THE (NON-)TERRITORIALIZATION OF "KURDISTAN" IN THE MIDDLE EAST BETWEEN 1919 AND 1990: A CRITICAL GEOPOLITICAL APPROACH

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE
OF
TOBB UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS AND TECHNOLOGY

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THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE

September 2016

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science.

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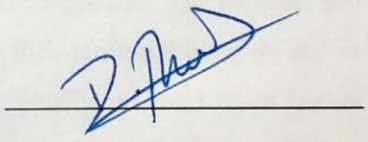

Naz Duygu AKYOL-GÖZEN

ABSTRACT

THE (NON-)TERRITORIALIZATION OF "KURDISTAN" IN THE MIDDLE EAST BETWEEN 1919 AND 1990: A CRITICAL GEOPOLITICAL APPROACH

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This thesis analyses the reasons of why a certain "Kurdistan" could not be established as a geopolitical entity within the Middle East between the years 1919 and 1990. By using critical geopolitics as the theoretical framework, the thesis focuses on the effects of continuous deterritorialization and reterritorialization of the Kurdistan as a geopolitical entity as well as civilizational and ideological geopolitical discourses developed by four states in the region, being Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. A threefold argument is proposed to explain why an independent or an autonomous Kurdistan could not be formed at the chosen time frame. The internal factors underline the traditional tribal and more recent territorial divisions among the Kurdish tribes preventing the Kurds to establish a common geopolitical discourse describing a particular and territorially-defined "Kurdistan". The external factors emphasize the policies and geopolitical discourses developed by states to preserve their territorial integrity and to prevent any separatist tendency within their own states. Finally, the third set of factors cross-linked internal and external factors. It focuses on the cooperative and conflictual transversal connections between sovereign states and Kurdish political movements. Accordingly, some sovereign states tended to cooperate with the Kurdish groups of rival states in a way to undermine the power of the Kurdish groups within itself and some Kurdish political movements tended to cooperate with the neighboring state to undermine the power of the home state. All in all, the period between 1919 and 1990 witnessed the failure of the projects to establish an autonomous if not an independent Kurdistan.

Keywords: Kurdistan, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria

ÖZ

1919 VE 1990 YILLARI ARASINDA "KÜRDİSTAN"IN ORTADOĞU'DA SINIRSALLAŞ(AMA)MASI:
ELEŞTİREL JEOPOLİTİK BİR YAKLAŞIM

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Bu tez 1919 ve 1990 yılları arasında neden "Kürdistan" adı verilen belirli bir yapının Ortadoğu'da jeopolitik bir entite olarak ortaya çıkamadığının nedenlerini incelemektedir. Bunu yaparken, eleştirel jeopolitik yaklaşımını bir kuramsal çerçeve olarak kullanarak, bir taraftan Kürdistan'ın bir jeopolitik entite olarak sınırsallığının nasıl sürekli bir biçimde bozulduğuna ve yeniden tasarlandığına odaklanırken, diğer taraftan dört bölge devletinin, yani Türkiye, İran, Irak ve Suriye'nin ortaya koyduğu medeniyetçi ve ideolojik jeopolitik söylemleri analiz etmektedir. Buna göre ilk olarak iç faktörler olarak değerlendirilen Kürt kabileleri arasındaki geleneksel bölünme ve buna daha yakın zamanda eklenen sınırsal bölünmelerin, belirli ve sınırları tanımlanmış ortak bir Kürdistan söyleminin oluşumunu engellediği ileri sürülmüştür. İkinci olarak dış faktörler üzerinde durulmuştur. Bölge devletlerinin geliştirdiği politikalar ve jeopolitik söylemler onların toprak bütünlüğü konusunda hassasiyetini vurgularken ayrılıkçı herhangi bir politikaya izin verilmemesi sonucunu doğurmuştur. Son olarak iç ve dış faktörlerin bir araya gelmesi ile ortaya çıkan üçüncü bir neden de egemen devletler ve Kürt gruplar arasında geliştirilen işbirliği veya çatışma temelli çapraz sınır ötesi bağlardır. Buna göre bazı egemen devletler rakip devletlerin içindeki Kürt grupları kendi içlerindeki Kürt gruplara veya rakip devletin kendisine karşı kullanırken, bazı Kürt siyasi hareketleri de içlerinde bulundukları devletin gücünü zayıflatmak için rakip devletler ile işbirliği içine olmuştur. Bu sınır ötesi bağlantılar da ortak bir Kürdistan söyleminin önüne geçmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kürdistan, Türkiye, İran, Irak, Suriye

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to thank my thesis advisor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mustafa Serdar Palabıyık. The door to Dr. Palabıyık's office was always open and he has helped to steer me in the right direction whenever I had troubles or questions about my research.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Yıldız Deveci Bozkuş and Assist. Prof. Dr. Hakan Övünç Ongur for their participation in the examining committee of this thesis and for the guidance that they provided me in the final revision of this thesis.

I could not also forget the support of my friends and my family, without the encouragements and moral support of whom, everything would be more difficult. A final acknowledgement is deserved by my husband, who always is so much understanding during my intense periods of study.

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ABBREVIATIONS

DP	:	Democratic Party
KDP	:	Kurdish Democratic Party
KDPI	:	Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran
KDPS	:	Kurdish Democratic Party of Syria
KLP	:	Kurdish Liberation Party aka. Kürt İstiklal Partisi
Komala	:	Kurdish Communist Party of Iran (pre-1946)
Komala	:	Revolutionary Organization of Toilers of Kurdistan
MP	:	Motherland Party aka Anavatan Partisi)
NATO	:	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PKK	:	Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê aka. Kurdish Workers Party
PUK	:	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan aka. Yekîtiya Nîştimanî ya Kurdistanê
RCHE	:	Revolutionary Cultural Hearths of the East aka. Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları
RPP	:	Republican People's Party
SAVAK	:	Organization of National Intelligence and State Security aka. Sazeman-e Ettelaat va Amniyat-e Keshvar
Tudeh	:	People's Party of Iran aka. Hezb-e Tudeh Iran
TİP	:	Turkish Workers Party aka. Türkiye İşçi Partisi
UKDP	:	United Kurdistan Democratic Party
USA	:	United States of America
USSR	:	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WP	:	Welfare Party aka. Refah Partisi

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In classical understanding of politics and international relations, geography has generally been described as the most static factor affecting political/geopolitical decisions of ruling elites and peoples. Accordingly, geography is perceived as something fixed; therefore it is argued that geography contributed to the policy-making process, not vice-versa. However, in reality geography in general and space in particular is not something stable; it changes over time as do the perceptions related to it. In other words, space is what the perceiver perceived of it, it is described or undescribed, it is prioritized or downgraded, it is praised or hated. Space, therefore, is value-laden and the value attached to it depends on three elements: who the perceiver is, what is perceived and when it is perceived. This triangular interrelationship among the perceiver, the perceived and time established a particular geopolitical discourse which attempts to display a certain understanding of a particular space. Thus as geography contributes to the policy-making process, the politics itself is important in shaping the geopolitical discourse as well.

In regions like the Middle East, where geographical have not always overlapped with the political boundaries, territory and people attached to it acquire an additional attention. Ernest Gellner believes that nationalism aims to construct one state for one ethnicity or one culture. Gellner has put forth the idea that a successful state emerges from this principle (Cuff, 2013). The plurality of identities on a particular piece of territory resulted in emergence of different and sometimes competing geopolitical

discourses. Sometimes the same territory was claimed by the ancestral homeland of a certain people and this claim was rejected by the other people as in the case of the Palestinian issue; sometimes a piece of territory turned out to attain a strategic significance that none of the rival states had difficulties in giving up sovereignty over there as in the case of the Gaza Strip, Kuwait or Shatt al Arab regions; sometimes a particular state is accused of extending its influence in the region by forming a particular geopolitical outlook as Iran has been accused of establishing "a Shia crescent". Among these problematic geopolitical discourses in the Middle East the discourse developed on "Kurdistan" was one of the most complex and problematic discourses in the region. Addressing this quite quarrelling concept, this thesis attempts to discuss through a critical geopolitical theoretical frame the reasons why a particular geopolitical entity named "Kurdistan" could not emerge within the Middle East. Following the deterritorialization of the Middle East after the First World War, the Kurdish people have been reterritorialized within four territorial states, being Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, resulting in the emergence of a transversal Kurdish issue. Today about 25 to 35 million Kurds inhabit the region between Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. They are the fourth largest ethnic group in the Middle East but they have never established an independent and territorially defined nation-state of their own (Jamil, 2006: 1027). The Kurdish issue in the region has become one of the main concerns of the given four states, which have defined Kurdistan as a threat to their territorial integrity and have administered their policies accordingly.

The concept of critical geopolitics was first used by Simon Dalby in the 1970s (Ingram, and Dodds, 2009: xi). It aims to re-examine epistemological assumptions and ontological commitments of classical geopolitics. In other words, critical geopolitics is a

construction of discourses that intend to scrutinize classical geopolitics. Critical geopolitics seeks to understand space, identity, vision and statecraft by questioning the very given meanings of these concepts. This field of geopolitics accepts the importance of geography in politics, but also argues that geopolitical discourses redefine the nature of geographical understanding of politics. Critical geopolitics not only developed a horizontal analytical framework focusing on different geopolitical discourses of different states or peoples; but also focuses on a vertical analytical framework questioning the transformation of geopolitical discourses over time. Accordingly, John Agnew defined three epochs of geopolitical discourses each of which focus on a different aspect of geographical knowledge being civilizational, naturalized and ideological geopolitics (Agnew, 1998: 85). Critical geopolitics makes use of post-structuralist theories. Although it does not emerge from post-structuralism, it investigates simplistic and dichotomical territorial representations (Kuus, 2009: 5-6). Hence geopolitical discourse turned out to be the basic analytical tool to understand geopolitics. As Gearoid Ó Tuathail argues, geopolitics must study discourses as discourses are representational practices of cultures. It is cultures that give meaning to words by means of narratives and images (van Efferink, 2009).

The main question that this thesis attempts to answer is why a particular geopolitical entity named "Kurdistan" could not be territorialized. The study has identified three factors preventing the emergence of Kurdistan as a concrete territorial entity. The first factor is the traditional tribal structure of the Kurdish communities. The Kurds had traditionally lived under tribal structures and the loyalty towards tribe is far stronger than the loyalty to a particular piece of territory. This limited the nationalist sentiments of Kurds as they preferred to prioritize their tribal rather than ethno-national

identity. After the World War I, a process of reterritorialization via the emergence of territorially defined states happened and the borders of these territorial states divided the Kurdish community. Hence in addition to tribal divisions, the Kurds were divided as minor ethnic groups in the newly established territorial states. This added a transversal rivalry to the existing tribal rivalry among the Kurds, which crippled the motivation of the Kurds in defending and fighting for an autonomous if not independent Kurdistan. The disunity among the Kurds created different geopolitical discourses of Kurdistan, while the borders prevented the emergence of a strong Kurdish transversal movement to establish a territorially defined state for the Kurds. As chances of a Greater Kurdistan appeared low, Kurdish people chose to fight for autonomy under Turkey, Iran and Iraq. In Syria it did not develop as such due to the political environment of the time. However still, even for the establishment of an autonomous political entity an undivided, determined and a strong nationalist movement was required. As Kurds failed in constructing the necessary foundations for such a successful movement, they found themselves in constant armed conflicts with sovereign states. Hence there emerged several rebellions in these states such as Sheikh Said rebellion in Turkey, Simko rebellion in Iran and Barzani rebellion in Iraq attempting to establish autonomous political entities; however, internal divisions among the Kurdish tribes as well as lack of enough transversal support resulted in their suppression by the sovereign states.

The second obstacle in front of the emergence of Kurdistan as a territorial/geopolitical entity was the sensitivity of the sovereign states on their territorial integrity. These states feared a process of deterritorialization through the construction of a Kurdistan and this fear resulted in the neglect of Kurdish political rights via a civilizational geopolitical discourse describing the Kurds as an uncivilized community

incapable of self-government. Accordingly, the sovereign states used civilizational geopolitics in order to subdue the Kurdish ethnic identity for promoting a singular national identity. Policies of nation building resulted in oppression of the Kurdish ethnicity, language and culture. The Kurdish community tried to voice its concerns and sought recognition of their cultural rights but the sovereign states generally closed the political arena radicalizing the Kurdish movement and resulting in armed conflicts and uprisings. With the Cold War, an additional threat perception emerged which began to label the Kurds as an ideological threat as well. Particularly in Turkey, the collaboration between Kurdish political movements and Turkish left alarmed the state for a communist threat posed by the Kurds. To a lesser degree, this was evident in Iran considering the collaboration between Tudeh, the Iranian communist party and the Kurds. Around this time ideological geopolitics appeared as an alternative to civilizational geopolitics. Meanwhile, some Kurdish political movements began to perceive the sovereign states through ideological geopolitical lenses as well and argued that the sovereign state had imperialist designs over the oppressed Kurds and accused the political elites of pursuing this oppression through collaborating with Kurdish landowners. Similarly, in Iraq and Syria, where pro-Soviet regimes had been established during the Cold War, Kurds were perceived as the tools of imperialist or former colonial states used for disturbing territorial integrity of home states.

The third obstacle in front of emergence of Kurdistan as a geopolitical entity stemmed from the combination of internal and external factors. Accordingly, although there have been a conflictual relationship between the home state and the Kurdish minority, there were transversal collaborations between states and Kurdish political movements. The transversal phenomena are a political practice that crosses boundaries

and questions the spatial logic through which these boundaries establish and conduct international relations (Bleiker, 2000: 2). A state might support the Kurdish political movement of its rival while a Kurdish group in a particular state could support the rival government of that particular state to undermine the power of the home state. For example, Muhammad Reza Shah of Iran provided Mulla Mustafa Barzani, a prominent Iraqi Kurdish leader with arms and in return asked for his support against Kurds of Iran. Barzani's coalition with Iran led to the isolation of the Iranian Kurds. Similarly, during the Iran-Iraq war, Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran supported the Iraqi *Peshmergas* to help weaken Iraq from within. The Kurdish community was not able to overcome such difficulties to claim for an independent or a self-governed political entity.

Having set the theoretical framework and basic arguments of this thesis, the reasons for selecting a particular period should be discussed as well. There are three principal reasons of conducting this research for the time frame between 1919 and 1990. First, the end of World War I dramatically altered the geopolitical composition of the region, deterritorializing the Ottoman Empire and transforming the Persian dynasty. The emergence of four territorially-defined states with a degree of authority over the Kurdish minority – Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria – make territorial integrity a top priority for these states in dealing with the Kurdish question. The end point of this study, namely the Gulf War of 1990-91 was another landmark event, after which the Kurdish question was tremendously transformed with emergence of a de-facto "Kurdistan" in Iraq and identification of Kurdish cantons in Syria in years to come. In other words, an argument for "non-emergence of Kurdistan as a geopolitical entity" is more supportable for the period between 1919 and 1990, where the sensitivity for territorial integrity was a common denominator for all regional states. Finally, the discipline of critical geopolitics

has argued for a multiplicity of geopolitical discourses after the Cold War. In other words, with the relative disappearance of ideological geopolitics, no geopolitical discourse emerges as a dominant one to describe geopolitical understanding. In other words, studying post-Cold War era would undermine the theoretical framework established by this thesis.

As to the methodology of this thesis, qualitative methods are preferred. Since the thesis uses critical geopolitics as its theoretical framework, discourse analysis has been used to investigate how sovereign states have enforced civilizational or ideological geopolitical discourses to deny the existence of Kurdistan as a self-governing entity. The political and the social context have been scrutinized to uncover the perceptions of Kurdistan among the Kurdish population as well as the sovereign states. In exemplifying the discourse analysis, case study approach is preferred as well with a comparative outlook comparing and contrasting not only different periods of Kurdish movements and rebellions but also different responses developed by the sovereign states. Therefore, by extending the chronological and territorial reach of this study, the cases examined in this thesis aimed to provide a holistic view of the perception of Kurdistan both domestically and externally.

This attempted holistic perception is also one of the main weaknesses of this thesis, since the thesis attempts to cover a wider region and a wider time frame, which resulted in some shortcomings for in-depth analysis. Since this thesis did not focus on the Kurdish question of one particular state or one particular (more limited) period, it provides the reader with a general overview of why a particular “Kurdistan” could not emerge as a geopolitical entity. In other words, if the reader wishes to find out in-depth analysis for a particular state or period, the thesis might be disappointing. Therefore, in

order to present a more all-encompassing picture, the thesis might overlook some detailed examinations. A second and equally important limitation is the lack of referring to the primary resources particularly in Kurdish since the author of the thesis could not read Kurdish, a shortcoming which the author wishes to ameliorate by learning Kurdish in the years to come. Lastly, the emergence of nation states is related to the spread of capitalism. In order to not to further expand the study, the aspect of capitalism has been left out.

The thesis is composed of three chapters. The first chapter is devoted to critical geopolitics, the theoretical framework of this thesis. In this chapter, emergence of the discipline of geopolitics, its basic tenets, the differences between classical and critical geopolitics as well as the concept of geopolitical discourse are tried to be examined. Particular attention was given to deterritorialization/ reterritorialization processes and the three geopolitical discourses approach designed by John Agnew, being the civilizational, naturalized and ideological geopolitics. The second chapter focuses on the non-emergence of Kurdistan as a geopolitical entity between the years of 1919 and 1950. In this chapter, after discussing the Kurdish question in general and the concept of Kurdistan in particular within the Ottoman Empire and Qajar Persia the transformative process of World War I and the geopolitical effects of reterritorialization of the Middle East by colonial powers are discussed. After that the chapter goes on with the analysis of the impact of state/nation building in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria on the conceptualization of Kurdistan, internal resistance of Kurdish people against imposition of a certain national identity and the failure of Kurdish movements as result of the factors discussed above. The third chapter examines the period between 1950 and 1990, when Kurdish movements became more politicized, radicalized and even militarized in

the Middle East. The additional ideological threat perception and specific policies designed by states to prevent this threat are discussed alongside with civilizational geopolitical discourses, which also continued in this period. Moreover, the intensification of transversal connections between states and various Kurdish political movements are examined in this chapter as well. The thesis ends with a general conclusion covering up the debates made throughout the thesis in a summarized and systematic way.

CHAPTER II

CRITICAL GEOPOLITICS AND GEOPOLITICAL DISCOURSES

Geography shapes state policies and in return perceptions of geography shape international relations. Spaces, identities, images and statecraft are all interrelated and it is through these concepts that the world is "seen" and policies can be analyzed through representations. A critical inquiry on the perceptions of statecraft can reveal the reasoning behind policies why certain policies are preferred over the others and it can clarify the obscurities with regard to these choices. For decades, geopolitics appeared as a problem solving theory, but in reality geopolitics has tended to project projected merely conflicts and anxieties of certain great states in certain time frames. Critical geopolitics emerged from as a result of the critical inquiry against this great-power approach of classical geopolitics. This chapter will explain the roots of geopolitics, the foundations of critical geopolitics and the application of this critical inquiry study to the perception of "Kurdistan" as a geographical, political, and thus, as a geopolitical entity.

2.1. What is Geopolitics?

At the dawn of the twentieth century there was a widespread belief that there were dramatic changes in the global economic and political system. A shift had occurred from a capitalist system based on steam, coal, and iron to gas, oil and electricity. American factories had started to implement a Fordist revolution and this had enabled the US to overthrow Britain as the global economic hegemon. The fact that the US was

a land power on a continental scale had put more emphasis on railroad connections which was contrary to traditional European world order based generally on sea transportation. Simply this new type of transportation pointed toward a new relationship between spaces and state politics based more on land-based geopolitical approaches (Heffernan, 2000: 28-29).

This transformation was compounded with an upsurge in economic nationalism, which had begun against the cherished ideal of free trade. Geographical size had gained importance and had started to play an important role in defining national power but European states had a limited space on the European map. This led imperial powers to race for land from 1880s onwards. Starting from 1890s, the European inter-state system went through fundamental changes, defined by bipolar arrangements (Heffernan, 2000: 28-30). A new field of study aspired to make a difference in understanding these three main dimensions of "geopolitical panic", namely differentiation of resources, economic nationalism and imperialist rivalry, within nation-states, their borders, and state capacities. It was Rudolf Kjellen, a Swedish geographer, in 1899 who first introduced "Geopolitics" as a new scientific project (Ó Tuathail, 1994: 259).

The ascendancy of geopolitics can be said to have started in the late nineteenth century. However, the trajectory of political geographic thought can be traced back about 2,300 years. Aristotle had adapted a deterministic environmental study of Greece and pondered about requirements for boundaries and the interrelation between geographical size and territorial power. Greco-Roman geographer Strabo had researched how the Roman state functioned effectively despite its great size (Jones, Jones and Woods, 2004: 4). Sun Tzu, a Chinese general, who wrote between 400-320 BC, illustrated the view of geopolitics as a theater of military action. He especially

emphasized the importance of geopolitical knowledge such as calculating distances and the impact of topography and terrain (Gray and Sloan, 2013: 17). Ibn Haldun (1332 – 1406), a notable Arab historian, noticed the similarity between organisms and the state. He theorized that just like people or communities, the state is born, then it grows, and eventually it gets old and dies. New states are formed in its place after its death, thus, the cycle continues. Thomas Hobbes (1588 – 1679) put forward sovereign states as the principle actors in international politics and Hugo Grotius (1583 – 1645) based the establishment of society on the law of nature (Brauch, n.d.).

Friedrich Ratzel's work in “Laws of the Spatial Growth of States” (1896) laid the foundations for modern geopolitics. Ratzel had a theory of a state as an organic entity. In 1897, in his book *Politische Geographie* (*Political Geography*), Ratzel had used biological metaphors to describe the state; such an understanding had been overwhelmingly influenced by Darwinism. He believed that a state had to either grow or die in a constant struggle for adaptation within a political arena. Kjellen motivated by his opposition to Norwegian independence, believed in a notion of a state similar to Ratzel's. He considered the nation-state as an organism but did not employ biology only as an analogy. He used geopolitics to describe the physical structures of states. Kjellen built upon Ratzel's biological notions and suggested that states are dynamic and naturally grow with power. Culture was seen as the driving force behind the advancement of power. The more spirited and intense the culture, the more right a state had in expanding control over territory. Thus, borders were seen as movable and expandable concepts (Flint, 2006: 20). The state was perceived as an entity larger than individuals or communities residing within it and it was a product of interaction between people and nature that took place over centuries (Heffernan, 2000: 45). Even though

both Kjellen and Ratzel left room for statesmanship in their theories, geopolitics remained largely as a deterministic approach (Owens, n.d.).

The ascendancy of geopolitics became more visible from the nineteenth century until the end of the Second World War. During this period, Halford Mackinder marked a departure from sea-based theories of political power. His new map of the world under "The Natural Seats of Power" supported a new theory known as the Heartland Theory. Mackinder's theory identified a spatial determinism based on land power and land mobility. The German geopolitician, Karl Haushofer, on the other hand, perceived geopolitics as an important tool in education of statecraft and gave it a mission to set and attain political objectives (Haushofer, 2003: 33-35). However, an era of marginalization of geopolitics started after the blunder of the German geopolitics under the brutal and racist regime of the Nazis. Geopolitics was discredited as a serious academic pursuit and any associations with it were heavily criticized.

In the 1950s, an American geopolitician Richard Hartshorne (1899-1992) made an attempt to depoliticize geopolitics and suggested a more functional approach. He argued that the study of geopolitics could be used to analyze internal dynamics and external functions of a state without trying to shape government policies. This new path led geopoliticians to take up questions regarding the ethnicity of people, relations between borders and physical geographic traits, structure of local governances and mapping patterns of states (Jones, Jones and Woods, 2004: 7). Another prominent American geographer, Isaiah Bowman (1878-1950) highlighted the significance of geographers through their detailed work on wide-ranging cartographic material, their capacity to put things together in regional frameworks and, perhaps most importantly, their capacity to go beyond the limits of formal training and thinking creatively on

higher levels of land use policy. According to Bowman, geographical science had a social value that could provide with peace and security under conditions of liberty. Without such knowledge the standard of living could fall and the entire social structure could be fatally weakened (Bowman, 1949: 1-6). After the Nazi's use of geopolitics, the discipline remained wary of modeling and theorizing. It prevailed to be descriptive and empirically driven and had little distinction from mainstream regional geography (Jones, Jones and Woods, 2004: 7).

1970s marked the era of revival for geopolitics due to reintroduction of theory and a more political approach in geography. Interestingly, this change did not emerge within the discipline but from the reflections of new research clusters that eclipsed the functional approach. For example the technical and theoretical innovation of electoral geography introduced geopolitics with the broader development of systems theory. This meant more focus on processes rather than places (Jones, Jones and Woods, 2004: 7).

It can be argued that geopolitics conjures up many images. On the one hand it can encompass wars, empires, and diplomacy and on the other hand it can create images of practices, classification of territories and masses of people. Geopolitics is a relation of power, politics and policy within space, place and territory. Space can be understood as the core concept of the field of geopolitics. While space is traditionally defined as a piece of fixed and immobile territory, place is described as a specific spot in space and territory is perceived as formal demarcated portions of space with specific identities and characteristics (Jones, Jones and Woods, 2004: 3). Territoriality, on the other hand, involves the classification of an area and is based on communication, particularly communication of boundaries. Territoriality also requires an attempt of control over to an area and to things within it as well as outside of it. Symbolic shapes such as the

process of naming, fixed symbols like flags, social practices and identity narratives are crucial in territory formation (Paasi, 2003: 112-114). It is most important to understand geography as something dynamic. The meaning of space, distance, territory and borders can change through factors as technologies or alliances. The change in perception can affect internal and external policies of states and the connection between individuals and groups (Starr, 2013: 439).

In order to comprehend the field of geopolitics, a connection must be made between geopolitics and statesmanship or the practices and representations of territorial spaces. Geopolitics should not be reduced to mere competition over territory or a production of principles to justify such political acts. Since geopolitical thought is based on geography, the discipline examines the world through a spatial perspective and geopoliticians have made claims of "seeing" or "understanding" the whole world. This belief constitutes the world as a transparent space that is see-able. If the world is see-able, than the world could also be know-able. This process of "seeing" and "knowing" the world could only be possible by the educated and white Western elites. This biased view classified the world in to regions and also defined historical trends. This has made geopolitics an outcome of situated knowledge (Flint, 2006: 13-16). Situated knowledge is not abstract truths about the world but reflections of the authors in their particular situations (Ingram and Dodds, 2009: 6). Donna Harraway links feminist objectivity to situated knowledge. She states that situated knowledge is about communities not about individuals. Thus a larger perception can be acquired by being somewhere in particular and through joining of partial views and voices (Harraway, 1988: 590).

The concept of classical geopolitics was introduced by critical geopoliticians in order to define traditional approaches of geopolitics. As Merje Kuus states:

> Classical geopolitics, taken to mean the statist, Eurocentric, balance-of-power conception of world politics that dominated much of the twentieth century, is closely bound up with the discipline of geography. […] It goes back to the birth of self-consciously geopolitical analysis in the nationalism and imperialism of the fin-de-siècle Europe (Kuus, 2009: 2).

The following are the main principles of classical geopolitics: (1) Classical geopolitics has always had a privileged, white, elite Western figure as an author. (2) It proved a very masculine perspective. (3) It opted for labeling and classification of territories because there were "few opportunities for additional European territorial expansion and, in such circumstances, international politics became increasingly focused on "the struggle for relative efficiency, strategic position, and military power" (O'Tuathail 1996: 25). (4) Politics were always state centric and other actors were left out (Flint, 2006: 17). In sum, classical geopolitics focused on a state-centric, static and deterministic account of the impact of geography over politics and favored a one-way determinism as if geography defined politics and not vice-versa. On the contrary, critical geopolitics would attack all these classical foundations by focusing on a dynamic, inter-relational and discursive understanding of the relationship between geography and politics.

2.2. Critical Geopolitics

The concept of "Critical Geopolitics" was first used by Simon Dalby in the 1970s. This critical understanding of the geography-politics relationship can be defined as "a most important and increasingly suggestive area of inquiry, unfolding at the conjuncture of social theory, political geography, and cultural studies" (Ingram, and Dodds, 2009: XI). This new field of study drew inspiration from the works of post-

structuralist thinkers such as Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, and post-colonial theorists such as Homi Bhabha. Critical geopolitics opened the concept of power to a new critical inquiry. Based on Foucauldian genealogy put forth by Michel Foucault, the notion of power was understood to be coercive and disabling but at the same time productive and enabling within the society (Kuus, 2009: 4). Power can be understood as something that is held over others and used as leverage or it can be a conception for getting things done. The former is an instrument of constraint and domination, meanwhile the latter is a tool for potential empowerment. The possession of power is something separate from using that capability. In geo-graphical spatial politics, Foucault sees power as means to justify a particular group's authority over a subject population (Allen, 2003: 96-102). 'Power is everywhere' and 'comes from everywhere' so in this sense it is neither an agency nor a structure (Foucault 1998: 63). Instead power is "a regime of truth". Power derives from accepted notions of the knowledge, scientific understanding and of course the "truth". Foucault uses the terms of power and knowledge to explain that "truth" is of this world and is produced through constraint. Each society has its own discourse of the truth or a regime of truth (Gaventa, 2003).

The greatest contributions of Foucault towards the discipline of geopolitics can be labeled by two key concepts: discourse and governmentality. Discourse is defined as "referring to the ensemble of social practices through which the world is made meaningful but which are also dynamic and contested." (Jones, Jones and Woods, 2004: 11-12). In other words, discourses provide the meaning to the concepts and no concept itself can be immune from a discursive definition. The second concept, governmentality, is about how a government renders a society governable through the use of some apparatuses of knowledge. Hence, the control over knowledge turns out to be a

significant source of power. The importance of both discourse and governmentality lie in their exploration of space, because space itself becomes a tool in exercise of power. Foucault rejected power as something possessed and focused on how it is practiced and circulated among society. His work put forward the notion of space as fundamental in any exercise of power (Jones, Jones and Woods, 2004: 12). Considering geographical knowledge as an element of power, the political neutrality of geography is merely an illusion and that critical examination of the geopolitical discipline was necessary (Kuus, 2009: 4).

In addition to these two concepts, other two concepts are borrowed from the writings of post-structuralist thinkers, Deleuze and Guattari, namely the concepts of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. According to Deleuze and Guattari, the consequential processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization between biopolitical and the sovereign; they argued that "[f]orces of deterritorialization are continually being set in motion by a form of sovereignty that operates strategically by combining and entering into new relations with these forces in an effort to create new political assemblances" (Reid, 2009: 136). To put it in geopolitics, deterritorialization means the deconstruction of a particular discourse on territory, while reterritorialization refers to the redefinition of territory or emergence of a new discourse on that particular territory. They are intertwined and dynamic. These two concepts can take place within the boundaries of states as well as outside borders. Any change in perception of identity or ethnic makeup as well as the reconstruction of territorial understandings start by deterritorialization of the previous concepts and continue with reterritorialization. For example, the debates on the eradication of state borders through increasing permeability via globalization could be perceived as a deterritorialization, while emergence of new

borders (i.e., local or sub-state level) constitute the process of reterritorialization (Flint, 2012: 131-133).

It should be noted that critical geopolitics borrows from post-structuralist theories, but it does not emerge exclusively from it. For critical geopolitics, classical geopolitics is not a critical but a problem-solving approach. The main function of classical geopolitics is to become aware of problems, help perceive their reality. The state was the focus of classical geopolitics. The international relations of the time consider little of the state vs. society complexes (Cox, 1981: 127) The main purpose of critical geopolitics, on the other hand, is to break these simplistic and dichotomical territorial representations such as us vs. them, security vs. insecurity, order vs. anarchy, etc., to create a new space for debate and action (Kuus, 2009: 5-6). Although Richard Ashley was not a critical geopolitician, his *anarchy problematique* is an earlier example of the study of deconstruction. He analyses the concept of anarchy meanwhile searching for theoretical as well as the practical notions through discourses (Ashley, 1988: 231-233). While classical geopolitics seeks to treat geography as a given non-discursive terrain, critical geopolitics seeks to uncover the notion of power within geopolitical knowledge. According to critical geopolitics, the conventional conceptions dominating the twentieth century geopolitics was a pan-optic form of power and knowledge that sought to aid the statecraft of great powers. Its narrative was declarative and imperative. Critical geopolitics seeks to problematize epistemological assumptions and ontological commitments of geopolitics. It also seeks to deconstruct hegemonic discourses and question relations of power (Ó Tuathail, 2000: 166). Discourses are not taken as real truths but perceived as versions of describing, writing, and representing geographical information and international politics. Foucault perceives discourse as a system of

representation. By discourse he means ‘a group of statements’ that provide a way for language. It is a tool to represent knowledge on a particular topic in a particular time of history. Simply, it is a production of language through a language (Hall, 2005: 72) The creation of geopolitical knowledge by intellectuals, institutions, and practicing statesmen become the subject of analysis (Ó Tuathail, Dalby, and Routledge, 2003: 3). In this regard, critical geopolitics has a much wider and deeper approach compared to geopolitics. This is also the reason why the 1990s produced many analyses on the complicity of geography and geographers in colonialism, imperialism, nationalism, and Cold War superpower rivalry (Kuus, 2009: 4).

According to critical geopolitics, globalization, informationalization and risk society have created a post-modern geopolitical condition in world politics. These transform the boundaries of modern interstate systems by establishing new interconnections between places around the world and alter local, national and global relations. Even though the seeds of this post-modern geopolitical structure have been planted in the 1970s, it is best considered a phenomenon of late 1980s and early 1990s because the three processes of globalization, informationalization and the construction of risk society came together in such a distinct way that they created a new political environment (Ó Tuathail, 2000: 167-168).

Critical geopolitics does not examine identities or actions of pre-given political subjects but it investigates how the political subjects have emerged in the first place. Unlike classical geopolitics, sovereign state is the result of discourses of sovereignty, security, and identity. Thus, the states' foreign policy practices construct its identity and interests. Identity politics regarding geographical spaces have been one of the most researched practices and it is believed that borders cannot be perceived solely as lines

marking political entities. It is within these boundaries that entities are defined as the self or the other. Borders are boundaries but they can also allow movement that reproduces, adapts, or alters entities' identities (Kuus, 2009: 7-8). John Agnew puts this simply as follows: “borders are primarily the result of cultural borrowing about how states should be laid out. […] Borders thus make the nation rather than vice versa” (Agnew, 2007: 399).

Geopolitics has associated boundary marking with the spatial extent of a state. The pre-globalized era of the Westphalian state used boundaries to show the exercise of power of a state within a particular territory but the trans-boundary movement of people, goods and ideas the sovereignty of states have been opened to challenge. During the colonial age, the geometrical lines drawn in European capitals with little knowledge and care of spatial patterns of ethnic and tribal distribution have led to artificial identities leading to strife and civil war. Boundaries should be understood as dynamic patterns and the demarcation of lines, both social and spatial, affect people's lives, identities of communities and interaction with others beyond specific locations. These lines demarcate the extent of inclusion and exclusion of members of groups extending from local to international. Thus, they have a prominent role on politics of identity. Identity cannot be a deterritorialized concept as power emerges from territorial bases. For example if a state grows weak, the focus of identity switches to local, global, religious or cultural, most of which are determined by some form of territorial compartmentalization. Based on this territoriality of identity, the concept of boundary has to take three dimensions into account. (1) Hierarchical nature of boundaries should be recognized and allow different types of territorial boundaries such as local and national or state and municipal. (2) Social and spatial boundaries are as much part of boundaries as

organization and portions of territories. (3) Boundaries are multidisciplinary (Agnew and Corbridge, 1995: 125-135).

