TURKEY'S KURDISH CONFLICT, 1999-2009

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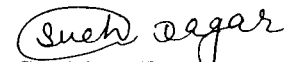JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY

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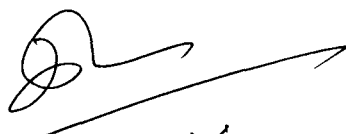
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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled "**Turkey's Kurdish Conflict, 1999-2009**" submitted by me for the award of the degree **of Master of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has been submitted for any other degree of this university or any other university.

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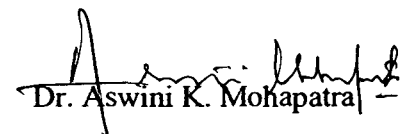
CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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Dedicated To

Mummy & Papa

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Last but not the least, a person needs special mention, my friend Satyendra, whose presence in my life made me realize the true essence of life and to live it to the fullest. He emboldened and supported me in conquering all my weaknesses and in emerging out victorious and more confident. My research work got in current shape because of him who spared a lot of time in reading my chapters and pointing out my mistakes. He has been constant source of motivation through the completion of this work.

Needless to mention that I own soul responsibility of all the mistakes and errors that might have crept into this dissertation.

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INTRODUCTION

The Kurds, an ethnic minority numbering 20-25 million people are primarily concentrated in Turkey, Iran and Iraq with residual communities found in Syria and Armenian republic. The bulk of Kurds live in contiguous areas in the east and south east of Turkey, north and northeast of Iraq and northwest of Iran and northeast Syria. The ethno-genesis of the Kurds has been the subject of several hypotheses, though the Kurdish nationalists claim to be the direct descendents of the ancient Medes- an Indo-European tribe from Central Asia that ruled the Iranian plateau until 550 B.C. According to the Kurdish nationalist scholars, history of Kurds began during the third millennium B.C. when a semi-nomadic people who spoke Indo-European language began to migrate from Southern Russia towards Anatolia. Likewise, some western scholars sympathetic to the Kurdish cause contend that Kurds were first recorded as *cyrtii* from the second century B. C. onwards when they were already an amalgam of Indo-European and pre-Iranian tribes living in the Zargos Mountain. By the time of the Islamic conquest a thousand years later, the term "Kurd" had socio-economic rather than ethnic meaning referring to the nomads on the western edge of Iranian plateau.[1] The history of the Kurds, however, begins in a more verifiable way with the Arab conquest of the areas in the 7th century.

For many centuries before the emergence of modern nation-states in West Asia, the Kurds were frontiersmen, living on the disputed borders between rival Ottoman and Persian empires. In an age when mobilization of the imperial army was a costly undertaking, Kurdish paramount chiefs known as *amirs* were given fiefdoms in return for policing the border region and other services such as the supply of troops at the time of war. Prior to the Ottoman expansion of the area, a number of short-lived Kurdish dynasties had existed, especially during the 9th and 11th centuries. Thus, the Kurdish region had enjoyed considerable autonomy and even some degree of independence until

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[1] David McDowall (1992), "The Kurdish Question: A Historical Review" in Philip G. Kreyenbroek and Stefan Sperl, eds., *The Kurds: A Contemporary Review*, London: Routledge, pp. 50-58.

the mid-19th century when the Ottoman rulers sought to exercise direct control over its eastern borders.[2]

After the World War I, when new states were carved out of a disintegrating Ottoman empire, the Kurds like the stateless Jews were also regarded as natural candidate for nationhood. The August 1920 Treaty of Serves envisaged interim autonomy for the predominantly Kurdish areas of Turkey. The Treaty of Serves became irrelevant, as the reconstructed Turkish army overran Kurdish territories in 1922. While a large chunk of Kurdish population was left within the borders of the new Turkish republic founded by Mustafa Kemal, popularly known as Atatürk (Father of the Turks), Britain and France indirectly awarded themselves Kurdish areas through their client states, Iraq and Syria.[3] Predictably, failure to implement the provisions of the Treaty set off sporadic Kurdish resistance to the central control in all three states – Turkey, Iraq and Iran – where Kurds are primarily concentrated.

The modern Turkish Republic emerged from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire in 1923. In the months following the victorious termination of the War of Independence and recognition of the newly proclaimed Republic, Mustafa Kemal, the Ataturk[4] of the nation embarked on the peaceful reconstruction of Turkey. Most of the Kemalist reforms during the early years of the Republic were directed towards creating a new nationalist ideology and a national identity, and establishing the paramountcy of the state authority by dissolving into it all other primordial loyalties. Ataturk enacted a constitution in 1923, which denied the existence of distinct cultural sub-groups in Turkey. As a result, any expression by the Kurds as well as other minorities in Turkey of unique ethnic identity

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[2] For detail, see David McDowall (1996), *A Modern History of the Kurds*, London, New York: I.B. Tauris, Chap. III and IV.

[3] For a discussion of the foreign powers' connivance in the division of Kurdistan, see Robert Olson (1992),, "The Kurdish Question in the Aftermath of the Gulf War: Geopolitical and Geostrategic Changes in the Middle East", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No.3, pp. 475-477.

[4] Ataturk or Father-Turk was the new name of Mustafa Kemal after a law for the compulsory adoption of surnames was passed in 1934. Accordingly, the President renounced his old titles of *Gazi* and *Pasha*. For his biographical details, see Lord Kinross (1965). *Ataturk: A Biography of Mustafa Kemal, Father of Modern Turkey*, New York: William Morrow

has been harshly repressed. Until recently, the use of the Kurdish language was, for example, illegal. To this day, any talk that hints of Kurdish nationalism is considered as separatism and grounds for imprisonment.

Kurds constitute a significant portion (between 15 to 20 percent) of total population of Turkey and speak an Indo-European language. Originally though Kurds are concentrated in the east and southeast of the country, majority of them currently live in big cities including Istanbul and Izmir due to significant immigration during the 1980s. Traditional Kurdish -inhabited regions in Turkey put up resistance to the Kemalist policy of denial and forced assimilation but were crushed by the state. The major rebellions against the Kemalist State "firmly established the Kurds in Turkish minds as the originators of the primary challenge to their independent existence."[5] In the aftermath of these ill-fated rebellions of the mid-1930s, the Turkish government launched a vigorous campaign to stifle the Kurdish ethno-culturalism through forced assimilation and draconian laws banning Kurdish dress, their language, folklore and even the very word 'Kurd'. Also, attempts were made to de-tribalise the Kurdish society by abrogating all previous recognition of tribes, their chiefs and Sheikhs, and disperse the Kurdish population to the predominantly Turkish-speaking areas.[6]

During the next two decades, the tribal chieftains (*aghas*) and religious leaders (Sheikhs and *Sayyid*) played an active role in the political and economic life of the region,[7] as the government opted for indirect control through these local authorities.The cooption of the traditional Kurdish elites reinforced, and even consolidated the tribal social structure at the expense of the overall socio-economic development of the southeastern Turkey. As compared to the rapid economic growth and prosperity in

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[5] Philip Robins (October 1993),, "The Overlord State: Turkish Policy and the Kurdish Issue", *International Affairs*, Vol. 69, no.4, p. 660.

[6] In June 1934, a draconian law was enacted to transfer those whose mother was not Turkish to Turkish speaking areas. For details, see Mc Dowall, *The Modern History*, p. 208.

[7] For a discussion of social structure of the Kurds and the model of Kurdish tribal transformation, see Martin Van Bruinessen (1978), *Agha, Shaikh and State: On the Social and Political Organisation of Kurdistan*, Utrecht: University of Utrecht, Chap. II & IV.

Western Anatolian, the Kurdish areas continue to be the country's economic backwater. The economic underdevelopment together with the poor infrastructure of the region forced the Kurdish male population to migrate to near-by towns and cities in the West. Those who remained had to rely on the intermediary stratum of *aghas* for their living since these tribal chiefs owned huge tracts of cultivable land. [8]

The continuation of the old social patterns, no doubt, served the interests of both the Kurdish notables who successfully resisted the centre's attempts at restructuring the rural economy, and the political parties in Ankara seeking electoral support. With the onset of democratic pluralism in the 1950s, political parties including the RPP forged a more extensive accommodation with the *aghas* and Sheikhs who controlled the rural votes. In the long-run, however, this powerful nexus of mutual dependence conduced to the growth in radical politics in the Kurdish areas, on the back of which emerged the Kurdistan Workers' Party known as the PKK by its Turkish initials.[9]

Founded in November 1978 by a small group of Kurdish students of Ankara University in Diyarbakir, the PKK represents the strongest centrifugal force in the country today. Under the youthful leadership of Abdullah Ocalan, popularly known by his nickname 'Apo', the PKK has imbued Kurdish nationalism with the idea of class war. Unlike the Kurdish groups active in Iraq, which have cultivated a following through neo-tribal patronage networks, the adherents of Apo are drawn from Turkey's growing proletariat. In fact, PKK's armed struggle in the southeastern Turkey has been directed against the Turkish colonialism as well as the "Kurdish feudalism", which sustains it.[10] In response, Turkish government has undertaken periodic military incursions into the Iraqi Kurdistan to eliminate the PKK guerrilla bases.

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[8] In 1985, nearly two per cent landowners possessed 30.5 per cent of cultivatable land. David McDowall (1985), *The Kurds* , London: The Minority Rights Group Report No. 23, p. 9.

[9] See Michael Gunter (Summer1990), "The Kurdish Insurgency in Turkey", *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. XIII, no. 4, , pp. 57-81.

[10] Martin Ven Bruinessen, "Kurdish Society: Ethnicity, Nationalism and Refugee Problem" in Kreyenbrock and Sperl, *The Kurds*, p. 53.

In the past decade, however, Turkey has undergone changes in its political life signifying a qualitative transformation of its polity and along with it, its approach to the 'Kurdish question.' What has led to this change is an unusual combination of developments, notably the EU's acceptance of Turkey's application for full membership in 1999 followed by the rise of moderate Islamist Justice and Development party (AKP) as the single largest party in 2002 and US-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003. The U.S-led intervention in Iraq in 2003 coupled with the rejection by the Turkish Parliament of the US request for Turkish soil altered the delicate balance of power between Turkey and the Iraqi Kurds. The Iraqi Kurdish leaders, Mustafa Barzani and Jalal Talabani, emboldened by the US support adopted a more robust and muscular approach towards Turkey fanned by an urge of pan-Kurdish nationalist aspirations. Predictably, the unfolding geopolitical game in the post-Saddam Iraq gave rise to a widespread feeling in Turkey that Barzani and Talabani were employing the PKK as a bargaining-chip to undermine Turkish resistance to Kurdish autonomy and the annexation of Kirkuk, the oil-rich northern Iraqi area.

Wary of the growth of Kurdish ethno-nationalism in the area and its destabilizing impact on Turkey, decision-makers in Ankara chose to adopt a multi – dimensional approach towards the Kurdish question rather than pursuing exclusively a military solution to cope with the resurgence of PKK violence. Indicative of an overall change in Turkey's policy towards dealing with the Kurdish tangle, the ruling party has undertaken amendments in law that allow Kurdish language publications and Kurdish television broadcasting, and facilitating national debate among civil society groups and intellectuals on the issue of Kurdish particularism. In a way, the earlier ban on the public use of the word 'Kurd' is no longer there and the issue of Kurds in the Turkish state discourse is viewed as ethno-political rather than simply reactionary politics, regional backwardness or problem of terrorism.

At the same time, a significant improvement in Turkey's bilateral relations with its southerly neighbours, Syria, Iran and Iraq suggest a fundamental shift in its regional policy from confrontation to cooperation. It may be noted that until the arrest of the PKK

leader Ocalan in 1999, Turkey's foreign policy remained hostage to domestic insecurity arising from the PKK-led Kurdish struggle for autonomy. Its hostile neighbours, particularly Syria and Iran continued to dabble with the PKK factions, while northern Iraq in the absence of a strong central authority since Iraq's Gulf crisis defeat in 1991 became its constant source of worry. The two-day successful state visit of Turkish President to Iraq in March 2009 has, however, helped considerably in addressing Turkey's threat perceptions as regards the nascent Kurdish mini-state emerging in post-Saddam Iraq under the name of Kurdish Regional Administration (KRG). The growing interdependency between Turkey and Iraqi Kurds is likely to reduce the specter of Kurdish irredentism and Turkish elites' fear that Kurdish cultural-political rights may facilitate future Kurdish secession.

All the same, an amicable resolution of Turkey's Kurdish conflict remains elusive as long as the state continues to pursue the ideal of a homogenous, monolingual political community within its borders. This is what precisely accounts for the recent renewal of violence in the Kurdish region of the country calling into question the AKP government's much-vaunted "Kurdish initiative." At the core of Kurdish tangle is the Kemalsit notion of nationalism on which is founded the modern secular Turkish republic.

At the end of Turkey's war of independence, Ataturk turned his back on the extra-territorial ethnic pan-Turkism and opted for territorial-citizen nationalism with pre-Islamic memories. Territoriality forms an inherent part of the Turkish nationalist ideology in which the Anatolian heartland becomes the new focus of loyalty. The term 'Turk' used derogatorily under the Ottomans was re-invested with positive ethnic potential and harmonised with the Western concept of a territorial nation. In case of the Turks of Anatolia, the piece of territory as defined by the National Pact did not appear historic at the beginning, which explains why the task of writing the national history was regarded as a political mission during the formative years of the Republic. The historians under the direct patronage of Ataturk created the common myth of belonging-ness to a distant but special land -Central Asia – which was the cradle of all civilizations of the World including that of the Turks. The purpose of inventing a collective myth pertaining to the

Central Asian origins of the Turks was to provide the Anatolian Turkish population with historicity, ethnicity and a sense of territorial rootedness.

In brief, 'Turkishness' or the notion of Turkism was an artificial politico-ideological construct imposed upon the disparate people of Anatolia so as to create a modern nation-state on European model. In fact, the Turkish system is modeled on the concept of French nation-state wherein citizenship is based on the rights of the individual rather than on ethnic or religious identity. In brief, it implies that citizenship and nationhood are one; there is no legal barrier or structural discrimination on the basis of ethnicity in so far as the social mobility of citizens is concerned. The emphasis on Turkish identity, regardless of ethnic background, proved to be extremely valuable in the initial years of the Republic particularly in aborting the Armenian and Kurdish aspirations for statehood, which would have destroyed the spatial cohesion of Anatolia.

All the same, the dogma of homogeneity imposed by Ataturk carried with it the risk of alienating the national minorities, especially the Kurds who constitute a sizeable proportion of Turkish population. It was, in fact, during the Kemalist period that the seeds of a stronger Kurdish national identity were sown as a reaction to the forcible imposition of the Turkish one.[11] Despite attempts at their forced assimilation and incorporation by the successive governments, many Kurds have refused to identify themselves with Ataturk's famous maxim, "Happy is the one who calls himself a Turk". Kurds are a multi-lingual, multi-religious, multi-racial nation, but with a unified, independent and identifiable national history and culture.[12] Kurdish self-consciousness has grown strong under conditions in which the ethnic loss is imminent. Rather than integrating its Kurdish population, Turkey's official denial of the Kurds as a distinct ethnic category has over the years contributed to a progressive radicalisation of the Kurdish nationalism (Kurdayeti).

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[11] Henri J. Barkey and Graham E. Fuller (Winter 19970, "Turkey's Kurdish Question: Critical Turning Points and Missed Opportunities", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 51, no.1, p. 64.

[12] Mehrdad Izady (1992), *A Concise Handbook: The Kurds*, Washington: Taylor & Francis, p. 185.

If, the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK has emerged as the focal point of nationalist Kurdish resistance to Turkish rule, it is not due to its Marxist-Leninist ideology, which remains alien to local mentality. Nor does the majority of Kurds share the PKK's ultimate goal of establishing an independent state. Instead, it is the strong mono-ethnic tendency on the part of the Turkish state elites combined with an almost psychotic fear of the loss of 'national unity', which has strengthened the symbolic value of the PKK, the only surviving organisation that upholds the concept of Kurdish identity. In the Turkish state discourse, the issue of Kurds continues to be viewed in terms of reactionary politics, regional backwardness or problem of terrorism, never as an ethno-political one. Refusal to recognize the "Kurdishness" of the Kurdish question has left little space for a negotiated settlement of the festering conflict.

