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Title: The Republic of Kurdistan, 1946
Issue Date: 2012-03-13

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

1 Introduction

The twentieth century witnessed many Kurdish uprisings. Several of them succeeded in creating self-governing Kurdish areas for varying lengths of time. Three of these Kurdish governments took place in Iraqi Kurdistan: the Kurdish government, led by Sheikh Mahmud, in Suleymaniye in 1920s; the period of Kurdish autonomy from 1970 to 1975, led by Mulla Mustafa Barzani; and the period of autonomy that began in 1991 and continues now, which is led by the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iraq (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). The Kurdish movement that led to a Kurdish government was the Republic of Kurdistan of 1946, which took place in Iranian Kurdistan and constitutes the subject of this dissertation.

When the Allied Powers (Great Britain and the Soviet Union) entered Iran in August 1941, the relations between the central government and its peripheries broke down. At the centre, the shah was overthrown and the parliament became the most important governmental organization representing the Iranian people. In the peripheral province of Azerbaijan, Azeri politicians and intellectuals were gradually heading for the formation of an autonomous government, which became a reality in 1945. Kurdish inhabitants in West Azerbaijan also followed the example of their neighbouring ethnic group to build their own autonomous region. The distinct political movements of these two different ethnic groups not only challenged the centre to make serious attempts to ensure territorial integrity and sovereignty of Iran, but also exacerbated the tensions existing between the peripheral movements. An analysis of the tense relationships between the centre and both peripheries as well as the relations between these peripheries, that is between Azerbaijan and the Mahabad centred Republic of Kurdistan, is an important part of this study. The main goal of this dissertation is the description of the northern Iranian Kurdish political movements, which very shortly after the Second World War, between 1945 and 1946, established two political institutions, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)¹ and consequently ‘the Republic of Kurdistan’.²

¹ In 1973, the word ‘Iran’ was added to the name, transforming it to the KDPI.

² Although the use of the term ‘Republic’ by the Kurdish leaders to define their government raises questions as to the aptness of the term as well as their understanding of it, the commonly accepted name of the political entity

The Iranian Pahlavi dynasty was established by Reza Shah in 1925 and lasted until 1979. In 1941, he left his kingdom to his son, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi. During his reign until his forced abdication in 1941, he established a central government and brought all provinces under a more strict central control. Reza Shah's dream was to build a modern nation-state that, according to him, would be possible via modernization. One of his main policy goals was the transformation of the traditional Iranian society into a modern society. His policies included: modernizing the education system, establishing the University of Tehran, sending Iranian students to Europe, initiating a process of industrialization, and implementing a policy of forced migration and sedentarization of the nomads and tribes. Between the two world wars, the autocratic regime of Reza Shah pursued a hard-line assimilation policy towards non-Persian ethnicities including Kurds. Publishing and teaching in the Kurdish language were strictly forbidden. These modernization policies were not based on democratic principles. On the contrary, they were accomplished by suppressing the majority of the Iranian populace.

From 1941 to 1946, although there was an Iranian central government in place, the Allies were the de-facto rulers. This period was marked by a multi-party system, return of some elites and tribal leaders from exile and parliamentary elections. It was also a period, particularly during 1945 and 1946, of crisis (referred to by many authors as the 'Iranian Crisis'). A multitude of political problems contributed to the Iranian crisis between 1945 and 1946. Of these, the nation's sovereignty, geographical integrity, the Cold War, and the occupation of the country in 1941 by the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom were the most important. The Iranian government was deeply dependent on the Allied Powers, so far as its political, economic, and military wellbeing was concerned. Many tribes, particularly in the north and northwest of the country, independently managed affairs in their territories – in fact many of the significant leaders of the Republic of Kurdistan were also the leaders of such tribes. After 1941, the desire of some ethnic groups (Azeris and Kurds) to retain control of their territories was bolstered.

Between 1942 and 1945 Iranian Kurds formed two political parties, a development which has been cited as the beginning of a new era of political history in Iranian Kurdistan. *Komalay Jiyanyway Kurdistan* (The Society for the Revival of Kurdistan) or *Jiyani Kurdistan* (Kurdistan Life), commonly referred to as the JK Party, was proclaimed in 1942 as a

that was established in Iranian Kurdistan between January-December 1946 is in fact the Republic of Kurdistan. Thus shall it be used in this thesis, as it is in the official documents of the concerned political entity itself.

nationalist Kurdish political party. The urban Middle Class played a considerable role in the JK party and its political activities continued until 1945 when the majority of the JK politburo accepted the KDP as its new political party. The formation of the KDP in the second half of 1945 was nearly synchronous with one of the key events in the modern history of Iran, namely those centering on events in Azerbaijan. The Azerbaijan Democratic Party (ADP), which was founded in September 1945, was proclaimed the Autonomous Government of Azerbaijan in December 1945. The central government of Iran saw this event in the periphery as a great threat to national sovereignty. This was also a significant event for the Great Powers in their ongoing competition for political and economic advantage. It could also be argued that the establishment of the Autonomous Government of Azerbaijan was one of the central causes of the proclamation of the Republic of Kurdistan. Throughout this thesis, this argument will be explored in greater detail.

The establishment of the Republic of Kurdistan was an essential inspiration of the nationalist Kurds in Iran who had, for the first time, the support of a superpower, the Soviet Union. However that support that was patchy and unreliable, as shall be more clearly explained in the later parts of this thesis. Despite the brevity of the Republic, it enabled a remarkable outpouring in Kurdish Letters. Indeed, this was the golden age of the revival of the Kurdish language and its literature.³ Several Kurdish journals and newspapers were published and Kurdish became the language of education. Although the Republic tried to build formal governmental institutions to legitimize its status as a nation state, it retained in the end a more tribal character. Religious figures, landlords and particularly chieftains were the significant components of policy-making in the Republic of Kurdistan. It was a society that still respected the tribal affiliations, kinships, family ties and religious brotherhoods.