Geopolitical discourses are related to the context or the discursivity of representations of space rather than what is pronounced or penned, what is spoken or written by political elites. Spatial practices and images are dialectically associated with each other. This means that a careful analysis can reveal persisting themes and representations that guide and constrain conditions at a certain period of time (Agnew and Corbridge, 1995: 47). A periodization of geopolitical discourse is a simplification of complex flow of representations and practices; therefore, each period holds the emergence as well as the demise of other epochs within itself. Periodization helps greatly in understanding prevailing hegemonies, dominant sets of rules in governing that correlate with the economic, technological and social trends. John Agnew has identified three epochs of geopolitics: civilizational, naturalized and ideological (Agnew, 1998: 46). More will be explained about these epochs later on in this chapter.

Four points should be kept in mind when concentrating on geopolitical discourses. Firstly, they are not just specific influences of foreign policy situations; they are present in everyday descriptions of the world. Second, they involve practical reasoning. Practical geopolitical reasoning relies on common-sense narratives and distinctions rather than formal models. Third, geopolitical knowledge is reductive as information is suppressed in order to fit into a priori geopolitical category. Finally, not all political elites have equal power on how political-economic space is represented (Flint, 2006: 13-17).

In addition to the chronological classification, critical geopolitics also divides geopolitical discourse into four based on the actors producing it: practical, formal,

structural and popular geopolitics. Practical geopolitics examines practices of everyday state craft. It examines geographical understandings and perceptions of states and how they help formulate functioning policies. Formal geopolitics is constructed by the academia, think-tanks or strategic institutions as geopolitical thoughts or geopolitical traditions. Structural geopolitics involves structural processes and tendencies that effect states foreign policies such as globalization and informationalization. Finally, popular geopolitics is geographical politics created and debated by the various media-shaping popular cultures. It includes social construction and collective understandings of transnational and national perceptions (Ó Tuathail, 1999: 109-113).

Critical geopolitics has shown successful engagements and proven itself to be important tool in understanding the geopolitical arena. However, there are also some limitations of critical geopolitics to be studied in detail. John Agnew has made four suggestions to ameliorate these limitations. First, Agnew believes that greater attention should be paid to histories of geopolitics within non-western geopolitical imaginations and polities. Second, critical geopolitics should further engage in post-colonial debates. Third, the concept of the "state" is not dissolving under effects of globalization therefore more research should be conducted towards perceptions of "state", "territory", and "community". Finally, military affairs and strategies should be open to more scrutiny as geopolitical knowledge is vastly used by military organizations. Critical geopolitics has opened new and exciting fields of research and teaching, thus as it continues to grow it can answer intellectual disposition that is relentlessly questioning and open ended (Dodds, 2001: 471-479).

All in all, this section has attempted to define geopolitics, both in its classical and critical understanding. While classical geopolitical discourses focus on a deterministic

and static understanding of the impact of geography over politics, critical geopolitical discourses argue that while geography have an impact on politics, this impact is not natural or given; rather it is discursive or constructed. In other words, as geography influence politics, the political discourses also give new meanings to geography. In other words, it is mainly the discourse that prioritizes certain territories over the others, gives meaning to space and place and shapes and is shaped by the actors' spatial perceptions. Having said this, the rest of this chapter examines three geopolitical discourses in a chronological sequence in order to demonstrate the dominant spatial configuration of certain periods. The findings of this examination would be used in the coming chapters in a way to understand the discourses developed by regional actors (i.e. the states) on the conceptualization of the Kurds in general and the spatial construction of "Kurdistan" in particular.

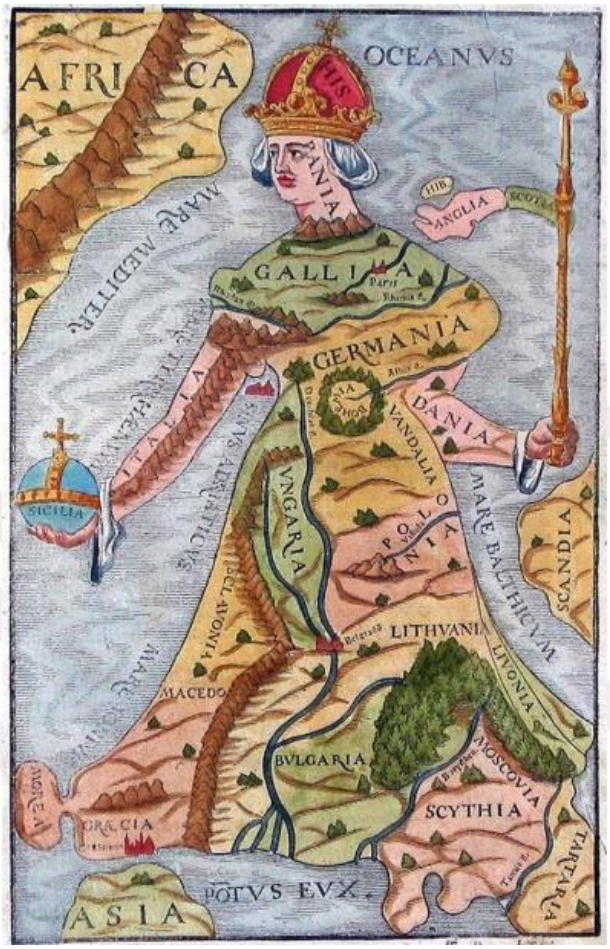
2.2.a. Civilizational Geopolitics

The first geographical discourse put forward by Greek geographers suggested three continents – Africa, Europe and Asia – separated by bodies of water. As geography progressed, Europeans realized that European and the Asian contents did not fit into borders clearly cut by water. However, the division of the continents remained as the concept of Europe changed. Europe transferred itself from a physical-geographical region in to a cultural region, as a result of the Catholic Church abandoning claims to universality and providing a narrowly defined Christendom (Agnew, 1998: 52). It was in the eleventh century that the church defined a connotation of the term Christendom. Pope Urban II specifically expressed the idea for urging Christians to crusade Seljuk Turks (Heikki, 1998: 23).

Perceiving Europe as a unified political entity came from the idea of unified Christian community and the global inheritance of the universal might of the Roman Empire. Thus, the use of Europe was arbitrary and variable. For some, it solely meant continental unity, for others Europe was something political, intellectual or religious. In addition to this, the unity above all enhanced attitudes towards the enemies, or "the others", such as Arabs, the Mongols or the Turks (Heikki, 1998: 29-30). The differences between the Christian and the Muslim world created a sense of deep chasm within the European perspective of the world (Agnew, 1998: 52).

During this time frame Europe witnessed designation of imaginative maps which highlighted the uniqueness and the supremacy of the continent. For example the maps of Europe depicted as a queen was a symbol of both dominance and fertility, associated with ocean based imperial expansion (Figure 1). As Bassin (1991: 7) explains, "this imagery was reinforced by the European voyages of discovery, which demonstrated the self-evident initiative, vision and zeal of Europeans." As centuries past, the feeling of superiority gradually increased and incorporated historical reasoning. Simply, the European history was perceived to be full of accomplishments, which eclipsed those of other nations, and destined Europeans for greatness (Agnew, 1998: 54).

Map 2.1. Map of Europe depicted as a queen (Maptitude, 2013)



The sense of grandeur led to an understanding of the world as "available" to use by Europeans and colonialism emerged. The difference between Europe and other continents was reinforced by the dichotomy of homeland and peripheries or frontiers and colonialism was rationalized by "the burden of the white men" (Agnew and Corbridge, 1995: 88).

Around the nineteenth century, the nation-states became the most perfected version of the European difference. In time, states reworked dynastic and regional identities as national cultural identities and combined classical motifs with local ones. Nationalities were drawn from a common but an ancient past. States became delimited

territories that balanced one and other in the international political arena. The external borders of European states were thus becoming an unlimited political space open for conquest. This new European outlook and agenda created a world of imperial rivalry (Agnew and Corbridge, 1995: 90-92). By the end of the nineteenth century each imperialist and great state developed a geopolitical discourse to meet its own cultural, geographical, and strategic intentions. The discourse of civilizational geopolitics categorizes the people's mental maps according to the concept of civilization to which people inhabiting that particular region are perceived to part of a particular civilization (Bilgin, 2004: 270). This resulted in the understanding that some civilizations, such as the European civilization, are superior to others.

One of the most important representatives of this discourse was Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840–1914), an admiral in the US navy. In his work, he made a distinction between land and sea powers. Mahan described six factors that affect the progress and preservation of sea powers. These are geographical position, interconnected waters, exposed land boundaries, overseas bases, and the ability to control significant trade routes; the physical shape of the state, such as the nature of the coastline; extent of territory; size of population; national character; and the type of the regime (Mahan, 2010). Mahan’s geopolitical vision for the US became the foundation on which many geopolitical thinkers built upon during the Cold War. The main intention of Mahan's work was to strengthen US influence and reach, without facing a conflict with Britain (Flint, 2006: 18-20). Just like Robert Cox’s idea that “theory is always for someone and for some purpose” (Cox, 1981: 128),

The British geographer Halford Mackinder (1841 - 1947) was interested in issues such as global strategy and the balance of power between states which greatly suited the

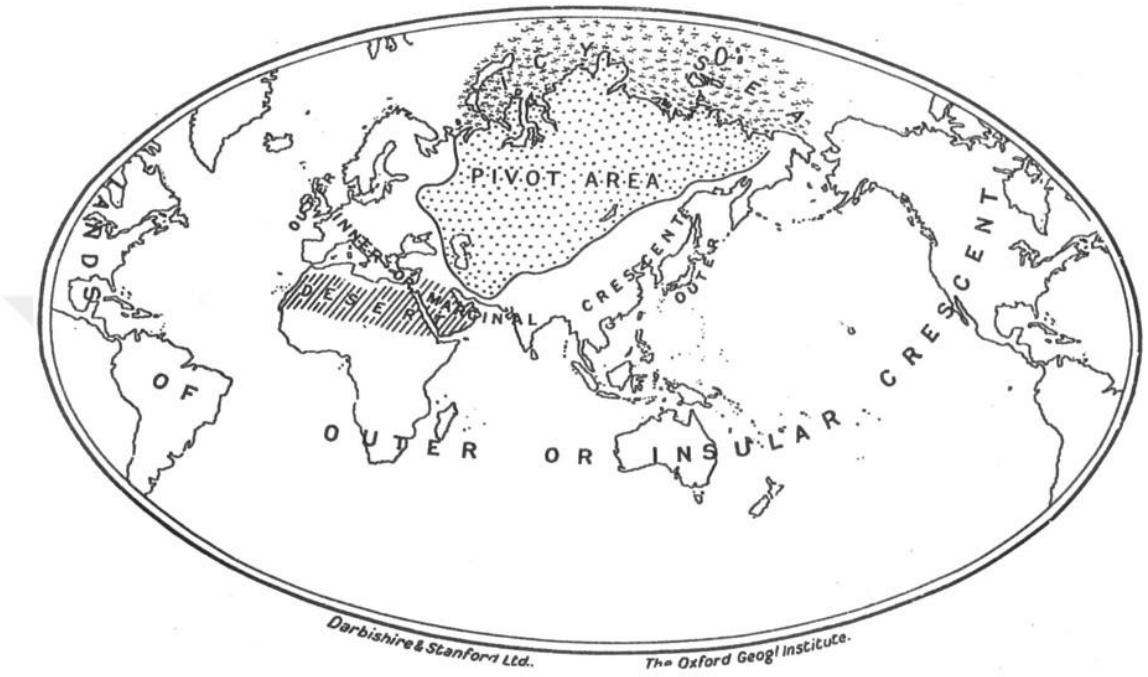
British foreign policy. Influenced by works of Mahan but contrary to his sea-based analysis, Mackinder viewed the world as a closed political system. He suggested that age of exploration had come to end causing the balance of power to shift among the states. His work centered on the interconnectedness of states that are to have major conflicts between land and sea powers (Jones, Jones and Woods, 2004: 5-6).

One of Mackinder's major works, “Geographical Pivot on History,” written in 1904, brought three major innovations to the field of geopolitics. First, geopolitics became a way of seeing the whole world as a political space. However, this political space was to be determined by only the elite, educated, and privileged white men, capable of understanding, explaining and altering history and laws. Second, Mackinder's work put forth a map of “The Natural Seats of Power” in which he categorizes huge chunks of land under single identity (Figure 2). New terminology such as “pivot area”, “heartland”, “World Island” and “inner and marginal crescent” were introduced and adapted to define these new spaces. The heartland was the center of the world, Eurasia. The World Island included Europe, Asia and Africa, a vast land that included most the world’s resources. Finally, Mackinder underlined three epochs of history. He named these epochs after Columbus’ discovery of the New World (pre-Columbian, Columbian and post-Columbian) and used dominant power of mobility as the defining factor between epochs. He believed that sea-powers always held the upper hand but as technology developed that fact could be reversed by railways, especially if one could control the heartland (Mackinder, 1904: 421-437). Based on these explanations, he developed his famous dictum:

> “Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland.
>
> Who rules the Heartland commands the World Island.

Who rules the World Island commands the World." (Mackinder, 1962: 241)

Map 2.2: Mackinder's natural seats of power (*Solis, 2015.)*



Mackinder's contribution is an important example of classical geopolitics. He uses a very Western-centric view of the world to put forth an intellectual objective, which is very biased and is used to justify the imperial aspirations of one particular state. He uses fetching terms and phrases to influence foreign policies. However, Mackinder was unable to make an impact on the British foreign policy but his work influenced the ideas of Karl Haushofer and American policies in the following decades (Flint, 2006: 20-21).

All in all, civilizational geopolitical discourse was based on the dichotomous representation of Western civilization vs. the rest. Accordingly, European civilization was suggested to be superior to the others because of the specific historical patterns that the European peoples followed. Perception of nation-state as a European type of perfect actor of international relations was also quite evident. Finally, the civilizational

discourse focused on the geopolitical division between the civilized vs. the uncivilized, which also legitimized the control of the former over the latter under the form of "the civilizing mission". In other words, the civilized had the "responsibility" of "civilizing" the uncivilized and this was the white man's burden. Therefore, civilizational geopolitical discourse used civilization as a medium to distinguish between achievers and under-achievers.

2.2.b. Naturalized Geopolitics

From the nineteenth century to the end of the World War II, geopolitics was defined by the "natural" character of the states. This can be understood as scientifically akin to the new biological advancement that took place in the same time frame. The foundation of naturalized geopolitics is based on the division between imperial and colonized peoples. This distinction was born from an understanding of states as "organic" beings; thus, states had "biological" needs for territories and resources in order to survive. The world was perceived as a closed system in which states gained political and economic achievements in other states expenses. Darwin's theory of the "survival of the fittest" had a profound effect on naturalized geopolitics. Natural selection transformed into the understanding of "the survival of the fittest" in the social world, which was then used to justify the imperialist aims of the European world. Distinguishing races gradually led the way to racist ideologies (Agnew and Corbridge, 1995: 56-57).

The harmony of the state and the nation, natural political boundaries, and economic nationalism all contributed to a state's wellbeing in the international arena. The harmony of the nation meant uniting its peoples around an ideology. For example in

Russia this was *mestorazvitie*, in Germany it was *heimat* and in the United States, states united around the concept of "American-ness". Natural political boundaries implied that historical boundaries were not always the proper borders. The possibility of using natural features to specify the natural area of states also enabled states to question existing borders. Finally, economic nationalism can be defined as organic conservatism. Individuals and firms were all responsible for the state and had to act according the greater good of the state (Agnew, 1998: 60-61).

An important figure that shaped naturalized geopolitics was Karl Haushofer (1896-1946), a German general and a geopolitician. His military career required his presence in Japan, where his understanding of discipline, military rule and obedience to a leader had developed. These ideas reflected onto his studies as a geopolitician. As Haushofer progressed in his career, he came in contact with Adolf Hitler. Hitler and Haushofer shared the idea that the Versailles Treaty had crippled Germany and the state was in need of Lebensraum or living space. In his search to empower Germany, Haushofer established the journal *Zeitschrift fur Geopolitik* (*Journal of Geopolitics*). Like Mackinder, he believed in educating leaders of state and the youth to have a real effect on conflicts since geopolitics was a way to provide realistic insight and make feasible predictions. His work merged ideas of social Darwinism with the geopolitical thinking of Friedrich Ratzel and Halford Mackinder. In essence, this understanding perceived international political arena as a struggle of survival and states needed living spaces to exist (Ó Tuathail, Dalby and Routledge, 1998: 20).

The Nazis had taken this geopolitical study to a very imperialistic and a racist practice under Adolf Hitler's leadership. Toward the end of the World War II, the Allied States and the USA presented Karl Haushofer as the brain behind the blueprint for

Germany's world domination. In his defense Haushofer stated that he was trying to educate the youth on world affairs and his work was legitimate geopolitics. The defense raised questions about the legitimacy geopolitics as a whole and the brutal regime of Nazis tainted the associations with geopolitics (Ó Tuathail, Dalby and Routledge, 1998: 21-23). It should also be noted that Haushofer did not point to racial discrimination and never joined the Nazi party. When asked about Hitler he would describe Hitler as a half-educated man who never fully understood the principles of geopolitics and focused on catch words which he did not fully comprehend (Barnes and Abrahamsson, 2015: 65-67).

In sum, naturalized geopolitics perceived state as an organism having the basing need of survival. In order to survive the state required to expand since without additional resources it would be impossible to feed and meet the needs of the people. Since expansive policies are legitimate, power accumulation was required to perform expansion. Thus only the strongest states could survive in the continuous political struggle. This understanding divides the world into two being the colonizers who tended to expand and the colonized whose duty was to serve the colonizer. Hence the naturalized geopolitical discourse focused on racial classifications based on the supremacy of the white race over the others and legitimized the pressure exerted by the white race over the others.

2.2.c. Ideological Geopolitics

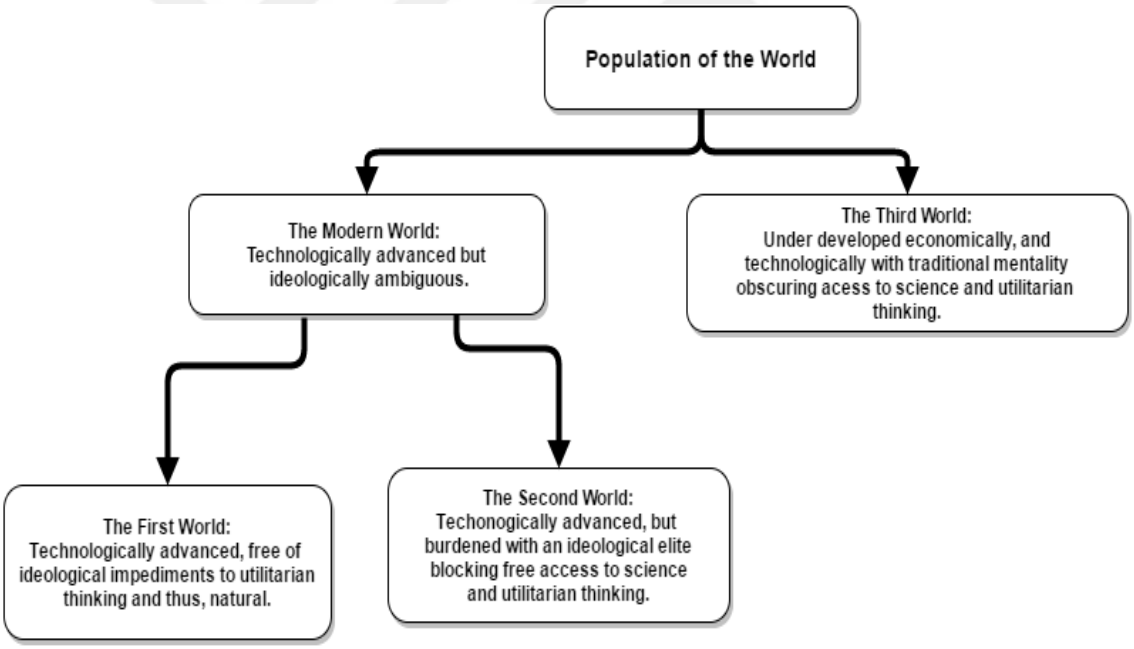
The end of the World War II started a new era in geopolitics. Geopolitical imagination centered around two main conceptions on how to organize the international political economy; communism and capitalism. Two different sets of values promoted by two different victorious states of the World War II competed for world domination. Ideology is defined as a living connection between men and the world, as well as an unconscious relation such as philosophy by Louis Althusser (Brewster: 1969). The ideology put forth by the US had more widespread acceptance but it strongly needed the presence of the other – Soviet Union - as a point of comparison and threat (Agnew and Corbridge, 1995: 65).

From a practical geopolitical point of view, the friendly relations between the US and the USSR that had existed prior to the World War II, was terminated and this collapse in relations demanded a new mode of interpretation. Stalin had attempted for a sphere of influence in Eastern Europe and Western powers were alarmed about Soviet expansionism. However, this was stated to be a natural move for the Soviets by Stalin since the war costed for more than any other state. The Soviet leader was seeking to secure governments' loyalty towards Soviet core (Dodds, 2003: 208-209). In 1946, George Kennan (1904-2005), an American diplomat serving in Moscow, had written his famous "Long Telegram" drawing attention to the differences of two very different societies that could have little prospect of long-term harmony. In this telegram Kennan presented communism as a disease or a parasite in need of a cure (Kennan, 1946).

The period between 1945 and 1991 resembled a chess match with a move from the US and a counter-move from the Soviets. "Anti-American" or "anti-Soviet" discourse became central to both nations construction of identity. None of these

ideologies were territorial. Each had an aspiration to be ideologically spread across the globe, which also created security issues within borders. Both states felt a threat from extraneous as catalysts to domestic subversions. For example, as the United States appealed to the public opinion since legitimizing her foreign policy became one of her top priorities. Thus, exaggerating vulnerability and emphasizing a need for self-defense became a crucial political discourse. An important consequence of this shared vulnerability was the idealization of each other. Simply put, the rival was "super-potent" in the eyes of the adversary (Agnew and Corbridge, 1995: 104-105).

Figure 2.1. The threefold categorization of the world (Agnew and Corbridge, 1995: 103).



The two ideologies – communism and capitalism – contributed to emergence of a new concept of a "Third World" which signified old colonies or non-aligned states. Thus, the world was divided into blocks, and spaces were defined as "friendly" or "threatening". Pre-modern – modern polarity and ideas of national security from previous geopolitical discourses were reworked into state politics as actual places became meaningful thorough their representations within these geopolitical categories.

Simply put, the superpowers recognized the world according to their interests. The threefold categorization of the world (Figure 3) can be explained as the First World meaning capitalist and technologically modern countries with a liberal ideology. The Second World was socialist which meant that it was technologically advanced but not ideologically free. Finally the Third World was aspiring to be developed nor liberal and open to influence (Agnew and Corbridge, 1995: 103).

Ideological conflicts produced a novel geopolitical terminology such as containment, domino effects and hegemonic stability, which were used to define strategies of superpowers. Containment was a policy of preventing the spread of communism. Domino effect meant that if a state came under communist control than the surrounding states would fall into communism as well. Hegemonic stability theorized that the international system would be more stable under the single dominant world power. All these concepts played a part in naturalizing the understanding of space and global politics for Americans and others. They also took local conflicts and externalized them into global conflicts. For example, President Eisenhower had used the domino effect in the mid-1950s to describe the possible effects of South Vietnam in the hands of the communists. A local incident was perceived as a threat by a super-power, thus required a military action (Agnew and Corbridge, 1995: 103).

The 1970s witnessed a discursive change in the United States. Accordingly, interstate cooperation and a necessity for a benevolent hegemon in world economy were put forward. A justification was created under images of “fatherhood”. An American leadership would provide the public goods, and in times of need, would enforce international rules of equality. In general, Cold War politics – the polarity between the Soviet Union and the United States of America - helped secure and reinforce a set of

geographical identities while disciplining domestic social and cultural differences with in these spaces (Agnew and Corbridge, 1995: 112).

It is important to note that the practical geopolitics of this era was very much affected by formal geopolitical thinking. As a consequence of the rejection toward geopolitics after the Nazi influence, very few geopoliticians continued their work. However, the earlier works of geopoliticians was enough to fuel important individuals, resulting in the revival of geopolitics as a study. Cold War officials, such as George Kennan, were inspired by geopolitical views of the world politics. The desire to contain communism was a reflection of American concern toward the geo-power of the Soviet Union. Saul Cohen, published *Geography and Politics in a Divided World* (1973), which was an analysis of the post-war international system. His work reflected geopolitical ideas of Mackinder and his purpose was to question the American containment policy as well as the perception of the Soviet Union as a land power. It was the work of Henry Kissinger that truly contributed to the revival of geopolitics. Kissinger, troubled by the Soviets strategic presence in Africa and the Middle East, used geopolitical vocabulary to describe the potentially dangerous situation. This encouraged other academicians and authors to return to the ideas and languages of geopolitics and encourage the US government to indulge in the study (Dodds, 2003: 211-212). Harvey Sicheman has pointed out that geopolitics does not easily permit peace but that it cannot be put off due to its nature. Geopolitics can be manipulated to assure peace but it can never be abolished (Sicheman, 2002: 17).

All in all, geopolitical discourses have been part of the political history since thousands of years. Its emergence as a discipline in the twentieth century has opened new doors to comprehending the international political arena. Critical geopolitics that

emerged from classical geopolitics has shown ways to classify views, processes and open them to new scrutiny. This new perspective provided by critical geopolitics can help understand the Kurdish question and the reasons as to why a “Kurdistan” could not be established in the Middle East. The use of critical geopolitics in answering this question will be twofold. First of all, critical geopolitics is used to understand how and why different actors could not create a unified geopolitical vision of Kurdistan, whose borders have never been clearly defined. In doing that the deterritorialization and reterritorialization of the notion of Kurdistan over time and according to different actors will be examined in the coming chapters. Secondly, the civilizational and ideological geopolitical discourses are borrowed from critical geopolitics in order to show how the states chosen as regional actors of this thesis used these two discourses in a way to prevent the emergence of Kurdistan as an autonomous if not independent geopolitical entity and to discredit Kurds either as having no competence for self-government or having exerted a significant ideological/political/security threat for the “territorial” integrity of the home states. In other words, the next two chapters attempt to link this theoretical framework to understand the (non-)emergence of “Kurdistan” as a geopolitical entity.

	Civilizational Geopolitics	Naturalized Geopolitics	Ideological Geopolitics
Period	1800-1870	1870-1945	1945-1990
Thinkers	Mahan, Mackinder	Ratzel, Haushofer	Kennan, Kissinger
Dominant Actor	Britain	Germany	The US
Dominant Idea	Superiority of European civilization; the reason of this superiority is the peculiar history of Europe; nation-state as the most developed political unit	Superiority of white race; states as living organisms; the impact of geographical factors on global positioning of states, geographical determinism	Superiority of liberal values (human rights, democracy) vs. superiority of communist values (anti-imperialism, destructive democracy), geopolitics based on doctrines
Geopolitical Space	Civilized vs. Uncivilized	Imperialist vs. Colonized	Capitalist vs. Communist (until 1970s) First World, Second World, Third World (1970s onwards)

Table 2.1. A table summarizing the three eras of critical geopolitics

CHAPTER III

THE IDEA OF "KURDISTAN" AND THE OBSTACLES IN FRONT OF ITS TERRITORIALIZATION BETWEEN 1919 AND 1950

Until the end of the World War I, most of the Kurds were living in two Middle Eastern Empires, being the Ottoman Empire and Iran (which, unlike the Ottoman Empire, was ruled by different dynasties, namely the Safavid, Afshar, Zend and Qajar dynasties from the sixteenth until the twentieth centuries). The social life of the Kurds was generally organized through feudal clans living in various eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire including Bitlis, Dersim, Diyarbakır, Hakkari, Mosul, Mamuretülaziz (Elazığ), Van as well as in the territories from the West of Urmiye Lake to Iran's Khuzestan region. After the World War I, the region witnessed a significant reterritorialization under mandate regimes, semi-independent and independent states. The period between 1919 and 1950 witnessed the emergence and the development of the Kurdish question in different Middle Eastern states including Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria.

This chapter examines the factors that hampered the emergence of "Kurdistan" as a politically independent and geopolitically delimited entity in the Middle East, after the World War I until 1960. Accordingly, lack of a unified imagining of "Kurdistan", the tribal conflicts among various Kurdish tribes, the influence of emerging "nation"-states and the security concerns of the ruling elite of these states after the construction of new borders influenced the failure of defining "Kurdistan" as a geopolitical entity. Moreover,

in this period, a civilizational geopolitical discourse established by the colonial administrators and the ruling elites of the newly-established states emphasizing the uncivilized side of the Kurds and their disability of self-government was evident. Hence, in terms of critical geopolitics, this chapter first focuses on the impact of continuous deterritorialization and reterritorialization of the region between 1919 and 1950 on the perception of "Kurdistan" and, secondly, it examines the civilizational geopolitical discourse perceiving the Kurds as an uncivilized tribal community that lacks the ability for self-government. In doing that, this chapter follows a chronological sequence starting with the Kurdish political entities in the late Ottoman Empire and proceeding with the impact of the World War I and the mandate system afterwards, the establishment of semi-independent and independent political entities in the Middle East and the division of the Kurdish community among these newly-established territorial states.

3.1. The Kurdish Political Entities in the Late Ottoman and Qajar Empires

For the last few centuries, the Kurds have lived between and the Zagros chain, stretching from the northwest to the southeast. The territories from the northern regions of Lake Van towards the southern plains and highland plateaus in the East had traditionally been populated by the Kurds. It is difficult to discern whether the identity of the people has defined Kurdistan or the perceived Kurdish territories have defined who the Kurds are (Kaya, 2012: 105). Although the pre-Islamic time for the Kurds still remains with many questions, most Kurds believe that they are the descendants of the Medes. This is also the starting point for most nineteenth and early twentieth century travelers and writers. The Kurdish history is said to begin with the conquest of Niniveh in 612 BC (O'Shea, 2004: 57-58). The primary tribal character of the Kurdish social

structure has made it difficult to define the Kurds as well Kurdish people have not belonged to a single religion or have not spoken a single Kurdish language; there are different religions/sects and dialects in the region. Most of the Kurds are Sunni-Hanafi Muslims but there also Shafi'is, Twelver Shiites, extremist Shiites (*ghulat*), Alevis, the *Ahl-e Haqq* (People of the Truth) and Yezidis (Van Bruinessen, 1992: 23). The dialect generally spoken in the northern and northwestern parts of the region described as Kurdistan is called Kurmanji; while the southern dialect is named as Sorani and Southeastern dialect as Sanandaji. The region described as Kurdistan has always drawn the attention of the empires surrounding it. However, none could maintain sovereignty throughout the entire Kurdish territories, thus it was divided by the borders of surrounding states, such as the Ottoman Empire and the Persian Empire (Van Bruinessen, 1992: 11-13).

The Ottoman Empire and Iran, ruled by different dynasties, had exercised forms of indirect rule over Kurdistan and this has had a significant impact on the social and the political organization of its peoples. The specific formation of tribal life has been effected by the interaction between different Kurdish societies, empires and eventually the nation-states that emerged or constructed in the region after the World War I. Over the past four centuries, the size and number of tribes have changed but the larger tribes have protected their integrity and survived in the hostile environment over time and it were these tribes that have shaped the lifestyle in the region they described as Kurdistan (Van Bruinessen, 2002: 2-4).

The Kurdish emirates, founded in the region, were generally in the form of chiefdoms that emerged as coalition of tribes led by dynasties of chieftains and they were officially recognized by the Ottoman Empire and Iran. Chieftains were known as

aghas; these were the notables with whom Kurdish primordial loyalties lay. The seyyids, who were the alleged descendants of the Prophet Mohammad had a significant degree of religious authority and were respected by the Muslim Kurds (Van Bruinessen, 1992: 6, 343). During the Ottoman-Safavid rivalry over the region in the early sixteenth century, Kurdish tribes recognized Ottoman sovereignty, particularly during the reign of Selim I and under the influence of a respected Kurdish notable and Ottoman statesmen, İdris-i Bitlisî, who had been sent by the Ottoman Sultan to convince the Kurdish notables to recognize the Ottoman sovereignty (Bayır, 2016: 29). A crucial factor as to why Kurds chose the Ottomans over the Safavids was that the Kurds belonged to the Sunni sect of Islam and recognized the Caliph/Sultan as the supreme authority against the Shia Safavid Empire. An equally important factor was that Ottomans offered greater power and autonomy to the Kurdish chieftains unlike the Safavids which attempted to eradicate local autonomy of the emirates (Kaya, 2012: 107). After the destruction of the Aqqoyunlu confederation, the Safavid Shah Ismail I attempted to eliminate the local Kurdish chieftains and appoint Safavid governors as local rulers. If some power was to be given to the local people it was not to be placed in the hands of the traditional families but to their rivals with lesser statutes. Therefore, the Kurds disfavored the Safavid rule and preferred Ottoman rule instead (Özoğlu, 2004: 63-64).

In the reign of Suleiman I of the Ottoman Empire, an imperial decree in 1533 combined nine Kurdish principalities as part of the Diyarbakir province (Kaya, 2012: 108). Although, at first instance, this process seemed to have a centralizing effect that bothers the Kurdish chieftains, the local autonomy of Kurdish emirates was largely preserved. Even, through their interactions with the Ottomans, the courts of Kurdish emirates have come to resemble smaller models of the Ottoman courts. The Kurdish

emirates of this period were autonomous units directed by the emir who was exempted from paying revenue tax to the Ottoman government (Van Bruinessen, 2002: 4-7).

The Ottoman Empire saw no reason in trying to assimilate the Kurdish emirates. They had given the Kurds a vassal system in order secure the Eastern borders of the Empire. Instead of having the Ottoman armies come to the border for smaller conflicts, it was much more advantageous and economic to have the Kurdish emirs dealt with these incidents. Ottomans also ensured that the local government should remain in the hands of the same families. This guaranteed the loyalty of the emirs as they needed government's authority to stay in power (Doğan, 2011: 36-38).

Kurdish tribal association strengthened territorial attachment both in local and regional levels. It is believed that the Kurds had a sense of common identity long before the age of nationalism, even though they lacked religious/cultural unity. The preservation of this common identity is thought to have been made possible through the geographical inaccessibility of the region which restricted contact with the outsiders. As the Ottoman and Safavid empires rivaled over Eastern Anatolia, Kurdish tribes often changed their allegiances, which resulted in no complete integration to any political or cultural formation of the sovereign empires. In other words, there was a nascent common Kurdish identity in this period; however, it was not as strong as overcoming the tribal identity. This means that instead of linking their identity to a territorial entity, the Kurds first and foremost emphasized their tribal identity (Kaya, 2012: 107).

