.).

The more recent Kurdish nationalistic views, however, go beyond the Medes and consider a much older historical legacy for the Kurds. The most radical view is presented by Izady who discusses the "early kingdoms and city-states in Kurdistan" going back to 3000 B.C.²⁶ As he himself has noted, there are no primary sources in this regard and what he has done is a historical reconstruction based only on similarities between the ancient names and certain modern Kurdish tribes.²⁷

The problem is that such intellectual interpretations sometimes create confusion and reveal contradictory claims. A good example in this regard is the writing of Karadaghi, the editor of the newly published Kurdish journal *Kurdistan Times*.

²⁵See for example, Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan and the Kurds*, 34-35.

²⁶Izady, *The Kurds*, 28-40.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 28.

Writing about Kurdish history, Karadaghi informs us of "the ancient Kurds" who were the native inhabitants of Kurdistan and "belonged to the Caucasian race and spoke the ancient Caucasian language."²⁸ While he does not mention when these ancient Kurds were living in Kurdistan, it is clear that it was long before the Medes settled there. According to Karadaghi,²⁹ when the Medes, an immigrant Iranian or Aryan tribe from the northeast, arrived in eastern Zagros,³⁰ they found themselves among the settled communities of the ancient Kurds. What we perceive from his writings, therefore, is that the ancient Kurds were racially and linguistically different from the Aryan Medes.

As the accessible historical sources stress -- and Karadaghi refers to them -- the Medes established their empire in 700 B.C. and were defeated by the their co-ethnic Persians in 550 B.C. Karadaghi points out that when the Medes collapsed they were assimilated by the larger population of the ancient Kurds who were by then a Median speaking nation.³¹ Despite Karadaghi's thesis that the ancient Kurds existed long before the Medes, that the ancient Kurds were more numerous

²⁸Mustafa Al Karadaghi, "Summary of Kurdish History", in *Kurdistan Times*, 1, no. 2, (Summer 1992): 6.

²⁹Zagros Mountains stretch from northwestern to southwestern Iran. The Kurds have been living on both the eastern and western sides of the Zagros.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 54.

³¹*Ibid.*, 66.

than the Medes, and that they had racial and linguistic differences from the Medes, the reader is surprised to read that "the Kurds are the direct descendants of the Medes."³² To justify his claim, he relies primarily on the argument that the language of the ancient Kurds was replaced later by the Median language. Since he does not refer anywhere to the annihilation, disappearance, or the destruction of the ancient Kurds, the reader must wonder what became of them and whether modern Kurds are the direct descendants of the Medes rather than the ancient Kurds.

Karadaghi creates this confusion because he is attempting to make his reconstruction and manipulation of history via two somewhat contradictory routes. First, in his attempt to find very old historical roots for the Kurds and to show that they have been living in the present Kurdistan a long time before the coming of the Aryan people, he presents the story of "the ancient Kurds." Yet in his search for an ancient political tradition and an old historical state for the Kurds, he introduces the Kurds as "the direct descendants of the Medes." It is noteworthy that many Azarbaijani intellectuals in Iran have a counterclaim for being the descendants of the Medes since Azarbaijan was called the Lesser Mede.³³

There is another interesting and contradictory historical

³²*Ibid.*, 6, 54.

³³Mohammad Javad Mashkour, *Nazari be Tarikh-e Azarbaijan Va Asar-e Bastani Va Jami'at Shenasi An*, (Tehran: Bahman, 1971), 91-94.

interpretation regarding the relationship of the Medes (the Kurds) and the Persians. Drawing upon historical sources, most Kurdish intellectuals borrow the thesis of an Aryan migration into Iran, and the belief that the Medes and the Persians were the two main Aryan tribes settled in the western and the southern parts of the Iranian plateau.³⁴ The Kurdish intellectual elites, however, present a historical account that brings about contradictory and confusing results. The Medes and the Persians are said to be from the same race and origins. Karadaghi, for instance, writes that:

Of the various Aryan tribes and groups who penetrated into the Iranian plateau and Zagros highlands, the two tribes of Medes and Parsa...were ethnically related and both belonged to the ancient Aryan nation and formed one of its important subdivisions. They spoke similar languages derived from the primitive Aryan tongue. In all probability, they were also connected by marriage.³⁵

He also mentions that the Medes and Parsa-Persians both adhered to Zoroastrian religion.³⁶ He thus tells us that the two groups were originally from the same nation, that their language had the same roots, and that they shared the same religion and were connected through intermarriage. The contradiction is that despite all these similarities, he goes

³⁴See Izady, Karadaghi, and Ghassemlou.

³⁵Karadaghi, 14.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 24.

on to speak about distinct Median and Persian nations.³⁷ Other than race, language, religion, and common history, it is not clear on what basis this distinction between nationalities could be made. One main cause of this problem may be the fact that Kurdish elites try to reject the Iranian nationalists' claim that the Kurds and the Persians are both the same nation.

In their search for a political background for the Kurds, the intellectual elites create and present their national heroes. One famous and often-used example in this regard is the case of Saladin. He is considered by all Kurdish nationalists to be the greatest Kurdish ruler and national hero. The reality is, however, that though he was a Kurd, he was also the greatest Islamic champion against the Crusaders occupying Jerusalem. Indeed, he later established the Ayubid dynasty in Egypt and western Syria including the present Lebanon, and his army was composed more of Turks than Kurds.³⁸ Thus his loyalty was first and foremost to Islam rather than to the Kurds.

Another Kurdish ruler of whom the Kurdish elites have identified as a national hero³⁹ was Karim Khan Zand -- unfortunately, his candidacy raises many of the same problems.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 17.

³⁸Nikitine, 389.

³⁹see Izady, *The Kurds*, 54; and Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan and the Kurds*, 37.

Though, Karim Khan was a Kurd who established the Zand dynasty in Iran (1750-1796), he considered himself the king of Iran⁴⁰ rather than a Kurdish national leader. The irony is that the Zand dynasty was destroyed by Qajars who were supported by the two powerful Kurdish tribal confederacies of Ardalan and Mukri.⁴¹ In fact, the whole idea of a Kurdish national awareness is a modern phenomenon elaborated and cherished partly by the Kurdish elite of the twentieth century. Historical records rarely indicate the existence of any greater Kurdish sense of unity⁴² or a Kurdish leader who tried to unite the Kurds into one political unity. Even the period of the Kurdish principalities, to which some Kurdish intellectuals refer nostalgically, was not a period of Kurdish unity. Rather, the different Kurdish principalities fought one another in support of the Ottoman or the Safavid empires.⁴³

The more recent Kurdish leaders of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries -- among them Badir Khan, Shaikh

⁴⁰The Iranians consider Karim Khan Zand one of the most popular and just kings in Iran. He actually considered himself the representative of the people (*Vakil Al-Ra'aya*) rather than a Shah.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 382.

⁴²One exception was Ahmad Khani, (Ehmede Khani) the Kurdish lyricist poet (1650-1706) who in his famous work *Memozin* laments the divisions between the Kurds. The Kurdish intellectuals consider this book 'the Kurdish national epic'.

⁴³See Martin van Bruinessen, "Kurdish Tribes," 365-68.

Ubeydullah, Shaikh Said, Ismael Agha Simko and Hama Rashid -- are often mentioned as national leaders who rebelled to unite the Kurds or to establish a Kurdish independent state. But the fact is that they cared more about the expansion of their personal power than fighting to unite the Kurds under one banner. Moreover, some of these Kurdish chiefs had religious rather than national loyalties. Being fanatic Sunnites, they suppressed, and in some cases massacred, Yazidi and Shi'ite Kurds, as well as non-Kurd Assyrians and Azari Shi'ites in Iran. Referring to such bitter experiences during Sheikh Ubeydullah's revolt of the 1880s, Izady writes:

The Kurdish Alavi community witnessed so many killings, forced conversions, and seizures of property in the course of the 1880s that it sided with Ataturk's secular republic in 1925 in order to protect itself from yet another Kurdish religious leader, Shaykh Sa'id. Their fears were so great that they took part in the actual combat against Sa'id alongside the Turkish republican forces.⁴⁴

The Kurdish tribal chiefs who revolted in the twentieth century Iran were not nationalist leaders in its modern meaning. The cases of Simko and Hama Rashid are good examples. Simko especially is considered to be a national leader⁴⁵ who was in contact with Kurdish nationalists outside of Iran and looked for Kurdish independence. However, like Shaikh Ubeydullah and Shaikh Said, Simko also engaged more in brutal acts against Assyrian Kurds, Shi'ite Azaris and

⁴⁴Izady, 57.

⁴⁵See Ghassemlou, 71-72.

Armenians than trying to unify the Kurds. In fact, his forces once sacked the Kurdish city of Souj Bulagh (present Mahabad).⁴⁶ The following passage relates how many Kurds feel about Simko:

...with the encouragement of mullahs and sheikhs, the Shakak tribal chief Isma'il Agha Simko, before his execution by the Iranian monarch Reza Shah in 1930, carried out enough atrocities during his 17-year political life to place him alongside such historical villains as Attila the Hun.⁴⁷

Hama Rashid, the leader of the Beigzadeh tribe in Baneh, was involved in similar actions in the early 1940s. According to the Kurdish writer Tavakkoli, Hama Rashid once invaded the Kurdish city of Baneh, where he set fire to the city, killing and displacing many thousands of Kurds.⁴⁸

In short, the notion that such local chiefs were national leaders for the Kurds is more a state of mind of the nationalist intellectual elites rather than the chiefs' Kurdish contemporaries. Indeed, it is not surprising that many Kurdish tribal forces participated in the suppression of these ambitious chiefs, whose ambitions centred more on their personal power than the promotion of the Kurdish national cause.

At the core of Kurdish nationalistic claims we find an

⁴⁶See Bruinessen, "Kurdish Tribes," 388.

⁴⁷See Izady, 57.

⁴⁸Muhammad Rauf Tavakkoli, *Jografia Va Tarikh-e Baneh-e Kurdistan*, 213-214.

emphasis on the distinctiveness of the Kurdish language. In fact, the question of language as a political factor in the creation of the Kurds' national awareness is a relatively modern phenomenon and, once again, primarily the product of elite intellectual elaborations.

The question of language first became politicized and was considered a factor of Kurdish national awareness in the late Ottoman Empire under the influence of the nationalist trends of the Young Turks, though in Iran such an awareness did not appear until the mid-1940s. The Kurdish elites' claims that language is an old political phenomenon in Kurdistan is problematic in part because surviving Kurdish literature does not support such claims. With some exceptions,⁴⁹ most Kurdish poets, historians, and Sufis have written less in Kurdish than in Persian or Arabic. *Sharafnameh*, the first work on the history of the Kurds for example, was written in Persian.⁵⁰ According to Tabibi, even the religious text of the Kurdish sects are mostly in Persian rather than Kurdish.⁵¹ In his history of the Kurdish scholars, poets, historians, and political elites, the Kurdish historian Mardukh mentions

⁴⁹Among them are Sheikh Ahmed Nishani (or Mulla of Jezireh) in the late fifteenth century, Ahmed Khani of the early eighteenth century.

⁵⁰For a list of the books on the history of Kurdistan written by the Kurds in Persian language, see Heshmatullah Tabibi, "Zaban va Adabiyyat-e Kurdi," [Kurdish language and literature], (text in Persian), *Avineh*, 1994, no. 14-15, 112-113.

⁵¹See Jalaipour, *Kurdistan*, 84.

dozens of Kurds who wrote in Persian and Arabic. As the book relates, about 70 Kurdish poets whose family name was *Sanandaji*, attributed to the present capital of the Iranian Kurdistan, have written poetry in Persian.⁵² As the book's content reflects, the use of the Kurdish language in poetry has become popular only in the mid-twentieth century.

Elites' Struggle Over Representation: One aspect of the activities of Kurdish political elites, especially those who lead political/military organizations, has been their struggle for power, sphere of influence, and political representation. This mainly reflects the fact that different rival elites have claimed the right to speak for the Kurds and to represent their national cause. Such an intra-elite competition has created divisions and diversity among the Kurds rather than uniting them. Indeed, this competition has been so intense that in some cases it has led to violent military conflicts. Such divisions in turn have had profoundly negative effects on the Kurds and have decreased the popularity of the political elites and the legitimacy of their struggle.

Intra-elite conflicts and factional warfare have existed not only between the Kurdish organizations in different countries, but also within the same country. The best example of these bloody factional conflicts between Kurds of

⁵²Baba Mardukh Rohani, *Tarikh-e Mashahir-e Kurd: Urafa, Ulama, Udaba, Shoara*.

two different countries occurred during the early 1970s, when Mulla Mustafa Barzani fought the Iranian Kurds. His forces, for example, executed Sulayman Moini, one of the founders of the *Komala*, and killed about forty Iranian Kurdish activists.⁵³

Iraqi Kurds have also engaged in factional warfare against each other. In 1992-94, bloody clashes occurred between the forces of Masoud Barzani, the leader of the Iraqi KDP, and the guerrillas of Jalal Talabani, the leader of PUK. Also in Iraq in the period 1992 to 1994, hundreds of Kurdish guerrillas were killed in intra-Kurdish clashes between PKU and the Islamic Movement in Kurdistan (IMK).⁵⁴

In post-Revolutionary Iran, Kurdish political elites have been in a continuous struggle over the right to represent Kurds. While such divisions have often been expressed in ideological terms, power motives in the struggle over the expansion of military territorial spheres of influence play a key role. The political and military conflicts between Komala and KDPI is a well-known example of such intra-elite divisions. Both groups are fighting against the central government for Kurdish autonomy and both claim that they are the real representatives of the Kurdish people. In practice,

⁵³Nader Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 29.

⁵⁴For such conflicts See Michael M. Gunter, "Troubles in Iraqi Kurdistan: Disaster or Growing Pains," in *Kurdish Affairs*, Vol. 1, no. 2. (September, 1994): 12-13; See also *Ibid.*: 1, 15-16.

however, they are fighting for power and resources. To justify their fights, each has accused the other of collaborating with the Islamic regime and being the fifth column of the Ayatollahs.⁵⁵ Such political struggles have led to armed clashes in several periods, the worst of which happened in 1985. According to Jalaipour, as the result of KDPI-Komala conflicts in the period between 1979 and 1986, about 800 Kurdish guerillas were killed.⁵⁶ Their conflict has deepened still further since 1986 and continues to undermine the activities of both organizations.

Elite competition has even created divisions within single organizations. The split within the KDPI's central cadres in 1980 over the decision to cooperate or oppose the Islamic regime is one example.⁵⁷ Another split occurred in 1988 when a new faction calling itself the "KDPI-Revolutionary leadership" was formed by 15 high ranking cadres of the KDPI.⁵⁸ Komala was not free of such divisions. In 1991 it was reported to have fissioned into a majority faction led by Mansur Hekmat and a minority group under Abdullah Mohtadi.⁵⁹

⁵⁵See *FBIS Daily Reports*, Middle East and South Asia, (January 7, 1985): 13

⁵⁶Jalaipour, 111.

⁵⁷Izady, 210. For more details see *JPRS*, 79558, (Dec 1, 1981): 56.

⁵⁸Koohi-Kamali, 189.

⁵⁹Izady, 212.

Non-Ethnic Elites and the Kurdish National Question: In examining the role of elites in the creation and the promotion of Kurdish ethnic identity, we must consider the role of both ethnic and non-ethnic elites. The weakness of the state's physical presence has made Kurdistan a suitable ground for the activities of different opposition groups -- particularly leftist organizations -- which have engaged in the armed struggle against the state for power and control. These non-Kurdish organizations have cooperated with Kurdish organizations such as the KDPI and Komala. Deprived of often important bases of power in Iran, and in need of the support of Kurdish organizations, these leftist groups have supported the idea of Kurdish autonomy.

Like the Kurdish elites, these groups have justified the legitimacy of such ideas on the basis of the linguistic and cultural distinctness of Kurdish society. With the support of these non-Kurdish elites, Kurds have tried to convince the central government to accept the legitimacy of their political demands. But the fact is that the support of such non-ethnic groups was largely an instrumental policy rather than a genuine belief in the idea of the Kurdish national cause. In the democratic atmosphere of the early years of the Revolution when different groups were competing for political power, the leftist groups were in dire need of the votes of minority groups like the Kurds. After the state's ban on the activities of political parties, leftist groups moved their

headquarters to Kurdistan in order to continue their armed struggle. The presence of the non-Kurdish organizations in Kurdistan, thus, started in the immediate days after the fall of the Shah.

It was, for example, at the invitation of *Jebhey-e Democratic-e Melli* (National Democratic Front) that the representatives of the Kurdish, Turkman, Arab, Baluchi and Azari Turks assembled in a meeting which opened with a message from Shaikh Ezzoddin Hussein. A religious Kurdish leader, Hosseini declared that Iran will obtain democracy only when ethnic minorities were "free and autonomous."⁶⁰ *Sazaman-e Cherikhay-e Fadaiy Khalq-e Iran (Fadaiyan)* (the Iranian People's Organization of Guerrilla Devotees), the most important Marxist movement in Iran after the Tudeh Party, brought together elites from different minorities in Iran and formed a collective forum called *Shoray-e Khalq-Hay-e Iran* (The Council of Peoples of Iran) which held its first congress in the Kurdish city of Mahabad in the summer of 1979.⁶¹

Among its demands, the congress emphasized that "the republic of Iran is an assembly of autonomous regions with equal rights and duties and it should be administered in a federal form."⁶² *Sazeman-e Paykar dar Rah-e Azadi-e Tabagheh-*

⁶⁰A.H. H. Abidi, *Iran at the Crossroads: The Dissent Movement*, (New Delhi: Patriot Publishers, 1989), 176.

⁶¹Hosseini, *Iran and Its Nationalities*, 170.

⁶²Abidi, 170-171.

e Kargar (or Paykar) (The Organization of Struggle for the Liberation of the Labour Class), another Marxist organization, was very active in Kurdistan. These Marxist groups have participated in ethnic-led armed clashes with the Iranian army in Kurdistan. Fadaïyan, especially, had an important role in the political events in Kurdistan in the early days of the Revolution.⁶³ In the bloody clashes between the Kurdish armed groups and the central government, Fadaïyan fought against the latter.⁶⁴

Non-Kurdish political elites also played a significant role in the political orientation of the Kurdish political elites and the later splits in Kurdish organizations. While Fadaïyan, for example, supported the KDPI, Paykar allied itself with Komala. Fadaïyan itself was split into majority and minority factions, with the former focusing on political and the latter on military struggle against the Islamic regime. The Minority Fadaïyan, Sahand, another non-Kurdish leftist organization, and the Kurdish Komala together formed

⁶³In its letter of April 4, 1982 to the Kurdish Council of Sanandaj, Fadaïyan directly confirmed its participation in all political and military activities of the Kurdish groups, including the fighting in Kamyaran against the Iranian Revolutionary Guards and Army forces. See Daftar Siasi, *Kurdistan: Imperialism Va Goroohay-e Vabasteh*, 60-70.

⁶⁴The best evidence for the involvement of Fadaïyan in Sanandaj clashes in 1979 is a book which the group published about the episode. See Fadaïyan Organization in Sanandaj, *Jang-e Khunin-e Sanandaj va Dastavarhay-e An, Shoray-e Shahr*, [The bloody fighting in Sanandaj and its achievements, the City Council] (text in Persian), (Sanandaj, 1979).

Hezb-e Communist-e Iran (the Communist Party of Iran) in 1983.

The role of non-ethnic elites in the Kurdish question is not restricted only to Iranian Marxist organizations. Non-Marxist Persian elites also played important role. The best example in this regard is the active presence of *Sazman-e Mujahedin Khalq Iran* (*Mujahedin Khalq Organization- MKO*). As the most radical and the strongest opposition force in Iran, MKO has had a significant role in Kurdistan. It was, for instance, in 1983 that *Shoray-e Mughavemat-e Melli* (National Resistance Council-NRC), an umbrella group consisting of the Mujahedin, the National Democratic Front and Bani Sadr, the deposed Iranian president, agreed with KDPI on the recognition of Kurdish autonomy. As a centralist and nationalist organization, the MKO does not believe in a decentralized Iran, but since it needs the support of Iranian Kurds, it made such an agreement. It is interesting that the MKO has tried to impose its policies on the Kurds, and toward that end strongly disagreed with the KDPI's policy of negotiation with Tehran in 1984, insisting instead on the continuation of armed struggle to overthrow the Islamic regime. This led to the withdrawal of the KDPI from the NRC.⁶⁵ Moreover, the MKO apparently played an important role in the split of 1988 within the KDPI, as by 1994 they were cooperating with the KDPI-Revolutionary Leadership.

These examples show how during their struggle for power

⁶⁵See Koohi-Kmali, 187.

and status, non-ethnic elites play significant roles in promoting Kurdish identity, legitimating the political demands of the Kurdish elites, and contributing to factional divisions in Kurdistan.

BALUCHISTAN

Considering the role of elites in promoting nationalist consciousness, two major differences distinguish the Kurdish and Baluchi cases. First, in contrast to the Kurdish experience, the modern, educated and urban-based middle class sector emerged much later and slower in Baluchistan. Second, the leadership of the Baluchi autonomist movement in Iran has been in the hands of the traditional elites of Baluchi society (i.e., tribal chiefs) rather than the urbanized and modern educated middle class. Nevertheless, the intellectual and urbanized elites, as in the Kurdish case, have played an active role in the promotion of Baluchi identity.

The intellectual activities directed toward the construction of ethnic identity have been more the work of the educated Baluchi elites in Eastern Baluchistan in Pakistan. In contrast to the Kurdish case, the Baluchis of Iran and Pakistan have worked closely with each other to promote the Baluchi national cause. Compared with Irania. Baluchistan, Pakistani Baluchistan is more developed and its educated elites emerged much earlier than their Iranian counterparts -- in fact, Iranian Baluchis, have always looked for the

political and intellectual support of Pakistani Baluchis, and most Iranian Baluchi opposition groups have their headquarters in eastern Baluchistan. In sum, the intellectual products of the Pakistani Baluchis have inspired the political undertakings of Iranian Baluchis. The eastern Baluchis have also taken the responsibility of speaking for the western Baluchis and reflecting their political demands.

Despite the differences cited between the Kurdish and Baluchi cases, the question of "tribal connection" is relevant in Baluchistan. On the one hand, as in Kurdistan, the modern educated and urbanized intellectual Baluchi elites who were active in nationalist movements have mostly a tribal background (i.e., are either the direct descendants or close relatives of the Baluchi tribal elites). On the other hand, few non-tribal educated elites who have had a leading role in Baluchi political organizations have relied on the military, financial and political resources of Baluchi tribal leaders.

The attraction of the traditional and the modern Baluchi elites to take part in nationalistic activities has its roots partly in the centralization policies of the Iranian state from Reza Shah to the Islamic Republic. The main cause for the participation of the tribal leaders in nationalist activities was the fact that the increase in the state's control and influence since Reza Shah challenged their power and influence. As long as the central state was ready to give them political and economic concessions, the tribal elites

remained loyal. Otherwise, they preferred to join the Baluchi opposition movements.

In the post-Revolutionary period, this trend received fresh momentum when the Islamic regime chose not to rely on Baluchi Sardars or recognize them as middlemen between the Baluchi tribal people and the state. The Shah's regime, however, had a different policy in that it could attract the loyalty of most Baluchi tribal elites by giving them political concessions⁶⁶ and recognizing them as the representatives of their tribal areas. In fact, there existed a heated rivalry among Baluchi traditional elites over using the state's resources and concessions. As Hosseinbor points out "most often, but not always, those who saw themselves as less favoured by the government, or at a disadvantage vis-a-vis their rivals, revolted or joined the nationalist camp."⁶⁷ Most of these dissatisfied tribal chiefs, however, reconciled with the state as soon as the latter expressed its willingness to give them significant political and economic concessions.

A good example in this regard was the case of the

⁶⁶According to Hosseinbor, 124, some of these Hakoms and Sardars served for four to five consecutive four-year terms in Iranian parliament. He gives the name of the followings as the members of the parliament during 1960s and 1970s: Amanullah Rikki (Rigi), Karim Bux (Bakhsh) Saidi, Abdul Hossein Khan Narui, Eisa Khan Mubarakhi, Mohammad Khan Lashari, and Bahman Barakzai.

⁶⁷Hosseinbor, *Iran and its Nationalities: The Case of Baluchi Nationalism*, 124.

Baluchistan Liberation Front (BLF) which was formed in 1964. Although the founder of the groups was Jumma Khan, an intellectual Iranian Baluchi who grew up and was involved in nationalistic activities in Pakistan, the group "scored its biggest success when it attracted the support and the membership of one of the best-known tribal chieftains in Iranian Baluchistan, Mir Abdi Khan of the Sardarzai tribe and several other lesser tribal notables, including Mir Mualadad."⁶⁸ Amanullah Mubarak, a powerful noble elite of the Mubarak tribe, Musa Khan Lashari, a Hakom of the Lashari tribe, and Aryan, a Sardar of the Narui tribe in Sistan, were other important members of the BLF.⁶⁹ Musa Khan joined the BLF in the early 1970s largely because of the then heightened rivalries among the Hakoms of the Lashari tribe.⁷⁰

Thus, it was with the help of the tribal chiefs that the BLF was able to organize its military wing. According to Baluchi Sardar Shah Bakhsh, the military forces of the BLF consisted of four to five hundred men from the Mubarak, Sardarzai, and Gamshadzai tribes.⁷¹ The Shah's regime however, was able to attract the leading member of BLF, Mir Abdi Khan, by offering him generous concessions. He and Aryan

⁶⁸Selig Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, 106.

⁶⁹On Amanullah Mubarak membership, see *FBIS*, SOA, 226, 1985, f1; on Musa Khan Lashari and Aryan see Hosseinbor, 125.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 124.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 107.

both returned to Iran in 1974.⁷² Referring to the reconciliation of Abdi Khan, Harrison writes:

The crowning blow to Jumma Khan came in 1973 when Mir Abdi Khan succumbed to the Shah's blandishments. Uprooted from his tribal environment, the sixty-five-year old Sardarzai chieftain had become increasingly dissolute. When the Shah's agents offered to provide him with a harem, a lifetime pension, and a handsome house in Tehran, he agreed to retire from politics -- adding insult to injury, in the eyes of his erstwhile colleagues, by praising the Shah in a Radio Tehran broadcast.⁷³

The place of Baluchi tribal elites in the ethnic national movements was enhanced after the Islamic Revolution of 1979. In the early days of the post-revolutionary period, many tribal chiefs who were closely collaborating with the Shah's regime and had political positions in the government, parliament, or in Baluchi areas, fled the country and actively participated in, and in many cases formed, Baluchi opposition groups to struggle against the new regime. Several such opposition groups were formed by the disadvantaged tribal elites. The Baluchi Volunteer Force (*Pesh Marg-e Baluchi*), for example, was organized in the early 1980s by Amanullah Barakzai,⁷⁴ a direct descendant of the famous Dust Muhammad Khan, the Baluchi legendary leader during Reza Shah's reign. Barakzai was a former Baluchi nationalist of the 1960s who had

⁷²Hosseini, 125.

⁷³Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, 108.

⁷⁴See *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, (1981-1982), 551.

made peace with the Shah. He and other Baluchi tribal Hakoms and Sardars formed a united front called the Baluchi Unity Front (*Jebhay-e Vahdat-e Baluchi*) against their common enemy, namely, the Islamic Republic. They had close relations with the Iranian Monarchists and received financial help from them.⁷⁵

The case of the post-revolutionary Baluchi Liberation Front (BLF) provides another example of how Baluchi tribal elites resort to primordial factors such as language and religion as political levers in order to promote their own interests. According to *Mardom*, the formal organ of the Iranian Tudeh Party,⁷⁶ a group of Baluchi Sardars and khans who had enjoyed significant economic and political advantages in the Shah's regime organized the BLF for Baluchi self-determination. To legitimate their cause, they claimed that their organization was the continuation of the BLF of the late 1960s and the early 1970s. Among its most important members were numbered the famous Mir Abdi Khan, the leader of the Sardarzai tribe, Eisa Khan Mubarakhi, Karim Bakhsh Saidi, Bahram Khan Barzehi⁷⁷ (all three members of parliament in the Shah's regime) and Amanullah Mubarakhi, a member of BLF during

⁷⁵For more information, see Hosseinbor, 172.

⁷⁶*Mardom*, (Feb 1, 1981): 1-2, mentioned in *JPRS*, 77717, (March 31, 1981): 25.

⁷⁷For more information on Mubarakhi, see *FBIS*, SOA, 226, (1985), f1.

the Shah's period who had reconciled with the new regime.⁷⁸ Some of these tribal elites -- like Karim Bakhsh Saidi, and several other Baluchi Sardars -- were even seeking the support of Western countries to launch an armed struggle against the Islamic Republic.⁷⁹

Tribal elites still play a dominant role in Baluchi opposition groups. In 1990, for example, reports were published of a group called the Popular Front for the Baluchi Liberation (PFBL) in which members of the Narui tribe had the leading role.⁸⁰ According to the Pakistani newspaper *Nation*, a leading member of the group -- Haj Baluchi Shah Bakhsh, a tribal chief and a former minister under the Shah⁸¹ -- was killed in Karachi in 1990. Delviz Khan Narui, chief of the Narui tribe and apparently another member of the group was killed in Karachi in March 1993.⁸²

These examples show that the role of tribal elites in Baluchi ethnic nationalism is far stronger than that of the Kurdish tribal elites in Kurdistan. They consider themselves

⁷⁸Other tribal elites in this group were: Alam Khan Mubarakhi, Muhammad Khan Lashari, Bahram Khan Shirazi, Cheragh Khan Shirazi, Mulla Rad Sardarzehi.