Events in the northern peripheries were largely propelled by the Great Powers' policies in Iran, especially those of the Soviet Union. The presence of the Great Powers in Iran changed the political atmosphere in the country. In August 1941, Reza Shah was deposed by the Great Powers and Iran was divided into three zones: Soviet troops were in the north, British in the south and Tehran and some adjacent central regions remained unoccupied. The Allied Forces had created a buffer-zone in Iranian Kurdistan, which was accordingly divided into three zones. 1- Northern Kurdistan to Ushnawiyeh and Miyanduab was under the sphere of Soviet troops, 2- Southern Kurdistan up to Sanandaj went under the control of the Britain,

³ Joyce Blau, 'The Kurdish Language and Literature' (February 2010):

<http://www.institutkurde.org/en/language/>

and 3- a Kurdish-held territory from Mahabad to Saqqiz was a buffer-zone located between the two super powers. The presence of a small Iranian army force during the Second World War ended when these Iranian military units were removed by the Kurds. This region became the centre of Kurdish political activity, which gave way to the establishment of the Republic of Kurdistan in 1946.

The Allied Forces had promised not to intervene in Iranian internal affairs and to withdrawl their troops at the end of the war. Non-intervention was, however, according to Homa Katouzian, a myth due to the indirect and questionable intereference that took place in practice.⁴ First, there was the extensive use of Iranian resources, ranging from foodstuff and raw materials to roads, railways and telecommunications networks, especially during the Battle of Stalingrad, which lasted from August 1942 until February 1943. Secondly, there were the practices based on the ‘conflict of interests’ of the Great Powers, which intensified further when the United States (US) became the third power in Iran after 1945. The presence of Allies in Iran not only thrust Iran onto the international stage and caused a major transformation in the country’s external relations, but also opened the way for profound internal changes. The British policy was not linked to any Iranian political parties or movements but it was oriented towards supporting certain individuals and the central government. The Anglo-American policy was simply supporting the Iranian central government. Soviet policy, on the other hand, was different. The Soviets aimed to achieve their political and economic goals by helping ethnic groups fight the central government. The concept of the ‘right of nations to self-determination’ came to guide the Soviet foreign policy and led to the apparent ethnic groups rallying around the slogan ‘liberty for the Kurds and the Azeris from the oppression of the Persians’.

These two different approaches caused a diplomatic crisis between the Soviets and the British, which only worsened when the US began to exert its influence on the Middle East in general and on Iran in particular. In fact, the confrontation between the US and the Soviets during the Iranian crisis of 1945-1946 played an important part in the origins of the Cold War in the Middle East. All of the Western occupiers were preoccupied with their own interests in the region and sought to influence particular ethnic groups, parties and individuals. This resulted in exacerbating the problems in Iranian politics, with the Iranian people being split among pro-British, pro-American, and pro-Soviet factions. This political polarization not only

⁴ Homa Katouzian, *The Political Economy of Modern Iran: Despotism and Pseudo-Modernism, 1926-1979* (London: Macmillan Press, 1981), 141-2.

plunged Iran into a crisis, but, as stated above, was also an important factor in the origins of the Cold War. The Cold War was a protracted global political, economic, and ideological confrontation between the US and its allies vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and its allies. An important part of this dissertation is the analysis of events surrounding the Iranian crisis of 1946 within the international relations framework that clarifies the influence of external factors on the nascent Republic of Kurdistan.

2 Kurds: An overview

This section introduces the Kurds, the target group of this thesis, on the basis of geographic, population, linguistic and religious characteristics.

2.1. Geography

The Kurds are one of oldest communities to have continuously inhabited Mesopotamia and the largely mountainous region of the Near East and the northern boundaries of the Middle East.⁵ According to Elphinston the word Kurd in modern form appears in Arabic sources in the ninth century, in the plural form *Akrad*.⁶ The term ‘Kurdistan’, as a geographical term, was for the first time introduced in the fourteenth century by the Saljuqs Empire.⁷ McDowall, however, claims that the word Kurdistan was introduced in the twelfth century by the Saljuqs.⁸ Given the fact that the Saljuqs reigned between 1037-1157, the twelfth century seems to be the period when that imperial people would have introduced the term Kurdistan.

The central part of the Kurdish territory is situated among three mountain systems: the Armenian extension of Taurus on the north, Inner Taurus and Zagros. Zagros stretches from Ararat to the southern point of Khanagin on a northwest – southeast axis.⁹ Before 1937, Iran was traditionally divided into four large *ayalat* (provinces) and *velayat* (districts).¹⁰ Today Iran has twenty-four *ostan* (provinces). One of these provinces is Kordestan, with Sanandaj as its capital. A substantial portion of the waters in the Middle East have their origins in Kurdistan. Headwaters of Euphrates, Tigris, Khabur, Great and Small Zab, Diyala, Alwand, Aras, Safid-Rud, Kerkhan and Dizful, among others, are all located in the mountains of Kurdistan and they flow through Kurdish lands extensively before heading towards neighbouring territories.

Kurds are the biggest ethnic group in the Middle East without a sovereign state of their own. Because the borders of Kurdistan are not officially recognized by either the countries in which parts of Kurdistan are situated or by other relevant international bodies, it is difficult to

⁵ The Encyclopaedia of Kurdistan. www.kurdistanica.com

⁶ W.G. Elphinston, ‘The Kurdish Question’, *International Affairs* (Vol. 22, No. 1, Jan. 1946), 92.

⁷ Abdulrahman Ghassem lou, *Kurdistan and the Kurds* (London: Publishing House, 1965), 13.

⁸ David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 6.

⁹ For more information about the geography of Kurdistan, see Abdullah Ghafor, *Coghrafie Kurdistan* [The Geography of Kurdistan], (5th ed., Hewler Publisher, 2008).

¹⁰ Touraj Atabaki, *Ethnicity and Autonomy in Iranian Azerbaijan: The Autonomous Government of Azerbaijan 1946* (Ph.D. thesis, Utrecht University, 1991), 88.

ascertain the exact borders of Kurdish lands. Without internationally recognized borders, it is also difficult to arrive at an accurate estimate of the Kurdish population. Below, is an attempt to draw an estimate of the Kurdish population through the evaluation of various sources.