This system of local governance more or less endured until the nineteenth century, when the Ottoman attempts for centralization increased. As a result, the region described as Kurdistan, which had vaguely defined before the nineteenth century, was begun to be defined more clearly, which is quite visible in the Ottoman dictionaries and lexicons

printed in the nineteenth century. Indeed, *Kamus-u Fransevi* (French Dictionary) published in 1883 described Kurdistan as "the country of Kurds" without referencing to a specific territory (Şemseddin Sami, 1883: 883). However, *Lugat-ı Tarihiye ve Coğrafiye* (Historical and Geographical Dictionary), published in one year after, defined Kurdistan as the territories between Armenia, Al-Jazeera, Iraq and Turkistan, thus providing a territorial explanation. What is more, this dictionary depicted Kurdistan and its people as well. Accordingly, the Kurdish population was estimated to be around 350,000 and the Kurdish people were described as uneducated and rude nomads. However it was also stated that nothing can be said about their courage, humility and hospitality. A brief history of the region was also added, mentioning Selim I's policy to use the Sunni Kurds against Safavid Persia (Ahmed Rıfat, 1884: 77-78). *A Turkish and English Lexicon* published by Sir James Redhouse in 1890 defined Kurdistan as "the whole country occupied by the Kurdish tribes on both sides of the mountain range of Zagros" (Redhouse, 1890: 1536). Finally, *Kamus-u Türki* (Turkish Dictionary) printed in 1899 stated that Kurdistan was under Ottoman rule and stretched from the borders of Iran to north and eastern Mesopotamia (Şemseddin Sami, 1899: 1157). In sum, Kurdistan was perceived as a geopolitical entity by the Ottoman lexicographers, which had borders (though not clearly defined) and populated by the Kurdish tribes. These lexicon entries demonstrate that the Ottomans had not avoided naming the region; in other words, for the Ottomans, Kurdistan was a particular region inhabited by the Kurds and there was no problem in defining it as such.

The politicization of ethnic identity in the nineteenth century started when the Ottoman attempts for centralization began to increase. The attempts for centralization created conflicts with the local power structures (Yavuz, 2001: 1). These attempts

started with Sultan Mahmud II and continued with his son Abdulmejid, who issued a Land Code in 1858 which significantly altered the Kurdish way of life. The reduction of communal features of the tribal life introduced individualization. Aghas were transformed into landlords and over the course of time they gained excessive power over Kurdish peasants. The urban-based landlords created a new class within the Kurdish community. New forms of patronage emerged between these urban-based landlords and tribal aghas (Van Bruinessen, 1992: 182-184). The state's centralization in terms of monopolizing violence and education threatened the aghas' political and seyyids' religious interests as well as their autonomy. Tribes resisted new laws as they were aimed to end feudal tyranny over local people (Yavuz, 2001: 5).

During the nineteenth century, different tribal leaders exercised control over the Kurdish population and their relations with the Empire began to variate from total loyalty to rebellion. The earlier rebellions of Kurdish tribes were not nationalist uprisings; rather they emerged out of political or economic reasons. One of the earliest Kurdish rebellions in the region was erupted in the early 1830s by Muhammad Kor Pasha, the emir of Soran Emirate, who made the Soran Emirate the strongest local force in Southern Kurdistan. Accordingly, benefiting from the rebellion of Kavalalı Mehmed Ali Pasha, the governor of Egypt, Muhammad Kor Pasha extended his territories against the rival Botan Emirate in 1833. The Ottoman offensive against the Soran Emirate was repelled. However, when other Kurdish tribes perceived that the expansion of the Soran Emirate exposed a significant, by 1836, most of them chose to side with the Ottoman Empire. Eventually, Muhammed Kor Pasha surrendered to the Empire, seeing low chances of victory. In all, although Muhammad Kor Pasha's revolt was not based on Kurdish nationalism it could be perceived as a preliminary indication for establishing a

wider Kurdish statehood and presented a model for the rebellions to come in the following decades (Eppel, 2014: 53-55). At the same time, it demonstrated that the Kurdish allegiance to the Ottoman Empire was a matter of geopolitical balance of power among the Kurdish emirates. When the balance was disturbed in favor of one of the emirates the others chose to cooperate with the Empire to end this threat to the balance of power.

Bedirkhan family of the Botan Emirate was another Kurdish dynasty having a strong rule in the region. Bedirkhan Pasha emerged as a *mütesellim* (tax collector) of the Ottoman Empire in the 1830s. Particularly, after the suppression of the Sorani threat, his authority sometimes exceeded that of the Ottomans in the region. The Empire began to perceive the Botan Emirate as a threat and to make it controllable the Ottoman government attempted to increase taxes received from the Emirate. This agitated Bedirkhan Pasha and resulted in his rebellion in the summer of 1847. This rebellion was suppressed within a few months.

In addition to Sorani and Bedirkhan families, the Semdinan family rose to power in the second half of the nineteenth century, with Seyyid Ubeydullah as its leader, who had also become a powerful landlord by purchasing land from both the Ottomans and the Qajars. Ubeydullah rose to power by filling the vacuum created by the destruction of other tribal chiefs. Naqshbandi sheikhs were able to become more influential among the Kurds after the rise of Semdinan family. Previously Sufi sheiks had operated as spiritual leaders of tribal chiefs. By 1880, Ubeydullah secured himself as the paramount chief of the Kurds and his power extended over the most notable Botan and Baban confederations as well as the Bahdinan, Hakkari and Ardalan confederations. Ubeydullah rebelled after the signing of the Treaty of Berlin in 1878 in fear of an

independent Armenian state. He sought the help of Nestorian Christians against the Persians and the Ottomans. He invaded northwestern territories of the Qajar state but his militia consisting mostly of Kurdish tribes was easily defeated. He surrendered to the Ottoman authorities and was exiled first to Istanbul and then to Hijaz. Ubeydullah's rebellion was not of nationalists interests, either. It was simply the reactions of a powerful Kurdish leader to consolidate, expand and redefine his regional influence (Özoğlu, 2001: 383-391).

Although there were Kurdish revolts in the nineteenth century against the Ottoman Empire the Kurdish tribal leaders were disinterested in and not capable of organizing an ethno-nationalist movement. Muhammed Kor Pasha's revolt emerged out of territorial reasons, while Bedirkhan Pasha's revolt was related to economic matters. Seyyid Ubeydullah's revolt, on the other hand, was because of his fear of losing territories to the Armenians. The reason for lack of nationalist rebellions might be sought in the lack of infrastructure, external aid, political organization, and communication networks. Any nationalist sentiment would have to be worked through tribal, religious and local levels. The tribal structure encouraged Kurdish chiefs to act for their personal interests instead of the Kurdish nation against the centralization policies of the Ottoman Empire. The fact that the political space within the Kurdish society was too unevenly developed also crippled the support for a unified nationalist movement. The availability of alternative political opportunities fractured the nationalist elite and significantly weakened the Kurdish sentiment. Urban notables supported the sheikhs; meanwhile the intellectuals criticized the sheikhs, thus taking sides of the Ottomans. Kurdish tribal leaders turned to Sufi orders and some Kurdish notables turned to opposition groups. Even though there were outlets for the nationalist sentiment, the Kurdish movement was not highly

ethnicized, due to the fact that the Ottoman government itself was not yet Turkified. Therefore an "*other*" to work off was not created until the end of the Ottoman Empire (Natali, 2002: 185-187).

All in all, the Ottoman Empire's decay during the seventeenth and the eighteenth century culminated into the peripheral aspiration of secession and independence. In order to prevent such a disintegrative process and to minimize the European encroachments, an administrative reform was particularly engaged by Sultan Mahmud II, who tried to re-establish the failed central control over the peripheral provinces. Thus, the Kurdish Emirates, which had gathered significant power and control over the region called Kurdistan, had become a problem for the central bureaucracy to be dealt with effectively. Thus, on the one hand reforms for centralization were enforced and on the other hand some military operations were performed over the Kurds (Van Bruinessen, 1992: 175-176). By the end of the eighteenth century the power of the emirates were relatively eliminated and this handicapped the basis for a Kurdish nationalist movement and a Kurdish state in the course of the nineteenth and the twentieth century. This eradication wiped out any ambition to dominate the region defined as Kurdistan. The existence of such a force would have awakened imaginings of a Kurdish nation and attracted the educated and Westernized Kurds within and outside of Kurdistan. This awakening became the nucleus for Kurdish statehood and nationalism after the World War I. Lastly, the elimination of the emirates created an obstacle in the transformation and the diffusion of any one Kurdish dialect to become the modern "standardized" high language (Eppel, 2008: 237-240). Moreover, the demise of Kurdish emirates created the conditions toward reinforcement of tribal frameworks and it also strengthened the status of Sufi sheikhs. The weakness of the Kurdish bourgeoisie and middle class created a

barrier in establishing modern education in Kurdish. It has to be considered that education is the main social base in constructing imaginings of communities. After the emirates it was the clans and the tribes such as Barzani and Barjinzi under Naqshbandi sheikhs that effected and directed the Kurdish national movement (Eppel, 2008: 256-257).

Towards the end of the Ottoman Empire, after the re-proclamation of the Ottoman constitution, Said Ubeydullah's son, Abdulkadir, became one of the founders of the Kurdish Society for Mutual Cooperation and Progress (*Kürt Teavün ve Terakki Cemiyeti*). He was inspired by the liberal atmosphere emerging in the Ottoman Empire. Abdulkadir became an Ottoman bureaucrat and together with his religious identity he was able to pose a strong authority over the Kurds. He wished for an autonomous Kurdish state backed by the British power as he respected the Caliphate and was not in favor of secession. Abdulkadir's attempts to establish a British-backed Kurdistan continued after the World War I against the new republican regime of Turkey and he resisted against the abolishment of the Caliphate as well. It should be noted that Abdulkadir started his attempts for autonomy towards the end of the Ottoman Empire as a reaction to dissolution rather than a strict act of nationalism. He then refused the new Turkish state's identity politics aiming for melting ethnic minorities under a singular Turkish identity. The new regime would execute him for his alleged participation to the Sheikh Said rebellion (Özoğlu, 2001: 392-394).

Said-i Nursi emerged as another important Kurdish political figure. He was born in Bitlis and had very strong ideals for the Kurds. In 1907, he was received by Sultan Abdülhamid II and proposed a Kurdish university to be established in Kurdistan. He had strived to achieve this goal for his entire life, though this project could never be

materialized. Nursi was also active in the Kurdish Society for Mutual Cooperation and Progress and in 1908 he became part of the movement of Muhammadan Union (*İttihad-i Muhammediye*), which organized a strong reactionary rebellion known as the 31 March incident against the Young Turk constitutional regime in 1909. He continued to support the Kurdish cause until the Sheikh Said rebellion. Interestingly, he was not a part of this revolt but was perceived as a reactionary religious threat by the Turkish government. In the final years of his life, he abandoned the Kurdish cause for a more religious movement known as *Nurculuk* and he was interested in interpreting and preaching the Koran (Van Bruinessen, 1992: 257-259).

In this period from the second constitutional period until the success of the Turkish national liberation movement, as a third significant Kurdish political figure, Bedirkhan's son, Emin Ali chose to continue his father's footsteps and became one of the founders of Kurdish Society for Cooperation and Progress (Özoğlu, 2001: 395-403). Emin Ali took action for secession of Kurdistan at the end of the World War I. He perceived the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire as his last opportunity for recovering his family's territory, wealth, and legacy. It was during this time that the newspaper entitled *Jin* (Kurdish Language) became the unofficial publishing organ of the society (Aydınkaya, 2015). In 1920, Emin Ali left the Kurdish Society to form another organization, the Kurdish Society for Social Organization (*Kürt Teşkilat-ı İctimaiye Cemiyeti*). The reason for his split was his rivalry with Abdulkadir and his disinterest in a path of autonomy set by the organization. Until his last days, Emin Ali continued to work for the Kurdish cause but never had the power that Abdulkadir possessed (Özoğlu, 2004: 95-100).

All in all, the Kurdish community had leaders that actively worked for the

Kurdish cause until the end of the Ottoman Empire. They did not succeed in forming an independent Kurdistan due to the shortcomings of the Kurdish nationalist movement and the weakness caused by the eradication of the emirates, as well as the lack of a unitary Kurdish identity to form a single Kurdish nation striving for an independent state. The formation of Turkey as a secular, unitary nation-state would become another important obstacle, which will be explained later on in this chapter.

On the other side of the Ottoman border there was the Qajar Iran that governed over the remainder of the Kurdish community. It is important to look at the late Qajar Empire's perception of Kurdistan to understand the differences between Kurdish perceptions in the Middle East as well as the diversities in attitudes between the Persians and the Turks. Indeed, the understanding of Kurdistan as a geopolitical entity was weaker in Iran than in the Ottoman Empire, due to the fact that Kurds were a smaller minority (less than 10 percent of the population) and lacked political influence. Similar to the Ottoman Empire, the Qajars privileged the traditional tribal structure and encouraged tribal/religious identities over nationalist intentions. The local populations were arranged as either Muslim or non-Muslim. The clerical hierarchy allowed Shia Kurds to integrate into other Shia groups and creating opportunities for some to become leading ayatollahs. Unlike the non-Sunni groups of the Ottoman Empire, the Sunni Muslims and Sufi minorities still found some cultural and political opportunities. The traditional order and agrarian economy favored Kurdish landowners, tribesmen, and warriors. Qajars did not develop a professional army and depended on tribal groups for defense. In return for their services, the chiefs were exempted from taxes, received land or obtained positions in government. In contrast to the Ottoman political space emphasizing centralization towards the end of the nineteenth century, Iranian attempts

for centralization remained more futile. Even as the imperial system started to crumble in Iran, the existing Qajar's social organizations endured. In all, Kurdistan was neglected by Tehran as it was isolated from other provinces. This led to the emergence of different types of Kurdish identities. Most of the Kurds identified themselves as Kermanshahis, Sanandajis, or Howremanis based on their tribal affiliations. In this atmosphere, the Kurdish Sufi brotherhoods could not obtain governmental support or other resources to organize Kurds at a religious or a national level. The urban-tribal divisions that mobilized the Kurds in the Ottoman Empire were not present under the Qajar rule. In the absence of ethnicized form of nationalism within the borders, Kurds found no reason to differentiate themselves. In fact, the shared history and culture among the Persians and the Kurds, the use of secular, monarchical, and tribal themes led to favoring of the Kurds over the other ethnic communities within borders (Natali, 2002: 186-197). Therefore, unlike the Ottoman Empire, there were no large-scale Kurdish resistance movements in Qajar Iran.

All in all, the deterritorialization and reterritorialization experienced in the Ottoman Empire by the mid-nineteenth century led Kurdish leaders to seek alternatives for protecting their interests. In other words, the simultaneous processes of centralization and disintegration altered the relations between the Kurds and the Ottoman center. The Ottoman attempts for centralization, which had designed to prevent further disintegration of the Empire, were not welcomed by Kurdish tribes, which were accustomed to autonomy. Although most of the Kurdish rebellions were not based on nationalist discourses, they planted the seeds for nationalist uprisings in the coming decades. Contrarily, in Iran, the political space encouraged a more consistent and balanced relationship between the Kurds and the Iranian rulers. In sum, although

geographically existed as a distinct region, Kurdistan could not emerge as a *geopolitical* entity under Ottoman and Qajar rule both because of intra-Kurdish rivalry preventing a single Kurdish authority to rule the region and because of imperial responses to the Kurdish people. Although the imperial responses differ (conflict in the case of late Ottoman Empire and neglect and cooperation in the case of late Qajar Empire), there was no clear nationalist sentiment motivating the Kurdish people against the respective sovereigns. The motives for Kurdish rebellions in the Ottoman Empire were more political and economic than nationalist and the Kurds did not experience a significant pressure from the Qajar rulers leading them to rebellion. However, the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the fall of the Qajar dynasty would have dramatic implications changing the nature of the relationship between the Kurds and the new sovereigns.

3.2. Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization of Kurdistan at the End of the Ottoman Era: Western Attempts for Defining "Kurdistan"

The eighteenth century had closed with Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion of Egypt in 1798 which was a psychological blow for the Ottomans since the Europeans penetrated for the first time the non-European territories of the Empire and became politically and militarily influential in the Middle Eastern provinces. From then on, during the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire was able to survive only by benefiting from the European balance of power (Neumann, 2006: 58). In this period, Britain had achieved a privileged status in Egypt; the Suez Canal had brought a new strategic emphasis to the region between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean. By 1881, the deteriorating Ottoman economy had come to such a dead end that a Public Debt Administration had been formed through which European powers could interfere in

Ottoman economy (Quataert, 2005: 58 -104). Meanwhile, Germany turned out to be another significant actor in the Middle East, enhancing the European rivalry through the Berlin-Baghdad railway project. Finally, the discovery of vast oil resources in Southern Mesopotamia had significantly increased the importance of the Middle East. The Ottoman government had used these conflicting interests of the Great Powers to continue its existence, but her decision to join the World War I on the side of the German-Austro-Hungarian alliance dramatically changed the circumstances (Kirişçi, 1997:103–105).

While, British, French and Germans increased their interest in the Ottoman Middle East, the Russians began to use the Armenian-populated territories of the Ottoman Empire as a stepping stone to the warm waters; hence they participated into the Great Power rivalry by opening up an eastern front. However, this created a significant threat for the Kurds, since the territories which Russia had interested in were the territories also described as Kurdistan. In other words, the territories named as "Western Armenia" and "Kurdistan" overlapped geopolitically, which began to alter the relationship between the Kurdish and Armenian people. The Russian-Ottoman wars took their toll on the Kurdish-Armenian relations as well. While the Russians were able to exert some degree of control over Eastern Anatolia Armenians backed the Russian occupation and even aided the Russians to pursue their advance in Western Armenia during the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-78 (Ünal, 2005, 87-114).

Meanwhile, the British and the American missionaries became active as there had always been a sizable Christian population in Kurdistan. Nestorians working under Kurdish chieftains welcomed foreign aid as they hoped to become their own masters (Van Bruinessen, 1992: 107-185). The British had also taken a keen interest in the

Armenians after the Congress of Berlin 1878 (Duguid, 1973: 142). From the Kurdish point of view, this was considered as an important step for the independence of Armenia and a direct threat to the Kurdish tribal interests (McDowall, 2007: 57). In order to suppress the possibility of an independent Armenian state and an attempt to keep Kurdish leaders at bay, the Hamidiye Regiments were created by Sultan Abdülhamid (Duguid, 1973: 142-145). They were tribal militia led by tribal chieftains. This allowed the chieftains to increase their power and even abused the authority given to them to suppress the local Armenian population. In some cases, Hamidiye Regiments were able to maintain a balance between tribes as weaker groups found ways of strength against rivals. Moreover, on the other hand, this policy of arming the Kurds under Ottoman service discouraged, at least temporarily, the Kurdish tribes to rebel against the Ottomans since the Armenian-Russian threat was perceived to be more significant (Van Bruinessen, 1992: 186).

The Western penetration to the Ottoman Empire's Middle Eastern territories reached to a climax between 1915 and 1917, when a series of agreements were made to share the Ottoman Empire, the most significant of which was the Sykes-Picot Agreement. While the Middle Eastern territories of the Empire were put under British and French sphere of influences or direct rule, so were the Kurdish populated territories (Kirişçi, 1997: 103–105). As a result of this agreement, Syria, Lebanon and Turkish Cilicia were handed over to the French, and Palestine, Transjordan, the territories around the Persian Gulf and Baghdad were put under British control. Although Sykes-Picot Agreement did not envisage an independent Kurdistan as a geopolitical entity, it increased British presence in the Middle East dramatically. The agreement hastened Britain to occupy Baghdad in March 1917, Mosul on early 1918 and Damascus in late

1918 (Fisher, 1988: 129).

At the beginning, the British presence in Southern Kurdistan was limited by the lack of sufficient army for occupation and civilian administrators. Thus, the British sought the support of the Kurdish population “to liberate towns from the Turkish rule”. Accordingly, Britain would not interfere directly but provide political and administrative help to Kurdish leaders. Sheikh Mahmud Barzinji emerged as one of the most influential Kurdish political figures after the war. He had contacted with the European powers to drive out the Turks from Kurdistan and wrote to the British forces to include Kurdistan in the list of liberated territories. He then organized a meeting of the notables of Sulaymaniya region to decide on Kurdistan's future after the Turkish retreat. The outcome of this meeting was the formation of an autonomous Kurdish state under the leadership of Sheikh Mahmud. Although the establishment of an autonomous Kurdish political identity seemed to amend the Sykes-Picot agreement, since there was no mention of such a political identity in the text of the agreement, the British managed to keep the Kurdish government between 1818 and 1819. However, not all British officers in the region wanted to pursue an autonomous political entity. Soon after the formation of the Kurdish government, Colonel Arnold Wilson, who was the Acting Civil Commissioner in Iraq, began to downgrade the efficiency of this local political entity (Gunter, 2009: 210). According to Wilson, Kurds were just as divided as the Arabs and they were incapable of governing. He discredited the Kurdish government by arguing that British interests can be better served through a British protectorate with British officials in command. He was quick to act and within months he had ended the autonomy of the Kurdish government by reintroducing the feudal system under British control (Eskander, 2000: 139-149).

By the end of the World War I much had changed and Sykes-Picot Agreement could not be realized as it had been designed. The new post-World War I order for the Ottoman Empire was created by the Treaty of Sevres which was signed in August 1920. The significance of this treaty was that for the first time Kurdistan appeared as a geopolitical entity, which was designed to prevent Turkey from retaining control of the territorial gap between Armenia and Mesopotamia. It would also help strengthening British acquisition of Mosul (which was not left to the French contrary to the Sykes-Picot Agreement) as well as creating a buffer zone for this oil-rich province. With the French pressure and diplomacy, a decision was made to establish an autonomous Kurdistan envisaged by a joint French-British-Italian commission. It was decided that within a year after the formation of Kurdistan, the Kurds could appeal to the League of Nations for a full independence. Mosul was excluded from this project of Kurdistan as it was to remain under British influence. However, no Kurd rose to represent the entire Kurdistan. Tribal leaders once again chose to consider their own interests. Without the backing of a great power, no Kurdish chieftain could achieve the control of entire Kurdistan (Helmreich, 1974: 27, 301-302). Some concerns were voiced by some European diplomats and bureacurats, who had different experiences in the Kurdish territories, such as James Levi Barton, who was a missionary and an executive of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, regarding the Kurds inexperience for any kind of administrative government (Barton, 1918: 12). Lastly, the treaty had some major flaws as it did not include Kurdish territories in Syria as well as Dersim and it did not mark Kurdistan's boundaries with Armenia. In the end, such shortcomings crippled Kurdistan's chances, but they were nothing compared to the fact that the treaty was forced upon an unwilling government lacking constituency even in

Istanbul (McDowall, 2007: 137). Although the Treaty of Sevres formalized the division of the Ottoman Empire, it was considered to be void by a new state emerging under Mustafa Kemal's leadership.

All in all, the Western penetration into the territories described as Kurdistan by the late nineteenth century has transformed the existing traditional power structure in the region. To start with, the presence of Great Powers created opportunities and challenges for the Kurds. On the one hand, the missionary activities in the region resulted in the eradication of isolation of the region from the rest of the world and began to make the Kurds acquainted with missionaries and their ideas. Moreover, the West began to learn that a particular region known as Kurdistan existed at a strategic location linking Black Sea basin to Mesopotamia. On the other hand, Great Power rivalry and particularly Russian attempts for creating an independent Armenia in the region resulted in Kurdish reaction against this project. The threat of an independent Armenia led some Kurdish tribes to ally with the Ottomans under the framework of Hamidiye Regiments and thus prevented emergence of an independent Kurdistan. Secondly, the partition of the Kurdish territories under British and French influence through the Sykes-Picot Agreement resulted in different colonial frameworks leading to further disintegration of the Kurdish people. This was tried to be reversed with the introduction of an independent Kurdistan in the Treaty of Sevres; however, the problems in the formulation of the Treaty, particularly the vague definition of the territorial boundaries of this new state as well as the Turkish liberation movement resisting the implementation of the Treaty resulted in the failure of emergence of an independent Kurdistan.

3.3. Turkey and the Kurds: From Cooperation to Conflict (1919-1950)

A Turkish national resistance and liberation movement emerged as the Ottoman Empire began to crumble after the World War I. The Turkish forces lead by Mustafa Kemal, formed the new state of Turkey. The eastern borders of this new state included a portion of what is known to be “Kurdistan” and made the Kurdish people the second largest ethnic community within the Turkish borders. The post-World War I period had started with discourses of brotherhood between the Turkish and the Kurdish population as well as promises of autonomy to the Kurds but soon after Turkey's territorial recognition, any form of self-government was soon out of question. This section will look into how a shift in autonomous politics and modernization policies triggered Kurdish rebellions that led to implementations of civilizational geopolitics between 1919 and 1950.

Once Mustafa Kemal began to organize the resistance and became a powerful leader, his policies were perceived as a threat against both the Ottoman Empire and European powers. The European powers, which were interested in the former Middle Eastern territories of the Empire began to increase their contacts with the local population. For instance, Britain had sent Major Edward Noel, an intelligence officer served in Sulaymaniya region, to strengthen the British presence and undermine the Turkish influence in the region by installing Emin Ali Bedirkhan as the governor of Diyarbakir. Noel met with Bedirkhan family members and traveled to Antep and Malatya with them. He was hoping to use the Alevi Kurds as they did not share the feeling of Muslim unity and loyalty to the Caliphate, but most importantly they appeared hostile to a Turkish nationalist movement (McDowall, 2007: 128-129). However, Mustafa Kemal had learned the intentions of Bedirkhans and Major Noel to hamper the

national congress planned to be convened in Sivas and to detain the attendees if not assassinating them. As a reactive measure Mustafa Kemal chose to send the thirteenth district army corps, and forced Noel and the Bedirkhans to flee towards Syria (Atatürk, 1970: 116-117).

Mustafa Kemal found it necessary to build relations with Kurdish tribal leaders. He thought it dangerous to single out a leader as it would give the impression of downgrading others and eventually leading to conflict. Mustafa Kemal's orchestration of relations with the tribal leaders was put to a test when he set about organizing the Turkish national resistance in 19 May 1919. He found that the Kurdish club in Diyarbakir was working for the Kurdish independence and increasingly cooperating with the *Hürriyet and İtilaf Fırkası* (Entente Liberal), which was an opposition group whose policies fitted with that of the Istanbul government. Mustafa Kemal sent a telegram from Samsun on 28 May 1919 to the Kurdish club underlining the importance of national unity and emphasizing that a racial conflict between brothers could be abused by external enemies. It should be pointed out that the term *race* was used to denote an ethnic community. In another telegram Mustafa Kemal declared the British intentions to build Kurdistan would serve Armenians more than the Kurds. He stated that Turks and Kurds are true brothers, thus, inseparable and that he is willing to grant all rights and privileges in order to ensure the unity of these two communities (Mango, 1999: 5-8).

A similar emphasis on the unity of Turks and Kurds was evident in the Congress of Erzurum. During the Congress, on August 7, 1919, Mustafa Kemal issued a declaration stated that Turks, Kurds and all other Muslims in Anatolia and Eastern Thrace were brothers and the decisions of the Congress were reported to two Kurdish leaders: Sheikh Abdulbaki Kufrevi of Bitlis and Cemil Çeto of Garzan. Sivas Congress

refined the terms used in Erzurum and the wording implied a respect toward Kurdish ethnicity and customs:

> All Islamic elements living in the above mentioned domains [the Ottoman lands within the armistice lines] are true brothers, imbued with feelings of mutual respect and sacrifice for each other, and wholly respectful of racial and social rights and local conditions (Mango, 1999: 11).

There are several reasons for the Kurdish-Turkish brotherhood discourse of Mustafa Kemal. First, Mustafa Kemal and his colleagues must have been aware of the fact the entity they were trying to put together had not developed into a nation like some of the disparate communities in Anatolia. While there was a talk of what a Turk might be, there was also an attempt to bolster the shared attributes with other communities in order to internalize different ethnicities. Secondly, the Ottoman discourse of religious brotherhood continued into Mustafa Kemal's rhetoric and it would take several years before the Turkish leader put his innovating ideas to action. Third, Mustafa Kemal had been contacting with Kurdish chieftains and had developed friendly relations toward them. Thus, it would be natural for him to emphasize the Turkish-Kurdish brotherhood (Heper, 2007: 85-120). Whether Mustafa Kemal aimed to prevent the possibility of an autonomous if not independent Kurdistan in the future with his rhetoric cannot be said for certain; but these three factors certainly had an impact on the Kurdish-Turkish relations as they contributed to the collaboration between the two communities. As it will be discussed later on, this collaboration eventually handicapped the formation of an independent Kurdistan.

Meanwhile, Damad Ferid Pasha, the former Ottoman Grand Vizier, decided to use some Kurdish tribes to overcome the nationalist threat in general and Mustafa

Kemal's prestige in particular. Moreover, he believed that he could regain his position as Grand Vizier if he could come up with a plan to defeat Mustafa Kemal. He sought the help of Kurdish Sheikh Abdülkadir and promised Kurds complete autonomy in return for a Kurdish assault on the Turkish nationalist forces. Abdülkadir was reluctant to act without guarantees from Ferid Pasha and assurance of protection toward Kurdistan from the British. Abdülkadir was not against Turkish rule but he feared an Armenian rule which he thought to be completely unacceptable. The failure of Kurds to produce credible leadership was a blow to the British hopes but the failure to create an alternative to Sykes-Picot in 1918 was an even bigger set back. The British failed to give proper guarantees to the Kurds for the establishment of an autonomous, if not independent, Kurdistan. As time passed between the Armistice of Mudros and the Treaty of Sevres, Kurds responded to Mustafa Kemal's call of Muslims, for it seemed the most credible position. A pan-Islamic propaganda proved successful and many Kurdish tribes turned in Kemal's favor. Meanwhile, Mustafa Kemal had strengthened his position and had worked for the establishment of a national assembly. In January 1920, a large Turkish nationalist majority affirmed a significant document known as the National Pact (*Misak-ı Milli*) (McDowall, 2007: 130).

The first article of the National Pact follows as (Hurewitz, 1956: 74-75):

> Inasmuch as it is necessary that the destinies of the portions of the Turkish Empire which are populated exclusively by an Arab majority, and which on the conclusion of the armistice of the 30th of October, 1918, were in the occupation of enemy forces, should be determined in accordance with the votes which shall be freely given by the inhabitants, whole of those parts whether within or outside the said armistice-line, which are inhabited by an Ottoman Moslem majority, united in religion, in race and in aim, imbued with sentiments of mutual respect for each other and of sacrifice, and wholly respectful of each other's racial rights and

> surrounding conditions, form a whole which does not admit of division for any reason in truth or in ordinance.

It can be inferred from this article that the Turks and the Kurds were aware of their own racial and social rights, which they respected; however, against a common threat, they were united as if they constitute a single entity. Thus geopolitically speaking, there could be no autonomous Kurdistan since it would split the non-divisible geographical unity proposed by the National Pact. It should be considered that this pact was written after the break off of Arab populated lands. Among the remaining ethnicities there was a high populace of Kurds. Considering the nation building process, as stated earlier, even though the National Pact does not state Kurds specifically, it can be safe to assume that it saw no conflict leading a war against European powers and constructing a state with the Kurdish *brothers* as stated by Mustafa Kemal.

After the inauguration of the Grand National Assembly, in which Kurdish deputies were also present, Mustafa Kemal put his views in a general framework on 24 April 1920. He declared the importance of the marked borders of Turkey which encompassed Mosul. This was not just a military but a national frontier. He emphasized the Islamic elements which belonged to the same nation. However, Kurds were not specifically pointed out in this speech. On 1 May 1920, he touched upon the Kurds once more declaring that the assembly is not made only of Turks, Circassians or Kurds but a sincere gathering of all Islamic elements with no privileged amongst. The ambiguity about *race* remained but the choice to use “people of Turkey” instead of “Turkish people” was very significant (Mango, 1999: 12-13).

In June 1920, Mustafa Kemal wrote instructions on constitutional provisions of local government to Nihat Pasha, who served in Turkish Land Forces and was the

commander of the Al-Jazirah Front (Burak, 2005: 169). The instructions clearly foresaw to include Kurds directly and effectively. Despite there was no mention of an autonomous Kurdish government in the text of the National Pact, in these instructions it was mentioned that the Kurds were to have a local government when Kurdish leaders and notables declared to live under the administration of the Grand National Assembly. The Al-Jazirah front was responsible for completing the necessary work to create a local government of Kurdistan (Mango, 1999: 14-17). Mustafa Kemal continued to voice the will to create autonomy for the Kurds up until 1923 but was met with some caution from the politicians. For example Kazım Karabekir, who was a general in the Turkish army had a restrained attitude towards the Kurds, told the Chief of Staff that there would be an emerging problem as the Kurdish situation is consistently tempered by different groups. Karabekir believed that a raising Kurdish consciousness would be to Turkey's disadvantage, therefore a Turkish Kurdistan should be divided into three districts and powerful Turkish villages should be settled in these divisions. He believed only together with soldiers as head officials of these districts, the government could take control of the regions and impose its sovereignty (Tan, 2012: 259).

In 1922, Ismet Pasha, the head of the Turkish delegation, and Lord Curzon, the head of the British delegation, discussed the issue of Kurdistan in the Lausanne Peace Conference. The Turkish side did not see itself bound with the Treaty of Sevres and claimed the territory from Province of Mosul down to Jabal Hamrin in Northern Iraq. These claims were based on several factors. First, Turks and Kurds were said to be racially inseparable and the Arabs were the minority. Secondly, most of Turkey's trade was declared to be with Anatolia. Third, the Turks claimed illegal occupation by the British after the Mudros Truce. Lastly, Turks claimed that all inhabitants wanted to join

Turkey and it was an issue of self-determination. Mosul was temporarily left out of negotiation as both sides were unwilling to give it up. The treaty was signed in 24 July 1923 and formalized the de facto division of Kurdish inhibited lands between Turkey, Iraq and Iran. Britain's Kurdish policy in Iraq was influenced by the negotiations with Turkey over Iraq. Between 1922 and 1924 Britain withdrew her support for an independent Kurdish state. This new stand was taken due to Britain wish to appease Turkey, whose cooperation was needed to isolate Bolshevik Russia. Kurds were used as pawns by both sides to control Mosul (Ali, 1997: 521-531).

The question of Kurdish self-autonomy within Turkey was pushed aside as soon as the Lausanne Treaty was signed and Turkish sovereignty was recognized over its territories. The Mosul question was still unresolved but after the Izmir Briefing in 1923 it seemed as though Mustafa Kemal had written off Mosul. The priorities had changed for Mustafa Kemal. He desired to create a modern secular state and would need a strong authority to do it. Provincial self-government especially in an area considered backward would have been an obstacle. A modern state was perceived to need a homogeneous society as well as a homogeneous identity (Arakon, 2010: 178).

