

The Rise and Decline of Kurdish Movement in Years 1978-88

Hamidreza Jalaiepour

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Abstract: *During the past hundred years Kurdish nationalism developed parallel with nationalist movements (and the process of establishment of nation-states) in Turkey, Iraq and Iran. Under the influence of that nationalism drive, so far, we have seen several types of Kurdish movements aimed to achieve political autonomy and federal governments. This article describes one of the Kurdish movements in Iran during the years 1978-88. The process of Kurdish nationalism has been investigated from a critical viewpoint through a constitutive theory in this article.*

Keywords: *Social movements; civil nationalism; ethnic nationalism; nation-state; Kurdish nationalism; Kurdish movement; Kurdish solidarity; Kurdish parties*

Introduction

In the first years after the victory of Islamic Revolution especially after the fall of Pahlavi regime (in February 1979), an ethnic/nationalist movement started among Sunni Kurds northwest of Iran whose political slogan was autonomy for Kurds and democracy for Iran. The Islamic Republic of Iran which was the fruit of Islamic Revolution gradually stretched its domination over that region and resisted the Kurdish demand for autonomy. Against the government's reaction two leading militia forces in the Kurdish movement including the Kurdish Democrat Party (KDP) and Komoleh checked their tactics into guerrilla warfare in order to achieve autonomy and they continued their war until 1988. The implementation of guerrilla warfare and the heavy casualties suffered during the struggle compelled the Kurdish people to reduce their support of the Kurdish independence movement. Simultaneously, with the 8-year imposed war with Iraq, the central government's disciplinary and military forces succeed to make the majority of the Kurdish *pishmarga* (volunteer partisans who died for their leaders) or the guerrilla forces of the above-mentioned parties to surrender themselves or pushed deep inside the Iraqi Kurdistan and defeated the movement. The principle object of this article is to discover the causes for the creation, continuation and defeat of this Kurdish movement during the first decade after the Revolution (1978-88).

Background and importance of the subject

The Kurdish people are living alongside of the skirts of Ararat and Zagros mountains. The Kurds neighbor other Iranian ethnicities such as Azeri, Lor, and Fars ethnicities at the eastern side of the above mountains and with Arabs and Turks and Armenians at the western slopes of Ararat Mountain. Although, presently, political borders have divided the Kurdish populated regions, in the past, despite the fact that these regions were often chaotic and turbulent, the geographical shape of these regions was not like today. Before the Chaldoran War in the 16th century because of national features such as elevated mountains, nomadic ethnic life, proximity to Semitic (Arabs) and Turkish ethnicities, distance from ancient civilizations such as the Babylonia, Persia, Rome and being placed at the crossroad of confrontation between Iranian and Roman empires added to this crisis. However, it was after the Chaldoran War that elements such as the Shia faith observed by the Safavid Dynasty and Sunni tradition followed by the Ottoman Turks, the rivalry between these two faiths, the British policy of exploiting Kurdish nomadic forces to weaken the Ottoman Empire and emergence of nationalistic feelings in the vast Ottoman Empire and eventual collapse of this multi-ethnic empire at the end of the 19th century added fuel to the sensitivity in the Kurdish populated regions and gave rise to Kurdish nationalistic aspirations. According to Iranologists in the past the habitat of the Kurds was part of the ancient Iranian plateau which was later on divided between several countries and presently the Kurd are not living merely in modern Iran but in southeast of Turkey, north and west of Iraq, northwest and west of Iran, east of north of Syria and south of Armenia, and they enjoy common religious, lingual, ethnic and historical features.

The emergence of Kurdish nationalism and political struggle to achieve their political rights including demand for an independent Kurdish state or political autonomy or a federal state (which was voiced recently), are things that are related to the Kurdish contemporary history. After the collapse of Ottoman and Qajar empires and increase of nation-states and eruption of nationalistic feelings in Turkey, Iran and other Arab states (such as

Iraq), the Kurdish nationalism was also ignited. One can say that Kurdish nationalism started first in Turkey and then in Iraq during the First World War and the waves of such fervor reached Iran after the Second World War. Of course ethnic and cultural difference and discord between the Kurds and Turks and Arabs is far deeper than between Kurds and Persian and Azari citizens. Kurdish nationalism in Iran reached its peak during the years 1941-1945 in the form of a Kurdish movement and exertion to establish a Kurdish republic which lived for a year. After the collapse of the Kurdish republic (in 1946), the Kurdish nationalists did not have a remarkable activity until 1978, but with the outbreak of Islamic Revolution and the fall of Pahlavi regime and change of international conditions the Kurdish nationalists found a suitable atmosphere for their struggle in the Sunni-populated regions in Iran.

Significance of the survey

Studying Kurdish ethnic and nationalistic movement is important at least from three aspects. Firstly, various ethnicities are living in towns and regions near Iranian borders part of which are outside the Iranian frontiers including Kurds, Arabs, Baluchis, Turkmen and Azari ethnicities.¹ Aside from Kurds who live west and northwest of the country adjacent to Iraqi and Turkish Kurdistans, Arabs neighbor Iraq southwest of Iran, Baluchis neighbor Pakistan southeast of Iran, Iranian Turkmen neighbor with Turkmenistan Republic northeast of Iran and Azaris at north and northwest are neighbor with Azerbaijan Republic and Turkey. In fact political borders have divided these ethnicities. After the victory of Islamic Revolution each of these regions were confronted with social agitations and political and even security crises, but in none of these regions a nationalistic and guerrilla movement started and continued like Kurdistan Province. Therefore, a survey to see why we faced such a situation in Kurdistan Province is an important survey.

Secondly, from the eve of victory of Islamic Revolution Kurdish populated territories were confronted with nationalistic and ethnic challenges. At one side the central government was defending the national sovereignty and security of the country in the name of the Iranian nation by using its disciplinary and military forces and was supported by the entire Iranian-Islamic nation that was the fruit of Islamic Revolution. On the other, hand inspired by Kurdish movement two Kurdish political parties i.e. the KDP and Komoleh were fighting the Iranian government forces on behalf of the Kurds and with the help of Kurdish pishmarga² or partisans to secure their autonomy. The result of this political/social struggle was numerous military conflicts and repeated chaos during the first decade after Revolution contrary to other regions in the country. Therefore a study of such war which inflicted heavy human loss on the central government and the Kurds (and the whole Iranian nation) is a profitable study.³

Thirdly, from historical viewpoint Iranian Kurdistan has suffered numerous crises. Among important developments in the twentieth century one can refer to Sheikh Abdullah's religious/ethnic uprising at the end of Qajar rule, the uprising of Esmail Aqa Shakak or Simko⁴ north of Kurdistan and the Kurdish ethnic uprising and establishment of Kurdish autonomic republic of Mahabad between the two world wars. Kurdish crises and revolts in Turkey and Iraq continued far vigorously compared to those in Iran. Incidentally in recent years the Turkish Kurdistan and especially Iraqi Kurdistan was one of the chaotic regions in the Middle East. Therefore, the political history of those tumultuous regions makes the study of Kurdish movement an interesting and serious subject.

¹ I believe that the ethnic conditions in Azarbaijan greatly differ with Sunni populated regions in the country. Being followers of Shia faith and enjoying equal economic conditions among Azaris and Persians and the joint historical collaboration between these two are all grounds that have caused ethnic feelings among the Azaris not to be deeply rooted and politically motivated like Kurds and the Pan Turkism movement in Azarbaijan to remain a social phenomenon.