2.2. Population

The extent of the Kurdish population is a subject of much discussion. Here three sources will be compared for the estimation of the Kurdish population. The first source is from western scholars, Cecil J. Edmonds, Martin van Bruinessen and David McDowall. The period of Edmonds' research was in the middle of the first half of the twentieth century, van Bruinessen's was in the middle of the second half of the twentieth century and McDowall's in the late twentieth century. The second source is from the countries in which Kurdistan has been located (Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria and Soviet Union) and the third source comes from the Kurds themselves.

According to Edmonds,¹¹ when the League of Nations Commission came in 1925 to inquire about the dispute between Great Britain and Turkey regarding the Mosul *wilayat* (province), they estimated the Kurdish population at:

Turkey 1,500,000; Persia 700,000; Iraq 500,000; Syria and elsewhere 300,000; making a total of 3 million.¹²

Edmonds did not agree with these numbers, however. He believed that the total Kurdish population was more than three million and suggested 'a grand total of between 4 and 4½ million.'¹³

Fifty years after Edmonds, in 1975, van Bruinessen made the following estimation of the Kurdish population, see table 1.¹⁴

¹¹ Edmonds was a British political officer who particularly focused on Iraqi Kurdish issues between 1920-25. He served with the British Expeditionary Forces in Mesopotamia. From 1935 to 1945, he was adviser to the Ministry of Interior in Iraq. He published a famous book titled: *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs: Politics, Travel and Research in North-Eastern Iraq, 1919-1925*, (1957), which provides detailed notes on social and political conditions, personalities and local practices in the districts where he served.

¹² Edmonds 1957, 3.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁴ Van Bruinessen 1978, 22.

Countries	Grand Population	Kurdish Population	Percentage
Turkey	40/2	7/5	19
Iraq	10/5	2-2/5	23
Iran	34	3/5	10
Syria	7/3	0/5	8/5
Soviet Union	--	0/1	--
Total		13/5 to 14	

Table 1: Population estimates for 1975, see Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State: On the Social and Political Organization of Kurdistan* (Ph.D. thesis, 2nd ed., Rijswijk, 1978), 22.

About twenty years after van Bruinessen, McDowall estimated the total Kurdish population between 24-27 million.¹⁵

The second source comes from the countries within which Kurdistan is located, where it should be noted that there have never been official statistics documenting minority populations such as Kurds. These governments then have a tendency to underestimate the size of the Kurdish population. Religious statistics of Iran show that about 90% of the populations are Shi'ites and approximately 10% are Sunnis. The majority of the Kurds in Iran are Sunnis. However, Shi'ite Kurds are also the majority of the inhabitants of the Kermanshah province and a certain portion of the population of Ilam. The Great Soviet Encyclopaedia of 1952 presents that Kurds are 7 million.¹⁶ The third source is from the Kurds themselves. Most Kurdish scholars claim that the Kurdish population consists of approximately 30 million or more. For example, Kendal Nezan claims that the total number of the Kurdish population, including the diaspora, to be around just over 30 million.¹⁷

2.3. Language

Kurdish is an Indo-European language and belongs to the family of Iranian languages. It is a distinct language, in that it has its own historical development, continuity and grammatical system. Simply classified, Kurdish can be sub-divided into the following dialects: 1.

¹⁵ McDowall 1996, 3.

¹⁶ Ghassemloo 1965, 21.

¹⁷ Kendal Nezan, 'The Kurds: Current Position and Historical Background', in Philip Kreyenbroek and Christine Allison (eds.), *Kurdish Culture and Identity* (London: University of London, 1996), 7-9.

Kurmanji: Also categorized as Northern Kurmanji. It is the dialect spoken by most Kurds in Turkey, in northern Iranian-Iraqi Kurdistan, in the Kurdish inhabited north-eastern region of Syria, and in the former Soviet Union, especially throughout the Caucasian republics of Georgia and Armenia. 2. Sorani: Also categorized as Central Kurdish dialects group. It is spoken by most Kurds in and around Arbil, Suleymaniye, and Kirkuk in Iraq as well as in the region of Mukriyan and Ardalan in Iranian Kurdistan. 3. Pehlewani: It is also categorized as Southern Kurdish. It is mostly spoken in Khanaqin and Mandalin districts of Iraqi Kurdistan and in the Kermanshah region in Iran. 4. Dimili: Also known as Zazaki or Kirmancki. It is spoken by widely-scattered small pockets of communities in Kurdistan in Turkey throughout Dersim, Erzincan, Elazig, Diyarbakir, Bingol, Mush, and Urfa. 5. Hewrami: It is mostly spoken in the far corners of Southern Kurdistan.¹⁸ For writing in Kurdish a modified version of Persian-Arabic alphabet is used in Iran, Iraq and Syria. The literate Kurdish population in Turkey uses the Latin alphabet. Although Kurds in the former Soviet Union adopted the Cyrillic alphabet for the most part of their modern history, there were periods during which certain circles used the Latin alphabet.

The territorial boundaries between the Ottoman and Persian¹⁹ empires from the sixteenth century to the end of the First World War show similar characteristics as those of the Byzantine and Islamic empires. During the Byzantine and Islamic empires, Kurdistan was divided between north and south and in the period of the Ottoman-Persian empires Kurdistan was divided between north-west and east. The historical division of Kurdistan is one of the main reasons for the development of dialectal differences within the Kurdish language, and is also a fundamental obstacle to the formation of unified Kurdish nationalism.