Overall, in the period of Turkish national liberation movement, there were some stakes to establish an autonomous regional government in the region defined as “Kurdistan”; however, two factors prevented this process. First, the National Pact was formulated in a manner to create a single territorial unit populated by Ottoman/Muslim majority, and in order to emphasize the unity of the Turkish government, no autonomous region was designed in it. While some of the Kurdish elites might have thought to establish such an autonomous entity, the existence of a common threat prevented them to insist on these schemes. When the war was over and when Mustafa Kemal’s authority

and legitimacy became mostly indisputable, the Turkish ruling elite opted for a unitary nation-state, in which ethnic-based territorial formations were not allowed. Therefore, the deterritorialization of Kurdish-populated provinces during World War I and their reterritorialization with the Treaty of Lausanne resulted in the failure of establishing an autonomous Kurdistan in this period. The articles of Lausanne between 37 and 45 are part of the political clauses of the treaty. They refer to the minority rights of Greeks, Armenians and non-Muslims such as the Jews leaving out any mention of the Kurds or Kurdistan (Republic of Turkey Ministery of Foreign Affairs, n.d.).

3.3.a. Civilizational Geopolitics in a New-born State:

The next step after recognition of Turkish independence was further modernization and economic development of the country. The discourse of development of the Turkish leaders resembles the discourse of civilizational geopolitics. Accordingly, the concept of civilization became dramatically important which was laconically expressed with the expression of "reaching the contemporary level of civilization" (*muasır medeniyetler seviyesine ulaşmak*). The state assumed the paternal role of ruling as well as constructing and defending the common good. The notion of civilization created an uncivilized other, which had to be civilized by the state. In other words, likewise the external civilizing motive of the nineteenth century, which legitimized European penetration into the non-European world through civilizational discourse, an internal civilizing mission was designed to eliminate "traditional/oriental" characteristics of the society and to make them "modern/western". This mission involved othering of the Ottoman past, of all rural and tribal structures. The ethnic, religious and the linguistic differences of the old empire were presented as the source of instability and an obstacle

in front of progress. The authorities ignored the dissident voices when trying to mold loyal nationalist citizens (Zeydanlıoğlu, 2008: 155-162).

Following decades of the new republic showed no signs of autonomy for the Kurds. Works of Ziya Gökalp were very much influential at the time. For example in his book about the principles of Turkism, Gökalp examines the existing definitions of a nation and concludes that unity is transferred through education and education does not have much to do with ethnic heritage. As long as people within a nation share the same language, religion, culture they can be held together in unity (Gökalp, 1968: 32-40).

In 1924, the Law of the Unification of Instruction (*Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu*) was adopted to eliminate the socio-political legacy of the Ottoman education system. The Hat Law in 1925 discouraged excessive veiling and encouraged a Western type of dress and prohibited the fez. The caliphate was abolished, religious foundations were put under government control, courts became secular, dervish orders and sectarian facilities were shut down. These secularist reforms aimed to eliminate the traditional structure of the Ottoman Empire and construct the nation-state of Turkey. Turkification was introduced to take place of Islam, which had been perceived as a source of unification under the Ottoman Empire. The measures taken for homogenization of the Turkish nation intended to obtain loyalty of citizens as well as preventing ethnic separatism. At the same time the ruling elite had hoped to weaken European colonial interference which had left a deep scar since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire (Zeydanlıoğlu, 2008: 162-163).

Within this nationalist/secularist fervor, the Kurds as a people and Kurdistan as a region was perceived as backward; thus the region had to be civilized for the good of the people living there. Hence a civilizational geopolitical discourse became evident even at

the higher echelons of the Turkish ruling elite. For example, the Turkish foreign minister Tevfik Rüştü expressed his views regarding the Kurds in 1925 as such:

> …in their [Kurdish] case, their cultural level is so low, their mentality so backward, that they cannot be simply in the general Turkish body politic [...] they will die out, economically unfitted for the struggle for life in competition with the more advanced and cultured Turks [...] as many as can will emigrate into Persia and Iraq, while the rest will simply undergo the elimination of the unfit (McDowall, 2007: 200).

Similarly, in 1930, towards the end of the Ararat rebellion (explained later on in this chapter), Mahmud Esad Bozkurt, the Turkish interior minister, made his declaration:

> Only the Turkish nation has the privilege of demanding national rights in this country. There is no possibility that other ethnic groups' demands for such a right will be recognized. There is no need to hide the truth. The Turks are the sole owners and the sole nobles of this country. Those who are not of Turkish origin have only one right: to serve and be the slaves, without question, of the noble Turkish nation (Olson, 2000: 93).

In sum, the Kurds were perceived as ethno-linguistic aliens and insufficiently civilized. The official Turkish view was that Kurds were "mountain Turks" who had forgotten their identities. They have culturally and linguistically degenerated and, thus, speak gibberish comprised of Persian, Arabic, and Turkish. Their language is incapable of expressing sophisticated thought. According to Van Bruinessen (1984: 6), the Turkish elite of the time have been very much obsessed with territorial integrity and national unity which is another traumatic heritage from the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire. These laid the foundations for policies of assimilation.

The civilizational geopolitical discourse began to strengthen in 1930s with the introduction of "Turkish History Thesis", which argued that the Turks came from Central Asia and they spread civilization across different parts of the globe. It put forth

the Turks as the origin of all ancient civilizations in Anatolia. Schools books were rewritten to contain this theory to support the Turkish education and nationalism. The other theory put forth around the same time was the Sun Language Theory which asserted Turkish as the foundation of all the languages spoken in the Middle Asia. Turkish as spoken today was the continuation of this original and unique heritage. Turkish Language Institution was founded to purify Turkish (Kirişçi and Garet, 1997: 153-154). These civilizational discourses had two main objectives: First, through these discourses, a community that had no social, ethnic or religious differences was tried to be constructed. Secondly, no religious-ethnic minorities have been defined to disturb the national unity discourse (Arakon, 2010: 177). It is aimed to melt the Kurdish culture within the Turkish one through these theories and institutions. Had they been successful, a homogeneous Turkey could be created but it was not enough to erase the cultural and ethical bonds of the Kurds.

Creating a Turkish nation meant that the Kurdish identity had to be forgotten, postponed and canceled (Yeğen, 1999: 120). The new Turkish state discourse was based on the denial of existence of Kurds as a different ethnic identity. When reference had to be made towards the Kurdish issue, the state chose to address conflicts without pronouncing the word “Kurd” (Yeğen, 1999(b): 560). In 1934, the Settlement Law was enacted which divided the people living in Turkey under three categories. The first category was comprised of persons possessing the Turkish culture, language and ethnicity. The second category was the non-Turkish populations who were considered Turk, but could not speak Turkish. Finally, the last category was composed of those who could not speak Turkish and did not possess anything of the Turkish ethnicity. The settlement law separated Turkish lands into three zones. The first zone was settled by

Turkish-speaking ethnically-Turkish citizens therefore it could be opened to immigrants from inside and outside of the state. The second zone was for those who needed to be assimilated further into the Turkish culture. The last zone was closed to any kind of settlement due to security reasons. The seventh article of the law stated that those of Turkish dissent could reside in any area that was open for settlement, but other immigrants were to be settled by the government. It should be noted that this law was not designed only for Kurds but for immigrants from the Balkans and the Caucasus (Kirişçi and Garet, 1997: 148-149).

As explained above, the Turkish state itself started a process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization within its borders aiming to dissolve the Kurdish identity within the Turkish character and remove the perception of Kurdistan all together. Civilizational geopolitics provided Turkey the necessary tools to suppress and eliminate the contrasting identity of the Kurds. A strong rhetoric of *Turkishness* was put forth as a source of unity, nationalism and pride under the secular and modernizing state of Turkey. However, these politics failed as the emphasis of Turkishness led to the unexpected reaction of the Kurdish aghas, who saw the new policies as a threat to their customs and traditional way of life. The agitation of the aghas soon transformed in to three powerful rebellions against Ankara.

3.3.b. The Kurdish Resistance: Sheikh Said, Mt. Ararat and Dersim:

It was argued in the previous parts that the main reason for Kurdish failure to form a “Kurdistan” was their inability to unify under nationalist aims and their lack of common ethnic self-consciousness. Soon after the World War I, there were three groups of Kurds based on their will of coexistence with the Turks. The first group was a small group of Kurds desiring an independent state, while the second group sought autonomy under the Ottomans or the Turks. A third group consisted of tribal chiefs who wanted their own political units on the land that they had control over, not a unified Kurdistan. Part of Turkey's success in denying the Treaty of Sevres and hindering the establishment of Kurdistan lies within the disorganization of the Kurds (Kirişçi and Garet, 1997: 120).

It is no surprise that Kurds chose to side with the Turks due to the political atmosphere of the time as mentioned above. There were seventy-four deputies in the Grand Turkish Assembly coming from the Southeastern provinces, most of which were of Kurdish; but there were also Kurdish tribes that rebelled against the Turkish government. Still, among the twenty-three rebellions against the Turkish resistance movement and measures for centralization, four took place within the Kurdish-settled lands and Kurdish tribes participated in only three of those rebellions. These were the Cemil Çeto rebellion (May 1920), the Milli tribe rebellion (Summer 1920) and the Koçgiri rebellion (March and June 1921). These acts were inspired or influenced by the Society for the Progress of Kurdistan but none were as serious as the Koçgiri rebellion led by Sharif Pasha (Kirişçi and Garet, 1997: 120-122). Sharif Pasha had been present during the Paris Peace Conference and had attempted to prepare the first formal map of Kurdistan. He wanted to form an independent Kurdistan (O'Shea, 2004: 143-144). Hence he clearly reterritorialized the region that he defined as Kurdistan. Some Turkish

historians have described the Koçgiri rebellion as a great act of treachery to Turkish people during the War of Independence as the Kurds tried to utilize foreign presence to form a state of their own declining any communication with Ankara (Yurtçicek, 2016: 35). However, it was a time of political uncertainty and unity among Kurds could not be established. Some Kurds had already joined Mustafa Kemal, crippling the Kurdish revolt. Without the support of Great Powers, a divided Kurdish revolt had no chance of success (Bozarslan, 2008: 338).

It would be Sheikh Said in the coming years, who would be able to use his position effectively to outset a powerful rebellion that economically cost more than the Turkish War of Independence (Kirişçi and Garet, 1997: 151) and set a pattern that would influence all the revolts in Turkey as well as the Middle East until 1970s (Bozarslan, 2008: 339). Accordingly, on 13 February 1925, a rebellion started in the southeastern Turkey under the leadership of a Naqshbandi sheikh and tribal leader Sheikh Said against the regime. Sheikh Said's influence came from his status as a hereditary religious leader which simultaneously made him the leader of the tribes in the area. He was also a government official in the Sultan's government in Istanbul, as well as official representative to various nationalist organizations established by Mustafa Kemal (Olsen and Tucker, 1978: 195-196).

The reasons of this rebellion are manifold ranging from a reaction against the governmental efforts to create a secular state to British agitation over the Mosul question to obtain oil-reach territories by arguing that the Turkish and Kurdish peoples did not have an intention for peaceful coexistence. In other words, a Kurdish conflict would force the Turks to work together with the British and hopefully settle within British interests (Değerli, 2010: 96-99). A more balanced approach argues that the real reason of

the rebellion was the Turkification and centralization policies of the government. Accordingly, Kurdish sheikhs who were present in the first Grand National Assembly were not elected to the second. Local notables were angered by removal of *tithe*, the collecting and in most cases pocketing of the taxes, which was a profitable income. The Kurds resented conscription and the taxation of the government and the fact that they were no longer recognized as separate people, but as "mountain Turks". The abolishment of religious schools and the forced use of Turkish were significantly resented. Moreover, the disestablishment of Islam as a source of political power altered sheikhs' bases of power. The abolishment of the caliphate and the abolishment of the Sharia gave the impression of an attempt to remove religion from the public sphere. The objective of the rebellion was declared as the restoration of caliphate and the establishment of Islam (Olsen and Tucker, 1978: 198–200).

Despite its being a Kurdish rebellion to a great extent, this rebellion was not organized for the creation of an independent Kurdistan as a geopolitical entity. There is no doubt that some who participated in the rebellion had intentions of independence but the lack of participation of the chieftains (*aghas*) show otherwise. The chiefs were not men of religion like the sheikhs and were able to benefit from governmental positions. The main concern was the preservation of traditional way of life. The sense of nationalism that the leaders possessed was not defined or articulated; but a consciousness of a community existed. Between 1923 and 1924 the Kurdish leaders had not felt the effects of reforms and centralization, thus they presumed that they would continue to be the Ankara governments arm in the eastern Kurdish areas. Lastly, the use of the army to suppress the Sheikh Said rebellion made Kurds cautious of engaging in further rebellions at least for some time (Olsen and Tucker, 1978: 199).

The success of the rebellion was strong and frequent in the beginning. The government changed as Fethi Bey resigned and İsmet Bey came to power. This transition signaled an aggressive military policy. A specific Law for the Maintenance of Order (*Takrir-i Sükun*) was passed and the government obtained the right to suppress any organization, publication or institution, which might encourage any action or agitation against the regime. The implementation of the law was left to the Independence Tribunals (*İstiklal Mahkemeleri*). The Turkish offensive started in March and the rebellion collapsed in April. Said and his followers were brought to the Independence Tribunals and Said refused to admit that he done anything wrong and pleaded not guilty. He and forty-six of his followers were executed the next day. Mustafa Kemal was than able to carry on with his reform projects in the region more vigorously. The rebellion was used to justify suppression of dissident elements (Olsen and Tucker, 1978: 199). Moreover, *Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Partisi* (Progressive Republican Party), which was formed in 1924 as the first opposition party claimed to support these conservative aspects of the rebellion, was closed based on the *Takrir-i Sükun* (Çağatay, 1972: 27). Moreover, some of the Kurdish tribes were sentenced to forced resettlement in various parts of the country.

Although the revolt was suppressed and the rebels were punished, the security of the Eastern Anatolia could not be established. Some rebels that had crossed borders to Iran, Iraq and Syria raided the villages across borders and returned Turkey where they were said to kill gendarmes and government officials. The revolt had also brought the Sunni Kurds in favor of the reforms and the Alevi Kurds in opposition to new regulations against each other (Koç, 2010: 162 - 165).

The declaration of Ismet Inönü after the elimination of the rebellion was quite

conspicuous because of its perception of Turkish nationalism and Turkification policies to come:

> We are frankly Nationalist [...] and Nationalism is the only factor for our cohesion. Before the Turkish majority other elements have no kind of influence. At any price, we must Turkify the inhabitants of our land, and we will annihilate those who oppose Turks or "le turkisme." What we seek in those who would serve the country is that, above all, they be Turks and "turquistes". They say we lack solicitude for religious currents; we will crush all who rise before us to use religion as an instrument (Olson, 2000: 93).

Sheikh Said rebellion occurred at a time when two ideologies were conflicting in the world: modernism/secularism vs. traditionalism. Mustafa Kemal and the ruling elite saw this rebellion as a counter revolution. The rebellion was perceived as a threat to the Turkish state and it undermined the confidence of Kemal and his partners towards the reforms. This insecurity led to new laws being passed, aiming to fortify the Turkish ethnicity and language (Kirişçi and Garet, 1997: 150-151).

The importance given to modernization, centralization and secularization of the Turkish state had helped the spread of Kurdish ethnic consciousness. The second revolt erupted around Mount Ararat in 1927 and it was planned by a new Kurdish party founded in Syria: Khoybun. Unlike Sheikh Said rebellion, this revolt aimed to create an independent Kurdistan and Mount Ararat was designated as the provisional capital of Kurdistan (Edmonds, 1971: 91). Lieutenant Ihsan Nuri, who deserted the Turkish military, undertook the leadership of the rebellion. At first Ankara tried to negotiate with the rebels but failed to persuade the Kurdish leadership of its sincerity, and Nuri's demands of Turkish evacuation of Kurdistan made a settlement impossible. By the autumn of 1929, Kurdish forces dominated the area between Mt. Ararat and southern regions of the Lake Van, thus, the Turkish government increased its pressure over the

rebels. Law no. 1850 was passed in 1931 to ensure that no one engaged in the suppression of the rebellion would be prosecuted (McDowall, 2007: 204-207). The rebellion was suppressed after this fierce military intervention; however the real weakness of the rebellion was the Kurdish tribal system and the lack of coordinated action, which crippled the Kurdish fighting capacity. As significant number of rebels would be found to act against the Turkish government, there would always be as much from other tribes willing to work with and for the government to uphold their interests (McDowall, 2007: 207).

By the mid-1930s, Dersim was a province of Turkey that had not been brought under sufficient government control, though some measurements were taken to limit the activities of previous rebellions and especially the works of Khoybun. Mustafa Kemal himself had signed documents forbidding the printing and the distribution of Khoybun's newspapers, books and magazines within Turkey (Yeşiltuna, 2012: 456-460). However, the tribes residing in this province had never been truly subdued by the government and they continued to live via traditional tribal rules. Chieftains and religious leaders had significant power over the commoners and economically exploited them. They did not oppose the government as long as it kept out of their affairs and some developed close relations with military and police officers to further consolidate their power. Conflicts between tribes were common and many tribesmen carried arms, often participating in raids against other tribes. Local military were drawn into these feuds as come chieftains claimed conspiracy against themselves. At the same time sons of educated families carried and tried to spread a Kurdish nationalist understanding (Van Bruinessen, 1994: 2-3).

In 1936, Dersim was decided to be “civilized”, was put under strict governmental

authority and renamed as Tunceli. The process of renaming a certain region, town, village, etc., is very important in terms of critical geopolitics, which provides reterritorialization in line with the demands of existing power structures. Not only Dersim, but also the Kurdish names of villages and other towns in the region were also abandoned and new Turkish names were given to eradicate any notion of Kurdistan. Moreover, the state claimed to bring civilization by building roads, bridges and police posts. Some chieftains sought accommodation with the military and other chieftains resented the interference by the government. It was one of the first regions where the law of resettlement had been put in to practice. It was constituted as a separate province and was to be governed by a military governor who had extraordinary powers to arrest and deport families. The Minister of Interior, Şükrü Kaya had declared the law as necessary against backwardness and unruliness of tribes. In early 1937, the government had come to believe that a rebellion was imminent due to resistance to the centralization attempts of the government. Chief conspirator was declared to be a religious leader, Seyid Riza and five tribes out of a hundred were believed to be conspiring together (Van Bruinessen, 1994: 3-11). The conflict escalated and the military had permission to interfere. As tribes refused to give up their leaders to the military, the Turkish army mounted a large campaign. In September Seyid Riza and his men surrendered but the military operations continued with greater force (Dersimi, 1952: 274-286).

The strong reprisal of the government was not claimed officially to be directed at the Kurdish population and the authorized sources never mention Kurds specifically. It should be noted that during the Dersim rebellion the Kurds were considered as "mountain Turks". Şükrü Kaya had informed the National Assembly that Dersim commoners were authentic Turks but did not know of their Turkishness. In the eyes of

the regime, this was the only way to assert the process of liberation leading to a human equality and dignity (Van Bruinessen, 1994: 7-12). The military reports called the rebels as Dersim bandits. The Turkish newspaper *Cumhuriyet* printed on March 1936 also informed the readers of the rebellion as an act of bandits but at the same emphasized the Turkish citizenship and goodwill. It is very likely that the paper was trying to lower the tensions in Tunceli as well as around Turkey as it wrote:

> Tunceli peoples suffering from public insecurity today celebrated with drums and clarions the new operations and the groups of bandits coming to surrender to the authorities as a show of good will and a sign of honest Turkish citizenship (Yeşiltuna, 2012: 746)

There was an external dimension of the rebellion as well. Seyid Riza had appealed to Anthony Eden, the Britain Foreign Secretary and demanded support for preventing the Kurdish assimilation process practiced by the Turks; but Britain did not answer this demand (McDowall, 2007: 208). In fact the government had gained a stronger international support (Romano, 2006: 38).

Although some Kurdish authors describe the Dersim rebellion as a Kurdish nationalist movement, it is evident that most of the rebels had acted out in their own narrow interests and their own loyalties, instead of establishing an independent or autonomous Kurdish polity. The rebellion seems to be another attempt of resistance against the civilizing acts of the government and the interference it had on local affairs of chieftains (Van Bruinessen, 1994: 11-12). When the revolt ended in 1938, rebellious Kurdish elites had all been exiled, killed or deported to Western parts of Turkey. Aghas, beys, sheikhs and chieftains either chose to cooperate with the government or they were detained (McDowall, 2007: 37-39).

After the suppression of this rebellion, Kurdish rebellions seemed to cease to

exist and during World War II, the Kurdish separatist movement seemed to lose ground in Turkey. Under conditions of war, despite the Kurdish peoples living in countryside suffered much economically, they had largely escaped state interventionism and many landlords were able profit greatly from this situation. The Republican People's Party introduced a Land Reform Bill aiming to divide arable areas to give to the peasants that had little or no land. Most of the intended territories were either state-owned or traditional waqf (charity property under religion) properties; but there were a number of powerful landlords in the southeast that would be affected by implementation of such a law. This law needed a powerful one party based system to be passed and the Democrats presented themselves as the protectors of private properties from 1946 and onwards. The Kurdish peasants that had the most to gain from this law took it suspiciously. Some even considered it a plot to destroy Kurdish populate lands. Their devotion as well as their loyalty to the Kurdish landlords made them stand beside and vote for the Democrats. In 1950, when the Democrats won the elections a new era had started for the Turkish Kurds (McDowall, 2007: 400-401).

To conclude, domestically, the reason for the failure to establish an independent or autonomous Kurdistan within Turkey rested in the lack of strong national consciousness among the Kurds because of insufficient Kurdish intelligentsia and strong local political/religious elites which perceived traditional way of life more viable compared to establish an independent state. In other words, these local landlords or sheikhs were not aiming to establish an independent geopolitical entity; rather they tried to preserve existing tribal formations. This meant that, they would rebel against the government only when their traditional interests were harmed and stopped supporting rebellions when their interests were restored. The relationship between the central

government and the Kurds was much based on a civilizational geopolitical discourse, in which the government made an "other" of the Kurds as an uncivilized people, who were incapable of self-government and who had to be civilized in order to make themselves proper citizens of the new republic. Kurdistan as a territorial concept was not much mentioned by the ruling elite as if it had not existed before.

3.4. Iran and the Kurds: Rebellion, State Response and Mahabad Republic (1919-1950)

Western penetration towards Iran had started in the early nineteenth century by the military defeats of the Qajars first to the Russians and then to the British. The two powers had turned the country into a buffer zone and a contested territory in their "Great Game". The treaties signed with the foreign powers had brought capitulations to the Tehran government further weakening the state. The Qajars started a process "defensive modernization" in hopes of limiting foreign penetration; however, the efforts failed due to the inability of the state to raise sufficient tax revenues. The economic crises brought about by the government bankruptcy and inflation triggered a revolution in 1905, which paved the way for a written constitution. In 1906, the Constitution was approved by Muzaffar al-Din Shah who died shortly after and was replaced by Muhammad Ali Shah. By 1908, Muhammad Ali had felt strong enough to lead a coup against the Majlis which triggered a civil war within the country. On 12 December 1921 General Reza Khan, commander of the Cossack garrison in Qazvin, took control of Tehran. At first he declared himself a pro-Shah and a pro-British actor, but soon he started to undermine British influence and capitulations. Reza Khan managed to become the real power behind the throne first as an army commander, then as Minister of War, and then as the

Prime Minister as well as commander-in-chief. In 1925, he convened a Constituent Assembly, and by accepting the crown, Reza Khan became Reza Shah, replacing the Qajar dynasty with his self-declared Pahlavi dynasty (Abrahamian, 2008: 36-65). During this chaotic time, the signing of the Treaty of Sevres and various revolts in the region defined as Turkish Kurdistan as well as the Iraqi Kurdistan influenced the Iranian Kurds to revolt against a weak Tehran government. This would start a new era in Iranian Kurdistan (Yildiz and Taysi, 2007: 2-11).

3.4.a. The Kurdish Uprising of Ismail Agha Simko

In February 1919 important chieftains of the Iranian Kurdistan came together and discussed an insurrection against the Iranian government. Among them were Ismail Agha Simko, the chief of Shakkak tribe controlling Urmiyeh, Salamas and souther parts of Khoy, and Sayyid Taha, a strong Kurdish notable descending from Sheikh Ubeydullah. Accordingly, Sayyid Taha visited Baghdad to obtain British support and Ismail Agha Simko wrote a letter for British support to Civil Commissioner in Baghdad, A.T. Wilson. Neither of them was able to obtain a definite support for their cause. Despite this lack of foreign support, Simko was able to appoint governors of his choice in Urmiyeh, tax villages and through raids he was able to obtain firearms as well as resources for his future operations. Simko also have a strong influence over the Kurdish notables in the regions he had controlled in early 1920s. The biggest tribes of Azerbaijan, the chieftains of the Artushi confederacy and other tribes of Hakkari had come to council convened by Simko to discuss the Kurdish issue, and they recognized Simko's power. By 1921, his authority extended towards all Iranian territory west of Lake Urmiyeh, to Baneh and Sardasht, as well as the north western district of Iraq. The

same year Simko plundered Souj Bulagh (Mahabad) which was a Kurdish populated area. This caused discord among the Kurdish nationalists. However, his success against the government troops earned him wide support and increased the numbers of his followers (Van Bruinessen, 2006: 18-20).

The Kurdish chieftains perceived forming friendly relations with Simko quite important since his power was extending day by day. In 1922, Reza Khan decided to act against Simko's power with a new, modern, coherent and disciplined army that he had built. This changed everything for Simko as he could not resist the army. All but a few loyal men remained at his side after the defeat as he had to escape first to Turkey than to Iraq. In exile he searched for supporters and although he was greeted with respect, no one was ready to join him. In 1926 he made another attempt for independence and failed. Finally, in 1929, the Iranian government re-invited him offering the Governorate of Osnaviyeh. This was a set up by the government and he was killed few days after arrival (Van Bruinessen, 2006: 20-21).

The weakness of Simko's movement was the absence of any kind of formal organization and its dependence on personal connections of Simko. The governors appointed by him were tribal chieftains with no connection to the people of the towns, similar to the Tehran appointed officials. There was no systematic taxation and the treasury was filled by looting. Nationalism was one of the factors that mobilized his troops but the rate at which his followers dwindled in times of difficulty demonstrates that it was merely an additional motivation. It is usual for tribes to look for concrete and immediate gains such as military accomplishments over the state, as well as other tribes or simply, plunder. When faced with the power of a modernized army the tribes judged the possibility of success as inadequate, breaking down the unity of the Kurds (Van

Bruinessen, 2006: 23).

Simko failed because of his shortcomings in creating a political agenda and his inability to create a successful bureaucracy to rule. The nationalist aims of the upraising were low compared to the tribal nature of the leadership. Simko still had opponents within Shakkak tribe; they were silenced but not destroyed. There were also Kurds in the North who wanted paid employment and asked the government to form a local contingent against Simko. The Mukri, the Dihbukri and the Mamash tribes were divided among themselves as pro- or anti-Simko (McDowall, 2007: 217 - 221). Those that chose to side with him did so because Simko seemed to be the most powerful figure. What Simko did was to use the Kurdish nation state to obtain more power and authority for himself (Romano, 2006: 223). In other words, nationalism that he envisaged was only a tool; therefore, he failed to unite Iranian Kurds against the state (Yildiz and Taysi, 2007: 12).

Similar to the Turkish case, tribal structure was a huge obstacle for the national Kurdish movement. The loyalty that one felt towards its tribe rarely passed onto another structure. A Kurd is born into a social relationship with a tribe and he cannot dismember himself if he is to remain within the system. This traditional way of life has its own built in rivalries and conflicts with other tribes and neighbors that cannot easily be forgotten. Only under extraordinary circumstances they could unite against a common enemy or for a common goal (Harris, 1977: 114). For the Kurdish folk the question was how they could escape taxation, conscription, and other controlling policies of the centralized state. For Kurdish leaders or intellectuals the question was how to form an autonomous power or if the circumstances presented itself, to form an independent state (Kaveh, 2008: 29). However without unity and external help, the Kurdish desires of Kurdistan

was almost impossible to achieve.

3.4.b. State Response to the Kurds: Reza Shah and the Kurdish Question

Reza Khan crushed the Simko rebellion after noticing the threat that the tribal society created for the state. He resorted to the strategy that had proved effective since centuries. Reza Khan chose to play the tribes against each other, take hostages and act against tribal chieftains. However, the proximity of the Kurdish tribes to the Turkish and Iraqi borders was disadvantageous as dissident tribes could cross over borders in times of threat posed by the government and escape Reza Khan's plans (McDowall, 2007: 223). Therefore, an argument can be made regarding the border permeability of Kurdistan Borders demarcate the territorial limits of a state's jurisdiction and authority, the spatial reach of a given state, and provide a map of geographical distributions of named peoples (Cox, 2016). In the case of Kurdistan, the Kurdish community can easily cross borders to the villages of their *brothers* to refrain from states' jurisdiction. Thus, existing state borders were deterritorialized by the Kurds in a way to create a Kurdish space free of borders within but having a border separating this space from a non-Kurdish one, though this latter space was not so much clear. Moreover, this vague border perception also becomes a cause of instability of Kurdistan's imagining as its perceived definition can change according to the needs of its peoples. It should also be noted that the nomadic Kurds would wander across borders between seasons, regardless of political conflicts. Bandits, as mentioned earlier, would cross over borders and raid villages causing security issues between sovereign states. In case of Reza Shah, the crossing and the re-crossing of borders undermine state authority and emphasize the trans-border nature of the Kurdish issue.

The conflict of the borders has created a problem over an international dimension in the Middle East between Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Syria. Considering the delicacy of the borders to the newly founded states such as Turkey and Iran, the Kurdish violation of demarcated lines was of considerable significance. The rebellion of Kurdish aghas would be logistically supported by Kurds across the borders, making the suppression of rebellion a lot harder to suppress. For example, Turkey and Iran had made several meetings over Simko's backing by Kurds living in Turkey. Turkey's decision to increase monitoring of logistical support of Kurdish aghas considerably weakened Simko's movement and had a direct effect on his downfall (Erdal, 2012: 79). It can be said that the Kurdish issue also contributed to the establishment of the Saadabad Pact in 1937 between Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Afghanistan as these states shared a similar periods of nation building, security concerns and a Kurdish conflict. In other words, the Kurdish boundary issue led to the search of allies especially between Iran, Iraq and Turkey, in order to effectively enforce their sovereignty (Palabıyık, 2010: 157-160).

In addition to border management policies, towards the end of the 1920s, the Iranian government began to disarm tribes. This required a lot of manpower as the Kurdish men were not willing to give up their weapons to the state and preferred instead to send them over the borders to other tribes Iraq. The period between 1927 and 1934 witnessed clashes between the government troops and the Kurdish tribes in terms of disarmament. With each clash, the suppression of the state increased. The important chiefs such as Sheikh Taha, Umar Khan (Simko's nephew), and Sawj Bulaq chief of the Mukri started to be eliminated by the government one by one under suspicious circumstances (McDowall, 2007: 225).

3.4.c. Civilizational Geopolitical Discourse in Iran

Indeed, the model of modernization/westernization pursued by Reza Shah was similar to the understanding of the Turkish ruling elite; a coherent society with distinctive concept of nation and state. On the political level regional autonomy would need to be ended and tribes would have to be weakened through resettlement and their opposition would be silenced. On the cultural level a low degree of cultural diversity and a high degree of ethnic homogeneity would need to be obtained (Zad, 2012: 54). Despite this similarity implementation of civilizational geopolitics in Iran was more difficult compared to Turkey. Iran had a much larger variety of ethnicities to be controlled and building a common identity would take a lot more work than it had in Turkey. Reza Shah set out to promote nation-building using the Turkish example. He even used the term "mountain Iranians" to refer to the Kurdish population of the country, although the term "Kurd" was never banned as was the case within Turkish borders (Romano, 2006: 224). The following words of Reza Shah regarding the uniformity of dress are a strong example of his attempt at nation-building:

> We know that the ten to twelve million Persians, although of the same race and, with few exceptions [sic!], of the same language and religion, used to form groups that were rendered heterogeneous by the large distances that separated them and by the bad state of roads. Each of them had its own mores, customs, and costumes. The Lors, Kurds, Turcoman, Shahsavans, Baluchis, Bakhtiaris, etc., dressed so differently that it was difficult for them to consider each other as belonging to the same country (Chehabi, 1993: 224).

In 1928 traditional honorific titles such as beg, emir, or agha were banned. In 1929 the Pahlavi hat became obligatory which caused great anger that led the Mamas and the Mangur tribes to fight the garrison. Conscription was vigorously rejected. Kurdish language was banned in schools in 1934 and on any public notices the following year. In

1939, Sardasht tribes revolted against the enforcement of conscription, disarmament and the adaptation of European clothes. Before his forced abdication, Reza Shah settled tribes and tried hard to destroy their organizations. During the 1930s, the Shah forcibly transferred Kurds from their settlements to other locations of the state's choosing and placed Turkic speaking peoples. Other Kurds had their lands sequestrated; only sometimes were they compensated by lands far away from their own. However, even by 1936, the chiefs were successful in bribing state officials to leave them relatively free from government suppression. Soon the military officers had taken over the roles of chieftains in corrupt and cruel affairs. The reforms also had severe economic consequences as tribes became impoverished and many towns that depended on the Kurdish tribes for their food supply found themselves in short supply. By the late 1930s the Kurds were under complete submission (McDowall, 2007: 225-226).

Another similarity between Ankara and Tehran governments was the accusation of the British on creating a Kurdish nationalist sentiment. Iranian government saw the Kurdish nationalism partially as a British game due to the short lived Sevres Treaty that promised Kurds a state of their own. The British administration worked to create a Kurdish district in Iraq and the manipulation of Kurdish nationalism in order to thwart Turkish claims on Mosul in mid-1920 contributed to their suspicions. This belief had two main consequences. First, it led to the neglect of internal dimensions of the Kurdish grievances and second, it fostered the idea that the problems of Kurds could be quieted by diplomatic relations with great powers (Kaveh, 2008: 31).

All in all, the period before the World War II in the Iranian Kurdistan was a period of tribal conflict and the rivalry among Kurdish tribal chieftains. No significant discourse of Kurdish nationalism had taken form. Reza Shah was against any act of

autonomy or any transfer of power that would disrupt his plans of nation building. He used his victories over local revolts to enhance his military rule and forcibly resettle Kurdish tribal leaders or place them in Tehran under his supervision (Ghods, 1991: 38). The Kurdish rebellions were against these nationalization and de-tribalization reforms of the Shah's government. Just like in Turkey, the Kurds in Iran had failed to unite for their common interests under Kurdistan. However, the circumstances would radically change with the World War II and with the establishment of the Republic of Mahabad.