² The term "*pishmarg*" or "*pishmargeh*" in the day to day Kurdish literature had different meanings during the first decade after Revolution. It meant a Kurd who sacrificed his life for the sake of other Kurds. Of course pishmarg was not attributed solely to the KDP and Komoleh guerilla fighters. For example the Muslims pishmargs too were Kurdish forces that fought against the above two guerillas along side the central government's armed forces. What is interesting is that both KDP and Komoleh partisans called the Kurdish Muslim pishmargs that were fighting along with government forces as "jash" which has negative meaning and is nearly against the real meaning of pishmarg and was interpreted as traitor to the aspiration of Kurdish people.

³ A focus only on the following number of killed and wounded as a result of these clashes in Mahabad city displays the gravity of the crisis and the condition of the politics:

a. From September 1979 until February 1984 some 1240 forces from IRGC, army, gendarmerie and the municipality died, 1416 were wounded and 157 were taken captive.

b. During the same period KDP and Komoleh lost 500 persons.

c. During these military clashes 555 Kurds were killed in Kurdish towns and villages and 1756 persons were wounded (Mahabad File, Ministry of Interior's Security Council Secretariat, p. 200).

⁴ Esmael Simiqo which is known as Simko in the Kurdish dialect.

Research scope and methodology

This research covers a specific branch of Kurdish population and geography that was the scene of formation and continuation and defeat of Kurdish movement during years 1978-99. Although we have no exact figure of Kurdish population existing studies have revealed that the Kurdish population in the Kurdish settlements on the eve of Islamic Revolution was approximately 16.5 million (Scott, 1990) out of which 9 million Kurds were living in Turkey, 5 millions in Iraq, 5 million in Iran and 800,000 in Syria and former Soviet Union. Out of 5 Iranian Kurds only approximately 2.5 million Kurds followed the Sunni faith under the scope of this study. In other words the rise and decline of Kurdish movement in Iran happened in Kurdistan Province, part of West Azarbaijan Province and a small part of Kermanshah Province⁵ and the Shia Kurds in West Azarbaijan, Kermanshah and Ilam provinces are out of the scope of this survey because they were not influenced by the Kurdish movement.⁶

The theoretical framework and the model for compilation of this article (which will be explained later on) are on analytical/experimental basis. In other words in this study I have profited from analytical meaning of social movement⁷ and have then analyzed the subject by giving examples and causes that are understandable for the reader and conceivable from experimental viewpoint. In adapting the terms with the subject under study I have benefited from personal observation, interviews and recorded sources that was available to me. The causes I have mentioned in Table 1 have are based on deep interview which I have conducted with than 50 Kurds including researchers, engineers, physicians, scholars, traders, taebins⁸, ethnic elders, political, security and military officers. The main questions raised in these interviews were the following: Why did a Kurdish movement erupt in Kurdistan area during the first years of Islamic Revolution? Why did this movement continue nearly a decade in the form of guerrilla war and why that movement failed to achieve its targeted autonomy and was defeated?

Previous studies

The bulk of research on Kurds is in non-Persian languages especially English, German, Russian and French about various features of Turkish, Iraqi, Syrian and former Soviet Union Kurds in the past 100 years and is remarkable in size. The majority of such studies have been conducted in Kurdish research institutes. "Kurd and Kurdistan", a research and anthropological book by Vassili Nikitin (1987) is one of these books. This book tries to give a relatively comprehensive image of various dimensions of Kurdish life from old times until the Second World on the basis of studies and direct observations. Of course the object of the Russian author in his study is not a secret to the reader. In the Persian language and among Iranian researchers, before the Chaldoran War "The Kurd and his Historical Genealogic Connection," by Rashid Yassami, the learned professor of Tehran University, is a good readable example (Yassami, 1984). Yassami tries to defend the Iranian citizenship of the Kurds from genealogical, linguistic, anthropological and historical angles. For this reason Kurdish Sunni nationalists do not agree with the contents of that book and maintain that this book was written under the domination of chauvinism and Persian-oriented nationalism of the First Pahlavi period upon Reza Shah's instruction.⁹ In the past three or four decades many considerable studies have been conducted in English language about Kurds (e.g. Barth: 1953, 1961; Edmonds:1957, 1971; Ghassemlou: 1965, 1980; Kinnane: 1964;

⁵ The 5-million Kurdish populations include Sunni and Shia Kurds in Ilam, Kermanshahan, Kurdistan and West Azarbaijan provinces. The population of Sunni Kurds in Kurdistan, West Azarbaijan and Kermanshahan provinces is estimated to be around 2.5 million.

⁶ The principle Sunni populated towns in the above provinces during the period under study were Piranshahr, Sardasht, Baneh, Saqez, Mahabad, Sanandaj, Marivan and Paveh. The Sunni populated districts were Sumay-Bradoost, Silvana, Oshnavieh, Bukan, Kamyaran, Divandareh, Nosood and Sarvabad (Qorveh and Bijar towns in Kurdistan Province are Shia populated. Sunni Kurds are living in parts of Naqadeh and Uremia towns).

⁷ Social uprising is a general movement that targets a specific goal and is divided into three divisions. Firstly, social movements instigated by informal networks (often non-governmental), formed from mutual relationship between a number of people, active groups and organizations. Secondly, social uprising which culminates through intellectual discourse among supporters of enlightenment and identity a hope to achieve a common goal. Thirdly, social movements in the process of social changes (change of the existing discriminatory conditions) from political and cultural standpoints. These movements are ready to fight and suffer loss with their enemy even if it is the central government (Diani, pp. 1-25).

⁸ Here Taebin means Kurdish nationalist armed militiamen that were once members of KDP and Komoleh parties and by receiving letters of pardon from the government repented from their past activity and are no more members of these two parties and continue to lead a non-factional/political life in Kurdish towns and other towns in the country.

⁹ At least half of the Kurds I interviewed implicitly or definitely expressed such an opinion about Rashid Yassami's book. Yassami was a learned Kurdish scholar in Kermanshah.

McDowell: 1966; Entessar: 1984; MacDonald: 1988 and Van Bruinessen: 1983, 1986). What is remarkable is that even the books published after 1980 have not given careful attention to the conversion of Kurdish nationalism into Kurdish movement especially in post-revolutionary Iran. During recent years Ahmadi published "Tribe and Ethnicity" (1999) in Iran in Persian language. In this book Ahmadi has tried to examine the majority of Iranian ethnicities that contributed to the establishment of national government in contemporary Iran. Ahmadi says ethnic nationalism is often the product of ideologies of political groups and their foreign supporters. Of course in that book too Ahmadi has not explicitly examined the rise and decline of Kurdish movement.

Theoretical framework

Every incident including the rise and decline of Kurdish movement and continuation of crisis in Kurdistan must have various causes. As a consequence we need a constitutive framework because every constitutive model lays stronger emphasis on several causes among a variety of causes. During my study of recorded sources and my interviews with Kurd and non-Kurd experts they laid emphasis on 11 causes for the Kurdish movement which I have mentioned in Table 1. In this article all the causes mentioned in Table 1 do not have the same weight in exciting the movement. Causes No. 2, 5 and 6 are considered as three push causes and the remaining causes had a role as background causes. The reason for continuation of Kurdish movement has been mentioned in Table 2 and the reasons for its defeat are explained in Table 3. Background causes mean that they existed in Kurdistan from long time ago yet despite such causes we did not see a Kurdish uprising in Kurdistan. Therefore one can conclude that the rise, continuation and defeat of an uprising needs push causes.

If you look carefully into Table 3 in which the theoretical causes of this study have been enlisted and have responded to questions about the reason for rise, continuation and defeat of Kurdish movement, you may ask why out of many causes (at least 11 causes have been mentioned in Table 1), I have focused only on several causes?

