1 | *Introduction*

This book, *Kurdish Politics in Iran: Crossborder Interactions and Mobilisation since 1947*, is a political and historical study of different stages of the Iranian Kurdish movement from 1947 to 2017. It deals with two main elements of the Iranian Kurdish movement: firstly, the formation and politicisation of Kurdish national sentiment, and the reasons for the emergence and continuation of the Kurdish question in Iran; and secondly, the crossborder dimension of the interaction between Iranian and Iraqi Kurdish political parties, and the impact of this interaction on the capability and direction of the Iranian Kurdish movement. This book pays particular attention to movement mobilisation and different aspects of the collective actions and mobilisation deployed by the actors, civil society organisations and political parties of Iranian Kurds during different phases of the movement. The collective political movement led by the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (*Hîzbî Dêmukratî Kurdistanî Êran*, KDPI) and the Society of Revolutionary Toilers of Iranian Kurdistan (*Komełey Şorşgêrrî Zêhmetkêşanî Kurdistanî Êran*, Komala), the two mainstream political organisations of the Iranian Kurdish movement, is the main focus of this study. Nevertheless, there have been periods in the Kurdish movement when the actions of Iranian Kurdish civil society were not limited to the activity of the KDPI and Komala. In this regard, several historical events and actions, for instance of Kurdish peasants, students, intellectuals and others, which have great importance for the direction of the Iranian Kurdish movement, have been included in this book. Emphasising the importance of these two elements, I argue that the century-long national movement of the Iranian Kurds is a product of the discriminatory policy pursued by changing Iranian ruling regimes (the Pahlavis and the Islamic Republic) towards non-Persian and non-Shiite ethnonational and ethnoreligious communities in the country. The analysis of the Kurdish–state relationship in Iran reflects on macro- and micro-historical events, inside and outside Iranian Kurdistan,

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which have had an impact on the direction and content of the Iranian Kurdish movement.

Reflecting on seven decades of Kurdish crossborder interactions since the collapse of the Republic of Kurdistan (1946), I argue that the relationship between Iraqi and Iranian Kurdish political parties has been complex, sometimes resulting in fraternal violence and fragmentation within the Kurdish movement. The geopolitical situation of the Kurdish homeland, split between four nation-states with hostile relations with the Kurds, has had a profound impact on the variety of different forms of mobilisation in different parts of Kurdistan. The evolution of Kurdish nationalism in the twentieth century was also to a certain degree subject to these geographic circumstances. As a result of the establishment of nation-state borders and boundaries, different understandings of national interest among the Kurds of different parts of Kurdistan can be identified.

The periodical scope of this study spans 1947 to 2017. Three distinct periods of the Iranian Kurdish movement have been identified, which include the aftermath of the collapse of the Republic and the emergence and growth of the KDPI and Komala. Owing to the characteristics of the Iranian Kurdish movement in the 1960s, in 1979 and the 1980s, and from the early 1990s to 2017, these periods constitute the three major phases of the Kurdish national movement in Iran. Chiefly, the approaches of the KDPI and Komala to mobilisation during the phases of the Iranian Kurdish movement will be the focus of this study, employing a critical approach: how and why have these parties failed in conducting a sustainable struggle against different Iranian regimes, and how has misconducted crossborder interaction between Iranian and Iraqi Kurdish movements challenged the integrity of the Iranian Kurdish movement?

This book highlights two critically interwoven aspects of the Kurdish struggle: crossborder interaction and movement mobilisation. I, the author of this book, am also an insider, having a link to this movement. From the initial stages of my research, I have been warned about my position, by colleagues. Bearing this in mind, I have conducted this research with awareness of the importance of academic integrity and the threat of subjectivity. The study of crossborder interaction has resulted in some critical assumptions, yet all claims and assertions have been underlined through referring to evidence and historical records related to this aspect of the Kurdish movement.