⁷⁹Harrison, 121.

⁸⁰See *FBIS-NES-90-143*, (July 25, 1990): 63-64.

⁸¹*Nation*, Lahore, (Feb 17, 1990): 10, mentioned in *FBIS-NES-90-035*, (Feb 21, 1990): 071. See also *FBIS* mentioned in footnote 78. [This is the first source which mentions that Shah Bakhsh was actually a minister in the former regime.]

⁸²See *FBIS-NES-93-059*, (March 30, 1993): 64-65.

the representatives of the Baluchis. Like all ethnic nationalist movements, they focus on primordial factors such as language and religion and argue for the distinctiveness of the Baluchi people. To mobilize Baluchis against the central government, they tend to primarily emphasize the religious differences between Shi'ite and Sunnite rather than the question of language. Since the central government has been controlled by Shi'ite religious elites, the use of religion as a political instrument for instigating ethnic antagonism in Baluchistan can be more effective than language.⁸³ By arguing that in a centralized state, Baluchis are under socio-economic and political discrimination and that their religio-linguistic differences from the Persians give them legitimate national rights, these elites demand autonomy for Baluchistan in a federal Iran. Their socio-political background, however, suggests that they care less about nationalistic goals than retaining the power and influence they enjoyed under the earlier regime.

Nevertheless, despite the remarkable presence of the traditional tribal chiefs in the Baluchi nationalist movements, the role of religious leaders and the modern educated and urbanized elites, either non-tribal or those having tribal connections, have been important. The rise of

⁸³According to some reports, these chiefs even used to instigate the Shi'ite-Sunnite antagonism in order to bring more Baluchi Sunnites on their side. See *Mardom*, (March 3, 1981) published in *JPRS*, 77836. (April 15, 1981): 29-30.

both religious and secular urbanized elites was the consequence of Reza Shah's detribalization (sedentarization) and centralization policies. The Baluchi religious elites, the *Mowlavis*, have played an important role. As Salzman writes:

Mowlavi is a holy man who has for many years studied abroad in Quranic schools. He is respected by the Baluchi as a representative and explicator of religion: the status of *Mowlavi* is equated with religious knowledge.⁸⁴

While *Mowlavi* have maintained the respect of the people "simply in his capacity as *Mowlavi*,"⁸⁵ they had not much socio-political influence during the domination of autonomous tribal Sardars or Hakoms in Baluchistan. The detribalization (sedentarization) policies of Reza Shah undermined the authority of these leaders, and their power was usurped by the National Government. Spooner argues that with the decline of the secular power of Sardars and Hakoms in southern Baluchistan, the importance of religious leaders (*Mowlavis*) has increased.⁸⁶ Salzman argues that in contrast to southern Baluchistan, in Sarhad (northern Baluchistan) the importance of religious leaders has increased as the authority of the

⁸⁴Philip Salzman, "Islam and Authority in Tribal Iran," *Muslim World*, 3 (1975): 188.

⁸⁵Brian Spooner, "Religion and Society Today: An Anthropological Perspective," in Ehsan Yar Shater, ed., *Iran Faces the Seventies*, (New York: Praeger, 1971), 181.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 187.

secular leadership has increased.⁸⁷ Thus, as both Salzman and Spooner show, Iranian Baluchistan witnessed the rise of Baluchi religious elites in the post-Reza Shah period. The political importance of the religious elites, however, would become evident on the eve of the Islamic Revolution.

Like the Shi'ite religious elites, the Sunnite elites of Baluchistan exerted great influence and played a significant role in political mobilization against the Shah's regime. Because of this influence, the Muslim Unity Party, which was formed by a group of Baluchi Mowlavis led by Mowlavi Abdul Aziz, became the most popular party in Baluchistan. While Abdul Aziz generally supported the Islamic Republic, with the increase of the Shi'ite clergies' influence in the country and the establishment of a political order based on the Ayatullah Khomeini's theory of *Velayat-e Fagih*, a group of Baluchi Mowlavis, led by Mowlavi Nazar Muhammad and Mowlavi Amanullah, protested the moderate position of Abdul Aziz and went to Pakistan to organize religious protests against the Iranian central government.⁸⁸ These religious elites, whose number has increased and whose influence in Baluchi society is great, have had an important role in turning Sunnism -- as a basic factor of Baluchi identity -- against the Shi'ite Persians. Other Baluchi political elites, especially traditional tribal chiefs, have used the influence of Mowlavis and religious

⁸⁷Salzman, "Islam and Authority in Tribal Iran", 187.

⁸⁸Hosseini, 171.

differences as significant mobilizing forces against the central state.

The secular, modern educated and urbanized Baluchi elites emerged primarily as the result of the state's centralization process: the spread of urbanization, expansion of economic development, and modernization. It was during the Shah's regime that Baluchi society witnessed socio-economic transformations and an increase in the number of modern urban elites. In 1966, the urban population consisted of only 17% of Baluchistan's population. A decade later the percentage had increased to 26%,⁸⁹ and in 1986 to 41%.⁹⁰

The establishment of two educational institutions in Baluchistan, namely the Teacher Training College of Zahidan in 1972 and the University of Sistan-Baluchistan in 1973, had a great influence on the growth of a Baluchi modern educated class. According to Nasser Askari,⁹¹ while the number of Baluchi students in higher education institutions in Iran was estimated to be only nine in Iran in 1967, this number increased by 1979 to around 100 in only the two aforementioned Baluchistan educational institutions.⁹² In the post-

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 131.

⁹⁰Markaz-e Amar-e Iran, *Salname-e Amari-e Keshvar*, 40.

⁹¹Nasser Askari, *Moghadameh-i Bar Shenakht-e Sistan Va Baluchistan*, [An introduction to the knowledge of Sistan and Baluchistan] (text in Persian) (Tehran: Donyae Danesh, 1968) 209, cited in Hosseinbor, 112.

⁹²*Ibid.*, 112.

revolutionary period the number of the institutions of higher education and their students have increased. According to the more recent reports, a total number of 4,882 students -- Baluchi and non-Baluchi -- were studying in the institutions of the higher education in Sistan and Baluchistan province during 1988-1989.⁹³ Moreover, during 1985-1989 a total number of 974 students registered in four Teacher Training Centre in Sistan and Baluchistan.⁹⁴

Some Iranian Baluchis used to study higher education in Pakistan and also in Western countries. These educated elites, who included both tribal and non-tribal elites, have played an important role in promoting the Baluchi identity and organizing ethnic nationalist movements after the Revolution. Their intellectual contribution to the Baluchi cause has provided a legitimating force, on the basis of which traditional and modern elites have been able to justify their political activities. Therefore, while the tribal elites have provided the political, financial, and military bases of Baluchi political movements, the intellectual elites have engaged in a more important job -- specifically, articulating and creating the notion of Baluchi ethnic identity.

As in the Kurdish case, and in fact the case of most ethnic nationalist movements, Baluchi educated elites have been involved in providing the intellectual basis for the

⁹³Markaz-e Amar-e Iran, *Salnameh-e Amari-e Keshvar*, 145.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, 120.

nationalistic trends in Baluchi society. It is on the basis of such intellectual contributions that the leading Baluchi political elites -- mostly tribal chiefs -- can claim distinct Baluchi ethnic roots, a tradition of political rulership, a series of national heroes, and a continuous struggle for Baluchi national goals.

These intellectual activities began in the second half of the twentieth century after Muslim elites in India decided to establish their own state in the form of Pakistan. In 1955, the Kalate⁹⁵ State National Party was banned by the Pakistani ruling elites. The Baluchi tribal chiefs, who feared to lose their autonomy by the encroachment of a strong centre, formed another party, *Ustoman Gal* (People's Party), and named Prince Karim, Khan of Kalat's brother, president. The party had a flag with three Stars on it, representing Baluchis of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran. The aim of the party was described as the formation of 'Greater Baluchistan'.⁹⁶

Having acquired the support of tribal political elites, different Baluchi intellectuals in Pakistan, and later in Iran, actively took the responsibility of producing literature to improve the Baluchi national image. As Amin points out:

The myth of common historical origins were created,

⁹⁵Kalat Khanat, also known as the Kalat Sate, was the Baluchi local reign since the sixteenth century. See Chapter Four.

⁹⁶Tahir Amin, *Ethno-National Movements of Pakistan: Domestic and International Factors*, (Islamabad: Institute of Policy Studies, 1988), 94-95.

the common heroes from the Baluchi history were sought, and common villains were identified. The development of literature was a curious synthesis of remnants of Baluchi and Barahui histories, jargons of modern nationalism and Marxist literature.⁹⁷

Through interpretation and reinterpretation of texts of ancient history, the work of Western Orientalists, classical Persian and Islamic sources and local folkloric literature, the Baluchi intellectuals rediscovered their racial roots, a distinct cultural heritage, a tradition of national resistance, and political continuity. As Ahmed points out, "while loud proclamations of an ethnic identity are common to Baluchi elite, it is far from certain as to where the Baluchi-Brahui peoples come from and what the basis of this ethnic identity really is."⁹⁸

Though the Baluchi community was portrayed as a homogeneous group enjoying internal harmony and unity, they were also presented as a group in a state of permanent conflict with their neighbouring peoples. Such a picture of Baluchi society required that historical facts be selected and interpreted in a one-sided manner. In some cases, not only parts of historical facts were neglected in order to give proof for a specific claim, but also manipulation and imagination were added to such interpretations.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, 95.

⁹⁸Aijaz Ahmed, "The National Question in Baluchistan," in S. Akbar Zaidi, ed., *Regional Imbalances and the National Question in Pakistan*, (Lahore: Vanguard, 1992), 196.

Some examples of these manipulations are the way Baluchi intellectual elites depict the historical relationship between Baluchis and Persians. A continuous history of conflict and hostility characterize these relations, and the reader of these accounts may become confused when no explanation for such hostilities is forthcoming. The works of many Baluchi nationalist intellectuals, for instance, are mixed with a one-sided historicity regarding Firdowsi's⁹⁹ accounts of Baluchis.¹⁰⁰ In one case, Firdowsi tells us that the Sasanid king Anushirvan (531-578 A.D) suppressed the Baluchis. According to Firdowsi, these Baluchis laid waste to virtually all they touched through their pillaging, slaughtering, harrying, and ravaging. When they were severely suppressed to the extent that few or none of them survived, "the world had quiet from their ravaging...the herds henceforward strayed without a guard and the sheep required no shepherd."¹⁰¹ In reading Firdowsi's work, it becomes clear that the Baluchi are not described as a distinct race or political entity who had

⁹⁹Firdowsi (living in the eleventh century) was the composer of *Shahnameh*, the Iranian national epic, in which the mythical and historical era of Iranian history is depicted in poem.

¹⁰⁰As mentioned in Chapter Three, Firdowsi's epic *Shahnameh* was the first source which has referred to Baluchi. The terms "Kuch and Baluchi" are mentioned together. Firdowsi gives little explanation on these groups. They are not presented as a distinct race or a political entity. Rather it seems that their specific way of living make them distinct.

¹⁰¹Abul Qasim Firdowsi, *Shahnameh*, (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1964), 437-438.

their own territory with distinct boundaries.

Baluchi intellectuals' account of these events reflects a completely political reinterpretation.¹⁰² They look at the episode as if two nations were in permanent conflict. In at least two other cases Firdowsi refers to the Kuch and Baluch as the brave fighters in Iranian armies who participated in Irano-Turanian Wars and were at the service of Sassanid kings or earlier Iranian mythical monarchs such as Kai Kaus and Kai Khusrow. Nevertheless, the Baluchi elites mostly disregard these accounts. Hosseinbor, an Iranian Baluchi nationalist, for example downplays the credibility of Firdowsi's accounts of Baluchis as part of Iranian forces,¹⁰³ but considers the suppression of Baluchis by Anushirvan more 'historical' and 'relevant'.¹⁰⁴

Like Muhammad Sardar Khan,¹⁰⁵ Hosseinbor presents all 60 lines of verse detailing the episode in the *Shahnameh*.¹⁰⁶ He even goes so far as to use the phrase "Perso-Baluchi wars." Such a phrase, however, cannot be found in any historical or

¹⁰²See for instance, Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch, *History of Baluchi Race and Baluchistan*, 29-33. Inayatullah Baloch, *The Problem of Greater Baluchistan: A Study of Baluchi Nationalism*, 92.

¹⁰³Other Baluchi intellectuals have a similar approach. See for example Inayatullah Baloch, 92.

¹⁰⁴Hosseinbor, *Iran and Its Nationalities*, 25-26.

¹⁰⁵Muhammad Sardar Khan, *The History of Baluch Race*, 29-31.

¹⁰⁶Hosseinbor, 26-27.

even folkloric sources. One use of such intellectual manipulation is that the myth of "Perso-Baluchi wars" stand beside real historical events like the "Perso-Greek Wars" of the Achaemenids or the "Perso-Roman Wars" during the Sasanid era. The result is that Baluch is presented as a political entity as concrete as the Greek or Roman empires.

Such intellectual accounts of the so-called Baluchi-Persian hostility are not limited to the pre-Islamic period. The relations between the two parties are presented in a way to show the reader that there has been an enduring, traditional conflict between the two. A case in point is Inayatullah Baloch, a Pakistani intellectual Baluch and a political scientist with strong tribal connections.¹⁰⁷ His book on Greater Baluchistan reflects a belief in this very Perso-Baluchi conflict. To show the continuation of this conflict in the Islamic period, he writes:

Today the majority of Baluch are of the Islamic faith and belong to the Sunnite sect. Their old war ballads, however, claim that the Baluch were the followers of Caliph Ali, and therefore originally followers of Shia Islam....Nothing is known about the causes of their conversions to Sunni Islam. When Iranians embraced Sunni Islam,¹⁰⁸ the Baluch became Shias, and with the conversion of Iranians to Shia Islam we discover Baluch joining the opposite camp -- Sunni Islam!¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷He points out that his forefathers were the founders of Baluchi confederacies, including Dadai in eastern Baluchistan. See *The Problem of Greater Baluchistan*, 2.

¹⁰⁸Italics are mine.

¹⁰⁹Inayatullah Baloch, 70.

The elites' contribution to the promotion of a Baluchi ethnic identity is not restricted to the manipulation of such "we-they" debates. As in the case of Kurdish elites, an important part of elite activities is devoted to a search for political and institutional history and for heroes of Baluchi sovereignty and independence. Unlike the Kurdish case, there is no ancient Baluchi political heritage to rely on. Rather, Baluchi elites usually look for the roots of their political self-rule or independence in the Islamic era of the seventh century to the present.

The problem is that none of the historical works -- Arabic, Persian, or even Western -- give a clear picture of the Baluchis until the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century. Despite this, the Baluchi intellectuals claim the existence of independent Baluchi political life -- without any reliable references, of course. Inyatullah Baloch, for instance, refers matter of factly to an extended period of Baluchi independence beginning about three centuries after the collapse of the Sasanid Empire in the seventh century A.D., yet he does not provide any historical accounts of these three or more centuries of Baluchi independence, nor mention the name of any Baluchi who ruled in this period. The only information that he gives the reader about this period is the following:

The Arab rulers of Damascus and Baghdad respected the independence of the Baluch, and Baluch-Arab relations for centuries were based on the principles of good will, co-operation, and non-

interference.¹¹⁰

Since he offers no references for the assertion, it is not clear on which sources the claim is based. His intent becomes clear, however, if we relate this imagined Baluch-Arab friendship to the formerly mentioned Baluchi-Persian conflict. Since the relations of Iranians and Arabs have been conflictual since the victory of Arab Muslims over the Iranians in the mid-seventh century, the friendly relations between Baluch and Arab seems a rational and natural phenomenon. The available historical sources, however, are not able to confirm the credibility of these claims.

The Baluchi elites usually justify the claim of Baluch political independence by referring to a more historical time. This era, which is referred to by the Baluchi elites as "the Baluch period" (*Baluch Doura or Zamana*) is considered the golden age of Baluchi self-determination -- the time when local Baluchi chiefs ruled much of Baluchistan. According to Hosseinbor, Baluchi Doura¹¹¹ is the period of Baluchi political independence and the absence of foreign political and administrative rule. It signifies a period when Baluchi political and military institutions as well as the Baluchi culture and language were paramount throughout the country.¹¹²

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 93.

¹¹¹According to Hosseinbor, Baluchi period was from 1400 to 1948.

¹¹²Hosseinbor, 34-35.

Baluchi elites claim that it was during this period that two independent tribal confederacies of Rinds in the late fifteenth century and Khanat of Kalate in the mid-seventeenth century united Baluchi tribes and incorporated all the Baluchi territories under their central rules.¹¹³

The historical sources, however, offer little evidence of Baluchis unified under one Baluchi ruler. Baluchi nationalist elites today hail Mir Shakar Rind (1487-1511) as the Great Baluch¹¹⁴ and "the first Baluchi nation-builder to be credited with the political and territorial unification of Baluchistan."¹¹⁵ It is also claimed that Rind created a "unified state of Baluchistan."¹¹⁶ Yet even the most powerful Baluchi chiefs -- Mir Shakar Rind and Nasir Khan (1745-1805) among them -- were unable to establish a powerful political order to unite the Baluchis, and in fact tribal rivalry and conflict between Baluchi chiefs was predominant during their rule. Mir Shakar Rind's reign, for example, was centred in eastern Baluchistan and did not include the western part in present-day Iran. Moreover, the tribal rivalries, especially the thirty years war between Rinds and Lasharis, disrupted the

¹¹³*Ibid.*, 37.

¹¹⁴Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch, *The Great Baluch: Life And Time of Ameer Chakar Rind*, (Quetta: Baluch Academy, 1977).

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, 38.

¹¹⁶Inayatullah Baloch, 97.

confederacy.¹¹⁷ Referring to such divisions, Sardar Khan points out that they "brought the edifice of Baluch sovereignty crashing down in ruin before the foundation was laid down."¹¹⁸ It was, in fact, as a result of tribal rivalries and bloody conflicts that Rind himself was forced to abdicate and die in exile. Clearly then, what emerged during Rind's rule was not a "unified state of Baluchistan", as Baluchi elites claim, but a short-term, local tribal reign.

Similar problems exist regarding the case of Nasir Khan. According to Hosseinbor, the Baluchi nationalists reserve the highest admiration for him for

his accomplishments in building a semi-modern institutional infrastructure for the state ...and look with nostalgia to his success in creating a politically united sovereign Baluchi state as a historical precedent supporting their claim for a reunited Baluchistan.¹¹⁹

As in the case of Rind, modern terms such as "a united sovereign state" are used for a traditional tribal confederacy which did not control all Baluchi populated territories¹²⁰ --

¹¹⁷Hosseinbor, 39.

¹¹⁸Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch, *The Great Baluch*, 139.

¹¹⁹Hosseinbor, 42, 45.

¹²⁰Ata'ullah Mangal, the leader of Baluchi Liberation Organization, a group founded by the Pakistani powerful tribal Sardars in 1980, considers Mir Shakar Rind as a leader who united the Baluchis and Nasir Khan as the leader who "established the most sophisticated political system in Baluchi history", and who "had a prime minister and two legislative councils." See *JPRS*, 79673, (December 16, 1981): 0034.

such tribal confederacies headed by powerful chiefs existed all over the Ottoman Empire and Iran, yet they were considered parts of these empires rather than independent, sovereign states.

As detailed in previous chapters, Nasir Khan was appointed as *Beiglarbaigi* (governor) of Baluchistan by Iranian emperor Nadir Shah, and paid tribute to the emperor until Nadir's death. After that, Nasir Khan maintained a similar relationship with Ahmad Shah Durrani, the king of Afghanistan. The Baluchi nationalists, however, choose to consider him an ally, rather than a subject, of the Iranian and Afghanistan states. Nasir Khan was at best a charismatic Baluchi tribal leader who could rally many, but not all, Baluchi tribal chiefs around himself. After his death, traditional rivalries between his family members and other Baluchi tribal chiefs reasserted themselves and old tribal divisions prevailed.¹²¹

This pattern of creating institutional backgrounds -- i.e., discovering the existence of Baluchi states, Baluchi state-builders, and national heroes in the past -- has also been applied to twentieth century history. With regard to Iranian Baluchistan, the cases of Dust Muhammad Khan and Dad Shah are good examples. While Baluchi nationalists consider Dust Muhammad Khan, like Mir Shakar Rind and Nasir Khan, a state-builder in Iranian Baluchistan, they portray Dad Shah a

¹²¹For such rivalries, see A.H. W. Hughes, *The Country of Baluchistan*, 187-237.

national hero who was fighting for the Baluchi national cause. I have earlier analyzed the autonomous power of Dust Muhammad Khan and Reza Shah's confrontation with him, but I did not discuss the Baluchi elites' attitude toward Dust Muhammad Khan. Again here, Dust Muhammad Khan is portrayed as a chief of state whose main goal was the unification of all Baluchistan. Inayatullah Baloch, for example, goes further and argues that Dust Muhammad declared himself "the Shah of Baluchistan."¹²² The historical sources, however, do not support such claims.

The problem is that Dust Muhammad Khan himself has not left any statement, interview, or personal memoirs to enable us to better judge his political goals. Even those Western travellers who met Dust Muhammad did not remark on any such ambitions. Henry Tristram Holland, for instance, met him before his confrontation with Reza Shah's army, but Holland writes less about Dust Muhammad's political plans than his frequent 'raiding and looting'.¹²³ Moreover, the Baluchi elites' argument that he was looking to establish a state consisting of Iranian and Pakistani Baluchistan¹²⁴ contradict Dust Muhammad Khan's proposition for paying taxes to the

¹²²Inayatullah Baluch, *The Problem of Greater Baluchistan*, 144.

¹²³Sir Henry Tristram Holland, "Thirty-Five Years in Baluchistan: A Doctor's Reminiscences," *Asiatic Review*, 32, no. 112 (October 1936): 694-695.

¹²⁴See Mir Amin's views on this issue in Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, 17-18.

central state in return for freedom of action within his own area of influence.¹²⁵ Dust Muhammad Khan at best could achieve only a shaky control over even one third of Iranian Baluchistan.¹²⁶

The case of Dad Shah offers an even better understanding of the intellectuals' role in manipulating historical facts for elevating ordinary individuals to the status of national heroes. Dad Shah was not a tribal chief but an ordinary member of the Mubarakhi tribe who mistakenly¹²⁷ ambushed and killed three Americans, and two Iranians in March, 1957.¹²⁸ Because of the international repercussions of this event, the Iranian army was ordered to end Dad Shah's episode. Toward this, the army enlisted the help of loyal Baluchi Sardars, and two of them -- Sardar Eisa Khan Mubarakhi and Sardar Mahim Khan Lashari -- invited Dad Shah to a meeting. Before the meeting was over, Dad Shah, his brother, and Mahim Khan Lashari were shot dead. Dad Shah lives on, however, because in the aftermath Baluch intellectuals in Pakistan promoted him

¹²⁵See Hosseinbor, 88.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, 18.

¹²⁷Almost all sources, including Iranian (Afhsar), Western (Harrison) and Baluchis (Hosseinbor), stress that Dad Shah did not know about the identity of those killed.

¹²⁸According to Afshar, they were: Kevin Karroll the chief of Point Four Program in Kirman, the main city in the southeastern Iran; his wife Anita Karroll; an American contractor, Brewster Wilson; his Iranian deputy Mohsen Shams; and Khachikian the Iranian driver of the car. See Iraj Afshar Sistani, *Baluchistan Va Tamadon-e Dirineh-e An*, 415.

to the level of a national hero -- the Martyr of Baluchi Nationalism.

Indeed, Baluchi and Iranian state sources present two different portraits of Dad Shah. Disregarding the Shah's government propaganda, I present the slightly more objective view of Iraj Afshar Sistani. Afshar, a well-known researcher on Iranian tribes who is originally from Sistan-Baluchistan province, has sympathy toward the Baluchis.¹²⁹ After providing a detailed description of Dad Shah's activities, Afshar concludes that he was more the leader of a bandit gang than a political activist. According to Afshar, Dad Shah committed many crimes, including the murder of his cousin Abdul Nabi and all five of Nabi's sons over a land dispute, the raiding and pillaging of Baluchi villages, and the kidnapping and sale to Arab Sheikhs of Baluchi women.¹³⁰

Nonetheless, Baluchi nationalists soon elevated him to the status of a "national leader who raised the flag of revolt."¹³¹ The Baluchi Liberation Front (BLF), bowing just a little more to the facts, proclaimed Dad Shah as "a man whose aim in the beginning might not have been the

¹²⁹He, for instance, praises Dust Muhammad Khan and most Baluchi chiefs who were suppressed by Reza Shah.

¹³⁰As one example, Afshar writes that Dad Shah kidnapped seven Baluchi girls who were the subjects of Sardar Ali Khan Shirani from Bent and Fanuj villages and sold them in Muscat the capital of Oman in 1952. See Iraj Afshar Sistani, *Baluchistan*, 417-425.

¹³¹Harrison, 105. See also *Ibid.*, endnote 13 on page 212

independence of the whole of Baluchistan", but a man who "gradually came to see his role in a larger perspective. During his last days, he gave great sacrifices for the cause of independence, for awakening the Baluchi nation and fighting against imperialism."¹³²

Assuming that even Afshar has exaggerated and been influenced by the popular opinion of the Shah period, I must conclude that Dad Shah was not the nationalist and national leader the Baluchi intellectuals and political activists would have us believe he was. Rather, these political elites -- either Pakistani or Iranian Baluchis -- have reinterpreted the Dad Shah episode and created a national leader out of him in order to promote Baluchi ethnic nationalism. By considering themselves the followers of Dad Shah, therefore, they seek to mobilize the Baluchi people to support their political goals.

Non-Ethnic Elites and Baluchi Ethnic Nationalism: As the Kurdish case indicated, the ethnic elites are not the only groups who promote ethnic nationalism. Non-ethnic elites too have played a significant role in Baluchi nationalism. To enjoy more support and exert greater influence, especially among the educated classes of minority groups, these non-ethnic elites take a stand in recognizing the right of

¹³²Baluchistan Liberation Front, *Baluchistan: Introduction and Liberation Struggle*, a pamphlet published clandestinely, 12. as quoted by Harrison, 105, and Hosseinbor, 141.

minorities to self-determination within Iran. Their ultimate motive, however, has been to organize Baluchi support in their favour and to mobilize them in political movements against the central state.

It was mainly in post-revolutionary Baluchistan that ethnic elites started their activities and tried to gain the support of Baluchis, especially their educated class. Harrison, who visited Baluchistan in August 1978, just before the advent of the Iranian Revolution, mentions that representatives of the guerilla organizations *Fadayan*, *Paykar*, and *Mujahedin Khalq* made secret visits to Baluchistan¹³³ to examine the ways they could be most effective in the area. Again, the two Marxist groups of *Fadayan* and *Paykar* were more active than other groups.¹³⁴ Aside from these two leftist political organizations, a group of monarchists have also used Baluchistan and some Baluchi political movements to launch a military struggle against the Islamic Republic.

The leftist political organizations in the centre, mostly led by Persians, encouraged and helped the Baluchi intellectuals to organize political movements with a demand

¹³³Harrison, 111.

¹³⁴Because of their experiences during the Muhammad Reza Shah regime, these two groups had the leading role in sending volunteers to help Baluchis to organize guerrilla movements. See Ervand Abrahamian, 1985, "The Guerilla Movement in Iran: 1963-77," in Haleh Afshar, *Iran: A revolution in Turmoil*, 170.

for autonomy in Baluchistan. They also invited the Baluchis to participate in the Council of People of Iran held in the Kurdish city of Mahabad in the summer of 1979. The most famous leftist Baluchi group, the Baluchistan People's Democratic Organization (BPDO), for instance, was greatly assisted by the Persian Marxist *Fadaiyan*. This Baluchi group also cooperated and coordinated with Iranian Marxists. It was originally formed by a group of Baluchi members and supporters of *Fadaiyan* and *Paykar*, and many Persian leftists were among its members.¹³⁵ Rahmat Hosseinbor, the leader of BPDO, also had close relations with leading members of the Persian Marxists, while *Fadaiyan* had its own Baluchi branch called *Bam-e Estar* (The Red Star) and *Paykar*, another Marxist group with Maoist orientations, formed *Nabard-e Baluch* (The Baluch Struggle), which was in fact its provincial arm in Baluchistan.¹³⁶

The non-Baluchi leftists also promoted the idea of Baluchi self-determination by organizing cultural circles and publishing periodicals. *Fadaiyan*, for example, formed a group called *Kanoon-e Siyasi Farhangi Khalgh-e Baluch* (Political-Cultural Centre of Baluch People),¹³⁷ to promote the idea of Baluchi identity and Baluchi cultural heritage. Among the

¹³⁵See Hosseinbor, 170, 166.

¹³⁶*Ibid.*, 166.

¹³⁷This Marxist organization also formed such Centres among the Kurds, Turkmans and Arabs of Iran. See *Ibid.*, 170.

publishing activities of the leftist organizations we can name *Koo Kar* (Cry) the organ of Marxist forces, and *Grand* (Majesty), a monthly journal dealing with revolutionary doctrines published by leftist forces.¹³⁸

The Monarchist supporters of the former regime also found Baluchistan a fertile ground for their activities against the Islamic regime. Groups such as the Council of National Resistance led by Shahpour Bakhtiyar, the last prime Minister of the Shah, organized armed opposition groups among Baluchi tribes. The Baluchi Sardars who had the greatest advantages under the Shah's rule were supported by these monarchists. While the Monarchists supported the autonomist Baluchi organizations, their main goal was the revival of the former political order and their socio-political and economic interests.