In response to such a question I must say that this article has made such a selection on the basis of four presuppositions. Firstly, in each analytical/experimental research it is necessary to distinguish between push causes and background causes otherwise the research will lead us nowhere. Secondly, every analysis of Kurdish movement calls for a constitutive analysis of Kurdish nationalism and the analysis of Kurdish nationalism calls for analysis of causes that incite nationalism in societies that are in the process of modernization and development. Due to troublesome development of the nation-states –which normally accompany catastrophes–, they need to advertise and encourage nationalistic ideology (which lays emphasis on a specific nation), whereas all countries do not enjoy the same level of national and ethnic solidarity. Ethnic nationalism emerges in reaction to nationwide nationalism. Thirdly, a single explanatory theory cannot be useful in the description of nationwide nationalism (which zooms on language, education and nationwide administrative departments) and ethnic nationalism (which gives rise to ethnic movements) and we need a constitutive theory to analyze such subjects. Fourthly, the emergence of Kurdish nationalism does not necessitate a Kurdish movement. During the course of many years Kurdish nationalism has existed among the Kurds but it has never led to Kurdish movement. Conversion of ethnic nationalism into ethnic movement needs other requirements and conditions (such as ethnic discrimination, ethnic leadership and the political fortunes to make a political protest).¹⁰

The start of the movement

From September 1978 when the political, religious and popular struggle against the Shah reached a peak under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini and the Pahlavi regime was on the verge of final disintegration, the Kurdish nationalists found the conditions ripe to renew organized action to achieve political autonomy in Kurdistan. During this period the Kurdish nationalists had formed three political parties.¹¹ The first branch was the Kurdish nationalists who considered themselves as followers of Qazi Mohammad (the president of Mahabad Autonomic Republic) during years 1945-46. Part of that branch revived and reorganized the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP). In November 1978 Dr. Abdolrahman Ghassemlou was elected the secretary general of KDP. After 16 years of stay in the Eastern Europe, Ghassemlou entered the Iranian Kurdistan through Iraq. He started KDP activities by first of all organizing 250 Kurdish nationalists.¹² His slogan was autonomy for Kurdistan and

¹⁰ I have analyzed these presuppositions in chapter 1 of my book entitled "The rise and decline of Kurdish Movement" (Jalaeipour, 2006).

¹¹ Over 30 political factions (Kurds or non-Kurds) were active in Kurdistan during the Revolution, but the above three parties were the most important ones among them. The majority of the people whom I interviewed agreed to this fact.

¹² The number of KDP members at the eve of its establishment is approximate and is estimated on the basis of my interviews.

democracy for Iran. At first KDP political activities and later on guerrilla and military activities began north of Iranian Kurdistan especially in Mahabad and its surrounding districts (or Makrian Kurdistan) which had gathered remarkable popular support.

The second party had communist (Maoist) background. Before the Revolution these communists had their own intellectual and student gatherings and some of them like Foad and Yousof Ardalan were imprisoned by the Shah's regime. They believed that first of all they could liberate Kurdistan by forming rural organizations and networks in Kurdish villages by a pioneer organization and then set them as a platform for the victory of communism revolution and liberation of Iran in its entirety. Before Revolution the Kurdish intellectuals and communist circles did not attempt actual and guerrilla warfare against Pahlavi regime. It was after the victory of Revolution that they gradually assembled in Sanandaj, Saqes and to some extent in Mahabad. Compared to KDP these Marxists and Maoists had little public support and were compelled to gather around Ezoldin Hussein, the influence Friday prayer leader of Mahabad, and tried to persuade him to lead their party against rival Ghassemlou in order to become the sole leader of the Kurdish people. These communists believed that Islamic Revolution was a minor and sudo-bourgeois revolution whilst a real revolution was incited by farmers and workers under the leadership of a progressive communist organization. Later on these elements established the Kurdistan Zahmatkeshan Organization (Kurdistan Workers' Organization) which was briefly referred to as Komoleh. Although Komoleh had Marxist inspirations and considered struggle against classes as its principle slogan, it considered them as a Kurdish organ and defended Kurdistan's autonomy. In other words by resorting to Kurdish nationalism powerhouse and not labor revolutionary forces they wanted to liberate Kurdistan and Iran. Komoleh's operation centers were mostly in villages as well as Saqes and Sanandaj.

The founders of the third party were Muslim Kurds who followed Ahmad Moftizadeh or Kak Ahmad, known as the followers of *Maktabe Quran*. Moftizadeh was a Sunni influential and intellectual Muslim in Kurdistan who had been a friend of intellectual Shia before the Revolution. The young Muslim academic students in Kurdistan believed him to be a model Ali Shariati for Kurds.¹³ That party opposed the Marxist ideology and KDP and Komoleh parties considered them as backward and affiliated to the Islamic Republic of Iran. Kak Ahmad's party two had nationalistic inspirations in mind and cautiously supported Kurdish Autonomy especially in its cultural drive. After the victory of Revolution this party was ignored and punished by the Islamic Republic and was blamed to have entertained Vahhabi ideology.

In 1979 in the absence of a definite government in the Iranian Kurdistan this province was under the influence of nationalist figures of these three parties. While the leaders of the above three parties were busy consolidating and expanding their organizations in Kurdistan, they traveled to Tehran and Qom to continue their negotiations to secure autonomy for Kurdistan and receive formal recognition from the central government. According to these parties (especially KDP) the Kurds had achieved their autonomy and only needed their autonomy to be formally recognized¹⁴, whilst KDP and Komoleh leaders during the years that Islamic Revolution was about to triumph had not taken any drastic partisan military measures against the Pahlavi regime.¹⁵ After the Revolution they continued their military struggles parallel with their political activity to the extent that upon the victory of Revolution some of their military adventures incited a general resentment in the country and revolutionary masses expressed their harassment against the events unfolding in Kurdistan. For example the Bridge 3 barracks in Mahabad and that city's gendarmerie regiment were disarmed by the members of KDP party. The military barracks and the headquarters of Kurdistan's Army 27 in Sanandaj were besieged by Kurdish nationalists but the barracks resisted the invaders and did not fall, but the majority of gendarmerie stations throughout the Kurdish populated territories were disarmed. On the occasion of re-opening of KDB branch party in Naqadeh in March 1979 KDP, arranged a military parade by mobilizing over ten thousand Kurds in the critical town and opened the way for an ethnic war.¹⁶

¹³ For further information refer to Moftizadeh's book.

¹⁴ For example in 1979 Ghassemlou, the secretary general of Kurdistan Democrat Party, said to the delegation from Tehran: "KDP enjoys autonomy in Kurdistan. The only thing we need is that the Iranian government should recognize our autonomy otherwise Kurdistan will fall into chaos". I am quoting from my interview with Mr. Ezzatollah Sahabi, the 3-man delegation team known as the good will delegation which had been sent to Kurdistan to calm the crisis (September 2, 1996).

¹⁵ Most of the interviewees approved this fact.