¹⁸ Some sources about the Kurdish language: 'Kurdish Academy of Language' at <http://www.kurdishacademy.org/?q=node/41>; see also languages of the World at www.ethnologue.com. For several scholarly studies about the Kurdish language, see van Bruinessen, 'het Koerdisch, een problematische taal [Kurdish, a problematic language]', in Mahabad B. Qilorî, Nêçîrvan Qilorî (eds.), *Woordenboek Koerdisch-Nederlands* (Amsterdam, 2002); Baran Rizgar, *Learn Kurdish: A Multi-level Course in Kurmanji* (London, 1996); Hassan Ghazi and Hewa Cardoi, *Svensk-sydkurdiskt lexikon* (Sweden, 1992); Feryad Fazil Omer, *Kurdisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch*, dem institut für Iranistik der frein universität Berlin und medico international, (Berlin, 1992).

¹⁹ Up to 1935 Iran was called Persia by westerners after the manner of the Greeks, who identified all of Iran with the name of one of its provinces: Fars, or Persia. In 1935 Reza Shah changed the official name of country to 'Iran' and requested that all countries follow his usage.

From the beginning of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the Kurds were oppressed and could not speak their own language in governmental institutions. The Turkish government does not recognize the status of the Kurds as either as a distinct nation or as an ethnic minority group. The institutions of the Turkish government have played prominent roles in the design and content of curricula for all Turkish educational institutions from primary schools to universities. The speakers of Kurdish are not recognized as a legitimate cultural minority and education in Kurdish is considered a manifestation of terrorism as persecuted as such. The unresolved Kurdish issue remains one of the main obstacles to the Turkish government's ambition to join the European Union. Since 2002, Turkey has shown a certain willingness toward recognizing a number of Kurdish cultural rights. Questions remain, however, about the extent of these rights and whether they will actually be upheld or merely recognized on paper as a sop to political and diplomatic pressure.

In Syria, until the end of the French mandate, at the end of the Second World War, control over the Kurdish minority was relatively loose. During this period, a number of Kurdish intellectuals were able to work on standardizing the Kurmanji dialect and produce various Kurdish publications. It was in this period that for the first time Jeladet Ali Badir Khan²⁰ adopted the Latin alphabet for Kurdish. Although this was a too short-lived positive period for the Kurdish language, works of this era have had significant influence on succeeding generations of Kurmanji speakers.²¹ After the French mandate released the entire governmental control to the Arab administration, however, the Syrian Kurds were deprived of even the few concessions that they had secured under French mandate. Since then, any attempt by the Kurdish population in Syria to assert their cultural or political rights has been met with brutal suppression.

In Iraq, the government that was constituted under the British mandate recognized the basic cultural rights of its Kurdish minority, such as the right to don traditional garb, the use, teaching of and publication in Kurdish. Partly due to the fact that the Iraqi government

²⁰ Jeladet Ali Badir Khan (1893-1951) was the son of Emín Ali Badir Khan and the grandson of the Emir of Badir Khan (Botan emirate). He was a famous politician at the time of the Ottoman Empire. For most of his life, Jeladet divided his time between France, Germany, and Syria. He held a master's degree in law from Istanbul University and completed his studies in Munich.

²¹ Jeladet printed and published a Kurdish journal, *Hawar*, in Damascus, based on Latin scripting system which is currently used as the standard northern Kurdish alphabet. He published the Kurdish grammar lesson '*Bingahîna rézimana Kurdi*' through the paper. *Hawar* was published from 1932 to 1935 and from 1941 to 1943. For more short information about Jeladet's activity, see: <http://www.kurdishacademy.org/node/91>

accepted Sorani as the educational language of the Kurdish minority, from the second half of the 1920's on, Kurdish literature in this part of Kurdistan enjoyed the opportunity to develop. This situation continued until 1991 with periods of improvements and decline depending on which administration led the Iraqi government.

Kurds in diaspora, especially those in Europe, through tremendously popular Kurdish cultural activities, played significant roles in the revival of the Kurdish language and literature. Within the last two decades, Kurdish radio and television outlets in Europe have played a considerable role in the social mobilization of the Kurdish community. Another important element for the revival of the Kurdish language, history and culture since 1991 has been the autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan. This area may yet continue to play an important role for all Kurds in their efforts to preserve their language, culture and politics.

2.4. Religion

The majority of the Kurds are Muslims, but there are also a number of religious variations, such as Yezidis. It should be noted that some European scholars (e.g. Jacques Waardenburg), as well as a number of Arabic and Persian scholars, are under the impression that there is a connection between Yezidis and Yezid Ibn Mo'awiye (Umayyad Caliph, 680-83).²² However, historical evidence suggests that this is an entirely erroneous conception of Yezidis. Yezidis have a distinct religion of their own, predating even the birth of Islam.²³

Alevism is another notable religious variation among Kurds. There is an ongoing discussion among Alevis as to whether they should count themselves as Muslims or not.²⁴ Over the past ten years, a small segment of Alevis began manifesting themselves as a separate

²² Jacques Waardenburg (ed.), *Islam: Norm, Ideaal en Werkelijkheid* (5th ed., Houten: Fibula, 2000), 410; for Iranian author, see Safizada Burakayi Şadiq, *Tarikhi Kurd va Kurdistan* [History of Kurds and Kurdistan], (Tehran: Nasri Atiya, 1999), 46.

²³ More about Yezidis, see Kreyenbroek 1996, 96-104; John S. Guest, *Survival among the Kurds: A History of the Yezidis* (London: Kegan Paul, 1993).

²⁴ It is difficult to define what Alevism exactly is. This is because Alevism, unlike other religions as Judaism, Christianity and Islam, has no specific source, but over the centuries through various adaptations from other religions, cultures and lifestyles it has become what we today observe as 'Alevism.' Although Alevism in many respects seems to be a different religion, most Alevis for defensive reasons usually call themselves Muslim. Throughout the centuries many Islamic principles crept inside Alevism as well. Because of political motives related to assimilation purposes, Alevism in Turkey is considered as an Islamic movement. More about the Alevis community, see David Shankland, *The Alevis in Turkey: The Emergence of a Secular Islamic Tradition* (London, 2003).

ethnic group.²⁵ The majority of the Kurdish population in Kermanshah and Khanaqin are Shi'ites. Most of the Kurdish population in and surrounding areas of Dersim (Turkey) are Alevi. A number of Sufi orders are also active in all parts of Kurdistan. Naqshbendi and Ghadri are the two of the major Sufi-orders.