3.4.d. The Organized Resistance of Iranian Kurds: Komala JK, KDPI and the Mahabad Republic

Iran was greatly affected by the World War II as the country was split into two spheres of influence. The northern part was controlled by the Soviet Union and the southern part by the British and to a lesser degree, the United States. In 1941, Reza Shah had been replaced by his son Mohammed Reza Shah, whose influence was low as the country was under occupation. To undermine the authority of the Tehran government, the exiled and jailed Kurdish tribal chiefs were allowed to return by 1942. They engaged in a number of uprisings in the early 1940s seeking to recover their land or their positions (Yildiz and Taysi, 2007: 13). For example Abbas Qabudian, one of the most significant of Kurdish landlords returned to Kermanshah and with the British support he was elected to the Parliament and then to the Tribal Commission of the Parliament, where he was able to restore the confiscated tribal lands. He was not alone as many chiefs worked to incorporate governmental posts for themselves and for their relatives to obtain a monopoly of local power (McDowall, 2007: 334).

In the north, tribes living in the west of Lake Urmiyeh were contained by strong

Russian garrisons. Since the Iranian authority was almost non-existent in this part of the country, the Soviets engaged in direct relations with the Kurdish tribes: the Jalali in the north, the Shikak in the mountains west of Shahpur, and the Herki west of Rezaieh. There was an intermediary region between the Russians and the British-controlled regions, located at the middle of Merivan and the Avroman Mountains that the Kurds were able to form a kind of autonomy. In this region, Mahmud Khan of Kani-Senan established his hegemony and in Baneh, Hama Rashid Khan established a principality including Saqqiz and Sardasht. They were both recognized by the Iranian government as semi-autonomous local leaders until 1945, when the reorganized Iranian army forced them into Iraq (Roosevelt, 1947: 248). In sum, Iranian Kurdistan was geopolitically divided into three, being the British-controlled, Russian-controlled and relatively autonomous chiefdoms.

It was not only the tribal chiefs at work but also the urban intellectuals of Mahabad and other Kurdish towns, as well as middle class civil servants, merchants and teachers. This newly emerging relatively well-educated group formed an organization called *Komala-i-Zhian-i-Kurd* (the Committee of Kurdish Youth), or also known as Komala JK. Komala was a nationalist organization working for self-governance and establishment of an autonomous region within Iranian Kurdistan. At first, it began to work as a secret organization performing its activities in formation. Komala kept in touch with the Soviets as well the Kurds from HIWA, an Iraqi party working for a greater Kurdistan. The Soviets had influenced Komala's Marxist-Leninist character. By 1944, its representatives started to travel to Iraq, Turkey and Syria which transformed the movement into the most significant and innovative Kurdish nationalist movement of the time (Yildiz and Taysi, 2007: 13-15).

Soon the Russians had interested in the Komala JK's activities. In 1942, they had invited the leading aghas to Baku. As Komala's influence began to increase, its leaders requested Russian assistance to found a branch in Mahabad, where they could hopefully meet regularly. In 1945, Komala declared itself officially with a pompous ceremony. However, the Soviets were not in favor of the democratic structure of Komala and were looking for someone for leadership that could comply with their "suggestions". Qazi Mohammed was a hereditary judge and religious leader of Mahabad and at the same time came from a respectable family. He was the man the Russians were searching for. At first Komala had feared his reputation as they thought he had the potential to dominate the party and had rejected his admission. When Soviets interfered, Komala's fear came true as the party turned into a one man rule (Roosevelt, 1947: 250-253). After Qazi Muhammad's takeover, the party did not last very long and its brief life ended on 15 August 1945 as Mohammad dissolved Komala and absorbed its membership into the new Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (a.k.a *Partî Dêmokiratî Kurdistanî Êran*, Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran or KDPI) (Gunter, 2009: 102).

This change proved the powerful grip the Soviets had on the Kurdish party, because the radical change that Komala JK was hoping to achieve in Iranian Kurdistan would have had adverse consequences for the Soviet security and strategic interests in the region. The absence of radical populist rhetoric in KDPI's discourse of "Kurdistan" was specifically designed to incorporate the tribal leaders, landowners and mercantile bourgeoisie (Vali, 2011: 25-27). The KDPI gave an opportunity to tribal leaders disappointed by the political repression of Reza Shah's policies as they had begun to use nationalism in their political aspirations to oppose the Iranian state after their release. With the end of Komala JK, the radical nationalist ideals and reformist ideas were

largely abandoned, leaving KDPI with a commitment to autonomy. In the party program's part 2, clause 4, its main purpose is stated as:

> To safeguard the rights of the Kurdish people within the boundaries of the Iranian state ... In Kurdistan democracy should be fundamentally accessible to the people and they should have the right to take part in the elections for the national consultative assembly [the Majlis] without national and religious discrimination.(Vali, 2011: 26)

Meanwhile in northwestern Azeri-populated territories of Iran, Iranian government was rapidly losing control. When Tabriz fell into the hands of Azerbaijan People's Government, Qazi Muhammad decided that it was time for the Kurds to do so as well. On 22 January 1946 vast number of Kurds from Mahabad and some tribal chiefs along with Qazi Muhammad declared the establishment of the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad. Qazi Muhammad became the new president. Almost all of the members chosen for his cabinet were former members of Komala JK with middle or upper class backgrounds (Koohi-Kamali, 2003: 104-109). Qazi Muhammad had managed to go beyond tribal relations of the Kurds and had managed to attract different confederations of tribes against a commonly identified enemy, the Iranian central government, to form an autonomous Kurdistan within Iran (Harris, 1977: 114).

It was the tribes that offered their military forces for security of this newly established state, but their reason for support was far from nationalist. The Republic was the only alternative to the central government and was the only option to end tribal rivalry. There were also many chieftains discontent about the republic and its increasing power. The reason for this discontent was the threat it posed to tribal leaders' power and influence. The conflicts and rivalries among Kurdish tribes once more appeared as an obstacle in front of national unity within the Republic. The central government also

abused this obstacle by bribing to some Kurdish notables and offering state support against their rivals. By the end of 1945 the Mahabad Republic had grown stronger but its dependence on tribal troops emerged as a big vulnerability as it had to rely on tribal military power to fight against the government forces as well as rival tribes hostile to the Republic. The majority of the cabinet members, the Central Committee of the Party and the government officials were from the urban middle class and would take any chance they could to reduce the power of tribal chiefs but not much could be done without a strong central army. Thus, the movement appeared to be nationalist in appearance, while it remained largely under the influence of traditional and tribal factions (Koohi-Kamali, 2003: 110-111).

In sum, the Mahabad government was inexperienced, poorly-organized as a result of Kurdish tribal affiliations. Moreover, it did not properly organize its provincial structure or reach an administrative-political unity demonstrated by an official map of the state. The boundaries of the Republic, whether real or imagined, fell within the domestic jurisdiction of the Western and the Eastern Azerbaijan. KDPI also lacked a political doctrine. Even though the ruling elite were under the Soviet influence there was no talk of socialism, no word of land distribution or action toward equality between the peasants and landlords. The political concept of a "Kurdish nation" was claimed to name a community internally divided into different social classes and strata, in other words, each class had contradictory political, cultural and economic interests (Vali, 2011: 58-86).

Main achievements of Mahabad Republic experience were cultural such as the translation of educational books to Kurdish, printing of a newspaper named *Kurdistan* as well as some magazines published in Kurdish. The treasury was sufficient enough to

meet daily expenses. Taxes and party dues were collected from tribal leaders who tried hard to prove their loyalty. A twenty year agreement of friendship and cooperation was signed with the newly formed government of Tabriz in 1946 which had a shocking effect on Tehran as it was an act indigenous to independent states (Koohi-Kamali, 2003: 112-115).

As the tension rose with Tehran, Qazi Mohammad and his colleagues gave up titles such as president and minister and took up names as party leader or chief of finance to appease the Iranian government. Tribal support to Mohammad had started to dwindle as soon as the Tabriz-Tehran deal was broadcast. This meant that Azeris had abandoned the Kurds and the chieftains began to follow up their personal interests. The Iranian government started military operations to bring order to the country and the government allowed the army to enter Iranian Kurdistan to maintain law and security during parliamentary elections. On 13 December 1947, after the Iranian government re-entered Tabriz, the Mahabad government declared that it would peacefully receive government forces. Thus the Mahabad experience had not lasted a full year when the Iranian forces closed Kurdish printing presses, burned the Kurdish books and banned the teaching of Kurdish. On March 31, Qazi Mohammad was hanged in the town square (McDowall, 2007: 244-245).

In sum, Tehran saw the Mahabad Republic and the new Kurdish nationalism as a lot more dangerous to its sovereignty then tribal rebellion. The Shah perceived Mahabad the same way the Turks viewed the autonomous rule of Kurds, as a dangerous cultural framing. After the dissolution of the Republic, Kurdish identity was recognized as long as it was not politicized (Romano, 2006: 229)

The Mahabad Republic was the first experience that a provincial Kurdish

government took a form of an autonomous geopolitical entity, and it was one of the political structures closest to a particular state that could exert control over a region named as “Kurdistan”. However, except the Soviet political support, the Republic was never recognized by any other country. The social and political limits of Mahabad prevented it to exert extensive control over a region along Iranian borders; even some the major Kurdish cities within Iran such as Sanandaj and Kirmansah were not under Mahabad's control (Ahmadzadeh and Stansfield, 2010: 14-15). The Republic of Mahabad was too short lived to fulfill the role of a functioning government. For example it was able to print school books, but it didn't have the opportunity to educate young Kurds. The Republic also depended too much on the Soviet support. Once the Russians withdrew, the Kurds of Mahabad were unable to resist the Iranian forces. The most important aspect of this government in terms of its geopolitical implication lies not in its state formation in itself, but in its realization of the Kurdish nationalism in a transversal manner. Only thirty percent of the Mahabad administration was from Iran and the rest had come from Iraq, Turkey and Syria (O'Ballance, 1996: 33). Therefore, although hampered by the tribal conflicts, it represented a pan-Kurdish desire. In its short life span, the Kurdish culture found time to rediscover and recreate its traditions (O'Shea, 2004: 151-154). Thus, the Republic of Mahabad was perceived by some of the Kurdish intellectuals as a proof of the possibility of constructing an independent “Kurdistan”, if Kurdish tribalism could be overcome.

3.5. Iraq and the Kurds: British Mandate System and Independent Iraq (1919-1950)

After the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the World War I, Iraqi territories of the Empire were invaded by the British. General Sir Frederick S. Maude entered Baghdad as the commander of an army of "liberation" on 11 March 1917. By 1918, the British occupied most of the country, though Mosul's status would not be legally settled until 1926. Sheikh Mahmud was made governor of Sulaymaniya and other Kurdish officials were placed to work under the British. In 1920 mandate for Iraq was given to the British powers by the League of Nations. Faisal, son of Sharif Hussein, declared as King of Iraq as a political act of balance. He had to work hard to keep up with the demands of different ethnic and sectarian communities as well as the British mandate administrators (Fattah and Caso, 2009: 157-171).

3.5.a. Early Kurdish Political Actors and Kurdish-British Relations in Iraq

Once assumed the governorship of Sulaymaniya, Sheikh Mahmud faced deep problems within the governmental system. There was a conflict between the institutionalized government and the highly personalized form of government-based patronage between the Kurdish tribal and religious strata. Mahmud tried to build personal power and tried to increase his personal security through the elimination of political figures that opposed him. Soon, General Noel replaced him with Major Elly Bannister Soane, who perceived Sheikh Mahmud as a rogue figure having deep commitments to the Kurdish cause (Gunter, 2009: 190). The British politics continued to support the tribal system and the following are Major Soane's words on the problems of the tribalism:

> Revival of the tribal system was ... a retrograde movement. Already South Kurdistan had become largely detribalized and a measure of prosperity, in consequence, had been its lot in prewar times. Now, the Political Officer [Noel], accepting the views of Sheikh Mahmud, devoted leader. The idea was to divide South Kurdistan into tribal areas under tribal leaders. Petty village headmen were unearthed and discovered as leaders of long dead tribes.... Law was to be administered by this chief, who must only recognize Sheikh Mahmud as Hukmdar.... Ideal for the clansman but fatal for trade, civilization and tranquility (McDowall, 2007: 157).

Before the British could act on the deteriorating situation, Sheikh Mahmud raised three hundred tribal troops and imprisoned all the British personnel and toppled the garrison in Sulaymaniya in 1919. He wanted to become the ruler of Iraqi Kurdistan, which in his mind did not consist of territories beyond Iraq. Sheikh Mahmud was a true nationalist and his aims were toward creating a Kurdish political entity but under his own rule. He had come to believe that self-determination was what the Allies had promised. However, his power of influence did not extend beyond the Governorate of Sulaymaniya and even in that area the large Jaf tribe resisted his desires to become the King of Kurdistan (W.L.E., 1956: 419-420). His rebellion soon became the symbol of Kurdish nationalism but he failed and was exiled. In 1922, he returned from exile and was made governor once again. He tried to revolt one more time in spring of 1931 and declared himself to be the "King of Kurdistan". He failed yet again to the British powers and accepted house arrest for him as well as his family in Southern Iraq (O'Ballance, 1996: 19-20). Though his rebellion could not succeed, his self-declared title of "King of Kurdistan" was important for his perception of Kurdistan as a geopolitical yet not clearly defined entity. His Kurdistan only comprised of Iraqi Kurdistan and there was no transversal intention.

Things got further complicated with the Mosul problem as Turkey and Britain had conflicting ideas about this region. The British appeared to be more sensitive to the Kurdish culture than the Arab government but this was motivated purely by economic interests, particularly considering the rich oilfields of Mosul. Soon, the British came to perceive Kurds as a disintegrative force in the context of Mosul. The British saw the natural resources as a crucial element of stability and prosperity. When Mosul was incorporated into Iraqi territories, the Kurdish territories were seen as a direct threat to the consolidation of state power over areas containing oil. From the 1920s onwards, Arabization of Northern Iraq started. Similar to Turkey, the British mandate aimed to amalgamate country's diverse people into a coherent whole, hoping to stop dissident voices. The British failed in this regard as the government was shaped meanly by Sunni Arab majority, which resulted in societal divisions along ethno-sectarian lines (Romano and Gurses, 2014: 44-45).

In 1935, forty Kurdish chiefs challenged the government by demanding the official use of Kurdish as was stated by the League of Nations. They had no intentions of autonomy but wanted fair representation in the National Assembly, fair share of natural resources and development of Kurdish agriculture and industry (Yıldız, 2007: 15). The politicians in Baghdad did not comply with the Kurdish demands as the Kurds could not be properly organized. By 1936, Kurdish civil society activity was nearly nonexistent. There was an informal *Komala-i Liwan* (Young Men's Club) formed by Kurdish students in Baghdad in 1930 but lacked an official political program. An official Iraqi Communist Party was founded in 1934 and it supported Kurdish independence. Some Kurds joined since no other alternative existed. Even after the party abandoned to work for Kurdish independence, many continued to support the Party as it backed minority

rights (McDowall, 2007: 288).

In October 1936, General Bakr Sidqi staged a coup in Iraq. He was ethnically Kurd, but he was not a Kurdish nationalist. A year later he was assassinated (Yıldız, 2007: 15). Sidqi's coup provoked anti-Kurdish feeling among Arab nationalists. Pan-Arabists saw Kurds as an obstacle in front of their ideals, while their provocative policies in turn strengthened Kurdish national feelings. As a reaction a class of young professional Kurds started to emerge. *Komala Brayati* (Brotherhood Society) was formed by urban notables. *Darkar* (Woodcutters), with a reference to the Italian Carbonari of the Risorgimento movement, was founded by more radical nationalists in Sulaymaniya. *Hiwa* (Hope) emerged from the Darkar and intended to bring together different groups. *Hiwa* soon had 1,500 members from young trainee professionals in Baghdad to officers and few landlords, chiefs, and aghas. It was an indication of a social shift from the mountain and tribal identity. However, peasants were absent.in this organization. Whether this was because the landlords chose not to incorporate them or the average peasant could not relate himself with the nationalist rhetoric; it significantly weakened the party (Gunter, 2009: 66).

3.5.b. Emergence of Mulla Mustafa Barzani as a Strong Political Figure

The next Kurdish leader that rose after Sheikh Mahmud was his grandson, Mulla Mustafa Barzani. He, his brother Sheikh Ahmad and their tribe lived around the village of Barzan near the Great Zab. He first clashed with the government over taxation issues and the resettlement of Assyrian refuges from Hakkari to Iraqi Kurdish areas. The government forces had aircrafts in their command and forced the Barzani brothers to the Turkish border, where they surrendered and remained detained until their escape in 1943 (O'Ballance, 1996: 19-20). After his escape, Mulla Mustafa had started to preach vague nationalist ideas. On October 1943 the Iraqi government sent a small military detachment against him which he was able to defeat in Diyana. Barzani's victory had attracted Kurds attention and caused some Kurds to desert the Iraqi army. Seeing the severity of the situation, the British involved and asked Mulla Mustafa Barzani to negotiate with the government; he was threatened with a possible air strike against his forces if he would act otherwise. The negotiations ended with no positive outcome (O'Ballance: 24-25). Mulla Mustafa Barzani asked the Iraqi government to live peacefully in Sulaymaniya with his brother, Sheikh Ahmad. The government chose to do nothing which eventually led to another armed conflict between the two sides. Britain warned Baghdad to end the victimization of the Barzanis which would hurt the Kurd-Arab relations. Britain also feared the Barzanis' potential for an uprising as the Iraqi Kurdistan had been neglected by the government and nothing had been done to help the Kurdish famine of 1943 after a failed harvest. Eventually, the British forced the Iraqi government to pardon the Barzanis. Baghdad sent a Kurdish minister, Majid Mustafa to sort things out peacefully with Mulla Mustafa. Mustafa's return to Baghdad had become a personal triumph which greatly irritated the Arab nationalists with in the country. The

general neglect of the Kurds had gained widespread sympathy for the Barzanis (McDowall, 2007: 290-292). By 1944, Kurdish national feelings were starting to take a strong hold in Iran as well as in Iraq.

Majid Mustafa used the opportunity he received from the government to stimulate a Kurdish nationalist movement. In Sulaymaniya a meeting of tribal leaders took place to discuss grievances. They went to Barzan and then to Mahabad. The movement had the intention of uniting as one nation with the Iranian Kurds. This was important, because for the first time a transversal scheme to establish a unified Kurdistan was tried to be implemented. In December 1944, Mulla Mustafa demanded the fulfillment of promises for the detachment of Kurdish *qadhas* (districts) from Arab administered Mosul, together with the release of Kurdish prisoners, and the appointment of a Kurdish commissioner with a power of veto. The government was then given forty days to comply. Replying these demands, the Iraqi army marched against Barzani (McDowall, 2007: 292-293).

Once again tribal politics played a part as the Zibari tribe abandoned the Barzani movement and received a full pardon from the government. The revolts between 1943 and 1945 were intrinsically tribal. The actions of Mulla Mustafa Barzani were to widen his political power rather than an act of nationalism. He had demanded removal of police posts, instruments of government authority and had attempted to act as a mediator between tribes. All point to Barzani's will to extend his regional influence under his traditional title. Indeed, the Kurdish nationalist movement in Iraq was in need of a leader and Barzani had proven his tactical skills winning over the government However, the reluctance of Barzani in giving up his personal agenda of increasing his own power against rival tribes and in leading the nationalist movement resulted in his failure. *Hiwa*

had tried to present the Barzani rebellion as a nationalist fervor but the failure of the revolts resulted in Hiwa's split into smaller groups. One of those groups became *Rezgari Kurd Parti* (Kurdish Deliverance Party) that aimed to construct a greater Kurdistan starting with a secure independent regional government in Iraq. In 1946,the Rezgari Kurds appealed to the American Legation in Baghdad for Kurdish sovereignty, but they obtained no result (Kaya, 2012: 138).

In mid-October 1946, Mulla Mustafa Barzani and Sheikh Ahmad fled to Mahabad where Barzani proposed an alliance to KDPI (Romano, 2006: 188). 3,000 followers of Barzani from Iraq crossed over to Iran to aid Qazi Mohammad for this purpose. Barzani became the foreign minister of the Mahabad Republic and for the first time, a successful transversal connection was provided. However, Qazi Mohammad and Mulla Mustafa had conflicting political views and there was also an issue of linguistic and cultural differences among the Iranian and the Iraqi Kurds. These differences also opened the door to some rivalries (Kaya, 2012: 140). In the end, it was Barzani's troops that defended the Republic of Mahabad until its collapse. After the fall of the Republic, Mulla Mustafa Barzani fled to the USSR as he could not come to terms with Iranian government (O'Shea, 2004: 151-152, 171).

During this period, Iraq did not apply a civilizational geopolitical discourse as the British had artificially drawn Iraqi borders and they were controlling the political system. Tribal politics were in the foreground and Kurds were seeking to find their place within Iraq. Like everywhere else, tribal formations played a part in causing a disunity of the Kurdish people in the revolts against the government. Sheikh Mahmud was more of a nationalist leader than Barzani and believed that Wilson's principles meant self-determination for Kurdistan. However, his wish to become the King of Kurdistan was

not accepted by various tribes and his influence proved to be of no use. Mulla Mustafa managed to become the face of the nationalist discourse but his desires for personal power and influence within the region prevented him to do so. Although Barzani aided The Republic of Mahabad, it was too short lived to unite the Iraqi and the Iranian Kurds as their differences in language and customs proved strong differences. In the 1940s an Iraqi government started negotiations over the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930 and the withdrawal of the British forces. The coming years were to show clashes of Arab nationalism and the question of ideological geopolitics in Iraqi Kurdistan (Fattah and Caso, 2009: 174-179).

3.6. Syria and the Kurds: French Mandate and Khoybun (1919-1950)

In the years between 1919 and 1950, Kurdish tribal political or nationalist activities in Syria were quite limited compared to Turkey, Iran and Iraq. Syria was a French mandate and the colonial regime downplayed the importance of Kurdistan. This is the reason why this section is comparatively shorter than those dealing with the previous three states. After the World War I, the French were able to establish their mandate regime within Syrian borders and continued the Ottoman ethno-religious organization of the *millet* system. They presented themselves as a mediator between the religious minorities and the Sunni majority. In reality, the French rule perceived Syrian unity as part of Arab nationalization designed by the Britain to harm French interests (Tejel, 2009: 2-16).

The Sykes-Picot Agreement had created the spheres of influence for France and Britain, leaving Syria to France. Kurdish people mostly residing in Afrin and Damascus proved loyal to the French mandate administrators after the World War I. Two leading

families, al-Yusiv and Shamdin, preferred the French administration over an Arab one, whom they saw as a threat against their tribal lifestyle. Some tribes came from Turkey after the 1920 rebellion to be settled in Jazeera. Member of the Kurdish national associations in the Ottoman period had fled to Syria and settled under the French mandate, among them were many tribal leaders, aghas and sheikhs. The French policy of decentralization provided aghas with increasing power. By 1932, most of the Kurdish population had settled in the upper Jazeera. Bedirkhan family who founded the *Khoybun* organization and who had supported the Mt. Ararat rebellion against the Turks were also among those settled in Syria. The French sought to divide and rule by supporting minority groups against the potential of an Arab nationalist upsurge (Yıldız, 2005: 28). When the French had difficulty with the rising demands against mandate power they recruited Kurds, Circassians, and Armenians to their armies against the Arab revolt against French administration in 1925 (Romano and Gurses, 2014: 86-87).

In 1924, the Kurdish population began to demand some form autonomy. The Kurdish Berazi tribes living between Jarabulus and Nusaybin appealed for the creation of a Kurdish state within the Syrian borders. These appeals became strengthened after Kurdish intellectuals fled from Turkey settled in Syria. The revolts that they had organized in Turkey, allowed these intellectuals to gain some experience on self-determination. The declaration of Kurdish as the second language, the teaching of this language in schools and administration by Kurdish officials were among the demands of the Kurdish intellectuals (Romano and Gurses, 2014: 86-87).

By 1936, the French had installed an Arab nationalist government to appease growing nationalist resentment while they continued to support administrative autonomy for other regions. In 1937, some revolts took place against the centralization policies of

Damascene urban notables within the government. France chose to reestablish French power and increase autonomy of Kurds living in Jazeera. However this led to an increased conflict between the Sunni Arab population and the Kurdish community as the Kurds became unwilling to give up their autonomy and cultural identity to an Arab administration (Yıldız, 2005: 28-30).

The French had little respect for Syrian officials and often complained of their incompetence and dishonesty. They especially had a negative perception of Muslim Arab, Kurds, and Druzes, which were perceived as uncivilized peoples of Syria. Contrarily, the French colonial masters favored Maronites, as one French officer was noted to state that the Maronites were thinking as if they were French people (Khoury, 1987: 71). Considering the roots of the civilizational geopolitics, the French attitude came from their belief in their superiority. The Christian communities were closer to their history and belief systems and therefore they were prioritized. Although the French colonial administrators held a civilizational perspective in governing Syria, they generally preferred following a divide and rule policy. Naturally these policies had no true interests in the culture or the language of the Kurds other than how they can be made useful in attaining the French colonial interests within Syria. The will of the Kurdish people were not the priority. Syria gained independence from the French colonial rule in 1946 and would witness an unstable political course disrupted by multiple coups and counter-coups in the coming years. The development of the Kurdish identity, perception of Kurdistan, assimilation and repressive state policies based on a civilizational geopolitical discourse will be examined in detail in the next chapter as these concepts became more visible after the 1950s as pan-Arabism and nationalist ideals became more apparent.

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire after the World War I began a period of reterritorialization in the Middle East. The Sevres treaty had envisioned Kurdistan as political but entity but the political atmosphere did not allow it to be realized. The Kurdish population was deterritorialized amongst Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria which created a transversal Kurdish question. These newly formed states perceived Kurdistan as a security problem and enforced civilizational geopolitics. Meanwhile, the Kurdish population itself had troubles uniting for national purposes and was unable establish an independent Kurdistan. The aspiration for independence would soon transform itself in to a need to be ethnically and culturally recognized under the sovereign states. The period between 1950 and 1990 would witness the conflicts emerging from civilizational and ideological geopolitics.

CHAPTER IV

REVIVAL OF KURDISH NATIONALISM AND DEMANDS OF AUTONOMY BETWEEN 1950 AND 1990

The period following 1950 has been a period of revival for Kurdish nationalism and the demands for an autonomous, self-governing "Kurdistan" based on Kurdish identity. Between 1940 and 1950, almost every Kurdish movement witnessed a sense of hopelessness against the power of the sovereign states. Particularly, from 1950s onwards, the Kurds were relatively optimistic about an opening in the political atmosphere to start the revitalization of "Kurdistan" as a self-governing geopolitical entity under the countries of the region. On the other hand, Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria developed similar perceptions regarding the threat of deterritorialization of "Kurdistan"; but they chose to enforce different policies. This period also witnessed the emergence of ideological geopolitical discourse, although civilizational geopolitical discourse continued to exist strongly. In Turkey, and, to a lesser degree, in Iran, the Kurdish political movements were associated with communism and therefore discredited as a threatening phenomenon towards to regime. In Iraq and Syria, on the other hand, where Arab socialism and anti-Westernism became prevalent, Kurdish political movements were labeled as a tool of the "Western imperialists" to penetrate into the Middle East and to disturb to territorial integrity of the state.

4.1. Turkey and the Kurds: The Revival of the Kurdish Nationalism (1950-1990)

The political atmosphere after the World War II had changed significantly. The defeat of Axis powers was seen as a victory for democracy. The USA emerged as the dominant power with its pluralist and capitalist values. Around this time, Soviet Union had not renewed the Treaty of Friendship with Turkey, which had been signed in 1925. Moreover, Soviet Union demanded Turkey to accept joint defense of the Straits as well as revision of the Montreaux Convention. This had contributed to the deterioration of Turkish-Soviet relations as well as development of Turkish-American relations. With American influence, İsmet İnönü, prime minister of the period, had begun giving speeches in favor of democratization in Turkey which eventually led to the declaration of a multi-party system in 1946. In the 1950 elections, the Republican People's Party (RPP), which had been in government for 27 years, was replaced by Democrat Party (DP) that had founded in 1946 and led by Adnan Menderes. DP came to power with the rhetoric of a free market and putting the rural people's interests first (Zürcher, 2004: 208-226). In the coming years, Turkey would witness military interventions and a very unstable political atmosphere. The rise of the leftist parties and the influence of communism would create an opening for the Kurdish nationalist movement. From the 1950s onwards there would be a strong revival of Kurdish nationalism.

4.1.a. Kurdish Nationalist Revival and Emergence of Ideological Geopolitics

Two decades after the Dersim rebellion, the discourse of Kurdistan or rather any act of Kurdish nationalism was almost nonexistent. A massive aerial and land military campaign had broken the armed resistance and eliminated the leaders of the rebellion. This had broken the will of the Kurds, making any sort of resistance seemed pointless.

Moreover, the outbreak of the World War II had also undermined the discourse of Kurdistan. The rise of the Democrat Party signaled a new era for the Kurdish question and altered these conditions in a way to renew the demands of the Kurdish people. DP allowed the return of deportees and closed the inspectorates in 1952, while seeking to broaden its support among the Kurdish tribes and cooperation with regional religious leaders. The party chose to follow integrative policies instead of coercion. For example, the grandson of Sheikh Said, Abdülmelik Fırat, who had been considered to pose a double threat of Kurdishness and obscurantism, was made a deputy in the National Assembly (Bozarslan, 2008: 343). Through the party system local authorities were able to find allies in Ankara. Since landlords and aghas controlled most of the votes in the rural parts of Eastern Turkey, DP distributed spoils in exchange for votes (Van Bruinessen, 1984: 8). There was a significant change in political mobilization as the multi-party system drew different interest groups to the political arena in Turkey (Van Bruinessen, 1992: 26).

The Democrats presented themselves as the protectors of private property. RPP had wanted to pass a Land Reform Law to reallocate land to peasants. This had considerably bothered landlords in the Southeastern Anatolia. DP exploited the situation by obtaining religious *fatwas* (ruling on Islamic law by the recognized religious authority) regarding righteousness of private property, an act that especially had Kurdish aghas in mind. Their strategy worked, since in 1954, DP got thirty-four seats out of forty in the Kurdish populated areas of Eastern Turkey. However, by the mid-1950s, the Democrats started to lose their hold on this region as smaller parties chose to follow similar approaches in obtaining the votes of Kurdish landlords. This caused another breakup of unity among the Kurds. When a certain Kurdish tribe supported a particular

party, the rival tribe began to support the rival party. The polarization would eventually take a dangerous turn as coffee houses and other communal areas became marked by "political tribes" which became physical threats to their rivals (Romano, 2006: 400-402).

Meanwhile, as things seemed to improve for the Kurdish sheikhs and aghas, who had been receiving support from and cooperated with the government, towards the end of the DP era, the government began to suspect from the intentions of some Kurdish notables. Indeed, the Kurds began revive the movement for an independent Kurdistan in 1958, the same year Mustafa Barzani returned Iraq, by forming the secret Kurdish Liberty Party (KİP - *Kürt İstiklal Partisi*). Based on a Marxist ideology, the KİP denounced the authority of aghas, tribal chieftains, sheikhs and seyyids. The party believed that when Kurdish leaders bearing these titles entered the Turkish parliament, they betrayed the idea of an independent Kurdistan. On the other hand, Adnan Menderes had claimed that a number of Kurdish politicians had used their position to attempt for an independent "Kurdistan". As a result, 485 Kurds were arrested and detained. In December 1959, 52 Kurds, who founded the KİP, were arrested for attempting to divide the Turkish state with the help of foreign powers. Some of the Kurdish notables were considered as the most influential figures in this alleged rebellion for independence and were exiled to Western Turkey. What is especially interesting was that all but one of those exiled Kurds was members of the DP (Şimşir, 2011: 515).

The civilizational geopolitical discourse, perceiving Kurds as un-civilized and incapable of self-government, survived during the 1950s as well. Particularly, this assimilative discourse was reinforced through the education system. Şerif Fırat, a Kurdish intellectual, argued that the Kurdish identity was suppressed as if there was no Kurdish nation. Similarly, Mahmut Altunakar, a prominent Kurdish politician, stated

that after leaving his home town in Mardin for Mersin, he was mocked by his school mates for being a Kurd. This interaction with the Turks made him more aware of his Kurdish identity. Based on these personal experiences, the Kurdish nationalists claimed that they were repressed and assimilated (Loizides, 2010: 516-518). These claims later turn out to be a common discourse for the Kurds.

In 1960, a military coup took place as a reaction to increased authoritarianism by the Democrat Party, its contradictory behavior towards secularism, unconstitutional acts and economic distress. The coup claimed the lives of Adnan Menderes and two other ministers; while almost all the DP deputies were arrested and sentenced to imprisonment. Moreover, after the coup, a new constitution was adopted. The new constitution appeared to be social. In the aftermath of the coup an urban-middle classed coalition took place in hopes of economic progress and social justice (Daldal, 2004: 75-98). On the other hand, the military government had chosen to give Turkish names towards Kurdish villages and towns. In other words, this renaming demonstrated the governmental attempt for reterritorialization by prohibiting the use of Kurdish names (Gunter, 1988: 391).

Despite all its shortcomings, the new constitution seemed to bring wider civil liberties and more freedom of press. It also made it easier to establish trade unions and political associations. As a result of this relative liberalization, some journals began to be published entirely on Kurdish history, folklore and economic problems (Van Bruinessen, 2000: 227). It was leftist views that gradually increased and spread out through the country. While the RPP began to define itself as a center-left political party, some factions of the Turkish left was consolidated under the Turkish Workers Party (TİP – *Türkiye İşçi Partisi*) and TİP was able to achieve fifteen seats in the Parliament in 1965

elections. TİP started to take interest in the Kurdish question, and finally in 1970, it openly declared that the Kurdish people constitute a distinct ethnic identity in Turkey as well as criticized the assimilation policies exerted upon them previously. This was particularly crucial to the Kurdish issue, because until that time no political party specifically recognized the existence of Kurdish people as a distinct ethnic group in Turkey (Gunter, 1988: 392).

In 1965 a Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) of Turkey was established by Faik Bucak who was a Kurdish lawyer from Urfa and a member of the Turkish parliament. It should be noted that this party was founded when Mulla Mustafa Barzani's uprising were covered by the Turkish press. Barzani's Kurdish Democratic Party of Iraq was without a doubt a model for the KDP of Turkey (Aydın and Taşkın, 2015: 172). Moreover, in 1969, Kurdish intellectuals in Ankara, Istanbul and some provinces of Eastern Turkey formed the Revolutionary Cultural Hearths of the East (DDKO - Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları) as the first legal Kurdish organization. This organization was established to discuss economic problems of Kurdish-populated territories and the oppression of the Kurdish villagers by the Kurdish aghas and sheikhs (Gunter, 1988: 392-393). The formation of this society marked the beginning of separation of the Kurdish nationalist left from the Turkish Marxist counterpart. Besides formation of parties and organizations, there were also demonstrations. For example in the summer of 1967, mass student demonstrations took place in 19 Kurdish cities and towns (Kutschera, 1994: 12-13).