¹⁶ Two third of the 12000 population in Naqadeh town were Azari Turks and follower of Shia faith and lived with the Kurds. Had the Azari Shia citizens escaped from Naqadeh alarmed of the parade of KDP militia and the town had fallen, KDP would have disarmed three other barracks in Kurdish towns such as Piranshahar, Paveh and Jaldian because Naqadeh was placed in

Against this insecurity and chaos the central government in Tehran did not dominate the affairs in Kurdistan and had only succeeded to stop Sanandaj, Saqez, Piranshahr, Jaldian, Pasveh and Baneh barracks from falling and the soldiers and military and disciplinary forces were permitted to walk a few hours in daytime in Kurdish areas. Two policies were pursued among by revolutionary elite in the newly established Islamic Republic government to cope with this unrest in Kurdistan. One alternative was to solve the Kurdistan political/security problem by negotiation. The advocates of that policy were mostly supporters of Bazargan's provisional government and the result of such policy was the dispatch of a 3-man delegation by the Leader of Islamic Revolution to Kurdistan to negotiate with Kurdish representatives or Kurdish nationalists. Although the 3-man delegation succeeded to encourage Ayatollah Khomeini to issue a message in six articles to the Kurds that made them so happy that they flocked into streets, the delegation failed in its mission because of two reasons. One reason was that the representatives of Kurdish nationalists were not trusted by the delegation. Secondly the delegation members were not popular among revolutionary youth and Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) forces and revolutionary organs and their supporters in the government, and were blamed to be liberals and conciliatory.

Another faction in Tehran believed that the demand for political autonomy was not the inherent desire among the Kurds in Iran and was a pretext in the hands of KDP and Komoleh activists to brew turmoil. That faction said that if KDP or Komoleh were given an opportunity to maneuver they would separate Iranian Kurdistan from the mainland. This faction looked at the chaotic happenings in Kurdistan to have been orchestrated by the enemies of Islamic Revolution who wanted to stop the Islamic Republic to consolidate. That ideology was adhered often among Muslim revolutionary youth and followers of the Ayatollah's path who were active in revolutionary organs and above all in the IRGC. These revolutionary youth maintained that negotiation with Kurdish political parties by Bazargan's government was a conciliatory and non-revolutionary policy that gave an opportunity to the enemies of Islamic Revolution to hatch intrigues against Islamic Revolution and that continuation of such compromise would end with the partition of the country. The main slogan of the young followers of the Ayatollah Khomeini's path was that instead of negotiating with the representatives of KDP and Komoleh parties the government must firmly resist them and employ the armed forces of the Islamic Republic to prevent the Kurdish nationalists to gather political and military prowess, bring security to Kurdistan and try to rebuild and eliminate economic discriminations in Kurdistan. Therefore, the full-fledged presence of IRGC personnel at the beginning of Revolution Kurdistan must be considered to be in keeping with that opinion.¹⁷

Despite deep ideological difference between the KDP and Komoleh parties they had a common approach versus the political conditions in Kurdistan Province which conflicted with the opinion of the authorities at the seat of Islamic Republic. These Kurdish parties believed that the people in Kurdistan closely cooperated with them in order to achieve autonomy and also maintained that the central government had no political/military power in Kurdistan and that should the Iranian government accumulate power in Kurdish populated territories and rebuild these territories they would undermine the popularity of the seekers of autonomy in Kurdistan, and the Kurds must not permit the government to offer welfare services to Kurds. They argued that the battle for power in the Islamic Republic was serious and the government is unable to exercise order in border mountainous regions in Kurdistan. They said Iraq and Iran had historical difference with each other and with the establishment and continuation of the Islamic Republic the difference between Baghdad and Tehran was apt to escalate. They believed that the Iraqi government would support the autonomy-seeking Kurdish groups that opposed the Islamic Republic and the big western countries would eventually refuse to see the Islamic Republic to flourish and for many years Iran would suffer from lack of a central government.¹⁸

the way leading to these three barracks. At last after several days of battle and 200 casualties Naqadeh didn't fall and KDP failed to dominate that town (the number of the casualties are approximate and is based on my interview with related officials).

¹⁷ The presence of IRGC forces in Kurdistan was not mandatory or upon government order to quell a crisis but was a volunteer presence (or it was religious presence according to the terms used in those years). At that time even the majority of army and gendarmerie and even police personnel volunteered to fight in Kurdistan. This is why the difficult security conditions in Kurdistan never stopped the dispatch of armed forces to Kurdistan from Tehran and the Islamic Republic never surrendered to the demands of nationalist Kurds.

¹⁸ These assessments are based on my own interpretation from the analysis of the words spoken by KDP and Komoleh radio and recorded by me until 1985.

According to that assessment, besides disarming gendarmerie barracks and posts, KDP and Komoleh parties consolidated their political and military setup and didn't permit the central government to stretch its power to Kurdistan and establish security in Kurdistan.¹⁹ Thus the political scene in Kurdistan was the scene of fierce political forces and both parties believed their action to be legitimate and desirable. On one side on the coin were the autonomy-loving nationalists and especially KDP figures who considered themselves as the guardians and advocates of securing the political rights for the Kurdish folk and followers of the path that Qazi Mohammad had trodden and had lost his life for it – a path which would eventually liberate the Kurdish citizens and would lead to development of Kurdistan. Kurdish nationalists believed that like former regimes in Iran the Islamic government in Tehran Republic would not recognize the Kurdish right for autonomy and maintained that the Kurds themselves should fight for their rights. On the other side of the coin it was not only the Islamic government that supporters of Islamic Revolution but massive revolutionary supporters and above all IRGC that considered the Islamic Republic accountable for loss of blood of thousand of martyrs and felt the Islamic Republic was threatened Kurdistan and severely opposed the demand for autonomy in Kurdistan.

It is under this turbulent political atmosphere that one should understand the Kurdish political movement in big cities in Kurdish populated regions especially in Mahabad, Saqez and Sanandaj. In other words a large number of Kurdish citizens considered themselves to be culturally, politically and economically discriminated and believed that the Iranian central government was the instigator of such behavior. Kurdish nationalism was the leading ideology in these cities (which was exactly contrary to the feeling in other cities in post-revolution Iran that followed religious/revolutionary ideology and held the majority). Kurdish political groups considered the existing conditions in Kurdistan as the best opportunity to secure political autonomy for Kurdistan. Many people believed that with the fall of Pahlavi regime the newly established Islamic Republic (Kurdish parties had boycotted participation in the referendum for establishment of the Islamic Republic) had no alternative but to accept the Kurdish autonomy.

The causes of the movement

After the victory of Islamic Revolution political struggles was not limited to Kurdish populated regions and stretched to the Azaris, Turkmen, Baluchs and Arabs²⁰, but the supporters of the Islamic Republic were only among the Kurdish settlements which were faced with serious and continuous crisis. As I mentioned before the reason for this difference was that after the victory of Revolution aside from political the activities of two Kurdish nationalist parties, the Islamic government faced a general Kurdish demand for uprising for autonomy. At the start of the Islamic Republic naturally the government was a fledgling and weak government but the same government was supported by huge masses of popular/religious and anti-American feeling in the majority of the large cities under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini and millions of Iranians supported that government. Therefore, despite its fledgling nature, the Islamic government enjoyed unparalleled massive popular support, but the same government lacked such popular power in Kurdistan because it was faced by a Kurdish movement in Kurdish towns. Many Kurds (especially after the revival of Kurdish parties) believed that the only solution for their underdevelopment and eradication of economic, political and cultural discrimination in Kurdistan was political autonomy. Now the question is why the Kurdish movement (whose political goal was against the political goals of nation's popular/religious movement) erupted in Kurdish regions during the outbreak of Revolution? Normally those who were interviewed about that question underlined one or two important causes among other causes in Table 1. They said one of the causes for the Kurdish movement was that it was deeply rooted among Kurds and the other was political, economical, social and cultural discrimination of Kurdish populated regions compared to other regions in the country. Although is right to refer to these two causes as the

¹⁹ For example in the beginning of 1979 fifty IRGC personnel were massacred in the way leading to Sardasht border town by Kurdish nationalist militia. After that incident the situation in Kurdistan was deemed very tumultuous and insecure and incited hatred among Friday prayers throughout the country against the Kurdish nationalist activists which were labeled as anti-revolutionary Kurds. At the same juncture KDP and Komoleh stopped the newly established revolutionary organs such as Construction Jihad Organization from offering welfare and service to Kurdistan. For example in 1979 Naser Torkan, a Tehrani student whose brother became a minister in Mr. Rafsanjani's cabinet, represented the Construction Jihad Organization in Kurdistan. He was kidnapped by Kurds and was ruthlessly killed near Sardasht. Later on such atrocities became common incidents in Kurdistan.