3 A descriptive framework

The establishment of the Republic of Kurdistan is the primary field of investigation for this study. Accordingly, the problem of this study can be formulated as such: 'Was the establishment of the Republic of Kurdistan based on the principles of modernity and the maturation of Kurdish nationalism's internal dynamics or was it a product of hasty reactions to the larger events surrounding it, such as the presence of the Great Powers in the region during and after the Second World War, the formation of the Autonomous Government of Azerbaijan?'

A thorough exploration of this problem requires an investigation of several contextual frameworks, as they will enable the reader to better understand the thesis' question and the answer(s) offered throughout this dissertation.

Any definition of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which is an interdisciplinary approach in the sense that it blends social theories with that of language and discourse, will be challenged by most scholars. CDA is an instrument that opens a dialogue between various social and linguistic theories. It is, according to Lilie Chouliaraki and Norman Fairclough, a method for analysing social practices and focuses more on their discourse moments within the linking of the theoretical and practical concerns.²⁶ The CDA framework chosen for this research touches upon a number of interrelated social and international relations theories within distinct academic fields and methods. The theoretical framework consists of the following four components:

²⁵ More debate about the Alevi identity, see van Bruinessen, 'The debate on the ethnic identity of the Kurdish Alevi', unpublished paper, *Centre for the Study of Asia & the Middle East* (Malvern, Victoria (Australia): Deakin University, 1997).

²⁶ Lilie Chouliaraki and Norman Fairclough, *Discourse in late Modernity: Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 16.

3.1. Ethnic group

Before Fredrik Barth's work in 1969, in general, ethnic groups were seen as a cultural characteristic that distinguished from other ethnic groups. Barth has made other common perspective, he emphasized the social organization of differences and similarities.²⁷ Following Barth's lead, other scholars, such as Thomas Hylland Eriksen, saw ethnic groups as a social differentiation within a population or by an expansion of system boundaries bringing hitherto discrete groups into contact with each other.²⁸ The diversity of ethnic groups inside a society often becomes a loaded source of dispute that sometimes leads to open conflicts. Asia has have encountered many of these conflicts, particularly in the Middle East. The mosaic of ethnic groups within Iran has not only led to reflection but also to a problem in the country's sense of national identity, which was at its worst when the country was invaded in 1941. Considering Kurds as a nation or as an ethnic group depends more on the definition of both of these socio-political terms. It should be noted that, there is no agreement among scholars as to the definition of either of the abovementioned terms. Can any group of people call themselves a nation without its own independent state? If so, then what are the requirements of being recognized as a nation? In chapter II, theoretical debate of this framework and related terms are described more in detail.

3.2. Autonomous minority

John Ogbu classifies minority groups into *voluntary (immigrant)*, *involuntary (non-immigrant)* and *autonomous* minorities. This classification calls attention to an important difference in the histories of the peoples who is referred to as minorities. Voluntary minorities are those who have more or less willingly moved to another state because they expect better opportunities such as better jobs, more political or religious freedom. Involuntary minorities are people who have been conquered, colonized, or enslaved.²⁹ In contrast, autonomous minorities according to Ogbu, 'may have a distinctive racial, ethnic, religious, linguistic or

²⁷ Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Long Grove/Illinois: Waveland Press, 1969, reissued in 1998), 6.

²⁸ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives* (London/Colorado: Pluto Press, 1993).

²⁹ John Ogbu, *Minority Education and Caste: The American System in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (New York: Academic Press, 1978).

cultural identity that that is guaranteed by a national constitution or by tradition.’³⁰ Voluntary and involuntary minority groups are the main topics of Ogbu’s investigation. Autonomous minority received little attention in Ogbu’s typology beyond persistent mention. Kurds, as a minority, who are ruled by dominant groups of Persian-, Turkish- and Arabic-speakers have a similarly distinctive cultural identity and demand, autonomy, its recognition by national constitutions.

This demand for autonomy by various Kurdish movements, which was a hot topic in the past century, was a collective response to rapid social transformation. In order to explain the concept of political autonomy, Ruth Lapidoth categorized it into five main types: federal system, decentralization, self-government, associate statehood and self-administration.³¹ Out of all of these varieties of autonomy, self-government autonomy is the term that most applies or could be adapted to the demands of the Kurdish movements. In this study, self-government autonomy is defined as a territorial community that manages its own internal affairs, without external intervention.³² It does not have a much broader meaning than self-determination because self-determination also has both external and internal aspects. The external aspect is the international status of the rights of a people, while the internal aspect is the right of a people to choose its own system of government and to participate in the political process that governs it.³³ This internal aspect of self-determination can also be found in the self-government category of autonomy as described by Lapidoth. This kind of autonomy draws attention to the cultural and political rights of the autonomous minority. For the Kurds, cultural rights would refer to their ability to determine their education based on indigenous language, wear their traditional clothes, and practice their religions freely. Important Kurdish political rights would include self-rule free from external control or interference. Autonomous self-government was the fundamental aim of the Kurdish movements in the twentieth century. Several Kurdish movements and the KDP and their government, the Republic in 1946, are

³⁰ John Ogbu, ‘Minority status and schooling in plural societies’, *Comparative Education Review* (No. 27 (2), 1983a), 169.

³¹ Ruth Lapidoth, *Autonomy: Flexible Solutions to Ethnic Conflicts* (Washington D.C.: United State Institute of Peace Press, 1996), 49. For the definition of the various autonomies, see *ibid.*, 50-7.

³² *Ibid.*, 52. For details on relations between internal and external aspects, see Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 35-48.

³³ For more on self-determination among several minority groups, see Hurst Hannum, *Autonomy, Sovereignty, and self-determination: The Accommodation of Conflicting Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 27-49.

examples of autonomous minority struggling for self-government, which will be analyzed in this dissertation.