As long as the authorities in Ankara pursue an exclusively military solution, foreign policy of Turkey will remain hostage to domestic insecurity arising from the Kurdish struggle for autonomy notwithstanding the recent capture of the PKK leader, Abdullah (Apo) Ocalan. It has already created societal polarisation along ethnic lines, posing a dire threat to the cohesion of the Jacobin national state forged by its founder. In the past decade, the gravity of Kurdish insurgency has offered Turkey's hostile neighbours an alternative way of exerting leverage over Ankara. Even as the PKK-led movement begins to peter out in the aftermath of Apo's expulsion from Syria, Turkey's regional rivals, notably Iran and Russia continue to dabble with the PKK factions with a view to deflecting Ankara from an activist foreign policy in the 'Greater West Asia.' While Syria no longer represents a serious security challenge to Turkey, northern Iraq has become its constant source of worry. The absence of strong state authority in the area since Iraq's Gulf crisis defeat in 1991 has benefited the PKK partisans particularly in consolidating their forward bases close to Turkey's border region. Thus, "the Kurdish issue is both an internal and foreign policy issue for Turkey: the Kurdish issue in the internal domain affects foreign policy, and vice versa."[13]

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[13] Philip Robins (1993),"The Overlord State: Turkish Policy and the Kurdish Issue", *International Affairs*, Vol. 69, no.4 p. 657

That the Kurdish issue has remained a critical variable in Turkey's foreign policy-making becomes evident in its increasingly strained relations with the Western world, especially the European Union. In the December 1997 Luxembourg summit, European Council decided not to include in its enlargement process even though Turkey had applied for full membership way back in 1987. The decision was based on the EU's concerns about the human rights violation in Turkey. Already the Council had adopted a set of criteria for EU membership in its Copenhagen summit in June 1993, which included, among others, stable institutions, governing democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights and the minorities. Further, in the post-cold-war period, the mainstream European approach to the issue of minorities varies substantially from the Turkish state doctrine of the indivisibility of the nation that denies the existence of ethnic minorities such as the Kurds. In fact, Turkish government's handling of its Kurdish problem is used as the yardstick by which the state of democracy in the country is judged. Thus, if the issue of Kurds were allowed to fester, European pressures on Turkey are certain to grow, blighting its chances of full membership in the EU. [14]

The main objective of this study is not to discuss the conflict causation or to trace the roots of Turkey's Kurdish conflict, but to examine the change in Turkey's approach in the past few years, especially as a result of three major developments as mentioned above. Whether the change in policy would be effective in resolving the long-running conflict, which involves a complex issue of challenging the foundational ideology of the Turkish state is the focus of this study. Accordingly, the study is divided into three chapters. The following chapter will chapter will present a brief historical account pf the Kurds in West Asia in general and Turkey in particular. The second chapter attempts to identify the factors that led to the adoption of military approach in dealing with the issue of Kurds in Turkey. It will also analyse the ideological bases of the Turkish republic and along with it, the civil-military relations apart from bilateral dispute with the country's southern neighbours.

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[14] Henri J. Barkey (winter 1993), "Turkey's Kurdish Dilemma", *Survival*, Vol. 35, No.4 pp. 66-67

The third chapter will discuss the recent developments, namely the capture of the PKK leader in 1999 followed by the EU's offer of membership, the AKP's rise to power and the U.S. occupation of Iraq. The main focus of the chapter, however, will be on the extent to which these developments have contributed in bringing about the change in Turkey's Kurdish policy. While analyzing the recent legal and constitutional reforms in Turkey under pressures from the EU, an attempt will also be made to evaluate the impact on the status of the minority Kurds and their struggle for cultural autonomy. The study will end with a critical examination of the policy change with a brief analysis of forces and factors that impede the process of accommodation of the Kurdish cultural and political aspirations.

Chapter 1

Kurds in Turkey

Areas with Kurdish population

BULGARIA

Black Sea

GEORGIA

UKRAINE

ARM.

AZER.

Ankara ✪

Diyarbakir ●

IRAN

T U R K E Y

CYPRUS

SYRIA

LEB.

Mediterranean
Sea

Baghdad ✪

ISRAEL

I R A Q

0   EGYPT   500 mi

JORDAN

0   500 km

SAUDI ARABIA

KUWAIT

RICH CLABAUGH/STAFF

~ 13 ~

Kurds are an Indo-European tribe whose homelands mostly spans the Zagros Mountains, where modern-day Iran, Iraq and Turkey meet. Kurds make up the majority of the region's population, and have a long-standing presence in the area. As early as the 13th century AD, the region was called "Kurdistan"[15], which mainly referred to a system of principalities or chiefdoms[16]. The Kurds are a large and distinct ethnic minority in the West Asia. No reliable figures are available for the total global population of Kurds though they are thought to number in excess of 30 million. Around 27 million of them live in a swath of mostly mountainous terrain covering parts of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. In each country they account for a minority of the total population. [17] In Iran, Kurds are estimated to be approximately 5.5 million constituting around 8 percent of the country's total population, living mostly in the mountains in the northwest of the country. The number of Kurds in Iraq is between 5 to 5.5 million or nearly 20 percent of the total population. Most of them live in the north of the country, where they constitute the majority in several provinces. There are also believed to be over 1.5 million Kurds in Syria, where they account for at least 8 percent of the total population. However, unlike most of the other Kurds in the region, those in Syria are divided between a numbers of non-contiguous areas along the country's northern border.

The highest concentration of Kurds is in Turkey, where they constitute around 20 percent of the country's total population of 75 million. Most of them live in eastern and southeastern Anatolia, which is also the most underdeveloped region of the country. Moreover, the massive population movements in the past few decades have resulted in the geographically redistribution of the Kurds (see *Table 1.1*). There are as many Kurds in Istanbul and Izmir today, Turkey's two big cities, as in the Diyarbakir province, the very heartland of Kurds traditional area of settlement. Around 3-4 million of Istanbul's

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[15] M. Kendal (1980), "Kurdistan in Turkey," in Gerard Chailand ed., *People without a Country: The Kurds and Kurdistan* London: Zed Press, p. 19.

[16] Beverley Milton-Edwards and Peter Hinchcliffe (2001), "Ethic Conflict: the forgotten Kurds" in *Conflicts in the Middle East since 1945*, London: Routledge, p 76.

[17] David McDowell (1997), *A Modern History of the Kurds*, London: I.B. Taurus, p 6.

total population of 14 million is estimated to be Kurdish in origin, the highest concentration of Kurds in any city in the world.[18]

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Table: 1.1

Breakdown of Estimated Kurdish Population by

Geographical Region in 1990

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Region	Number (000)	Percentage of total Population
Eastern	2,230.29	41.96
Southeastern	2,365.04	64.98
Aegean	296.99	3.98
Black Sea	37.88	0.50
Central Anatolia	579.38	5.53
Marmara	810.13	6.09
Mediterranean	726.55	8.95
Total for all Turkey	7,046.26	
Percentage of total population of Turkey		12.60
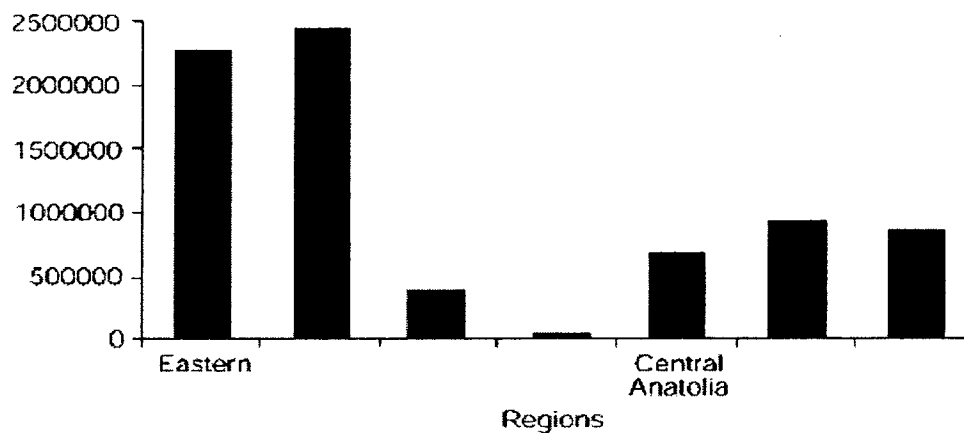
Source: S. Mutlu (Spring 1995), "The Population of Turkey by Ethnic Groups and Provinces," *New Perspectives on Turkey*, No. 12, p. 49.

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[18] Servet Mutlu (1996), "Ethnic Kurds in Turkey: A Demographic Study", *International Journal of Middle East.*

The origin of the Kurds is uncertain, although some scholars believe them to be the descendants of various Indo-European tribes that settled in the area approximately four thousand years ago[19]. The Kurds themselves claim to be descendants of the Medes, who helped over throw the Assyrian Empire in 612 BC, and also recite interesting myths about their origins involving King Solomon, jinn, and other magical agents. Many believe that the Kardou choi, mentioned by Xenophon in his Ana basis as having given his ten thousand soldiers quite a mauling as they retreated from Persia in 401 BC, were the Kurds' ancestors. In the seventh century CE, the conquering Arabs applied the name Kurds to the mountainous people they Islamicized in the region, and history also shows that the famous Saladin (Salah al-Din), who fought so chivalrously and successfully against the Christian Crusaders and Richard the Lionhearted, was a Kurd.[20]

By the time of crusades the Kurds had acquired a reputation for military powers, not only giving trouble to those who interfere with them, but evolving a tradition epitomized in Islam most famous worrier, Saladin, who though a Kurd, never lived in Kurdistan like many other Kurds, he grew up in culture of military camps which were to be found near the centers of power in fertile crescent. They speak a separate language is that they are ethnically different from their neighbors. Perhaps the *Kardu* who attacked the ten thousands were really *medes,* as Kurds themselves like to think a distinct mountain tribal people of Indo-Aryan origin. The ethnic term 'Kurd' was being applied to an amalgam of Iranian and Iranicized tribes, some of which may have been indigenous *Kardu*, but many of which were of Semitic or other ethnic origin. Although the Kurdish people are overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim, they embrace Jews, Christians, *Yazidis* and other sects (e.g. the Alevis of central Anatolian).

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[19] John Bulloch, and Harvey Morris (1992), *No Friends but the Mountains: The Tragic History of the Kurds*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, p. 55.

[20] In the seventh century CE, the conquering Arabs applied the name Kurds to the mountainous people they Islamicized in the region, and history also reveals that the famous Saladin (Salah al-Din), who fought so chivalrously and successfully against the Christian Crusaders and Richard the Lionhearted, was a Kurd.

Early in the sixteenth century, most Kurds loosely fell under the Ottoman Turkish rule, and the remainder was placed under the Persian Empire. In 1596, Sharaf Khan Bitlisi completed the Sharaf nama, an erudite history of the ruling families of the Kurdish emirates. During the following century, Ahmad-i Khani wrote *Mem u Zin*, the Kurdish national epic, and he was seen by some as an early advocate of Kurdish nationalism. Badr Khan Beg, the ruler of the last semi-independent Kurdish *Emirate of Botan*, surrendered to the Ottomans in 1847. 1880 represented the first indication of modern Kurdish nationalism, although others consider it little more than a tribal-religious disturbance.

Kurdish Society, Language & Religion

Historical evidence suggests that Kurdish society was essentially tribal, originating from a semi-nomadic existence, which can still be seen in most Kurdish tribes to this day.[21] In mountainous heartlands of Kurdistan the sense of tribes has always been strongest, but in the low lying areas in the foothills and on the plain many Kurds lost their tribal identity. This characteristic of Kurdish society may have changed, especially during the second half of the twentieth century, but it remains a cultural hallmark of the people. According to McDowall who provides a comprehensive study the Kurds, "Kurdish loyalties, first to the immediate family, then to the tribe are as strong as any in the Arab world."[22] It is suggested by historians that, unlike the Arabs, Kurdish tribal cohesion is based on a mix of blood ties and territorial loyalty.[23]

Another important aspect of Kurdish society has been religion, namely Islam. It is worth noting that Kurds are not religiously homogeneous the majorities are Sunni, but there are also a significant number Shi'as in Iran, Alevis in Anatolia, and smaller sects

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[21] Lale Yalc‚in-Heckmann (1990), "Kurdish Tribal Organisation and Local Political Processes," in Andrew Finkel and Nükhet Sirman, *Turkish State, Turkish Society*,London and New York: Routledge, pp. 289–312.

7 For details, see Winrow and Kirisci, The Kurdish Question and Turkey; Kodaman, Sultan II. Abdülhamit'in Doğu Politikasi, Chapter 1.

[23] David McDowall (1989), *The Kurds*, London: Minority Rights Group, p. 8.

and minorities including Yazidis and Christians.[24] Alongside tribal ties, strong religious loyalties, especially to the sheikhs, *aghas,* and the local leaders of religious brotherhoods have existed throughout their history. Although the Kurds are known as highly religious people, this characteristic is comparatively recent, dating back to the first half of the nineteenth century, when two religious Muslim orders, the *Qadiris* and the *Naqshbandis,* began to spread rapidly throughout Kurdistan.[25] As noted by McDowall:

> Following the destruction of the emirates in the middle of the century, secular power became more localized and devolved on the tribal basis. In the absence of the mediation previously provided by the emirs, there was frequent disorder and conflict between the groups or tribes. The vacuum was filled by the growing number of religious sheikhs.[26]

The Kurdish language is composed of a number of different dialects. Most are mutually unintelligible and several are so different that linguists disagree on whether they should be regarded as different dialects or separate languages in their own right. The most common dialect is what is known as *Kurmanji,* which is spoken by the majority of Kurds in Turkey and Syria. Most Iraqi and Iranian Kurds speak forms of what is known as *Sorani,* although there are also large numbers who speak *Kurmanji.* In addition, in Turkey there are communities of ethnic Kurds who speak *Zazaki,* while some Iranian Kurds speak *Sorani.* [27] There are also many Kurds who have a much better grasp of the dominant language of the country in which they are living than they do of Kurdish. This is particularly the case in Turkey, where the state has long pursued a policy of enforced cultural homogenization and imposed often draconian restrictions on the use of Kurdish.

Status of the Kurds before 1918

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[24] Ibid, p 76. Alevis is an unorthodox form of Shi'ism. The Christian minorities include Assyrians and Syrian Orthodox.

[25] Ibid.

[26] David McDowall (1992), "The Kurdish Question: A History of Review," in P. G. Kreyenbroek and S. Sperl, eds., *The Kurds: A Contemporary Overview,* New York and London: Routledge, p. 15.

[27] Mordecho Nisan (1991), *Minorities in the Middle East: A History of Struggle and Self Expression,* Jefferson: McFarland, pp. 26-29.

An important characteristic of the West Asian region since the Ottoman imperial rule is the periodic "centre-periphery" tensions arising form the assertion of control by the Central authorities on the one hand and those living on the fringes resisting the interferences in order o retain their politico-cultural autonomy.[28] Mountains people of the Empire, for instance, proved far harder to be brought under control than the Bedouin with the Maronite and Druzes, Kurds and Afghans being the present day examples of repudiation of central government. In the Kurdish case, galls and timber in return for their constructive use of the Kurds martial propensities and the Kurds in return enjoyed. In the upheavals in Anatolia caused by the Mongol and Turkoman invasions during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Kurdish tribes began to extend their territorial control northwards beyond the Zagros range, onto the eastern part of the Anatolian plateau.

With the struggle between the growing Ottoman and Safavid Empires in the sixteenth century, the Kurdish tribes were able to extend their powers and position even further. Both Empires sought to stabilize to border after the decisive ottoman victory over Safavids at Chaldiran in 1514, and both sought the Kurdish tribes to achieve this. On sides, Kurdish paramount chiefs, or *amirs*, were appointed and given fiefdoms, sometimes in areas hitherto unoccupied by the Kurdish tribes, in return for policing the border and ensuring its tranquility. In age when the mobilization of the imperial army was an expensive and lengthy undertaking, this arrangement was efficient and economical. Furthermore, by using the tribes to their advantage, the two Empires avoided costly and recurrent revolts among the tribes enjoyed considerably freedom, and were seldom disturbed so long as they ensured relative tranquility in the Ottoman- Safavids border marches.[29]

The extension of the Ottoman control precipitated a number of revolts by Kurdish *amirs* during the rest of the century. Some tried to achieve complete independence, others

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[28] See Serif Mardin (1973), *Centre-Periphery Relations: A Key to Turkish Politics,* Daedalus, Winter, pp. 169-190

[29] Mehrdad Izady (1992), *The Kurds: A Concise Handbook,* Washington, D.C., Crane Russak, pp. 113-119

merely to hang on to what they had previously enjoyed as of right, while one or two tried unsuccessfully to play off the two regional powers, neither of which was likely in the long run to welcome Kurdish independence. It is natural that some Kurds look upon these revolts as the beginning of the national struggle, but it must be borne in mind that the *amirs* acted individually, as reluctant to subordinate personal power to the greatest opportunities of acting in concert with the other paramount chief as they were to accept the authority of government.[30]

Under the *millet* system[31], Kurds' primary form of identification was religious with Sunni Islam being the top in the hierarchy (*millet-i hakimiye*).[32] While the Ottoman Empire embarked on a modernization and centralization campaign known as the *Tanzimat* (Reorganisation) in the mid-19th century, Kurdish regions retained much of their autonomy and tribal chiefs their power. In 1908, the Young Turks come to power asserting a radical form of Turkish ethnic identity and closed Ottoman associations and non-Turkish schools. They launched a campaign of political oppression and resettlement against ethnic minorities – Kurds, Laz people, and Armenians, but in the wartime context they could not afford to antagonize ethnic minorities too much.[33] At the end of World War I, Kurds still had the legal right to conduct their affairs in Kurdish, celebrate unique traditions, and identify themselves as a distinct ethnic group.

In 1908 the Young Turk revolution promised constitutional reform and representative government. All over the empire the event proved a catalyst in the nascent

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[30] While the *amirs* had been responsible for peace and security, day-to-day power was usually wielded by the tribal chiefs, or *aghas*, in each velly. With the decline of the *amirs* during the middle year of the nineteenth century, the importance of the *aghas* class grew. For details, see McDowall, *The Kurdish Question*, pp. 50-58.

31. *Millet* is an Arabic-Turkish word meaning 'people' that came to be applied in the Ottoman Empire to the legally organised religious communities such as the Greek Christians, Armenian Christians and the Jews. There was no Turkish or Arab or Kurdish *Millet* – they were rather parts of a larger body called *Umet*. Bernard Lewis (1961), *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, London: OUP, Chap. 1.