Due to the predominance of tribal structures in Baluchistan, political organizations led by Baluchi tribal chiefs have had more influence than Marxist organizations. It is not surprising that most anti-regime activists in Baluchistan belong to political groups with a tribal background. Among such groups, *Baluch Pesh Marga* and *Jebhey-e Vahdat Baluch*, which closely cooperated with each other and were both led by the Baluchi Sardars and Hakoms loyal to former regime, were supported financially and militarily by

¹³⁸*Ibid.*

the Persian monarchist groups such as CNR,¹³⁹ Iran's Salvation Front (led by Ali Amini, the prime minister of the Shah in 1960-61), and by other monarchists led by Reza Pahlavi, the former Crown Prince of Iran. According to some reports, former officers of the Shah's army have commanded the military faction of these Baluchi groups.¹⁴⁰ These Baluchi and monarchist groups have been especially active in promoting Shi'ite-Sunnite disputes in Baluchistan in order to exacerbate Baluchi religious dissatisfaction with the present regime.

To sum up, the rise of the ethnic nationalist movement in Iranian Baluchistan was partly the result of political and intellectual efforts of the Baluchi traditional and modern urban educated elites who resented the detribalization and centralization policies of the modern state. Along with the Baluchi elites, non-ethnic elites have played a significant role in helping Baluchi -- the urban, educated and the tribal -- to form their own political organizations that can exploit religious and linguistic differences in order to invoke Baluchi support for their political goals. Non-ethnic elites, however, were actually more concerned with increasing their

¹³⁹It was, for example, Voice of Iran, a radio broadcasting station belong to Bakhtiyar and his CNR that used to report the military activities of these two Baluchi organizations. See for instance: *JPRS*, 78464, (July 7, 1981): 66; *JPRS*, 79029, (September 22, 1981): 0048A; *JPRS*, 78358, (November 3, 1981): 0036.

¹⁴⁰See *JPRS*, 79029, (September 22, 1981): 0048A.

own bargaining powers and material resources in their struggle against the central state than with Baluchistan's autonomy.

AZARBAIJAN

One important factor which makes Azarbaijan different from the Kurdish and Baluchi cases is the fact that traditional tribal elites did not play any significant political role in Azarbaijan's political life in the post-Reza Shah period. Instead, the politicization of ethnicity in Azarbaijan has been mainly the work of the urbanized and mostly middle class, educated elites. Although the tribal factor in Azarbaijan existed in this period, its political role was very limited. As I discussed in the last chapter, the political function of the tribes has been mainly to support the central government vis-a-vis the centrifugal forces. Also in contrast to the Kurdish and Baluchi cases, Azari nationalism has not demonstrated itself as a continuous political and organizational movement after the collapse of the Democratic Republic of Azarbaijan in 1946. One more difference between Azarbaijan's experience and that of the other two ethnic groups is that the destiny of Azari nationalism has been more closely related to its co-ethnics outside Iranian boundaries. In other words, Azari nationalist trends in the former Soviet Union have had greater direct political repercussions in Iran than Kurdish trends in Iraq or Turkey or Baluchi trends in Pakistan.

While the emergence of Azari nationalism as an elitist-inspired movement was the product of both Iranian and Soviet Azaris, the role of the latter after the 1945-1946 episodes has been much more important. It was in fact the political and intellectual Azari elites outside Iran who took the responsibility for promoting and instigating ethnic nationalist tendencies among Iranian Azaris. The Iranian Azaris, however, had an active role in the emergence of Azari nationalism in its early stages in Russia of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Some of the leading political elites of Russian and later Soviet Azarbaijan were originally Iranians who emigrated and stayed in Russia or the Soviet Union.

To understand the importance of Azari elites in the emergence of ethnic nationalism in Iran, then, we should consider the role played by both groups. Here, as in the Kurdish and Baluchi cases, we can see how the elites' drive for political power and status has encouraged them to become involved in political and intellectual activities for creating and promoting a distinct ethnic identity which had not existed before. Azari elites have relied primarily on the question of language as the basic ethnic identity-making factor. The common belief in Shi'ite Islam by all Azaris has deprived the political elites of using religion as an instrumental element for the construction of ethnic identity and the politicization of ethnicity in Iranian Azarbaijan.

Historically, different socio-political upheavals have influenced the Azari elites' political awakening and the spread of nationalistic trends among them. Significant events in which the Azaris were directly involved included the Russian Revolution of 1905, the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906, the Young Turks' Revolution of 1908 in the Ottoman Empire, the occupation of Iranian Azarbaijan by Russian and Ottoman Turks from 1909 to 1918, the October Revolution of 1917, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the formation of modern Turkey in 1918, and finally the rise and fall of an independent Azarbaijan in the Soviet Union in 1919 and 1920.

The centre of Azari nationalism was the city of Baku on the western bank of the Caspian Sea. It was here that a group of Iranian Azaris became involved in cultural and political activities in Iran and Russia in the early twentieth century and formed the nucleus of the elites who built and led the separatist/autonomist movement of 1945-46 in Iranian Azarbaijan. Baku became one of the major oil-producing regions in the world at the turn of the twentieth century. By the time of the first Russian Revolution in 1905, this city was one of the most volatile revolutionary centres in the Russian Empire, with an active social democratic organization and a newly emerged multi-ethnic (Russian, Iranian, Turkish, Armenian) industrial proletariat. As Altstadt writes "the city became, by the turn of century, a cosmopolitan industrial

centre and a frontier-type boom town like those of the California gold rush."¹⁴¹

Although the two treaties of Gulistan (1813) and Turkmanchai (1828) following the two Perso-Russian Wars¹⁴² (1808-1828) led to the Russian conquest of Iranian territories in Caucasia north of the Aras (Arax) river,¹⁴³ the movement across the new border never ceased. Indeed, the socio-political unrest in Iran during the Tobacco Rebellion (1891-92) and the Constitutional Revolution (1906-11) -- in both of which the leading Azarbaijani cities were major centres of popular resistance -- coupled with pressure to leave the land and the lure of jobs in the north, led to a steady rise in the rate of movement to Russian Azarbaijan. According to the former Russian council in Tabriz, the capital of Iranian Azarbaijan, between 30,000 and 60,000 passes were issued to Iranians in Tabriz each year during the period 1891 to 1904.

As a result of this immigration into Russian Azarbaijan, 50% of all Muslim workers in Baku were from Iran during the last years of the nineteenth and the first years of the

¹⁴¹Audrey Altstadt, "Muslim Workers and the Labour Movement in Pre-War Baku," in Sabri M. Akural, ed., *Turkic Culture: Continuity and Change*, (Indiana: Indiana Universities Turkish Studies 6, 1987), 83.

¹⁴²See Chapter Three.

¹⁴³The Arax River has been the border of Iran with its northern neighbours (Russia, Soviet Union, and now the Azarbaijan Republic).

twentieth centuries.¹⁴⁴ In addition to these workers, many Iranian Azari socio-political reformers who had been politically active in Iran but had come under pressure, immigrated into Baku. These groups of Iranians were energetic political activists in the city and used to promote Iranian political and social reforms from their adopted home. Several political organizations were formed and periodicals published in the Persian language toward this goal.

Iranian Azaris in Baku not only actively participated in political organizations such as *Hemmat* (founded in 1904)¹⁴⁵ and *Musavat* (1911), but they also formed their own political parties like *Ijtimaiyyun-e Amiyyun* (1906), and *Adalat* (1916). These parties had many supporters among non-Azari Iranians in Tehran and other major cities. Through such political activities, many Iranian Azaris became aware of and were influenced by such reformist and revolutionary ideologies as social democracy and communism. Some of them also returned to Iran to encourage socio-political reforms or to organize political parties. Among the Iranian Azari elite who played principal parts in the rise and the promotion of Azari ethnic nationalism in Russian and Iranian Azarbaijan, Akhond Zadeh, Rasul Zadeh, and Pisheh Vari were some of the best known.

¹⁴⁴David B. Nissman, *The Soviet Union and Iranian Azerbaijan: The Use of Nationalism for Political Penetration*, (London: Westview Press, 1987), 14.

¹⁴⁵After the Russian Revolution of 1905, this party merged with Russian Social Democratic Workers Party (RSDWP), but retained its autonomy.

Fath Ali Akhond Zadeh (1812-1878) was a satiric dramatist and a playwright who, for the first time in modern history, wrote in Azari Turkish. The son of Iranian Azari parents, Akhond Zadeh, who lived in the Russian Caucasus, was among the first Muslim modernists to take up a campaign against the bigotry and religious fanaticism of the Shi'ite clergy.¹⁴⁶ Akhond Zadeh is considered one of the forerunners of westernization in the Islamic world. He urged Iranians and Russian Muslims to become acquainted with Russian and West European culture, and even suggested the replacement of the Arabic alphabet by Russian-Latin letters of his own invention. His call to enlightenment, his anti-clericalism, and his Azari language writings in the journal *Akintchi* (the Ploughman) had an especially strong influence on the Russian-Soviet Azarbaijanis after the creation of an Azarbaijani national theatre, the repertoire of which relied heavily on Akhond Zadeh's plays.¹⁴⁷

What contributed most to his popularity among Azari nationalists, however, was his use of Turkish Azari in his literary works. This was later interpreted as the first effort to replace the domination of Persian literature in

¹⁴⁶Serge A. Zenkovsky, *Pan-Turkism and Islam in Russia*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 94.

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.*

Caucasia by introducing the use of the Turkish language.¹⁴⁸ However, there is little in Akhond Zadeh's writings to indicate that his decision to work in the Azari language rather than Persian, the dominant literary language of Caucasia and the Ottoman Empire, was an intentional political act of Azari Nationalism or an indication of anti-Iranian orientations. In fact, many Iranian modernists consider him one of the first Iranian nationalists to proclaim his admiration of ancient Iran and to characterize the Arab conquest as a disaster¹⁴⁹. The following passage neatly describe Akhond Zadeh's political orientations:

A tsarist official of impeccable loyalty, he (Akhond Zadeh) described himself as "almost Persian", and his philosophical writings reveal the depth of his preoccupation with all things Persian, both good and bad. Inasmuch as he extolled the pre-Islamic greatness of Persia and castigated the "hungry, naked, and savage" Arabs for having destroyed the kingdom of the Sasanids, he is considered one of the forerunners of modern Iranian nationalism. Nor was he devoid of typical anti-Ottoman sentiments, which were clearly reflected in some of his writings. Still he has been recognized as a major figure in the movement for the self-assertion of national identity of Turkic people by virtue of his role in the literary revival of the

¹⁴⁸Tadeusz Swiettochowski, "National Consciousness and Political Change in Azarbaijan, 1905-1920," in Ronald Grigor Suny, ed., *Transcaucasia: Nationalism and Social Change*, (Ann Arbor: Harvard University Press, 1983), 210.

¹⁴⁹Hafez Farman Farmayan, "The Forces of Modernization in Nineteenth Century Iran," in William R. Polk and Richard L. Chambers, eds., *Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East*, (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 1968), 141.

native [Azari] language.¹⁵⁰

Akhond Zadeh's ideas were imitated by Persians such as Mirza Agha Khan Kirmani,¹⁵¹ who also promoted Iranian nationalism in its pre-Islamic form. With the rise of the Azari nationalist awareness in Russian Azarbaijan in the early twentieth century, the Azari elites disregarded his romantic nationalist tendencies toward Iran, and made out of him an Azari national hero.

Muhammad Amin Rasul Zadeh's (1884-1955) case was different. He was an Iranian Azari and an energetic political activist who lived in Iran, but who for political reasons had moved to Russian Azarbaijan and had become one of the vanguards of Azari nationalism. Rasul Zadeh was one of the founding members of the *Hemmat* (Endeavour) party in Baku. Following increasing political repression in Russia in 1908, he and 800 other Azaris moved to Iran. These refugees from Transcaucasia, the bulk of them Azarbaijanis and *Hemmatists*,

¹⁵⁰Tadeusz Swiettochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan; 1905-1920: The Shaping of National Identity in a Muslim Community*, (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1985), 24-25, quoted in Nader Entessar, "Azari Nationalism in the Former Soviet Union and Iran," in Crawford Young, ed., *The Rising Tide of Cultural Pluralism: The Nation-State at Bay ?* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 120-121.

¹⁵¹On Agha Khan Kirmani's ideas see Mangol Bayat-Philip, "Mirza Agha Khan Kirmani: A Nineteenth Century Persian Nationalist," in Kedourie and Haim, eds., *Towards a Modern Iran*, 64-93.

joined the fighting in Tabriz¹⁵² alongside the Iranian Constitutionalists in defence of the Constitutional Revolution.

According to the Iranian modernist Fereydu Adamiyyat, in the beginning Rasul Zadeh, like Akhond Zadeh, was one of the first promoters of Iranian nationalism to hold up as an ideal type pre-Islamic Iran. In his writings, which were published in Persian journals in Baku and later in Tehran, Rasul Zadeh tried to encourage Azaris not to forget their Iranian background.¹⁵³ Zenkovsky, however, points out that Rasul Zadeh's early writings bear witness to the fact that he and other Azarbaijani leaders such as Topchibachev and Agaev were, at the beginning of their political careers, influenced more by the Pan-Islamic sermons of the Persian ideologist, Jamal Al Din Afghani, than by Turkic national considerations. In these writings they envisioned the revival and the unification of the entire Muslim World, and it was the culture and religion of Islam, not the nation, which seemed to them the most suitable basis for further political action.

In Tehran, Rasul Zadeh became the editor of two Persian

¹⁵²See Tadeusz Sowietochowski, "National Consciousness and Political Orientations in Azarbaijan, 1905-1920," 216.

¹⁵³For his journal, which published in Persian in Caucasia, he chose the name of *Seyavash-e Asr-e Ma* (Seyavash of our time). Seyavash was a popular ancient Iranian hero who was murdered by Turanians. See Ferydun Adamiyyat, *Fekr-e Democracy-e Ejtemaei Dar Nehzat-e Kashrooteyat-e Iran*, [the idea of social democracy in Iranian Constitutional Movement] (text in Persian), (Tehran: Payman, 1984), 17-18, 111-112.

periodicals, *Iran-e Abad* (Prosperous Iran) and *Iran-e Now* (New Iran). Rasul Zadeh's reformist ideas, however, were disturbing to the tyrannic Qajar rulers, and his political and cultural activities led to his expulsion from Iran in 1910. This event seemed to have an important effect on his attitude toward the Azari national cause and Turkish nationalism. As one analyst writes:

Defeated on the battlefield of Iranian (Constitutional) Revolution, Rasul Zadeh migrated to Constantinople. Here he joined the Pan-Turkic movement and cooperated with the Young Turks, who were now in power. He contributed to the radically nationalist *Turk Yurdu* (Turkic Fatherland). Extremely enthusiastic over the cause of Pan-Turkic unity, Rasul Zadeh returned to Baku in 1910 or 1911 and immediately became prominent in local political life.¹⁵⁴

In 1911-12, Rasul Zadeh founded the *Musavat* (Equality) a party which became the vanguard of Azari nationalism against Russia. It was this party which declared the independence of Russian Azarbaijan in 1919. In 1922, with the imposition of Soviet control over Azarbaijan, Rasul Zadeh fled to the West. For several years, he lived in Turkey as a writer, and then went to Europe in the 1930s. He returned to Turkey in 1947, dying there in 1955.¹⁵⁵ Rasul Zadeh was a good example of that group of political elites whose preoccupation with and involvement in the struggle for power and social status deeply

¹⁵⁴Zenkovsky, *Pan Turkism and Islam in Russia*, 100.

¹⁵⁵For a good biography of Rasul Zadeh, see Charles Warren Hostler, *The Turks of Central Asia*, (London: Praeger, 1993), 178-179.

affected their political orientation toward ethnic nationalism. When Rasul Zadeh saw no chance of a political future in Iran, he put aside his Pan-Islamic or Pan-Iranic ideas. It was only after his expulsion from Iran that he went to Turkey and became an ardent Pan-Turkist.¹⁵⁶ This brought him prestige, respect and political status in Russian Azarbaijan and Ataturk's Turkey.

If Akhond Zadeh and Rasul Zadeh were not directly involved in the Azari nationalist movement in Iran,¹⁵⁷ Ja'far Pishe Vari was. Born in the Iranian city of Khalkhal in Azarbaijan, he emigrated to Russian Azarbaijan at the age of 10. He was one of the Iranian immigrants in Baku who were deeply involved in revolutionary activities. He was the chief editor of *Hurriyyat*, a Persian/Azari journal and the official organ of the *Adalat* party in Baku. This party was an organizational umbrella for many Iranian communists. Pishe Vari himself became a founding member of the Communist Party of Iran which was formed in Baku in the aftermath of the Soviet Revolution of 1917.

In 1918, he moved to Gilan, the northern province of Iran, to help other Iranian communists establish the Soviet

¹⁵⁶Alexander Benningsen, "Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism in History and Today," *Central Asian Survey*, 3, no. 3 (1985): 48.

¹⁵⁷This was probably because of their sympathy for Pan-Iranist ideas as well as the fact that at that time there was no Azari nationalist tendencies in Iran.

Republic of Gilan.¹⁵⁸ Pishe Vari went to Tehran in 1920, probably to organize communist cells in Iran. In Tehran, he was the chief editor of *Haqiqat* (The Truth) the organ of the communist activists. Following Reza Khan's coup d'etat of 1921, he moved once more to Baku until he came back to Tehran in 1927 to reorganize communist cells. Pishe Vari was arrested in 1930 and spent a decade in prison until the abdication of Reza Shah in 1941. Following the formation of the communist Tudeh Party in 1941, Pishe Vari became one of its leading members. In Tehran in 1943 he started to publish a three-issues-per-week leftist newspaper, *Azhir* (Alarm). A year later, he was elected as a member of the Iranian parliament (*Majlis*) but the *Majlis'* members, noting his communist background, rejected his election by a vote of 50 to 47.¹⁵⁹ After being deprived of having his seat in parliament, he moved to Iranian Azarbaijan, and in September of 1945 formed the Azarbaijani Democratic Party. I have discussed the rise and fall of this party and the proclamation of the Azarbaijan Democratic Republic.¹⁶⁰ With the Republic's fall, its president, Pishe Vari, fled to Soviet Azarbaijan where,

¹⁵⁸This short-lived republic collapsed in 1920-21 after Reza Khan's Cossack forces defeated most separatists.

¹⁵⁹Sepehr Zabih, *The Communist Movement in Iran*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 79.

¹⁶⁰See Azarbaijan in Chapter Three.

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according to reports, he was killed in a car accident in 1948.¹⁶¹

The rejection of his membership in the Majlis was a turning point in Pische Vari's political life. Here he lost probably the best opportunity for pursuing his leftist political ambitions on a national level (i.e. in Iran). The fact is that despite his long stay among the ardent Azari nationalists of the Soviet Union, there is less evidence that Pische Vari had been looking to promote an Azari national identity in Iran. Instead of having loyalty to ethnic nationalism in Azarbaijan, his efforts were devoted to the universal communist struggle in general. Some students of Iranian and Azarbaijani politics have stressed that during his activity in Baku as a journalist and communist, Pische Vari wrote many articles in which he referred to Iran as a "nation with a distinguished history and identity," thus clearly

¹⁶¹Fereydun Keshavarz, the former member of the central committee of the communist Tudeh Party, accused the Tudeh leadership and the Azarbaijan Communist Party of the Soviet Union of masterminding Pische Vari's murder and manufacturing the so-called car accident as a cover-up. See Fereydun Keshavarz, *Man Muttaham Mikoyan Komiteh-e Markazi Hezb-e Tudeh-e Iran Ra*, [I accuse the central committee of the Tudeh Party of Iran], (text in Persian), (Tehran: 1979), 65-66, mentioned in Entessar, "Azari nationalism in the Soviet Union and Iran", 124. Mehdi Partovi, a leading member of the Tudeh Party who was accused of giving Iranian military information to Soviets in the early 1980s, has stressed that Pische Vari did not die in a motor accident but was killed by KGB for opposing the Soviets. On this see Sepehr Zabih, *The Left in Contemporary Iran: Ideology, Organization and the Soviet Connection*, (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 49.

expressing his Iranian nationalist tendencies.¹⁶² This was in fact a defensive position vis-a-vis the anti-Iranian policies of Russians and some Russian Azarbaijanis. In an article entitled "Revolutionary Thinking is Necessary in Iran", he praised "Iranian customs and traditions":

It is a known fact that Iranians are a historical nation which, despite having suffered numerous ups and downs in the past and adopted many religions and beliefs, has nevertheless been able to preserve its six-thousand-year-old culture and tradition.¹⁶³

In his early years of political activity, he used to write on the Iranian identity of Azaris. His first article, written in Persian in *Hurriyyat*, was about the Iranianness of Azarbaijan and entitled "Azarbaijan Joz'-e la-Yanfak-e Iran (Azarbaijan, an Inseparable Part of Iran).¹⁶⁴

The rejection of his credibility as a member of the Iranian parliament, therefore, had dramatic effects on Pische Vari's political position. In late 1944, along with the Tudeh Party members of parliament, Pische Vari started to raise the question of the formation of *Anjoman-ha-ye Iyalati va Velayati* (the Provincial and District Councils) mentioned in the Supplementary Constitutional Code. Unable to influence politics in Tehran, he focused his attention in 1945 toward

¹⁶²Touraj Atabaki, *Azerbaijan: Ethnicity and Autonomy in Iran After The Second World War*, 117.

¹⁶³*Hurriyyat*, 72, (May 221, 1920), quoted in Atabaki, 117.

¹⁶⁴*Hurriyyat*, 1-3, (January 28 to February 6, 1918), cited in Atabaki, 117.

Azarbaijan as an important basis of support and resources. To follow such a political goal, he handed over control of his newspaper, *Azhir*, to his colleagues and departed for Azarbaijan where he declared the formation of the Azarbaijan Democratic Party and later the Azarbaijan Democratic Republic. In order to mobilize the Azarbaijanis in a mass political movement, he would need some unifying element which could distinguish Azarbaijanis from their fellow Iranians. Championing the Azarbaijani language proved to be the most effective rallying point for uniting the population of the province.

After its formation in September 1945, the Azarbaijan Democratic Party made it clear that its stance on adapting Azarbaijani as the official language of the province was uncompromising. Pishe Vari himself raised the issue of language and even went so far as to demand the cleansing of Azari's of Persian and Arabic influences.¹⁶⁵ As Atabaki points out, the main goal of Pishe Vari in introducing the issue of language was to bring "crowds into history", while in his pre-Azarbaijan Democratic Party life he was not particularly keen to promote the use of the Azari language. In short, as Atabaki points out,¹⁶⁶ the Pishe Vari of September 1945 was not the same Pishe Vari of a few years

¹⁶⁵Sakina Berengian, *Azeri and Persian Literary Works in Twentieth Century Iranian Azarbaijan*, 146.

¹⁶⁶Atabaki, 104.

earlier. The question of power necessitated that ethnic nationalist ideas be promoted and primordial elements such as language be politicized. The creation of an Azari ethnic identity and the promotion of nationalistic ideas in Iranian Azarbaijan was not the work of Akhond Zadeh, Rasul Zadeh, and Pische Vari alone. There were other Azari political and intellectual elites who have tried to attract the attention of Iranian Azarbaijanis to notions of one Azari nation, the unity of northern and southern Azarbaijan, and the southern question. But as I discussed in Chapter Three, most Iranian Azari elites have not welcomed such ideas and preferred to consider Azarbaijan an integral part of Iran. Therefore, it was primarily the Azari elites of Russian Azarbaijan, moved to action by the rising nationalistic trends in the Middle East of the late nineteenth century, who have promoted the national question in Iranian Azarbaijan.

As a secular political ideology which replaced universal Islamic loyalty in the late Ottoman Empire, pan-Turkism had a great influence on the Azari elites of Istanbul in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Some of these elites, such as Rasul Zadeh, Hussein Zadeh, and Ahmad Aghaev, put aside the Iranian inclination of their early political life and became the proponents of Pan-Turkism and the unity of all Turkic people from Mongolia to the eastern parts of Europe. One manifestation of this secular trend was the Turkification of all aspects of life. Zenkovsky explains:

A cultural "de-Iranization" was initiated in Constantinople as a common feature of Turkic national revival both inside and outside Turkey. Among all Turkic regions of Russia, it was of particular importance for Azarbaijan, where Persian influence had been intense and long-lasting.¹⁶⁷

Such a campaign against the political and cultural influence of Iran in Russian Azarbaijan had begun in the late nineteenth century. As Zenkovsky points out, despite the political domination of Russia, a remarkable degree of Iranian cultural and political influence survived in nineteenth century Russian Azarbaijan.¹⁶⁸ Azari intellectuals, backed by the Russians, started a campaign against that influence.¹⁶⁹ Such a campaign continued even into the twentieth century and "in some parts of the Russian Turkic world the native intelligentsia in the early part of this century was still struggling with the effects of Iranian cultural

¹⁶⁷Zenkovsky, *Pan-Turkism and Islam in Russia*, 92.

¹⁶⁸According to Zenkovsky "despite the Russian conquest [of Azarbaijan in 1828], the Persian language remained the main language of the administration in the provinces until the reforms of the 1840. The local authorities themselves were either Persian or local aristocrats who spoke Persian, and the Persian tongue continued to be spoken in the courts until 1870's. The Shiite clergy, which controlled the schools and courts, was the main perpetuator of Iranian influence. Persian remained also the language of the upper classes and of literature." See Zenkovsky, 94.

¹⁶⁹Ronald Grigory Suny, *Baku Commune 1917-1918: Class and Nationality in Russian Revolution*, (N.J.: Princeton University press, 1972), 16.

domination."¹⁷⁰ *Akintchi* (the Ploughman), the first Turkish newspaper in Russia demonstrating the influence of the secular Pan-Turkist ideology of the Young Turks, was preoccupied mainly with criticizing and attacking the Shi'ite religious traditions and the Iranian cultural influence.

According to Swietchowski, *Akintchi*¹⁷¹ had obvious "anti-Persian accents."¹⁷² Though this newspaper was suppressed within a few years of its founding because of its pro-Ottoman and Pan-Turkist tones,¹⁷³ other periodicals such as *Mullah Nasreddin*, founded in 1906, resumed the anti-Iranian and anti-Shi'ite tradition of *Akintchi*. The late nineteenth and early twentieth century was, thus, the period during which the Azari Pan-Turkist elites initiated the construction of a secular, nationalist Pan-Turkish identity for Azarbaijan. It was, for instance, *Kashkul* (Darwish Bowl), a Sunni-published periodical

¹⁷⁰ Zenkovsky, *Pan-Turkism and Islam in Russia*, 274. Swietochowski writes that "The trend away from Persian cultural traditions was bitterly opposed by conservative elements and criticized even by some Western educated intellectuals." See Tadeusz Swietochowski "National consciousness and political change in Azarbaijan, 1905-1920," in Ronald Grigor Suny, ed., *Transcaucasia: Nationalism and Social Change*, 211.

¹⁷¹For a detailed discussion on *Akintchi*, see Jeyhoun Bey Hajibeyli, "The Origins of the National Press in Azerbaijan", in *The Asiatic Review*, 261, nos. 85-88 (January-October 1930), 758-765.

¹⁷²Swietochowski, "National Consciousness and Political Orientations in Azarbaijan, 1905-1920," 211.

¹⁷³In the eyes of the Tsarist officials, *Akintchi* was pro-Ottoman enough to have it closed in 1877, in the midst of war with Turkey.

of the 1880s, that for the first time proposed the use of the name "Azerbaijani Turks" instead of Caucasian Muslims.¹⁷⁴

The Azari elites have been involved in a difficult and as yet unsuccessful intellectual campaign to achieve that goal. Their most important job has been to create a notion of Azari, and a Turkish identity distinct from that of Iranian identity. Through a Pan-Turkist reinterpretation of historical events, and in fact a rewriting of Azarbaijani history, they have tried to discover the Turkish "missing link", thus discrediting any other links, historical or cultural, between Azarbaijan and Iran. The level of intellectual manipulation has gone much further in the case of Azari elites than among their Kurdish or Baluchi counterparts. They have tried, for example, to create Azari national heroes out of historical Azari figures and to interpret any political upheaval or social movement in Iranian Azarbaijan as a nationalistic event in which the primary motivation was the promotion of Azari identity or Azarbaijani independence.

In fact, Azarbaijan has been dealt with as a distinctly Turkish political entity throughout history. Referring to just these intellectual manipulations in Azari literature, Nissman writes that, for example, the encyclopedia of Azarbaijan, published in Baku, introduces Babak Khoramdin, an eighth century political leader who revolted against the Arab Muslim rulers in Iran, as an Azari national hero who "led the

¹⁷⁴*Kashkul*, 22 (1884) cited in Swietchowski, 211.

struggle of Azarbaijani people against Islam, Arab, slavery and feudal tyranny." Such a presentation creates in the minds of readers an unmistakable nationalistic hue, an interpretation that could never come to mind through the study of more objective sources relating to his period.¹⁷⁵

To acquire a better understanding how the political elites in the former Soviet Azarbaijan have reinterpreted historical events in favour of creating a historical background for the ethnic nationalistic struggle in Iranian Azarbaijan, the examples of Sattar Khan and Shaikh Muhammad Khiabani are instructive. Sattar Khan was one of the leaders of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906 who led the resistance against the Qajar rulers in Tehran in defence of the Constitutionalists. His forces joined other Constitutionalist forces from northern and southwestern Iran and defeated anti-constitutional forces in Tehran. He is well-known as *Sardar-e Melli* (the national leader) in the contemporary histories of Iran.