3.3. Iranian central government, Autonomous Government of Azerbaijan and the role of neighbouring countries, Turkey and Iraq.

Inter-state relations among Iran, Iraq and Turkey relating to the Kurds are described in this framework.

The theory that is most applicable to the inter-state relationships in the Middle East is the ‘omni-balancing’ theory.³⁴ It concentrates on third world countries and highlights inter-state relations with references to internal conflicts and the influence of greater political powers in the background. Omni-balancing is the model, according to Robert Olson, that best characterizes the Turkish and Iranian foreign and domestic politics, in which the Kurdish question plays a dominant role.³⁵ This is one of the significant theoretical approaches related to the balance of power theories within the realist and neorealist schools. It has different emphasis in the Third World states and particularly on leaders of such states. The essential aspect of the omni-balancing theory is that the ties between Middle Eastern states were based more on internal threats, which not only caused obstacles for the cooperative relations between these states, but also brought into question the continuity and practical application of the treaties signed among these states. For example, although the Sa’dabad Treaty, signed in 1937, between four Muslims countries (Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and Turkey) was about inter-state relations, the fundamental aspects of this agreement were scarcely adopted due to internal threats from the leadership of the various intra-state political actors. The role of these internal threats is an essential element of omni-balancing theory, which suggested that the leaders in the Middle Eastern states competed against each other for internal policy-making capabilities. This kind of political theory is different from that of the realist school, which concerned itself with the competition for external or inter-state policy-making capability.³⁶

Internal threats had been increasing in the Middle East, especially with the formation of new states after the First World War. According to Fred Halliday, to protect their

³⁴ The omni-balancing theory is the most revered when it comes to explaining Third World issues. For more on this, see Steven R. David, ‘Explaining Third World Alignment’, *World Politics* (Vol. 43, No. 2, 1991), 233-56.

³⁵ Robert Olson, *The Kurdish Question and Turkish-Iranian Relation from World War I to 1998* (Costa Mesa/California: Mazda Publishing, 1998), 14.

³⁶ David, ‘Explaining Third World Alignment’, 1.

legitimacy, the leaders from the majority of the Middle Eastern states aligned themselves with one of the Great Powers, which led to the latter becoming players in regional politics.³⁷ An important example of balance of power theory is the creation of the new Iraqi government by Great Britain. Although Great Britain decided not to create a Kurdish state in their mandate territory in Iraq, it sometimes supported and encouraged Kurdish nationalism to establish a balance of power between ethnic Kurds and the Arabs and between both the religious Sunni and Shi'ite communities. This realist theory of balance of power was an instrument for the British policy to easily control the territories under their sphere of influence.

Another aspect of omni-balancing theory holds that states that are driven by internal threats are, according to Steven David, 'likely to be weak, in which case they will not affect the global balance of power anyway.'³⁸ With regard to the Kurdish question in the Middle East, this argument is controversial for many Middle Eastern experts. For example, due to strategic or internal elements, both Turkey and Iran have sufficient power to influence the balance of power in the region. According to Olson, Iran and Turkey are not weak states and their inability to deter the Kurdish nationalist movements, particularly the formation of an independent Kurdish state, would affect the global balance of power.³⁹

3.4. Presence of Great Powers in Iran

In order to arrive at a sound comprehension of the political agendas followed by the Great Powers during and after the Second World War in Iran, as well as in other parts of the world, it is important to evaluate some of the major international relations theories. As necessary tools to arrange, analyze and structure reality, theories are, according to Kenneth N. Waltz, one of the leading realist scholars, assessed in terms of what they attempt to explain or predict.⁴⁰ In this dissertation, three international relations theories are evaluated: 1- (Neo-)realism. 2- (Neo-)idealism/liberalism, and 3- Structuralism. Below, these three theories are described briefly. In chapter V, they are examined in more detail. Because chapter V described the behaviours of political and economic interest of the Great Powers in Iran,

³⁷ Fred Halliday, *The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics and Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 177.

³⁸ David, 'Explaining Third World Alignment', 253.

³⁹ Olson 1998, 12.

⁴⁰ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York, Columbia University: Waveland Press, 1979), 1-10.

however, it would be logical that these international relations theories were also explained in the same chapter.

The fundamental feature of sovereignty is 'claim'. Others may not 'respect' this claim, but if the legitimacy of sovereignty is formally 'recognized' then the issue is less important. In the modern world-system, the legitimacy of sovereignty requires reciprocal recognition.⁴¹ This reciprocal recognition has two dimensions, external state relations and internal state operation. The first, which is an important aspect within the realist school and was a significant Anglo-Americans policy to holding relations with central governments, such as Iran, refers to the sovereignty of a state. This sovereignty recognised by the majority of other sovereign states, but it can also be not accepted by some other states. Respecting the sovereignty of a state depends on the weakness and strength of a state. Internal sovereign reciprocity refers to the relations between a central state and its peripheries, where the local peripheries must recognize the sovereign authority of the central state. The central authority must, according to Immanuel Wallerstein, also recognize the legitimate authority in the peripheries and defend the sphere of their authorities.⁴² In many democratic countries the power is divided between the centre and peripheries and even the political power of the local authorities is recognized as independent. When the central government does not recognize the political power of local authorities, it could lead to internal conflicts. It could even be exacerbated enough to cause a civil war. The breakdown of relations between the central government of Iran and its peripheries, such as Azerbaijan and Kurdistan, in 1945 and 1946 is a good example.

Balance of power, an important international relations theory, is the second aspect within the (neo)realist and (neo)idealist schools and it can be used to explain the inter-state policies that existed amongst the Great Powers. A definition of this theory, by Hans Morgenthau, a realist scholar, will suffice to make things clear. According to Morgenthau, balance of power refers, 'to an actual state of affairs in which power is distributed among several nations with approximate equality.'⁴³ For Waltz, balance of power is one of the most important political theories in international relations. He claimed that 'if there is any

⁴¹ Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-System Analysis: An Introduction* (Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2004), 44.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 45.