32Denise Natali (2005), "Ottoman Kurds and emergent Kurdish nationalism". *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 13, no. 3, p.2

33 Ibid., p.9

nationalism espoused by the intellectuals of the various ethnic or cultural groups which were part of the empire. A handful of educated Kurds, mostly the sons of *aghas,* began to form political clubs and even some schools. But such initiatives soon fell foul of inter-family rivalries, of *aghas* who suspected their own position might be undermined, and of the new Ottoman authorities who sensed the beginning of separatism in such initiatives. In any case, any theorists of a political future for the Kurdish people were swept aside by the world war.[34]

Following the defeat of the Ottoman Empire by the allies in 1918, an entirely new order was ushered in West Asia. The British forces occupied all Mesopotamia, including Kurdish areas around Sulaymaniya and northwards to the east and north of Mosul. The remaining Arab areas of Syria, Lebanon and Palestine had also been lost to the British and their Hashemite Arab allies. Allied plans for a peace settlement included the dismemberment of the remaining Turkish parts of the old Empire, allocating parts to Greece, Russia, Italy and France. But the collapse of tsarist Russia in 1917, and the internal upheaval inside such plan impracticable. Nevertheless, a balance was proposed between the strategic interest of France and Britain, which were both concerned primarily with the Arab areas of the old Empire, and the "principals of the civilization" as proposed by the American president, Woodrow Wilson, In his fourteen point programme for world peace, point twelve of which stated that the non –Turkish minorities of the Ottoman empire should be "assured of an absolute unmolested opportunity of autonomous development."[35] The outcome of the allies' deliberation was the Treaty of Sevres signed reluctantly by the Ottoman in August 1920. As regards the Kurds, it envisaged interim autonomy, which, according to the article 64 of the Treaty:

If within one year from the coming into force of the present Treaty the Kurdish people ... show that a majority of the population of these areas desires independence

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34 See Mordecho Nisan (1991), *Minorities in the Middle East: A History of Struggle and Self Expression,* Jefferson: McFarland, pp. 26-29.

35 Ferenc A. Vali (1971), *Bridge Across the Bosporus: The Foreign Policy of Turkey,* Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, pp. 20-21.

from Turkey, and if the Government then considers that these people are capable of such independence and recommends that it should be granted to them. Turkey hereby agrees to execute such a recommendation, and to renounce all rights and titles over these areas.[36]

The Treaty of Sevres was the nearest the Kurdish people ever got to statehood. However, while many Kurds today look back ruefully to the failure to implement the treaty, it is more than likely that the proposal would have triggered new conflicts, between the Kurds and those other groups, mostly notably surviving Armenians and also the Assyrian Christians, whose land overlapped and intermingled with areas where Muslim Kurds predominated. However, Turkey's quick revival under Ataturk-ironically enough, with considerable Kurdish help, because the Turks promoted the theme of Islamic unity to rally the Anatolian peasantry. Subsequently, with signing of the Treaty of Lausanne in July 1923, the nascent Republic of Turkey gained international recognition without any special provisions for Turkish Kurds.

In any case, the possibility for such a state never occurred, since a Turkish officer, Mustsafa Kemal atatürk repudiated his government's submission at Sevres, raised the flag of revolt in the muslin of Anatolia, and drove out the Christian forces in the west(Greece) and the east (Armenians and Soviets). Many Kurdish *aghas* and their tribes willingly helped Atatürk in this task; they were fighting for the Muslim patrimony in which they had a share. When victory was achieved, however, and the borders with Syria, Iraq and Iran were stabilized, they found their prospects, as with their Kurdish sister communities elsewhere, greatly altered. The one common feature in the new states of Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran was the determination of their governments to compel Kurdish submission to essential non – Kurdish but ethnically nationalist governments. It was a recipe for recurring conflict.

Rise of Modern Turkish Republic

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[36] *Treaty Series, No. II*, Cmd 964, London: Foreign Office, 1920 cited in Philip Robins (October 1993), "The Overlord State: Turkish Policy and the Kurdish Issue", *International Affairs*, Vol. 69, no.4, p. 660. The Treaty of Sèvres signed in 1920 "suggested" an independent Kurdish (and Armenian) state but after the establishment of the Turkish Republic by a Turk ethnonationalist government.

Modern Turkey's founder, Mustafa Kemal, popularly known as Atatürk (father of the Turks), enacted a constitution 70 years ago which denied the existence of distinct cultural sub-groups in Turkey. As a result, any expression by the Kurds (as well as other minorities in Turkey) of unique ethnic identity has been harshly repressed. Of the six main dimensions of Kemalism, the Kurds seemed to oppose two. The first one was the new interpretation of nationalism, which identified nationalism as rooted in ethnic origins rather than religious ones. The second one was the secularization principle. It was argued that one of the primary unifying factors between Turks and Kurds was Islam and that secularization of the new Republic damaged this tie.

The Kurds redefining themselves in terms of ethnicity found themselves competing against states intent on forging a new identity based upon an ethnicity they felt denied their own identity. Unlike the Turks and Arabs, the Kurds were fatally disadvantaged because they lacked both a civic culture and an established literature the case of modern turkey the new identity was called Turkish , ideologically defined as those who, though not necessarily of Turkish ethnic origin, nevertheless were claimed as Turkish because of social conditioning. Such a definition was produced by the ideologue of the new Turkish republic, Ziya Gokalp, a man born and bred in Diyarbakir a man who considered himself Turkish because it was in his view both His mother tongue and his culture but was arguably of Kurdish ethnicity.[37]

In modern Turkey there can be no doubt that a significant number of historically ethnic Kurds have been completely assimilated into Turkish society and no longer even speak Kurdish. Nurtured on the Kemalist ideology of republican Turkey's national unity and territorial integrity, which itself sprang from the earlier trauma of the gradual disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, the Turkish hesitancy to bolster artificially the number of Kurds in Turkey today can be readily appreciated. On the other hand, the claim by some Turks that the Kurds are really "mountain Turks" who has forgotten their Turkish origins is intellectually unacceptable.[38] Improved educational opportunities, the

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[37] Michael M. Gunter (1997), *The Kurds and the Future of Turkey*, New York: St. Martin's, Chap. 2.

[38] Andrews estimated the population of the Kurds in Turkey in 1982 as 3,800,000 people. These population

gradual integration of the region into the Turkish economy and the resulting labor migration from east to west led to the rapid emergence, beginning in the late 1960s and early 1970s, of a broadly-based Kurdish national movement. The military perceived this movement as a major threat to Turkey's national security, and immediately after the 1980 coup initiated a concerted effort to wipe it out completely.

The Kurdish regions have traditionally been the most underdeveloped parts of Turkey and have experienced little economic and social improvement. The private sector, attracted by the economic opportunities in the more prosperous western regions, has, for the most part, ignored the Kurdish provinces, often citing the inadequacy of infrastructure there. This, along with insufficient state investments, explains the growing divergence in per capita in-come between the mostly Kurdish regions and the rest of the country.[39] The long-term economic development programs for this region are twofold. The first program is to bring basic infrastructure to this area, and the second is the enormous Southeast Anatolian Project, which envisions some 10 dams and 13 development schemes being developed in order to provide electricity and to irrigate mil-lions of acres of arable land. Given the rudimentary sense of ethnic consciousness in the Islamic world when the Turkish Republic was established, the continuing perceived need of political unity, as well as the fact that over the years a significant number of historically ethnic Kurds have been completely assimilated into Turkish society, the Turkish policy toward its Kurdish population can be understood, but not necessarily accepted.

Turkey's military and bureaucratic elites have always been extremely wary of all forms of expression of Kurdish national sentiment. They have invariably reacted with repressive measures more severe than those directed against any other perceived threat to state security, including communism. The Turkish elite have an obsession with territorial integrity and national unity that seems to be rooted in the trauma of the gradual

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figures are all estimates and do not reflect actual numbers. Alford Andrews (1989), *Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey*, Weisbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, pp.94 - 95.

39 Henri J. Barkey (Winter 1994), "Turkey's Kurdish Di-lemma," *Survival*, 35, no. 4, p. 68. Based on information provided by the Turkish General Staff, the southeastern area has the lowest per capita income of all regions in Turkey, while it ranks first in value of per capital investment.

dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire. Fears that the Armenians would prove to be a fifth column in an armed conflict with Russia led to their deportation and the massacre of hundreds of thousands of them in 1915. Similarly, the Kurds have been suspected of disloyalty and collusion with foreign powers: with the British and French in the 1920s and 1930s, when these were still considered enemies, and later with the Russians. The present military leadership proclaims to believe that the Kurdish movement in Turkey was masterminded by the Soviet Union, and they have spared no effort to destroy it. The strategic location of Kurdistan, close to the Soviet border and the oil wells of northern Iraq, and only a few hours' flying time from the Gulf, added to the military's concern with potential separatism.

The strong reaction which Turkey's governing class showed towards even moderate forms of Kurdish ethnic awareness is not born of strategic considerations or fear of foreign subversion alone. The ideology of national unity has come to replace religion as the chief legitimating of state power in Turkey. This national unity was forged by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, and Turkish official historians have provided it with a "scientific" base by "proving," among other things, that the Kurds are really Turks.[40] Challenges of this idea Such as, for instance, the claim that the Kurds constitute a separate nation provoke a reaction similar to the desecration of the flag or Ataturk's statue.

Kurdish Nationalism

With the exception of a strip of land along Iran's northwestern border, all of the territory with a substantial Kurdish population today was once part of the Ottoman Empire. Identity in the Ottoman Empire was based on religion. Although there were references in 19th century diplomatic correspondence by both Ottoman and foreign officials to "Kurdistan," they point to a geographical region namely the area

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40 The official Turkish views on history have been expounded in the works of the Turkish Historical Society, established by Ataturk in 1930 with the express aim of writing history according to Turkish nationalist needs. See B. Lewis (1953), "History-writing and national revival in Turkey," *Middle Eastern Affairs*, Vol. 4, pp. 218-222.

predominantly inhabited by Kurdish-speaking tribes rather than an actual or nascent political entity. Throughout the Ottoman period, central control over the Kurdish tribes was very loose so long as they continued to pledge their nominal allegiance to the sultan, the tribal chieftains enjoyed a considerable degree of de facto autonomy in what were, in most cases, inaccessible mountains.

The concept of Turkish nationalism did not appear until the late 19th century, and then mainly in response to the centrifugal nationalism of the sultan's non-Muslim subjects. Kurdish nationalism was largely a reaction to Turkish nationalism.[41] However, in both cases, nationalism was the almost exclusive preserve of the tiny Ottoman intelligentsia. Even when the Ottoman Empire collapsed following its defeat in World War I, the vast majority of both Turks and Kurds still identified themselves primarily through religion, clan, family and locale rather than any concept of "nation." Even though the Treaty of Serves signed in 1920 between the victorious Allies and the Ottoman government had envisaged the creation of an independent Kurdish state in Anatolia, Ataturk after the successful "war of liberation" acknowledged by the Western powers in the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne set about transforming Anatolia into a secular, unitary Turkish nation state.[42]

Initially, Ataturk had hoped to incorporate the Ottoman governorate of Mosul, which included the oil-rich fields around the city of Kirkuk in what is now northern Iraq into his new Turkish Republic. However, the area had been included in the British mandate of Iraq and Britain refused to relinquish control of it. It was only in 1926, three years after the proclamation of the Turkish Republic, that Ataturk admitted defeat and agreed to the border between Turkey and Iraq, which remains unchanged today. But the loss of Mosul and Kirkuk has rankled with Turkish nationalists ever since. The Treaty of Lausanne which reversed the Treaty of Servres in many ways thus resulted in the former

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41 Gareth Jenkins (2008), *Political Islam in Turkey: Running West, Heading East?*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 67.

[42] See Enver Ziya Karal (1981), 'The Principles of Kemalism" in Ali Kazancigil and Ergun Ozbudun, eds. *Ataturk: Founder of a Modern State*, London: C. Hurst and Co., pp. 28-30.

Kurdish subjects of the Ottoman Empire becoming minorities in what were to become three nation states: namely Turkey, Syria and Iraq.[43] Although there were already a handful of Kurdish nationalist intellectual, loyalty to tribe and family still took precedence over any concept of "national consciousness."[44]

Inevitably, the fact that Kurdish Nationalism only really emerged after the Kurds had been divided between four states meant that it was localized from the outset. Even if some ultimately aspired to a pan-Kurdish state, in practice Kurdish nationalists initially focused on opposition to the government in the state in which they lived. The result was the development of what were effectively multiple Kurdish nationalisms rather than a single nationalist movement. The fragmentation was further exacerbated by differences of language, religion and, above all, tribal allegiance. Indeed, rival Kurdish nationalist groups within the same country often appeared more of a threat to each other than to the central government. Until recently, practical difficulties meant that it was frequently very hard for groups in different countries even to communicate with each other, much less cooperate.

Kurdish Revolts

The Kurdish tribes had always been restive. During the 20th century, Kurds in Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran all rebelled against the central government. In a large number of cases, the rebellions were primarily local in origin, such as resistance to a central government's attempts to impose its control over a particular region or tribe. Sometimes religion was also a major factor, particularly in Turkey where Ataturk had

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43 Iraq became a fully independent state in 1932, Syria in 1946. For a discussion of the foreign powers' connivance in the division of Kurdistan, see Robert Olson, "The Kurdish Question in the Aftermath of the Gulf War: Geopolitical and Geostrategic Changes in the Middle East", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No.3, (1992), pp. 475-477.

44 Martin Ven Bruinessen, "Kurdish Society: Ethnicity, Nationalism and Refugee Problem" in Kreyenbrock and Sperl, *The Kurds*, pp. 5-8

abolished the caliphate and replaced the Islamic state of the Ottomans with a secular republic.[45]

Some of the Kurdish groups sought self-determination and the championing in the Treaty of Sèvres of Kurdish autonomy in the aftermath of World War I, Kemal Atatürk prevented such a result. Kurds backed by the United Kingdom declared independence in 1927 and established so-called Republic of Ararat. Turkey suppressed Kurdish revolts in 1925, 1930, and 1937–1938, while Iran did the same in the 1920s to Simko Shikak at Lake Urmia and Jaafar Sultan of Hewraman region who controlled the region between Marivan and north of Halabja. A short-lived Soviet-sponsored Kurdish Republic of Mahabad in Iran did not long outlast World War II. From 1922–1924 in Iraq a Kingdom of Kurdistan existed. When Ba'athist administrators thwarted Kurdish nationalist ambitions in Iraq, war broke out in the 1960s. In 1970 the Kurds rejected limited territorial self-rule within Iraq, demanding larger areas including the oil-rich Kirkuk region.

During 1920s and 1930s, several large scale Kurdish revolts took place in this region. The most important ones were: Saikh Said Rebellion in 1925, Ararat Revolt) in 1930 and Dersim Revolt in 1938.[46] Following these rebellions, the area of Turkish Kurdistan was put under martial law and a large number of the Kurds were displaced. Government also encouraged resettlement of Albanians from Kosovo and Assyrians in the region to change the population makeup. These events and measures led to a long-lasting mutual distrust between Ankara and the Kurds.[47]

Turkish Response policy in Assimilation

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45 The most serious was the Shaykh Said Revolt of 1924. Although it has often been appropriated by later generations of Kurdish nationalists, the Shaykh Said Revolt was primarily, though not exclusively, religious in character. See Jenkins, Political Islam in Turkey, pp. 93-4.

46 Robert Olson (1989), *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880-1925*, Austin: University of Texas Press Olson's book contains the most detailed analysis of the Sheikh Said revolt.

47 C. Dahlman (2002), *The Political Geography of Kurdistan, Eurasian Geography and Economics*, Vol.43, no.4, p.279

The process of assimilation gained momentum after the revolts of 1925. The government forbade the use of the Kurdish language in public places, made it easier for land to be confiscated from Kurds with the explicit purpose of distributing in to Turks, who were being resettled in Kurdish areas, and exiled many Kurds.[48] However, a lack of resources hampered Ankara from fully carrying out the government's policy of assimilation. A language revolution takes time, and in the meantime heavy-handed control through the gendarmerie and the military substituted for lagging educational and economic development. In order to make Kurds into Turks, the state not only needed to exercise complete physical control over a region traditionally accustomed to a great deal of de facto autonomy, but also needed to invest significant resources to teach a whole population literacy and a new language. Furthermore, assimilation had to be carried out in a deteriorating economic environment, caused by the ravages of war and the division of once-united Ottoman Kurdish territories between Turkey and Iraq that undermined centuries-old trading and cultural exchange patterns. During the period following the Shaykh Sa'id revolt, most Kurds became non-entities in the Turkish political lexicon. With time, all references to Kurds as a distinct group in society were dropped. During the 1937 revolt, newspapers were not allowed to make references to disturbances in the east, and eventually the use of the word "Kurd" disappeared altogether from the media, and from any kind of official documentation, including school textbooks.

Any relaxation of controls on the Kurds or any concession on cultural autonomy or rights would only have been possible as long as Ataturk lived. He could single-handedly change the domestic political and cultural environment through the force of his personality and the enormous support he enjoyed. His supporters included a self-selected coterie of Kurds as well. But once Ataturk died, in 1938, the Turkish state became static as his successors sought to legitimize themselves in his shadow. Reformulating or even questioning some of the basic tenets of the Kemalist reforms became equated with political disloyalty. It was, however, during the Kemalist period that the seeds of a stronger Kurdish national identity were sown as a reaction to the forcible imposition of

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48 Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, p. 281.

the Turkish one. In effect, Kemalists inadvertently succeeded in creating two distinct nationalities: a Turkish and a Kurdish one, even if the latter would need another generation to blossom fully.