The Azari intellectual elites in Baku, however, have presented him in a different way. His efforts during the Iranian Constitutional Revolution is anachronistically reinterpreted as the national struggle of the Azarbaijani people against Persian domination. The official Azarbaijan *Soviet Encyclopedia* describes Sattar Khan's movement as a

¹⁷⁵David B. Nissman, *The Soviet Union and Iranian Azerbaijan*, 68.

"national liberation struggle conducted by the people of southern Azarbaijan at the beginning of the twentieth century." But as Nissman points out, "there was no concept of national liberation in Iranian Azarbaijan at that time; the Constitutional movement was directed at democratization of the Iranian government."¹⁷⁶ During the Azarbaijan Democratic Republic of 1945-46 in Iran, Sulyman Rustam, a Soviet Azari poet, wrote a poem entitled "My Tabriz" in which he presents Sattar Khan as a national (Azari) hero whose ways should be continued by the people of Tabriz, the capital of Iranian Azarbaijan:

Sattar Khan, the great national commander who
with fiery heart and fiery tongue
Defined freedom for the people.
Come, not turn from his road, my Tabriz!¹⁷⁷

A similar approach has been applied to the case of Khiabani, a member of the liberal faction in the Iranian parliament who, in Tabriz in 1919, revolted against the anti-democratic and pro-British government in Tehran.¹⁷⁸ Again the Azari elites in Baku have depicted Khiabani as a "hero of Azari national liberation." Khiabani's decision to form a national government in Tabriz and his initiative to change the name of Azarbaijan to Azadisetan in particular were interpreted as an indication of his desire to separate

¹⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 60. fn. 6.

¹⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 68.

¹⁷⁸See Chapter Three for more details.

Azarbaijan from Iran.

However, the readings of Khiabani do not bring out any evidence of separatist or autonomist ideas. In a series of articles on Khiabanis' movement, the Iranian Azari researcher H.M. Zavesh presented many citations from Khiabani's lectures in which his patriotic tendencies and loyalty toward Iran were clearly expressed.¹⁷⁹ According to Zavesh and Azaris such as Amir Khizi, Khiabani's decision to change the name of Azarbaijan was a reaction and a protest to the Soviet Caucasian elites who chose the name of Azarbaijan for a territory which had been historically called Aran.¹⁸⁰

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire, and with it the Young Turks, generally weakened the Pan-Turkist trends in Caucasia. However, the rise of the Soviet Union, in which Azarbaijan was a socialist republic, gave new impetus to the Azari elites to consider formal political and intellectual commitments to their Iranian Azari cousins. Marxism as a revolutionary ideology paved the ground for similar Pan-Turkist aspirations, though now with a socialist flavour. For about 75 years, Iranian Azarbaijanis had witnessed a steady stream of recommendations, guidance, and advice from north of the Aras

¹⁷⁹H.M. Zavesh, "Nehzat-e Khiabani," [the Khiabani movement] (text in Persian), *Keyhan Havai*, no. 1072 (March 2, 1994): 15.

¹⁸⁰See Enayatollah Reza, "Turkan, Pan-Turkism va Pan-Turanism," [The Turks, Pan-Turkism and Pan-Turanism] (text in Persian), in *Ettela'at-e Siyasi Eqtesadi*, 9-10 (June-July 1992), 6.

(Araxes) River, all relating to the eventual unification of Azaris on both sides of the River, and the necessity of a national Azari awareness for achieving this goal. The vanguards of this call were Azari intellectuals, politicians, writers and poets.

The efforts of the Azari elites at national identity formation are best reflected in the intellectual discourses around the "southern question", the "literature of longing", and "one Azarbaijan." While some Iranian Azari intellectuals, such as Ali Tude, Balash Azeroghlu, and Madina Gulgun migrated to Soviet Azarbaijan after the collapse of the Azarbaijan Democratic Republic in 1946, and though their literary works remained welcome in Baku, the promotion of the "southern question" -- Iranian Azarbaijan's political situation -- was predominantly left to Soviet Azari intellectuals.

Mirza Ibrahimov's¹⁸¹ novel, *The Coming Day*, written and published between 1946 and 1948, was the first step in introducing the question of Iranian Azarbaijan as a political problem. Azarbaijan national consciousness was given special emphasis in the novel.¹⁸² The hero of the novel was Fereydun, an Azari youth in Iranian Azarbaijan. According to a Soviet

¹⁸¹He was born in the Iranian city of Sarab in 1911, but his family emigrated to Baku in 1918 and remained there, except for a few years during the Soviet occupation of Iranian Azarbaijan during World War II, when he was actively involved in organizing national movements in Tabriz.

¹⁸²David Nissman, *The Soviet Union and Iranian Azarbaijan*, 42-43.

literary history, "because he [Fereydun] understood the important social and political events well and because he was witness to the attitudes of superiority that the Persian chauvinists held toward the culture and language of Azarbaijani people, his national consciousness, internationalism and humanism were strengthened."¹⁸³ As Nissman writes, the appearance of the novel had lasting political significance, and gave major stimulus and direction to Soviet policies toward Iran, in which the national question and the national liberation struggle took precedence over the class struggle.¹⁸⁴

The question of national liberation in southern (Iranian) Azarbaijan was widely discussed in Soviet Azarbaijan's mass media and within cultural agencies such as the Nizami Institution. Through these, many Azari intellectuals played a major role in keeping the "southern question" alive and participated in the further development of national liberation symbology. They gave "progressive" attributes to many mythical and historical personages common to both Iranian and Soviet Azarbaijan. One example in this regard was the Aras River "which acquired great national liberation significance because it could be viewed both as a symbol of Azarbaijan unity and Azari separation."¹⁸⁵ Azari poets and writers such

¹⁸³*Ibid.*, 43-44.

¹⁸⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 35.

as Suleyman Rustam, Kamran Mehdi, Anvar Mammadkhanly and Jafar Khandan all devoted themselves to the promotion of an ethnic national identity for Iranian Azarbaijanis.¹⁸⁶ The resultant body of nationalistic and mostly nostalgic literature came to be known as the "literature of longing", and it became the dominant school in Soviet Azari writing. It enjoyed an enormous audience, in particular when it was used in Radio Baku broadcasts directed to Iranian Azarbaijan in the 1980s.¹⁸⁷

The focal point on which the Azari nationalist elites have relied for creating a distinct identity is the question of language. Referring to linguistic differences between Azari, Turkish, and Iranian languages (especially Persian), they argue that there are racial, and thus ethnic differences between Azarbaijanis and Iranians. Through such arguments, the Azari nationalists in the former Soviet Azarbaijan claim and insist on the pure "Turkishness" of Azarbaijan, both ethnically and culturally throughout history.¹⁸⁸ Their Pan-

¹⁸⁶Kamran Mehdi and Suleyman Rustam both wrote poems about the Aras River. Mammadkhably wrote a play on Iranian Azarbaijan, and Khandan wrote his dissertation about "The Ideas of the national Liberation Movement in the Literature of Southern Azarbaijan." See *Ibid.*, 35-36.

¹⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 37; For more details see David Nissman, "The Origin and the Development of the Literature of 'Longing' in Azarbaijan," *Journal of Turkish Studies*, VIII (1984), 199-207.

¹⁸⁸Shirin Hunter, "Azerbaijan: Search for Identity and New Pattern," in Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras, eds., *Nations and Politics in the Soviet Successor States*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), 234.

Turkist biases lead them to disregard the widely respected thesis that Azarbaijan has been linguistically Turkified through three centuries of Turkish immigration and invasion into Iran and Caucasia (the eleventh to fourteenth centuries, specifically).¹⁸⁹ They, for instance, do not explain why there is no single Turkish work produced in the region before the fifteenth century or why most classical poets in Azarbaijan and Caucasia, such as Qatran Tabrizi (writing in the eleventh century), Nizami Ganjavi (d. 1205) and Khaqani Shirvani (d. 1199)¹⁹⁰ are considered the forerunners of Persian poetry -- indeed, not a single Turkish verse can be found in their works.¹⁹¹

The Azari pan-Turkist elites are especially sensitive to Iranian Azari intellectuals such as Kasravi and Yahya Zoka who have argued for the Iranianness of Azaris. Shirin Hunter, who

¹⁸⁹See Chapter Three for a detailed discussion of this thesis.

¹⁹⁰Ganja and Shirvan are the big cities, after Baku, in the present Azarbaijan Republic.

¹⁹¹Nizami and Khaqani have explicitly praised Iran and its glorious pre-Islamic past. In one of his poems, for instance, Nizami, has said:

The world is the body, Iran is the heart
Such comparison should not bring shame
Since Iran is the heart of the earth
The heart is certain to be better than the body

See Mostafa Vaziri, *Iran as Imagined Nation: The Construction of National Identity*, (NewYork: Paragon House, 1993), 122.

visited the Azarbaijan Republic after it gained its independence from the Soviet Union, wrote that the Azari nationalist elites in Baku were involved in a "widespread campaign of insult and discredit aimed at Iranian Azarbaijani historian scholar Ahmad Kasravi, a prominent proponent of the Iranian origins of Azarbaijan's history and culture."¹⁹² In a similar manner, Yahya Zok'a, the Iranian Azari scholar who published a monograph series called *Movgufat* in Tehran, came under attack from Soviet Azari intellectuals. Yahya Zok'a has stressed the Iranian roots of Azarbaijan and the fact that despite the question of language, Azaris are culturally Iranian. Because of his explicit opinions, Zok'a has been severely criticized by Bakhtiyar Vahabzede, the Azari poet, and by other elites of the Soviet Union for "betraying" his ancestors and children.¹⁹³

The collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s intensified the nationalist trends in the Azarbaijan Republic. While the former Soviet Azari elites flavoured their Pan-Turkist views with a Marxist-Socialist blend, the new nationalist Azari elites were devoid of leftist trends and stressed more Pan-Turkish aspects of Azari ethnic nationalism. These new elites, who formed Azarbaijan's Popular Front (APF) started a new wave of nationalistic appeals toward Iranian Azarbaijan. The main focus of their efforts for promoting the

¹⁹²Hunter, "Azarbaijan: Search for Identity," 235.

¹⁹³Nissman, 80-81.

Azari national consciousness both in Iran and in the Republic itself has been an emphasis on common linguistic ties among Azarbaijanis and the historic necessity for establishing a single Azari political entity.

To create such a nationalistic consciousness, the Azari elites have tried to mobilize Azaris against imagined common enemies of their national unity. This required a reinterpretation of the history, a disregard for many obvious historical facts, the construction of myths and "inventing the tradition" of an ever-present national consciousness and a historical unified political entity distinct from that of neighbouring areas of Azarbaijan. This claim, however, is nothing more than a modern intellectual construction of the Azari elites. Wimbush succinctly explains this strategy when he writes:

Azari Turks did not evolve a distinct national consciousness nor the idea that the territory of Azerbaijan is a national homeland until the early twentieth century, and then only under some unique conditions. There can be little doubt that Azeri Turks saw themselves distinct from Ottomans (for religious and cultural reasons) and from Persians (for linguistic ones), very early on. Knowledge of these differences, however, did not lead Azeri leaders to urge that their territory be classified as a national homeland, as the term now is understood.¹⁹⁴

Despite this, the Azari elites in Baku have tried to introduce the existence of a historical national consciousness

¹⁹⁴S. Enders Wimbush, "Divide Azerbaijan: Nation Building Assimilation, and Mobilization Between Three States," 62.

in both Iranian and Russian-Soviet Azarbaijan as well as a territorial political unity between the two regions. The political developments in the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, and the rise of APF intensified such intellectual tendencies. Regarding this question, Shirin Hunter writes:

In January 1990 a number of Soviet Azarbaijanis tore down border posts on the Soviet-Iranian frontier. The impression was then created that the world was witnessing something akin to the crumbling of the Berlin Wall, which heralded the reunification of the two Germanies. The nationalists of Azarbaijan's Popular Front (APF) and others tried to convey such an image to international observers. They called for the reunification of the so-called "Northern" and "Southern" Azarbaijans. They attributed the separation of the two regions to a historic conspiracy between Tsarist Russia and Iran in 1808 under the terms of the Treaty of Gulistan.¹⁹⁵

The historical facts regarding the separation of the present Azarbaijan Republic from Iran, however, do not support such an intellectual reinterpretation -- i.e., the existence of an Irano-Russian conspiracy. In fact, the two periods of Russo-Iranian wars and the treaties signed at the end of each period¹⁹⁶ are known in Iran as the "Shameful" (*Nangin*) treaties. This indicates that there has not been a deal made between the states of Iran and Russia, as Azari elites claim. On the contrary, the separation of the current Azarbaijan

¹⁹⁵Hunter, "Azarbaijan: Search for Identity," 228-229.

¹⁹⁶The Treaty of Gulistan (1813) and the Treaty of Turkmanchai (1828) as the result of which the whole Iranian territories in Caucasia, including the area covering the present Azarbaijan Republic, was taken by Russia.

Republic from Iran was an obvious consequence of Russia's imperial expansion.¹⁹⁷

The intellectual elites in the Azarbaijan Republic proposed the thesis of the reunification of the divided Azarbaijan and used the idea of pan-Azarbaijanism as their most potent instrument for promoting a sense of nationalist consciousness among Iranian Azarbaijani. In order to attract Iranian Azarbaijanis, they even proclaimed that Tabriz would be the capital of the new united state of Azarbaijan.¹⁹⁸ Some of these intellectuals went beyond Iranian Azarbaijan and expressed Pan-Turkist aspirations by suggesting the idea of the unity of all the Turkic speaking peoples of Iran,¹⁹⁹ including the Turkmans of the northeast, in a united Azarbaijan.

Such extreme nationalistic plans were expressed only in the first days of the independence of Azarbaijan from the Soviet Union, as a number of factors soon made intellectual elites in Baku tone down their nationalistic rhetoric. Among these was the absence of any demonstrated interest in such political slogans among Iranian Azarbaijanis, the important fact that the masses in the Azarbaijan Republic expressed special attachments to their Islamic identity and even a

¹⁹⁷*Ibid.*, 229.

¹⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 232.

¹⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 229, 256.

possible attraction to Azaris in Iran or to Iran itself,²⁰⁰ and finally the beginning of the Azari-Armenian conflict over Nagorno-Karabagh. In a more recent article on Azarbaijan, Malekafzali and Moser write that economic concerns among the political elites in Baku also contributed to declining interest in the unity of the two Azarbaijans.²⁰¹

Non-Ethnic Elites and Azari Nationalism: The idea of Azari political autonomy in Iran, especially during 1945 and 1946, has been promoted by non-Azari political elites as well. In this regard leftist Iranian political movements have played an important role. It was basically the Tudeh Party of Iran, the leading pro-Soviet Marxist organization, that supported the idea of Azarbaijan's autonomy through the establishment of Provincial Councils.²⁰²

²⁰⁰The Azari elites in Baku also feared that their nationalistic appeal for unity might have an opposite result, i.e., the risk that Soviet Azaris, particularly those speaking Iranian dialects, express a willingness to join Iran. As one Soviet academician has told Shirin Hunter, "in places like Lankaran, and heavily Shi'ia border areas, most people would like to join Iran." See Hunter, 233. Further evidence of attraction to Iran was the adoption of Iranian new year (Now Ruz) celebrations as a national holiday in Azarbaijan Republic. On this, see *FBIS*, Sov-90-067; 109. For more reports on such trends toward Iran, see Fred Halliday, "The Other Country with Some Awkward Azeris," *The Economist*, (January 20, 1990), 43-44.

²⁰¹Farhad Malekafzali & Robert G. Moser, "Primordial, Instrumental Identities of Ethnic Collective Movements: The Case of Azari Nationalism," *Canadian review of Studies in Nationalism*, 19, 1-2 (1992), 36.

²⁰²Atabaki, 98.

The role of non-Azari elites in the Azarbaijan Democratic Republic of 1945-6 was important if we consider the fact that most of the officers in charge of training the Republic's army (*Fadaiyan*) were non-Azaris -- known as "Khorasan Officers" -- who had revolted in Khorasan Province in northeastern Iran in August 1945 and had fled to the Soviet Union. After the declaration of the Azarbaijan Democratic Republic, they departed Baku for Iranian Azarbaijan where they organized the nucleus of the Azarbaijan Democratic Republic army. As Tafreshian, one of the 'Khorasan Officers,' has recently written in his memoirs, there were "about 70" mostly Persian officers "who formed the backbone of the Azarbaijan army."²⁰³ Azar, another "Khorasan Officer," was appointed as the Azarbaijani Army's Chief of Staff.²⁰⁴

The idea of regional autonomy for Azarbaijan was also supported and promoted by left-leaning political groups after the Iranian Revolution of 1979. As in the cases of Kurdistan and Baluchistan, two Marxist groups -- *Fadaiyan* and *Paykar* -- played significant roles in this regard.²⁰⁵ Nevertheless, given the absence of ethnic nationalist trends in Iranian

²⁰³Abulhasan Tafreshian, *Ghiam-e Afsaran-e Khurasan*, [The revolt of Kurasan Officers] (text in Persian), (Tehran: Atlas, 1988), 94.

²⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 95-96.

²⁰⁵An unofficial political organization in Soviet Azarbaijan called *Birlik* (Unity) which was engaged in promoting the Azari national consciousness in post-revolutionary Iran, was partly led by Rasul Simak a member of *Fadaiyan*. See Hunter, 230-231.

Azarbaijan, these non-ethnic elites could not be a significant source of influence as they were in Kurdistan and Baluchistan.

Conclusion

The study of autonomist/separatist political movements in Iranian Kurdistan, Baluchistan, and Azarbaijan shows that the politicization of primordial ties such as language or religion and the construction of ethnic identities have primarily been the result of the activities of political elites and intellectuals who resented the central state's policies. This experience supports the argument of the theorists of nationalism such as Hans Kohn and Anthony Smith who emphasize that nationalism as a political movement in general is mostly the work of intellectuals. Furthermore, the fact that the politicization of religio-linguistic differences in three Iranian cases occurred mainly in the twentieth century confirms the modernist approaches to ethnicity and ethnic nationalism that look for the roots of ethnic nationalism in modern times.

The case of Kurdish, Baluchi, and Azari ethnic nationalist movements in the twentieth century shows that the intellectual and political elites play decisive roles in the construction of a distinct ethnic identity and in the instrumental use of primordial ties for the sake of political goals. I discussed in detail how these two types of elites --

intellectuals and political activists -- played a significant role in Kurdistan, Baluchistan and Azarbaijan. The first group of elites have engaged in an intellectual interpretation, reinterpretation and manipulation of historical facts in order to create and construct the myth of distinct racial and cultural roots -- as Hobsbawm puts it, "inventing" political traditions for the group. Given this fact, the national phenomenon cannot be adequately investigated without careful attention to the "invention of tradition."²⁰⁶ As Paul Brass writes, such elites strive to promote a congruence of the group's multiplicity of symbols in order to argue that the members of the group are different not in one respect only, but in many, and that all its cultural elements are reinforcing.²⁰⁷

The second group of elites were political activists who formed political organizations based on the ideology of ethnic nationalism. These organizations were influential political instruments for mobilizing the members of the groups against the central state. The presence of these two groups of elites in the ethnic nationalist movements in Iran remind us of Anthony Smith's theory of nationalism, in which he distinguishes between "the *intellectuals* who formulate ideals and definitions, and the professional *intelligentsia* which

²⁰⁶Eric Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition*.

²⁰⁷Paul Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Theory and Comparison*, 16.

actively pursues nationalist goals which it perceives as being in personal as well as collective interests."²⁰⁸

By elaborating the idea of ethnic identity and by forming ethnic nationalist organizations, elites consider themselves the representatives and the spokesmen of the minority group. As the Kurdish experience showed, the problem is that different political elites in the same group become involved in a political struggle over representation and the right to speak for the group. This leads to a political struggle among the elites, as the result of which the unity and the consolidation of the groups is shattered. Remarking on this phenomenon, Brass writes:

In the process of transforming cultural forms, values and practices into political symbols, elites in competition with each other for control over allegiance or territory of the ethnic group in question, strive to enhance or break the solidarity of the group.²⁰⁹

The Iranian experience of ethnic nationalist movements, however, introduces a phenomenon to which the theorists of ethnicity and nationalism have not paid enough attention. The promotion and the construction of ethnic identity was not the result of ethnic elite activities only, but also of many non-ethnic elites, who in the process of their struggle against the central state, have promoted and supported the idea of ethnic national identity. The leftist political elites, the

²⁰⁸Anthony Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*.

²⁰⁹Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 15.

members of political organizations such as *Fadaiyan*, *Paykar*, and the *Tudeh Party* who traditionally did not have any strong support or resources in the centre or main Persian and Shi'ite urban and rural areas of Iran focused their activities in areas where religious and linguistic minorities had a majority. By supporting, and in fact articulating the political demands of such groups, the non-ethnic elites have attempted to gain political support and resources for their own struggles against the central state.

While the three cases of Kurdistan, Baluchistan, and Azarbaijan bring strong evidence regarding the active role of elites in the promotion of ethnic nationalism, there are some differences between the cases, primarily due to the type of elite groups involved in each region. In Baluchistan, the traditional tribal elites (Sardars and Hakoms) have had the leading role in the politicization of ethnicity. Indeed, even most Baluchi intellectuals engaged in the promotion of a Baluchi ethnic identity have had obvious tribal roots. Compared with the Baluchi experience, tribal elite have had a reduced role in the Kurdish nationalist movement. While the tribal factor is present in Kurdistan, non-tribal factors, especially the middle class educated elites, have played a leading role in the movement. The Azari case, however, reflects a totally different experience. Here, the tribal factor is relatively insignificant. Instead, the middle class elites have held the destiny of ethnic nationalism in their

hands.

Moreover, one thing that makes the Azari case exceptional is the fact that in contrast to Kurdistan and Baluchistan, Azarbaijan has not witnessed the continuity of separatist or autonomist movements in the present century. Rather, the idea of ethnic national identity in Azarbaijan has been elaborated and promoted by the intellectual and political elites in Soviet Azarbaijan since the collapse of the Azarbaijan Democratic Republic in 1946 -- they have had the leading role in creating a notion of Azari national consciousness different from the Iranian identity.

The Soviet Azari elites, however, have not been acting independently. Rather, their contribution to the promotion of an Azari ethnic national identity in Iran has had been closely coordinated with the policies of an external force -- the Soviet Union -- toward Iran in general. This fact, bring us to the third important variable in my theoretical framework, namely, the international factor and its role in the rise of ethnic nationalism in Iran. As I will discuss in the next chapter, this factor has played a critical and vital role in creating, mobilizing and activating ethnic nationalist movements, not only in Azarbaijan, but also in Kurdistan and Baluchistan.

Chapter Seven:

International Relations of Ethnic Nationalism:

Ideas, Politics, Orientalism

It is hard to explain the rise of ethnic nationalism in Iran without considering the important role that international influences have played in it. If we consider the fact that the Middle East has endured a history of remarkably frequent international interference, the question of minorities will be a particularly important issue area in which we can study such an international involvement. After discussing the role of state and elites in the rise of ethnic nationalism in the last two chapters, here I discuss the important role of international factors in the rise of ethnic nationalist movements in Iranian Kurdistan, Baluchistan and Azarbaijan.

In this chapter, the international aspects of ethnic nationalist tendencies are studied in three dimensions. First, I will discuss the external factor in the realm of international politics to see how the foreign policies of the great powers on the one hand, and the regional states on the other, have intentionally promoted or have helped to promote the nationalistic tendencies among minority groups in Iran. In this regard, the linguistic and religious issues have been instrumental in promoting the national and ideological interests of the great powers or regional rival states.

Second, I will discuss the role of external factors in the realm of ideas, in the form of an *international universe of political discourse*. Here the cultural aspects of ethnic nationalism are considered. As I will discuss, the penetration of the idea of secular nationalism in the Middle East has influenced the elites of different minority groups in the region in general and in Iran in particular. The intellectual and political elites of minority groups have often voluntarily welcomed and embraced these ideas as inspirational gospels in their political struggle against the centralized modern state. In this regard, the two basic political schools of Wilsonian *self-determination* and Marxist-Leninist, or better to say, Stalinist doctrine of *nationality* are considered to have particular importance. Most ethnic nationalist movements in the Middle East have justified their demands for distinct national rights and states at least in part on the basis of these two critical political discourses of the present century.

Finally, an important external dimension of ethnic nationalism relates to the role of international intellectuals and political elites who, through their writings and research, have contributed to the creation of distinct ethnic identities and the rise of nationalistic trends among minority groups in the region. Many such *Orientalists*, to use Edward Said's terminology, have in fact been the mentors of such ideas and movements among the Kurds, Baluchis and Azari Turks. While

some of these groups have operated in direct relation to international politics and the national interests of particular states, some also have been making their intellectual contribution independently. The works of both groups, however, have brought about the same result -- the provision of historical and cultural legacies for minority groups -- and have thus promoted and instigated the nationalistic tendencies among them.

As we will see, these three dimensions of the international politics of ethnic nationalism can be traced in the rise of autonomist/separatist nationalist movements in Iranian Kurdistan, Baluchistan and Azarbaijan. The chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section, I will discuss the role of international and regional politics in the promotion of ethnic nationalism, as well as what type and degree of influence the international universe of political discourse has had on ethnic identity formation and the rise of separatist or autonomist political movements. In the second section, I will discuss the relationship between Western Orientalism and ethnic nationalism.

I. FROM THE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSE OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE TO INTERNATIONAL POLITICS:

KURDISTAN

The International Universe of Political Discourse and Kurdish Nationalism: The Kurds, like other groups of peoples in the Middle East, have been influenced by the idea of secular, territorial nationalism, a concept that came to the Islamic World in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. This new ideology was delivered as a key element within the *international universe of political discourse* in the nineteenth century. With the weakening of universal religious identities, especially in the Ottoman Empire, the Western notion of a national identity based on race and language proved to be more attractive for the newly emerging educated elites -- the Young Turks, for instance, who replaced their Islamic identity with the idea of Pan-Turkism.

As I discussed in the last chapter, the early Kurdish political elites were religious leaders rather than secular nationalists. As Bruinessen has pointed out, most Kurdish rebellions between 1880 and 1930 were led by the Kurdish religious elites such as the *Tariqa* Shaikhs.¹ At this time, a Kurdish designation was available, but hardly ever of

¹Martin Van Bruinessen, "Kurdish Society, Ethnicity, Nationalism and Refugee Problem," in Philip G. Kreyenbroek and Stefan Sperl, eds., *The Kurds: A Contemporary Overview*, (London: Routledge, 1993), 51.

political significance. As Sami Zubaida writes:

The bases of solidarity for Kurds were tribal, which often coincided religious (rival Sufi orders), or loyalty to a prince or warlord....Kurdish identity acquired political significance only when nation-states were being handed out, often on ethnic criteria, and the Kurds were left out.²

The spread of liberal and secular nationalism among the Arabs, Armenians, and the Turks of the Ottoman Empire in the late twentieth century affected the Kurdish elites too.

The influence on the Kurdish elites of the idea of Western secular nationalism in general and the ideologies of pan-Arabism and Pan-Turkism in particular brought about the politicization of linguistic ties. The Kurdish intellectuals who were influenced by this secular ideology began to think about the Kurds as a distinct nation. Earlier, ethnic nationalism in its Western notion had appeared in the works of Haji Qadir Koyi (1817-1897) who:

...championed this nationalism by promoting unity of common people, and rejecting the traditional ruling classes and religious leaders as obstructive and misguided irrelevancies. He also called for a fully independent, Pan-Kurdish state which was to implement secular education in Kurdish language at the expense of the established Middle Eastern lingua francas.³

The late nineteenth century witnessed the spread of the

²Sami Zubaida, "Nations: Old and New: Comments on Anthony D. Smith's 'the Myth of the "Modern Nation" and the Myths of Nations," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 12, no. 3 (July 1989): 332.

³Izady, *The Kurds*, 56.

European model of ethnic nationalism among a wider group of Kurdish intellectual elites and modernists. The existence of nationalist tendencies among different groups of the Ottoman Empire had important effects on the Kurds. As Bruinessen argues "Kurdish nationalism developed partly as a reaction to and imitation of Armenian nationalism and (later) the Young Turk movement."⁴ Kurdish newspapers such as *Kurdistan* in Istanbul (later in Cairo) and Kurdish political and literary clubs in the Ottoman domain actively promoted the national aspirations of the Kurds.⁵ Many members of the Kurdish intelligentsia participated in the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 with great hopes for the freedom and self-determination of the Kurdish community. While the forced Turkification launched by the Young Turks quickly dissipated the Kurdish euphoria, the participation of the Kurds in the revolt, nonetheless, had a great impact on the growth and development of Kurdish identity.⁶

While the predominance of secular territorial nationalism became the main stimulus for the rise of the secular ideologies of Pan-Arabism, Pan-Turkism and Pan-Iranism, the *international universe of political discourse* of the early twentieth century introduced new ideas regarding nationalism to the Middle East. Two main schools of thought were

⁴Bruinessen, "Kurdish Tribes," 378.

⁵Izady, 59.

⁶Farzanfar, 155-156.

elaborated -- one by an American president and the other by the leader of the October Revolution of 1917. The main target of both was the self-determination of different minority groups in the region. While the Wilsonian notion of self-determination was mainly elaborated regarding all nationalities and the minority groups of the disintegrated German, Austrian, Russian and Ottoman empires, the Leninist concept of self-determination and later the Stalinist idea of nationality were produced with the multitude of non-Russian nationalities within the Russian Empire in mind. Wilson categorically and repeatedly had demanded independent states for the "Arabs, Armenians, and Kurds."⁷ The Kurds, like many other minority groups in the Middle East and Africa, were encouraged by both the liberal and Marxist approaches to self-determination and nationality.