Furthermore, it is important to clarify that the critical claims about Kurdish crossborder interaction *do not* include Kurdish civil society of Iraqi Kurdistan. Iraqi Kurdistan has, since the collapse of the Republic of Kurdistan (with some intermittency), become the home of the exiled Iranian Kurdish movement. The Kurdish people in Iraqi Kurdistan have largely acted with hospitality. With reference to my personal experience of living in Iraqi Kurdistan, together with the narratives of people from my generation and of the previous generation of Iranian Kurds engaged in the Iranian Kurdish movement, it is worth noting that during these different periods of crossborder interaction between the Iranian Kurdish movement and Iraqi Kurds, the majority of the Iraqi Kurdish people showed solidarity with the Iranian Kurdish movement. This hospitality has been practised while the Iraqi Kurdish villages suffered immensely at different times from the Iranian regime's arbitrary shelling and bombardment, justified by Iran by claims that the areas were hosting the KDPI and Komala. It should also be noted that beyond this intra-Kurdish rivalry, the Kurds of different parts of Kurdistan have demonstrated strong crossborder connections and networks, especially through periods of hardship. An observable positive example of crossborder Kurdish interaction is that since the 1990s, following the establishment of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in northern Iraq in 1992, economic, cultural and political connections across national frontiers have multiplied. The cultural, political and economic lives of many Iranian Kurds are heavily influenced by recent developments in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI); many Iranian Kurds now live, work, study or frequently travel to the KRI. Despite many Kurds' awareness of the misconduct of crossborder political organisations, recent interactions have contributed to the growing politicisation of Kurdish identity and aspirations in Iran, as well as accelerating similar trends among Kurds in Turkey and Syria.

This book is the first systematic attempt to study the past seven decades of the Kurdish movement in Iran through the lens of its crossborder aspects. The previous absence of such a study is evident not only in English and European languages, but also in Middle Eastern languages, Kurdish and Persian included. It thus addresses a significant gap in the existing scholarship, shedding light on the implications of mobilisation on the conduct of the socio-political movement of a nation whose land is divided between four different nation-states. My interest in writing on this topic, and more broadly on aspects of

intra-Kurdish rivalry, developed throughout the years of writing my PhD thesis, in 2016–19. My dedication to researching various aspects of the contemporary Iranian Kurdish movement has meant that I have been able to publish several peer-reviewed articles in internationally recognised journals (Hassaniyan 2019a, 2019b, 2019c, 2020a, 2020b).

This book draws on a wide range of primary and secondary sources, aimed at developing a comprehensive analysis of the most recent seven decades of Kurdish politics in Iran. Materials including political documents, historical records, audiovisual material, including photographs and video recordings, newspaper clippings and archives, including the CIA's Historical Review Office Collections (CIA), the collection of the *Nashriyah* newspaper at the University of Manchester and private individuals' collections such as Mansoor Hekmat's archive,[1] are the major primary sources of information for the empirical foundations of this book.

I recognise that elements from ideologically constructed archives, such as Hekmat's, require additional reliability checks. Hekmat was a leading figure of the Communist Party of Iran (CPI) and founder of the Worker-Communist Party of Iran. His archive comprises a variety of documents, political statements, minutes and letters exchanged between leading Komala officials. These materials are useful for a range of purposes, for instance to discern Komala's views on the Kurdish question and its fratricidal war with the KDPI during the 1980s.

Autobiographies and biographies of political leaders and veteran Peshmerga[2] of the Kurdish movement have also been essential sources of primary data. Together, these materials provide a rich historical account and a hetrogeneous (sometimes contradictory) articulation of

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[1] Mansoor Hekmat's digital archive (*Fehrest-e asar-e Hekmat, Mansoor*) can be accessed at Fehrest-e asar-e Hekmat, Mansoor, http://hekmat.public-archive.net /indexFa.html.

[2] The term *peshmerga* literally means 'those who face death'; in the context of modern Kurdish history, the Peshmerga are Kurdish guerrilla fighters opposing state authority in Iran and Iraq. The exact moment the word emerged is disputed, though there are indications that the term was adopted in 1946 during the brief existence of the Kurdish Republic centred in Mahabad. However, it is indisputable that the Peshmerga have become a pillar of the Kurdish movement and Kurdish society and political culture in recent decades (Lortz 2005; Aziz 2017).

crossborder Kurdish interactions. Furthermore, I have drawn on many secondary published sources in Persian and English, in particular socio-political, historical and economic studies of the past two centuries of Iranian and Kurdish history, to draw a picture of the wider environ-ment in which the emergence and evolution of the Iranian Kurdish movement occurred. English translations from Kurdish and Persian originals are all mine, unless otherwise indicated.