²⁰ Keyhan newspaper archives from September 1978 until September 1980 is one of the good sources to become acquainted with the political happenings in ethnic regions in Iran.

main elements for the Kurdish movement, such feelings existed in Kurdistan many years before victory of Islamic Revolution but never that region faced a Kurdish uprising. Therefore, aside from the background factors in Table 1 one must refer to the following three push factors:

The collapse of the Shah's regime in 1979 as a result of the victory of Islamic Revolution. After the fall of the Shah's regime the government control on Kurdish cities and villages was withdrawn and the people became rid of the limitations imposed by the central government.

In the absence of government, KDP and Komoleh quickly reorganized themselves and benefited from the chaotic atmosphere to flourish. As I said before these two parties continually spoke about autonomy as a solution for Kurds to get rid of discrimination and national tyranny.

The third factor that influenced the Kurdish movement was consolidation of Kurdish solidarity and political aspirations among the Kurds which needs to be discussed in detail.

By Kurdish solidarity or "Kurdayeti" I mean common customs and rites that the Kurds observed in the past and continue to observe. But when the Kurdish solidarity became politically motivated and helped the Kurds to focus on their special genuine culture compared to other cultures and the Kurds tired to discover their identity based on these special cultural features, integrate and separate themselves from non-Kurdish people and to resist others (central government and ethnicities and factions that supported the central government) by relying on their solidarity.

If Kurdish solidarity had failed to materialize, the Kurdish nationalists would have been stalled in their political aspiration and would have failed to mobilize Kurds towards a single movement to fight the central government and seek autonomy. With the withdrawal of government control in Kurdistan in 1979, the Kurdish solidarity zoomed on Kurdish cultural features such as Kurdish language, Kurdish dress and Kurdish customs and art (such as Kurdish dance with club or local folklore songs and Sunni beliefs and rites compared to Shia beliefs and rites). After the waiver of government control in Kurdistan that made the Kurds hope for autonomy the Kurdish nationalists emphasized on distinct Kurdish features (Jalaeipour, 2006, pp. 95-104). For example KDP, which insisted that the Kurdish language should be taught in schools set up many schools in Mahabad (in the former Youth Palace) after the victory of Islamic Revolution. Wearing Kurdish traditional dress became popular in parks and main streets in Kurdish towns even by Kurdish academic students who for many years had been accustomed to wear ordinary dress in Tehran and the main slogan of Kurdish publications was about Kurdish autonomy, Kurdish language and the tyranny suffered by the Kurds. Kurdish language and the tyranny imposed by the central government against Kurds.²¹

The causes of continuation of the movement

Although during the first years after Islamic Revolution the Kurdish nationalists found an opportunity to enjoy a Kurdish popular support but they failed to benefit from that popular movement to hit their principle target which was autonomy for Kurdistan, because the Islamic Republic that had gushed from Islamic Revolution did not agree to demands for autonomy in a part of the country. In other words in the Islamic/revolutionary atmosphere of the first years after Revolution, accepting autonomy for Kurdistan by the officials of the Islamic Republic meant to accept the disintegration of the country and was considered as treason to popular revolutionary aspirations. Therefore, after 1981 the revolutionary forces succeeded to control the majority of political scuffles in different regions in the country to the benefit of the Islamic Republic. In the Kurdish regions too IRGC, army, gendarmerie and police personnel were stationed in Kurdish towns and villages. These forces dismantled the military bases of KDP and Komoleh militia bases from the Iranian Kurdistan and pushed them into Kurdish mountainous regions in Iraq. The Kurdish popular movement too gradually lost its former prestige and ardor among the Kurds and emerged as a mere Kurdish resistance movement. In other words thousands of Kurds who had pinned their hope on the fulfillment of the slogans chanted by Kurdish parties during the Revolution gradually grew disappointed, but that disappointment did not mean that like other people in Iran the Kurds supported the Islamic Republic. On the contrary when they understood that they had to pay dearly to achieve autonomy they grew quiet and subdued. After 1981 instead of continuation of Kurdish movement the Kurds witnessed a guerrilla uprising. This guerrilla uprising and ethnic

²¹ The majority of the people I interviewed had the same opinion.

struggle were factors that contrary to other regions in Iran continued to brew tension and insecurity in Kurdistan until 1988. The following four factors explain the causes for continuation of the Kurdish guerilla movement:

First factor: The first factor was the partisan tactics adopted by KDP and Komoleh parties. As a whole the activists of these two parties refused to attack tens of thousands of Islamic Republic's security forces in Kurdistan directly. A study of examples of operations conducted by these two parties displays five guerrilla tactics which was easier than direct military attack. Their first tactic was planting land mines in dirt roads leading to the bases of Islamic Republic security forces which had been set at mountainous points facing villages and towns in order to exercise order. The mines were easily planted by a single Kurdish partisan at night and he easily returned to his base after ending his mission. Their second tactic was to hide in ambushade in the afternoons before sunset during the march of military personnel. After attacking the military personnel the Kurdish partisans escaped in the darkness of the night.

The third tactic was nocturnal attacks by Kurdish militia against the disciplinary and military bases especially those stations whose weak fortifications had been identified by the local agents and spies of the militia. The fourth tactic was to attack government buildings in towns and villages in the evening or midnight. The fifth tactic for the partisans was to penetrate into towns and take shelter behind private homes and rooftops and fight the urban security forces.

With these tactics the KDP and Komoleh mercenary fighters inflicted heavy casualties on government forces by suffering the least casualty. The KDP and Komoleh activists were either slain or taken captive by government forces or they grew tired of the length of operation and demanded letters of pardon from government forces. During the first decade after Revolution approximately 8000 persons from these two parties, mostly belonging to KDP, surrendered themselves to the Islamic government. Of course these two parties succeeded to recruit fresh fighters against those who lost in action and by continuing their guerrilla operations and resorting to the above mentioned five tactics they showed to the government that they were present and active in Kurdistan.

Second factor: The second factor was continuation of partisan operation in mountainous regions which was suitable for guerrilla warfare. Nikitin says the Kurds and the mountains are inseparable (Nikitin, p. 104).²² The scattered villages in the mountains can serve as convenient logistic bases for Kurdish guerrillas. To clarify the matter we may describe Kurdistan Province. The population of that province in 1986 was approximately 1,050,000 persons out of which 650,000 were living villages. In other words 60 percent of the population of Kurdistan Province was rural population and the peasants were scattered in 1810 villages. 50% of these villages contained less than 50 families, 30% contained 50 to 100 families, 10% contained 100 to 150 families, 5% contained up to 200 families and the remaining 5% of the villages housed more than 200 families. The majority of small villages with less than 50 families are scattered in towering mountains slopes around Baneh, Marivan and Sanadaj - as if the population status and geographical location of these small villages resembled the tents of moving nomadic tribesmen that had gathered in a single spot.²³

This mountainous nature of small village populations served a good privilege for KDP and Komoleh militiamen²⁴ because in order to hide after a partisan operation against government forces he did not need a road to return and could escape on foot from whatever direction he wanted.²⁵ Contrary to guerilla forces the regular government forces were badly in need of roads in order to move their troops, continually cater for their troops and exercise security and fight the Kurdish militia. Their problem was aggravated when we consider the harsh lengthy winters with snow capped mountains in Kurdistan.²⁶ When the partisan fighters were present in the region or were fighting with government security forces, these scattered little villages in Kurdish mountains were safe havens for them, because they benefited from the villages before and after an operation to dine and rest.