Many Kurdish leaders of the post-World War I period hoped that these new promises could guarantee national rights for the Kurds and that they could establish a Kurdish nation-state with the help of these two emerging world powers. The Kurdish tribal and religious elite of the 1920's were particularly aware of Wilson's 'fourteen points', and as they saw the feasibility of a Kurdish state possible on the basis of Wilsonian self-determination in conjunction with British plans for the region, many of them suddenly became nationalists and

⁷Izady, 59.

revolted.⁸ Shaikh Mahmud Barzanji in Iraq was one of the traditional Kurdish leaders who had a serious belief in the Wilsonian promise and resorted to armed rebellion in the early 1920s hoping to liberate and unite all Kurds in a single Kurdish state supported by the Allies.⁹

Besides the Wilsonian principle of self-determination, what encouraged the nationalist tendencies among the Kurds of the Ottoman Empire was the promises which the Treaty of Sevres (August 1920) gave to the Kurds regarding their independence. This treaty called for the creation of an independent Armenia and Kurdistan, as well as independent Arab states of Hijaz, Syria and Iraq. The Treaty of Sevres itself contained three articles (articles 62 to 64) regarding the Kurdish question. In article 64, the conditions for Kurdish independence were delineated:

If within one year from the coming into force of the present treaty, the Kurdish people within the area 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 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

⁸Bruinessen, "Kurdish Tribes," 379.

⁹Ibrahim Younesi, "Introduction" in Edmonds, C.J., *Kurdha, Turkha, Arabha*, (Persian translation of *Kurds, Turks, Arabs: Politics, Travel and Research in North-Eastern Iraq, 1919-1925*), Trans. Ibrahim Younesi, (Tehran: Roozbehan, 1988), d.

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 hitherto been included in the Mosul Vilayet.¹⁰

While these promises were never implemented,¹¹ they provided some kind of international justification and recognition for a Kurdish independent state. Indeed, many Kurdish nationalists still refer to the Treaty of Sevres as the clearest manifestation of their legitimate rights for self-determination.¹²

In the 1920s the Marxist-Leninist and Stalinist notions of self-determination and nationality were not as influential among the Kurds as the Wilsonian approach. The Kurdish intellectuals and political elites of the 1940s and after, however, became increasingly attracted to Marxist theory because they had not been able to realize their aspirations through the Treaty of Sevres, or the treaty's architects, the West. These Marxist notions were especially inspiring for the leftist Kurdish activists who found the Soviet model of federalism an ideal type for the future Kurdistan.

Lenin characterized the self-determination of nations as

¹⁰J. C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East, A Documentary Record 1914-1956*, Vol. II (N.J.: Princeton University press, 1956), 82.

¹¹For the causes of such failure see Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 52-53.

¹²See for instance, Ghassem lou, *Kurdistan and the Kurds*, 46-49.

"the political separation of nations from the alien national bodies and the formation of an independent national state."¹³ His formula was theoretically more attractive for the new generations of revolutionary and leftist Kurds. Ghassemlou, the former leader of the KDPI in Iranian Kurdistan, for example, was one member of this generation who was strongly influenced by Lenin's approach to self-determination. After a detailed discussion of the Marxist position toward nationalities in his book on Kurdistan, Ghassemlou concluded that "the Marxists, both in their theory and their activities, recognize the right of the Kurdish nation to self-determination and to creation of an independent state."¹⁴

It is interesting that the modern, educated Kurdish elites such as Ghassemlou had spent parts of their life in the Soviet Union, and thus were influenced by the Marxist version of nationality. Some of them were among the first groups of Kurdish students who were sent to the Soviet Union by the Kurdish government of Mahabad in 1945-46. With the collapse of the Republic in 1946, many of these students remained in the Soviet Union, while some of those who returned to Iranian or Iraqi Kurdistan founded the second Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran during the late 1950s and early 1960s.¹⁵ One of these

¹³V.I. Lenin, *Question of National Policy and Proletarian Internationalism*, (Moscow: Mir, n.d.), 63.

¹⁴Gassemlou, *Kurdistan and the Kurds*, 248-249.

¹⁵Hamid Mo'meni, *Dar Bareh-e Mubarezat-e Kurdistan*, 40.

Kurdish students was Ghani Bolurian,¹⁶ the strong man of the KDPI who, protesting Ghassemlou's positions, defected with seven members of the party's central committee in 1980-81.¹⁷

One of the effects of the Marxist-Leninist theory of self-determination and nationality was the promotion of Kurdish identity through the revival of Kurdish literature. In the early years of the Soviet Union, Leninist policy was implemented in Armenia where a community of a hundred thousand Kurds were living. With the help and encouragement of the Soviet authorities, Kurdish became the literary language of the Kurds in the Soviet Union.¹⁸ More than anywhere else, it was in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, that Kurdish educational and cultural institutions flourished, Kurdish theatre grew and Kurdish books and newspapers were published.¹⁹

A great deal of propaganda was launched with respect to the social, cultural and economic transformation of Kurdish areas as the result of socialist policies and the Marxist doctrine of self-determination. Books such as *The Kurd Shepherd*²⁰ and *The Red Farmer* (1930) were written in Kurdish

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 83.

¹⁷On this split, see Chapter Three.

¹⁸On this see Nikitine, *Kurd Va Kurdistan*, 585-6, 602.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 427.

²⁰This book was translated into French by the Soviet Orientalist Nikitine.

about the Kurdish situation in the Soviet Union,²¹ and such books had an important influence on the new, educated generation of Kurds as they promoted the idea that real Kurdish autonomy and prosperity could be realized only in a socialist framework. It is not surprising that with the failure of the Western idea of self-determination in the Kurdish context and relentless Soviet propaganda on Kurdish autonomy in the Soviet Union, many young intellectual Kurds and political elites turned their attention to Marxist ideas of self-determination and came to believe that the Kurds could rely on the help of the Soviets.²²

International Politics of the Kurdish nationalism: While the basic nationalist orientation of the international universe of political discourse in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had a strong influence on growing Kurdish nationalism, it was mainly the strategic dimension of international politics -- i.e., the direct involvement of external forces in the Kurdish question -- that led to the actual formation of nationalist movements among the Kurds. In fact, the Kurdish question more than any other minority problem in the Middle East has been internationalized.

From the beginning, the Kurdish national movement has evolved in an atmosphere of external interests. External forces -- the great powers and regional rival states -- have

²¹*Ibid.*, 428.

²²*Le Monde*, May 8, 1946), cited in Nikitine, 429.

long had a strategic interest in engaging the Kurdish question, but the Kurds themselves have in many cases welcomed, and in some cases encouraged, such interference.²³ This, of course, is not a special feature of the Kurdish national movement. Writing on Middle Eastern international politics in general, Carl Brown considers this tactic of inviting foreign intervention "characteristic of the national liberation movements" in the region.²⁴ According to Brown:

The nationalist leaders exercised their maximum leverage in getting others involved. They had less control over the course of events once their struggle was under way. They were not able to keep international action confined to the issue that triggered hostilities.²⁵

The Kurds were not an exception to this rule. In fact, the Kurdish national movement has tied its destiny with external forces more than any other Middle Eastern nationalist movement. Farzanfar puts it another way, remarking that "it seems that the Kurds are not only easily manipulated by external forces, they readily lend themselves to such manipulation."²⁶

As a matter of fact, from the last decades of the

²³Mulla Mustafa Barzani, the leader of KDP in Iraq, for example, elicited American support and even declared his willingness to join the USA as the 51st state.

²⁴L. Carl Brown, *International Politics and the Middle East*, 57.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 58.

²⁶Farzanfar, *Ethnic Groups and the State*, 439.

nineteenth century on, many tribal chiefs thought it useful to establish contact with Russia or Britain.²⁷ Prominent Kurdish leaders such as Shaikh Ubeydullah (late nineteenth century), Abdul Razaq Badir Khan, and Shaikh Mahmud Barzanji (the 1920s) were looking for the support of British and Russia.²⁸ In Iran, Ismael Agha Simko was also demanding the support of Britain, Russia, and later the Soviet Union in the late 1910s and early 1920s.²⁹

These powers, of course, had their own agenda when supporting Kurdish chiefs and nationalist movements -- simply put, the attainment of their own national interests rather than any interest in the Kurdish national cause *per se*. In 1920, for example, the British supported Shaikh Mahmud Barzanji, and considered him the Sultan of a Kurdish state in what is now northern Iraq, but later preferred and supported the creation of an Iraqi kingdom led by Faisal, the son of Sharif Hussein, in the very same area. The British rationale for the apparent change of heart was their belief that a unified Iraqi state under a king they helped choose was a better way to guarantee their oil interests than an unstable

²⁷Bruinessen, "Kurdish Tribes," 376.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 379; Mordechai Nisan, *Minorities in the Middle East, A History of Struggle and Self-Expression*, (North Carolina: Mcfarland, 1991), 30; Edmonds, *Turkha, Kurdha, Arabha*, 40.; On Badir Khan, see Nikitine, *Kurd Va Kurdistan*, 415-416.

²⁹Bruinessen, "Kurdish Tribes," 384-387; See also Iraj Afshar Sistani, *Moghaddameh*, 158.

Kurdish state.³⁰ An equally cunning policy was evident in Britain's policy in Khuzistan in southern Iran in the early 1920s regarding the rebellious Iranian Arab tribal chief, Shaikh Khaz'al. While British forces had traditionally supported Khaz'al, they switched their support to Reza Shah rather than chiefs like Khaz'al or the Kurdish chief Ismael Agha Simko in Iran. Again, British oil interests in Iran could be better guaranteed under a powerful central state rather than an unstable Iran led by different, sometimes centrifugal forces.

The role of external factors in promoting Kurdish ethnic identity and in forming and assisting Kurdish nationalist groups cannot be understood very well without discussing the role of the Soviet Union in the creation of the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad in Iran in the 1940s. The majority of the Kurds in the world refer to this episode as the fullest manifestation of their national aspirations to date and indeed the lesson of the Mahabad Republic has had tremendous effects in politicizing Kurdish generations since 1946. A study of the events leading to the formation and the collapse of the republic demonstrates the vital role which international forces have played in the rise of Kurdish ethnic nationalism.

Before the formation of the Republic of Mahabad, the

³⁰Stephen C. Pelletiere, *The Kurds, an Unstable Element in the Gulf*, (Boulder: Westview, 1984), 58; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs: Politics, Travel and Research in North-Eastern Iraq: 1919-1925*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), 398.

Soviet Union had the leading role in helping the Kurds to form nationalist organizations. In fact, the whole idea of Kurdish independence or autonomy in Iran came from the recommendations of the Soviet authorities whose military forces occupied northwestern Iran in 1941. In the absence of the Iranian army, the Soviet military forces had actual control of Iranian Azarbaijan and Kurdistan. As Roosevelt has written, the Soviet army had direct relations with the Iranian Kurdish tribes of Jalali, Shakak, and Herki, and made them responsible for security and the maintenance of order in the area, and for providing grain for the Soviet forces.³¹

In the beginning, the Allied forces (the Soviets and British who occupied Iran in 1941) had the strategic goal of providing military supplies through Iran into the Soviet Union to help stem the advance of the Germans on the eastern front. Gradually, however, they became involved in a rivalry over political influence and oil concessions in Iran, and the Soviets soon determined to use the Azari and Kurdish questions to their advantage in this competition. Their close relations with Kurdish elites started in late 1941, when several tribal chiefs and non-tribal Kurdish elites, including Qazi Muhammad, the future president of the Mahabad Republic,³² were invited

³¹ Archie Roosevelt, Jr., "The Kurdish Republic of Mahabad," *Middle East Journal*, 1, no. 3 (July 1947): 248.

³² For a complete list of the invited Kurds, see Eagleton, William, 1963, *The Kurdish Republic of 1946*, 16, 133.

to Baku, the capital of Soviet Azarbaijan. There, Jafar Baghirov, the president of Azarbaijan, spoke to them at length about Soviet friendship and Kurdish-Azarbaijan brotherhood.³³

It was in the absence of the Iranian army in Kurdistan that the first Kurdish political organization in Iranian Kurdistan, *Komala*, was formed by a group of Kurdish elites in September of 1942. While the Soviets were not directly involved in its formation, the members of the group relied on the Soviet Union to support their subsequent actions.³⁴ Later, *Komala* was contacted by two Soviet Azari authorities, Abdulaov and Hajiov, with an offer of military aid.³⁵ To promote its ideological and cultural influence, the Soviet Army established the "Cultural Society of Kurdistan and the Soviet Union." The activities of this group were centred around the promotion of Kurdish identity and the propagation of the Soviet way of life.

One of the group's most effective activities was a dramatic performance in the Kurdish language called *Daik i Nishtiman* (Motherland) by the members of *Komala* in April 1945.³⁶ The main message of the drama was Kurdish nationalism, and it had an unprecedented influence on Kurdish

³³*Ibid.*, 23.

³⁴Arfa, *The Kurds*, 73.

³⁵Roosevelt, 251.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 252.

audiences.³⁷ It was the story of a woman (Kurdistan) who was captive and misused by three ruffians (Iran, Iraq, and Turkey). Only her sons were ultimately able to achieve her salvation. According to Roosevelt, the performance and its message was so dramatic that all the Kurdish audience "fell weeping on each other's shoulders and swore to revenge Kurdistan."³⁸ The play was performed all over Kurdistan, and in later versions "the Soviet Union stood with the sons of Kurdistan in their rescue of their motherland."³⁹

By the end of the War, when the rivalry between the Allies in Iran reached its height, the Soviets started to play a more active role in country through the manipulation of political events in Kurdistan and Azarbaijan. It was at this time, September of 1945, that they extended their role in Kurdistan by inviting the Kurdish elites to Baku for the second time. Their goal was to facilitate the merger of the Kurdish and Azari secessionist movements and to bring both movements in line with Stalin's policy objectives in Iran.⁴⁰ In the meeting with the Kurds, among them Qazi Muhammad and some leading members of the *Komala*,⁴¹ Baghirov stressed unity

³⁷Eagleton, 40.

³⁸Roosevelt, 252.

³⁹Eagleton, 40.

⁴⁰Entessar, 19.

⁴¹See Eagleton, 133, for a list of the Kurds who attended in Baku meeting.

between the Kurds and Azaris, and suggested that the *Komala* be replaced by a new Kurdish Party. Just a few days after his return from Baku, Qazi Muhammad formed the Kurdish Democratic Party by dissolving *Komala*. The manifesto of the KDP on Kurdish autonomy reflected the Soviet proposal regarding the relations between the Kurdish and Azari movements. Article 6 of the manifesto required that:

The Kurdish Democratic Party will make a special effort to establish unity and complete fraternity with Azarbaijan people and other peoples living in Azarbaijan (Assyrians, Armenians, etc.) in their struggle.⁴²

It was also by the invitation of the Soviets that all Kurdish elites and most Kurdish tribal chiefs gathered in Mahabad on January 22, 1946. Three Soviet officers also attended this gathering. In this meeting, Qazi Muhammad, in a Soviet-style army uniform, declared the formation of the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad.⁴³ The Soviets supplied and established a printing machine for the Republic and helped the Kurds to publish the Kurdish newspaper *Kurdistan*. In April 1946, a group of Kurdish students were sent to study in Baku.⁴⁴ It was also as a result of the Soviets' efforts and mediation that in April 1946 Qazi Muhammad and Pische Vari, the leader of the Azarbaijan Democratic Republic in Iranian

⁴²Roosevelt, ???

⁴³Eagleton, 63.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 83.

Azarbaijan, made an agreement regarding disputes between the Kurds and Azaris over territory.⁴⁵

While the Kurds and Azaris in Iran hoped to consolidate their republic with long-term Soviet help and support, the Soviets, concerned with their own changing interests, doomed the new state almost as soon as it was born. In a discussion with Ahmad Qavam, the Iranian prime minister, the Soviets promised to withdraw their troops from Iran in return for an oil concession in the northern oil fields in Iran.⁴⁶ Consequently, when the agreement for withdrawal of the Soviet forces from Iran was reached in April 1946, both the Kurds and Azaris were left alone to face the advance of the Iranian army. As I detailed in Chapter Three, the Mahabad Republic collapsed soon after the arrival of the Iranian army. Though many Kurdish nationalists look at the experience of the Mahabad Republic in a nostalgic manner and consider it the symbol of their national aspirations, some more realistic Kurds accept that the whole episode was little more than a tragic Soviet manipulation. Izady, for example, emphasizes that:

⁴⁵According to Eagleton, 82, the Kurdish sources argued that the Treaty of Friendship and Alliance, as it was called, between Kurdistan and Azarbaijan was imposed over the Kurds by the Soviet officials who occupied the nearby room during the negotiations.

⁴⁶The Soviets asked for oil concessions in the northern Iran at the same time that American had demanded the same in the southeast and the British had already great concessions in the Iranian oil field of Khuzistan in southwest Iran.

In reality...the Mahabad Republic was a creation of the Soviet forces occupying Iran (the Soviets also created a neighbouring Azarbaijan Democratic Republic centred in Tabriz). These unquestionably were to have been incorporated into the Soviet Union when the dust from World War II had settled. It is rather naive to believe there would have been any chance of survival for this Kurdish polity once its loss by Iran had been acknowledged, or as happened, the Soviet Union withdrew its supportive military umbrella.⁴⁷

Iranian Kurdistan did not witness much nationalistic activity between the collapse of Mahabad and the Islamic Revolution of 1979. The centre of the Kurdish national struggle was Iraq, where in the 1960s the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iraq, under the leadership of Mulla Mustafa Barzani, had started a military campaign against Baghdad. As in the Mahabad episode, international forces played important roles in the continuation of the Kurdish crisis in Iraq.

Here, however, the regional rival states had the dominant role in the internationalization of ethnic nationalism among Iraqi Kurds. The rivalry between the Shah of Iran and the Ba'th party in Iraq over regional dominance had repercussions for the Kurdish question. The Shah's regime actively supported Mulla Mustafa's forces and created many problems for Baghdad, as the Iraqi Kurds posed a serious challenge to Baghdad as the result of the aid coming from Iran. Traditional supporters of the Shah -- the United States and Israel -- actively backed the Shah's policy in helping the

⁴⁷Izady, *The Kurds*, 65.

Kurds.⁴⁸ By claiming that he was helping the Kurds because they had the same Aryan racial bonds with other Iranian peoples, the Shah tried to gain the support of both Iraqi and Iranian Kurds. His instrumental policy toward the Kurds, however, was disclosed when he abruptly withdrew his support from the Kurds in the aftermath of Iran-Iraq Agreement in Algeria in 1975. The Kurds were left on their own once again and suffered heavy losses in subsequent clashes with the Iraqi army.

The Iran-Iraq rivalry since 1979 has affected the Kurdish question with both sides actively backing the Kurds against each other. While the KDPI and *Komala* have established their military bases in Iraq⁴⁹ and have received military, financial and political support from Baghdad, Iran has supported the Iraqi KDP led by Masud Barzani. Such involvement of the regional rival states, in fact, has been vital for the survival of the Kurdish ethnonationalist movements both in Iran and in Iraq.

The political events following the war between Iraq and Allied forces in 1991 intensified international involvement in the Kurdish question. The creation of a no-fly zone in the Kurdish areas in northern Iraq by American and European forces to protect Iraqi Kurds from Baghdad's attacks increased the

⁴⁸See Fred Halliday, *Iran: Dictatorship and Development*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979).

⁴⁹See Jalaipour, *Kurdestan*, 124-125.

Kurds' hopes for international intervention to create an independent political entity. Four years after the war, such hopes seem to be fading away, and it seems that the Kurds are condemned to be perennial victims of international politics. I conclude this section by quoting Richard Falk's revealing comments on the tragedy of the Kurds:

There are many other stories of nationalist hopes and geopolitical⁵⁰ betrayal that are part of the narrative of the Middle East in this century. None is worse than the Kurdish story.... The Kurdish people were initially offered the prospect of an autonomous Kurdistan, a promise embodied in the Treaty of Sevres only to be withdrawn a few years later in the Treaty of Lausanne, by which time geopolitical calculations had shifted to the disadvantage of the Kurds.... Furthermore, their fate was combined in a cynical fashion with their utility as a pawn in regional political power games, and they were entwined in the wider tangles of geopolitics.... Kurdish fortunes have risen and fallen on a geopolitical yo-yo which has been mainly by extra-regional forces. The Soviet Union encouraged Kurdish separation in northwest Iran at the end of the Second World War as a way to weaken Iran and extend its own influence south. But when the Soviet military presence was effectively challenged by the United States in 1946, the central authorities in Iran once again harshly and discriminatorily integrated the Kurdish minority into Iran. During the 1970s, Iraqi Kurds were manipulated by Iran, with the encouragement of the US Central Intelligence Agency -- a political dynamic generating an armed uprising. When the tensions between Iran and Iraq subsided in 1975, the Kurds were immediately cut off from their sources of assistance, clearing the way for the first of several waves of violent Iraqi repression that has included many crimes against humanity. This was a process which was repeated in the last stage of the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s when poison

⁵⁰Geopolitics is used by Falk to designate *prevailing patterns of hegemonic structures and processes* and not in the more restricted sense of referring to geopolitical schools of thought.

gas was used against Kurdish villages while a cease fire was being arranged in the external war. In the 1990s Gulf War, the Kurds were once again moved about the geopolitical chess board as an expendable pawn. They were encouraged to rise up against Saddam Hussein during the period of fighting. They were then virtually abandoned in the face of Saddam's brutal reassertion of authority on behalf of Baghdad.⁵¹

BALUCHISTAN

Compared to Kurdish ethnic nationalism, the Baluchi question has been less internationalized. While extra-regional forces such as the great industrialized powers have been involved in the Kurdish question to promote a cultural and political notion of Kurdish ethnic identity, Baluchistan lacks such experience. No great power has been involved directly in Baluchistan to activate Baluch ethnic nationalism. Like the Kurdish case, however, Baluchistan has witnessed strong regional involvement. This regional interference has played a significant role in Baluchi political movements. As in the Kurdish case, the politicization of linguistic and religious traits took place partly under the influence of the *international universe of political discourse* after World War I.

The International Universe of Political Discourse and Baluchi

⁵¹Richard Falk, "The Cruelty of Geopolitics: The Fate of Nation and State in the Middle East," *Millennium*, 20 (1991), 387-388.

National Consciousness: One of the ironies of the Baluchi case is that despite the fact that Baluchi society had a less-developed socio-economic and political structure than Kurdish society in the early twentieth century, the Baluchi traditional and educated elites have been attracted more to the Marxist-Leninist idea of self-determination than to the Wilsonian version. Aside from the extensive efforts of the Soviet officials to attract different groups of people in the Middle East, one reason for the Baluchi's Soviet orientation was the fact that they looked at the Soviets as the rivals of the British Empire which had occupied Baluchistan since the early nineteenth century.

Whatever the reasons, the Leninist-Stalinist concept of self-determination and the rights of minority groups in multinational states had an important influence on politicizing Baluchi elites, and in turn, promoting a Baluchi ethnic identity. According to some sources, Lenin himself had implicitly referred to the Baluch as a distinct people. This was reflected in the credential letters of Y.Z. Surits, the first Soviet representative in Afghanistan. This credential, which was signed by Lenin in 1919, described Surits as:

Representative extra-ordinary and plenipotentiary of the Soviet federative Socialist Republic in Central Asia, empowering him to maintain diplomatic relations with the peoples of independent Afghanistan, independent (tribes of) Baluchistan, and the peoples of India fighting for their

liberation.⁵²

The Soviet influence increased when Baluchi delegates -- just some of the 2050 delegates from numerous linguistic and religious groups across Asia, including the Kurds -- attended "The Congress of the Peoples of the East" in Baku in September, 1920.⁵³ At the end of the conference, delegates appealed to "the peoples of the east" to wage a holy war for the liberation of the East, to abolish the oppression of its peoples, and to secure complete and equal independence irrespective of language, colour, and creed.⁵⁴ The conference also established an organization called the Indian Organization which translated communist materials into different languages, including Baluchi. According to Inayatullah Baloch, after the Baku Conference, some Baluchi participants came back to Kabul where they tried, unsuccessfully, "to organize a revolutionary organization in order to liberate Baluchistan." Their thoughts and activities

⁵²G. Bondarovski, "Bolshevik Policy and the People of the East", *Mainstream*, (December 3, 1977), 34.

⁵³The Baluchi delegation was headed by Sardar Misri Khan Baluch who with other Baluchi Tribal elites had revolted against Britain and had fled to Russia. These Baluchi Khans, including Karim Khan Baluch, Sardar Khan Baluch, Haidar Khan Kolanchi Baluch, and Mulghani backed Soviet communists in the suppression of anti-communist *Basmachi* Muslim movement in Turkmanistan in the early years of Soviet regime. See Inayatullah Baloch, 147-148, 150.

⁵⁴Brian Pearce, *Baku, Congress of the Peoples of the East*, 174-180, cited in Inayatullah Baloch, 14.

had an important impact on the politics of Baluchistan.⁵⁵

It was perhaps these overtures that made the Soviet model of self-determination so popular for Baluchis and began a growth of Baluchi national consciousness, especially in Eastern Baluchistan (the former British India and the present Pakistan). As Akhtar Husain has written, "the October Revolution in the Soviet Union stimulated an upsurge of political consciousness. Most of the educated Baluchi youths thought the Soviet objectives were progressive and would serve the Baluch cause of independence."⁵⁶

The attraction of Baluchi movements to the Soviet model of self-determination does not mean that the liberal Wilsonian model did not have an impact. On the contrary, the early Baluchi nationalists in British India, and later Pakistan, were inspired by both liberal and Marxist schools of self-determination. As Amin argues, the analysis of the literature of the three early political organizations in Baluchistan -- the *National Awami Party* (NAP), *Parari* (a guerrilla organization) and the *Baluch Student Organization* (BSO) -- reveal that all of them were deeply influenced by both the Western liberal tradition and the multi-national Socialist tradition on self-determination. Their ideologies were of a syncretist nature, borrowing from both traditions and

⁵⁵Inayatullah Baloch, 149.

⁵⁶Akhtar Husain Siddiqi, *Baluchistan (Pakistan): Its Society, Resources, and Development*, (New York: University Press of America, 1991), 31.

combining these with parts of each group's local history and individual experiences.⁵⁷ To justify and legitimate their struggle for national rights, Baluchi nationalists have used both schools. Inayatullah Baloch, for instance, has tried to explain and legitimate the Baluchi national cause in terms of both the Marxist-Leninist and the Western schools.⁵⁸

As I have said, the Marxist school became more popular among later generations of Baluchis. According to Amin, by the expansion of the Baluchi movements, the new, educated middle class began to support the multi-national Socialist tradition. Moreover, the programs of all important Baluchi organizations in eastern Baluchistan focused on the notion of provincial autonomy within a socialist framework.⁵⁹ Later, some new political groups adapted radical Marxist ideologies of guerrilla war promoted by socialist countries such as Cuba, Vietnam and China, and even structured their guerrilla organization on their pattern.⁶⁰

The Marxist orientation was not restricted only to middle class Baluchis, since most political organizations with tribal backgrounds had Marxist and pro-Soviet tendencies. The leading elites of NAP, Parari, and BSO in Pakistani

⁵⁷Tahir Amin, *Ethno-National Movements of Pakistan: Domestic and International Factors*, 95-97.

⁵⁸Inayatullah Baloch, *The Problem of Greater Baluchistan*, 9-17.

⁵⁹Tahir Amin, 97.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

Baluchistan have emphasized that they were inspired by the Marxist idea of self-determination. Ghouse Bakhsh Bizenjo, the governor of Baluchistan in Pakistan in the early 1970s, for example, stressed that: "we have been inspired by...[the Soviet Union's] idea that the existence of separate nationality should be recognized and that each nationalist should have the ultimate right of secession."⁶¹ Khair Bux (Bakhsh) Marri, the leader of the NAP, is another example. Despite his strong tribal connections, he has explicitly expressed his interest in the Leninist idea of self-determination: "what I see in Lenin I miss elsewhere....Marxist Leninism has helped me to understand politics...[and] anyone who believes that the problem of Baluchistan can be solved with a Western-style welfare state approach is misled."⁶²

This Marxist orientation has not been restricted to Pakistani Baluch only, but as I discussed in the last chapter, Baluchi political organizations in Iran such as the BLF of the late 1960s and early 1970s, and some Baluchi groups formed after the Iranian Revolution such as the BPDO, as well as Baluch Raje Zorombesh, supported the idea of Baluch autonomy in a federal socialist Iran.⁶³ The Iranian Baluchis, however, were not as inspired by the Marxist school as the Pakistani

⁶¹*Ibid.*

⁶²Selig Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, 49.

⁶³See Hosseinbor, *Iran and Its Nationalities*, 145-171.

Baluchis have been. While, for instance, most Baluchi tribal elites in Pakistan have had Marxist orientations, the Iranian Baluchi tribal chiefs and Sardars who formed political groups after the Islamic Revolution were pro-West rather than pro-Soviet.⁶⁴ The irony is that despite the influence of the Marxist school among Baluchi elites, no strong Baluchi Communist party has emerged either in Pakistan or Iran. As Harrison points out:

...given the widespread assumption that Moscow ha[d] its eyes on Baluchistan, it is surprising to find out that there have never been effective Soviet-oriented Communist organizations in Baluchi areas either in Pakistan or Iran. This is primarily because Soviet policy ha[d] consistently stopped short of supporting the concept of an independent Greater Baluchistan.⁶⁵

International Politics and Baluchi Local Autonomy: Beside the effects of secular nationalist ideas of the international universe of political discourse in the twentieth century, the Baluchi idea of self-determination was encouraged as the result of strategic international politics in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In this regard, the British policy of bringing the Baluchi tribal chiefs under its control had critical importance. It is true that Britain abolished the power of the Baluchi Sardars in Kalate in the 1840s and thus

⁶⁴See Baluchistan in Chapters Three and Five.