This book includes an account of the relationship between the (Iraqi) Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the KDPI which some may find controversial. In this narrative, for instance, the KDP under the leader-ship of Mostafa Barzani in the 1960s played the role of oppressor and betrayer, while the KDPI was the victim. As shown over the following chapters of this book, I propose three main explanations for this state of affairs. Firstly, the KDP leaders' self-image of the KDP as a superior political organisation has meant that the KDP, particularly Mostafa Barzani, never treated the KDPI as an equal partner with its own valid interests. From the first moment of its arrival on the soil of Iraqi Kurdistan, the KDPI was treated as a subordinate organisation. When Barzani in the late 1950s encouraged and promised his support to the KDPI leadership to re-establish the movement in Iranian Kurdistan, he had the ambition of leadership of a greater Kurdish movement, reaching beyond the borders of Iraqi Kurdistan.

Secondly, for the Barzanis (the sons as well as the father), the survival of the KDP under the leadership of the Barzani clan has always been the first priority; at critical moments, national interest has been sacrificed for organisational, or personal, ends. The history of the Kurdish move-ment is rife with examples whereby the KDP (and subsequently the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) as well) has placed narrow organ-isational interests before wider Kurdish national interest. Yet the same problematic is also recognisable in the relations between Iranian Kurdish political parties. For instance, the failure to find a peaceful solution to the differences between Komala and the KDPI resulted in half a decade of fratricidal war in the 1980s, resulting in many still unhealed wounds for the Kurdish movement and Kurdish society. Critiques of the KDPI–Komala conflict are still quite evident within Kurdish society in Iran (Manbari 2017).

The third reason may be found in the geographical specifics in which the Kurds and their movements are caught. Surrounded by geopolitical challenges, the Kurdish movement of each part of Kurdistan, in order

to access a safe haven from which to carry out its struggle against its oppressor, has had to compromise some degree of its independence, and at times challenge conceptions of the collective goals of the Kurdish national movement.

Conceptual Framework

In order to explore the Iranian Kurdish movement's different stages through the lenses of crossborder interaction and movement mobilisation, this book draws upon the concepts and terminologies of ethnopolitics and social movement theory. The approaches of Milton Esman (1994) and Sinisa Malesevic (2006) to ethnonational politics contribute concepts and understandings related to the causes of the emergence of the Kurdish question as an ethnonationalistic movement and the complexity of Kurdish crossborder interaction; and the theoretical approaches of Charles Tilly (1978) and McAdam et al. (1996) to movement mobilisation contribute theoretical explanations applicable to the analysis of the patterns of mobilisation of the Iranian Kurdish movement during different phases.

Ethnicity and nationalism as products of modernity have had a massive impact on shaping a new era of complex and competitive relations between different communities. Nationhood is a modern ideological construct that has been homogenised and enforced by institutions (e.g. education systems, mass media and culture) of the modern nation-state, civil society and kinship networks. Esman's focus on multifaceted aspects of ethnic conflicts and the process of politicisation of ethnicity, and his conceptualisation of ethnic politics, makes him an obvious choice for this study. Important throughout the study of the Kurdish question is the conceptual identification and definition of Kurds (as either a nation or ethnonational group). The Kurdish people are among the largest nations not possessing a nation-state. Kurds are a nation when nationhood is defined by criteria such as possessing a distinct language, flag and geographical location (homeland). Yet, since the Kurdish people have no independent institutions of a modern nation-state with the task of systematically propagating nationalism, they can be considered as an ethnonational group. However, while theoretically Kurds are classified as an ethnonational group, the Kurdish people consider themselves as a nation, culturally, linguistically and geographically distinguished from the other nations

(i.e. Persian, Arab, Turks) that surround them. This self-understanding of *Kurdishness* has laid the foundation for the Kurdish movement through past centuries and in the present.

Despite the existence of a variety of competing actors within the Kurdish movement, promoting the socio-political, economic and cultural rights of the Kurds in Iran has been the main discourse of their movement. I use the term 'the Iranian Kurdish national movement' in articulating the Kurdish struggle in Iran. This choice has been made owing to the fact that this movement 'consists of organizations and other actors who view themselves as working on the behalf of – and for the reconstruction of – a Kurdish nation' (Watts 2010, p. 21). The Kurdish movement reflects the collective consciousness and aspirations of an entire community established in the form of politicised national mobilisation. This process has resulted in the recruitment of individuals into the movement, aimed at promoting and defending the community's collective interests.