²² Seyed Qader Jaafari mentioned the following old Kurdish parable to me: "Three things were enough for Kurds: towering mountains, cheap bread and goat's milk."

²³ Migrating nomadic tribesman that dwell in a cold resort during summers and warm resort in winters do not exist in Kurdistan. Instead the Kurdish ethnicities migrate to the mountains surrounding their villages.

²⁴ A Kurdish literacy fragment says: "This is not my homeland. Conscience and law belongs to an inferior country, but my lofty country is the castle of my heart." (Nikitin, p. 104).

²⁵ Or they traveled by mules and horses.

²⁶ The houses in Kurdistan must remain warm approximately six months in a year.

These villages were useful for the militiamen to collect information about the latest position and traffic of government forces and were the best platform for their propaganda among villagers in Kurdish language.²⁷

While the Kurdish partisans benefited from winding and towering mountain passes in Kurdistan to walk and hide, gather information from villages and eat their food, the government forces were exposed to danger when they passed through dirt roads in the windy mountain routes and populated towns and villages.

Third factor: The third factor that helped guerilla action and crisis in Kurdistan to continue was the outside bases neighboring that province, because it helps KDP and Komoleh parties to set up their bases in Iraq. The Iranian Kurdistan is part of the habitat of a greater Kurdistan. When as a result of tough pressure by government forces KDP and Komoleh failed to keep their fixed bases in elevated mountainous resorts in Iranian Kurdistan they didn't stop their military incursions and they moved their bases to Iraqi Kurdistan near the Iranian border. Because first of all these fixed bases in Iraqi Kurdistan served the same purpose that the bases did in Iranian Kurdistan.²⁸ Secondly, the government forces in the Islamic Republic of Iran could not easily penetrate Iraqi territory.²⁹ Thirdly, Iraqi Kurdistan was not a strange place for Kurdish activists because Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistans were part of a greater Kurdistan.

Fourth factor: The fourth factor was the security policy adopted by the Islamic Republic. That policy was such that helped KDP and Komoleh militiamen to start and continue guerilla campaign against the Iranian forces with the least loss of life and price. To clarify this subject we must first of all examine the conventional security policies in the Kurdish habitats and then explain the security policies adopted by the Islamic Republic. Usually in the past when conditions in Iranian Kurdistan became chaotic and turbulent the central governments adopted two separate policies or a combination of these two policies to calm the region. The first policy was negotiation with the opposition³⁰ in which instead of bringing the government's regular forces into Kurdistan and suffer heavy losses to repel the Kurdish opposition forces in the towering Kurdish mountainous regions, at one hand they started negotiating with the opposition groups and on the other hand started glorious and big army parades in the region to display the government might, but they seldom employed the army for military action. The other policy was military suppression. Based on that policy in order to restore order in the region the government would serve an ultimatum to the opposition groups and their supporters to surrender themselves and deliver their weapons to the army. In such a situation the army commanders distributed notices in Kurdish towns and villages that said, "You must not shelter the opposition forces among you, otherwise your will be suppressed." By suppression the army meant to commence heavy artillery fire. If in the first policy the government had pinned all its hope on the result of negotiation with the opposition and displayed the might of the army, in the second policy the government opened artillery fire into towns and villages that had quartered the Kurdish militia and the horror of the guns was the basis for the army to control and subdue the agitation in the region. In that policy the government did not directly employ its infantrymen and in the mountainous regions and the army personnel were not exposed to the attack of Kurdish guerilla.

Normally the governments resorted to talk at a time when they were weak and adopted the second policy when they were strong³¹ For example when the young Turkish and Ataturk, their leader, were trying to establish the Turkish republic, they promised autonomy to the Kurdish minority, but as soon as they built and fortified

²⁷ Supposing a number of Kurdish guerillas is passing the night in a remote mountainous region. Next morning after military operation against a government military base they capture a number of wounded soldiers as captives or loot their weapons too and return to the village. Under such circumstances you can imagine what kind of feeling KDP activists excited simple ignorant Kurdish villagers and exhibited their prowess that were cut from the outside world.

²⁸ The condition of security in Kurdish populated regions and presence of KDP guerillas was as follows:

a. Up to 1980 the towns, villages, borders and main and side roads were almost dominated by DPK guerillas.

b. In 1981 nearly all Kurdish populated towns and main roads, especially at daytime, were dominated by the government forces and the fixed KDP and Komoleh bases were shifted to the peak of mountains near the border.

c. From 1983 onward the principle KDP bases were transferred to Iraqi Kurdistan.

²⁹ In my book entitled "The rise and decline of Kurdish Movement" I have given specific examples of facilities and means owned by KDP in Iraqi territory (such as hospitals, radio and KDP headquarters building – Jalaeipour, 2006, pp. 125-130).

³⁰ One practical form of that policy was to arm the Kurdish nomadic tribesmen or ordinary Kurds by the central government, and one cannot say that Kurdish nomads were always hostile or friendly with the central government. Their condition changed in different circumstances. Anyhow always a large number of Kurds were armed by the central government and received wage to exercise security in Kurdish populated regions.

³¹ As I mentioned before, mere negotiation or mere repression never happened in Kurdistan and actually a combination of these two tactics were employed.

their government they continued to repress the Kurds.³² After the Second World War and beginning of formation of a nation-state in Iraq, the government repeatedly resorted to negotiation or suppression in Iraqi Kurdistan. In 1970 the Iraqi government granted autonomy to the Iraqi Kurds and allowed Kurdish language to be taught in schools and even agreed that six Kurdish ministers should join the Iraqi cabinet, but in 1974 the same government severely suppressed Kurdish nationalists. They evacuated the majority of border villages and built new Kurdish townships.⁵¹ From 1980 until 1991 the Iraqi government again resorted to talk with the Kurdish opposition (mostly with Jalal Talebani's troops and KDP which operated under the leadership of Masood Barezani), but whenever the Iraqi government gathered power it suppressed the Kurds. But the security policy of the Islamic Republic was not exactly like the above mentioned policies.

In other words the Islamic Republic neither resorted to negotiations nor suppression.³³ The basis of the Islamic government policy in Iranian Kurdistan was based on the following saying of the Ayatollah Khomeini, the Leader of Islamic Revolution: "One must differentiate between the Kurdish people and the anti-revolutionary opposition." In other words Khomeini said that the government must treat the ordinary people kindly and treat the anti-revolutionary elements severely. In fact at the peak of unrest and chaos in Kurdistan the Islamic government was ordered to serve the ordinary Kurdish citizens, bring security to them and attend to their welfare. In keeping with that policy the government could neither resort to negotiation nor display the army power. At one hand the government forces were supposed to spread in the mountainous regions in Kurdistan, which made it necessary for them to move out of their barracks (in other words they were unwillingly exposed to the attack of Kurdish armed militia) and to build new bases at the height of mountains and villages in order to exercise order for the Kurdish peasants and townfolk and in the meantime pursue the Kurdish partisans. On the other hand while the government forces were fighting the rebels, the government was supposed to fortify its service organizations in the region. "A gun in one hand and an axe in the other hand" was a sentence that was repeated by the supporters of Islamic Revolution in Kurdistan. The gun was the symbol of resistance against the armed KDP and Komoleh factions and the axe was the symbol of serving ordinary Kurdish citizens. Thus at the beginning the security policy of the Islamic Republic was a factor for the Pishmarga partisans to attack and display their force.