⁶⁵Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, 127. On Soviet stance on Baluchi question see *Ibid.*, 128-132.

instigated an anti-British tradition in Baluchi history, but the British authorities later gave remarkable autonomy to loyal Baluchi Sardars.

The necessity of preventing the incursion of other powers such as Russia into the British sphere of influence in the midst of "the Great Game in Asia" made the British authorities anxious to guarantee the friendship and loyalty of more Baluchi tribal groups. The British were especially afraid of the influence of Russia in Afghanistan and its possible influence among Baluchi Sardars. Therefore, after defeating Baluchi Sardars militarily, the British authorities established a close political and financial relationship but treated them as autonomous and independent rulers. In some cases, British authorities recognized this autonomy in formal treaties with Baluchi Sardars.⁶⁶ Moreover, the British consolidated the autonomous power of Baluchi Sardars by introducing new administrative regulations in Baluchi areas under their control. The clearest manifestation of this

⁶⁶For example: the 1854 treaty with Mir Nasir Khan II according to which the Khan sold his loyalty to Britain. The British, in return, recognized Khan as an autonomous ruler and promised to give him an annual salary of Rs. 50,000 plus military aid; the 1862 treaty with Mir Khudadad Khan which recognized the boundaries of Baluchi Khanate; the 1875 treaty signed between Lord Lytton and Mir Khudadad which acknowledged Khan as an independent ruler, an ally and friendly neighbour of the British Government. For these, and more cases see Inayatullah Baloch, *The problem of Greater Baluchistan*, 166-170; Aijaz Ahmed, "The National Question in Baluchistan," in S. Akbar Zaidi, ed., *Regional Imbalances and the National Question in Pakistan*, (Lahore: Vanguard, 1992), 206.

policy was the famous Sandeman⁶⁷ administrative regulations:

Britain introduced the *Sandeman* system of administration whereby the Baluchi tribal chiefs had complete autonomy with respect to their power over their subjects but themselves were subject to British supervision.⁶⁸

As Tahir Amin points out, "the British, fearing Russian influence in the area, had perpetuated the tribal system. They had operated through Sardars of Baluchistan by paying them subsidies in exchange for their loyalty."⁶⁹ According to Aijaz Ahmed, the British authorities increased the power of Baluchi Sardars by regulating the agrarian relations between Baluchi Sardars and the Baluchi semi-nomadic and peasant masses. According to Ahmed:

Britain actively financed the repressive *Sardari* system and received abject loyalty in return. The serfs, the slaves, the rural wage-workers, the semi-nomadic cattle-breeders thus began to face a double oppression -- practised directly by the Sardars but with the assistance of the new law-and-order apparatus paid for by the British.⁷⁰

To prevent Russian incursions to India, and also to stop reintegration of Baluchistan into Iran by Qajar Kings,⁷¹

⁶⁷ Attributed to Sir Robert Sandeman, a British colonial authority in India.

⁶⁸ Aijaz Ahmed, 206. For more details about *Sandeman* regulations, and the way it increased the power of Baluchi loyal Sardars, see *Ibid.*, 207-209.

⁶⁹ Tahir Amin, *Ethno National Movements of Pakistan: Domestic and International factors*, 97.

⁷⁰ Aijaz Ahmed, *Ibid.*

⁷¹ See Brian Spooner, "Who are the Baluchi," 104.

especially Muhammad Shah and Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar, the British authorities demarcated the boundaries of Iran, India and Afghanistan in the 1870s.⁷² Later, this division of Baluchistan into three parts would create a sense of national consciousness among Baluchis in three countries, thereby promoting the idea of Baluchi unity in one political entity. After the great Indian Mutiny against British colonialism in 1857, it had become a matter of the first importance to connect India and England by a direct chain of telegraph communication, a task that was completed in 1864.⁷³ Since the chain passed through southern Iran to India, the British authorities chose mostly Baluchi tribal chiefs to protect the telegraph line. For this service, they gave many concessions to the Baluchi Sardars, including formal recognition and support of their local autonomy.⁷⁴

This policy of promoting local tribal autonomy in Baluchistan continued until the end of British imperialism in India in the mid- twentieth century. The result was the rise of Baluchi leaders with real independence and political power,

⁷²See Gholamreza Mosavvar Rahmani, *Kohne Srbaz: Khaterat-e Siasi Va Nezami*, [The old soldier: political and military memories] (text in Persian), (Tehran: Mo'asseseh-e Khadamat-e Farhangi Rasa, 1988), 517-525; See also, A.W. Hughes, *The Country of Balochistan: Its Geography, Topography, Ethnography and History*, 57.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 57.

⁷⁴Among these, Sardar Jan Mir Khan, and Sardar Faqir Muhammad in Iran were appointed by British authorities in India for such a job. See Afshar Sistani, *Moghaddameh*, 899-900.

who faced the newly created state of Pakistan and expressed their desire to maintain their position vis-a-vis the central state. This tradition of local autonomy in tribal areas also became the dominant pattern in Iranian Baluchistan until the rise of the modern, centralized, bureaucratic state in the 1920s. In some periods, when the Iranian state's control of Baluchistan was in doubt, the British treated Iranian Baluchi Sardars as autonomous authorities and preferred to deal with them rather than the Iranian state.⁷⁵

Regional Forces in Baluchi Ethnic Nationalism: The most forceful international factors in the promotion of the idea of Baluchi independence and autonomy in the second half of the twentieth century in Iran were more regional than extra-regional. This regional interference in Iranian Baluchistan has basically stemmed from the nature of the foreign relations between Iran and the Arab countries in the Persian Gulf region. An example of the strong influence of this regional involvement on Baluchi ethnic nationalism can be found in Iran's relations with Iraq since the 1970s. While Iran was supporting Kurdish nationalists in Iraq during the late 1960s and the early 1970s and thereby promoting the idea of Aryan

⁷⁵This occurred, for example, during the occupation of southern Iran by British forces in World War II. For the English and the Persian text of a treaty signed in November 1943 between British military authorities and Sardar Mohrollah Khan the chief of Rigi tribe on the question of water in Iranian Baluchistan, see Afshar Sistani, *Baluchistan*, 290-300.

Kurdish national identity vis-a-vis the Arabs, the Ba'th Party in Iraq responded by actively supporting Baluchi political organizations formed by tribal chiefs and educated elites dissatisfied with the Shah's policies in Iran. While it was mainly Iraq which was heavily involved in this episode, other Arab countries such as Syria and some Arab Sheikhdoms in the Persian Gulf also backed the Iranian Baluchi nationalists. Together, these countries helped to create and promote the idea of the Arab origins of Baluchis vis-a-vis Persians in Iran.

The main Baluchi political organization in Iranian Baluchistan, namely the BLF, became active in the late 1960s and the early 1970s under the political, financial and military sponsorship of Iraq's Ba'th Party. The Front had established its headquarters in Baghdad and operated a radio station there that propagated nationalist themes for Iranian Baluchis. Most Baluchi political activists in these years were based either in Iraq or in the Arab Sheikhdoms. They were trained in military bases in these countries and departed for Iranian Baluchistan to launch military operations against the Shah's regime.⁷⁶ Abdi Khan, the Iranian Baluchi tribal chief who became the actual leader of the BLF, and Joma Khan, the founder of the Front, lived in Baghdad. This political organization also had its own offices in Cairo and in

⁷⁶See Farzanfar, *Ethnic Groups and the State*, 360.

Damascus,⁷⁷ where the Syrians gave it a quasi-diplomatic status as the representative of a provincial government-in-exile.⁷⁸

In its campaign against the Shah, the Iraqi Ba'th Party tried to create an anti-Shah coalition from different religio-linguistic groups in Iran. A group called the *National Front For Iranian Peoples* was formed by a defected Iranian general, Mahmud Panahian. This group formed its Baluchi Branch, the *Democratic Party of Baluchistan*, and published its organ, *Rah-e Ettehad* (Path of Unity), in all languages spoken in Iran.⁷⁹

The reasons behind the strong Arab support of the Baluch of Iran can be found in the strategic rivalry between Iranian and Arab interests in the region. In the midst of the cold war between Iran and the Arab nationalists during the late 1960s and 1970s, the Arab nationalist regimes in Baghdad, Cairo and Damascus "were the first to raise the issue of Baluchistan along with the question of 'Arabistan' -- namely, the largest Arab-populated province of Khuzistan in southeast Iran -- thus reviving the notion of identifying the Baluch ethnically with the Arabs."⁸⁰ Arab supporters hoped to promote a distinct Arab-Sunnite identity for Iranian Baluchis vis-a-vis the

⁷⁷See "Arab Support for Baluchistan," *Foreign Report*, (London: Economist Newspaper Limited, February 14, 1973), 5.

⁷⁸Harrison, 106.

⁷⁹Hosseini, 150.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 224.

Persian-Shi'ite majority.

The opinions of Arab nationalist intellectuals and Arab publications soon became more direct in their musings on an Arabic identity for the Iranian Baluchis. Riyadh Najib Al-Rayyes, a well-known Arab journalist-author and a political commentator in the influential Saudi-backed Paris weekly *Al-Mostaqbal* (The Future), used to write on Baluchistan and supported the view that Baluchis were ethnically Arab in origin. In one of his writings after the Iranian Islamic Revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, he argued passionately and explicitly that Arab countries should support

...an independent Baluch nation. First, because the Baluch movement is a movement of Arabs, whose Arab history goes back centuries and would fill volumes of books. Second, if the Arabs do not protect the Baluch movement, it will definitely succumb to Soviet influence. Instead of having a new Arab nation, a Communist Marxist nation will take its place, and the Arabs would have lost their chance to assert the Arab heritage of the Baluch....The Khomeini regime is threatening every political system in the Gulf, and Moscow is getting closer to the Strait of Hormuz. The establishment of a Baluch nation would positively secure the political systems in the Gulf, and it would enhance the Arab presence in the Gulf area....By helping Baluch leaders, the Gulf states will be protecting the Arabian Gulf from Persian and Asian expansion.⁸¹

The most ambitious manifestation of Arab involvement in the promotion of a Baluchi Arab identity and Baluch independence was the publication of a 310-page book titled

⁸¹Quoted in Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, 121.

Baluchistan: Diar al-Arab (Baluchistan: The Land of the Arabs) published in Bahrain in 1979 by an Iraqi intellectual, Ma'n Shana al-Ajli Al-Hakkami. The author tried to overwhelm the popularly held idea in Iran and Pakistan that the Iranian Baluchi are Aryans with a mass of evidence backing their Arab origins. While bemoaning the Baluch "loss" of the Arabic language, Al Hakkami attempted to demonstrate that they had retained many other elements of their Arab cultural and religious identity. He appealed to the Baluchi in Iran and Pakistan for "an awakening of the Arabic spirit," contending that "the unification of Iranian and Pakistani Baluchistan should be accomplished through their common Arabic heritage."⁸²

To gain political, military, and financial support from Iraq and other Arab countries, the Baluchi political organizations, especially the BLF, began to incorporate rhetoric detailing the Baluchi's Arab roots. In its Manifesto, the BLF declared that "we consider ourselves a part of the great Arab nation,"⁸³ and we are wholeheartedly with our Arab brethren in their struggle against imperialism, colonialism and Zionism." The Front also backed Iraq and the

⁸²*Ibid.*, 122.

⁸³It should be clarified that the Arab thesis has been rejected by Baluchi leaders, especially in Pakistan. They argue that abandoning the Baluchi language in favour of Arabic, as Pan-Arabs suggest, is nothing but abandoning their Baluchi identity. For these opposing views see Harrison, 125-126.

other Arab countries' claim to Khuzistan, or as they call it 'Arabistan',⁸⁴ and accepted the Iraqi claim to the Shat al-Arab, the waterway that divides Iran and Iraq.

Like any other instrumental political position, the Iraqi support for Iranian Baluchis ended when Iran and Iraq reached an agreement in 1975. Most members of the BLF were moved to Arab Sheikhdoms, some of them were killed by the Shah's regime, and some, including Abdi Khan, returned to Iran and were rewarded by the Shah. After the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and especially during the Iran-Iraq War, Iraq and other conservative Arab countries⁸⁵ resumed their support for Baluchi dissident movements in Iran. The conservative Arab states' fear of the fundamentalist fever growing in and being exported by Iran was a major factor for their interest in the Baluchi cause. Most Iranian Baluchi Sardars who formed political organizations to agitate against the Islamic Republic -- especially right wing groups and Monarchists such as *Pish Marg-e Baluch* and *The Front for Baluch Unity* -- have been actively supported by the Ba'th regime in Iraq. Iranian mass media of the 1980s repeatedly accused Iraq, Saudi Arabia,

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 106-107.

⁸⁵Many Arab Sheikhdoms in the Persian Gulf were supporting Iranian Baluchi nationalist activists. As an example, the embassy of Qatar in Washington financially supported the Iranian Baluchi nationalist Muhammad Hassan Husseinbor to do his research in order to complete his Ph.D dissertation about Baluchi ethnic nationalism in Iran. See Husseinbor's remarks on this regard in *Iran and Its Nationalities: The Case of Baluch Nationalism*, V.

Oman, Jordan and Egypt of supporting the Baluchi rebels in Iranian Baluchistan, and Tehran has complained that the Wahhabi⁸⁶ circles in Saudi Arabia are instigating Sunnite-Shi'ite division in Iranian Baluchistan.

AZARBAIJAN

While the Azari nationalist movement in Iran has not been a continuous phenomenon compared to the Kurdish or even the Baluchi experiences, it manifests the international dynamics of ethnic nationalism much more clearly than the two other cases. In the mid-1940s, the internationalization of the Azarbaijani question went much beyond that of the Kurdish question in terms of the intensity and scope of external involvement, not only in the influence which the international universe of political discourse of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had on Azaris, but also in regard to the involvement of regional and extra-regional external forces.

International Universe of Political Discourse and Azari Nationalism: The case of the Azari nationalist movement in Iran reflects the strong and decisive influences that both the secular, liberal idea of European nationalism and the Marxist-Leninist notion of self-determination and nationality had on

⁸⁶Wahhabism, a branch of Sunnite Islam, and the state religion in Saudi Arabia.

the politicization of a primordial tie such as language. On the one hand, the penetration of the European secular nationalist school in the Islamic World of the late nineteenth century provided the ground for the rise of Pan-Turkism and Pan-Turanism in the Ottoman Empire. Some Azari elites from Russia and Iran who were under the influence of these ideas followed the Pan-Turkist ideology and thus began to elaborate a Pan-Azari school. On the other hand, the success of the Soviet Revolution and the popularity of the Marxist-Leninist idea of self-determination among Iranian and Soviet Azaris in Baku nourished the thesis of local autonomy for Iranian Azarbaijan.

A group of nineteenth century Ottoman intellectuals were perhaps the first to be influenced by the Western secular nationalist discourse. This group, *The Young Ottomans*, established the first nationalist circle in the Empire and became convinced that it was secular nationalism, rather than Islam, that could inject Turkish society with a new spirit and ultimately solve all of its problems.⁸⁷ The Young Ottomans encouraged socio-political, military and cultural reforms in the Ottoman Empire (the so-called *Tanzimat*, 1838-1886) in the pattern of the European countries.⁸⁸

⁸⁷On Young Ottomans, see Serif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottomans Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas*, (New Jersey: Princeton, 1962).

⁸⁸Their leading figures were Namik Kemal, Zia Pash, and Shinasî Efendi.

It was as a result of these reforms, and in fact the influence of the secular European idea of nationalism, that important transformations took place. In the process of such transformation, the traditional dominant cultural heritages in the Ottoman Empire were replaced by Western culture. As E.J.W. Gibb, the distinguished historian of Turkish literature, has pointed out, the Ottoman Culture, "was, so to speak, born and reared in Persia." However, it was as the result of the influence of European secular nationalism that "after 1859 Turkish writers broke with Persian tradition, switching in literature from the poetic heritage of Firdowsi, Jami, and Fuzuli to the prose of Hugo, Balzac, Flaubert, and Dumas."⁸⁹

The *Young Ottomans* were followed by a new group of Westernized, intellectual Turks in the late nineteenth century. Known as the *Young Turks*, they followed in the footsteps of Ernest Renan in holding that "the basic factor of nationality lies, first, in language; second in religion, morals, and customs; and third, in a common history, fatherland, and fate."⁹⁰ While for a short period of time the Young Turks tried, unsuccessfully, to resort to pan-Islamic ideas for mobilizing the Muslims in support of the Ottoman

⁸⁹Quoted in Zenkovski, 30.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 108.

Caliphate on the eve of the First World War," they generally considered Islamic culture more a product of Arabic and Persian traditions than the fruit of purely Turkic intellectual and artistic talents. These Pan-Turkists sought inspiration in the "Turanian" (or Turko-Mongol) past rather than Islamic glory.⁹² It was Zia Gokalp, the most ardent theorist of Pan-Turanism, who in his popular poem emphasised:

For the Turks, fatherland means neither Turkey, nor
Turkestan; Fatherland is a large and eternal
country; It is called Turan.⁹³

It was in such an atmosphere that some leading Azari intellectuals -- among them Aghaoghli, Muhammad Amin Rasul Zadeh, Ali Hussein Zadeh, Nasib Usefbayli, Muhammad Hadi and Aghaev -- arrived in Constantinople from Russia and Iran and were inspired by the Pan-Turkist/Turanist ideology. Some of them, especially Hussein Zadeh, became such ardent Pan-Turanists that they in turn influenced people like Gokalp.⁹⁴ The result was, as I discussed in the last chapter, that they put aside their Islamic or Iranian loyalties and identities in

⁹¹They established a Pan-Islamic party called The Party of Unity of Islam, which had the job for mobilizing Muslims in defence of Ottoman Caliphate.

⁹²Zenkovsky, 109.

⁹³Jacob M. Landau, *Pan-Turkism in Turkey* (Connecticut: Archon Books, 1981), 36. On Gokalp and his teachings, see also Charles Warren Hostler, *The Turks of Central Asia*, 85-88.

⁹⁴Tadeusz Swietchowski, "national consciousness and political orientations in Azerbaijan, 1905-1920," 217.

favour of a Pan-Turkist and Pan-Azərbayajani identity. After their return to Azərbaycan, they began to propagate the ideas of Pan-Turkism in their writings. Indeed, it was Rasul Zadeh who, after his return from Istanbul, founded *Musavat*, a party devoted to the independence of an Azərbaycan republic.

After the collapse of Tsarist Russia and Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I, Azari nationalists pinned their hopes for independence on Woodrow Wilson's promises regarding the self-determination of minority groups in the defeated empires. The fall of these two empires had generally contributed to raise these peoples' expectations for self-determination.⁹⁵ Even at the height of the War in 1916, a committee of Azari elites had sent telegrams to Wilson and to other Western leaders demanding autonomy for the Muslims of Russia.⁹⁶

A delegation of Azaris at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 demanded the recognition of Azərbaycan as an independent republic and presented the boundaries of a "Great Azərbaycan" which included some parts of Armenia and Georgia.⁹⁷ Upon their arrival in April 1919, the delegation addressed a note to Wilson, making several requests, including the application

⁹⁵Touraj Atabaki, *Azərbayajian: Ethnicity and Autonomy in Twentieth Century Iran*, 12-13.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 129.

⁹⁷Zenkovsky, 262.

of Wilsonian principles to Azerbaijan.⁹⁸ They succeeded in having a meeting with Wilson himself in the Spring 1919 to make their case. Wilson, however, displayed a rather unsympathetic attitude and told them that the conference did not want to partition the world into small pieces, advising them instead to develop a confederation of the peoples of Transcaucasia.⁹⁹

It is true that following the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, the aspirations of Azari Pan-Turkist elites for the unity of the two Azarbaijans in a Turkish empire were shattered, but they did not give up their nationalist orientations. The integration of Azarbaijan into the Soviet Union and the influence of the Marxist concept of self-determination reinforced their Pan-Turkist and especially their Pan-Azarbaijani aspirations. The Russian and Iranian Azarbaijani elites had been disposed to Marxist ideas since the Revolution of 1905 in Russia. Because of its industrial importance, Baku was one of the main centres of revolutionary activities in the empire.

Some of the leading Marxist activists, including Stalin, had spent a significant period of their young careers organizing the revolutionary struggle against the Tsarist

⁹⁸For the text of the requests, see Firuz Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle For Transcaucasia 1917-1921*, (Connecticut: Hyperior Press, 1951), 266.

⁹⁹For more details, see Hostler, *The Turks of Central Asia*, 22.

regime in Baku.¹⁰⁰ According to Nissman, socialist groups such as the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party (RSDWP) had been active in Baku since before the turn of the century. Since the Iranian Azari workers in Baku's oil-industry were living in the worst of conditions at the bottom of the economic ladder,¹⁰¹ they were, more than any other Azaris vulnerable to socialist ideas. According to Russian newspapers on the eve of the First World War, Iranian Azaris, or as they were called, the "Persian citizens", were the most active workers organizing strikes in Baku.¹⁰²

As I noted in the last chapter, political parties such as *Ijtimaiyun-e Amiyun* and later *Hemmat* were the first socialist parties formed by Iranian Azaris in Baku. *Hemmat*, in fact, became the Iranian Communist Party on the eve of the Soviet Revolution. Pishe Vari, the founder and president of the Azarbaijan Democratic Republic in Iranian Azarbaijan in 1945-46 was one of the Iranians to emigrate to Baku in the early twentieth century, and once there he became a co-founding member of *Hemmat*. The Iranian Azaris, like the Kurds and Baluchis, were among the activists invited to the Baku Congress of the Peoples of the East held in 1920. Pishe Vari, the leader of Iran's Azari ethnic nationalist movement in the

¹⁰⁰See Zenkovsky, 98.

¹⁰¹Audrey L. Altstadt, "Muslim Workers and Labour Movement in Pre-War Baku," 85.

¹⁰²For more details, see *Ibid.*, 89-90.

1940s, was an active participant, attending the Congress on behalf of the Iranian Communist Party.¹⁰³ One year later, most of these Iranian Azaris were sent to Gilan in northern Iran to establish the Soviet Gilan Republic on the pattern of the Soviet autonomous republics.¹⁰⁴

Learning their Marxism in Tsarist Russia and later, first-hand in the Soviet Union, these Iranians were inspired by the Marxist-Leninist idea of self-determination and the Stalinist concept of nationality. They used to look at Iran from such a perspective. In the Second Congress of the Iranian Communist Party held in the Soviet city of Rostov in the late 1920s, a new program was ratified in which Iran was officially described as a land where "many nations" live. The task of the Iranian Communist Party now become that of "fighting for the total freedom of these nations, even to the extent of their seceding from central government."¹⁰⁵ In 1945, the Azarbaijan Democratic Faction (ADF) was founded by Pische Vari and other Iranian Azaris who were active in socialist activities in Russia. As Atabaki writes:

No one in ADF leadership came from a background specifically shaped by direct European experience. All seven top leaders of ADF -- Pische Vari, Shabestari, Badegan, Javid, Kaviyan, Daneshiyan and

¹⁰³Ebrahim Fakhrai, *Sardar-e Jangal*, [the commander of jungle] (text in Persian), (Tehran: Elmi, 1972), 274.

¹⁰⁴As noted in the last chapter, the Gilan Republic collapsed after Reza Shah's forces defeated the Iranian Communists in 1921. See *Ibid*.

¹⁰⁵Atabaki, *Azarbaijan*, 43.

Biriya -- either studied or spent a considerable length of time as political activists in Tsarist Russia or, later, the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁶

As they were convinced of the correctness of the Marxist notion of self-determination and nationality, these Iranian Azari elites believed that the people of Azarbaijan were, according to Stalin's notion of nationality, a distinct nation, and therefore deserving of the chance to enjoy their national rights in an autonomous political entity. The unofficial Iranian communist party (The Tudeh Party), which had many Azaris among its members, was under these Soviet Marxist influences when it demanded autonomy for all provinces, including Azarbaijan and Kurdistan, based on the Provincial Councils.¹⁰⁷

In short, the effect of the international universe of political discourse was to spur the construction of ethnic identities and the rise of ethnic nationalist movements by Azari elites in Azarbaijan. As in the Baluchi and Kurdish cases, the actual formation of the nationalist movements has been the result of the involvement of extra-regional and regional forces. As I will discuss in the following pages,

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 116-117.

¹⁰⁷The Tudeh Party's position on this issue was published in 1973, and supported "full equality of rights for all peoples, ethnic groups and national minorities living in Iran." It completely reflected Soviet thinking on nationalities. For more details, see Aryeh Y. Yodfat, *The Soviet Union and Revolutionary Iran*, (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 57-58.

nowhere has this international factor manifested its importance more obviously than in Azarbaijan.

The International Politics of Azari Ethnic Nationalism: The history of Azari ethnic nationalism from the mid-nineteenth century until the Iranian Revolution of 1979 has primarily been shaped by three external forces -- namely, Russia, the Ottoman Empire and the Soviet Union. All three were influential in promoting an Azari identity and encouraging the formation of political movements with separatist or autonomist tendencies.

Russia was the first country involved in the Azari question in Iran. This goes back to the time when the Russian government, in the aftermath of its conquest of Caucasia in the Irano-Russian Wars (1812-1828) decided to fight against the influence of the Iranian cultural heritage. As Zenkovsky has pointed out, the Persian (Iranian) influence was particularly strong in the southern provinces of Russia, and among the Turkic peoples living in Central Asia and Transcaucasia -- peoples living on the northern fringe of Iranian culture. Despite the best efforts of the Russian authorities to liquidate this influence, most Azarbaijani and Uzbek intellectuals and most central Asian and Caucasian cities¹⁰⁸ were bilingual. Russia's trump card in the campaign

¹⁰⁸Zenkovsky argues that Persian cultural domination was not restricted to the Turks of Russia, but in Turkey (Ottoman Empire) Persian literary forms dominated Ottoman

against the domination of Persian language and literature in Caucasia was the encouragement of a revival of the Turkish Azari language. This was, in fact, the first step taken for creating a distinct Azari identity. Hostler describes the process:

Before the Russian occupation, cultural life in Azarbaijan had been influenced by Persian civilization. Persian language and literature were in general use among the educated classes. This cultural link between the newly conquered country and its still strong Persian neighbour annoyed Russia, which tried to destroy it by supporting local Turkish cultural developments. These and other social currents contributed to the revival of local Turkish culture, illustrating the Persian proverb that "the enemy may be very useful if God wills it."¹⁰⁹

It was as the result of this policy that Russian authorities encouraged Azari intellectuals like Akhond Zadeh to write in the Turkish language instead of Persian. Akhond Zadeh's insistence on urging Azarbaijanis to become acquainted with Russian and Western European culture, and even replacing the Arabic alphabet by Russian-Latin letters,¹¹⁰ was in fact compatible with and encouraged by Russian cultural policy in Azarbaijan. Periodicals such as *Akintchi* and *Mulla Nasreddin* with their anti-Iranian and anti-Shi'ite tone were actually

letters for centuries. Persian influence gave way to Western influence in Ottoman literature only after the reforms of 1840's-188's, the so-called Tanzimat era, when a new Western-mainly French-cultural orientation was initiated. See *Pan-Turkism and Islam in Russia*, 10-11.

¹⁰⁹Hostler, *The Turks of Central Asia*, 19.

¹¹⁰Zenkovski, 94.

supported by the Russians.

Russian cultural policy in encouraging the Turkish language against the influence of Persian, however, brought about a result which was not favourable to Russian interests. The increasing interest in Turkish language and culture in Caucasia was reinforced by the rise of Pan-Turkist tendencies in the Ottoman Empire. The result of the anti-Iranian campaign in Caucasia, thus, was the spread of Pan-Turkist and pro-Ottoman trends among the Azarbaijani elites. Based on the long enmity between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, the Russians became concerned about such tendencies and consequently suppressed Pan-Turkist circles and banned Pan-Turkist periodicals.

One result of Pan-Turkist and Pan-Turanist orientations in the Ottoman Empire in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century was the spread of irredentism. When the Young Turks came to power in 1908, they pursued Pan-Turanist views of nationalists such as Zia Gokalp, who promoted the unity of all Turkic peoples in the world.¹¹¹ Their first

¹¹¹Gokalp considered three levels of Turkic peoples: (a) the Turks in Turkey; (b) the Oghuz Turks referring to those in Azarbaijan, Iran and Khwarizm who have the same Turkic culture as the Turks in Turkey and who form Oghuzistan; and (c) more distant Turkic speaking peoples such as Ozbeks, Yakuts, Kirghiz, Kipchaks and Tatars, who have a traditional linguistic and ethnic unity-but not identity- with the Turkish culture. All these form Greater Tukestan or Turan. According to Gokalp, the first of thee levels, 'Turkeyism', has been realised; the second, 'Oghuzism', might be possible at some future date; while the third, 'Turanism' with its 100 million people, remained a vision for the distant future. See Landau, *Pan-Turkism in Turkey*, 37.

target was naturally Azarbaijan, both Russian and Iranian. From the beginning, then, the Young Turk regime followed its pan-Turkist policy or, using Gokalp's metaphor, an *Oghuzist* policy toward Iranian Azarbaijan. The generally anarchical situation in Iran and particularly in Azarbaijan after the Constitutional Revolution of 1906 until the end of World War I facilitated the Young Turks' military, and consequently cultural, intervention in Azarbaijan. It was in the aftermath of the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 in Istanbul that the Young Turks supported the idea of an autonomous Turkic state in Iranian Azarbaijan. As a prelude to this plan, the Young Turk Halil Bey sent armed volunteers to the region.¹¹²

One of the main goals of Ottoman forays into Iranian Azarbaijan in 1915 was to help Azarbaijanis in Russia achieve independence,¹¹³ as well the formation of Pan-Turkist circles in Iranian Azarbaijan. It was during the presence of the Ottoman army in Azarbaijan and as the result of their support that a Turkish language newspaper, *Azarbaijan*, was published in Tabriz. The newspaper emphasized the Turkishness of Azarbaijan, and the ancient roots of that cultural legacy.¹¹⁴ For a while, the Young Turks regime tried to attract Azaris in Iran by opening branches of The Party of Unity of Islam. This

¹¹²Swietchowski, "National Consciousness," 216.