The crossborder cooperation between the Iranian and Iraqi Kurdish movements has been a factor having a huge impact on the direction of this movement. Esman views ethnic crossborder solidarity as a strong source of mobilisation aimed at challenging state policies towards certain ethnic communities. From his perspective, crossborder ethnic interaction is equivalent to ethnic solidarity (Esman 1994, p. 30). The concept of ethnic solidarity includes a combination of obligations and responsibilities of individuals to their community. The main purpose of solidarity is defending the interests and maintaining boundaries in relation to the *others*. As a consequence, the greater the solidarity, the more likely the emergence of ethnic political movements. Reflecting on the Iranian Kurdish movement reveals the existence of a strong sense of solidarity between the movements of the Iranian and Iraqi Kurds. During the KDPI's attempt in the 1960s to reorganise the movement, crossborder solidarity was viewed as a powerful source of movement mobilisation. In this regard it is even more interesting to investigate the critical aspect of this relation, for instance how malpractice in crossborder relations has affected the ability and outcomes of the Kurdish movement.

Malesevic's (2006) theory on ethnonationalism and identity can explain the role of *Kurdayetî* (Kurdishness)[3] as the core element

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[3] Gourlay (2018, p. 26) identifies *Kurdayetî* as 'a form of shared political identity that extends across borders and that does not necessarily prefigure territorial claims but may be a form of political capital with which to protect Kurdish interests and buttress political claims in the troubled strategic environment of the

through the evolution of the Iranian Kurdish movement. Malesevic deals with ethnicity and nationalism as sources of ideology. He defines nationalism as an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining the identity, unity and autonomy of a social group some of whose members deem it to constitute an actual or potential nation (Malesevic 2006, pp. 19–20). *Kurdayetî* has been a strong source of motivation for Kurdish people to participate in or support the Kurdish movement and collective class struggle. In this regard, at least until 1979 Kurdish nationalism was the chief ideology of the Iranian Kurdish movement, with a massive effect on the formation and facilitation of this movement. *Kurdayetî* defined the collective identity, a desired image of the movement and its demands and criteria for membership. The ideology of the Kurdish movement defines its community as a subordinated and oppressed people, all members of the community being victims owing to their ascribed ethnic/national status. Therefore, everyone is obliged to mobilise, resist and overcome the injustices that afflict them.

The theories of social and political movements are in many regards applicable in explaining the Iranian Kurdish movement. A movement is a process structured around a 'two-component' interaction, consisting of, firstly, networks of groups and organisations prepared to mobilise collective action, and secondly, individuals who attend these activities or contribute with resources to collective actions. According to Gamson and Meyer (cited in McAdam et al. 1996, p. 283), a social or political movement is a process in which actors and agents through their 'sustained and self-conscious' actions challenge authorities or cultural codes. Through this process, groups of individuals or/and organisations, in order to realise their ideals, employ extra-institutional means of influence. Movements – like the states they challenge – are not coherent or unitary, but composed of actors with competitive power and sometimes tensions in relation to internal and external environmental dynamics. The web of relations has been characterised as a 'flexible lattice of tension' (Watts 2010, p. 27). The Kurdish movement has not been an exception to this theoretical

modern Middle East . . . Kurdayetî, as a form of collective identity, is not automatically immutable or universally understood. Rather, like ethnicity, nation and nationalism, it is influenced and shaped by discourses, political forces and "contingent events".'

generalisation, since several examples of conflictual relations inside and surrounding the movement are identifiable.

The analysis of mobilisation concerns the process of gaining resources and transforming these resources into collective action. The term 'mobilisation' is associated with the process by which a group moves from being a passive collection of individuals to a (politically) active participant in public life. The most important elements of the analysis of sociopolitical movements are governments and the populations over which they exercise or claim control. Tilly stresses that within this political analysis, nation-states are the common points of reference (1978, pp. 9–10). Political opportunities, mobilising structures and framing processes are the most significant concepts in analysing movements and revolutions (McAdam et al. 1996). In the Kurdish movement, threats and opportunities have been the chief motivations for mobilising and conducting collective actions. While the fear of subjugation and annihilation has pushed the Kurds to carry out political collective actions, the existence of crossborder solidarity, as well as domestic and regional changes, have been among the windows of opportunity that have encouraged the political elites of the Kurds to mobilise and intensify their movement.