The official civilizational geopolitical discourse, denouncing any right of self-government for the Kurds led the Kurdish people search for an outlet, where they could express their identity. The poor economic conditions of the East direct some Kurdish

families to encourage their children to take higher education as they saw a diploma as a guarantee of economic independence. For this purpose, these families themselves prefer to speak Turkish language at home, meaning a self-imposed limitation for achieving a higher status in the society to promote Kurdish interests (Kutschera, 1994: 13). It can be argued that as the Kurdish community received education in Turkish schools and universities, they became aware of socialist alternatives and oppression through the Kurdish tribal system. This led them to seek solutions in the leftist formations. The new constitution had enabled the strongest leftist movement of Turkish history until that period (Van Bruinessen, 2005: 45). In other words, the civilizational geopolitical discourse began to weaken as more and more Kurdish intellectuals emerge as a result of the increase in educated Kurds. In other words, through education, the Kurds were able to demonstrate themselves as "civilized" people and those who produced the civilizational geopolitical discourse had to face the phenomenon of "Kurdish intellectual" particularly in cities. The weakening of civilizational geopolitics transformed the geopolitical discourse to an ideological one. In other words, based on the external conditions, i.e., the Cold War, and the internal conditions, i.e. the leftist inclination of the Kurdish movement, ideological geopolitical discourse began to dominate. As the revival of Kurdish nationalism increased and leftist views drew sympathy both from the Kurds and Turks, the Turkish government was alarmed in a way to suppress the Kurdish movement not only as a separatist one, but also as a communist one. Although the civilizational geopolitical discourse had not disappeared, the ideological geopolitical discourse became more prominent starting from the late 1960s onwards.

Through their political parties and other civil society organizations, the Kurds

had conservative demands at first. They wanted official recognition of the Kurds as a distinct ethnic group and demanded economic development of Turkey's eastern region, especially the Kurdish-populated provinces. However, the fact that a Turkish left wing party, the TİP, backed Kurdish demands was perceived as the most serious threat by the government. Thus, the outcome was further suppression of such groups. This suppression did not bring a solution since the lack of support from other Turkish parties and civil society organizations pushed Kurds to organize themselves and resulted in more radical demands such as autonomy or even an independent Kurdistan on the Turkish territories (Van Bruinessen, 2005: 45).

Towards the end of the 1960s, clashes between the left and the right took a very violent turn. The combination of outspoken Kurdish organizations and violent leftist movements as well as armed conservative factions led the country into political chaos (Marcus, 2007: 22). This was intensified with workers' strikes. Several lives were lost at political meetings as a result of clashes between rival political groups. Around this time, the autonomy agreement between Baghdad and KDP led by Mustafa Barzani on March 1970 triggered Ankara's concerns for a similar attempt for autonomy in Eastern Anatolia and Demirel authorized military operations against Kurdish villages and towns. The operations would end shortly after the military intervention in 1971, but would remain as a model for the future governments (Kutschera, 1994: 13).

On 12 March 1971, the military intervened by demanding the resignation of the Demirel government. The generals threatened to take over the government directly, if the cabinet did not deal directly with the leftist terrorists. Demirel and his cabinet resigned and the parliament gave into the generals' demands and authorized stronger military measures against the internal disorder. Although the military did not completely

take over the government, their presence behind the scenes was clear. They wanted martial law in provinces with great disturbances but were careful as not to dictate civilian politics directly. New articles were added to the constitution to reinforce government's hand against the left which was marked as the main threat against the government. Restrictions were placed on the press, unions and autonomy of universities. Anything that could be a possible threat to national unity, public order or national security was restricted (Harris, 2011: 205-206). The intervention banned TİP and closed down RCHE.

From the 1960s onwards, a massive migration had started from Eastern to the Western cities. This had made assimilation harder as the Kurdish community preferred to live within its closed traditional system. Kurds also became more aware of the gap in ways of life between the West and the East in these cities. The new generation graduating from the universities and secondary schools were more engaged in political discourses of imperialism, class struggle and national problems. They became the vanguard of the Kurdish movement in the 1970s. The military intervention had tried to suppress the activities of the leftist movements, but until the end of the 1970s, there was still a relatively liberal atmosphere due to lack of a strong government. Since the state apparatuses had become much politicized and the parties had such low support, there was no constant repression of Kurdish activities until the martial law in 1979. During this period the Turkish left had abandoned the Kurds even though they accepted Kurds as subjected to oppression. It was believed that a socialist revolution under the Turkish proletariat would solve the current problems. Kurdish movement did not move away from the left; as they adopted a discourse perceiving "Kurdistan" as a colony of the Turkish rule, they began to look for inspiration in other parts of the world such as South

Africa and Vietnam. Kurds wanted to be free of oppression under their self-governed Kurdistan. This discourse also claimed that the Kurdish chieftains, landlords and religious leaders had allied with the central government and the Kurdish movement made a connection with the discourses of class struggle in order to name such Kurdish notables as collaborators. Therefore, one of their primary aim of the Kurdish movement would be weakening this dominant exploitative class in the Kurdish society and promoting anti-colonial and anti-feudal struggle. Thus, the Kurdish movement began to take much more radical turn in time by adopting an extremely leftist discourse (Van Bruinessen, 2000: 229-232).

In 1973, the new prime minister, Bülent Ecevit declared a general amnesty and the former leftist Kurdish exiles began to regroup into the new and old Kurdish organizations. The number of these organizations increased and their ideological stances became more and more radical. Kurdish activists had formed a more definite agenda since their Turkish counterparts had proved to be a disappointment. The more the Kurdish issue was pronounced, the more intransigent the Turkish left had become. There was an underlying Turkish nationalism promoted by the education system that even the Turkish leftists could not dislodge themselves (Marcus, 2007: 23-26).

It was in this atmosphere that Abdullah Öcalan, who would become the leader of the terrorist organization named the Workers' Party of Kurdistan (PKK - *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê*), started his political activism. He took part in a leftist protest and was sent to jail in 1972. In jail he came to contact with leading members of the left, who insisted that only an armed struggle could save the country. Öcalan would later refer to those months in jail as his political schooling period. In the spring of 1973, together with friends from Ankara, Öcalan started to research the Kurdish problem and lay out plans

for resolving it. He joined the Democratic Higher Education Student Association of Ankara (*Ankara Demoktratik Yüksek Öğrenim Öğrenci Derneği*), hoping to find contacts that could help him form his own Kurdish organization and help lead a revolution with Turkish socialists. Öcalan could not find much support and the organization was shut down in 1975 by the government due to the propaganda of communism. This was the last attempt by Öcalan to find a Turkish counterpart. Öcalan and 15 of his friends quitted school and focused on establishing a Marxist-Leninist group that would fight for an independent Kurdish state. To take their ideas to the people in the Southeastern Anatolia they indulged in acts of attacking right-wing extremist groups, debating and sometimes fighting leftist groups who did not see the need for Kurdish nationalism and demonstrations (Marcus, 2007: 23-29).

In order to return to source of the problem, Öcalan's movement started a propaganda campaign targeting its "home" population. The first targets were Gaziantep, Maraş, Elazığ, Tunceli and Ağrı. They held several meeting and many of them were chaired by Öcalan. Finally, in 1978, the organization had decided to evolve into an illegal political party, namely the PKK. A manifesto entitled "The Path of Kurdistan Revolution" was published as the first official document of the party. The manifesto appeared to be a conventional Communist Party program, but it provided insights for the near future as well (Özcan, 2006: 83-87).

The first part of the manifesto talks about the imperialism in the world and gives a brief summary about socialism. The second part focuses on Kurdistan and Kurdish society. Again, a brief historical analysis is provided. The third section is devoted to the so-called Kurdish revolution. In the manifesto, Öcalan wrote that it was the Turks that colonized Kurdistan between 1925 and 1940. During these years Kurdistan did not have

the means to resist the Turkish power. The Turkish act was justified by being an act of civilization against the wild Kurds. Abdullah Öcalan also perceived Turkey as being colonized by the USA after the World War II. With Turkey's entrance to NATO, Marshall Plan and the bilateral agreements between America and Turkey, he stated that Turkey was transformed into a custodian of American interests in the Middle East against the socialist construction and national liberation acts (Öcalan, 1978/1993: 81-82).

Öcalan's manifesto described his movement to be a "Kurdish Emancipation Act" (*Kürdistan Kurtuluş Hareketi*). He stated that Kurdish emancipation would be realized when the Kurds are freed from the imperialist control imposed by sovereign states. Öcalan aimed the removal of foreign control from Kurdish natural resources, agriculture, economics, politics, labor, language, history, and culture. The persisting feudal system was to be undone to make way for a fairer government and administration of the people. His movement was strictly leftist and shows persisting themes of the clash between ideologies. Öcalan developed an ideological geopolitical discourse to discredit the civilizational geopolitical discourse put forward by the Turkish and other sovereign states over Kurdistan. The Kurdish movement was meant to break through the civilizational policies to realize its full potential under the territorial entity named "Kurdistan". Öcalan's perception of Kurdistan is greater than that of a political entity in just one state. The emancipation movement would result in a revolutionary upheaval not only for the Kurdish people of Turkey but also for the Kurdish people of the rest of the Middle Eastern states. Therefore, Öcalan's movement had the ultimate goal of reterritorializing the entire Kurdish nation under a single political/territorial entity. For him, an emancipated Kurdistan would be a democratic and an independent state that

could set an example for all oppressed minorities (Öcalan, 1978/1993: 121-129).

Öcalan saw Barzani's defeat (explained in detail under the subsection on Iraq) as the major flaw of all that was wrong with the Kurdish movement. In other words, the fact that Kurdish resistance remained part of feudal Kurdish society and depended on foreign powers for support was its main weakness. Independence from great powers would make the Kurdish movement successful and tribal leaders and large land owners should be eliminated for this cause. Öcalan did not only blame Barzani, but he also argued that previous Kurdish rebellions had failed because of their non-socialist nature and the cooperation of landlords as well as middle classes with the Turkish government. His Kurdish rivals in other organizations were also part of the problem. Öcalan saw them as collaborators and revisionists, thus they were false fronts. According to him, the PKK would be the one true solution to Kurdistan's needs and independence (Marcus, 2007: 34).

Just as Öcalan was organizing his party, Turkey was again at a political chaos. Between 1971 and 1980 there were ten major political parties with no majority-based government. Coalition governments failed one after the other. 1970s gave priority to narrow and short term goals and each party, when they became part of the governments, sought to mark its political territory that led to serious polarization. Sociological factors such as rapid urbanization incapable of economic opportunities caused unrest among the deprived and lead to civil violence. There were also large differences in distribution of wealth and services among citizens. In 1979, the military which always took to the scene as the protector of democracy delivered a letter of warning to political parties. In April 1980, the system was in such a deadlock that parties could not perform their constitutional duty of electing a new president. This dilemma and extremism

transgressed into anarchy and terrorism leading to another military coup in 12 September 1980 (Gunter, 1989: 63-69).

Following the coup, 1,790 suspected PKK members were arrested, which was more than any other Kurdish group or organization. The leaders of the PKK had crossed the border to Syria where they would prepare for return. The three years after the coup laid low, the PKK did occasional raids to kill soldiers on the border. In July 1981, the PKK decided to better relations with the Iraqi Kurds to establish safe bases in Northern Iraq. In 1982, it formulated a strategy with three phases: defense, balance and offense. Basically it aimed to start guerrilla attacks that would end with war with Turkey and by victory they would drive out the Turkish forces from Kurdistan. In May 1983, Turkey attacked the border area and Iraqi Kurds had the heaviest casualties. Seeing Baghdad and Ankara allied against the Kurds, Barzani and his party KDP signed a protocol with PKK, allowing them into Northern Iraq (McDowall, 2007: 422).

In 1984, PKK was ready to launch an armed offense in Turkey. The party engaged in attacks, bombings against the army and the police in Eastern and main Western cities of Turkey. Through this conflict, some Kurdish residents particularly in the rural areas were forcefully relocated in or migrated to other parts of Turkey or abroad (Kaya, 2012: 143). From 1984 onwards, the PKK strengthened its paramilitary character with the help of neighboring countries such as Iran, Iraq and Syria. They focused on military and some civilian targets such the Southeastern Anatolian Project, which was a massive irrigation project to strengthen agricultural production in Southeastern Anatolia and to weaken separatist tendencies by increasing prosperity in the region. The PKK also sought to eliminate the Kurds whom were believed to collaborate with the Turkish government. In this course, the PKK targeted some tribes

suspected for their loyalty to the government, the Kurdish elite having a position in the government and the Kurdish communities downgrading their Kurdish ethnic identity (Arakon, 2010: 182).

For Turkey, this conflict became a severe problem with different dimensions. PKK became an economic issue as one third of the budget was spent on the struggle with it. Rising unemployment and declining social services strengthened radical Islam, ethnic polarization, and nationalism within Turkish borders. Second, democracy took a blow. The measures taken to fight the PKK impeded development of democratization and human rights. Thirdly, the international aspect of the situation became a huge constraint on foreign relations. Foreign policies would focus mainly on anti-PKK lobbying and containing the PKK's threat to Turkey's security. Turkey's relations with its neighbors were molded by these conflicts (Beriker-Atıyas, 1997: 440-442).

All in all, after the World War II in general and after the 1960 coup d'état in particular, the Turkish left began to be flourished and ideological geopolitical discourse began to replace civilizational geopolitical discourse. The spread of leftist ideology especially among the young university students, who believed they were the future of the country and were able to change the capitalist system, alarmed the government. Moreover the interest of the Turkish leftist parties and organizations in Kurdish issue exacerbated the fears of the government. The acknowledgment of these leftist political movements for the first time that Turkey had a Kurdish population which had been oppressed via a civilizational discourse, was equally alarming. The Kurdish requests had started as conservative desires for recognition and freedom of language. However, as the Kurdish demands were overlooked, the Kurdish political movements took a more radical turn. Abdullah Öcalan emerged as a strong Marxist-Leninist Kurdish nationalist leader

that chose to establish an independent Kurdistan on Turkish territories. However, his political establishment did not see democracy as a plausible option and believed that revolution would come only through an armed conflict against the "imperialist Turks". Öcalan's idea of Kurdistan was free from the interference of landlord and aghas, who he believed to have exploited the Kurds for their own interests under the traditional system. While the coming years would witness bloody clashes between the PKK and Turkey, the first Turkish leader seriously attempting to change the states' civilizational or ideological geopolitical discourse against the Kurds, namely Turgut Özal began to become influential in Turkish politics.

4.1.b. Turgut Özal's Discourse on Kurdish Question and the Perception of Kurdistan

The first elections held after the coup d'état in 1983 introduced Turgut Özal in Turkish politics, who would dominate the political arena until his death in 1993. He established his political party, the Motherland Party (ANAP - *Anavatan Partisi*) and consolidated the votes of the right-wing. Özal's policies aimed for a major shift of economic development by liberalization of the Turkish economy. However, his liberal approach to the economy did not equally bring a political liberalization. Turgut Özal appeared to be reluctant in allowing all rivals back to politics and completely normalizing the political life after the coup. According to Douglas (2001: 166-68), as a prime minister he built and managed patron-client relationships and became master of the tradition of political patronage.

Özal wanted to construct Turkey as a powerful regional actor by promoting Turkish influence over the former Ottoman territories in the Balkans and the Middle East through a soft-power approach. However, at the same time, he was aware that

without peace at home there could not be an influential Turkey in the political arena. Thus, Turgut Özal sought to end the state's exclusion of cultural manifestations of Islam, of the Kurdish identity as well as other repressed identities and to resolve polarities. To achieve this, claims of Islamists or Kurdish activists had to be legalized (Aral, 2001: 74).

This idea of change meant a significant deviation from the civilizational geopolitical discourse of the previous governments, especially that of the early republican era. Özal claimed to follow the example of the Ottoman *millet* system and recognize other ethnic groups and cultural dimensions. Özal encouraged the idea of "Anatolia" as a geopolitical concept for uniting diverse ethnic identities; in other words, reterritorialization of Anatolia in a way to comprehend a multi-cultural society without favoring Turkism over the others became a major discursive target. The "*Turkish men's burden*" would, thus, disappear under the variety of cultures and tolerance of differences. On this course, political leaders chose to alter the famous Turkish saying *Ne Mutlu Türküm Diyene* (Happy is he who says I am a Turk) with *Ne Mutlu Türkiyeliyim Diyene* (Happy is he who says I am from Turkey). The official discourse of ethnicity was opened for question. The Islamic views had also played a part for downgrading ethnic identity by emphasizing a common religious identity with the Kurds (Ataman, 2002: 128-130). Hence, there began a limited but significant discursive transformation.

Islamic movements of the time had success in finding support from the Kurds. The most organized and the biggest Islamic party founded after the coup was the Welfare Party (RP – *Refah Partisi*). This new party was critical of the so-called Kemalist principles that Turkey had been based on as well as the failure of nationalist promises of Westernization in Turkey. Their belief in religion as the driving force behind a nation instead of ethnicity allowed the RP look tolerantly to the Kurdish demands for

autonomy. Since both the Kurds and the Islamists were considered to be suppressed by the "Kemalist regime", these two groups might join forces against it. The Kurdish movements were also tolerant to the RP, since in the beginning of the 1990s, the PKK only allowed RP's activities in the region they called as "Kurdistan". In the 1984 and 1989 elections, the RP obtained quite significant amount of votes in the Kurdish-populated cities (Ataman, 2002: 130-131).

The significance of Özal's perception of ethnicity and the rise of political Islam lies in the reterritorialization of "Kurdistan" as well. Under civilizational geopolitical discourse Kurdistan would not be considered as an autonomous region, capable of self-governance, since the Kurds were considered as an un-civilized people. The reconsideration of the Ottoman *millet* system enabled a new understanding and a relative tolerance to the idea of Kurdistan. This in return allowed the cooperation of the Kurds with the Turkish Islamists. Turgut Özal's reference to Anatolia as the principal geopolitical identity for the peoples of Turkey aimed to reterritorialize the Kurds and the Turks under an identity acceptable to both ethnicities. If such an understanding could take root, then Özal would have been able to eliminate the cause for social disturbance, oppression and terrorism. In 1989, Özal declared that he had partial Kurdish origins as well, as he sought a non-military resolution to the Kurdish conflict and a greater cultural liberty. It was after the Gulf War that Özal saw a propitious time to abolish the law forbidding other languages other than Turkish of 1983. However, the death of Turgut Özal from a heart attack in 1993 would end his legacy as Turkey would return to politics that of the previous decades (Douglas, 2001: 172-175).

4.2. Iran and the Kurds: Shah, Iranian Revolution and Civilizational Geopolitics (1950-1990)

The 1950s marked the beginning of a nationalist movement in Iran, led by Muhammad Mossadeq. Before being sent to retirement by Mohammad Reza Shah, he had been a deputy, provincial governor, and cabinet minister of Tehran. He was known for campaigning for strict constitutionalism and freedom from foreign powers. On his return to active politics, he threatened the power of oil companies of the British but also the power of the Muhammad Reza Shah and his control over armies. Mossadeq called for a strong central government that ensured the basic rights and freedoms to all Iranians despite their religious or ethnic backgrounds. The Kurds supported Mossadeq and this had further angered the Shah (Romano, 2006: 230). In 1953, it appeared that Mossadeq had reached the climax of his political power. The same year, a coup d'état took place and the CIA appeared to have saved Iran from an international communism problem. In reality, this intervention was a British-American venture to preserve the international oil cartel. The coup had re-installed Muhammad Reza Shah and all his powers as a sovereign. However, the Shah would always be compared to Mossadeq in the coming years and his legitimacy would always be undermined. The Kurds once again found themselves on the wrong side of politics. Iranian Kurdistan was occupied by the Iranian army and the Kurdish movement had to go underground as any challenge to the Iranian government was harshly suppressed. In 1979, the Islamic Revolution would change the Iranian politics and its interrelation with the Kurdish movements permanently (Abrahamian, 2008: 113-118).

4.2.a. The Recovery of the Kurdish Movement and the Road to the Revolution of 1979

After the collapse of the Mahabad Republic, the Kurdish movement in Iran entered a period of recovery, although it had lost some of its most powerful leaders such as Qazi Mohammad. First stirrings started in early 1952 as the KDPI participated in the provincial elections and won a significant amount of votes. The Shah was quick to invalidate the election and mobilized the army in Mahabad. He then left pro-royalist representatives in the region. This was the sort of control that Mossadeq was trying to limit with a relatively liberal constitution. The same year KDPI tried to lead a Kurdish revolt against the landlords in Bukan, but the military intervened and stopped all Kurdish political activity (Yıldız and Taysi, 2007: 20).

The Kurdish support towards Mossadeq was mainly due to his desire for constitutionalism and his promise for equal rights to different ethnicities. Mohammad Reza Shah practices a strong authoritarian rule that suppressed opposition. These conditions led to another Kurdish uprising in 1956 near Kermanshah. This too was quickly oppressed by the government forces. Mohammad Reza Shah pursued strategies similar to those of Turkey. For example he tried eliminating rebellious Kurdish chiefs, but also co-opting some of the traditional Kurdish notables by employing them in important governmental positions. Between 1960 and 1963, the Shah made sure that land owners cooperating with the regime would not be affected by his land reform program. The key difference between the Iranian political environment and the Turkish at the time was the absence of civil society. The Kurdish movement could not find a left-wing organization or a non-traditional path to pursue its goals. There were no equivalents to the TİP, the Kurdish cultural associations such as RCHE or the PKK. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, KDPI worked very closely with the Iranian

communist party of Tudeh. The relationship was so close that it was quite common at that time to consider KDPI as a branch of Tudeh at that time (Van Bruinessen, 1992: 34). However, Tudeh was crippled after 1953 and its activities were very much limited. The Shah's secret police, Organization of National Intelligence and State Security (SAVAK - *Sazeman-e Ettelaat va Amniyat-e Keshvar*) made sure to appear as the most ruthless force to suppress any kind of anti-regime movement. It should also be considered that the Kurdish population constituted around 10 to 15 percent of Iran which might have made it easier for the Tehran government to suppress their mobilization. (In Iraq and Turkey the percent of Kurds are 25 and 20 respectively) (Romano, 2006: 230-231).

Between 1953 and 1958, 3,000 Tudeh members were arrested. Seeing the difficulties of the situation, the KDPI chose to go underground and began to change its priorities. Abdullah Ishaqi had been elected as the leader and he redirected the party away from a leftist position. KDPI re-prioritized its demands as the overthrow of the monarchy, the creation of a Kurdistan with its own elected government, the liberation of all Kurdistan and the enfranchisement of women. In 1958, Barzani proposed a unification of KDP (Kurdish Democratic Party of Iraq) and KDPI but before any action could be taken, the SAVAK arrested 150 Kurdish activists. Despite this, KDPI continued its support for Barzani, especially during his rebellion in 1961. Just like in Iraq, Barzani helped keep out the leftists from KDPI as tensions grew between traditionalists and Marxists (McDowall, 2007: 251-253).

In 1964, a group of Kurdish intellectuals, who were also part of the KDPI, left Tudeh for not showing enough interest in the Kurdish cause. In the following KDPI congress, the same group raised the slogan 'Democracy for Iran, Autonomy for

Kurdistan'. They wanted an armed resistance against Tehran to establish their demands. This resulted in a peasant uprising in Urmiyeh that lasted three years but the difficulties of the guerrilla warfare changed the party's focus to recruiting members from Kurdish students in Europe (Koohi-Kamali, 2003: 168-169).

The coalition between Barzani and Ishaqi did not last long. A huge blow to unity of Iraqi and Iranian Kurds came when Mustafa Barzani decided to assist the Iranian government. The KDPI had aided Barzani until 1966, but that year Mohammad Reza Shah decided to provide more aid to Barzani in his quest against the Iraqi government and make a deal with KDP. The Shah had several aims in signing a deal with the Iraqi Kurds. He believed he could create problems for the Iraqi government, make Barzani dependent on Iranian aid, destroy the relationship between the Iranian and Iraqi Kurds, and weaken the Kurdish movement in Iran. The Shah would also receive secret information regarding the Iraqi military movements and developments. Meanwhile in Iran, the Shah suppressed the Kurdish movement by killing and arresting KDPI members. The only Kurdish leaders to criticize Barzani were from the Political Bureau of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iraq such as Jalal Talabani and Ibrahim Ahmad (Koohi-Kamali, 2003: 168-169).

After the deal, Barzani hindered the activities of Iranian Kurds in Iraq and refused to aid other Kurdish factions in Iran. This had a crippling effect on the unity of Kurds and the actions of Iranian Kurds. One of the most important incidents that ended the collaboration between Iranian and Iraqi Kurds was Barzani’s order of execution of the KDPI leader, Suleiman Mueini, as he attempted to cross the border into Iraq. His corpse was returned to Iranian government and the government left the body for public viewing for days. Barzani's forces arrested and killed many members of the KDPI. Such

actions led the Iranian Kurds to propagate the Kurdish cause in Kurdish populated towns and mountains of Iran. They tried to distance themselves from Iraqi Kurds. Moreover, instead of demanding an independent Kurdistan, the Iranian Kurds were content with an autonomous self-governing entity. The reasons for this choice are manifold. First of all, the Kurds in Iran had more in common with the minorities in Iran than with the Kurds of Iraq. The Iranian Kurds shared the same political oppression and economic negligence with other Iranian minorities. This fact can partially explain why the Kurdish national movement in Iran has had different objects and tactics of resistance compared to the Iraqi Kurds. Secondly, the Kurdish dialect of Iranians resembles much of Persian and the Kurds throughout Persian history have had common historical experiences with Persia which can be pointed out as one of the reason for demanding autonomy rather than full independence (Koohi-Kamali, 2003: 169-171).

The time frame between 1950s and the Iranian Revolution proved to be a complicated era for the notion of "Iranian Kurdistan". The support of Mossadeq had placed the Kurds on the wrong side in the eyes of the central government and the 1953 coup had increased Mohammad Reza Shah's power which he deliberately used to suppress any form of opposition against himself. The existence of a strong military and the SAVAK proved effective in crippling the Kurdish mobilization. The Kurdish opposition was weakened, but it did not end as it tried to cross borders in to Iraq for support. It seemed that until 1966 the Kurdish movement could be aided by the Iraqi Kurds which increased the hopes for a trans-boundary Kurdish movement, in other words, a reterritorialization of a "Greater Kurdistan" combining the Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistans. However, Barzani prioritized his personal interests over the interests of a "Greater Kurdistan" and turned his back on the Iranian Kurds. This created a wider gap

between the Iranian and the Iraqi Kurds as well as a very distrustful political atmosphere. Barzani's cooperation with the Shah hindered any possibility of erasing the border between the Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan.

Before closing this section, the relationship between the pro-communist Tudeh part of Iran and the Kurds should be touched upon as well, since, this relationship produced a problematic ideological geopolitical discourse. Accordingly, the Tudeh Party in Iran was established in 1948 as a pro-Soviet communist political movement, criticizing the pro-Western and anti-democratic monarchical rule in Iran. The party called for the overthrow of the monarchy and resisted the American presence in Iran. The restoration of monarchical powers of the Shah through a coup by the CIA was very significant for its ideological discourse, since the Shah was begun to be perceived as an Anglo-American puppet by Tudeh as well as by most of the people (Richards, 1975: 4-8). As the Shah tried to alter this image, he also tried hard to suppress the communists. The Kurdish intellectuals were happy to associate themselves with Tudeh, but they were never considered by the government as a part of the communist threat; in other words, unlike the ideological geopolitical discourse in Turkey and close relationship between the Kurdish political movement and TİP as in the case of Turkey, the alliance between Tudeh and the Kurds were seen not as an ideological threat, but as a security threat against the government. For the Iranian government, it was the KDPI that truly represented the ideals of the Kurdish people and the government perceived the KDPI and Tudeh as two separate threats to be contained.

4.2.b. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the Redefinition of Civilizational Geopolitical Discourse via Religion

While the Shah was able to suppress the Kurdish movement, in the 1970s he still felt a deep sense of insecurity. He had encouraged factions and division in government as well as in the court to prevent any one man to become a danger to his rule. Corruption was widespread in Iran especially among the Shah's family. On several occasions, the court ministers had warned the Shah to introduce democracy as way to close the gap between the people and the government but by 1975 the Shah had chosen to reinforce autocracy. Muhammad Reza Shah also attacked the ulama to replace Shi‘a hierarchy with a structure more loyal to the Shah's regime. By mid-1976 the economy had started to falter. Ayatollah Khomeini, an exiled religious leader and a revolutionary figure opposing the Shah's regime, managed to be effective across borders. Khomeini and his supporters among the clergy set up the Combatant Clergy Association (*Jame-ye Ruhaniyat-e Mobarez*) to coordinate the clerical movements against the regime. At the same time, the social discontent continued to rise and protests increased within the country. The Shah appeared weakened by the calls for revolution. The regime eventually lost control and credibility as the opposition movement led by Khomeini gained authority together with self-confidence. In the beginning of January 1979, the Shah left the country and soon after the Iranian monarchy was abolished. An Islamic Republic of Iran was declared by Ayatollah Khomeini (Axworthy, 2013: 76-122).

Towards the end of the 1970s, in the political protests not only the Shiite population but also the Kurds took place actively. In 1973, Abdal Rahman Ghassemlou, a former university lecturer, was elected as the new leader of the KDPI. Shortly before the revolution, Ghassemlou had started to lead the KDPI from a small underground

organization into a mass party with a program of establishment of autonomy in the Iranian Kurdistan. The other major organization, which became active during the revolution, was the *Komala***,** also known as the Revolutionary Organization of the Toilers of Kurdistan. Komala was a far more radical party and considered itself to be of the Marxist orientation. There were also other smaller Kurdish organizations such as *Fedaiyan-e Khalq* (The Organization of Iranian People's Majority) and *Mojahedin-e Khalq* (The People's Combatants). In early 1979, the Komala and the Fedaiyan-e Khalq initiated Peasant Councils. They made some attempts to distribute land among peasants in the Sanandaj and Marivan areas but their work remained limited (Koohi-Kamali, 2005: 142-143). All in all, the Komala had a very leftist perspective which fostered an ideological clash between the Kurds and the government. Although the work of the councils was limited the leftist perceptions were spreading among the Kurds. However, instead of creating a communist Kurdish identity, these ideals strengthened Kurdish nationalism in Iran.

The Kurdish chiefs were divided between the government and Kurdish political organizations. As the demands for Kurdistan's self-government began to strengthen some of these chiefs withdrew their support from the Kurdish nationalist movement; even, at times, they chose to act against the Kurdish nationalist movement. On the other hand, there was a group of individuals with strong tribal ties that worked together with the non-traditional leadership of the Kurdish movement to support the demand of autonomy. Some of these individuals even confronted the tribal leaders on their demand to collect traditional dues from the peasants. One of these individuals was Sheikh Izzedin Hosseini. He had joined the KDPI and enjoyed support from political organizations, tribal leadership and more importantly the Kurdish people in general.

Hosseini opposed Khomeini for interfering in government since Khomeini should remain, for him, as a man of religion and his duties lied within the clerics (Koohi-Kamali, 2005: 144).

The revolution was a golden opportunity for the Kurdish community who had become much more articulate than couple of decades before. During the revolution there were no police or gendarme forces in the Kurdish region. Political forces in Kurdistan took the opportunity to govern the region. In 1979, the Kurds captured military garrisons and gendarme outposts from which they were able to obtain considerable amount of weaponry. Revolutionary Councils, Workers Unions, and Peasant Unions replaced the government bodies and transformed Kurdistan into a major opposition force against the Shah regime (Koohi-Kamali, 2003: 172).

In February 1979, together with the establishment of the post-revolution government in Tehran, discussions began about the future of the Iranian Kurdistan. Negotiations took place between the Kurdish representatives and the revolutionary authorities. The Kurds had reached a consensus among themselves regarding the establishment of autonomy. Tehran, on the other hand, was trying to centralize and assert its power within Iranian borders. The government demonstrated a very distrustful attitude towards the Kurds. The existence of multiple competing centers of power both within Kurdistan and within the new government made it very difficult to come to terms (Van Bruinessen, 1992: 36). The Kurdish side witnessed conflict through the emergence of Sheikh Izzedin Hosseini as a Kurdish spiritual leader. He was opposed by the pro-Barzani Iranian Kurds and other elements of Barzani's KDP. The Komala and the Fedaiyan-e Khalq established themselves in Mahabad to ensure a share of power through bases. Baneh was created as a joint force between the KDPI and the Komala.

Iranian Kurdistan lacked harmony but proved sufficient enough to govern its regions in the absence of centralized power (O'Ballance, 1996: 110).

In March 1979, Izzedin Hosseini called a Kurdish Revolutionary Council of tribal sheikhs and leaders. Around five hundred people were gathered and an eight point plan was agreed upon, which was presented to Tehran when Khomeini was preparing a new constitution. The plan had only left foreign affairs, defense and economic planning to the central government, giving all other responsibilities to Kurdistan's regional governance. Kurdish demands were ignored and Kurds were not consulted in the constitution-making process as Ayatollah Khomeini believed their demands were excessive. To minimize the Kurdish agitation, Tehran government tried to persuade the Kurds to support Sheikh Ahmad Moftizadeh, but this policy was not welcomed. Moftizadeh was an influential political and religious figure of the Sunni Kurds and he was in favor of the notion of a unified Islamic Iran with some self-governance granted to the Kurds. Khomeini thought him to be a significant factor in trying to appease the Kurds. Next, Khomeini ordered the revolutionary movement to stop providing arms to non-Farsis. Immediately the Kurds took action and seized the military commander of the Sanandaj garrison and broadcast a cry of rally over a local radio station. The minister of interior had to step in to persuade the Kurds to evacuate the garrison. In order to do so he, in return, assured them of authorization of Kurds in schools. The rebels accepted the offer as Kurdish was never officially authorized by the Iranian government. However, the inability of the sides to come to a lasting resolution would eventually climax in to armed conflict (O'Ballance, 1996: 109-110).

After three weeks of Khomeini's return, clashes took place between the Kurds and forces loyal to the new Republic close to Bana. This sparked other conflicts between

the Shi'ites and the Kurds. The rest of the year as well as the next year witnessed repeated encounters between the newly formed volunteer Revolutionary Guards also known as the *Pasdaran*, who asserted Shi'i values of the new government. The rising tension led Khomeini to accept a renegotiation and he offered a very limited degree of autonomy with regard to the economic, political, social and cultural affairs of the Kurdish province. Kurds responded with the same eight point plan with only one difference, they demanded Kurdistan's autonomy to be written in the draft constitution. Few days later, the Kurds boycotted again after learning that there would be no mention of the Kurds in the constitution. Another fight broke out between local Kurds and Pasdaran (McDowall, 2007: 261-263).

Although Ayatollah Khomeini had established an Islamic Republic, he firmly followed civilizational geopolitical discourses. The only difference came from the fact that the Republic chose to use 'religion' in place of 'ethnicity'. Understanding Ayatollah Khomeini's belief system is crucial in order to understand the emergence of civilizational geopolitical discourse via religion. To begin with, Khomeini believed that the monarchy was illegitimate and the only system of government would originate from the God. The Qur'an was a collection of conditions that in way provided a constitution for an Islamic state. Khomeini stated that "whatever is in [constitutional] accord with the law of Islam we shall accept and whatever is opposed to Islam, even if it is the constitution, we shall oppose" (Mahdavi, 2014: 29).