¹¹³*Ibid.*, 219; see also 222.

¹¹⁴Ahmad Kasravi, *Zendegani-i Man*, [my life] (text in Persian), (Tehran: Now Bonyad, 1956), 86-87.

party demanded the separation of Azarbaijan from the Ottoman Empire. However, most Azari leaders, including Shaikh Muhammad Khiabani, protested Ottoman policies.¹¹⁵

The formation of the Republic of Turkey, at least in its early years, did not end the Pan-Turkist's hopes for Iranian Azarbaijan. It was in 1923, for example, that a conference on Azarbaijan was held in Istanbul by *Turk Ocagi* (the Turkish Hearth). Roshani Beg, a well-known Pan-Turkist, condemned the Iranian government for its atrocious, oppressive and tyrannical policies towards Azarbaijanis living in Iran, and called on them to unite with the new-born Republic of Turkey.¹¹⁶ The fact is that despite all these efforts, no strong ethnic nationalist movement emerged in Iranian Azarbaijan. As Cottam points out, "very few Azarbaijanis were persuaded to support Pan-Turanism, and the most powerful and popular of Azarbaijani leaders led the fight against the Turkish plan."¹¹⁷ This situation, however, did not last forever. After almost two decades, an Azari nationalist movement did appear during the occupation of Iranian

¹¹⁵Rahim Raisnya and Abdul Hussein Nahid, *Dow Mobarez-e Jonbesh-e Mashrooteh* [Two combatants of the Constitutional Movement] (text in Persian), (Tehran: Agah, 1976), 235-36.

¹¹⁶Atabaki, 56-58. Such claims raised harsh responses by Iranian intellectuals, both Azari and non-Azari. See for example, Dr. Taqi Arani, "Azarbaijan ya yek mas'ale-e hayati va mamati Iran [Azarbaijan: a question of life and death for Iran] (text in Persian), in *Farangestan*, 5 (1924): 247-254, reprinted in Iraj Afshar, *Zaban-e Farsi dar Azarbaijan*, 126-133.

¹¹⁷Richard Cottam, *Nationalism in Iran*, 132.

Azarbaijan by the Soviet army in World War II.

The Soviet manipulation of ethnic issues in Iran for its own national interests goes back to the 1920s, when members of the Communist Party of Iran (former Edalat) were sent to the Gilan region in northern Iran to establish a Gilan Soviet Republic. Most of these, including Pische Vari, Aghaev, and I.A. Akhundov,¹¹⁸ were Iranian Azaris who were working in Baku. As noted earlier, the Gilan Communist regime collapsed after the arrival of Reza Khan's forces in the region. After the return of these Azari elites to Baku, the Soviet regime did not involve itself in ethnic issues in Iran until its occupation of northern Iran in 1941.

In fact, Lenin pursued a friendly relationship with Reza Shah after the Soviet and Iranian Agreement of 1921, according to which the Soviet regime rejected all Tsarist Russia's claims on Iran. One reason for this new policy was the fact that Soviets had to face many political and economic challenges to consolidate their revolution -- another was that the Soviets wanted to ward off British influence in Iran by showing their good will toward Tehran. Ideologically, the theorists of the Soviet Communist Party believed that Iran, as a primarily feudal-based society, was not ripe for Socialist Revolution, though support of the growing national bourgeoisie class and its anti-feudal sentiment was considered worthwhile. Reza Shah's state with its centralization policies was

¹¹⁸See Nissman, 25.

considered "the symbol of the Iranian national bourgeoisie's aspirations."¹¹⁹ In their view, Reza Shah was the best hope to free Iran of its feudal structures and to move the country toward capitalist development as a prelude to a Socialist revolution.

In the 1940s, however, Soviet policy changed. The occupation of Iranian Azarbaijan in 1941 marked the beginning of a new era during which the Soviet authorities started to manipulate ethnic nationalist ideas and movements in Iran for their own strategic interests. Iranian Azarbaijan and Kurdistan were the most fertile centres in which such a policy could bring about the desired results. The rise and fall of the Azarbaijan Democratic Firqa (ADF) and Azarbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR) were the best examples of these manipulated ethnic nationalist movements and constructed ethnic national identity. I have discussed the rise and fall of the ADF and Azarbaijan Democratic Republic and the role of Azari elites in it in previous chapters. Here, I discuss only the role of the Soviet Union in the promotion of Azari ethnic identity and the manipulation of the Azari ethnic nationalist movement in Iran.

The preoccupation of Soviet authorities with Azari nationalism began several months after the occupation of Azarbaijan by the Red Army. A delegation of Soviet Azari

¹¹⁹Jamī (Iran's Peoples Freedom Movement), *Gozashteh Cheragh-e Rah-e Ayandeh Ast*, 66.

activists headed by Aziz Aliyev, a secretary of the Central Committee of the Azarbaijan Communist Party, arrived in Tabriz at the invitation of the Red Army.¹²⁰ In late 1941 this group of Soviet Azaris started to publish a newspaper in the Turkish language, *Vatan Yolunda*, in Tabriz, the capital of Iranian Azarbaijan.

Along with other Soviet Azari intellectuals, Mirza Ibrahimov, the newspaper's editor, used *Vatan Yolunda* to promote an ethnic national consciousness among Iranian Azaris. It was at this time, under the Soviet occupation, that nationalistic poetry about Azarbaijan in the Turkish language was produced for the first time.¹²¹ The Soviets stressed the importance of the Azari Turkish language, the introduction of Soviet Azari literature to Iranian Azari intellectuals, and encouraging them to follow the same model.¹²² Beside *Vatan Yolunda*, other Turkish journals like *Azarbaijan* and *Shafaq* were discussing Azari literature and ethnic nationalist

¹²⁰Other important members of the Azari delegation were Mehbaly Gasumov, a specialist of Azari intellectual history, and Mirza Ibrahimov, the Azari author and poet. See Nissman, 31.

¹²¹In some of these poems Stalin was praised as the liberator of Azarbaijan. See Sakina Berengian, *Azeri and Persian Literary Works in Twentieth Century Iranian Azarbaijan*, 138-139.

¹²²Lois Bazin, "Les Turcophones d'Iran: Aperçus Ethno-Linguistiques," in Jean-Pierre Digard, ed., *Le Faith Ethnique en Iran et en Afghanistan*, 49.

themes.¹²³ Later, writing on the impact and the importance of the newspaper, Ibrahimov wrote:

For the southern Azaris for whom schools, the press and literature in the mother tongue were banned, and who had been exposed to repression and persecution through the denial of their identity, nationality, history, culture and language under the severe national tyranny of Reza Shah's despotism, *Vatan Yolunda* shone like a light in the darkness.¹²⁴

Vatan Yolunda was published every other day with the financial support of the Red Army until early 1946. At the same time, Red Army staff were actively involved in other cultural activities in Azarbaijan's cities where they propagated Soviet socio-political life, for which Soviet Azarbaijan was a symbol. At the end of World War II, and along with these cultural campaigns for the creation of an ethnic national consciousness among Iranian Azaris, the Soviet Communist Party began a significant initiative for the formation of a nationalist political organization which would demand autonomy for Iranian Azarbaijan. This political organization was formed in September 1945 by Pische Vari, the Iranian Azari political activist, and a founding member of the Communist Party of Iran in Baku in the late 1910s.

As in the case of the Kurdish Democratic Party, the formation of *Azarbaijan Democratic Firqa* (or Party) was

¹²³Berengian writes that Azarbaijan was published in Baku, but the place of publication was never mentioned in the journal. See Berengian, 140-141, 144-145.

¹²⁴Nissman, 32.

recommended by Soviet authorities. According to Anvar Khameh'i, a former leading member of the Tudeh Party, the whole ADF "project" was chiefly invented and directed by the Soviets.¹²⁵ According to Jami, an independent Iranian leftist organization, ADF was formed after Pische Vari met Baghirov, the president of Soviet Azarbaijan in Baku, and received the full support of the Soviets.¹²⁶ This was exactly the case with the formation of the KDP in Kurdistan after the Kurdish leaders met Baghirov in Baku in the same month (September 1945).

The Soviets were in fact watching developments very closely after the declaration of the Azarbaijan Democratic Republic in Iran. Soviet support moved on to a new, more active level, as the Iranian army's move to reinforce garrisons near Azarbaijan was stopped at a Soviet check-point just outside Tehran in Shrifabad of Ghazvin. With that, the Iranian government began a series of diplomatic initiatives to encourage a Soviet withdrawal from Iran.

Despite an agreement signed by Soviet, American and British heads of state in 1942 for a withdrawal from Iran of their powers on March 2, 1946, the Soviets were not ready to withdraw their forces six months after the end of World War II. The Soviet Union argued that their presence in Iran did not relate to the Trilateral agreement of 1942, and that in

¹²⁵Atabaki, 102.

¹²⁶Jami, *Gozashteh Cheragh-e Rah-e Ayandeh Ast*, 270.

fact the Irano-Soviet Agreement of February 1921¹²⁷ gave the Soviet Union the right to maintain its forces in Iran.¹²⁸ Iran also brought its case to the newly established United Nations in January 1946. At the same time, U.S. president Harry Truman stated that the United States had a commitment to maintain the independence and territorial integrity of Iran.¹²⁹

Under such diplomatic pressures, Moscow suggested direct negotiations with Iran. The first round of Irano-Soviet negotiations between Qavam, the Iranian prime minister, and Stalin and Molotov ended in failure when Qavam rejected three conditions of the Soviets: that Tehran recognize the autonomous government of Azarbaijan; that the Soviet army be allowed to maintain its presence in the Iranian northern provinces after March of 1946; and that Iran offer Moscow special access to oil in northern Iran.¹³⁰ It was on March 24, 1946, several hours before the session of the UN Security Council being convened to discuss an Iranian protest against

¹²⁷Article six of the Agreement indicated that if the security of the Soviet Union is threatened from Iranian territories by a third country, Soviet Union has the right to bring its army to Iranian territory for self-defence. For the full text of the article, see Nissman, 22.

¹²⁸Iraj Zoghi, *Iran va Ghodrathay-e Bozorg dar Jang-e jahani Dowwom*, [Iran and the Great Powers in World War II] (text in Persian), (Tehran: Pazhang Publishing Co, 1988), 268.

¹²⁹*New York Times*, (December 19, 1945).

¹³⁰Zoghi, 289.

Allied zones of occupation and boundaries of the Azerbaijan and Kurdish regimes

Source: Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold War*, 21.

the Soviet's presence in Iran, that Radio Moscow declared that Soviet forces would withdraw within six weeks.

There is still no certainty about the reasoning behind the decision, but there is a strong argument that Truman's ultimatum to Stalin led Moscow to back down. In an interview on April 24, 1952, Truman said that he had sent an ultimatum to Stalin in 1946, warning that if the Soviet army did not withdraw from Iran the US would dispatch its own forces to the area.¹³¹ Before that became necessary, however, Stalin agreed to withdraw providing that Iran offered Moscow special access to oil in northern Iran. The final arrangements were made in April 1946, according to which the Soviet Union agreed to withdraw within 45 days, and Iran guaranteed that the issue of an oil concession would be referred to the Iranian parliament for approval. With that, the Soviets acknowledged Azarbaijan as an Iranian domestic problem, and officially accepted that would be peacefully resolved in negotiations between Tehran and the Azarbaijani people. The Soviets withdrew, and the Azarbaijan Democratic Republic, as I have earlier detailed, collapsed after its leaders fled to the Soviet Union. Moreover, the fifteenth Iranian *Majlis* (parliament) later unanimously rejected the idea of oil concessions for the Soviet Union in northern Iran.

As the final events of the Azarbaijan crisis show, the question of an oil concession was a key factor in Soviet

¹³¹*New York Times*, April 25, 1952.

policies towards Iran. Moscow easily disregarded its commitments toward the Azarbaijan Democratic Republic and abandoned it when it believed it had guaranteed an oil concession. In fact, there are some strong indications that from the beginning Soviet authorities had manipulated the Azari ethnic nationalist movement primarily in order to make Iran accept its oil demands.

Moscow's preoccupation with Iranian oil went back to 1944 in the midst of great power rivalry over Iranian oil. It was in 1943 that the representatives of American and British oil companies arrived in Iran to negotiate oil concessions in Iranian Baluchistan. Following them, Sergei Kavtradze, the representative of the Soviet Union, arrived in Tehran with Soviet oil experts in September 1944. After a trip to the northern provinces, they submitted their demand for an oil concession in those regions.¹³² Caught in the middle of a potential no-win dilemma, the Iranian *Majlis* reacted by approving a bill, presented by Muhammad Mossadiq in December 1944, which explicitly emphasized that the Iranian government had no right to negotiate or sign any oil contract with the representatives of any country.¹³³ This event led to a deterioration of Irano-Soviet relations.

Some analysts, including many Iranians, believe that the Soviet Union reacted to Iranian policy by manipulating the

¹³²Zoghi, 212-214.

¹³³*Ibid.*, 221.

Azari nationalist movement in 1945-46. Nurreddin Kianuri, the former leader of the Tudeh Party, who was arrested in 1983 and confessed in prison, has stated the following about the Azarbaijan autonomist movement and its relation to the Soviet Union:

Because their demands for concessions were denied, the Soviets tried to put pressure on Iran by separating that rich and historically important province from the rest of the country....We all know that the Soviet creation of autonomous regimes in Azarbaijan and Kurdistan was designed solely to achieve their goal in Iran, namely to refuse to evacuate the northern part of the country until it had secured concessions which they believed the Western powers had already gained in Iran.¹³⁴

After the collapse of the Azarbaijan Democratic Republic, the centre of the promotion of the national consciousness in Iranian Azarbaijan was shifted to Baku. Many Soviet Azari intellectuals like Mirza Ibrahimov, Suleyman Rustam and some Iranian Azaris, started to publish nationalistic themes about Iranian Azarbaijan. Subjects such as the "southern question", "one Azarbaijan", and the suppression of Azaris in Iran were discussed by these Azari intellectuals. The Soviet's formal policy in the years following 1946 was to support and encourage such nationalistic themes. Suleyman Rustam's book of poetry *Iki Sahil* (Two Banks), about the northern and southern banks of the Aras River dividing the two Azarbaijans,

¹³⁴Sepehr Zabih, *The Left in Contemporary Iran: Ideology, Organization and the Soviet Connection*, (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 215.

won a "Soviet State Prize" in 1947, and his epic poem *Tabrizda Gysh* (Winter in Tabriz) was voted one of the best poems of the year by the Moscow Literary Journal *Ogonyok* in 1949.¹³⁵

In 1951, Mirza Ibrahimov's novel, *The Coming Day*,¹³⁶ which examined Azari national liberation in Iran, was awarded the Lenin Prize. The USSR Academy of Sciences also established an Institute of History of the Azarbaijan in its Baku branch to develop national liberation and revolutionary movements in the countries of the Near and Middle East. This institute was involved in different research projects on Iran, among them the study of the national liberation struggle in Iranian Azarbaijan. In 1976, a Section for Southern Azarbaijani Language and Literature was formed under the Nizami Institute of Literature of the Azarbaijani SSR Academy of Sciences.¹³⁷

It was as the result of the activities of such institutions that the institutionalization of the Southern Question developed.¹³⁸ These institutions gained a new impetus for their task after the outbreak of the Iranian Revolution in 1979. Radio Baku's Southern program made a major effort to instill in the minds of Iranian Azaris those subjective factors which would precondition them to accept

¹³⁵Nissman, 36.

¹³⁶On this book, see the last chapter.

¹³⁷Nissman, 91.

¹³⁸*Ibid.*, 45.

themselves as part of a Greater Azarbaijan.

Beside promoting Azari national consciousness in Iran, one important function of these institutions was the promotion of a Soviet system of government's potential for assuring national rights. They also asserted the superiority of Soviet secular national rights over Islamic theocracy in order to eliminate or reduce the influence of the Islamic Revolution on Soviet Azaris and other Soviet Muslims.¹³⁹

The tone of relations between Iran and the Soviet Union could have significant effects on Soviet Azari elites', and in fact, Moscow's involvement in Iranian Azarbaijan. It was, for example, after the deterioration of Soviet-Iranian relations over the crackdown of the pro-Soviet Tudeh Party in 1981, that Soviet-Azari media and state organs began to elaborate the concept of "One Azarbaijan", and the idea that Iranian Azari Turks were part of the same nation as Soviet Azari Turks. Meantime, the Azarbaijan Society for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries began publishing a new newspaper, *Odlar Yurdu*, in Arabic-Persian script for distribution in Iranian Azarbaijan in 1982.¹⁴⁰

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the independence of the Azarbaijan Republic, a regional cold war began between Iran and Turkey over influence in the Azarbaijan Republic. While Iran has tried to emphasize religious and

¹³⁹*Ibid.*, 91.

¹⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 103.

cultural affinities with Azarbaijan, Turkey has relied on the question of Turkish language and encouraged political and cultural reforms in Azarbaijan to reinforce a Western secular nationalism. Other regional powers such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt have also been trying to undermine Iranian influence. In this regard, Saudi and Egyptian religious institutions have supplied Islamic texts and have sent religious instructors to Azarbaijan. The West in general has supported Turkey in this quasi-cold War. The Pan-Turkist circles in both Turkey and Azarbaijan have revived the question of Turkish ethnic identity for Azarbaijanis. Such efforts, however, have been overshadowed by the war between Armenia and Azarbaijan.

In sum, the promotion of nationalistic consciousness and the rise of ethnic nationalist movements in Iranian Azarbaijan were mostly the result of Soviet irredentist and strategic policies toward Iran. The proponents of the Pan-Turkist thesis in the Ottoman Empire, Russia, and later the Soviet Union, tried to promote concepts such as 'One Azarbaijan' as a historical fact, but the reality is that such an political entity had never existed. As Entessar argues:

the concept of a Greater Azarbaijan comprising the northwest Iranian province of Azarbaijan and the former Azarbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic is an imagined community created and promoted by the Soviets in the twentieth century.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹Nader Entessar, "Azari Nationalism in the Soviet Union and Iran," 117.

II. WESTERN ORIENTALISM AND ETHNIC NATIONALISM

An important contribution to the spread of ethnic identity, nationalistic ideas, and the rise of ethnic nationalism among the Kurds, Baluch, Azari and many other Middle Eastern religio-linguistic groups, has been made by the international intelligentsia. Originally Western, these intellectuals include the Orientalists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and many modern social scientists -- anthropologists, philologists, sociologists, historians and political scientists. By Orientalism and Orientalists, I mean the academic criteria that Edward Said has used in his work:

Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient -- and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist -- either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism.¹⁴²

Edward Said, however, has studied Orientalism in general and has not discussed its role in the promotion of the Western notion of secular nationalist ideas in the Orient. Here I focus only on its role in promoting the idea of nationalism, or according to social scientists, ethnic nationalism, among different religio-linguistic groups in the Middle East. Such Orientalists have been deeply involved in studying the

¹⁴²Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 2.

history, culture, religion and socio-political structures of different religio-linguistic and tribal groups in the Middle East and other parts of the Orient, as well as the Third World more generally. The stimuli for these studies differed, ranging from those old Orientalists who were working for colonial establishments in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to the modern social scientists who have often undertaken their research of policy-relevant issues with funding from Western governmental or nongovernmental institutions, to those who have tried to operationalize their conceptual and theoretical frameworks through empirical and field research in Third World societies.

One important product of the old Orientalists' studies was the discovery of distinct histories -- cultural and political heritages of the peoples who were perhaps themselves ignorant of them. It was mainly as the result of such studies that many Middle Eastern Muslims became politically aware of their so-called distinct ethnic roots as Persians, Turks, Arabs, Kurds, Baluchis, Turkmen or Pashtuns. It was also partly as the result of the theoretical and conceptual works of the modern social scientists that the existence of such rediscovered ethnic ties came to be considered the basic criteria for nationhood, nationality and political independence.

As I discussed in Chapter one, the problem with the works of many modern social scientists, either Western or

theoretically Westernised eastern social scientists, is that they take concepts such as tribe, ethnic groups, ethnic identity, or ethnic nationalism as given and unchallenged, and then apply them indiscriminately to Middle Eastern and other Third World societies. Their lack of historical insight and sensitivity and their disregard of the historical specificities of such non-Western societies has brought about many distorted and confusing results regarding the question of ethnicity, ethnic groups and ethnic nationalism.¹⁴³

Generally speaking, it was the historical, cultural, anthropological and linguistic findings of these international intelligentsia that provided the necessary material for native intellectual and political elites to construct distinct national identities and organize autonomist or separatist movements. It is interesting that the first groups of the secular nationalist intellectuals in the Middle East to create racial "Pan-Isms" ideologies in dominantly religious societies were inspired by the works of Western Orientalists. One example is the influence of the idea of Pan-Turanism and the rise of Pan-Turkist ideas among Azari intellectuals in the late and early twentieth centuries. The man most responsible for first popularizing the idea of Turan and Pan-Turkism was the Jewish-Hungarian traveller and Orientalist Arminius (Hermann) Vambery (1832-1913), whose works were related to

¹⁴³For the examples of these works, see Chapter One.

British colonial goals and strategic interests in Asia.¹⁴⁴ Vambery devoted an entire chapter of his book *Sketches of Central Asia*, first published in 1868, to the Turanians.

He contended that all Turkic groups belonged to one race, and it was he who in his *Travels in Central Asia* drew up a grand design for a Pan-Turk empire. It becomes clear that his whole effort toward the conceptualization of a Pan-Turanist empire was to evoke nationalistic sentiments among the Turks in the Ottoman Empire, Caucasia and central Asia against Tsarist Russia as the principal rival of British Empire in 'The Great Game in Asia'. His writings confirm this:

In its character of Turkish dynasty, the house of Osman¹⁴⁵ might, out of the different kindred elements with which it is connected by the bond of a common language, religion and history, have founded an empire extended from the shore of the Adriatic far to China, an empire mightier than that which the Romanoff was obliged to employ not only force, but cunning, to put together, out of the most discordant and heterogeneous materials. Anatolians, Azerbaydjanies, Turkomans, Ozbegs, Kirghis, and Tartars are the respective members out of which a mighty Turkish Colossus might have arisen, certainly better capable of measuring itself with its great northern competitor than Turkey such as we see in the present day.¹⁴⁶

The pan-Turk leaders in the Ottoman Empire had close relations with Vambery, and it was through this connection that they

¹⁴⁴There are two large volumes of Vambery's manuscript correspondence between 1889 and 1911 with the Foreign Office in London. See Landau, *Pan-Turkism in Turkey*, 1-2, 5.

¹⁴⁵Refers to Ottoman court.

¹⁴⁶Quoted in Landau, 2.

adopted the principles of Pan-Turkism in their writings.¹⁴⁷

The most important promoter of the idea of Pan-Turkism and Pan-Turanism was possibly the famous French Orientalist Leon Cahun. It was Cahun who most influenced Zia Gokalp, the so-called father of pan-Turkism ideology. According to Gokalp himself, when he arrived in Constantinople in 1896, the first book he obtained was Cahun's *Introduction a l'Histoire de l'Asie* which, he remarked, was written "as if to encourage the ideal of Pan-Turkism."¹⁴⁸ In the book, which was later translated into Turkish, Cahun glorified the Mongol warlords Genghis Khan and Timur as:

...superheroes, and the Mongols as a "racial" aristocracy. The Turks had descended from Mongols and were far superior as warriors to the Arabs and Persians. The Arab had poisoned them with their hypocritical Koran, denationalized and weakened them, and thus had prevented the building of a great Turkish world empire.¹⁴⁹

As Hertz argues,¹⁵⁰ it was in fact Cahun's ideas that found great appeal among the Turkish intelligentsia and contributed to the foundations of "Pan-Turanism." One example of such a Pan-Turanist was Kachen Zadeh who included in the future Turanian state of his imagination Asia Minor, Iraq, northern Iran, Azarbaijan, Crimea, all the plains between the

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 2, 5 ft. 12.

¹⁴⁸Hostler, *The Turks of Central Asia*, 112.

¹⁴⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰Frederick Hertz, *Nationality in History and Politics*, (London: Kegan Paul, 1954), 56, cited in *Ibid.*, 112, 210.

Volga and Urals, the Kazakh steppe, Central Asia, Mongolia, western China, eastern Siberia, the Irktusk, and the banks of the Amur river to the Pacific Coast.¹⁵¹ Thus the idea of Turan as the original homeland of the Turks came more from the mind of the Western Orientalists than the Pan-Turkist circles in the Ottoman Empire.

Equating Turan with Turks, however, was a misconception and misunderstanding. Such a distorted image, nevertheless, came to be considered a given fact by native secular nationalists in Turkey and Azerbaijan. It is noteworthy that possibly the oldest source mentioning the term Turan is the *Shahnameh* of Firdowsi, the Iranian epic written in the tenth century A.D. In Firdowsi's notion, Turan was not the land of the Turks, but a land attributed to *Tur*, the third son of *Fereydun*, the mythical king of Iran.

According to *Shahnameh*, after the death of *Fereydun* a conflict started between his sons over the throne. In this conflict, *Iraj* was the symbol of good and truth, and *Tur* the symbol of all treacherous and deceptive deeds. *Iraj* had been nominated as the King of Iran by his father, but *Tur* treacherously murdered his brother. As the result of this, a permanent conflict divided the followers of *Iraj* and the supporters of *Tur* (identified as Turanians). As we see, Turanians have been, according to Firdowsi's narrative, not Turks, but Iranians. Some of the oldest available historical

¹⁵¹Zenkovsky, *Pan-Turkism and Islam in Russia*, 111.

earlier. The question of power necessitated that ethnic nationalist ideas be promoted and primordial elements such as language be politicized. The creation of an Azari ethnic identity and the promotion of nationalistic ideas in Iranian Azarbaijan was not the work of Akhond Zadeh, Rasul Zadeh, and Pishe Vari alone. There were other Azari political and intellectual elites who have tried to attract the attention of Iranian Azarbaijanis to notions of one Azari nation, the unity of northern and southern Azarbaijan, and the southern question. But as I discussed in Chapter Three, most Iranian Azari elites have not welcomed such ideas and preferred to consider Azarbaijan an integral part of Iran. Therefore, it was primarily the Azari elites of Russian Azarbaijan, moved to action by the rising nationalistic trends in the Middle East of the late nineteenth century, who have promoted the national question in Iranian Azarbaijan.

As a secular political ideology which replaced universal Islamic loyalty in the late Ottoman Empire, pan-Turkism had a great influence on the Azari elites of Istanbul in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Some of these elites, such as Rasul Zadeh, Hussein Zadeh, and Ahmad Aghaev, put aside the Iranian inclination of their early political life and became the proponents of Pan-Turkism and the unity of all Turkic people from Mongolia to the eastern parts of Europe. One manifestation of this secular trend was the Turkification of all aspects of life. Zenkovsky explains:

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sources, such as Avesta the Holy Book of Zoroastrians, have also named Turan as an Iranian territory.¹⁵²

Nevertheless, the Western Orientalists who promoted the idea of Pan-Turanism and their followers among the Turkish and Azari elite took Turan out of its original historical context and created out of it a concrete, political goal. Zenkovski has neatly delineated this misconception:

In their enthusiasm, Agaev, Zia Gokalp, and their fellow nationalists were not aware that their glorification of Turan as the legendary home the Turko-Mongol peoples was based on an unfortunate literary and scientific misconception. The term "Turan" had been erroneously used throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to designate the Turko-Mongol land of Central Asia. The error was to a great extent due to the phonetic similarities between the words "Turk" and "Turan." In its original meaning, as used in the Iranian epic tradition and in Firdowsi's epic poem, *Shahnameh* (The Book of Kings), the word Turan did not mean the ancient home of the Turko-Mongol peoples, but rather of the north Iranian population which occupied all Central Asia until the sixth century A.D. Consequently, the entire Pan-turkist terminology and all the attempts to represent an "ancient, glorious land of Turan" as a national symbol were the product of the misuse of an obsolete geographical term.¹⁵³

We can see such Orientalist trails in the promotion of secular nationalist ideas and the creation of ethnic identity in the Kurdish and Baluchi cases too. It was, for instance,

¹⁵²For a good discussion of this subject, see Enayatullah Reza, "Turkan, Pan-Turkism va Pan-Turanism" [The Turks, Pan-Turkism and Pan-Turanism] (text in Persian), in *Ettela'at-e Siyasi Eqtesadi*, 9-10 (June-July 1992), 9-16.

¹⁵³Zenkovski, 110.

Vladimir Minorsky, the well-known Western Orientalist,¹⁵⁴ who elaborated the thesis of the Median origins of the Kurds¹⁵⁵ and presented it in the twentieth Congress of Orientalists in Brussels in 1938.¹⁵⁶ Before the popularity of Minorsky's thesis, not even a single word could be found regarding the Median roots of the Kurds in the primary historical sources. The classic Kurdish, Persian and Arabic sources relied mainly on mythical accounts, such as the one narrated by Firdowsi in his *Shahnameh*.¹⁵⁷ The seventeenth century *Sharafnameh*, the oldest history of the Kurds, for example, traces the roots of the Kurds to the myth of Zahhak¹⁵⁸ as it is told by Firdowsi. Today, however, the Median thesis is almost unanimously accepted by Kurdish intellectuals, and by many Western scholars.