Nation-State-Building and Kurdish Politics in Iran

The Kurdish question in Iran – likewise the Kurdish question in Turkey, Iraq and Syria – is an ongoing conflict, with its historical emergence back in the early twentieth century. There is an obvious nexus between the emergence of the Iranian Kurdish question and the establishment of the modern Iranian nation-state in 1925. Since the establishment of the modern Iranian nation-state, changing Iranian regimes have continuously had a complex and complicated relationship with the country's ethnonational communities. Fundamental issues, such as conflict arising from the non-Persian communities' claims for access to full and equal citizenship and socio-political self-determination, have determined this relationship (Atabaki 1993; Ansari 2012). Reza Shah's nation-state-building policy and his denial of the diverse nature of the multiethnic Iranian society, and continuation of the same policy by his son, Mohammad Reza Shah, resulted in the emergence of grievance among the non-Persian ethnonational communities of Iran (Saleh 2013, p. 62).

The Iranian Kurdish struggle has, from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, entered a new stage, with the politicisation of

Kurdish nationalism. Ever since, Iranian Kurds have pursued a fluctuating nationalist movement aimed at achieving the right of self-determination. Through this book, I argue that the Iranian Kurdish movement is a product of two interlinked and simultaneously parallel socio-political and cultural phenomena: firstly, a reaction to the exclusionary and suppressive state policies during and after the nation-state-building process in Iran, referred to as 'Persianisation', and secondly, the Iranian Kurdish elite's ambition of creating an autonomous Kurdish unit, aimed at promoting the political and cultural rights of the Kurdish population, during an era overcast by the nation-state's exclusionary policy of identity reconstruction. On the one hand, the Kurdish opposition to the centralisation of power in Iran and their dream of achieving Kurdish national self-determination, and on the other hand, the central government's aggressive reactions to this Kurdish endeavour, are among the permanent elements characterising Kurdish–state relations in Iran (Stansfield 2014, pp. 64–6). Consequently, it can be claimed that the Kurdish ambition of self-rule and the demarcation of Kurdish identity defined by the Kurdish people, hand-in-hand with the politicisation of Kurdish grievances, have been among the common factors behind intensification of the Kurdish movement during the past century. The existence of such motivations partly behind the emergence of the Kurdish movement in Iran justifies identifying this struggle as a 'nationalistic movement'. Nevertheless, historical records of the evolution of the Iranian Kurdish movement reveal that this movement has accommodated a variety of socio-political, economic and ideological motivations. Even though *Kurdayetî* and Kurdish nationalism have been powerful drivers for the emergence and conduct of this movement, the occurrence or establishment of several revolts (such as peasant movements challenging socio-economic relations within Kurdish society) and political parties and ideological trends (e.g. Komala with its focus on the class system within Kurdish society) are among phenomena that give reason to question the idea of the presence of an entirely *nationalistic* movement in Iranian Kurdistan. While recognising nationalism as the dominating factor, it will be argued that the Iranian Kurdish movement is a collage of a variety of elements.

The modern history of the Iranian Kurdish movement provides a variety of examples of unrest and uprisings initiated by the Kurds during the first half of the twentieth century. These uprisings

contributed to the formation and politicisation of contemporary Kurdish identity and have laid the foundation of a century of ongoing conflict and demand for Kurdish self-rule in Iran. For instance, the revolts of Simko Shikak (1918) and Hama Rashid Khan Banê (1941) – taking place at different times and in different geographical locations in Iranian Kurdistan – are among the most mentioned uprisings of the contemporary Kurdish movement led by Kurdish tribal leaders. In the early twentieth century, a combination of weak state institutions in Iran and awakening peripheral nationalism resulted in the emergence of different ethnonationalist movements against the Iranian state. In the case of Kurds, Simko saw such condition as a golden opportunity for starting an uprising (Atmaca 2018, p. 372). Simko's revolt is articulated by leading elements of the Kurdish movement, including the KPDI, as the engine of the modern Kurdish struggle for national self-determination. Despite these movements' tribalistic leadership and their lack of cohesion, they were composed of nationalistic elements that laid the foundation of the current national struggle of the Iranian Kurds (Ahmadzadeh and Stansfield 2010).