The above four factors i.e. the KDP and Komoleh guerilla forces, villages scattered over towering mountains, the shelter available outside the Iranian borders and the Islamic Republic's security policies, were the real causes for continuation of insecurity, unrest and guerilla uprising in Kurdistan for ten years, contrary to other regions in the country. In other words one can attribute the repetition and continuation of unrest in Kurdistan to the Kurdish solidarity, the operation carried out by nationalist guerilla forces in towns, the fact that the mercenary operation of the Kurdish militia did not degrade them in the eye of the Kurds, the organized parties could identify armed incursions beforehand and chose their combatants for such missions, the mountainous regions and villages set at the elevated slopes was the best resort for the Kurdish militia to leave the scene of action with the least casualty and seek food from the villagers, the security policy of the Islamic Republic which did not spread terror to stop peasants from helping the Kurdish partisans, and the outside shelter that provided a good opportunity to KDP and Komoleh headquarters to avoid heavy consequences of operations such as loss of fighters, enjoy a safe retreat to cure their wounded personnel and allow their tired men to rest for a long time. These factors provided such privileges to the Kurdish opposition armed militia that no opposition militia (that after Revolution had started armed struggle against revolutionary forces) in other regions in Iran enjoyed. Therefore, after victory of Revolution the Islamic Republic was confronted with a continued guerilla uprising and protest only in Kurdistan.

Causes of defeat

The Kurdish movement immediately after victory of Revolution and their guerrilla movement during the first decade after Revolution failed to attain their ends despite heavy human and material losses. The Islamic government gradually expanded its security, information, administrative, service, educational, judiciary and

³² As an example the suppression of Kurds in Sim, in Turkey, is a famous incident. Interesting enough the Western countries termed such suppression by the Turkish government as a war between civilization and barbarians.

³³ Critics may refer to some of the military or political happenings during the first decade of Islamic Revolution and try to conclude that the government resorted to negotiation or suppression. I believe one cannot make a conclusion easily because in that case first of all they cannot justify the increase of government forces to restore security in Kurdish mountainous regions which inflicted much pain and large casualties to government personnel. Secondly, from the beginning of the crisis while the government forces were suffering heavy loss every day in Kurdistan the government was developing the region as far as possible and even lost men during developing activities. Such behavior by the Iranian government has not been observed in Iraqi or Turkish Kurdistan provinces.

health organizations throughout Iranian Kurdistan. The majority of the KDP and Komoleh guerillas either surrendered themselves to the Islamic Republic and received letters of pardon or escaped to Iraq or were arrested or slain in the military struggles. Now the question is this: What was the cause for the defeat of Kurdish movement? Why after 10 years of bloody warfare the Kurds did not attain their desired autonomy? Among all the factors, two factors were the most important: the spread and consolidation of Islamic Republic's rule in Kurdish regions and the fatal blunders committed by KDP and Komoleh parties. These two parties believed that now that the Shah's regime had collapsed and the Islamic Republic was a fledgling and impotent government there was no government in Kurdistan and the new regime was unable to control Kurdistan whose majority of its army barracks and gendarmerie bases had been disarmed by KDP and Komoleh guerillas after Revolution. These two parties naively believed they dominated the people's heart because they were Kurds and since they were the only unopposed military power in the region they had actually achieved autonomy and the only thing they had to do was to wait for official recognition from the Islamic government in Tehran.

It was based on that presupposition that KDP and Komoleh guerillas thought their strategy to secure autonomy through armed struggle was a successful strategy, whilst in those years their biggest blunder was that they didn't listen to the wise opinion of Alexis de Tocqueville about the French Revolution. Tocqueville had poited that: Governments issuing from the heart of revolutions are not only not weak but are very strong also because the millions of people who revolt and destroy the former regime are the staunch supporters of the newly established revolutionary government. Thus KDP and Komoleh committed the mistake of fighting the Islamic Republic (in order to seek autonomy) as if they were fighting with millions of people who supported the Revolution throughout the country. Therefore, not only the Iranian government refused to grant autonomy to Kurds (which was said to be partitioning the country) and did not get tired of the continued armed struggles of Kurdish guerillas, but accumulated such a power that was able to push KDP and Komoleh partisans deep into Iraq and weakened and confined them. Contrary to the start the Revolution when the ordinary Kurds thought it was easy to attain autonomy, later on they grew frustrated and disillusioned and their guerrilla uprising was defeated.

Future prospects

Will Iran and the Islamic Republic get rid of problems in Kurdistan after the defeat of the Kurdish liberation movement? The defeat of Kurdish movement does not mean that the problem has been uprooted in the region because the background causes (mentioned in Table 1) still exist, and with the existence of push causes new Kurdish movement is likely to happen. Despite essential difference between the policies of Turkey, Iraq and Iran in the administration of their Kurdish dominions (I think the approach of the Islamic Republic towards Kurds has been much more human than that of Turkey or Iraq) ethnic and economic discriminations continue to exist in Kurdistan. Because of this discrimination the Kurdish populated regions are facing and will continue to face a sort of social resistance. Even 17 years after the defeat of nationalist Kurdish partisan war in the first decade after Revolution one can clearly see signs of Kurdish resistance in their political behavior during elections from 1993 until 2005⁵³. One way of helping Kurdish regions to develop is that intellectuals and government authorities in Kurdistan and the central government must know how they can convert the Kurdish social resistance into constructive forces and supporter of popular rule instead of pushing them into anti-development forces with nationalistic aspirations.

Based on the reasoning in this article one can mention three points: First of all the nation-state process (national government) in Iran is still incomplete. One of the fundamental defects of that process is that during the last hundred years often our cultural rhetoric (or belief in the cultural features of the Iranian nation with chauvinistic and religious propaganda) has overruled civil nationalism (or exercising equal rights for Iranian citizens despite ethnic or cultural differences). As long as civil nationalism is weaker compared to cultural nationalism and the government fails to be the main supporter of civil nationalism we must continue to expect ethnic resistance especially Kurdish resistance. In case circumstances become favorable the Kurdish resistance is likely to rapidly change into a costly Kurdish uprising like before. The second point is that Kurdish intellectuals and well wishers are mistaken to believe that by the growth of globalization process they can attain autonomy or Kurdish federation and achieve real development in Kurdistan, because quest for federal government is quest for autonomy which the Kurds nurtured at the beginning of Islamic Revolution and was defeated. Had Kurdish politicians and well wishers at the beginning of Revolution raised their demands as Iranian Kurdish citizens instead of seeking autonomy most probably Kurdistan Province would have developed far better than today. In

other words if the Kurdish movement with a slogan for autonomy had not misfired and those who emerged as social forces had tried to compel the central government to meet their demands in keeping with provisions of IRI constitution, their struggle would have been more peaceful, less costly for Kurds and Kurdistan would have better developed.