Transition to Multi party Rule

In the aftermath of World War II, the regime in Ankara, led by Ismet Inonui, under pressure from a victorious Soviet Union that coveted certain parts of Anatolia, tried to strengthen its connections with the West and with democratic societies. In order to gain admittance into Western conclaves, the regime decided to relax its authoritarian controls and permit the creation of an opposition political party. Although the 1946 elections were rigged to ensure the victory of the Republican People's Party (RPP) that had run the republic since its inception, opposition deputies were elected and by 1950 support for the opposition Democrat Party (DP) could no longer be contained. That year, the Democrats won fair elections and, for the first time in the Turkish republic's history, an orderly transfer of power took place. The Democrats were not unknown: the new president of the republic, Celal Bayar, and his three chief associates had been RPP-stalwarts, and he had served as prime minister under Ataturk.[49]

The DP victory ushered in a new era in Turkey. Although cast in the same authoritarian mold of the RPP, the new leaders were intent on liberalizing some aspects of the state and its economic policies. Once in power, they reduced state controls on religion. During the election campaign they also promised to ease some of the "cultural restrictions in the east" and reduce the oppressive practices of the gendarmes in the rural areas. Such pronouncements and the opportunity to oppose the much-disliked RPP led many Kurds to vote for the Democrats.[50] Despite some symbolic attempts to deal with

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49 Immediately before the formation of the DP, Inonu offered Bayar a deal whereby both parties would abstain from creating party organizations in the sensitive eastern and southeastern provinces of the country. Although the deal was rejected by Bayar, Inonui's suggestion is indicative of the circumspection with which the regime treated all Kurdish issues.

50 Many Kurds were elected to Parliament on the Democrat Party ticket. In a typical fashion the descendants of some of these members have continued to represent the same constituencies to this day. For details, see David McDowall (1996), *A Modern History of the Kurds,* London: I.B. Tauris, pp. 206-211.

Kurdish demands, such as the prosecution of General Mustafa Muglali who, in 1943, had had 33 Kurds executed in cold blood, the DP largely ignored the Kurdish question. It even prosecuted, on sedition charges, the few Kurdish intellectuals who tried to challenge state policy.[51] In the final years leading to the 1960 military intervention, the administration became increasingly intolerant of all types of dissent, not just Kurdish.

The DP era, however, was noteworthy in two respects: First, new and previously unavailable avenues of expression enabled all citizens, including those of Kurdish origin, to benefit from the process of democratization. The political and economic liberalization, even if limited by today's standards, strengthened civil society groups and created a real opportunity for the articulation of Kurdish grievances and even addressed some of them. The process of economic liberalization also provided new opportunities for upward mobility for all. Although the Democrats eventually fell victim to their own authoritarian tendencies, a return to the previous forms of stifling controls on all forms of dissent could not easily be accomplished. Even the officers who executed the 1960 coup ended up by installing a liberal constitution that protected a number of basic rights, such as freedom of speech and association. Expressions of Kurdish nationalism, however, did not benefit from this political liberalization.

Second, from a Kurdish perspective, the DP's victory came at a time when the last of the great Kurdish revolts had faded into memory, and the hardship years of World War II together with the uncompromising policies of the post- Kemal republic had diminished the incidence of violence. With its campaign promises, the DP rekindled these dormant expectations of the inhabitants of the east and southeast and empowered them through the vote. As David McDowall points out, in the 1954 elections the Democrats captured 34 of the 40 seats in the traditional Kurdish regions.[52] By the late 1950s, however, the Kurdish had become disappointed as both of these developments turned out to be illusory in the end.

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51 In a celebrated case, 49 intellectuals, some of whom were to become founding members of Kurdish nationalist parties in the 1990's, were tried for separatist activities. Ibid.

52 McDowall, *Modern History of the Kurds*, p. 398

The disillusionment with the liberalization process and the growing economic tensions within Turkey-stemming in part from rapid urbanization-eventually gave rise to new left-wing movements in the country, including the Turkish Labor Party (TLP). Some Kurds found the radical vocabulary of these movements useful to their cause, and Kurdish participation in them grew dramatically during the 1960s and 1970s-setting the stage for various new Kurdish organizations and for the future PKK.[53] These violent leftist movements, and their right-wing counterparts,[54] would plague Turkish politics throughout the 1970s and lead to harsher state measures and a more assertive Kurdish self-consciousness. The March 1971 military intervention meant a rupture in the Kurdish movement in several other respects. The Workers' Party of Turkey and the DDKO were banned, and most active members imprisoned. The military raided the Kurdish villages to intimidate the population. Two-and-a-half year's later, when parliamentary democracy was restored and a Kurdish movement slowly began to reorganize itself, it was a different movement, more radical in its national demands and at the same time broader in its social base. Like the Turkish left, however, it soon split into many rival groups.

At the risk of among the factors that contributed to the growth and radicalization of the Kurdish movement. The most crucial factor was the migration from the Kurdish provinces to the cities of western Turkey. This reached enormous proportions in the 1960s and continued unabated during the 1970s. Such large numbers of migrants could no longer be gradually urbanized and assimilated as earlier generations had been. Rather, they lived together in their own closed communities, to some extent maintaining their traditional lifestyle. They were more aware than they had been before of the great gap in

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53 Starting with the Democrats, Turkish governments, in order to discredit them, chose to brand all domestically-generated Kurdish organizations as communist inspired or driven even where this characterization was inappropriate. However, the overthrow of the monarchy by 'Abd al-Karim Qasim in Iraq, in 1958, and the return of the legendary Kurdish leader Mullah Mustafa Barzani did provide Turkish Kurds with an example of a state attempting to bridge the ethnic divide and hence the growing sympathy for the left-wing ideas of the new Iraqi regime.

54 The TLP, increasingly fractured over the Kurdish issue, was banned by the Constitutional Court in 1971. On the left, the most important of the movements included, Dev-Gen, (Revolutionary Youth) and Dev-Sol (Revolutionary Left). The Kurdish offshoot of these, *Devrimci Dogu Kultur Ocaklari* (Eastern Revolutionary Cultural Hearths), was formed in 1969.

development and ways of life between western and eastern Turkey. Occasional discrimination strengthened their awareness of being different. The new generation, as university or secondary school students, engaged in the political discussions on imperialism, underdevelopment, class struggle and the national problem, discussions that had rapidly spread outside narrow intellectual circles. This younger generation of migrants was the main motor of the Kurdish movement in the 1970s.

Most of the Kurdish organizations were first established in Ankara and Istanbul, and from there spread to Kurdistan. Urban-educated teachers and students returning to their villages brought the new political ideas, in simplified form, to the countryside and attempted to mobilize the peasants. This was only possible in the relatively liberal political climate of the years 1974-78, a consequence not of the governments' benevolence but of their weakness. In fact, both the Constitution and the Penal Code had been amended in 1971 to make a sharper prosecution of Kurdish activities possible. The state apparatus, including the police and the judiciary, had become politicized and was ridden with partisan rivalries. Each of the coalition governments of the period had such a narrow margin of parliamentary support that it could not afford to antagonize even small sectors of the electorate. There was therefore no consistently strong repression of Kurdish activities until the 1979 proclamation of martial law in the Kurdish provinces.

Another important factor in this politicization was the Kurdish disappointment with Bulent Ecevit. Before the 1973 elections, Ecevit had toured the eastern provinces and promised that he would, as a prime minister, take special care of the problems of the east. Few of his promises, however, materialized, and a few years later Ecevit clashed openly with Kurdish supporters who had dared to raise moderately nationalist slogans. Kurdish suspicions that they could expect little from Turkish politicians if even Ecevit left them in the lurch drew many people to the Kurdish nationalist organizations proclaiming that Kurds should take what the Turks refused to give. In the 1977 elections, an unprecedented number of independents stood as candidates for the Kurdish provinces. Some had broken loose from Ecevit's RPP, while others were known to be close to Kurdish nationalist organizations. The Kurdish left experienced a similar disappointment

with the Turkish left wing parties and organizations. Most of these did recognize that the Kurds were subjected to cultural oppression, and that the eastern provinces were underprivileged and economically exploited. Their automatic solution, though, was the socialist revolution that would occur under the leadership of the (Turkish) proletariat. Many Turkish leftists considered Kurdish national demands, in the present situation, untimely or even reactionary. The entire left accepted the Leninist doctrine of a nation's right to self-determination. They resolved this inconsistency by refusing to consider the Kurds as a nation, or by adding the rider that this right could only be exercised under the leadership of the proletariat.[55]

As a result, may Kurds left the Turkish parties and organizations of which they were members and joined the separate Kurdish organizations that mushroomed after 1975. The Kurdish movement did not turn away from the left: as .all Kurdish organizations claimed to be Marxist- Leninist, however little the rank and file knew about socialist theory. All considered the Kurds a nation apart and demanded the right of self-determination, although this did not mean for all the establishment of a separate state. One by one, they all also adopted the thesis that Kurdistan was a colony of the Turkish ruling classes. They began to look for inspiration to the liberation movements elsewhere in the world, such as southern Africa and Vietnam. Most of the Kurdish organizations claimed to see the struggle against class oppression inside Kurdistan as equally important, although they frequently accused each other of failing to address this issue. Some made a connection between the national and the class struggle Landlords and tribal or religious leaders- were often allied, through the various political parties, with the central state. The left organizations therefore labeled them "collaborators," and

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55 This is crude summary. The various left parties took different positions at different times and rarely stated them so bluntly or simplistically as I do here. The only one among the major left organizations and parties that did recognize the Kurds as a nation and was willing to grant them unconditionally the right to self-determination was Kurtulu, the most intellectual of the various groups that emerged from the original youth and student movement *Dev Gen*. Since the 1980 coup, much has changed. In their foreign exile, all the Turkish left movements have made many concessions to the Kurds, and almost all now agree that Kurdistan is a Turkish colony and that the Kurdish movement is an important revolutionary force. See William Hale (1981), *The Political and Economic Development of Modern Turkey*, London: Croom Helm, pp. 122-123.

proclaimed that breaking their power was one primary aim in the "anti-feudal and anti-colonial struggle." One organization, thinking that the time was ripe for the armed phase in this struggle, actually opened the offensive in 1979 against some particularly powerful and oppressive chieftains. This precipitated a minor civil war between supporters and opponents of these chieftains, with government forces taking the latter side.[56]

Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)

Together with a liberalized political environment crated by the 1961 Turkish Constitution, forced assimilation of the Kurds and their incorporation by the successive governments created conditions in which the ethnic loss was imminent. Rather than integrating its Kurdish population, Turkey's official denial of the Kurds as a distinct ethnic category contributed to a progressive radicalisation of the Kurdish nationalism (*Kurdayeti*).[57] Amidst this emerged the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK as the focal point of nationalist Kurdish resistance to Turkish rule in the latter half of the 1970s. It is though contended by some scholars that Ideologically the organization dates back to the early 1970s, though the name PKK did not appear until November 27, 1978, when, in the village of Fis in Diyarbakir, the nucleus of the PKK was established and the first draft party program was announced. The organization itself used the name National Liberation Army in 1974 and changed it to PKK in 1978; they came to be known among the local people as vicious Apocus (the followers of Apo, the nickname of Abullah Ocalan), especially during the late 1970s. The PKK was founded in 1978 by a group of Kurdish Marxists, led by Abdullah Ocalan (born 1948). Its original aim was the creation of a Kurdish Marxist state in southeastern Turkey, which would serve as a platform for the spread of communism throughout the region. Ocalan fled Turkey in the wake of the 1980 military coup. He spent the next 18 years in the Syrian-controlled Bekka Valley and,

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[56] See William Hale (1994),*Turkish Politics and the Military*, London: Routledge, pp. 228-240

[57] Paul J. Magnarella (1999), "Turkey" in Paul J. Magnarella (ed.), *Middle East and North Africa: Governance, Democratisation, Human Rights*, Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 148-150.

particularly latterly, the Syrian capital of Damascus.[58] The PKK launched its insurgency in August 1984 with two attacks on police stations in southeastern Turkey.

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[58] See Michael Gunter (Summer 1990), "The Kurdish Insurgency in Turkey", *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. XIII, no. 4, pp. 57-81.

Chapter 2

Turkey's Kurdish Policy

As discussed in the preceding chapter, rise of the PKK representing the radicalized Kurdish self-consciousness was one of the major factors that compelled the reluctant Turkish army on September 12, 1980 to step in.[59] The coup leaders headed by General Kenan Evren set up the National Security Council (*Milli Guvenlik Konseyi*) or the NSC consisted of four generals and one admiral, suspended all political groups active in the pre-coup period and cracked down on both the left-wing radicals and extremists on the right. More importantly, the present Turkish constitution was prepared under the aegis of the military regime, whish has an authoritarian spirit designed to protect the state from the actions of its citizens. Individual rights and liberties are recognised by the constitution but defined in highly restrictive terms.[60]

General Kenan Evren was automatically elected as President upon the ratification of the constitution by a referendum. Given his apparent popularity, and his role as the leader of the junta under whose auspices the constitution was drafted, it was no surprise that Evren wielded considerable political clout. He was supported by the military-dominated NSC, which, according to a provisional article, was transformed into a Presidential Council, an advisory body to the President. All this pointed to hard fact that Turkey ultimately had a controlled democracy, in which the members of the junta would remain intimately involved in the conduct of government. Moreover, during the transition period to the restoration of civilian rule, which was indeed relatively longer, the junta tried to retain tight control over the political process by banning all existing political parties and then, restricting the number of new parties that too with limited role. In order to ensure a bi-party stable political system, the new electoral law promulgated in June 1983 laid down the minimum 10 per cent of votes to be secured by a political party to be represented in the Assembly.[61] Turkish electorate, which had voted overwhelmingly for

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[59] See Mehmet Ali Birand (1987), *The generals' coup in Turkey*, London: Brassey's, p. 39.

[60] See Ergun Ozbudun and Omer Faruk Genckaya (2009), *Democratization and the Politics of Constitution-Making in Turkey*, Budapest: Central European University Press, p. 91.

[61] Frank Tachau (1984), *Turkey: The Politics of Authority, Democracy and Development*, New York: Praeger, pp. 57-59.

the new Constitution, turned around in the November 1983 elections for National Assembly, and voted for the party most likely to disengage the political system from military tutelage. Of the three parties qualified to contest the elections, the least closely attached to the generals was the Motherland Party (ANAP) founded by Turgut Ozal who held high technocratic position in the Demirel government before becoming Deputy Prime Minister in-charge of economic affairs in the Bulent Ulusu government. The 1983 elections resulted in an unexpected victory for Ozal and his party winning more than 50 per cent of the Assembly seats and 45 per cent of total valid votes. For over a decade Turkish politics was dominated by Ozal.

Even though Turkey in the post-coup period experienced three politically salient changes: 1) liberalisation of the economy giving greater social recognition to the entrepreneurial class; 2) de-bureaucratisation of the political system; 3) autonomisation of civil society, military continued to retain its political primacy in the national politics, especially in the security matter.[62] The Kurdish question was perceived by the military as serious threat to the cohesiveness of the unitary Kemalsit state. Consequently, it carried out armed operations in the south-east to crush the growing trend of Kurdish particularism. In the long run, such operations were of limited success.[63] The military authorities initiated a vigorous campaign to stamp out manifestations of the Kurdish identity. In 1983 a law was introduced which implicitly banned the use of the Kurdish language.[64] There was a new campaign to control the population of the south-east through

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[62] The Ozal government attempted to de-bureaucratize the political system through indirect methods such as reducing government's involvement in the economy, greater reliance on market forces, privatization of the State Economic Enterprises (SEEs), tackling the bureaucratic red tape and last but not the least, induction of U.S. educated technocrats- managers referred to as "Ozal's princes" into public economic enterprises. See Metin Heper, (1990), "The State and De-bureaucratization: The Turkish Case", *International Social Science Journal*, Vol. 126 pp. 605-615.

[63] This was not necessarily the perception at the time. One contemporary source, for example, declared that the PKK had been 'entirely eliminated in 1981'. See Colin Legum, Haim Shaked and Daniel Dishon (1982), eds, *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, vol. 5, p. 840.

[64] In fact the law banned any language other than the first official languages of countries recognized by the Turkish Republic. In reality, the aim of the law was to proscribe the Kurdish language.

the permanent stationing of two of Turkey's four armies in the region. This contrasted with the 1970s, when there had been an easing of the military presence.[65] The bulk of this chapter is devoted to the description of the military handling of the Kurdish issue and its negative fall-out in terms of further radicalization among the Kurdish population, which, in turn, accounted for the growth of the PKK in the 1980s.

The intervention of the Turkish armed forces and the severity of their policies had a counterproductive effect as far as the Turkish state was concerned. First, the very fact of the coup d'etat resulted in a large number of Turkish citizens seeking and gaining political asylum in Western European countries. Because of the nature of the intervention, a large number of these asylum- seekers were leftists or Kurdish nationalists. The repressive policies of the Turkish state had in any case prompted a disproportionate number of Kurds to seek employment opportunities in continent estimated to be some 500,000 Turkish Kurds in Western Europe, with over 400,000 of them in the Federal Republic of Germany and important communities in France (60,000) and Sweden (10, 000).[66] The military intervention, coming on top of the repression of previous generations, helped to create a large body of anti-Turkish opinion in the liberal states of Europe.[67]

The second and more major consequence of the coup d'etat and the pursuit by the Turkish government of a more confrontational set of policies was to re- entrench the polarization of politics which has for so long characterized the south-east of the country. Moderate, liberal Kurdish nationalism was unable to flourish. The failure to establish a political middle ground for the Kurdish south-east was to be critical in the growth of support for the PKK from the late 1980s onwards. It has always been true that the south-

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[65] David McDowall (1992), *The Kurds: A Nation Divided*, London: Minority Rights Group, p. 14.