The establishment in the 1940s of a new political organisation, the Society for the Revival of the Kurds/Kurdistan (*Komalay Jiyanaway Kurd/Kurdistan*, commonly referred to as JK) became a turning point in the process of modernisation of the Kurdish national movement. The JK had a nationalistic discourse, and through its newspaper *Nishtiman* (Motherland) articulated issues such as the distinctiveness of Kurdish ethnicity and the wish to establish a greater Kurdish homeland (Hussain 2008, pp. 281–459). The JK later transformed and was re-framed as the Kurdistan Democratic Party (-Iran) (KDP-I) in 1945 under the leadership of Qazi Mohammad (see Figure 1). The KDP-I (later KDPI), as the only political party of the time, declared the establishment of the Republic of Kurdistan on 22 January 1946 in Mahabad.[4]

Historical evidence related to the evolution of the Kurdish movement in Iran in this period bears witness to the fact that, despite the existence of several internal and external hindrances and difficulties, some degree

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[4] Some controversy surrounds the precise date of the KDPI's establishment. According to the KDPI's mouthpiece, the *Kurdistan* newspaper, the KDPI was established on 23 October 1945 in Mahabad, and the party held its first party congress on 24 October 1945 (Hussain 2008, pp. 522, 533). Vali (2019, p. 1) holds that the Kurdish Republic was established on 22 January 1946.

Figure 1 Qazi Mohammad (1893–1947): founder and President of the Republic of Kurdistan. The script reads, 'The Supreme Leader of Kurdistan, His Excellency Qazi Mohammad.' (Source: Personal archive of Hassan Ghazi.)

of modernisation within the movement has occurred. The Republic is an example of the move from a tribalistic to a semi-modern movement. In the case of the Kurdish movement, each event and uprising has paved the way for subsequent developments. By establishing the Republic, the nationalist movement of Kurds in Iran reached its zenith and stepped into a new era of endeavour towards national self-determination (Koohi-Kamali 2010, p. 135). The Republic, considered as the most serious Kurdish challenge to the Iranian government's authority, was a unique phenomenon that altered remarkably Kurds' approach to articulating their national identity. The nationalistic discourse of the Republic was produced by urban Kurdish intellectuals organised around the JK. Among many others, one of the main objectives of the JK 'was the introduction of Kurdish language into schools, better health services and so on, and a degree of local autonomy' (Burdett 2015, vol. IX, p. xi).

During a period of international and regional instability, when the superpowers of the time, Russia, the UK and the USA, prepared for a new era of post–Second World War competition, Iran turned into a frontline for demonstrations of power and compromise by these superpowers (Chehabi 2009). The occurrence of new national and regional conditions in this period, particularly the change of Russian policy towards Reza Shah and the withdrawal of Russian support to the Democratic Republic of the People of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Kurdistan, resulted in the collapse, first, of the former, then of the latter. Regional and international conditions in this period did not benefit the Kurdish establishment; quite the reverse, they maintained and protected the integrity of the Iranian state, and stopping any support for local uprisings throughout the globe was a priority of the superpowers. The collapse of the Republic of Kurdistan on 5 December 1946 resulted in the Iranian army's brutal violation of Kurdish society, with persecutions and executions of the leaders of the Republic.[5] The Iranian state's unconstrained use of violence resulted in a complete deterioration of the Iranian Kurdish movement. Such violence undermined civil society and politicised the economic and cultural fields in the Kurdish community in the years subsequent to the collapse of the Republic. However, despite the Republic's short life, its establishment left a significant political, symbolic and psychological impact on the Kurds' collective memory and their consciousness, and its collapse resulted in deep Kurdish mistrust in the elite of the Iranian state (Vali 2019, p. 9). The historical echoes of the Republic, even seven decades after its establishment and collapse, are still fresh within the minds and consciousness of Iranian Kurds. It has left a powerful and long-lasting effect on the political and cultural frames of the Kurds in Iran and elsewhere, and has crystallised in the minds of Kurds their right to self-determination, as well as their ability to run their own affairs (Romano 2006, p. 245).