⁴³ Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (4th ed., New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), 173.

distinctively political theory of international politics, balance-of-power theory is it.⁴⁴ This theory is more a historical generalization than a theoretical concept.⁴⁵ After the end of the First World War, the significance of the balance of power was a hot subject between the Great Powers. However, there were obstacles towards realizing the goal due to the instability of the international order at Versailles. This was due to the temporary weakness of Germany and Russia and meant that the balance of power was essentially artificial and the balance would be increasingly threatened if the two countries were to strengthen themselves further. The (neo)idealism school takes more the transnational elements of international relations into account. Robert O. Keohane emphasizes the importance of studying international institutions and how collaboration can take place in world politics without hegemony.⁴⁶ (Neo)idealism also claims that several (inter)national and inter-states organizations, such as the League of Nations and the United Nations, must obtain more political power to solve the internal and external issues of its member nations.

The last international theory, structuralism, is concerned with the division within societies, between the rich and poor within countries and between the rich and poor worldwide. This difference increases the importance of transnational relations and intergovernmental links. According to this theory, the structures of world politics are defined by economics and the interaction between sovereign states is not important. Structuralists emphasize the relationships between classes, both within states and among states. Structuralism was an important theory within the Marxism-Leninism political ideology of the Soviet Union policy, especially during Joseph Stalin's regime.⁴⁷ In this thesis, it would be examined to what extent the Soviet policy encouraged an ethnic group within a state, such as Kurds in Iran during the Second World War.

While exploring each of the abovementioned frameworks and the research question, many sub-contextual questions are delved into:

⁴⁴ Waltz 1979, 117.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 164.

⁴⁶ Robert O. Keohane, *Neorealism and its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

⁴⁷ For a more detailed discussion of the Soviet policy among structuralist theory, see Amitava Krishne Dutt and Jaime Ros (ed.), *Development Economics and Structuralist Macroeconomics* (United Kingdom: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2003).

- 1- In what ways do ethnic communities maintain their identities despite the presence of a dominant group?
- 2- To what extent did the Kurdish political movements between two world wars affect and encourage the Iranian Kurds to mobilise themselves into their own political parties?
- 3- How much solidarity and national unity existed among different tribes in Iranian Kurdistan?
- 4- To what extent has religious affinity infiltrated Pan-Kurdism or has tribalism infiltrated Kurdistaniness?
- 5- Which factors led to the weakening and the eventual fall of the Republic of 1946?
- 6- What were the most important friction points between the Iranian central government and the Kurdish government?
- 7- Did the Iranian government and Autonomous Government of Azerbaijan ever take the Kurdish government in Mahabad seriously?
- 8- What caused the disagreements between the Azerbaijan and Kurdish governments?
- 9- What obstacles were raised by Turkey and Iraq before the Republic of Kurdistan?
- 10- What were the policies of the Great Powers, especially those of Soviet Union's, towards the Republic of Kurdistan?

4 Research sources

In the past three decades, especially after the 1990s, numerous books and articles came out concerning the matters of ethnicity and nationalism.⁴⁸ These provide researchers with better opportunities to understand the Kurds' insistence on ethnically distinguishing themselves from such neighbours as Turks, Arabs, Persians and others. The basic literatures of this research are the primary sources. Throughout August and September of 2009, I travelled in Kurdish areas to conduct archival research and interviews and to find relevant books. During

⁴⁸ Other important books and articles in this category are: Abbas Vali (ed.), *Essays on the Origins of Kurdish Nationalism* (Costa Mesa/California: Mazda Publishers, 2003); Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001); __, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (2th ed., London/New York: Verso, 1991); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983); Koohi-Kamali Farideh, *The Political Development of the Kurds in Iran: Pastoral Nationalism* (Hardcover - Mar 4, 2004); Wilson N. Howell Jr., *The Soviet Union and the Kurdish Question: A study of National Minority Problems in Soviet Policy* (Virginia: University of Virginia, 1965).

my travels, I collected a large body of particularly relevant, useful, and reliable information in the form of historical documents, interviews and books. To my knowledge, there is no Ph.D. thesis about the Republic of Kurdistan of 1945-46. Although there are a few books, articles and masters theses, they are not comprehensive.⁴⁹ It needs to be remembered that until 1991 accessing the Soviet archives was difficult or impossible for non-Soviet citizen. Since 1991, Dr. Afrasio Hewrami has translated into Kurdish almost all the Soviet's archival documents that relate to the Kurdish and Azerbaijan issues in Iran during the period of the Second World War. Fortunately, in recent years, these important documents have been published in Iraqi Kurdistan (Suleymaniyeh and Arbil).⁵⁰ The presence of these documents furnishes a solid foundation for my thesis. Incidentally, this is the first English language Ph.D. research on this subject that avails itself of the archives of the former Soviet Union. The Kurds who live in diaspora and the Regional Autonomy of Iraqi Kurdistan (1991-present) have played an important part in the revival of the Kurdish literatures.⁵¹ Along with the primary sources of

⁴⁹ Several secondary sources about the Republic of Kurdistan are: Archie Roosevelt Jr., 'The Republic of Kurdistan of Mahabad', *Middle East Journal* (Washington DC, July 1, 1947), 247-69; Noshirwan Mustefa Emin, *Hekometi Kurdistan, Rebendani 1324-Sermawezy 1325: Kurd le Gemey Soviet da* (The Government of Kurdistan, 22 Jan-17 Dec 1946: The Kurds in the Soviet Game), (3th ed., Suleymaniyeh Publisher, 2007); William Eagleton, *The Republic of Kurdistan of 1946* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963).