The third point is a mistaken idea that can find supporters in the central government and prove problematic both for the government and for ethnic regions. That mistaken idea is for the central government to resort to military force, propaganda and economic power and to adopt a single policy versus all regions in the country and fail to respect plurality of culture and politics (and ignore civil nationalism which believes on equal rights for Iranian citizens despite cultural and ethnic difference). The experience of Iranian nation-state in the past 100 years has shown that those governments that have tried to impose a unique or single political and cultural strategy upon the nation have not been stable or progressive governments and have not promoted democracy (like Reza Shah's government which in order to inculcate a single national identity for the nation insisted on extremist Parsi (pre-Islamic) aspirations and immediately after his exile from Iran the Kurdish nationalism movement erupted in Kurdistan from 1941 until 1945 to object these chauvinistic policies). But those governments which followed the law and supported equal rights for all citizens and believed in multiple cultures in the country were more stable and helped Kurdistan to grow better. A government which does not respect the rights of different citizens in the country makes the business difficult for itself and for the nation and above all brews trouble for its armed forces, and when such a government grows weak, social resistances can lead to movements which do not necessarily seek development.³⁴

Table 1 – Causes mentioned in recorded sources and interviews to explain the development of Kurdish movement__

Description of causes	Those who emphasis most on these causes
The weakening of nomadic ethnic system has led to Kurdish movement. The Kurds are the children of mountain and their social achievement in their long struggle has been the taming of nature and shaping nomadic ethnic life. Nomadic ethnic life provides security and political system within the framework of its hierarchy and inner customs. The implementation of modernization, security and administrative programs and land reform by the central government (during the First and Second Pahlavi) had weakened the foundations of nomadic ethnic life. Therefore, when the Pahlavi regime collapsed because of Islamic Revolution the Kurds who were suffering from disintegration of ethnic system and lack of government found a chance to protest.	The elders of Kurdish nomadic ethnicities such as Mangoor; some former gendarmerie commanders; some government officials and revolutionary organs.
The Kurds have a distinct culture separate from the prevailing culture in the country. By participating in Kurdish movement the Kurds are trying to stabilize and engross their separate culture from Iranian culture. In other words the Kurds feel deprived and discriminated when they see their faith, language and customs ignored by the Persians and Shia followers in the center of the government. Such a feeling of deprivation has been the root of the Kurdish uprising.	Secular and religious Kurds (such as a part of the followers of Maktab-e Quran at the beginning of Revolution).
The political geography of Kurdish territories has paved the way for Kurdish movements. In other words the separation of Kurdish territories into Ottoman and Iranian Kurdistan after the Chaldoran	Central government authorities; part of Kurdish nationalists.

³⁴ As an example during the 9th presidential elections in spring 2005 the extent of Kurdish participation especially in Kurdish towns was less than other provinces in the country. For example only 20% of eligible citizens in Mahabad participated in the elections and boycotted the elections.

<p>War led to the division of Ottoman Kurdistan into Turkish and Iraqi Kurdistans (and two smaller Kurdish settlements in Syria and former Soviet Union). The political geography in the region has paved the way for general protest. For example the rivalry and hostility between Iraqi and Iranian governments gives a good opportunity to Kurdish nationalists to profit from the feud between these countries to benefit from Iraqi Kurdistan to support the Iranian Kurdish movement.</p>	
<p>The Kurds possess the qualities to form a nation but during the 20th century and especially with the optimism resulting from the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire the Kurds have not yet been able to establish an independent state. In other words impelled by Kurdish nationalism the Kurds feel they are not inferior to Arabs, Turks and Persians, each of which possess an independent state. Therefore, the desire to form an independent state (or at least achieving political autonomy) has been a popular aspiration and has been the main root for Kurdish uprising.</p>	<p>Kurdish nationalists; part of Western researchers.</p>
<p>The fall of the central government (the Second Pahlavi) as a result of victory of Islamic Revolution was the main cause for eruption of Kurdish uprising.</p>	<p>Central government authorities.</p>
<p>The formation and operation of two Kurdish political parties (KDP and Komoleh) that chanted autonomy for Kurdistan when the central government had lost control of Kurdistan was the principle cause for these parties to benefit from dissatisfaction among Kurds to provoke a Kurdish uprising.</p>	<p>Kurdish nationalists, central government authorities.</p>
<p>Due to different causes (such as the mountainous nature of Kurdistan, distinct culture, being adjacent to the border and hostile relation with neighboring countries) have not yet been able to lay firm administrative, security and propaganda foundations in Kurdish populated regions. Such a condition has made Kurdish populated regions ripe for protest and uprising.</p>	<p>Central government authorities.</p>
<p>The transition period (in social structure of Kurdistan) was one of the principle causes for the start of Kurdish uprising because during the history Kurdistan has enjoyed nomadic ethnic life and in the past the security and control of Kurdish regions was exercised by Kurdish nomadic tribesmen. But after the destruction of nomadic ethnic life during the Pahlavi Period at one hand the Kurdish regions have lost their closely integrated ethnic life and on the other hand the bureaucratic and logical government has not yet been changed (this is another interpretation of the cause mentioned in item 1).</p>	<p>Researchers who support the modernization theory.</p>
<p>The Kurds have fought different periods of insecurity and tension in the past. Security and continuation of security is one of the foremost aspirations of the Kurds. History has proven that the Kurds have never trusted any sort of government that has tried to bring security to Kurdistan. Therefore, the Kurds have only trust to</p>	<p>Old Kurdish nationalists.</p>

their own arms to exercise security and for this reason they defend every sort of uprising for autonomy even in its armed form.

Towering mountains, small and scattered villages on the slopes of these high mountains and lack of suitable roads has provided a suitable geography for guerilla uprising. At one hand a Kurdish guerilla can easily live and fight with the central government's armed forces with the support of peasants and on the other hand under such conditions it is a very difficult task for government security-forces to restore security and order.

Security and military experts.

Economic deprivation or poor economic development in Kurdish regions is remarkable compared to other regions in the country. Therefore, the Kurds revolted in order to get rid of that discrimination.

Kurdish and central government economic experts, bureaucrats and technocrats.

Remarks: Firstly, the 11 causes mentioned in the above table is the summary of opinions expressed in recorded sources and interviews conducted with more than 50 Kurdish and non-Kurdish experts (that took approximately 125 hours). Secondly, some of the causes convey different interpretations of a single cause and are interrelated. Thirdly, the list of these causes is not closed and can remain open. Forthly, by central government authorities I mean the political and cultural elites in Tehran and big cities and not merely government officially.

Table 2 – Causes to explain the reason for defeat of Kurdish movement

Description of causes	Those who emphasis most on these causes
The choice for autonomy by two armed Kurdish parties (KDP and Komoleh) provoked the central government (which was equipped with modern weapons and commanders that had been produced during the exciting revolutionary atmosphere and were supported by millions of Iranian people) to resist the Kurdish ethnic movement. With the advance and consolidation of the central government in Kurdish populated regions, the Kurds' aspiration for autonomy was defeated.	Central government authorities.
Lack of support for Kurdish aspiration for autonomy by big powers (such as the United States and former Soviet Union) during the Cold War.	Kurdish nationalists.
Deep social and political discord among Kurds, weakness in their struggle for autonomy and even treason by some Kurds who collaborated with the central government against the Kurdish quest for autonomy.	Kurdish nationalists.
Horror from attack of central government against Kurdish regions frightened the Kurds from pursuing their aspiration for autonomy.	Kurdish nationalists.

Table 3 – Model followed in this article to explain the Kurdish movement_____

Push causes that led to the movement	Causes mentioned in item 2, 5 and 6 in Table 1
Push causes for the continuation of movement	Causes mentioned in items 3, 4, 7 and 10 in Table 1
Push causes for the defeat of the movement	Causes mentioned in items 1 and to some extent item 2 in Table 2

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