[66] Michael M. Gunter (1997), *The Kurds and the Future of Turkey*, New York: St. Martin's Press, p. 103.

[67] For instance, Germany decided to halt all arms transfers to Turkey in 1992 when it became clear that some of the armoured personnel carriers supplied by the Federal Republic had been used by the Turkish state in the south-east of the country.

east has been one of the poorest parts of the country. This situation was aggravated in the 1980s with the country's 'economic miracle': rapid economic growth and consequent prosperity benefited the big cities and the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts, while economic development by-passed rural Anatolia, especially in the south- east. Only through migration could poor villagers gain access to such prosperity. For those who remained, the situation is grim. Per capita GDP in the south-east is less than half the national average. Unemployment is estimated to be twice the national average at around 25 per cent. Social development is also retarded. In the province of Mardin the literacy rate is only 48 per cent, compared to the national average of 77 per cent. Only 9 per cent of school children in the south-east complete secondary school, and only 18 per cent begin it.[68] The absence of such economic benefits has left the Kurds of the south-east with little stake in the prosperity of the new Turkey.

Growth of the PKK

The apparent military successes of the armed forces in the wake of the 1980 coup proved to be short-lived. In 1984 the PKK re-launched its guerrilla campaign in the south-east of the country; from this moment onwards the Kurds of this region were to have their rallying point. Although the military had handed the reins of government in Ankara to an elected administration a year before, the military was to retain a grip on the making of policy towards the Kurds. The leader of the coup d'état, General Kenan Evren, served as President of the republic until 1989. Even after that, the National Security Council, chaired by the president and includes the armed forces chiefs, remained central to the making of policy on this subject.

The emergence of The PKK in 1984 as a revolutionary organization in quest of Kurdish independence marks a major new phase in the evolution of the Kurdish national movement, entering a stage of sustained armed struggle now of over thirteen years'

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[68] David McDowall (February 1991), "Comment", *Turkey Briefing*, p. 5.

duration the longest Kurdish rebellion in modern Turkish history.[69] The transformation of the Kurdish problem in Turkey into its present form is not only due to the PKK: Events in other parts of the West Asia, specifically the Iran-Iraq and the Gulf wars, provided the PKK with significant political and military room to maneuver. The organization's ability to profit from geopolitical changes and its resilience on the ground have clearly touched a nerve within Turkey. Whether the organization survives or not in the longer run, the fact remains that it has managed to change Turkey's foreign and domestic politics.

Thus, the military-inspired approach continued under a civilian administration, and underlay two key policy developments towards the south-east in the late 1980s. First, in 1985 the ANAP (*Anavalan Partisi*, Motherland Party) government led by Prime Minister Turgut Ozal introduced a system of civilian militias to supplement gendarme operations.[70] The intention was to organize those familiar with local conditions as auxiliaries to the armed forces in trying to confront the PKK. The creation of these groups would also serve the purpose of showing outsiders that the Kurds in the south-east were far from united in their opposition to the Turkish state. The Village Guard system soon became embroiled in the tribalism of the region. With the PKK using violence as an instrument of terror against members of the militia and their families, those attracted to membership of the Village Guard have often been clans who are traditionally loyal to the state.

Second, also under Turgut Ozal's premiership, the government introduced state of emergency in 1987, to be extended every four months by a parliamentary vote, in ten provinces in the south-east of the country. The state of emergency, though falling short of martial law, effectively curbed the application of Turkey's emerging political

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[69] It is exceeded only in Iraq by the long armed struggle of the Kurdish Democratic party of Iraq later joined by the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan in Iraq both of which have also maintained an armed struggle for decades against the Iraqi state.

[70] For a detailed description of the establishment, composition and functioning of the Village Guard system see Imset, *The Kurds*, pp. 105-17.

liberalization process in the region. Extraordinary powers were vested in the hands of a governor responsible for the area. The range of powers at the disposal of the regional governor was radically extended in April 1990 through the adoption of Kararname 413 (subsequently revised as *Kararname 424*). The main thrust of this package of measures was to increase the punitive effect of measures that could be applied to the region, and to restrict the flow of information by imposing increased restrictions on the media.[71] It was the Iran -Iraq war in the 1980s that led to a resurgence of Kurdish nationalist activities in Turkey. The PKK found its greatest support in the south-eastern provinces of turkey which stretch along the 200-odd mile Turkish border with Iraq.[72]

The PKK is in fact an unusual phenomenon among Kurdish nationalist movements, particularly in its left-wing origins. Most other Kurdish parties particularly in Iraq have emerged from more traditional Kurdish circles with a specific regional and tribal orientation. There are, however, exceptions to this. Following the 1975 debacle of the Kurdish movement in Iraq abandoned by the shah of Iran after he concluded an agreement with Iraq a disenchanted KDP became increasingly leftist in orientation as it tried to curry favor with the ascendant Third Wordlist movements. The KDP followed the lead of its rival, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), which has traditionally been more middle-class oriented, and in the 1970s it assumed an anti-imperialist discourse. The aim of both movements was to align the Kurdish cause more closely with the "national liberation struggles," and principally with that of the Palestinians who never sympathized with them. Both these Iraqi movements, however, especially the KDP, maintain strong regional and tribal ties. They represented the least assimilated of the Kurdish populations. The PKK, by contrast, grew out of the anarchy and turmoil during the 1970s when a number of radical left-wing Turkish groups emerged, many of them violent.

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[71] For an edited translation of Kararname 413 see Turkey Briefing, 4: 3, June 1990.

[72] Between august 1984 and June 1990 a total of 1,771 people including 692 PKK guerrillas, 640 civilians,330 security personal, 79 villages guards,17 teachers and 14 villages chief died in armed clash.

Emerging from among the more assimilated elements, left-wing Kurdish students in Ankara began to talk of founding a movement as early as 1973, and in 1978 the PKK decided to hold its first congress and established itself in secret under the leadership of Abdullah Ocalan. Its initial actions targeted Kurdish landlords, including an assassination attempt on a member of parliament from the Justice party of Suleyman Demirel. With such operations, the PKK made a name for itself as a fighter for the disenfranchised.[73] It also became the most effective Kurdish group in the southeast and caught the attention of the security apparatus.[74] Early police pressures led Ocalan to decide that he and most of the party leadership had to flee to Syria and Lebanon, where he has remained ever since,[75] escaping the post-1980 coup dragnet. However, the regime's indiscriminate repression in the southeast and east helped the PKK gain many adherents, a large number of whom were in prison in Diyarbakir. Under Syrian tutelage in Lebanon, where the PKK recruits got their first real training, Ocalan and his small group established close links with some of the Palestinian groups as well as Syrian intelligence.

The PKK launched its military operations against the state in earnest in August 1984 after consolidating its position in the southeast following a bitter internecine struggle with rival Kurdish organizations. From then on, the PKK began to gather strength. Though amateurish at the beginning, its recruits with time gained experience as the PKK reached its peak between 1991 and 1993. Ankara was caught unprepared for the kind of challenge the PKK offered. This was not to be one of the many small bands or groups that had appeared and disappeared over the years, but rather one that had a well-defined political agenda and could exercise unparalleled discipline. The PKK, in line with its political agenda, has divided itself into three elements. The party itself that is, the PKK is the foremost organ. In 1985 it created the National Liberation Front of Kurdistan (ERNK) to bolster its recruitment, provide intelligence, and engage in propaganda

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[73] Ismet G. Imset, The PKK: 20 years of separatist violence in Turkey, (Ankara: Turkish Daily News Yayinlari, 1992), 59–71.

[74] Rifat Balli (1991), *The Kurdish Eile*, Istanbul: Cem Yayinevi, pp. 204–5.

[75] *Ibid.*

activities in Turkey and abroad. Finally, the third leg in its structure is the People's Liberation Army of Kurdistan (ARGK), formed in 1986.[76]

Ankara's initial reaction, which consisted primarily of military responses, included air raids across the border that invariably caused more casualties among the Iraqi Kurds than the PKK. With time the Turkish state too learned from its mistakes and began to target significant resources, primarily military, on the region and to score important military successes against the PKK.[77] The onset of first the Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988) and eventually the Gulf War in 1991 provided the PKK with strategic depth in its confrontation with the Turkey government. The PKK has benefited from the absence of a military presence to impede its activities. To impede the PKK's freedom of movement in Northern Iraq, Turkey has mounted numerous military operations land or air, large or small across the international border.

Organizational Structure of the PKK

From the outset, the PKK has proclaimed its goal to be the creation of a unified, independent Kurdish state, and thus it has made no secret of its pan-Kurdish aspirations. The PKK sought not only independence, but also a political and social revolution among the Kurds in order to transform their society's feudal structure. It described itself early on as Marxist- Leninist and adopted the generally left-wing anti-imperialist rhetoric of the period to oppose "imperialism," including "Turkish imperialism" in Turkish Kurdistan. The PKK's program mirrored the slogans of the extreme Left: Kurdistan with all four of its segments, controlled by Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria, represented the weakest link in "capitalism's chain," and the fight against imperialism was a fight to save Kurdistan's natural resources from exploitation.[78] The PKK thus very early on became committed to revolutionary violence against the Turkish state.

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[76] For the composition of the PKK's central committee, see Gunter, *The Kurds*, 23–59.

[77] For a more detailed account of the formation of the PKK, see McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds.*

[78] The organized PKK adopted a tight paramilitary structure and Leninist "democratic centralism" that essentially denied any internal debate or any transparency of organization and activity features that

It has attempted to demonstrate that it is a "national liberation" organization that can institutionalize itself to survive the long haul. It periodically organizes national congresses, in which decisions are taken "democratically." It has laws regarding military conscription, promotions in its army, and so forth.[79] While these congresses and the publication of its decisions are intended to dispel the notion that the organization is totally controlled by one person, there is no doubt that these activities are designed to show that this is a movement with a structure, goals, and the political means to achieve them.

In addition, PKK spokesmen claim that the Turkish state had then succeeded in winning over a large number of the wealthy Kurdish landlords, or *aghas*, as well as the mercantile class. In fact, behind the left-wing rhetoric, the PKK had always been a nationalist movement. Its promise to save the exploited of Turkey and the rest of the Middle East notwithstanding, it's very formation represented a break with the Turkish Left and abandonment of the "common struggle."[80] Its discourse is that of a national-liberation movement dedicated to the construction of a socialist state. Ocalan, in acknowledging the decision to do away with the hammer and sickle on the party flag, also stated that this did not represent a distancing from socialism.[81] If it has not completely abandoned its "left-wing roots," it is because of both tactical and strategic considerations. The PKK is not the only one among Kurdish groups that adheres to left-

largely have remained intact today, even if Marxism-Leninism has been abandoned in keeping with the new post–Cold War environment.

[79] See, for instance, Decisions of the 5th PKK Congress, (Germany: Wesanen Serxwebu^n, 1995). In this particular congress it was decided not to recruit youth younger than sixteen to fight and to make military service for women voluntary.

[80] In a fascinating insight into some of the racist or class aspects of Turkish society as perceived by the Kurdish Left, Ocalan had early on spoken of his desire also to liberate the "real Turks" or "Turkmen" of eastern Turkey, who had also been marginalized over a long period of Turkish history by the "white Turks"—the Istanbul-Ankara elite—who contained much Balkan blood as opposed to the purer Turkish blood of the Anatolian Turk with his closer blood ties to Central Asia, the cradle of the Turkish people. Whatever the truth of the observation about mixed blood, no Turks at least were moved by this kind of talk coming from a Kurdish organization.

[81] See interview with Ocalan, *Yen i Politika,* July 18, 1995.

wing dogma and terminology; as one Kurdish intellectual, Orhan Kotan, has pointed out, most Kurdish groups still use the terminology of the 1970s and are simply regurgitating the same old ideas, passing them off for new.[82]

Since the beginning of 1995, the PKK has been undergoing a significant shift in its political orientation. Although Marxist-Leninist thinking is no longer prominent in its rhetoric, it may be argued that the party still contains some Leninist features of "democratic centralism." The PKK has moved away from an earlier condemnation of Islam as "exploiting the people" to an acceptance of Islam. Indeed, an Islamist movement (Parti Islami Kurdistan) is now in the process of being accepted within the pro-PKK parliament in Exile. The PKK now speaks of a political settlement within the existing borders of Turkey.[83] The PKK no longer claims to be the sole political representative of the Kurdish people. Ocalan has reportedly said that if and when negotiations take place, they need not necessarily be held with him personally. In this way the PKK is seemingly moving toward greater reality in its assessment of the current political environment. At the fifth PKK Congress, held at an undisclosed location in 1995, the party consolidated many of the changes in policy mentioned above.

The end of the Cold War and the loss of powerful potential patrons such as the Soviet Union, together with the growing realization of the power of the Turkish state and, most important, the lack of genuine support for outright separation among Turkey's Kurds, were the most factors that accounted for choose in the PKK's long term goal from independence the autonomy. While they recognize the impossibility of achieving a military victory, they expect that the cost of the PKK-led struggle will force the Turkish government to abandon the east and southeast and, thereby, lead to the creation of an independent state.[84] Thus PKK is first and foremost a political organization with distinct political objectives even if they are modified when necessary that employs violence, often extensively and even erroneously from its own standpoint. This violence is basically secondary to its fundamental character; while this does not imply that violence is unimportant for the PKK, it does mean that violence is used to define and pursue political objectives.

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[82] *Pazar Postasi*, February 2, 1995.

[83] David Korn's interview with O¨calan, reprinted in the PKK publication *Serxwebun*, April 1995, 12–14.

[84] The mountain dwellers: from Bagok to Gobar in 26 days (Istanbul: Metis Yayinlari, 1996). This is an account by a Turkish correspondent of Agence France Presse who was kidnapped by the PKK in 1995 and taken through large swaths of territory in the southeast, where he encountered some two hundred PKK.

The violence against civilians and representatives of the state, and the military campaign against the security forces, were intermeshed with a political strategy designed to win both the respect and the support of the local population. The political component, which relied heavily on utilizing built up Kurdish resentment, is a crucial component because so much of the livelihood of individual insurgents and units roaming the countryside depends on the willingness of the citizenry to donate food and shelter when necessary. In addition, the political education process is necessary if the organization is to continue to recruit to replace its manpower losses. By its own admission, the PKK was not very successful with its civil disobedience campaign. These campaigns were initiated too frequently, without clear political goals, and resulted in exposing the civilian population to retribution and in ultimate suppression by the security forces.[85] As a result, the PKK has clearly decided to refocus its energies on pursuing military operations and, in response to the increased effectiveness of the Turkish military, to expand its areas of operation as much as possible.

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[85] *PKK 5. Kongre Karalari,* 105–10.

Table 2.1: The Structure of the PKK

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                    ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                    │            PKK              │
                    │ (Partia Karkeren Kurdistan) │
                    │    Kurdish Workers Party    │
                    └─────────────────────────────┘
                                  │
                    ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                    │      Central Committee       │
                    └─────────────────────────────┘
                    │                             │
        ┌───────────────────────────┐  ┌─────────────────────────────┐
        │           ARGK            │  │            ERNK              │
        │ (Artese Rizgariya Gele    │  │ (Eniya Rizgariya Netewa      │
        │      Kurdistan)           │  │       Kurdistan)             │
        │    Military Committee     │  │     Political Committee       │
        └───────────────────────────┘  └─────────────────────────────┘
                                              │            │
                                   ┌──────────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐
                                   │Domestic Committee │  │International  │
                                   └──────────────────┘  └──────────────┘
                                              │         │       │       │
                                          ┌───────┐ ┌──────┐┌────────┐┌────────┐
                                          │ Front │ │Europe││ Middle ││ Russia │
                                          └───────┘ └──────┘│  East  │└────────┘
                                                            └────────┘
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Botan			
Amed			
Armenia			
Garzan			
Dersim	Uprising Committee	Germany	Lebanon
Serhat	Public Relations	France	Syria
Orta	Economy	Netherlands	Iraq
Guneybati	Intelligentsia	Sweden	Iran
Gap		Greece	Libya
Mardin		UK	Greek-Cyprus

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        ┌──────────┐      ┌──────┐      ┌──────────────┐
        │ Internal │      │ Army │      │ International │
        │ Division │      │      │      │   Division    │
        └──────────┘      └──────┘      └──────────────┘
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PKK's Tactics and Funding sources

The PKK from its inception has employed classic insurgency tactics, blending violence and terror with political organization. The terror has systematically and primarily been directed first at potential rivals within the Kurdish camp, including other leftist organizations, and then at "collaborators" in other words, other Kurds suspected of benefiting from interactions or cooperation with the state. It is only after the PKK made a name for itself that the violence began to be directed at the state and its representatives again in a structured way. The violence against other Kurds has been particularly gruesome: The PKK's most hated target is the village guards who, in its view, do the state's bidding for money. In order to discourage further recruitment, village guards and their families have fallen victim to revolutionary justice, often being attacked and killed en masse. The PKK leader Ocalan in the past suggested that while terror may not be his preferred instrument, "the violence alternative may be difficult and painful, but it provides results."[86] As a result, violence is employed in crude and simplistic ways that damage the Kurdish cause. The PKK's effort to lessen Turkish state presence in the southeast by killing Turkish schoolteachers and civil servants, and by burning schools and other public institutions, has particularly enraged the Turkish public, which has seen innocent functionaries, who have no say in where they are assigned, made victim to the struggle.