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[5] On 26 January 1947, a special team from Tehran headed by Gholam Hossein Azimi arrived at Mahabad to prosecute Qazi Mohammad, Sadr Qazi and Seyf Qazi (the Republic's Minister of War). In a closed court, Qazi Mohammad and his comrades were sentenced to death on charges including attempting to create an independent Kurdish state and threatening the territorial integrity of Iran. The death penalty was carried out on 31 March 1947, with all three men being hanged in Mahabad's central Chawarchra Square.

Following the fall of the Republic, the Iranian Kurdish national movement experienced more than three decades of desperation. Re-establishing the movement in the decades subsequent to the fall of the Republic was rendered a difficult task by conditions such as the lack of a safe haven for Kurdish activists, the state's intensive persecution of these activists, and the suffocation of any political voices related to Kurdish nationalism. In the early 1960s an amalgam of factors, such as very challenging conditions characterised by the rise of persecutions and reprisals resulting in the impossibility of building a movement in Iran, yet also the possibility of alignments with new crossborder actors, were the conditions in which the movement's leadership operated. Initially, making alignments and partnerships with the Iraqi Kurdish movement in the late 1950s created new opportunities for mobilising through exiled nationalism with geographical distance to the targeted area, Iranian Kurdistan (Kaveh 1996).

Nevertheless, taking into account the huge price the Iranian Kurdish liberation movement has paid, it is far from achieving its basic socio-cultural ideals and demands, and suffers from inconsistency and discontinuity. Apart from regime brutality and geographical and geopolitical isolation (Klein 2011, p. 11), factors such as the durability and flexibility of the deployed strategy, means of mobilisation and mode of conducting collective action are among other issues facing the Iranian Kurdish movement. This book articulates crossborder interaction between the forces of the Iranian and Iraqi Kurdish movements through different periods, as a dysfunctional and unequal interaction that has resulted in decline and deconstruction of the Kurdish movement. Theoretically, crossborder interaction has been viewed as a powerful factor in strengthening ethnonationalist movements. Yet, reflecting on the crossborder interaction between the Iraqi and Iranian Kurdish movements throughout the second half of the twentieth century shows that this interaction has weakened the Kurdish movement and challenged the claimed national unity and shared interests of the Kurds.

Through this crossborder interaction, the Iranian Kurdish movement has during different periods been manipulated and misused by the leaders of the Iraqi Kurdish movement. The movement has been mistreated and misused as bargaining chip; it has been transferred into an instrument for negotiating financial, logistical and military support from the changing regimes of Iran. Individual leaders of the Iraqi Kurds (e.g. Mostafa, Massoud and Idris Barzani, and Jalal Talebani)

have several times, in return for receiving military and material support from the Iranian state, caused a decline of activity of the Iranian Kurdish movement to the lowest levels. The content of this claim will be discussed through the following chapters of this book.

Regarding the ideology and means of mobilisation of the twentieth-century Iranian Kurdish movement, it can be asserted that it has been captured by several competing factors and forces: firstly, a competition between progressive nationalists/leftists versus self-interested feudal forces inside the KDPI; secondly, between the competing narratives and discourses of Komala versus the KDPI; and thirdly, between the competing forces inside Komala. For instance, in the case of Komala, the organisation in 1991 experienced its first split. While some factions inside Komala acknowledged the Kurdish question as a national issue, other forces within this organisation denied and challenged the nationalist perspective. From the latter's perspective, the Kurdish question has been seen purely as a class struggle (Mostafa-Soltani 2006, pp. 470–8).

In fact, the Islamic Republic's (IR) maximum repression of civic activism among Kurds in Iran (as well as other sections of Iranian society) has meant that the exiled section of the Kurdish movement has been the most mentioned actor of this movement. Thus, the discourses and articulations of the Kurdish question by the Iranian Kurds' political parties have had a considerable impact on the way the movement has been shaped. Despite the existence of different worldviews among these parties, the realisation of the national rights of Kurds has been the shared element in the activities of the political parties. For instance, the KDPI has from its early days had an unchanged articulation of Kurdish nationalism. It has carried on its struggle inspired by the idea of *Kurdayetî* and the importance of establishing a political and administrative entity that guarantees the political, economic and cultural rights of the Kurdish people within the territorial framework of the Iranian state. The KDPI as a nationalist party has been able to recruit its members from a broad ideological spectrum of Iranian Kurdish society, including leftist, nationalist and religious supporters (Hassanzadeh 2002; Bahrami 2004, p. 78).