The doctrine Khomeini tries to put forth is very similar to civilizational geopolitics. There is one dominant factor: religion. Islam is glorified just like the way Europeans chose to glorify their history. Islamic way of life is believed to come directly from God, therefore there cannot be a more perfected conduct of government. Religion

would also strengthen the bonds between different communities within Iranian borders. Instead of choosing an ethnicity to bear the burden of civilization as in Turkey, or constructing a nation from different ethnicities as in Reza Shah's plan, Khomeini administered religion in a way to reproduce the simple dichotomy of 'us vs. them'. If the Kurds chose to disassociate themselves from the Iranian government by demands of autonomy or independence, they were perceived as heretics or betrayers of Islam since the Islamic Republic was fair to all Muslim subjects and followed the perfected path of God. There was no place for ethnic diversion. Tehran did not deny the existence of other ethnicities but it saw no reason to acknowledge their demands. This perception was incorporated into the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Articles 11 and 152 to 155 state "all Muslims" are "one nation" (*ummah*) and that the government should exert "continuous efforts" to realize "the political, economic, and cultural unity of the Islamic world" (Menashri, 1980: 130). Below is an example of Ayatollah Khomeini's thoughts on minority groups:

> "Sometimes, the word minority is used to refer to people such as the 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-Iranism, pan-Turkish and such isms, which are contrary to Islamic doctrines." (Menashri, 1980: 130)

In sum, according to Khomeini, the Kurds were negatively perceived for bringing their ethnic identity to the forefront instead of their religious identity. Thus, they were attempted to become "civilized" by adopting the religious doctrines of the

new regime. Contrarily, Sheikh Izzedin Hosseini dismissed the doctrine of the Islamic Republic. The Kurds were afraid of the Republic becoming a Shia dictatorship against the Sunni Kurdish identity. The following is an example of this concern voiced by Hosseini:

> What we have is not religious government, but a dictatorship under the name of Islam.... The role of the clergy is to be murshid (guide) in knowing God. You will also find some Shi'i clergy who reject Khomeini's concept of faqih (an Islamic expert in Islamic law). It is not an Islamic regime.... Any religious government will end in dictatorship, and religion will become a means of beating, executing and killing in the name of God (Entessar, 2010: 38).

Khomeini's civilizational geopolitical discourse based on the distinction between Islam and others on the one hand, and Shia and Sunni Islam on the other brought no solution to the Kurdish case and, in fact, caused more concern as perceived from Hosseini's words. In 1980, the discord provoked Tehran on a major assault on Kurdistan. The government was determined to control all the regions within Kurdistan and feared that a liberated Kurdish territory would become a very dangerous example to other minorities. At the end of April 1980, after a very bloody conflict, Tehran was able to obtain the control of Kurdistan. The conflict did not cease as Saddam Hussein decided to attack Iran. During the Iran-Iraq War Iranian Kurds perceived another golden opportunity to throw off the grip Khomeini had on Kurdistan. The KDPI demanded Tehran to accept their autonomy before joining the Iranian troops in a battle against Iraq. Tehran treated such an ultimatum as treason. At first the troops concentrated on the Iraqi assaults and left Kurdistan alone but in 1982 Khomeini started an advance to the Kurdish populated regions. By 1983, all Kurdish rebel-held territory was under Iranian control. In the coming year, the KDPI was driven in to Iraq. The end of the war between

Iraq and Iran in 1988 did not do much to change on the Kurdish territories. The Revolutionary Leadership made peace with Komala, something KDPI could not bring itself to do. Shortly after Khomeini's death, Ghassemlou was called to start negotiations. However, Ghassemlou was assassinated during the negotiations in Vienna allegedly by the governmental agents. This was a huge blow to the Kurdish hopes. Six weeks later, a senior Komala member was also assassinated. This showed that the Iranian government chose to eliminate Kurdish leaders that it considered to be a threat, meaning that there would be no negotiations at all (McDowall, 2007: 272-277).

To conclude, Ayatollah Khomeini's new Islamic Republic replaced Muhammad Reza Shah's regime. Although the Islamic Republic was a different political entity, it chose to practice civilizational geopolitics through religion. The mindset that constructed the civilizational perception remained unaltered but transformed. Religion was promoted through a glorified Islamic history and it put forth a perception of perfected state governance. Since Islamic outlook downgraded ethnic identity claims among Muslims, the Kurdish nationalist movement was handicapped as demands of autonomy were not only ignored but perceived as treachery. The Kurdish mobilization was more articulate than it was between 1919 and 1950 but its force and unity was not enough to establish a Greater Kurdistan between Iran and Iraq, let alone autonomous Kurdistan on the Iranian map.

4.3. Iraq and the Kurds: Question of Autonomy and Rebellions (1950-1990)

On 14 June 1958, Iraq witnessed a military coup. The military announced the end of the Hashemite monarchical order and the start of a new republic. Huge demonstrations started in the streets as the people proclaimed their devotion to the new regime. Two officers stood as the leaders of the coup, Brigadier General Abdul Karim Qasim and Colonel Abdul Salam Arif. One of the first institutional initiatives was the creation of the Popular Resistance Front (PRF) which was a militia designed to defend the Republic against internal and external threats. Additionally Peace Partisans was formed which included people of different backgrounds, ranging from lawyers to peasants (Dawisha, 2009: 443.9 / 966).

Soon after the coup, a conflict emerged between Qasim and Arif. It was a personal issue but became entangled with the identity of Iraq. Would the new regime remain as a potential nation state or as an administrative part of the Arab nation? Arif was an admirer of Gamal Abdel Naser who was the symbol of pan-Arabism. Qasim was more sympathetic towards domestic social reforms and the building of an Iraqi national community. It was not long before Qasim emerged as the sole leader of Iraq (Tripp, 2007: 147-148). Qasim would become Iraq's first true independent leader. However it was also Qasim who would commence the Kurds' estrangement in politics by his attempts to centralize the state and his pursuit of sovereignty (Rubin, 2007: 354). In 1963, Qasim was overthrown by the Baath Party, which had a strong pan-Arabist ideology. The party wanted to unite Iraq with Egypt and Syria. Within a few months they began to lose power and were replaced with another pan-Arabist Party. In 1968, Baath party came back to power with a final coup d'état. The Baath Party tried to carry out pan-Arabist policies, but radicalization of politics exposed the regime to many

dangers and difficulties. Baath chose to abandon the pan-Arabist rhetoric and replace it with a new Iraqi-centered discourse. Such an understanding led Baghdad to enforce its will over Kurdish nationalists and Shi'i traditionalists (Baram, 1991: xiii-xiv). The following decades would witness very severe acts of suppression, leaving the Kurdish community devastated; but it would fuel the desire and the struggle for a self-governed Kurdistan.

4.3.a. Return of Mulla Mustafa Barzani and Kurdish Demand for Autonomy

Since 1945 it had appeared as though Kurdish nationalism in Iraq had shown little manifestation. Just like in Iran and Turkey, the intellectual leaders had been persuaded that, for the time being, nothing could be done against the state power. They were waiting for an opportunity to mobilize. Meanwhile, Iraq's Kurds with the exception of the aghas, had moved closer with the anti-monarchic forces, including communists, Pan-Arabists, and anti-regime liberals. Such was possible due to similar perceptions of the developments in the Middle East. For example the Pan-Arabists had disliked the Baghdad Pact signed in 1955 on grounds that it aided Western imperialism. The Kurds had disapproved the Pact as well because it had brought together Iran, Iraq and Turkey, the three countries oppressing Kurdistan. As the demise of the Hashemite monarchy begun, all Iraqi Kurds found themselves to be united. This was neither because of class interests nor political allegiance; it was because all factions of the Kurdish community distrusted the Hashemite regime (Rubin, 2007: 356-357).

1958 revolution was a popular act among all Iraqi peoples. Kurds saw a new opportunity for a Kurdish-Arab understanding. Barzani immediately sent a telegram of congratulations to the new regime asking permission for himself and his men to return to

Iraq (Edmonds, 1959: 7). Qasim ignored Barzani's first call, but three days later, in his second attempt, Barzani was invited back to Iraq. On 3 September 1958, all the Kurds, who had been involved in the insurrections, were pardoned. Qasim had decided to use Kurdish nationalism to his advantage. If he could cultivate Kurdish fears of pan-Arabism, Qasim would gain a valuable ally in his rivalry with Arif and broaden his power base. Qasim had hoped to transform Barzani and his men into state functionaries. Mulla Mustafa Barzani becomes the president of United Kurdistan Democratic Party (UKDP). Barzani later would state that he desired no such title, but was forced by the Iraqi president to accept it (Rubin, 2007: 359-360).

A few days after the revolution, Qasim had promulgated a "Temporary Constitution", which stated Iraq as part of the Arab world but referred especially to the Kurds as co-partners of Arabs. The Kurdish people perceived this as a sign of a fairer place in administration. They took to the streets with pictures of Kurdish leaders and cheered for complete independence and freedom for Kurdistan. Kurdish and Arab brotherhood was emphasized and telegrams were sent to Council of Sovereignty to congratulate the revolutions' success (Edmonds, 1959: 3). However, still, as months passed there was no indication of an autonomous Kurdistan or there was no reference to the Kurds at all. Qasim had failed to build lasting political alliances as he did not understand the political mentality and norms of the Kurds. He based his relations on reconciliation with the KDP and Barzani. His system was based on economic patronage and shared enemies. Thus the two sides failed to reach an agreement on how much power would be given to Kurdistan while preserving the sovereignty of Baghdad (Rubin, 2007: 355).

Things started to sour when Qasim wanted to give an official pardon towards

Barzani's rivals; this step was clearly rejected by Mulla Mustafa Barzani. In order to keep the support of Barzani, Popular Resistance Front used aggressive activities against Barzani's adversaries. The cooperation between PRF and Barzani disturbed other Kurdish tribes and they started to show signs of restlessness. When Qasim realized the predicament, he chose to play the tribes against each other. He wanted to undermine the tribal power while at the same time bind the Kurds to the state. To do so, he gave arms to the Lolani tribe, then to the Zibar, Baradosti and some other tribes. The situation escalated in a way that tribal sheikhs traveled to meet with Qasim and requested him to stop disruptive actions in Kurdistan. The inter-tribal conflict led to armed conflicts between the Kurds that lasted until the 1960s (O'Ballance, 1996: 37-39).

Many aghas had feared the new regime since the beginning but their fears intensified in 1958 when Qasim told Barzani about his plans for agrarian reform. The plan did not seek to destroy landed elites as it would have given them significant compensation and continued ownership of major portions of the land. Yet it caused a severe chaos between the peasants and the landlord as there emerged significant clashes between these two classes. The Agrarian Reform Law shook the foundations of tribal authority. Anti-regime aghas feared confiscation of their lands and Qasim's efforts of directing the peasants against them. Barzani's patronage relations with Baghdad compounded the damage. They feared the one man rule of an outsider in their areas of influence (Rubin, 2007: 360-362).

In 1959 an uprising began to emerge in Kirkuk. It started as a leftist rally and the situation grew more complicated through inter-tribal disputes of the Kurds and rivalry between Turcomans and the Kurds. This resulted in Qasim's distrust of his allies as he had depended on the Kurds as well as the communists against the threat he perceived

from pan-Arabist group led by Arif. In 1960, when Barzani left for four months to USSR, Iraqi government withdrew some of the privileges they had given to the Barzanis. The same year, UDPK was declared illegal and some officers were arrested. In September reports broke out about a revolt led by Barzani. The government was quick to declare it a Kurdish inter-tribal feud, which had lasted for weeks until the government stepped in to restore order. In reality it was Barzani's consolidation of power as he defeated all of his rivals. He had prepared himself to fully face the threat presented by Qasim's regime (Wenner, 1963: 71-72).

It was only a matter of time before fighting broke out between the government forces and the Kurds. The government suffered setbacks from the Zakho Mountains to the Khanaqin area. Lack of military success, made Qasim resorted to air strikes, similar to Turkey's offensive against Kurdish rebellions. The government also made use of *Jash*, which meant little donkey in Kurdish. The Jash were the Kurds recruited by the government and they were mainly chosen from the tribes hostile to the Barzanis. They remained organized in a tribal manner but their number dwindled as it became unpopular to fight against Mulla Mustafa Barzani since he appeared as a strong leader having the necessary military means to fight for the Kurdish cause (O'Ballance, 1996: 57). These attacks had an unexpected result as they caused the Kurds of different ideologies and backgrounds to unite for the rebellion. Soon the revolt turned into a national uprising that lasted until the overthrow of Qasim in 1963. Despite this temporary alliance, it could be argued that the Kurdish front did not form a coherent unity throughout the rebellion. Tribal and personal feuds fueled conflicts among the Kurds in their rebellion against Baghdad as well (Edmonds, 1959: 514-515).

On 8 February 1963, Iraq witnessed another coup in which Qasim was killed and

a military junta in the hands of a pan-Arabist party, known as the Baath Party, took power. The coup was led by General Tahir Yahya, who later became the Chief of the General Staff. Abdul Salam Arif was brought back as the president. Once again the Kurds thought that the new government could solve the Kurdish problem. KDP sent Jalal Talabani as its negotiator to discuss the terms for self-government. Both sides were unable to find the means to an agreement and cleared the path for an armed conflict. On 10 June 1963, an offensive started by Baghdad. The troops moved to fight in three different regions: (1) against the towns and villages of Barzani tribe, (2) against the power centers of KDP and (3) against the limestone caves of Chami Razan, where the rebels found a natural stronghold. Arif demanded that Kurds should lay down their arms and placed a price on Mulla Mustafa Barzani's head. Curfews were ordered in Arbil, Kirkuk and Sulaymaniah. Intense fighting continued with no sides winning a decisive victory. On 30 July 1963, the government restarted negotiations but the Kurds did not agree to centralization. It was in 1964, when Arif announced a ceasefire and stated that the government would recognize Kurdish rights in a provisional constitution based on decentralization. Kurds would receive amnesty and the Jash would be dispatched. Barzani agreed to the terms (O'Ballance, 1996: 64-70).

The 1964 constitution did not uphold the Kurdish expectations as it did not specifically recognize the Kurds as an autonomous community. The government had no intention of granting autonomy; the constitution emphasized the unity of Iraq and stressed the aim of Arab unity. Complications rose on the Kurdish side as well, since the ceasefire agreement had not been consulted by the politburo of the KDP led by Jalal Talabani and Ibrahim Ahmad. Barzani used his authority to summon his own party congress, which endorsed the ceasefire. He then expelled the dissident voices.

Meanwhile it appeared that Arif was redeploying the Iraqi army under the cover of negotiations. Barzani rejected the disbandment of his own forces in case of a possible clash with the army. Soon, armed confrontations started once again. These events demonstrated that if the president of Iraq seriously pursued pan-Arabist unification schemes with Egypt, a high price would have to be paid by the Kurds, which was the denouncement of an autonomous Kurdistan. The period between 1964 and 1965 proved that point. Pan-Arabist policies led to serious fighting and managed to bring Barzani together with the expelled politburo. To change the direction of the politics, Arif appointed a new Prime Minister Abdul Rahman al-Bazzaz, a lawyer and an academic with conservative inclinations (Tripp, 2007: 172-174).

However, soon after this appointment, in 1966, Abdul Salam Arif died in a helicopter crash. The dependency and weakness of all who relied on personal patronage became apparent. Arif's brother Abdul Rahman Arif was elected president and al-Bazzaz was reappointed as prime minister. The new cabinet was able to reduce the hard militarist factions, allowing a new ceasefire with Barzani. Al-Bazzaz declared his willingness to recognize Kurdish nationalism. At the end of June 1966, the prime minister publicly offered the Kurds a twelve-point program. The program recognized the bi-national character of Iraq and the Kurds' separate culture and linguistic identity. It promised full representation and self-government. Although it did not meet every Kurdish demand, it certainly offered more than any previous regime. Barzani accepted the program as a foundation for a settlement. On the other hand, the program disturbed many Kurds as well. Some opposed the declaration because it seemed to emerge out of a military defeat, damaging the military prestige. Others were against any concessions to Kurdish self-determination. Hostility quickly built up and the president felt the need to

replace al-Bazzaz. The negotiations entered a standstill as war broke off with Israel in the Middle East. Simply, Kurdistan was put on hold (Tripp, 2007: 176-182).

President Arif was overthrown in July 1968 and the second Baath government came to power. The new government issued a directive regarding the Kurdish problem in March 1970. Saddam Hussein represented the Baghdad government and Mahmud Osman negotiated on the behalf of KDP. It had taken twenty months of severe fighting, but at the end, the Iraqi government issued the document known as the March Manifesto. This was the largest program Iraq had issued to accommodate Kurdish national desires. Accordingly, in Iraqi Kurdistan, Kurdish would be recognized as the official language, a Kurdish vice-president would be appointed, self-government would be granted, national administrative units were to be established in the Kurdistan and the constitutional recognition of equality and bi-national character in Iraq would be finalized. Other provisions included the establishment of a Kurdish academy of letters and a Kurdish university in Sulaymaniya. In return it was asked of the Kurds to relinquish heavy arms to the government and end their broadcasting station. Although some action was taken to realize the plan, problems hindered the full realization the Kurdish autonomy. The question of appointing a Kurdish vice-president could not be settled as the Kurds wanted the nomination of KDP's Secretary, Habib Mohammad Karim and Iraqi government found him unacceptable due to his Iranian background. Another name could not be settled on. A more significant problem emerged in terms of the determination of the geographical area to be placed under Kurdistan's self-rule. Barzani was insisting on Kirkuk, a major oil producing area and the government was pressing for areas with proven Kurdish majority. Kirkuk had lost most of its Kurdish population due to the forced relocation of the Kurds in previous years (Entessar, 1984:

918-919).

The previous agreements on Kurdish autonomy in Iraq were not fulfilled because of the lack of goodwill of the Iraqi government as well as because of political instability and the weakness of state apparatus. 1970 agreement was different but it could not be implemented as well due to the mentioned difficulties. Iranian and CIA agents in contact with Barzani encouraged him to take military action and supplied him with weapons. Later Barzani himself would state that had he not had the American support, he would never have indulged in resistance (Ghareeb, 1982: 141). Barzani began raising his demands and Baghdad began reneging on the terms of the agreement as well as launching attempts to assassinate Mulla Mustafa Barzani. In 1972, Soviet–Iraqi Friendship and Cooperation Treaty was signed and Baghdad had begun receiving arms in preparation for war with the Kurds. In 1974, Saddam Hussein gave Barzani two weeks to accept Law for Autonomy in Iraq. The law seemed reasonable as it purported to establish Kurdistan as a self-governing region and it explained in detail the areas administration setup. The territories would be defined according to the 1970 agreement and the 1957 consensus records. It fell short of Barzani's demands due the absence of Kirkuk and more administration of central government control (Yıldız, 2007: 20). Soon a large scale war broke out. Soviet assistance and the huge income from petroleum companies had strengthened the Iraqi army. It appeared as though Kurds could no longer pose a threat to the government. Unlike the Kurds in Turkey, Iraqi Kurds were not accustomed to guerrilla warfare. The government could easily identify Kurdish communities and their tribes. Therefore it was important for the rebels to defend their land. By the end of 1974, Kurdish forces were forced back to the Iranian, Turkish and Syrian borders. The Kurdish side continued to be divided internally, again crippling the

Kurdish chances for victory. Many tribes were recruited to fight together with the Iraqi army and non-tribal peasantry and urban workers remained passive (Romano, 2006: 193-195).

During this conflict, the idea of forming an autonomous Kurdistan faced major difficulties due to the presence of tribal leadership in the nationalist movement. The leadership did not see democracy as a solution, both the Iraqi and Kurdish sides chose to use arms instead trusting the state institutions and negotiating through state organs. KDP has chosen to lead its agendas through undemocratic methods. The other problematic aspect of the tribal leadership was violence and the factions among tribes. Between 1966 and 1970 the Kurdish community witnessed the most politically pronounced divisions. In 1966 Talabani and his followers split from Mullah Mustafa Barzani's forces, creating their own political movement. Talabani forces chose to cooperate with the government as Baghdad provided them with arms, money, daily newspapers, communication equipment, buildings, and vehicles. With the agreement in 1970, Talabani forces regrouped with Barzani. Although Barzani appeared as the sole leader of the Kurds once again, not all joined him in the insurgency of 1974. Some, including Barzani's eldest son Ubeydullah, chose to side with the government and accept the Autonomy Law for the Kurdish region (Dawoody, 2006: 488-489).

The Algiers Agreement of 1975 signed between the Shah and Saddam Hussein, shocked the Kurds. Iraq left a contested border demarcation on the Shatt al-Arab waterway and in return Iran agreed to stop supplying arms to the Kurdish rebellions. CIA left the region (Romano, 2006: 196). The KDP entered a time of disarray as Mustafa Mulla Barzani's reputation took a hard blow. A split occurred in the KDP ranks as those ousted by Barzani accused him of betraying the Kurdish cause. These dissidents

led by Jalal Talabani formed the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) (Entessar, 1984: 992). Barzani's sons Idris and Massoud Barzani took it upon themselves to reconstruct a wing of KDP, Kurdish Democratic Party-Provisional Leadership. The Iraqi Kurdish fighters known as the *Peshmerga* regrouped themselves under this wing (Entessar, 1989: 91).

All in all, after 1945, it appeared as though all of the Kurdish movement in Iraq had lost hope for obtaining autonomy from the Iraqi government. The 1958 Revolution seemed to open a new page for the Kurdish question. With the return of Barzani from USSR, a demand for autonomy emerged among the Kurdish community. Soon, it seemed as though an alliance had formed between Qasim and the Kurds. In reality Qasim had no true intentions of granting self-government to the Kurds. He wanted a centralized government and believed the Kurdish demands for autonomy would deterritorialize Iraq in a way to end territorial unity. Qasim played the Kurdish tribes against each other breaking their unity and weakening their opposition. The next coup lifted up the Kurdish hopes once again. However, the rise of the Baath Party meant the rise of pan-Arabism. Pan-Arabism was a serious concern to Iraqi Kurdistan because if the Arabic states reterritorialized as one political entity, then the Iraqi Kurdistan would be reduced to a small minority among a huge Arab population. Pan-Arabism's challenges to the Iraqi state proved to be more than its profits. As Baghdad made a switch to the administration of nation-state policies, the question of Kurdistan continued to be an unresolvable problem. As the Baath Party tried to stress Iraqi unity, Kurds emphasized their difference as an ethnic group by constantly referring to and using the word "Kurdistan". The use of the term "Kurdistan" had roused perceptions of secession and awakened fears of Iraq's deterritorialization. Several programs were put forth and

many ceasefires were made but none until the March Manifesto had made the sides content. When the Manifesto appeared it seemed as if the Kurds could finally establish their self-governed Kurdistan. The negotiations highlighted the complications of the geopolitically important territories. Both sides did not want to give up Kirkuk and Mosul. Overall the fight for reterritorialization of Iraq by the Kurds resulted in bloody encounters that lasted for years. The coming years under Saddam Hussein's presidency would prove much more devastating and he would choose to suppress the demands for an autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan forcefully.

4.3.b. Saddam Hussein and Increasing Pressure over the Kurds:

Saddam Hussein had always been a trusted and an active member of the Baath Party but the Algiers Agreement had further solidified Saddam's position. General Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr who took Abdul Rahman Arif's place after the coup, stepped down as president and Saddam Hussein took his position in July 1979. Saddam's power stemmed from his influence on the military and the civilian intelligence services. He managed balancing different elements through financial incentives, patronage networks, and tribal loyalties (Fattah and Caso, 2009: 220). Saddam's perception of Iraq was similar to "a huge ship for all Iraqis, Arabs, and Kurds" and he argued that if any one tried "to drill a hole in this ship, lest it fall apart and sink". He believed in three threats of disintegration. These were the schemes for an autonomous Kurdistan, the Islamic revolution in Iran and the Shia upraising after the Gulf War (Bengio, 1998: 122).

During the 1970s, Iran was the most powerful state in the Gulf. Iraq had a hostile relation with Tehran but was in no position to defy Iran's power. During this time, Iran put constant pressure on Iraq by provoking the Kurdish population within its borders.

The only way Iraq was able to persuade the Shah to stop his anti-Iraqi policies was through ceding half of the Shatt al-Arab. After the revolution in Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini was determined to expand his influence over the Islamic world starting with the state of Iraq. He pushed the Kurdish and Shiite population to topple Saddam. Border clashes between the two states became frequent. Saddam saw Khomeini to be weak and isolated after the revolution and perceived it to be good time to obtain a military victory (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2003: 52-53).

When the Iran-Iraq war broke out in 1980, Saddam Hussein was quick to play the Kurdish card. Iraqi government established a supply route to the Iranian Kurds who were fighting the Pasdaran near the Kurdish cities of Qasr-e Shirin and Nowdesheh. With the received assistance, Ghassemlou launched a three month offensive against the Pasdaran and achieved relative success. When Iraqi forces found themselves in forced retreat, the Iranian Kurds were also affected. It was not long before Ghassemlou realized that creating a "liberated Kurdish zone" was almost impossible and the Iranian Kurds had been used as an instrument against Iran in the war. On the other hand, Iran had begun to see the Iraqi Kurds as a destabilizing factor against Baghdad but they proved to follow a better strategy. Islamic Republic acquired the support of Massoud and Idris Barzani. In the final two years of the war Iran was also able to get the PUK to work with itself. The Kurdish forces succeeded in keeping Iraqi forces at bay. As Turkey witnessed the achievements of Kurdish forces, it started to fear a spillover effect on its own Kurdish populated areas. Ankara chose to dispatch expeditionary forces to fight off the Iraqi Peshmergas. Seeing its allies under attack, Iran accused Turkey of helping Iraq. Turkey responded by declaring its intentions of only protecting the Kirkuk-Iskenderun pipeline that supplied one-third of its oil needs (Entessar, 1989: 95-96).

During the Iran-Iraq war Saddam feared losing control of Kurdish areas especially the oil producing lands. The Kurdish defiance had infuriated Saddam; soon he announced the government's plan to crush the Kurds, with a campaign called the *Anfal* (Pringle, 2009: 29).The word literally means the spoils of war and derives from the Koran, from the eighth *sura* (verse) that deals with the battle of Badr (Bengio, 1998: 189). Saddam issued decree no. 160 of the Revolutionary Command Council on 29 March 1987 and appointed his cousin Ali Hassan al-Majid to command the Northern Bureau of the Baath. This basically gave al-Majid uncontrolled power in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, as his orders were to be carried with no question. During the Anfal campaign, Baath forces charged and razed villages to make sure that the Peshmerga could not interfere. Al-Majid made use of chemical weapons in Kurdish villages. There were mass shootings, executions and torture. After a chemical attack by airplanes or helicopters,the villages were looted by the army and then by the Jash. The Anfal campaign continued until 1989 and it is believed that two-thirds of the Kurdish population left the region during the operations. Around 60,000 refugees sought refuge from Turkey and 100,000 refugees sought refuge from Iran (Yıldız, 2007: 25-33).

The terror that Saddam Hussein imposed effectively pacified Kurdistan. The Kurdish political parties renounced armed struggles and decided to seek political and diplomatic efforts abroad. The evacuation of villages and the resettlement of the Kurds continued until 1990. When the Gulf War against Kuwait started the same year, the government threatened the Kurds to face something much worse than Halabja, where thousands of Kurds had been killed by chemical weapons. The Kurds knew that Saddam was not bluffing and they refrained from military activities (Van Bruinessen, 1992:43-44).

Saddam Hussein prevented the emergence of Kurdistan as an autonomous geopolitical entity. He used all means to keep Iraqi territorial integrity intact. The struggle for creating an autonomous Kurdistan almost came to a halt after the Anfal campaign. However, the Iraqi defeat in the Gulf War of 1990 made Kurds rise for the biggest rebellion ever. There was one problem in the Kurdish timing; the Iraqi army had not lost its military power during the Gulf War. As the Kurds experienced a worse defeat in the hands of Saddam, more than two million Kurds left their homes. Iraqi president had almost succeeded in deterritorializing Kurdistan by exporting its Kurdish population across borders into Turkey and Iraq. The trans boundary character of the Kurdish problem became apparent once again as Iraqi neighbors faced the economic burden and the destabilizing effect of such huge numbers of refugees (Van Bruinessen, 1992: 44).

4.3.c. Ideological and Civilizational Geopolitical Discourse in Iraq

The traces of ideological and civilizational geopolitical discourses in Iraq had also been evident toward the end of the Hashemite regime. On the level of national ideology, the monarchy offered Iraqi patriotism and militant pan-Arabism. It was the ruling Sunni elite that desired an Arab unity. One of the main reasons was to change the Iraqi demographic balance. As years past, idealist teachers spread pan-Arabist teachings among schools. Pan-Arabism was regarded with hostility because neither the Shiites nor the Kurds wanted to be reduced to small minorities. Arabism was perceived as the hegemony of a minority of Sunnis over Kurds, Shiites and non-Muslims. The first decade of the republican rule was a conciliatory beginning but as time went on Arab-Kurdish estrangement deepened. Kurds were alienated and negotiations soon turned into armed conflicts. The pattern of armed warfare would turn into a pattern under the Baath

regime. When Abdul Salam Arif died and was replaced by Abdul Rahman Arif, the Kurds paid heavily for their demands of an autonomous Kurdistan. Urbanization, economic development, proper provision of health and education became extremely problematic in the Kurdish region. Such problems only increased the tensions between the Arab nationalists and the Kurds (Baram, 1991: 5-7).

The Baath Part envisioned the political union of all Arab states. The Arabs would rise from their ashes to fulfill a worldwide *risala khalida* (eternal mission) of civilization and enlightenment. Very little thought was given to other ethnic communities such as the Kurds. It was believed that these different communities shared a common history and destiny with the Arabs that it would not be much of problem. However, when the Kurdish demands rose it became a persistent complication. In other words, non-Arab communities of Iraq were perceived as un-civilized compared to Arabs and Arabization was perceived as a civilizing mission over these un-civilized peoples. The other principle of the party was *hurriyya* (freedom), which meant a struggle against the Western imperialism and influence in the Middle East. This principle gave pan-Arabism its ideological tune and make it close to a socialist discourse; thereby bringing ideological geopolitical discourse in. This principle included battling feudalists and capitalists. Up until the 1960s, socialism was understood to be a tool to unite different classes. After Sixth Pan-Arab Congress in October 1963, Arab socialism adopted Marxist terminology and became the official ideology of the Baath Party when it took over in Iraq (Baram, 1991: 7-10).

Ahmad Hassan Bakr came to power in 1968 and formed the Revolutionary Command Council which included Saddam Hussein as a dominant member. The communists were becoming concerned about the autocratic nature of the Bakr's

government. Saddam chose to deal with the communists through military means, each time further angering them. The guerrilla units of the communists began raids in Baghdad and other cities (Couglin, 2005: 78-79). The government found it necessary to neutralize the situation with the Communists which had a stronghold on certain segments of the population. As a show of its strong desire to relieve Iraq from Western hold and to appease the demands of the communists, Iraqi government nationalized its pipelines. Despite this pro-socialist move, the Communist Party members were continued to be suppressed and forced into an alliance with the government (Fattah and Caso, 2009: 209-214).

The Communist Party of Iraq had a very weak leadership and could not hold its position regarding the Kurdish issue. During the Kurdish revolts of the 1960s, the communists found themselves in a conflicting position. Despite their support for Kurdish autonomy under the unity of Iraq, the Communist Party condemned the rebellion. When the war rose once again between Barzani and the government in 1974, the Baath regime forced the Communists to fight the Kurds whom were their allies at the time, despite their disapproval (Eppel, 2004: 182).

It should be noted that Saddam was given direct authority to deal with the Kurds in 1969 because the Baath government was finding it difficult to deal with Shiites, Communists and Kurds at the same time. The Soviets, seeking to increase their influence over the Gulf, had started to work with Mustafa Barzani. They did not like the treatment of Iraqi government against the Communist Party and saw the Kurds as means to pressure the regime. Saddam's first reaction was to fight against the Kurds but the Iraqi communists supported the Kurdish Peshmerga. The potential of a Kurdish-Communist alliance was considered as an ideological threat for Baghdad; however, Saddam Hussein

did not refrain to convince the Soviet Union in giving up supporting the Kurds. In other words, he followed a very realist foreign policy and downplayed the ideological geopolitical discourse. He convinced the Soviets to stop aiding the Kurds by assuring that no massacre in Kurdistan would take place. Moscow announced a new autonomy plan, which became known as the March Manifesto. Saddam seemed reluctant to stick with the plan and tried his best to create obstacles for Barzani. As mentioned above the Manifesto could not be implemented (Couglin, 2005: 82-83).

In the aftermath of the 1974-75 war, the Iraqi regime moved quickly to strengthen its grip on Kurdistan. The regime created a security belt along Iranian and Turkish borders that stretched from 5 km to 30 km depending on the topography. This meant wrecking of villages and collective resettlement in camps. If any Kurdis group tried to return to their homeland, they would immediately be killed by soldiers. Active supporters of Barzani and refugees, who failed to return in the period of amnesty, were sent to south Iraq, to Diwaniya, Nasiriya and Afak. The government chose to address the demographic problems by resettling populations in disputed areas of Khaniqin, Kirkuk, Mandali, Shaykhan, Zakhu and Sinjar. The local administration was rearranged to hold an Arab majority. Other measures for the Arabization of Iraqi Kurdistan were giving financial support to Arabs who took Kurdish wives, encouragement of ethnic assimilation, the transfer of Kurdish civil servants, soldiers, and police out of Kurdistan, the removal of Kurdish faculty from the University of Kirkuk and the Arabization of names in some places (McDowall, 2007: 339). In other words, through these Arabization policies, the Kurdish identity was attempted to be suppressed and Iraqi Kurdistan was tried to be reterritorialized as an Arab region.

The 1980s marked the continuation of harsher Arabization policies under

Saddam Hussein. Iraq began to increasingly define itself as an Arab state (Paasche, 2015: 2116). The Anfal, as mentioned above, was a state led movement against the Kurds. The documents obtained after Saddam's fall in 2003 detailed a systematic razing of villages, forced expulsions or deportations, large-scale disappearances, targeted assassinations, and the torture and mass executions of tens of thousands of Kurds. Saddam's decision to start the Anfal campaign was a result of Arabization as well as an act of revenge for the aid of the Peshmerga to Iran (Montgomery, 2012: 349). The result of the campaign was devastating and settled fear and anger in the hearts of Kurds. It froze armed insurgency until the Gulf War, after which the Kurds sensed an opportunity to revive Kurdish nationalism once more.

To conclude, the Iraqi revolution increased the ties between the new Iraqi regime and the Soviet Union and thus this period saw the emergence of an ideological geopolitical discourse when the Iraqi communists aligned with the Kurds. However, still, the Kurds did not directly become part of the leftist movements as they had in Turkey. The Kurds had found their representation under Barzani's leadership and did not seek a communist party to speak for themselves. Barzani himself also feared from the increasing influence of communists over the Kurds; therefore, instead of openly becoming a part of the Communist Party, the Kurdish movement chose to form an alliance. However this alliance was problematic considering the weak leadership of the Communist Party. When faced with governmental pressure, the Iraqi communists resisted against the Kurdistan's autonomy and even fight with the Kurds. Therefore ideological geopolitical discourse could not dominate during this period.