By far, the PKK's primary focus has been the Turkish military presence in the southeast. Using standard insurgency tactics against a military at first unprepared and untrained to confront such a challenge, the PKK achieved impressive results, denying its enemy large sections of the southeast. It even engaged the Turkish military in large skirmishes, but suffered heavily for doing so. Fighting the Turkish military and surviving against the efforts to eradicate it are what have made the PKK popular among Kurdish masses. The PKK sought to provoke the state into engaging in counterinsurgency tactics that were violent and indiscriminate. This had the goal of radicalizing Kurdish attitudes, forcing the Kurds to choose sides and banking on the fact that decade of ill treatment

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[86] See Rifat Ballis's interview with O'calan in *Ku'rt Dosyasi*, 252.

would make the PKK the natural repository of the local population's loyalties. In that respect, the PKK benefited from and exploited existing tribal divisions in the area. In the end, the combinations of PKK operations and state violence in response have contributed to precisely such a radicalization.

At its zenith between 1991–93, the PKK tried to create a political vacuum in the southeast not just by denying the state access to towns and villages but also by limiting the access of mainstream Turkish institutions, including the press and political parties, to the region. It also encouraged civil disobedience campaigns, such as store closings and sit-down strikes. It set up secret tribunals to judge and arbitrate disputes among the residents of the region. All of these were designed to show that it could effectively challenge the rule of the central government. It subsequently attacked other state institutions, primarily schools and teachers, to deepen the cleavage between Kurds and Turks.

The success of the PKK in becoming the preeminent Kurdish organization in Turkey is due to many factors, some of which have already been discussed, But it would be a mistake to attribute PKK success solely to the realm of heroism, brutality, or even ideals: Funding is also a factor. The PKK is exceptionally well financed, which gives it important leverage in spreading its message, underwriting its operations, and creating a broad infrastructure that facilitates its recruitment campaign. The sources of PKK financing is a highly controversial subject.[87] The PKK claims that most of its funds are from contributions, both from Kurds within Turkey and, especially, from those abroad. The Turkish government claims that the bulk of PKK funds come from burglaries and robberies (especially true in its early days), from extortion and protection money levied on Kurds and Turks wherever possible,[88] and especially from a massive narcotics trade between Turkey and Europe.[89]

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[87] In a briefing to Turkish journalists, the Turkish general staff claimed that the PKK's annual budget was of the order of $2 billion, *Hu'rriyet,* April 30, 1997).

[88] According to one former PKK operative on trial in a state security court, numerous local businessmen contributed to the PKK. The organization charged each transportation company 1,000 DM a year per bus,

Considerable numbers of Kurds speak of "taxation" levied by the PKK upon Kurds all over Turkey, and there is a great deal of circumstantial evidence that points to the PKK's effectiveness in extorting funds from all kinds of businesses, Kurdish and Turkish, where possible. The PKK itself admits that it is able to gain funds by collecting customs taxes at the border from incoming trucks (including smugglers), an activity conducted also by the main Iraqi Kurdish groups. Income can also be seized from "collaborative landlords". Another important source of revenue is the large Kurdish population living in Western Europe. Numbering as many as 500,000, Kurds in Europe has contributed generously to the PKK. These funds are used not only to support the organization's activities in Europe but also to purchase arms. Just as in Turkey, some of these funds are raised from willing contributors, who donate as much as 20 percent of their salaries, while other funds are raised forcibly. In the conditions of guerrilla warfare in the southeast, it is extremely easy to imagine how intimidation is frequently employed. Some villages are pro-PKK for various reasons conquest, tribal ties, commitment, desperation others are anti-PKK for equally diverse reasons. Clearly the PKK can threaten "enemy" areas and extract protection money from many Kurds linked to the government who might otherwise be targets of guerrilla action. "Taxation" also extends to all kinds of economic activities within the southeast especially narcotics.

The extent of PKK involvement in the narcotics trade is particularly controversial. The Turkish government claims that the PKK is responsible for the bulk of narcotics entering Europe from Turkey. The reality is that the region has traditionally been a major conduit for drug trafficking; under conditions of lawlessness and guerrilla warfare and the incredible temptation of the large profits to be made, many organizations and individuals, Turks and Kurds, are profiting from the trade. Those dealing in drugs even include

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and it obtained 25,000 DM from businessmen and 200,000 DM from factory owners in Diyarbakir (*Anadolu Ajansi*, August 6, 1996). Although these claims may be exaggerated because the operative may think that this is what the state authorities would like to hear, the fact remains that the implication of his testimony is that this is more than an extortion racket.

[89] Imset; this assertion was responsible, many Kurds claim, for the assassination of a number of Kurdish businessmen, including two abducted from the C¸inar Hotel near Istanbul.

members of the government and various security organizations, operating privately.[90] Narcotics-related corruption is widespread, [91] and, But the PKK, in the eyes of many Western analysts, is not the sole, or even the primary, source of European drugs from Turkey. But while the PKK, along with other groups in the region, is involved in narcotics, its political success cannot be attributed primarily to this factor, nor can it be written off as a "macro-terrorist organization."

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[90] In November 1996, a traffic accident near the town of Susurluk in western Turkey further revealed the relationship between some state security officials and Mafialike figures engaged in money laundering and drug trafficking. Although the investigation into these links has not been formally finished it may never be a number of officials have been arrested and the minister of interior, Mehmet Agar, had to resign because of his perceived involvement with the protagonists.

[91] In a dissenting minority report to the parliamentary investigation committee looking into the Susurluk

Table 2.2

PKK, Security Forces and Civilian Casualties 1984–95

Year	PKK	Security Forces	Civilians	Total
1984–91	1,444	846	1,278	3,568
1992–95	10,102	2,775	3,736	16,613
Total	11,546	3,621	5,014	20,181
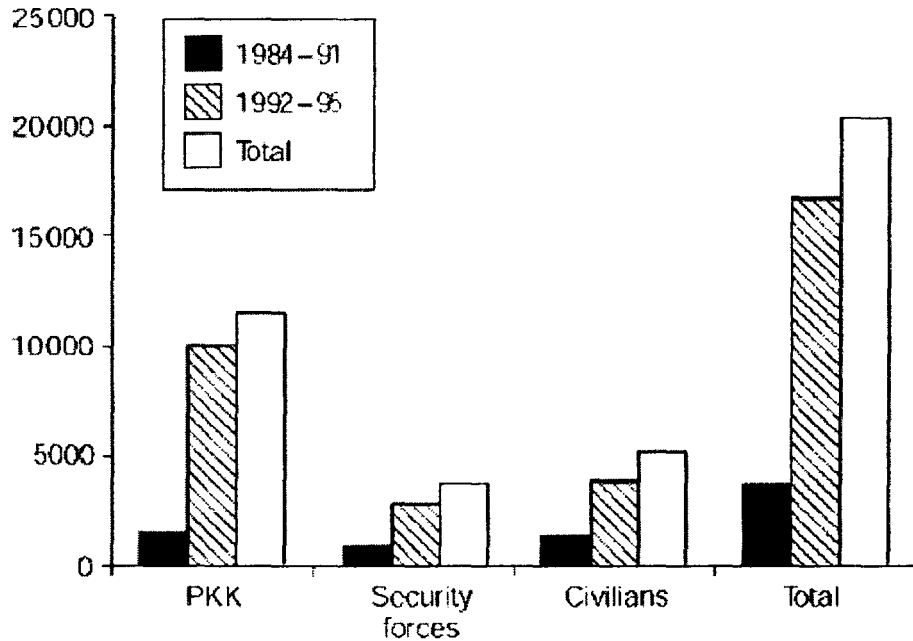
Source: Source: S. Mutlu (Spring 1995), "The Population of Turkey by Ethnic Groups and Provinces," *New Perspectives on Turkey*, No. 12, p. 49.

Role of External Actors

The anomalous situation in northern Iraq provides the PKK with a temporary opening to Western news media and interest groups. The fact that the U.S., France, Britain, and Turkey protect the Kurds of northern Iraq against Saddam Hussein's wrath indirectly lends support to the broader "Kurdish cause," even if these governments are

not individually well disposed toward the PKK.[92] The plight of the Kurds, while different in each country nevertheless has been bleak; as long as Saddam's threat persists, foreign involvement will continue. The porousness of international borders and the demonstration effect of Iraqi Kurdish successes also nourish the Kurdish cause in Turkey; events in northern Iraq have always had an impact on Turkey's Kurds. Other secessionist or independence struggles many held dear by Turkey's leaders and public.

Critical to the PKK's success is the clandestine support it receives from other states. To the extent that the Kurdish question is Turkey's most vulnerable point, for the countries threatened by Turkey or with which Ankara has severe disagreements and conflicts, the PKK is a valuable tool with which to punish Turkey. Thus, Iran and Iraq certainly have major reasons to help fund the PKK. The Syrian regime was the foremost supporter of the PKK; it provides the PKK with training facilities in the Syrian-controlled Bekaa valley in Lebanon, and Ocalan shuttles between Damascus and the Bekka.

Role of Syria

Syria, which had tense relations with Turkey over territorial and water disputes, made the most of Ocalan's exile in Damascus and used him as a card against Ankara. Besides, other states hostile to Turkey such as Greece and Armenia also had unofficial contacts with the PKK and provide support to settle scores with Turkey. Finally, the Soviet Union had well-established contacts with the Turkish Left in the past; Russia today openly hosts PKK conferences in Moscow whenever Turkey pursues policies perceived by Moscow to be hostile to its interests. The Russian ability to support the PKK unquestionably places a damper on any Turkish government willingness to look too sympathetically at the Chechen resistance or pan-Turkish movements in Azerbaijan and Central Asia.

Since the early period following the 1980 military coup, the PKK received its greatest support from Syria. According to security sources, Abdullah Ocalan had, until

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[92] The French pulled out from the protective force, Operation Provide Comfort, when it was renegotiated with the Turkish government in January 1997 and renamed Operation Northern Watch.

his arrest, been living in Damascus; a privilege accorded no other terrorist leader. Pelletiere explains this development: "The PKK, after being purged by Turkey's army, fled to Syria where Assad took it under his protection. In 1983, he selected this group to participate in and ultimately to lead, the terror war against Turkey." As noted earlier, the PKK had not only managed to establish itself in Syrian controlled Lebanon, but also received Syrian military assistance. Syrian support for the PKK was driven by two factors. As Muslih noted, Turkey had been building a major dam over the Euphrates River for the southeastern Anatolian Project GAP, and Syria had long claimed that this dam might reduce the flow of the Euphrates below 500 cubic meters per second, although Turkey had guaranteed this level to Damascus. The second reason Muslih noted is that Syria considered Turkish sovereignty over Hatay (in the province of Antakya) as illegitimate. The extent of Syrian support for the PKK ultimately went so far that it was even argued that the PKK lost much of its organizational freedom.[93] such a loss raises the question of the legitimacy of the PKK in terms of whether it was fighting for the Kurds or acting for Syrian interests in the West Asia.

From the beginning of 1985 throughout the 1990s, there was much diplomatic traffic between Turkey and Syria in which the PKK was undoubtedly one of the major topics of discussion. As the reports of West Asia and Turkish officials suggest, Syria used the PKK as a trump card in negotiations over Turkey's project to dam the Euphrates River and use the water supply for the demands of the southeastern Anatolian project. When it needed Turkey more than it did the PKK, and when it realized that it could not deal with the Turkish military threat, Syria left the PKK alone.

Kurdish Diaspora in Germany

The hub of the PKK's external activities is in Germany, where a majority of the Kurds, who arrived there primarily as guest workers, reside. These guest workers were joined in the 1980s by large numbers of politically active Kurds escaping the military

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[93] Muslih, "Syria and Turkey: Uneasy Relations," in Barkey, *Reluctant Neighbor: Turkey's Role in the Middle East*, pp. 113–29.

regime installed on September 12, 1980. They provided the leadership and the organization for the guest workers. More important, they provided the link with the PKK and enabled it to mobilize and organize these Kurds. Though banned in Germany, the PKK routinely organizes large-scale demonstrations, sit-ins, hunger strikes, and the like. The efficacy of the organization and its later decision to attack Turkish targets, both those representing the Turkish state and Turkish nationalist organizations, ultimately led to its being banned. Yet it continues to operate actively under the guise of cultural and other forms of self-aid organizations. Even the anti-PKK Kurdish organizations in Germany readily concede that the PKK has managed to gain the support of an overwhelming segment, maybe 90 percent if not more, of the Kurdish population there. In addition to financing, the PKK also recruits would-be guerrillas among the Kurds in Europe and uses its Diasporas population as a political trump card of sorts. Clearly, the German government has been forced to coexist with the PKK on its soil, despite the ban on the organization. It has also engaged it in discussions at significant levels with the hope of curtailing its attacks on Turkish targets.[94]

The PKK has also put its financing to important use in the establishment of a PKK-dominated Kurdish-language TV station that operates by satellite transmission out of the U.K. The broadcasts are widely available to Kurds in Europe, Turkey, and even in northern Iraq by satellite. The station, called "Med-TV,"[95] provides daily news and commentary on the Kurdish world in both Kurdish and Turkish. It's reporting on the greater Kurdistan region employs traditional Kurdish names for places now renamed in Turkish, Arabic, or Persian such as Dersim for Tunceli in the southeast. Live reports from PKK commanders in the field are regularly broadcast, as well as announcements and ceremonies held by the PKK. Ocalan often participates, by telephone, in the talk shows and uses the broadcasts to convey messages and make important announcements. Other

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[94] In the fall of 1995, a conservative member of the German Bundestag and a high-ranking security official of Chancellor Helmut Kohl visited Ocalan in Damascus. Because Ocalan hungers for international acceptance, these visits may have helped defuse some of the violence on German soil.

[95] The name "Med" refers to the ancient *Medes* (of biblical "Medes and Persians"), who are believed by Kurds to have been the forerunners of the modern Kurds.

programs are devoted to Kurdish arts and music. Med-TV is an important source of alternative news and information about the PKK and things Kurdish. But most important, it fills a large cultural vacuum: This is the first time Kurds in Turkey have ever had television programming dedicated to aspects of their own culture. As a result, the programming commands a wide viewership. With the yearly rental cost of the transponder estimated at $6.5 million and a staff of two hundred,[96] the broadcasts represent an important financial outlay for the organization.

In view of Med-TV's large viewership, the government in Ankara has made combating it a major priority. Security forces in the southeast have tried to destroy satellite dishes and in some cases have even prosecuted people for watching the station.[97] Most of the government's efforts have been directed at convincing European countries not to lease transponder time on their satellites.[98] It finally succeeded in July 1996 in forcing the annulment of the contract the station had negotiated with a Portuguese firm; however, it appeared that by mid-August the station had found another outlet, this time a U.S.-based independent firm. Frustrated, Turkish officials have been considering electronic countermeasures and banning the use of satellite dishes in the southeast altogether.[99]

Kurdish Parliament in Exile

One of the most important indicators of tactical change in the PKK, however, has been the creation of the Kurdish Parliament in Exile (Su˙rgu˙ndeki Ku˙rt Parlamentosu,

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[96] *Turkish Daily News,* Ankara, June 26, 1996. While these figures supplied to the journalist by official sources may be somewhat inflated, they nevertheless give an indication of the resources the PKK has managed to marshal.

[97] In a recent case, a village headman who in the past had complained to the European Human Rights Court for relief was charged with engaging in "separatist activity" because he watched MED-TV, *Cumhuriyet,* June 22, 1996.

[98] France Telecom was threatened with exclusion from a proposed bid on a third cellular network being built by Turkey to convince it not to renew Med-TV's lease on one of its transponders. *Sabah,* June 12, 1996

[99] *Daily Zaman,* Ankara, February 2, 1997.

or KPE). The parliament sets itself the critical task of serving as the "authoritative representative of the Kurdish people" and the eventual interlocutor with the Turkish state in reaching an eventual settlement of the Kurdish problem in Turkey. It denies that it is an instrument of the PKK, although most of its members are at least sympathetic to the PKK, if not actual members. In fact, there are few identifiable elements within it that are clearly distinct from the PKK. The political wing of the PKK, the National Liberation Front of Kurdistan, ERNK, is a key element within KPE ranks,[100] although the leadership of the parliament states that the ERNK is expected to conform to political decisions taken by the parliament as a whole.

The KPE claims to represent Kurdish aspirations by being "elected" by all Kurds willing to participate in a vote while living outside of Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria. Some of the KPE's members, especially the Turkish ones, do in fact offer the organization an element of credibility, having been elected to the Turkish Parliament in the 1991 elections from the People's Labor party, HEP. The evolution of legal Kurdish representation and political parties is analyzed later. Suffice it to say here that HEP was banned by the state as was its successor, the Democracy party. After the DEP was banned, a number of DEP parliamentarians fled Turkey and sought refuge in Europe. It is they who have provided some of the core of the KPE.[101] Even though the PKK now speaks of a solution within the existing borders of Turkey, the Kurdish Parliament in Exile in its own program demonstrates considerable ambiguity in reflecting its own basically pan- Kurdish character. It ambitiously purports to be broadly representative of all Kurds in the world.

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[100] In fact, of the parliament's sixty-five members, ERNK is the largest group, with twelve, followed by the banned DEP with six. See Gu¨listan Gu¨rbey (1996), "Options for the Hindrances to a Resolution of the Kurdish Issue in Turkey," in Robert Olson, ed., *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement in the 1990s*, Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, pp. 31-33.