In the case of Baluch nationalism, the work of the English Orientalist and professor of ancient history at Oxford University, George Rawlinson, is noteworthy. Drawing upon some similarities between words of Baluch, Belus, and Kush, Rawlinson argued that Baluch is derived from Belus, king of Babylon, the Nimrod of Holy Writ, and that from "Kush", the

¹⁵⁴Originally, he was from Russia, but spent most his scholarly life in Western Europe.

¹⁵⁵Minorsky, "Les Origines des Kurdes," *Travaux du XX Congrès International des Orientalistes*, 1949, 143-152.

¹⁵⁶See Nikitine, *Kurd va Kurdistan*, 45-54.

¹⁵⁷See Chapter Three.

¹⁵⁸See Chapter Three on Kurdistan.

travelled to Baluchistan and wrote historical works that according to Spooner, generally "had less validity."¹

One important source on Baluchi history and society repeatedly used as a reference by Baluchi nationalist intellectuals was written by Sir Henry Pottinger. He was a British officer working for the East India Company's native army who travelled, in the interests of the English Government, through portions of Baluchistan between 1809 and 1810, and in a volume published in 1816² provided a considerable amount of valuable information.³ This work, like Curzon's, has been used extensively by Baluchi nationalists in Pakistan.⁴

Western Orientalism's contribution to the development of nationalism among the Kurds, Turks, and Baluchis is not restricted to the realm of historiography. On the subject of language -- the most basic feature of Kurdish, Azari, and Baluchi identity -- Western Orientalists played an even more important role in all three cases. The first efforts for reviving the Kurdish, Turkish and Baluchi language were made not by native intellectuals, but by Western scholars. It was, for example, in the early nineteenth century that the first

¹Brian Spooner, "Who are the Baluch," 105.

²Henry Pottinger, *Travels in Beloochistan and Sinde*, (London: Astrahan, 1816).

³These information is taken from Hughes, 56-57.

⁴It was published, for instance, by Indus Publication in Karachi in 1976.

father of Nimrod, comes the name of the Kalati eastern district, 'Kachh'.¹⁵⁹ His arguments¹⁶⁰ have inspired many Baluchi intellectuals and historians such as Muhammad Sardar Khan, Inayatullah Baloch and Hosseinbor, who have used such findings as a proof of a Baluchi political legacy. Given the fact that few classic historical works on Baluchi history have been written by native Baluchs, the historiographies written by Orientalists such as Rawlinson, Lord Curzon¹⁶¹, Dames¹⁶² and Hughes¹⁶³ have become the main references for the Baluchi nationalist intellectuals and political elites. Inayatullah Baloch, for instance, emphasises that the information which Lord Curzon has provided on Baluchistan is a key source of Baluchi nationalism.¹⁶⁴

Yet as we have mentioned, Orientalists such as Curzon, Dames and Hughes penned their works on Baluchistan when the region was of important strategic value for British colonial authorities in India. It was at this time in the mid-nineteenth century that dozens of British scholars and spies

¹⁵⁹ Hughes, *The Country of Baluchistan*, 26.

¹⁶⁰ See George Rawlinson, *The Five Great Monarchies of Ancient Eastern World*, (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co, 1870).

¹⁶¹ George N. Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, (London: Longman, 1892).

¹⁶² M. Longworth Dames, *The Baloch Race: A Historical and Ethnological Sketch*, (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1904).

¹⁶³ Hughes, *The Country of Balochistan: Its Geography, Topography, Ethnography and History*.

¹⁶⁴ Baloch, *The Problem of Greater Baluchistan*, 23.

grammar of the Turkish language in English and French was written and published by Arthur Lumley David.⁵

As Hostler points out, the grammars of Turkish language generally contained a map of Turkish peoples in Anatolia, Russia, the Balkans, and the Near East, as well as descriptions of their language affinities and dialects, and these tended to stimulate the idea of Turkish unity.⁶ It is interesting that the idea of the purification of the Turkish language was suggested by the Polish Orientalist Konstanty Borzecki (1826-1876) who became a political emigrant in the Ottoman Empire, and under the assumed name of Mustapha Djelalettin Pasha, became a Turkish general⁷ and writer. It was he who, for the first time, wrote letters in Turkish using Latin instead of Arabic script,⁸ a style that was officially adopted in Kemal Ataturk's Turkey after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the early 1920s.

The role of the Western Orientalists in the promotion of the Kurdish language is also noteworthy. As mentioned in

⁵Arthur Lumley David, *A Grammar of Turkish Language*, (London, 1832).

⁶Hostler, *The Turks of Central Asia*, 112.

⁷According to Hostler, 112, Borzecky played an important role in the awakening of Turkish pan-nationalism. He wrote a book in 1869, *Les Turcs Anciens et Modernes*, which maintained that the source of modern civilization are to be found in the Turkish past and that the influence of the Turks on the development of European languages and history is valuable.

⁸*Ibid.*

Chapter Three, Kurdish was not, with few exceptions, a written language up to the mid-1920s. Kurdish elites used to write either in Arabic or in Persian (*Farsi*). It was only in the aftermath of World War I that Kurdish intellectuals organized literary circles in Syria, Iraq, the Soviet Union, and Egypt to promote the Kurdish as a written language.⁹ About a century and a half earlier, however, the Western, and in particular Russian Orientalists, had begun their writings and research on the Kurdish language. The first Kurdish grammar, for instance, was published in the Italian language by Maurizio Garzoni in Rome in 1787.¹⁰

It was also the Russian Orientalist Veliaminov Zermov who in Moscow in the 1850s, published for the first time since the mid-sixteenth century the original Persian version of *Sharafnameh*, the oldest and the only history of the Kurds. Another Russian Orientalist, F. Charmoy, translated the book into French between 1768 and 1875, publishing it in four volumes.¹¹ A major contribution in the promotion of Kurdish language was made by Russian Orientalist A. Jaba, who served as the Russian Chief Consul in the Ottoman city of Arz Rum

⁹For a detailed discussion on this issue, see Nikitine, 584-602.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 602.

¹¹According to Nikitine, 603, Zermov found this copy among the Safavid Library collection of books. The books of this famous library were confiscated by the Russians during the Irano-Russian Wars, when Ardabil, a major city in Iranian Azarbaijan was occupied by the Russian army in 1828.

from 1848 to 1866. It was there that he invited some educated Kurds and provided a collected work of the Kurdish classic poets. Among other works on the Kurdish language, Jaba wrote a Kurdish-French dictionary, and a voluminous Kurdish-French-Russian dictionary.

To compete with the Russian influence, German Orientalists such as Oskar Mann spent all their time in Iran and the Ottoman Empire studying the language and literature among the Kurds.¹² An important contribution to the study of the Kurdish language was made by British Orientalist E.B. Soane,¹³ who wrote the first Kurdish grammar in English in 1913. His writings on the Kurdish language¹⁴ are used extensively by Kurdish nationalists who argue for the purity of Kurdish as an Aryan (Iranian) language and its independence

¹²For more information see Nikitine, 603-606.

¹³Major Ely Bannister Soane was a British officer who worked for British colonial rule in India. He was sent to Suleymanieh, the centre of Kurdish nationalism after World War I. See Hassan Arfa, *The Kurds*, 113-114. Soane wrote several books about the Kurds, their history and their language, including: Soane, E.B., *Through Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in Disguise*, (London: John Murray, 1912). Mo'meni, an Iranian intellectual Kurd who was killed by the Shah regime, has written that "Soane was an English spy who came to Kurdistan as an Afghani and studied Sufism under a Sufi scholar. Later he disappeared, but returned to Kurdistan as a British officer." See Hamid Mo'meni, (M. Bidsorkhi), *Dar Bareh-e Mobarezat-e Kurdistan*, 30.

¹⁴See for instance, his *Report on Sulaimania Province*, (Calcutta, 1918).

from Persian.¹⁵ Similarly, the Baluchi language has been mostly an oral or spoken language. Educated Baluchis and their poets typically used Persian¹⁶ as a written and literary language up to the early decades of the twentieth century.¹⁷ Even in distant regions such as Swat in the northeastern parts of present-day Pakistan, Persian was used officially until the foundation of that state. As the last Wali of Swat has stated, the use of the Baluchi language as a political question began after 1947, when Baluchis reacted to the Pakistani state selection of Urdu as an official language.¹⁸ The literary heritage of Baluch had sporadically been recorded in what is called *Daptar Sh'ar*. The Baluchi intellectuals, thus, had not paid attention to the question of language until the middle of the current century. The first systematic studies on Baluchi language were undertaken by Western Orientalists who were usually working for British colonial rule in India. This was

¹⁵See Mustafa Al Karadghi, "Origins of the Kurdish Language," in *Kurdistan Times*, 1, no. 2 (Summer 1992), 98-99.

¹⁶For Baluchi poets who have made poetry in Persian, see Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch, *History of Baluch Race and Baluchistan*, 197-213; see also Afshar Sistani, *Baluchistan*, 349-356.

¹⁷A.M. Oranski, *Moghaddamey-e Figh-ol-Loghah-e Irani* [Introduction to Iranian philology] (text in Persian), Trans. Karim Keshavarz, (Tehran: Payam, 1979), 315.

¹⁸Miangul Jahanzeb, *The Last Wali of Swat: An Autobiography as Told to Frederick Barth*, (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1985), 51, 114.

primarily in the nineteenth century when the British had focused their attention on Baluchistan in order to prevent any possible Russian penetration. As Baluchi nationalist Hosseinbor points out:

Baluchi language survived and preserved its peculiarities in oral or spoken form until the nineteenth century, when British colonial officers and scholars began for the first time to write its grammar, compile a dictionary and collect its oral literature and folklore. The works of E. Mokler, Longworth Dames, Major J.W. Gilberston, E. Pierce, R. Leech and others constitute the first systematic study of the Baluchi language and literature. Prior to that, only some of the elites kept books, known as *Daptar*, in which they recorded their favourite ballads in Persian script.¹⁹

As the three cases of this study have shown, the nineteenth century was a time when Western Orientalism began to promote the ideas of secular nationalism in the Middle East through the study of its peoples historiography, languages and cultures. The works of the Orientalists laid the first foundations of distinct national identity for these peoples, for it was through the study of such writings that the educated elites of the twentieth century, who had already been influenced by the nationalistic ideas of the international universe of political discourse, became aware that they belonged to a group of people who had a distinct national identity and deserved to enjoy their own national rights either in an independent state or an autonomous region within a federal state.

¹⁹Hosseinbor, *Iran and Its Nationalities*, 54.

The Western Orientalists, were not undertaking such studies out of scholarly interest *per se*. Their studies were mostly policy-relevant and were funded by one of the great European powers involved in imperialist rivalries in the Middle East. In order to deal with Turks, Persians, Arabs, Kurds, Armenians, Baluch and Pashtuns and to gain their support, Britain, Russia, France, and Germany needed to understand the language and culture of these people. European powers benefited from the promotion of the national consciousness of Middle Eastern peoples so long as these nationalistic tendencies could be used to weaken the power of their rivals. It was for just such a reason -- specifically, the desire to weaken Russian influence -- that the British were deeply involved in the promotion of nationalistic ideas among the Turks in the Ottoman Empire, Caucasia and Central Asia. For their part, the Russians were attempting the same sort of manipulations with respect to the Kurds in order to weaken the Ottomans and British.

While the early Orientalists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries focused their historical and cultural research on minority groups, a modern notion of Western Orientalism emerged after World War II. The emphasis of this modern Orientalism was mostly on theoretical and conceptual studies in the Orient. The non-Western societies were considered appropriate cases for the application of the concepts and theories elaborated by modern social scientists

out of Western experiences. The Third World became a laboratory for the study of such socio-political concepts as modernization, development, political culture, tribalism, and ethnicity.

While the older generation of Orientalists were mainly European, the new generations of social scientists studying the Middle East were largely American. As Edward Said points out, "from the beginning of the nineteenth century until the end of World War II, France and Britain dominated the Orient and Orientalism; since World War II, America has dominated the Orient, and approaches it as France and Britain once did."²⁰ As the dominant superpower after World War II, the U.S. government was in real need of an understanding of different peoples in Third World societies, and the need became critical with the deepening of the Cold War between the two ideological blocs. To provide the required information, the U.S. government devoted good budgets for social studies in the developing societies.

The most important impact of these later Orientalist works has been the promotion of national consciousness or group identities among the members of minority groups. The fact is that the works of anthropologists and sociologists such as Lois Beck (on the Qashqais of Iran), Frederick Barth and Martin Van Bruinessen (on Kurds), Gene R. Garthwaite (on Bakhtiয়ারis), Richard Tapper (on Shahsevan), Brian Spooner,

²⁰Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 4.

Philip Salzman, and Selig Harrison (on Baluch) were often the first texts available on their respective Iranian tribal or ethnic groups. With the grants received from educational or government-related institutions, these theorists spent large parts of their life among the Kurds, Azaris, Baluch, Qashqais or Bakhtiaryis, receiving the hospitality of the tribal chiefs, and in many cases the host governments, as they collected the information they needed to empirically test their conceptual and theoretical frameworks.

I do not claim that all of this group of Orientalists or all social scientists working on issues such as ethnicity and tribalism since World War II were directly connected to or paid by Western governments. The fact is, however, that the results of the works undertaken by even the most independent and critical scholars have been in one way or another used by Western policy-makers dealing with developing societies. Still, it may be that the greatest impact of the studies was in the Middle East itself, for it was chiefly through the works of these scholars that many educated members of minority groups became politically conscious of the group they belong to.

It is noteworthy that studies with more political content have usually had both effects delineated above, namely, policy relevancy and the promotion of ethnic identity among the members of the group under study. This is especially the case of the works dealing with ethnic nationalism. One such

example was *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, the authoritative work of Selig Harrison on Baluchi nationalism. As the publishers point out in the introduction, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the threat of a superpower conflict in the region necessitated a better knowledge of the Baluchi question. It was thought in the West that the conflict would escalate if the Soviets could penetrate Baluchistan and manipulate Baluchi nationalism in order to establish an independent pro-Soviet Greater Baluchistan. Baluchistan, thus could become "the focal point of a superpower confrontation...since it is the 'Baluchi Card' that Moscow would likely play in retaliation for U.S. assistance to the Afghan resistance or for expanding U.S. military links with Pakistan."²¹ Such a possibility would consolidate the Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean, Persian Gulf, and the Sea of Oman, thus bringing the two superpowers into a real military conflict. Given this, the international academic community resolved to do its best to prevent such a confrontation. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace selected Harrison -- a well-known experienced journalist and an expert on Baluchistan -- to do research on the Baluchi question. Harrison's work, as he himself confirms, has a "deliberately Baluchi-centred"²² view, relating the story mostly from the point of view of the Baluchi nationalist

²¹Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, viii.

²²*Ibid.*, 4.

elites. The main finding of the book is that the U.S. government should pressure the Pakistani and Iranian governments to apply more liberal policies toward Baluchistan in order to prevent any possibilities of further Soviet manipulation of Baluchi nationalism -- "in the absence of a greater readiness for compromise on the part of Islamabad and Tehran," the book suggests, "the likelihood of Soviet manipulation of Baluchi nationalism will increase."²³ However, to convey such a message and to convince the U.S. government of the danger, it seems that Harrison exaggerated the case of Baluchi nationalism in general. Reading the book, one gets the impression that the Baluchi national movements in Pakistan and Iran are real threats to the stability of the region. In short, the book reflected the political mood in the U.S. at the time --i.e., the Carter Doctrine.

The more important fact about the book is its effect on Baluchi intellectuals and political elites and its role in promoting Baluchi nationalism.²⁴ This impact was especially pronounced in the case of Iranian Baluchistan, where the Baluchi problem had not been as critical an issue as in Kurdistan and Azarbaijan. It was this book that mostly

²³*Ibid.*, viii.

²⁴One example is the case of *Dad Shah*. By reflecting merely the views of Baluchi nationalists, especially in Pakistan, Harrison has promoted Dad Shah to the level of a Baluchi national hero and martyr in Iran, while such a picture hardly matches the life of Dad Shah. See my discussion of the subject in the last chapter.

inspired the Iranian Baluchi student Muhammad Hassan Hosseinbor to work with Harrison at American University and to write his doctoral dissertation on Baluchi nationalism in Iran. It is interesting that despite his Baluchi background, Hosseinbor chose to rely primarily on the information that Harrison had presented in his book on Iranian Baluchi political movements.

As for the study of ethnicity, tribe, state, national and ethnic identity in Third World societies, the works of many social scientists reflect the strong influence of the European experience and Western socio-political thought. Identity has a predominantly ethnic colour, as has been the basic pattern in the West since the advent of the French Revolution. Similarly, nation is equated with an ethnic group sharing a common language, and the nation-state is a political entity formed around a single ethnic group. Yet, as we have seen, such a definition for nation, state and nationality is inappropriate for many contemporary countries, and in particular for many Middle Eastern countries that cannot claim any such ethnic homogeneity.

For social scientists who share such a view, most current domestic and international conflicts have their roots in ethnic problems. In their view, most of these so-called ethnic groups which live in the present 'multi-national' states struggle in one way or another for their independence. According to them, many Middle Eastern societies have such

characteristics, namely they are composed of different ethnic groups who struggle for their independence or autonomy. The problem is that such a dominant view does not make any distinction between tribes and ethnic groups. They are almost considered the same and equal. In fact, as Bassam Tibi points out, "social scientists seem to have replaced the concept of tribe with the concept of ethnies. The Middle Eastern context does not support the equation of tribes and ethnies, that is, ethnic communities."²⁵

As I discussed in Chapter One, tribes, like ethnic groups, are mainly considered kinship-based and culturally homogenous groups. By having such a definition of tribe, social scientists problematically equate the tribe to a state, which they define, in contrast to tribe, as a heterogenous entity.²⁶ Tribes and states with such structures have been in continuous conflict. As I discussed in detail in Chapter Two, such conceptualization of tribal groups and their relations with the state present serious problems and cannot explain the characteristics of tribes and their relations with states in the Middle East in general, and in Iran in particular. Such continuous conflictual relations did not exist between the decentralized states and tribal groups. The mutually

²⁵Bassam Tibi, "The Simultaneity of Unsimultaneous: Old Tribes and Imposed Nation-States in the Modern Middle East," 131.

²⁶See Christensen, "Tribes, States and Anthropologists." 290.

exclusive relations between the two was basically a twentieth century phenomenon, and a consequence of the emergence of the modern state.

These are some problems which we can see in the work of the modern generation of Orientalists, among whom we can identify many Oriental social scientists. The modern Orientalists suffer a lack of historical insight as long as they do not consider the historical specificities of societies such as Iran. By mainly focusing on the contemporary conflictual relations between the state and the former tribal groups, or as they call them, ethnic groups, they disregard the nature of such groups and their relationship with the traditional states before the rise of the modern bureaucratic state. Many tribal or ethnic groups are presented as socio-political entities in permanent conflict with the state for independence in the past and the present.

This pattern of presenting ethnic groups as isolated, homogenous and independent entities suggests a distinct cultural and political identity for them. It is interesting that the members of such groups, even educated elites among them, may not represent themselves in such a way and have no awareness of such distinct identities. It is as if, as Karl Marx put it, "they cannot represent themselves, they must be represented."²⁷

²⁷Quoted in Edward Said, *Orientalism*, i.

It is primarily through the reading of such Orientalist works that the educated ethnic or tribal elite become aware of their history, and of their so-called national struggles against rival, dominant ethnic groups controlling the state apparatus. The message which these modern Orientalist works convey is certainly a nationalistic one, and the model they explicitly or implicitly suggest for solving the problem of ethnicity and "ethnic conflicts" is based on what the West has experienced and chosen in the past -- namely, either federalism or the creation of independent nation-states.

Conclusion

The study of Turkish, Kurdish, and Baluchi nationalism indicates the strong influence of international factors on the politicization of ethnic ties such as language, culture and religion. While the international politics, either regional or extra-regional, had a decisive role in forming political organizations or encouraging ethnic elites in this direction, the fermentation of ethnic identity and nationalistic tendencies has been more a matter of ideas than direct political involvement. It was mainly under the effects of the dominant nationalistic international universe of political discourse in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that intellectual and political elites of religio-linguistic groups became attracted to the idea of secular nationalism.

Western Orientalism played an indispensable role in the

creation of such political discourse. Through their historiographical and linguistic studies, the Western Orientalists created national histories and distinct cultural identities for these groups. These Orientalists, however, were not conducting their research independent of the strategic interests of the Western powers. It is in fact in such a situation that Michel Foucault's argument on "the relation between power and knowledge" makes sense. Colonial powers were supporting Orientalists and used their scholarly talents in order to have a better knowledge of the peoples they dominated -- thus, Orientalist studies were an instrument of domination. Lord Curzon, the well-known British Orientalist, outlined this relationship between Orientalist studies and the West's strategic interests when he told the House of Lords that:

Our familiarity, not merely with the language of people of the East but with their customs, their feelings, their traditions, their history and religion, our capacity to understand what may be called the genius of the East, is the sole basis upon which we are likely to be able to maintain in the future the position we have won.²⁸

Scholarly knowledge from the Orient and its peoples, thus, was at the service of rival colonial and imperialistic powers. Such a mutual relationship continued in a more delicate manner after World War II, particularly in the United States, where many modern social scientists were doing their

²⁸Cited in Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 214.

sociological, anthropological and political works with new conceptual and theoretical frameworks.

As far as the question of ethnic groups and ethnicity is concerned, such concepts and frameworks accommodated strong nationalistic themes. Ethnic groups are equated with national entities with distinct and homogenous socio-cultural structures. The problem with this definition of ethnic groups becomes apparent when it is applied to tribal groups in societies like Iran, where heterogenous and diverse tribes are presented as homogenous ethnic, and thus national groups. It is partly through these intellectual constructions that former tribal groups are given national identities distinct from the identity of their neighbouring peoples. These scholarly products of Western Orientalism's industry have had significant influences on native intellectuals and political elites and have inspired them to become involved in more intellectual constructions to complete the myths of ethnic and racial origins, thus providing the required legitimacy for their political struggle over power and status.

Concluding Remarks

This thesis was an effort to explain the emergence of nationalistic tendencies among the three main Iranian minority groups. In this theory-oriented work, I elaborated a theoretical framework out of the historical specificities of the Iranian context. As the application of the theoretical framework to the Kurdish, Azari and Baluchi cases indicated, the scope, intensity, and the continuity of nationalist political movements depend on the presence of all or each of the three variables discussed in this thesis: the state, elites, and international forces.

The confrontation between the modern Pahlavi state and powerful autonomous tribal chiefs was more evident in Kurdistan and Baluchistan than in Azarbaijan. Since Azarbaijan was economically and socially much more developed than the other two regions, and at the same time had close religious ties with the Shi'ite Persians, Azari tribal groups did not present a serious challenge to the state's power. Moreover, tribal groups in Azarbaijan had traditionally been the supporters, and in the case of the Safavids and Qajars, the founders of powerful Iranian dynasties. The detribalization of Azarbaijan by Reza Shah thus did not have a significant role in the rise of the separatist/autonomist movement in Azarbaijan. In contrast, in both Kurdistan and Baluchistan, the confrontation between tribal elites and the

modern state left a political legacy that profoundly affected events in the post-Reza Shah period. As I discussed in Chapter Six, tribal elites and their descendants played a vital role in the rise of the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad and Baluchi political organizations after the 1950s.

Compared with Kurdistan and Baluchistan, non-tribal Azari intellectual and political elites played a more active role in elaborating a Turkish ethnic identity and establishing nationalist political organizations. Such a role was less evident in Baluchistan where no Baluchi intellectual and modern educated elite emerged to elaborate a Baluchi ethnic identity. That is why Baluchistan did not witness the emergence of autonomist or separatist political organizations after the collapse of Reza Shah in the 1940s. By comparison, the role of such elites was pronounced in Kurdish and Azari political movements in the post-Reza Shah period.

The case was different regarding the role of non-ethnic elites. These mostly leftist Persian elites played active roles in Kurdish and Baluchi political movements. This was especially evident in post-revolutionary Iran when these groups established bases in both regions. The emergence of autonomist political organizations in Baluchistan in post-revolutionary Iran was in many respects the result of the contribution of non-Baluchi political elites who were looking to gain the Baluchis' support in their struggle against the Islamic central state.

International intervention has been the only factor to play a significant role in all three cases. Nevertheless, the intensity and the scope of such intervention was of a much higher degree in Kurdistan and Azarbaijan. In both cases, the Soviet intervention played the main role in the emergence of the Azarbaijan Democratic Republic and the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad in the 1940s. International factors in Baluchistan remained at the level of a regional intervention. However, it was as a result of this regional interference that Baluchi organizations such as the BLF and some political groups of post-revolutionary Iran could become active elements in Baluchi politics.

The case of Azarbaijan best demonstrates the remarkably important role of international forces in the rise of ethnic nationalist movements. As I noted earlier, while tribal elites did not have any political role in Azari politics, Azarbaijan witnessed the rise of Azarbaijan Democratic Republic, the most powerful autonomist/separatist political movement in Iran. Nevertheless, Azarbaijan was not the scene of any real nationalist movement after 1957. The way to explain this is to admit the vital role of international forces in Azari political life.

The continuity of ethnic nationalism depends on the presence of all three forces. This is why the Kurdish autonomist movement has been a relatively continuous phenomenon and more intensive than Baluchi and Azari

activities. Moreover, the confrontation between the modern Iranian state and the Kurdish tribal elites was more intense than in the other two cases. In the long term, however, the Kurdish tribal and non-tribal modern educated elites have been more active than the Azari and Baluchi elites. Kurdistan has also been the most important military and political base for non-Kurdish Iranian leftist organizations. Kurdish nationalism has been continuously supported and encouraged by international forces, both Great Powers and regional states. The combination of all these factors can be found only in the case of Kurdistan, and this explains why the Kurdish question has been a continuous problem in Iran.

International factors have had a more important role in the formation of ethnic nationalist movements in Iran. While the important roles of the modern state and elites should not be underestimated, historically it has been international intervention which has transformed ethnic nationalism into an active political force. This fact supports the argument of some students of International Relations and conflict, who stress that power politics of the present international system are the main cause of ethnic conflicts in our world.

Besides comparing the intensity, scope and the continuity of the nationalist movements in the Kurdish, Azari, and Baluchi cases, the application of this theoretical framework brought about important findings that generally support my arguments regarding the question of ethnicity, ethnic groups,

tribes, and ethnic nationalism in Iran.

As I argued in Chapter One, ethnicity and ethnic groups had a specific meaning when they were invented to study different linguistic, racial, and religious minority groups in the West. Groups with these characteristics did not exist in Iran, and for this reason I have tried to avoid using the concepts of "ethnicity" and "ethnic groups" with the same formulations that have been used in the study of Western societies, or in the study of Iranian and Middle Eastern societies by some Western or theoretically-Westernized non-Western social scientists who lack necessary historical insights regarding Iran. Applying a similar approach less than a decade ago, Richard Tapper rejected universal application of concepts produced from the Western experience:

I have tried to avoid using terms 'ethnic group' and 'ethnicity' when discussing specific discourses of identity in Iran and Afghanistan....because these terms are not necessary, but serve rather to obscure than to illuminate the cultural complexity we are concerned to describe and interpret....Ethnic group, a term brought in from western sociological discourse, is a poor translation of indigenous categories in Iran, Afghanistan and elsewhere, and hinders the analysis of their subtleties and ambiguities.¹

The fact is that Iran has not known ethnic groups as distinct racial or culturally homogenous entities. Rather, important sections of Iranian society, especially in the

¹Richard Tapper, "Ethnicity, Order and Meaning in the Anthropology of Iran and Afghanistan," 31.

border areas of the west and southeast, were composed mainly of different tribal groups until the early twentieth century.

Such tribal confederacies were more socio-political entities than the kinship-based societies reflected in Western approaches to tribe and tribalism. Therefore, linguistic or religious groups such as the Kurds, Azaris, and Baluchis were mainly composed of numerous tribal confederacies and smaller tribal groups. The relations between these groups were not always peaceful. On the contrary, they used to form political alliances with the state and non-Kurdish, non-Azari, and non-Baluchi tribal groups against their co-linguistic or co-religious tribes.

The long term and continuous influence of Islam and Iranian culture on these groups have made the existence of any clear-cut cultural boundaries between them obsolete. In such a context, therefore, ethnopolitics and ethnic nationalism become modern phenomena and, according to Eric Hobsbawm, "invented traditions." Presenting Iranian tribal and non-tribal linguistic and religious groups as culturally homogeneous and politically united societies does not accommodate the historical realities of Iran. Groups with such characteristics are, according to Benedict Anderson, "imagined societies", manipulated and invented by intellectual and political elites.

Even though there existed primordial ties such as language and religion, they were not important political

instruments for creating distinct ethnic identities in Iran, and consequently there were fewer biases and political sensitivities toward cultural penetration from outside. The extensive influence of Persian literature is one of the best examples in this regard. As I discussed in Chapters Three and Six, the growth and the popularity of Persian literature was partly the result of the great contributions of originally non-Persian speaking groups. Indeed, the Kurds, Azaris, and Baluchis all used the Persian language in their literary heritage.

Increased defensiveness on the subject of language, or put another way, the politicization of primordial ties, was the result of the Westernization of Iran in areas of politics, education and thought. This Western influence in the twentieth century expressed itself in the rise of the modern bureaucratic state, the ideology of secular nationalism or self-determination, and finally the political intervention of Western Orientalists and great powers in the formation of ethnic identities and nationalist movements.

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