On the other hand, Komala started its journey as a strictly leftist political party, fighting to provide the peasants, toilers and poor of Iranian Kurdistan with better life conditions. This party, following its alignment with some Iranian leftist groups, experienced a drastic shift in its attitude to Kurdish nationalism, experiencing internal disputes based on the question of whether the organisation should be considered

an *Iranian* or a *Kurdish* leftist party. The political crisis inside Komala escalated and erupted in the early 1990s and resulted in a split within the organisation. This split was a product of a longstanding political (identity) crisis inside Komala.[6] In Iranian Kurdistan, for the major part, the struggle has been carried out through a limited amount of civic activism, clandestine activities, exiled nationalism and the activities of the prohibited political parties (the KDPI, Komala, Khabat[7] and PJAK) based outside Iranian Kurdistan. Owing to the political nature of the Iranian state, electoral politics framed or organised around ethnonationalist ideology, and in the case of the Kurds, Kurdish ethnonationalist activities, has been entirely abandoned. As a result, discussions of the Iranian Kurdish national movement naturally revolve around the activity of the KDPI, Komala, PJAK and other banned political parties based in Iraqi Kurdistan. This approach has nevertheless meant that Iranian Kurdish civil society and its struggle have yet to receive the academic attention they deserve.

Structure of the Book

In Chapter 2, the timing of Kurdish nationalism's emergence and its process of politicisation in Iranian Kurdistan are explored. Chapter 3 investigates the socio-political and ideological aspects of the Kurdish Peasants' Uprising of 1952–3, as the very earliest class-based collective actions in Iranian Kurdistan. In Chapter 4, light is shed on the KDPI leadership's attempt to re-establish the Iranian Kurdish movement in the 1960s through crossborder interaction with the Iraqi Kurdish movement, and the short-lived safe haven provided by Mostafa Barzani, leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iraq (KDP).

Chapters 5 and 6 provide a detailed study of Iranian Kurdish politics during the turbulent period from 1979 into the 1980s. Through these chapters, the reason(s) for the Islamic Republic of Iran's rejection of the Kurdish claim of *khodmokhtari* (autonomy), interactions between

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[6] In the early 1980s, the Komala leadership started considering alignment with other Iranian leftist forces, among them the *Itehad-e Mobarezan* (Union of the Revolutionaries) and *Wahdet-e Komonisti* (Communist Unity) *Sehand* faction (Moradbeigi 2004; Mostafa-Soltani 2006; Mostafa-Soltani and Watandust 2015).

[7] Khabat is an example of a political movement of Iranian Kurds, established in the 1980s, which has based itself on the ideology of political Islam and Kurdish nationalism.

different actors, agencies and political parties, and their methods of challenging and interacting with the newly established regime in Tehran are analysed. Chapter 7 deals with the re-formation of the Kurdish movement from 1979 into the 1980s, and is structured around three aspects: firstly, the Iranian Kurdish movement's transformation from guest to host; secondly, Komala and KDPI's half-decade of fratricidal war; and thirdly, the impact of the Iran–Iraq War on the Kurdish movement.

In Chapters 8 and 9 the domestic and regional conditions that have shaped the framework and content of aspects of the Iranian Kurdish movement between 1990 and 2017 are explored. These include the activities of the Iranian Kurdish political parties based in the KRI, and the activities of Kurdish civil society in Iran, framed within Iran's electoral process. These chapters also note the KDPI's announcement of *Rasan* (2015), reviving its military and political activities through revolutionising the movement and mobilising the KDPI's Peshmerga forces and Kurdish civil society. The Conclusion discusses the results of the book, answering the main questions posed by the investigation, and at the same time demonstrating the book's original contribution and significance. It also presents the limitations of the study and proposes new focus for future studies on Kurdish politics in Iran.