[101] Gu¨rbey argues that, in an ironic way, by banning the DEP the state pushed the party into the hands of the PKK. *Ibid.*

In order to legitimate itself to the maximum extent, the KPE has been careful to establish the trappings of democratic process and transparency of process in its founding. According to the parliament's own information bulletin, a Preparatory Commission was established in late 1994 to oversee the work of the parliament. The Preparatory Commission consisted of twenty-three individuals, of whom five were active members of the Turkish Parliament in exile because of proceedings that were opened against them and six other deputies (then still in prison) on grounds of linkage with a subversive organization (the PKK). In early January 1995 "elections" were reportedly held among Kurdish communities in Russia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, North America, and Australia to select delegates to the new parliament; elections inside Turkey were obviously impossible. Some sixty-five delegates were ultimately elected. The parliament reportedly represents many different political trends within Kurdish society, but in fact most of the non-PKK/ERNK members represent only relatively small splinter groups a few communists, a few Islamists, women's groups, and Alevi, Yezidi, and Assyrian Religious minorities.

Although the KPE dedicated to a political solution in Turkey, or to the broader issue of liberation for "all of Kurdistan" nearly all Kurdish groups, parties, and organizations demonstrate ambivalence on the question of "pan-Kurdism." It is necessary here to distinguish between "pan-Kurdish" as a political movement, which in principle would seek to found a single state comprising all Kurds, and a more modest cultural "pan-Kurdish" interest that would demonstrate a concern for the welfare of all Kurds and view their own political struggles for greater rights as having direct impact on the struggle of all other Kurds, therefore requiring regular contact and even some degree of political coordination. In actuality, nearly all Kurdish political movements today, including the PKK, state that they seek solutions only within existing state borders of the West Asia. The parliament in exile thus faces a serious representational problem. The two leading Iraqi Kurdish political parties, the Kurdistan Democratic party (KDP) led by Massoud Barzani and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) led by Jalal Talabani, have also declined affiliation with the KPE. The Iraqi Kurds' concerns reflect the same questions about the KPE: If it is a pan-Kurdish organization, then these Iraqi parties who

value their links with Ankara and Washington does not necessarily wish to link themselves to a pan-Kurdish agenda; if the KPE really speaks for Turkey's Kurds, then it is not appropriate for Iraqi Kurds to be involved. The mainstream Iranian Kurdish organizations have also not joined. In a sense, then, the KPE cannot be said to represent more than the PKK and a broader group of sympathizers who see it as the major vehicle of organized, internationally oriented Kurdish power. The absence of other serious Kurdish organizations at this point weakens its representational aspirations.

The KPE also suffers from its lack of recognition by any existing government in the world. Unlike the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which for years maintained "embassies" abroad and gained formal observer status in many international organizations, the KPE so far has not attained this status.[102] It has, however, gained the sympathy of a number of private international supporters from many European countries who are willing to lend their names to the Kurdish cause. KPE leaders recognize that they have a formidable task ahead of them in seeking diplomatic recognition; they may, over time, in fact come to gain greater recognition than at the present early stage of the diplomatic offensive depending on how the Turkish government reacts.[103]

In the end, then, the future of the KPE is uncertain. However this establishment of the KPE in Europe opens up an entirely different world to Kurdish political activists. Instead of operating as does the PKK in secret in the Bekaa valley in Lebanon, or conducting guerrilla operations in the mountains of the southeast, Kurds living in Europe have the freedom and opportunity to openly seek political goals through political

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[102] The KPE's dilemma is different from that of the Palestine Liberation Organization, which consistently placed primary emphasis on obtaining international recognition as part of its process of gaining legitimacy among all Palestinians. The PLO's search for international recognition was greatly facilitated by its near automatic acceptance by most Arab states, which accorded the PLO virtually the status of a government in exile. The PKK will not readily gain this kind of automatic international recognition.

[103] The goal of the KPE is to create a Kurdish National Congress (Ulusal Kongre), quite consciously modeled on the Jewish National Congress, which for so long served to keep the idea of the Zionist state alive in public opinion. The congress purportedly is to be a permanent body, higher than the KPE itself, designed to attract Kurds of all political persuasions and from all countries who are dedicated to the national cause.

organization. Indeed, the PKK's struggle may now be gradually shifting toward the political and diplomatic phase, in an effort to increase pressure upon the Turkish state from abroad. Such a task will require a new cadre of Kurdish activists, more open, more educated, more European, and more flexible. This cadre is likely to grow in number as the nature of the political struggle evolves.

Ocalan Factor

By all accounts, the PKK is very much Ocalan's creation. Although based in Damascus and the Bekaa of velly, Ocalan succeeded in imposing himself on the Kurdish psyche by sheer force, ruthlessness, and single-minded determination. There is he has a genuine following among rank-and-file Kurds, even those who do not belong to the PKK. Indeed, by all descriptions Ocalan is secretive, withdrawn, suspicious, and lacking in self-confidence. He does not like group discussion; his close associates reportedly seem uncomfortable around him. He does not treat others as equals and he often demeans his subordinates in front of others, demands self-confessions from his lieutenants, and keeps his distance from nearly everyone. Arguing that the movement started with self-criticism, developed with self-criticism, and that victory will result from continued self-criticism,[104] he used this notion effectively to maintain his hold on the organization and its membership. The lack of pluralism within the PKK is not surprising given its Marxist-Leninist roots. "Kurdish 'Marxism' in Turkey, like Turkish Marxism itself . . . offered little opportunity for political pluralism."[105] He has used his aloofness and harshness to create a charismatic image for himself. The Syrian connection notwithstanding, the fact remains that for the time being Ocalan is the uncontested leader of the PKK. Irrespective of the terrorist label that has stuck to him, he has achieved, at least among a significant

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[104] Wesanen Serxwebun, 1995, In fact, Ocalan devotes a whole chapter to this topic in his long and laborious report to the 5th General Congress of the PKK. Abdullah Ocalan, *PKK 5. Kongresi'ne Sunulan Politik Rapor* (The political report presented to the PKK's fifth congress),p.p. 263–322.

[105] Hamit Bozarslan (1992), "Political Aspects of the Kurdish Problem," in *The Kurds: A Contemporary Overview*, ed. P. G. Kreyenbroek and S. Sperl, New York and London: Routledge, p. 110.

segment of Turkey's Kurdish population, a stature that no other Turkish Kurdish personality has reached, certainly not since Sheikh Said.

Some Kurdish observers believe that Ocalan began to show considerably more maturity, realism, and balance since 1993, changing PKK positions on key issues from separatism to Marxism-Leninism. He first demonstrated this pragmatism in 1993 when he declared a unilateral cease-fire that was well received by the Turkish public and media.[106]The positive Turkish response was encouraged by then president Ozal, who even asked the HEP parliamentarians to attend the announcement of the cease-fire's renewal. The death of Ozal and the subsequent collapse of the cease-fire dashed any hopes of a cessation of hostilities. Ocalan again tried, but this time without success, to seize the initiative by declaring a unilateral cease-fire to coincide with the December 24, 1995, Turkish parliamentary elections. There has been speculation for some time about the absence of any PKK-related violence in the main cities of the country, where hundreds of thousands if not millions of Kurds reside, some of whom are fairly recent arrivals escaping the conflict. Among the reasons offered are the efficiency of the security services; the vulnerability of the daily lives of these Kurds, afraid to get involved in the violence from which they have yearned to escape; the lack of professional PKK cadres in the cities.

Impact of Kurdish Insurgency

The PKK decision in 1984 to begin its "armed struggle" pushed large parts of the region into violence and vastly increased the armed presence of the Turkish army, gendarmerie, Special Forces, police, and intelligence elements. Some Kurds argue that the emergence of the PKK actually worsened the situation for the Kurdish cause overall; it polarized the situation and reduced yet further the already limited organizational freedoms that the Kurds had gained as they sought to build national consciousness over the long term in non confrontational ways. The heavy military presence in the southeast

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[106] Even though he scored some impressive political points with the 1993 cease-fire, Ocalan later admitted that it was in part motivated by the need for the organization to take a breather and reorganize. Ocalan, *PKK 5. Kongresi'ne Sunulan Politik Rapor*, 327–28.

has significantly diminished other forms of Kurdish political activities as well, including demonstrations, shop closings, strikes, and other forms of civil disobedience. Beyond the difficulties of everyday life, the insurrection led by the PKK had deepened divisions within Kurdish society. Governmental attempts at recruiting village guards (see below) often pit village against village, hamlet against hamlet, and tribal organization against other tribal groupings as the PKK and the state compete for the support of individual villages. Even the feudal system that the PKK has vowed to dismantle may have received a boost, as the state and the PKK have both sought to recruit along tribal lines. If the Turkish-Kurdish struggle is one day resolved, the seeds for internecine Kurdish fighting may have been sown. In its early years of paramilitary operations, the PKK tended to act on the principle that "all those that are not with us are against us." The PKK struggled quite harshly against all other Kurdish groups and activists, and it railed against what it perceived as their minimalist goals or narrow ideological perspectives. In fact, it did not take on the Turkish state until it had virtually eliminated all other potential military rivals. In the eyes of the PKK's Kurdish opponents, the violent paramilitary character of PKK operations transformed the operating environment in very negative ways. The PKK has in fact tolerated those political parties it thought it could influence, or at the very least use. The first was the HEP, the People's Labor party, which was subsequently banned by the state after having succeeded in entering parliament in a temporary alliance with the social democrats. With the closing down of HEP, the same members formed the DEP, the Democracy party, which was subsequently also banned. Many of its parliamentary members, including the most famous of them, Leyla Zana, were imprisoned on charges of sedition. While they may have had strong sympathies for the PKK, these parties were not monolithic, containing pro-PKK as well as non-PKK elements.

Therefore, it is difficult to ascertain exactly the extent of the PKK's support among Kurds in Turkey.[107] Despite some of the deep divisions that the insurrection has generated, and whether or not Kurds approve of all the PKK's tactics or like its

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[107] In a 1992 interview, Ocalan suggested that the Kurds in the western part of Turkey ought to avoid violence and any activity that would harm them, and instead concentrate on political activities and joining unions. *2000'e Dogru*, March 15, 1992.

leadership, the PKK has imposed itself upon the Kurdish political scene as the single central reality and has dominated its dialogue for many years. As a result, few Kurds are in fact willing to oppose the PKK openly. While there are three reasons for this, they can be summarized as an absence of rivals or alternatives.

South-east Anatolian Project (GAP)

The Turkish government has lately recognized the centrality of the economic issue to Kurdish unrest. The South-east Anatolian Project (GAP) is aimed at regenerating the economy of the south-east. Countless other plans for rapid economic transformation have also been unveiled. The GAP, however, is more likely to benefit the larger landowners and tribal chiefs; in any case it does not cover all the areas of greatest support for the insurgency[108], and will not be economically significant until towards the end of the decade. Periodic announcements of new investment plans leave those in the region numb, and are likely to be greeted with wariness until it is proved that both the political will and the strength of the Turkish economy necessary to disperse such substantial sums exist.

In tactical terms, it might seem wise for Turkey to allow a moderate Kurdish opposition to emerge that could then eclipse the PKK, attracting the support of the majority of the Kurdish population via more moderate goals and methods. Such an alternative movement, one might argue, would severely undercut the support of the PKK. Indeed, Ocalan himself, in a long interview in May of 1991, demonstrated some of his greatest resistance to the idea of any Kurdish political alternative to the PKK. He viewed any alternative Kurdish political organization or moves to seek the support of the U.S. as a disguised attempt at liquidating the PKK and the Kurdish cause. Although he accepted that non-PKK political parties had a right to exist, he clearly viewed them as state-sponsored agents intended to divide the resistance. Despite Ocalan's clear sense of paranoia about potential rival movements emerging against him especially those created by the government there is no indication that the government has ever seriously tried to

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[108] GAP covers the six provinces of Adlyaman, Diyarbaksr, Gaziantep, Mardin, ,anhurfa and Siirt, and therefore not such provinces as Hakkari, Van, Bitlis ,Srnak and Batman.

implement this idea. In fact, in the eyes of many Kurds, the PKK actually turned out to be a kind of blessing for Turkish hardliners. It was easy for the state to rally domestic and international support against an enemy like the PKK. Many Kurds have observed that the Turkish government prefers to have the PKK as its enemy. A more moderate, cooperative, nonviolent, and attractive Kurdish leadership would make it much harder for the state to justify its own violent response and heavy handed policies in terms of domestic and international opinion.

Instead of Turkish government's systematic suppression of moderate Kurdish groups played into the hands of the PKK by exposing the "futility" of moderate behavior. Among such actions, the banning of HEP and DEP were the most radicalizing, as they did away with legally elected parties and members operating within the system. In fact, the state found that the most effective way of silencing Kurdish groups in general was through the legal system, which can impose harsh prison sentences and monetary damages often far beyond the means of defendants.[109]. The Turkish policy has clearly benefited the PKK, which, unlike other groups, relies on its military capabilities to make its point.

Regionalization of Kurdish Issue

From 1983 to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990, Turkey and Iraq cooperated closely to contain their respective Kurdish populations and Kurdish nationalism. Between 1983 and 1988 Turkey, with troops sometimes numbering up to 10,000 accompanied by extensive air power, made constant incursions into northern Iraq, especially in 1983, 1986 and 1987. These attacks were made with the consent and sometimes in coordination with Baghdad. While Turkish military operations against the Kurds in Iraq decreased or perhaps ceased after 1987 until its operations in 1991, Turkey and Iraq seemed to be cooperating against Kurdish nationalist organization sight up to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Cooperation between Turkey and Iraq against the

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[109] In fact, the state has been consistent in its pursuit of any kind of Kurdish activism, including the most peaceful, through the court system. Large trials occurred in the 1950s as well as in all the subsequent decades and individuals have been sentenced to long terms in prison for evoking Kurdish nationalist themes.

Kurdish as been rigorously pursued since the Turkish, Iraq and UK Treaty of 5 June 1926 of which 16 of its 18 articles dealt with measures for border security and control of the Kurds.

The regionalization and consolidation of Kurdish nationalist groups as a result of the Iraq-Iran war in the decade of the 1980s and the US-led coalition war against Iraq in early 1991 provided the Kurds with their most propitious opportunity to create an independent state or, at least, gain greater autonomy within the states in which they live, since the collapse of the Ottoman empire. There are, however, great impediments to the creation of a Kurdish state that would include the bulk of Kurds living within what the Kurds refer to as Kurdistan. The major obstacle to the creation of a Kurdish state is that an independent Kurdish state or even an autonomous Kurdistan would jeopardise the sovereignty as now accepted of large states such as Turkey, Iran and Iraq: a sovereignty that is very much intertwined with the national history of each of these countries.

Turkey has always feared the influence of events in Iraqi Kurdistan on the Kurds in its own midst. It has, therefore, not just opposed independence for Iraqi Kurds but has also been displeased by any discussion of federation or even autonomy for the Kurds of Iraq. Ankara's fears notwithstanding, the relationship between Turkish and Iraqi Kurds has not always been easily discernible. Separated by an international boundary and by regimes that have been anxious to limit the mobilizational potential of their respective Kurdish populations, the two Kurdish populations have been kept together by little else but family and tribal ties and cross-border trade. In the early 1920s, the new government in Ankara set its eyes on Mosul, the oil rich province of Iraqi Kurdistan then occupied by the British. Ankara quickly abandoned any claims it had, once the Shaykh Said revolt erupted in 1925. The Kemalists always suspected the British of having encouraged the revolt to discourage them from advancing their claim.[110] The creation of Iraq was particularly disruptive, as it divided the Kurmanji-speaking areas of Turkey from

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[110] The international boundary between Turkey and Iran is the oldest and most established of all of Turkey's frontiers. By contrast, the demarcation line with Syria and Iraq is a twentieth-century phenomenon.

Kurmanji-speaking parts of northern Iraq, stranding families, clans, and tribes on different sides of the international divide. Over the years, trade between the Kurds residing in different states continued at a much reduced level and assumed a contraband character. But there were attempts at political cross-fertilization: Kurdish students from different countries began to mingle among themselves in Europe in the 1960s, and there was an abortive attempt by Iraqi Kurdish students studying in Turkey to set up branches of their European organizations.

The political connection between Iraqi and Turkish Kurds was rekindled with the successes of Mullah Mustafa Barzani. As van Bruinessen argues, "Barzani in his lifetime became a legendary superhero, whose feats were sung and told in all corners of Kurdistan. . . . Admiration for, pride of, and consequently loyalty towards Barzani strengthened an awareness of Kurdish identity and loyalty towards the abstract idea of the Kurdish nation."[111] The fact that Barzani was a Kurmanji speaker from across the border, with close family connections, also helped his stature among Turkish Kurds. The Barzani movement, in victory and defeat, influenced Turkish Kurds and provided them with an impetus for their ethno-political activities. His military successes and his ability to force the Baghdad regime to accede to an autonomy agreement, such as the one reached on March 11, 1970 (the first one ever to be concluded by a sovereign state and the Kurds), reverberated throughout the Turkish Kurd population. Turkish Kurds clandestinely formed the Turkish Kurdistan Democratic party (TKDP) as the Turkish counterpart of Barzani's Iraqi-based organization. The TKDP managed to gather an impressive following before it fell into disunity mirroring events in Iraq and disappeared altogether in Turkey. The struggles between the leftist elements among Iraqi Kurds and the more traditional Barzani were replayed in Turkey. Similarly, the 1975 collapse of the Iraqi Kurdish revolt following the Algiers agreement between the shah of Iran and Saddam Hussein of Iraq that put an end to Iranian support for the Iraqi Kurds confirmed the trend toward radicalization among Turkey's politically active Kurds. Disillusioned with the capitalist-Western camp, Kurds in both Iraq and Turkey were further pushed in the

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[111] Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State,* 316.

direction of the Soviet Union and other Third-World liberation struggles, especially the Palestinian one.