Pan-Arabism in the Middle East tried to revive a civilizational geopolitical discourse and unite the Arab community as one political entity. This proved very

problematic in Iraq, which lacked the ethnic and sectarian unity. The minorities such as the Kurds were afraid of becoming neglected and oppressed. The Kurds showed their concern through constantly emphasizing the term “Kurdistan” and rebelling against the government that chose to ignore their demands for self-government. Iraqi attempts for assimilation were not as severe as in the case of Turkey nor as loose as in the case of Iran until Saddam Hussein’s rule. It was with the rise of Saddam that Arabization politics intensified in Iraqi politics. The Anfal was the most destructive campaign led against the Kurds but was only a partial implementation of civilizational geopolitical as it appeared more as an act of revenge. The harsh politics of this period would only strengthen the Kurdish determination for a self-government which would take form after the Gulf War.

4.4 Syria and the Kurds: Oppression under Arabization

From 1948 onwards, Syria witnessed several coup d’états that made the state swing continuously from parliamentary rule to direct military administration. A search continued for a way to establish a territorially defined unitary Syrian state compromising between different ethnic and sectarian communities. The secular Arab nationalism seemed to be the best solution to Syria's mixed population. It had the potential to unite religious minorities such as the Alawis, Druzes and Christians but Kurds remained an anomaly because most of them were Sunni; but rather than aligning with Sunni Arab population they brought their ethnic identity forward (Yıldız, 2005: 31). When great political turmoil was experienced between 1957 and 1958, the Syrian foreign minister, Salah al-Din Bitar, convinced the ruling elite to work toward unification with Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser. It was not only the drive for pan-Arabism but the search for

protection that led Syria towards this path. When Egypt demanded a fully integrated Syria instead of a federal state, the Syrian leaders did not object. A deal was made to form United Arab Republic in 1958 but it only lasted until 1961. The aim of Arab unity sucked the Baathist Iraq and Syria and Nasserist Egypt in to a very costly political adventure. This ended with the failure of unification, meddling of each other's internal affairs and a variety of military actions against other Arab states. The Baath regime that had come to power in Syria in 1963 promised socioeconomic reforms and development projects but it was unable to fulfill any of its founding principles of unity, freedom, or socialism (Baram, 1976: 44-48). As of the constitution of 1973, Syria was defined explicitly as an Arab state. The Kurds were not recognized as a national or an ethnic minority. The Kurdish population was perceived as a threat to Syria's unity and sovereignty. The influence and the interests of the of former colonial powers, the artificiality of the Syrian borders, foreign influence in domestic affairs, development of Arab and Kurdish nationalisms, all contributed to the perception of Kurds as a security problem (Montgomery, 2005: 7-8).

The departure of the French troops from Syria had started a period of social, economic, and political upheaval that would last around two decades. The agricultural development affected the Kurds on a socioeconomic level. Particularly in agricultural regions of Syria, the Arabs as well as Kurds living in Aleppo, Hama, and Damascus obtained rights to claim land in low costs and the betterment of irrigation systems enriched the agriculture. The economic development sparked tensions between aghas competing for power. Despite the existence of Kurdish landowners, the majority of workers in the urban centers were the Kurds, who had settled in the cities. The rural exodus and the abuse of landlords opened the way for communism among the urban

Kurdish population. A sociological transformation started among the lower class through the way of union movements. Urban notables during the 1950s found themselves challenged by other social circles that tried hard to cast them out. New elites were able to acquire power by first controlling political resources as was the case of Arab nationalism or by coups. This fragility of the Syrian system opened the country to pressure and intervention from external powers. Thus, the politicians had to rely on external developments such as the Arab–Israeli conflict, the pan-Arab or the Kurdish and Iraqi revolts, to create alliances with the foreign powers. A debate between Syrian nationalists and pan-Arabists was flared by the distrust of the ethnic and the religious minorities of the country. Pan-Arabism appeared as a solution to integrate minorities into the national Syrian social structure. The Kurds became the scapegoats of Arab nationalism. They became to be known as "*shu'ubiyyun*" (people who did not allow themselves to Arabized). It was not long before Arabs perceived the Kurds as agents of foreign powers who wanted to destroy Arabism (Tejel, 2009: 38-41).

The elections of 1954 witnessed a great participation by the Syrian peoples. Syrian Communist Party, Syrian Popular Party, Baath and the Muslim Brotherhood were the four significant political actors representing a new current in the Syrian political structure against the conservative parties that held a strong position in the country. A strong political debate fired between the political right and the left. For the first time ideology prevailed over pragmatism. The freedom of speech and rights were widely represented in the parliament after the elections (Tejel, 2009: 47).

In the summer of 1957, Kurdish Democratic Party of Syria (KDPS - *Partiya Demokrat a Kurdistanê li Sûriyê*) was created as a left wing alternative to the Communist Party. The Communist Party at the time was led by a Kurdish leader, Nur al-

Din Zaza, but it showed no signs of campaigning for the Kurdish rights. The party was perceived as a continuation of Khoybun as most of its members had been part of the Khoybun movement. The party worked to better the negative perception of the Kurds and tried to ameliorate their rights. Jalal Talabani at the time was living in Syria and he forced the party to alter the party's name by switching the word “Kurdish” to “Kurdistan”. This was much more provocative title and created unease among the members. This word implied a connection to the Greater Kurdistan across the borders of Syria and it was not a message the KDPS wanted to send (Sinclair and Kajjo, August 31, 2011).

In 1958, the United Arab Republic was formed together with Egypt. Nasser dominated economic, social and political spheres of Syria which increased the Arab national sentiment within Syrian borders. The Kurdish social identity and culture was threatened by the rising Arabist attitudes. Nasser was quick to launch campaigns against the Kurds and the communists. Anti-Kurdish propaganda began by depicting the Kurds as traitors and separatists. Kurdish nationalism was presented as having a connection to Zionism and Western imperialism. Kurdish officers were quickly removed from their military positions. Suppression towards the Kurdish culture began as well. Kurdish language and publications were prohibited, Kurdish music was forbidden and recordings were confiscated by the government officials. Anyone owning or distributing Kurdish publications or recordings together with hundreds of members of the KDPS was arrested. The Kurdish uprising in Iraq in 1961 fueled concerns for a similar revolt with in Syria. It was also believed that Iraqi Kurds had rebelled with Israeli aid, which triggered unease regarding the openness of the Kurdish problem to foreign powers. Soon all of these matters led to the recognition of the Kurds as a threat to sovereignty and

territorial integrity (Yıldız, 2005: 36-37).

After the United Arab Republic had been disintegrated, the new state was renamed the Syrian Arab Republic. This particular emphasis on Arabness was a huge blow to the Kurdish community as they were waiting for recognition and betterment of rights. The importance of the Kurdish regions to Syria derived from their economic and strategic value. Some of the Kurdish areas are the most fertile lands in Syria. The Kurdish territories are also cut by water making them very influential in the Syrian economy. This fact made it especially important to define Kurdish lands as Arab lands. The fact that Iran, Iraq and Turkey have Kurdish minorities, made the Kurdish issue a tool in interfering in domestic affairs of each other and on the other hand allowed the cooperation of allies to work against the establishment of unity under a Greater Kurdistan or the gaining of rights for the Kurds (Montgomery, 2005: 9).

In August 1962, a consensus was administered. Known as the Consensus of *al-Hasakeh*, the government effectively stripped 150,000 Kurds of Syrian citizenship. They were named *ajanib* (foreigners) (Mansour, 2012: 2). The need for this consensus emerged from the concern of the government about the number of Kurds that had entered Syria from Turkey after the World War II. The authorities also believed that some had acquired Syrian citizenship through illegal means. The consensus had aimed to differ between those, who had a right to citizenship and those who did not. The government officials required one or all of the following documents to decide on the status of the Kurds: a Syrian identity card; a family card and land deeds that showed ownership and residency before 1945 (Yıldız, 2005: 33). Though, it did not really matter whether the Kurds had the proper documents or not. This development left the many Kurds deprived of civil rights as they were left stateless and could not travel abroad,

complete education, be admitted to state hospitals or own property. Strong discrimination appeared and the Kurdish community was pushed into harsh poverty (Lowe, 2005: 7).

The situation worsened after the coup that took place in 1963. The Baath Party came to power and it had been militantly anti-Kurdish since its inception in Syria in the mid-1940s. The Baathist land reforms were designed to weaken the Kurds by destroying the power of its traditional elite (Gambil, 2004: 2). On 12 November 1963, Lieutenant Muhammad Talab al-Hilal published a security report that on how to act against the Kurdish issue. Al-Hilal referred to history in order to deny the existence of the Kurds. He stated that they neither possessed a civilization, a language nor an ethnic identity. Kurdish demands appeared irrelevant within the Arab territories. He called for an increase in oppressive policies to erase all signs of Kurdish identity. He also stated that there was no difference between the Kurds and the Israelis who were both enemies of the state. In his report, there were many contradictions in his findings of a "non-existent ethnic group". The report suggested a dozen articles to depose of the Kurdish problem (Tejel, 2009: 60).. The following are the twelve points of al-Hilal's report:

> 1. *tahjir*, or the displacement of Kurds from their lands to the interior; 2. *tahjil*, or the denial of education; 3. extradition, or the handing over of a wanted Kurds to Turkey; 4. the denial of employment possibilities; 5. a large-scale anti-Kurdish propaganda campaign; 6. the deportation of Kurdish religious *ulama* who would be replaced by pure Arabs; 7. the implementation of a divide-and-rule policy against the Kurds; 8. *iskan*, or the colonization of Kurdish lands by a pure, nationalist Arabs; 9. the militarization of the a northern Arab cordon and the deportation of Kurds from this cordon (*sharit* or *hizam*) area, replacing them with Arabs; 10. the creation of collective farms (*mazari jamaiyya*) for the new Arab settlers who were to be armed and given military training exactly as in the Israeli border colonies;

> 11. the denial of the right to vote or hold office to anyone lacking a knowledge of Arabic;
> 12. the denial of Syrian citizenship to any non-Arab wishing to live in the area (Vanly, 2005: 122-123).

Under the cover of socialism and agrarian reforms, a plan known as the Arab Cordon based on Hilal's report was put into effect. 140,000 Kurds were planned to be replaced by Arabs. The Kurds resisted being resettled. In 1967 the Kurds were informed that their lands had been nationalized and the government sent few groups to build model farms; but the plan was interrupted by the Arab-Israeli War (Chaliand, 1993: 200).

In 1970, Hafiz al-Essad, a general in the Syrian army, came to power through a military coup. He started to reconstruct the political system by extending control over the cities and reforming the institutions. This process consolidated an authoritarian structure for the control of society by the Baath Party and the *mukhabarat* (security services). The new regime chose to assimilate the Kurds into the Arab society and emphasize the Syrian identity of the state (Montgomery, 2005: 8-9). Hafiz al-Essad deliberately excluded the Kurds from his reforms who were around twelve percent of the country at the time (Phillips, 2012: 68).

The true implementation of the Arab Cordon started in 1973. This new cordon would be a military cordon created on the Turkish-Syrian and the Iraqi-Syrian border. It was planned to be approximately 10–15 kilometers deep and 375 kilometers long. The idea was to separate the Syrian Kurds from the Turkish Kurds and force the Kurds in these areas to the cities in the interior regions (Yıldız, 2005: 36-37). Bedouin Arabs from the Euphrates area were resettled in Kurdish territory. The Kurdish villagers did not have possession of their lands but clung to their houses and refused to move. It should be

noted that the authorities did not resort to force for resettlement but chose to Arabize the names of the areas instead (Vanly, 2005: 124). The Arab Cordon is a perfect example of the government's reterritorialization efforts within its borders. By deterritorializing the settled Kurdish population, the government would play with the number of inhabitants, thus changing the demographic structure of the region. This policy would soften the Kurdish character of the region and reassure the fears of Damascus.

Despite the growing oppression towards the Kurds during the 1960s and 1970s, the Kurdish community was unable to organize a resistance or rebellion. This was due to the political disunity that almost made any form effective resistance impossible. The strength of kinship ties as well as the loyalties to tribes and clans proved to be much stronger than a Kurdish national sentiment. Syrian agencies bought off local village chiefs and used them against each other as in Turkey and Iraq. Syrian Kurdish political activism was also affected by the lack of transversal support. Barzani worked to undermine KDPS, which did not accept his leadership. In the 1980s Syrian activists received hostile receptions in conferences organized by the Kurdish Diaspora in Europe because they were perceived as a threat to the PKK (Gambil, 2004: 2-3).

In contrast to the hostile relations among various Kurdish tribes or political organizations at home countries, the relationship between a state and Kurdish political organizations across the borders of that state was generally cooperative (Kaya, 2012: 145). For example, the PKK received support from the Syrian government. In 1980, the PKK escaped to Bekaa Valley which was Lebanese territory under Syrian control. Bekaa Valley turned out to be a settlement for training the PKK members for guerrilla warfare and it was a passage for them to enter Northern Iraq. Syrian authorities also hosted Öcalan and allowed him to gather new recruits (Özcan, 2006: 89,170). It should be

noted that it was the support of the Syrian government that allowed PKK to train new recruits and build camps rather than the support of the Syrian Kurds (Van Bruinessen, 1999: 3).

All in all, the Kurdish movement in Syria can be defined as the weakest of the Kurdish movements. It could not establish Kurdish representations, organizations or parties strong enough to defend its rights. The Syrian state feared a reterritorialization of the Kurdish-populated areas of the country as an autonomous geopolitical entity and the transversalization of the Kurdish question increased Syrian governments' concerns. The key difference in Syria was the implementation of the civilizational geopolitical discourse. It can be said that the shortcomings of Kurdish organizations allowed Damascus to broaden its civilizational discourse, leaving thousands of Kurds deprived of civil rights. The Kurd-Arab rivalry seemed to peak in Syria. Pan-Arabist and Arabization policies were strongly carried out. The Syrian Kurds chose to keep quiet and not attract more attention than which had already been given. The dominance of Kurdish tribal and traditional life paralyzed the Kurdish national sentiment, which prevented the emergence of Kurdistan as a political entity within Syrian borders. The division among Kurdish people together with governmental practice of civilizational geopolitical discourse over the Kurds proved to have dire results for the Kurdish population of Syria.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This thesis attempted to examine why the region named as “Kurdistan” by various actors could not emerge as a geopolitical entity through a critical geopolitical approach. It focuses on three types of reasons for the non-emergence of Kurdistan as a territorially defined and self-governing region. The first set of reasons are categorized as the internal factors which underlines the lack of a single geopolitical discourse among the Kurds for clearly defining the borders of the region that hampered the actualization of the abstract notion of “Kurdistan”. The second set of reasons is labeled as the external factors focusing on the reactions of the territorial states of the region against the construction of such an entity disturbing the so-called “territorial integrity” of these states. In other words, the governments of the home states perceived the very notion of Kurdistan as an existential threat for their territorial integrity and opted for preventing any attempt to construct it as a self-governing entity. In order to do so, a civilizational and an ideological geopolitical discourse were developed which made the other of the Kurdish community either based on a civilized home state vs. uncivilized Kurdish community dichotomy or based on an ideologically legit home state vs. ideologically threatening Kurdish community dichotomy. Therefore, the discursive foundations of home states’ geopolitical outlook served to legitimize the pressure exerted upon the Kurds. Finally, the third set of reasons linked internal and external factors in a way to argue that there were crosslinks between the home states and various Kurdish political

movements fostering several transversal connections at the expense of others. In other words, some home states tended to cooperate with the Kurdish political movements of the neighboring states to minimize the threat perception that they felt from them, or some Kurdish political movements tended to cooperate with neighboring home states to undermine the pressure of the home state over themselves. All these factors contributed to the lack of a certain unitary definition of "Kurdistan" and to the insufficiency of the transversal nature of the Kurdish political movements.

While the Kurdish political entities had a certain level of autonomy until the late nineteenth century in the Ottoman and the Safavid Empires, the centralization attempts in both empires resulted in a severe reaction by some Kurdish groups while others tended to cooperate with the central government if they were satisfied with the protection of their interests by the ruling elite. The end of World War I, on the other hand, tremendously altered the conditions and created some opportunities for the Kurdish elites claiming for an independent Kurdistan. The Great Powers also encouraged the Kurds through the Sevres Treaty, which promised an independent Kurdistan in the Middle East. However the regional reterritorialization after World War I in the form of territorial states dividing Kurdish people under four states, namely, Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, did not allow an independent and unified Kurdistan to be established within the region. The division of the Kurdish community created a transversal conflict that raised the security concerns of these four sovereign states and resulted in a reactive stance against Kurdish autonomy.

The first and perhaps the most influential internal problem hampering the emergence of Kurdistan as a unified entity stemmed from the traditional tribal structure of the Kurdish community. For centuries, Kurdish people had lived under chiefdoms and

other tribal political configurations, mostly in geographically closed areas, such as the Zagros Mountains. This geographical aspect shaped their loyalties; the Kurdish culture prioritized obedience to a powerful clan leader rather than the general Kurdish nation and gave significant political and religious authority to the landlords, chieftains and seyyids. The rivalry among the strong pursue of self-interests by such leaders created further fragmentation. By the end of the World War I, these factors had crippling implications on the establishment of an independent Kurdistan. In sum, the Kurds failed to imagine a "Kurdistan" that could incorporate the entire Kurdish peoples into one political entity.

In addition to these internal factors based on Kurdish identity, the identity of newly-established territorial states in the Middle East after the World War I turned out to be a significant factor preventing the Kurds to establish an independent Kurdistan. Accordingly, the new Turkish Republic managed to integrate the Kurdish nation into the state by not recognizing the Kurds as a distinct ethnic identity with the right of self-government. The first serious reaction against this policy within the country was organized by Sheikh Said, whose rebellion occurred in time of conflicting ideologies between modernism/secularism vs. traditionalism. Sheikh Said represented the traditionalist Kurdish mentality. He revolted against the modernization reforms and the centralization acts of the Turkish Republic. The next two revolts in Mt. Ararat and Dersim were not much different and desired the preservation of traditional system favoring the historical social strata and relative autonomy of the Kurds vis-à-vis the central government. In all three uprisings there were a significant number of Kurdish tribes fighting against the government, but the government could always find Kurdish recruits as well from rival Kurdish tribes. In other words, the government effectively

benefited from the segregation among the Kurds and cooperated at least with some of the Kurdish notables.

In Iran Simko had established himself as a powerful leader among the Iranian Kurds. Simko kept control over different tribes through intimidation of power. Although Simko used a nationalist discourse and opted for an independent Kurdistan, he sought to increase his influence in Iran as well. Reza Shah confronted Simko's troops with a modern army that proved to be too strong for the Kurdish forces. Most of Simko's followers gave up their support upon his military defeats ; in other words, just like the Turkish case, the Kurdish tribes had chosen to be on the side that they perceived to be more powerful. The unity of the Kurds fighting for an independent Kurdistan had scattered and the national cause was abandoned. As Kurds failed in unification, the sovereign states did not. Iran, Turkey and Iraq formed an alliance through the Saadabad Pact. These three states had understood the consequences of transversal logistic support among the Kurdish tribes and felt threatened by the security issues caused by the desire to establish an independent Kurdistan. Thus they sought alliances among themselves to effectively enforce their sovereignty.

Following Simko’s defeat, the Kurds of Iran, once more gathered by Qazi Mohammad established the Mahabad Republic. For the first time in Iran, a Kurdish political movement seemed to have succeeded in overcoming tribal relations and managed to attract different tribal confederations against a commonly identified enemy, namely the central government in Tehran. However, there were still some tribes that remained hostile as the Mahabad Republic posed a threat to tribal leaders’ power and influence. This geopolitical entity depended on tribal military power to survive as it did not have an organized army of its own. This was its main weakness and its major

problem in eliminating tribal influence. Iran was quick to bribe Kurdish notables and offer state support to the adversaries of the Republic. The Mahabad government was inexperienced and poorly-organized as a result of Kurdish tribal affiliations and could not resist Iran's power. It came to an end in 1945 proving, once again, the divisive powers of traditional tribalism.

In Iraq Sheikh Mahmud had true nationalist ideals and believed that an independent Kurdish state could be formed under his authority. However his interest to become the king of Kurdistan was met with resistance among the Iraqi Kurds and the presence of the British had hindered his rebellion. Sheikh Mahmud's imagining of Kurdistan was not that of a transversal entity and similar to Simko's uprising, it aimed freedom under one particular sovereign state. His movement was not successful but Mulla Mustafa Barzani, who rose as the next prominent Kurdish leader was able to awaken the nationalist sentiment within Iraqi borders. Barzani fostered the Kurds for independence and used the government's neglect of Kurdish rights for self-government to gain sympathy among tribes. He managed to round up a nationalist upraising between 1943 and 1945. This movement proposed the unification of all Kurds under one Kurdistan but Barzani's intentions proved not to be nationalist but self-interested. In reality, Barzani wanted to extend his influence by retaining and if possible enlarging his traditional titles. The Iraqi government, just like Turkey and Iran, had noticed the fragmentation of tribes and offered a full pardon to those who would abandon the Barzani revolt. Baghdad also formed the *Jash* amongst Barzani's rivals to fight beside the government against the rebellion. Barzani's reluctance in giving up his personal agenda resulted in his failure and he was forced to leave for USSR.

On his return to Iraq in 1958 Mulla Mustafa Barzani tried to pursue autonomy

under Iraq but the Kurdish movement had not lost its tribal nature. Abdul Karim Qasim, who had overthrown the monarchy via a coup d'état, was willing to play the Kurdish chieftains against each other to handicap a Kurdish coalition. This strategy would once again prove effective as the opposing tribes began armed conflicts against each other, splitting the Kurdish unity.

Two other coups had followed Qasim's rule. Each time Baghdad felt weakened against the Kurdish movement, it offered armistice and began negotiations to win time. The Law of Autonomy offered by Saddam Hussein appeared to be the most reasonable offer by Iraq. Barzani's decision to decline this offer was met with harsh criticism within the KDP. By 1980, Barzani's influence was weakened and Jalal Talabani had established the PUK to represent the Kurdish interests dividing, yet again, the Kurdish resistance.

Syria suffered the most from the lack of Kurdish unity within the state as well as across the borders. Syrian Kurds could not form parties, organizations or any form of powerful resistance in order to defy the suppression of Damascus. The dominance of Kurdish tribal and traditional life paralyzed the Kurdish national sentiment, allowing the government to impose policies relinquishing the rights of the Kurds.

The second obstacle in front of establishing Kurdistan was the sovereign states that exercised control over the Kurdish populations. Prior to the proclamation of Turkish Republic and during the War of Liberation, Mustafa Kemal chose to cooperate with the Kurdish leaders to battle against the foreign powers. The Kurdish chieftains collaborated willingly with the Turks as they were promised autonomy under a Turkish regime. However, once the deterritorialization of the Ottoman Empire and its reterritorialization as the Turkish Republic was recognized in the Lausanne Peace Conference, Ankara discarded any mention of Kurdish autonomy. A formation of a self-governed Kurdistan

under Turkey's authority was perceived as an obstacle in front of modernization and westernization of the country. The secular reforms of the newly established state aimed at dissolving the traditional structure of the Ottoman Empire and replacing it with a nation state. The construction of such a nation meant Turkification, homogenization of the Turkish nation to prevent ethnic separatism. Within this nationalist and secularist fervor, Kurdistan as an unnamed geopolitical region and Kurds as a people were perceived as backward and uncivilized, meaning that they were incapable of self-government because of their backward tribal identities and their anti-secular religious establishment. The Kurds were referred as *Mountain Turks* and it was emphasized that they had forgotten their true Turkish identities. Deterritorialization of Kurdistan within Turkey started with plans of demographic resettlements and replacement of Kurdish language with Turkish.

The 1950s in Turkey was a period of relative liberation for the Kurds, since the Democrat Party governments opted to collaborate with various Kurdish notables if they chose to give up any separatist policies. Particularly, the governmental resistance against land reforms enhanced this cooperation between the Democrat Party and the Kurdish landlords, who wanted not to lose their authority. The 1960 coup, on the other hand, provided the tools necessary to voice the Kurdish concerns regarding cultural assimilation. The Kurdish intellectuals, who resisted the collaboration between the landlords and the government found some representation in the leftist political movements. Although the Leftist groups showed sympathy towards the Kurdish concerns, they were schooled under the nationalist education system and found it difficult to pronounce Kurdish rights. At the time, Ankara perceived a double threat, one from the Kurds and one from the Leftist groups. It chose to suppress both groups with

vigor. Such actions pushed the Kurds to form their own organizations and radicalized their demands. The Kurdish people switched requests of cultural and ethnic recognition with radicalized demands of autonomy and independence. After the 1980's PKK emerged as a terrorist organization with a Marxist-Leninist manifesto. Its leader Abdullah Öcalan used ideological geopolitics to confront the civilizational geopolitics of the Turkish state; in other words, he perceived the Kurdish notables as puppets of the imperialist regime imposed by the government and resisted the governmental understanding of Kurds as an uncivilized people. On the other hand, the government began to perceive the Kurdish movement as an ideological threat as well, since the Marxist-Leninist nature of the PKK became prevalent. As the PKK chose to use terrorist methods as means of obtaining its intentions, Turkey found no other alternative to its civilizational discourse until Turgut Özal's presidency. Turgut Özal tried to alter the Turkish military rhetoric by at least recognizing the Kurds as a distinct ethnic group towards the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, but his untimely death in 1993 cut short his legacy.

Iran had a more complex ethnic composition compared to Turkey. When Reza Shah came to power he tried to construct an Iranian nation but this proved more troublesome because of this complex network of different ethnic groups. Regarding the Kurds, the Shah chose to deterritorialize powerful Kurdish aghas by enforcing land reforms that would impoverish Kurdish landlords. Even under this atmosphere, the Kurdish leaders had failed in uniting to protect their rights against the Iranian state but they were relatively relieved from governmental pressure with the Reza Shah’s abdication of the throne in 1941. The Kurdish leaders had hoped for reconciliation with the new Shah but his reign also witnessed unsuccessful Kurdish efforts for taking a

unified action.

In 1979, the Kurds had become an opposition force against the monarchical regime and with the formation of the new Islamic Republic; they had once again hoped to obtain autonomy. The Islamic Republic of Ayatollah Khomeini had no place for an autonomously governed Kurdistan as the new regime entered a period of constructing authority and establishing a government around the Shiite religion. Tehran believed that if the Kurds were to be granted with self-autonomy, they would set an example for other ethnic and religious minorities, deterritorializing the newly founded regime. When the Iran-Iraq war started, the Kurds demanded autonomy in order to fight against Iraq. Such an ultimatum turned the Kurds into traitors in the eyes of the regime. Iran did not refrain from fighting the Kurds and the Iraqi forces in two different fronts.

Iraq formed its own version civilizational geopolitics under the influence of the pan-Arabic ideals. The estrangement of Kurds had started with Qasim but took a different turn with the Baath influence. The Kurds feared a pan-Arab reterritorialization as a single political entity, which would reduce Kurdish population to a small minority among a huge Arab population. As pan-Arabist ideals proved too challenging to the Iraqi regime, Baghdad chose to make a shift towards a nation-state administration. Baath Party tried to stress Iraqi unity; meanwhile the Kurds emphasized their difference as an ethnic group by constantly referring to and using the word Kurdistan. The failed negotiations for autonomy turned the Iraqi Kurdistan into an unresolvable problem within Iraqi borders.

The strongest oppression over the Kurds in Iraq came with Saddam Hussein's presidency. Saddam wanted a regionally strong and a united Iraq. He was willing to use force if necessary to accomplish territorial leadership. Sensing a weakness in

Khomeini's attempts for creating a new regime in Iran, Saddam launched an offensive attack to Iran. He was quick to play the Kurdish card, but seeing the Peshmerga fight back effectively against himself with Iranian assistance, Saddam's policy collapsed. Towards the end of the war Saddam sought revenge against the Iraqi Kurdish population by launching the Anfal campaigns that resulted in death of thousands of Kurds. The Anfal operations also silenced the Kurdish demands for autonomy until the end of the Gulf War.

Syria was perhaps the most insecure state of the four. It feared external regional powers as well its own Kurdish population. The Kurdish rebellions across its borders only added to its worries of the emergence of an independent Kurdistan. To guarantee preservation of Syrian territorial integrity, the government chose to impose pan-Arabist policies under civilizational geopolitics perceiving the Kurds as uncivilized people and denying any right to self-government for them. Meanwhile, the Syrian Kurds could not form representations, organizations or parties strong enough to defend its rights as in Turkey, Iran or Iraq. They feared drawing more negative attention to Kurdish ethnicity through such organs and they had no interests in getting mixed up in transversal Kurdistan conflicts. This fact strengthened Syria's hand in imposing civilizational geopolitics as Arab-Kurd rivalry reached its peak within the country. In 1963, Lieutenant Muhammad Talab al-Hilal published a security report about the Kurdish population. He depicted the Kurds as the enemy of the state and requested further oppression under twelve points. The report led to the implementation of the Consensus of *al-Hasakeh* that effectively stripped 150,000 Kurds of Syrian citizenship, naming them foreigners. The Arab Cordon also emerged as a result of this report and it aimed to reterritorialize the Kurds by resettling the Arab people close to the Turkish and Iraqi

border and cutting the ties of the Syrian Kurds with the other Kurdish communities.

The sovereign states chose to not only play the Kurdish tribes within their boundaries against their rivals, but also armed Kurds across borders to undermine Kurdish opposition. Reza Mohammad Shah gave support to Barzani while trying to suppress its own Kurdish communities. Barzani's assistance to the Shah hindered the Kurdish movement in Iran and collapsed the belief in a united Greater Kurdistan. In the Iran-Iraq war both countries endorsed each other's rival Kurdish population. As the Iraqi Peshmerga showed success, Turkey got involved dispatching expeditionary forces in fear of a spillover effect amongst the Turkish Kurds. In sum, the transversal character of the Kurdish conflict was used to break apart Kurdish unity.

In resisting the demands of the Kurds, the home states opted for a civilizational geopolitical discourse arguing for non-competence of the Kurds for self-governance because of their archaic, non-modern and uncivilized nature. This discourse survived not only the pre-Cold War period, but also during the Cold War as well. However, during the Cold War, alongside the civilizational geopolitics, ideological geopolitics played a significant role within the region. In Turkey it was through the leftist political movements that the Kurds tried to obtain cultural and ethnic recognition. TİP voiced its concern of the Kurdish issue but it was not willing to make Kurdistan a top priority. TİP believed that once a revolution would take place all the ethnic problems would naturally be solved. This led the Kurds to create their own organizations after leaving the Turkish-formed organizations but most of the Kurdish political activists continued to remain ideologically Marxist-Leninist. It should be noted that only in Turkey the Kurds were considered as a serious ideological threat in addition to their perception as a nationalist security threat. The government recognized the Kurds as part of the communist danger

and legitimized the military operations against the leftist Kurdish organizations through an ideological discourse. Iran and Iraq did not perceive the Kurdish movement as a communist threat as strong as Turkey did. The Soviet support towards Barzani and KDP largely remained political instead of ideological and there was no efficient leftist political movement among the Iraqi Kurds. Barzani's tribal self-interest was in contrast with the leftist political movements criticizing these tribal interests. The traditional feudal system, which was not much altered by Barzani left no room for a leftist political movement in Iraq. In Iran however, Marxist-Leninist ideology was far more important. The Kurds had formed Komala that presented an ideological clash with Tehran. Komala had the support of the Soviet Union, but their attempts for an independent Kurdistan were even too radical for the USSR. Komala was transformed into KDPI in order to keep the Kurdish demands in check. KDPI had to find a way of incorporating the tribal leaders to pursue autonomy for Kurdistan, thus it had to comprise some of its radical rhetoric. KDPI collaborated with Tudeh, which was a strong communist movement in Iran; however the central government effectively prevented this collaboration. In Syria, Kurds did not cooperate with leftist organizations and the governmental discourse remained strictly civilizational. Overall Iran, Iraq and Turkey developed ideological geopolitical discourses during the Cold War; however, except for Turkey, Iraqi and Iranian responses to the Kurdish political movements as an ideological threat remained limited.

In conclusion, the period between 1919 and 1990 witnessed a struggle for the establishment of a Kurdistan as a geopolitical entity. However, from a critical geopolitical perspective, such a geopolitical entity had never existed. The reason for non-emergence of Kurdistan had both domestic dimensions stemmed from tribal

politics' superiority over modern nationalist political movements as well as lack of unity among the Kurds in defining where really the Kurdistan is. The insufficiency of transversal cooperation among the Kurds of different states was another reason of failure. The home states' policies regarding the Kurds were equally effective in preventing the emergence of Kurdistan. The high sensitivity of the home states about territorial integrity forced them to resist any kind of separatist activity. In doing that, they either benefited from internal division of the Kurds by aligning a group of Kurds against the others, or they tended to produce civilizational, and to a lesser degree, ideological geopolitical discourses to legitimize their denial of self-government to the Kurds. Although there was limited cooperation among these states as in the case of the Saadabad Pact, generally, the states preferred to use the Kurdish groups in the rival states to undermine their power while the Kurdish groups sometimes use the governments of rival states to undermine the power of the home state. All in all, considering these internal and external factors, and the factors combining these two, it could be argued that an independent Kurdistan turned out to be a geopolitical abstraction instead of a concrete construction.

1919-1950	Turkey	Iran	Iraq	Syria
Type of Geopolitical Discourse	Civilizational	Civilizational	Civilizational	Under the French Mandate
Actions of Governments	Sun Language Thesis Turkish History Thesis Declaration of the Kurds as Mountain Turks Settlement Plans Turkish Nationalist Education	Construction of an Iranian identity Settlement Plans	Under the British influence Kurdistan is neglected	n/a
Actions of the Kurdish Peoples	Sheyh Said Rebellion Mt. Ararat Rebellion Dersim	Ismail Agha Simko upraising Formation of Komala JK, KDPI Mahabad Republic	Early Political Formations Upraising of Sheikh Mahmud Upraising of Mulla Mustafa Barzani	n/a
1950-1990				
Type of Geopolitical Discourse	Civilizational and Ideological	Civilizational and Ideological	Civilizational and Ideological	Civilizational
Actions of the Governments	Perception of the Kurds as a communist threat Coups and oppression by the military Continuation of civilizational geopolitical policies	Muhammad Reza Shah's oppression Revolution of 1979 under Ayatollah Khomeini	Baath Party Influence and Pan-Arabist Ideology Formation of Jash Anfal Operations	Baath Party Influence and Pan-Arabist Ideology Al- Hasakeh Consensus Muhammad Talab al-Hilal Report Arab Cordon
Actions of the Kurdish Peoples	Revival of Kurdish Nationalism Radicalization of the Kurdish demands under leftist groups for an independent and a self-governed Kurdistan	Tudeh working with the KDPI Raise of Sheikh Izzedin Hosseini Demands of Autonomy for Kurdistan	Negotiations for an autonomous Kurdistan PUK separates from KDP	No perception of Kurdistan

Table 5.1 A table summarizing the time frame between 1919 and1990 within Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria

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