⁵⁰ These primary documents that have been published in couple books are: Afrasio Hewrami, *Rojhalati Kurdistan le Sardami Dowem Cangî Cihanida: Be peyi Balgehnamekani Arşivi Yeketi Sovjet* (Eastern Kurdistan during the Second World War: according to the documents of Soviet Union Archives), (Suleymani: Zheen Publishing House, 2008a); __, *Peywendyekani Kurdistan u Azerbaijan u Hereshenani Herdula le sali 1946 da: Le Belgeh u Sarchawekan da* [Kurdistan and Azerbaijan Relations and the fall of both in 1946: in the documents and sources], (Suleymani: Sardam Publishing, 2008b); __, *Rodawekani Rojhalati Kurdistan le Balgenameyi Sovjet da: 1945-47* [the events of the Eastern Kurdistan in the documents of Soviets], (Suleymani: Binkai Zhin, 2007); __, *Mustafa Barzani le Hendek Belgenome u Dokumenti Sovjet da: 1945-58* [Mustafa Barzani in several Evidence and Documents of the Soviets], (Erbil: Aras Publishing, 2002).

⁵¹ Some of the primary sources for my research are: Ali Karimi (ed.), *Nishtiman: Belawkrehweyi biri Komelayi Je-K* [Nishtiman: dissemination of the ideas of the Society for the Revival of Kurdistan], (Suleymani: Binkai zhin, 2008); Himdad Hoesen, *Rojnamevani Kurdi: Sardemi Komari Dimokrati Kurdistan 1943-1947* [Kurdish journalism: during the Democratic Republic of Kurdistan 1943-47], (Erbil: Aras Publisher, 2008); Mahmud Mulla Izzat, *Dewlati Cemhori Kurdistan, Name u Document* (The Democratic Republic of Kurdistan, Correspondence & Documents), (vols. 2, 2th ed., Suleymani: Tishk Publishing, 2003a); __, *Cemhori Kurdistan: Lekolineweyeki Mejoyi u Siyasi* [Kurdistan Republic: political and historical investigation], (2th ed., Suleymani: Sardam Publishing, 2003); Rafiq Saleh & Sadiq Saleh (eds.), *Rojnameyi Kurdistan: Mahabad 1324-1325 Hetawi (1946)* [the journal of *Kurdistan*, Mahabad, 1946], (Suleymani: Binkai zhin, 2007).

footnotes 50 and 51, the Iranian parliament records, during 1944-1946), British and US archives are also key sources for my research.

An essential part of my thesis is the role and the influence of the Great Powers in Iran during and after World War II. The first major post-WWII international political crisis in the Middle East began in Iran. Historians have given much attention to the Cold War. Many books and articles have been published about the origins of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe, especially in Poland. However, little interest has been shown in the conflict between the US and the Soviet Union in the Middle East, particularly in the Iranian crisis (1945-1946).⁵²

5 Construction of the thesis

Chapter II is concerned with manifestation of ethnic identity. After the collapse of Ottoman and Tsarist empires, the concept of the nation and nation-states became the most influential factor in determining new geographical borders. The imagining of ethnicity and ethnic identity among Kurds are central to the case of the Republic of Kurdistan. Therefore, chapter II will address the dynamics and interactions among concepts of ethnic identity, ethnicity and nationalism. Several of these theories will be compared in this section, followed by a close analysis of Kurdish ethnic identity.

This dissertation will examine the development of political identity in modern Kurdistan in general and especially in Iranian Kurdistan. Kurdish political movements between two world wars make up one of the main topics that will be dealt with in chapter III. It will discuss the Kurdish political movements between the two world wars, which in turn affected and encouraged the Iranian Kurds to mobilise themselves into their own political parties. One of the results of these movements is the Republic of Kurdistan of 1945-46, which

⁵² Some secondary literature about the Kurds, the Azeris and the Iranian government in the World War II in international policy are: Bruce R. Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East: Great Power Conflict and Diplomacy in Iran, Turkey and Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); Yassin 1995; McDowall 1996; Fred H. Lawson. 'The Iranian Crisis of 1945-1946 and the Spiral Model of International Conflict', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (Vol. 21, No. 3, Aug., 1989); Kerim Yildiz and Tanyel, B. Taysi, *The Kurds in Iran: The Past, Present, and Future* (Hardcover - Mar 22, 2007); Louise L Estrange Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold War: The Azerbaijan Crisis of 1946* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Natalia I. Yegorova, *Iran Crisis of 1945-1946: A view from the Russian Archives* (Washington DC, 1996); Olson 1998; Touraj Atabaki, *Azerbaijan: Ethnicity and the Struggle for Power in Iran* (2nd ed., London: I.B. Tauris and Co Ltd, 2000).

will be discussed in chapter IV. In order to thoroughly understand the rise and fall of the Republic of Kurdistan, it is also necessary to understand the socio-political events during the period of 1941-46. The KDP was one of the movements that played an essential role in the proclamation and establishment of the Republic of Kurdistan. This political party and its relations with other parties and the Iranian government will also be discussed in this chapter. Thus chapter IV presents an illustration of the Republic of Kurdistan's structure as well as its socio-political standing. Further, it examines the opinions of the opponents and supporters of the Republic who provide insight into the extent of the Republic of Kurdistan's achievements and its shortcomings.

The final chapter, chapter V, focuses on the role and influence of the Great Powers, especially of the Soviet Union, and the countries neighbouring Iran, such as Turkey and Iraq on the Republic of Kurdistan. Further the chapter describes the relations between the Great Powers in Iran and the governments of Iran and Azerbaijan with the Republic of Kurdistan. Within the context of the Cold War, the Superpowers' struggle to gain hegemony over the 'Third World'⁵³ emerges mainly after the second half of the 1950s. In Iran, however, it began even before the war had ended. Shortly after the Second World War, the Cold War between the two Great Powers (the Soviets and the US) became central to the study of International Relations. The specific reasons for the manifestation of the Cold War in Iran will also be described in chapter V.

⁵³ The term 'Third World' was used during the Cold War to define countries that remained non-aligned or neutral towards capitalism (First World) or communism (Second World). The term continues to be used colloquially to describe the poorest countries in the world. This usage is widely disparaged, because the fall of the Soviet Union deprecated the terms 'First World' and 'Second World.' While there is no identical contemporary replacement, common alternatives to the term 'Third World' include 'developing world'.