To this day divisions among Iraqi Kurds, between Mullah Mustafa's son Massoud on the one hand and Jalal Talabani on the other continue to be reflected among Turkish Kurds. In 1975, Talabani left the Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party to form the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). Talabani, a Sorani speaker, represents the more urban middle and lower middle- class elements of Kurdish society, whereas Barzani's movement is more tribal and peasant based. The advent of the PKK has not changed the view of Turkish Kurds about Iraqi Kurdish politics. Turkish Kurds continue to be divided: Those who oppose the PKK remain attached to the Barzanis and regard Talabani as neither genuine nor trustworthy. They blame him for dividing the Iraqi Kurdish movement and betraying Mullah Mustafa Barzani. By contrast, PKK supporters and leftist Kurds belonging to parties such as HADEP, while not automatically pro-Talabani, are more positively disposed toward him. Barzani, insofar as he resembles the traditional conservative Turkish Kurdish elements, represents everything Ocalan is ideologically opposed to. Talabani has also had more of an influence on Ocalan. He was quite instrumental in getting Ocalan to consider the 1993 ceasefire and was present when Ocalan publicly renewed it. Talabani, to some extent, can afford to have a more balanced relationship with the PKK, since his territory does not abut Turkey as does Barzani's, although in the past (as in 1992) he did participate in anti-PKK military operations with the Ankara government.

Ironically, it was Saddam Hussein and the PKK who brought the Kurds in both countries closer together at least physically. Saddam's repression in the 1980s and 1990s caused large population movements from Iraqi Kurdistan toward Turkey. Because the revolt against Saddam in the aftermath of the Gulf War was so comprehensive it included not just the *peshmergas* but also civil servants, the middle classes, the professionals, and the peasantry the refugee flow into Turkey was much larger and different than before. Their suffering, which prompted international food drops, also mobilized Turkish Kurds. Local officials, without relying on Ankara's help, organized large food convoys for the

Iraqi Kurds. The refugee influx not only mobilized them but also further politicized them when they thought that Ankara was being less than generous.

On the other hand, the growth of the PKK and its use of northern Iraqi territory to base its fighters and supplies introduced a Turkish dimension into Iraqi Kurdish politics. During the Iran-Iraq War, Turkey signed a security agreement with Iraq that allowed Turkey to conduct operations against the PKK in Iraqi territory; the Turkish military has continued to intervene in the north almost at will and without Iraq's permission since the end of the Gulf War in 1991. These operations, especially air attacks, have not always ended up hitting PKK bases; sometimes they hit Iraqi Kurdish villages, causing casualties among their civilian populations. In effect, by traversing across the border into Iraq, the Turkish-Kurdish conflict is greatly influenced developments there and forcing the two Iraqi Kurdish parties to deal with the PKK.

The connection between the two areas is real, although this does not mean that one would necessarily emulate the other when it comes to political choices. Turkish Kurds are still very much interested in the fate of their brethren in northern Iraq, despite the failure of the two Kurdish factions to build upon their initial achievements after the conclusion of the Gulf War. Kurdish interest in the fate of the north is best seen during the debates over Turkey's renewal of the Operation Provide Comfort (OPC) mandate, the U.S.-led multinational force that has served since 1991 in northern Iraq to protect the Kurds from attacks by Saddam Hussein. The OPC, under attack from a variety of sources, including Islamists, nationalist elements among the center-left parties, and even indirectly from the military, which was anxious about the indefinite prolongation of such a force and its consequences for Turkish sovereignty, began to run into serious trouble in the Turkish parliament. The debates on its periodic six-month renewal assumed an increasingly vitriolic character, with OPC being accused of deliberately fomenting revolt by the PKK and other ills.[112] The resulting acrimony over the subject put parliamentarians of Kurdish origin, irrespective of their affiliation, in a quandary. While supporting the

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[112] The Turkish general staff, while publicly supportive of the operation, nevertheless was reluctant to completely commit itself to its continuation, in part because it hoped to obtain better terms from the U.S.

renewal of OPC's mandate, these parliamentarians found themselves in difficult situations when their parties required them to vote against any extension.

The advent of the Welfare-led government in June of 1996 ironically may have helped save the operation. Prime Minister Erbakan not only agreed to its extension but at the end of 1996 also gave his assent to a revamped admittedly less extensive OPC, renamed Operation Northern Watch. In the long run, the multinational force, which since January 1997 no longer includes France, is more threatened by developments in northern Iraq. Massoud Barzani's deal with Saddam Hussein in August/September 1996, which until he was pushed back allowed him to gain control of all of northern Iraq, underscored the limits of OPC and its successor force. While some Turkish Kurds welcomed the ascendancy of one faction over another, especially because their preferences were with Barzani in the first place, they were angered by the KDP's deal with Saddam, who was equally hated on both sides of the border. In the end, however, Turkish Kurds publicly supported an end to the conflict, and Welfare party's Kurdish members even initiated attempts at bridging the gap between the two Iraqi factions. The PKK, however, was wary of Operation Provide Comfort. Turkey's main source of arms used against the Kurds in the southeast, and the principal diplomatic support to Turkey in defending the government against European criticism that Turkey is violating human rights in the southeast.[113]

President Ozal, in his final years as President, decided to capitalize on the close connection between Iraqi and Turkish Kurds. By inviting the Kurdish leaders to Ankara, he sought an alternative way of defusing the conflict within Turkey. Working on the assumption that any move by Turkey designed to help the Kurdish enclave Northern Iraq would be well received among Turkish Kurds, Ozal started to lay the groundwork for a strengthened relationship between Ankara and Iraqi Kurds. This would demonstrate to

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[113] See interview with Ocalan in *al-Hayat* reprinted in *Mideast Mirror*, November 20, 1995.

the Kurds in Turkey that the Turkish state was not necessarily hostile to Kurds, but just to the violence perpetrated by the PKK. It was largely a symbolic move.

According to some estimates, this armed conflict took a toll of more than 37,000 lives and cost more than 200 billion US dollars. After about 15 years of intense fighting and about a dozen cross-border campaigns, Turkey managed to force the Syrian government to expel Abdullah Öcalan out of Damascus in 1998, by directly threatening to invade Syria. After about a year of traveling from country to country, including Russia, Greece and Italy, Öcalan was finally captured in Kenya on his way out of the Greek Embassy in Nairobi and was delivered to Turkish operatives. During his trials, Ocalan did not offer a legal defense. "There are enough reasons to accuse me of wrongdoing," he stated, but added that "we must learn from our mistakes and learn to achieve peace." He declared that violence and fighting for an independent state were wrong and that Turks and Kurds, who had shared the same homeland for a thousand years, ought to work together toward reconciliation and democratization.

At the time of the 1999 elections, it was widely believed that each body bag bringing a soldier home from the east brought added votes to the MHP, which emerged as the second largest party with 18.6 percent of the vote. The opposition currently consists of the Islam-oriented Virtue Party and the dwindling True Path Party (DYP) of Tansu "iller. Both these parties have consistently advocated the execution of Abdullah Ocalan, whose death sentence by a Turkish tribunal is under review by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). The Virtue Party, like its predecessor, the Welfare Party, saw the Kurds as Muslims and accept them so long as they do not emphasize their ethnic identity, which it regards as running counter to Islamic brotherhood. The DYP is opportunistic and sees the delay of Ocalan's execution as an issue that it can use to score points against the government. While advocating Turkish entry into the EU, it insists on an initiative that would sever Turkey from Europe. In such a political climate, pressure for further democratization and for a solution of the Kurdish problem can only come from external sources like the European Union and the United States.

Chapter-3

Shift in Turkish Approach to Kurdish Issue

As discussed in the previous chapter, Turkey's war against the PKK since the latter launched guerrilla campaign in 1984 against the state grew bigger over the years, but the revolt showed no signs of petering out. Contrarily, the PKK's terrorist attacks stretched beyond the south-eastern Turkey where it had based its armed struggle for a homeland of over 12 million Kurds who make up fifth of the country's population. The absence of strong state authority in northern Iraq in the wake of Iraq's Gulf crisis defeat in 1991 and the power vacuum created there by an internecine factional fighting among the Iraqi Kurds benefited the PKK partisans, particularly in consolidating their forward bases close to Turkey's border region. Backed by the logistic support from Iran and its Iraqi surrogate, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), the PKK persisted with its cross-border attacks against the Turkish targets. At the same time, the Turkish military's attempt to establish a 'security zone' in northern Iraq similar to one set up by the Israeli forces in southern Lebanon was not approved by the allied forces led by the US. Consequently, the issue of Kurds until the dramatic capture of the PKK leader in 1999 remained an enduring source of Turkey's security.

In any case, Turkey's military approach to the issue of Kurdish ethno-nationalism was seen by many analysts as an expression of its weakness rather than strength. For a state unable to achieve consensus politically will remain fragile.[114] In fact, it was an increasing schizophrenic attitude of the Turkish state that strengthened the symbolic value of the PKK, the only surviving organisation that upheld the concept of Kurdish identity. Even though the PKK did not possess resources and the kind of international support to transform the movement into a Kurdish *intifada*, it won a significant political victory by forcing the Turkey's political elite, known for their strong mono-ethnic tendency, to acknowledge what then Turkish Premier Suleyman Demirel in December 1991 called the "Kurdish reality."[115] Two years later, the new Prime Minister, Tansu Ciller, broached the "Basque model" as a potential formula for solving Turkey's Kurdish

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[114] David McDowell (1997), *A Modern History of the Kurds*, London: I.B. Taurus, p. 309

[115] "Kurdish Reality Recognized" (December 9, 1991), Ankara Anatolia in English, 1505 GMT, December 8, 1991, as cited in *Foreign Broadcast Information Service — West Europe*, p. 55.

problem after a meeting with the Spanish prime minister.[116] In December 1999, the former Prime Minister, Mesut Yilmaz declared that "the road to the EU passes through Diyarbakir,"[117] the largest city in Turkey's southeast and long considered the unofficial capital of the historic Kurdish provinces in Turkey. Finally, in August 2005, the current prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, declared that Turkey had a "Kurdish problem," had made "grave mistakes" in the past, and now needed "more democracy to solve the problem."[118]

It is worth mentioning that prior to the 1990s, the term 'Kurd' in the official discourse was used relatively freely but in reference to Kurds outside Turkey, mainly Iraq's Kurdish leaders. This change took place, according to an analyst, because people had accepted Kurdishness on a private and individual level.[119] The Gulf War of 1991 and the developments in Iraq made it impossible to ignore the "Kurdish realty." Following the capture of the PKK leader in 1999 and its public declaration to renounce armed struggle for a separate state, not only a elative peace prevailed in the south-eastern parts of Turkey, but the problem of Kurds began to be treated as political rather than a security or "existential threat" in the state discourse and even in the public debate. What contributed to the shift in Turkish approach towards the Kurdish issue were two other promising developments: recognition of Turkey's candidate status by the European Union (EU) at its Helsinki Council meeting in December 1999, and the landslide victory of the pro-Islamic Justice and Development Party, known by its Turkish acronym as the AKP in the national elections in November 2002. The bulk of this chapter is devoted to a critical analysis of the implications of the two developments on the overall Turkey's Kurdish policy in the past decade. Besides, the discussion will also focus on Turkey's response to

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[116] Henri J. Barkey and Graham E. Fuller (1998), *Turkey's Kurdish Question*, Lanham: Rowman and Liitlefield Publishers, p. 137

[117] "Road to EU Passes through Diyarbakir" (December 17, 1999), *Turkish Daily News*

[118] "The Sun Also Rises in the South East," *Briefing* (Ankara), August 15, 2005.

[119] See Murat Somer (2004), "Turkey's Kurdish Conflict: Changing Context, Domestic and Regional Implications", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 58, no. 2, pp. 246-249.

the 2003 March US invasion of Iraq in the backdrop of its refusal to allow the US troops to pass through the territory during the Iraq war.

Capture of Ocalan and Its Aftermath

The dramatic capture by Turkish commandos in February 1999 in Nairobi marked a new phase in Turkey's struggle with the PKK. It set off a process of implicit bargaining between the Turkish government and the PKK's political fronts that held out the hope of a win-win result for all the parties involved. The Kurdish political party, HADEP, for instance, suggested that 'first of all, general amnesty should be declared'. Then, 'a new constitution with a consensus in accordance with today's universal standards and the democratization of all laws, primarily criminal law, will be the issues that we will pursue'. Specifics 'include the recognition of the Kurdish identity, practicing cultural rights, and the right to have education in Kurdish'. Other goals involved the right of Kurds to return to their villages, the lifting of Emergency Rule (OHAL) and changes in the electoral system that will permit every political party to be represented in the parliament according to the vote it has received. This latter provision meant rescinding the 10 percent rule that eliminated parties such as HADEP from receiving any representation at all. Meanwhile, the captured PKK leader had declared that violence and fighting for an independent state were wrong and that Turks and Kurds, who had shared the same homeland for a thousand years, ought to work together toward reconciliation and democratization. He offered his services to the state in order to achieve these ends, noting that he could perform these services only if he were allowed to live. To add credibility to his statements, he ordered PKK fighters to lay down their arms, and a short time later called on them to leave Turkey.[120] At its extraordinary 7th party congress held 2-23 January 2000, the PKK adopted a 'Peace Project' which incorporated several of these points.[121] Other main points announced by the PKK included securing the life and

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[120] Michael M. Gunter, (1998) "Abdullah Ocalan: We Are Fighting Turks Everywhere," *Middle East Quarterly*,

[121] 'Brief statement on PKK "Peace Project"', released by the *Kurdish Information Centre*, London, 4 April 2000, accessed over the Internet.

freedom of Ocalan, increased investment in the southeast, and preservation of historic and environmental treasures threatened by the Ilisu Dam in the southeast.

Turkish government, however, chose to pursue its own agenda. Unfortunately, there were powerful forces in Turkey opposed to democratization and even an end to the war on Kurdish terror. On 19 February 2000, for example, three main HADEP majors were suddenly arrested and accused of supporting the PKK: Feridun Celik of Diyarbakir, Selim Ozalp of Siirt and Bingol mayor Feyzullah Karasslan. Although they were quickly released and allowed to return to their jobs, their trial began two months later. Daniel Cohn-Bendit, the co-chairman of the Turkey-EU Parliamentary Commission, was initially denied permission to visit the imprisoned Leyla Zana, a decision then reversed. The CNN TV affiliate in Turkey was ordered off the air for 24 hours because it asked whether history might one day regard Ocalan as a Turkish version of Nelson Mandela. Ocalan himself was no longer permitted to make statements to the press, and access to his lawyers was reduced. [122] Interestingly, then Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit continued to argue that Kurdish was not a language, only a dialect, and that there was no Kurdish ethnic problem in Turkey, only a question of economic development in the southeast. Despite the PKK's abandonment of the guerrilla struggle, emergency rule in several southeastern provinces continued and the village guards have not been disbanded. Indeed, in April 2000 the Turkish military attacked PKK units in northern Iraq. In addition, it appeared that there would be no peace dividend, as the Turkish military planned to increase spending on modernization and the purchase of tanks and helicopters.

Furthermore, the March celebration of the Kurdish holiday Newroz in Istanbul was banned by the governor Erol Cakir because the application for permission used the non-Turkish letter 'w' in the word 'Newroz', instead of the preferred Turkish spelling 'Nevroz', Ludicrously, of course, the letter 'w' appeared on the door of virtually every public toilet in Turkey. Crude threats led to prominent Turkish sociologist Serif Mardin deciding not to participate in an international conference on the Kurds sponsored by the

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[122] See Gunter, "Abdullah Ocalan"

American University in Washington, DC on 17 April 2000. Likewise, Turkish High Court of Appeals in November 1999 rejected Ocalan's lawyers' appeal of his death sentence. However, EU recognition on 11 December 1999 of Turkey's candidacy for membership altered the government's attitude toward his execution. The European Commission for Human Rights (ECHR) demanded that Ocalan's execution be suspended until it had completed its review of the verdict. Under heavy outside pressure and after long deliberation, Turkey acquiesced to the ECHR's demand on two conditions: that the PKK halt all hostilities against Turkish targets and that Ocalan stop speaking out from his prison cell.

Issue of Turkey's EU Membership

In December 1999, the European Union finally accepted Turkey as a candidate member. To become part of Europe is Turkey's long-cherished goal since its very inception. A significant part of Ataturk's reforms in the early years of the Republic was in fact aimed at "destroying the symbols of Ottoman-Islamic civilization, and substituting them with their Western counterparts."[123] It was thus in pursuit of gaining recognition of its western/European identity that Turkey in 1959 applied for membership, two years after the establishment of the European Economic Community (EEC). It became an associate member with the signing of the Ankara Agreement in September 1963, which came into effect in December 1964. The agreement outlined a process by which Turkey was to achieve a customs union with the Community, possibly to be followed by full-fledged membership. Interestingly, Turkish decision-makers during this period saw no distinctions between their country's membership of the new EEC and military ties with the NATO or politico-cultural associations with a host of other European institutions. In the 1970s, however, Turkey's relations with the EC were soured, especially when the then Turkish Premier Bulent Ecevit unilaterally froze the Ankara Agreement in 1978.

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[123] Binnaz Toprak (1993), "The Religious Right" in Albert Hourani (ed.), *The Modern Middle East: A Reader*, London: I.B. Tauris, p. 631.

Few years later, the European Parliament reacting to the September 1980 military coup in Turkey suspended the Association.

With the progress of civilianization of the post-coup regime in the later half of the 1980s and Turkey's successful transition to export-oriented market economy, Prime Minister Turgut Ozal applied for full membership of the EC in April 1987, which was rejected in December 1989. In the post Cold War years, recognizing Turkey's strategic saliency, and its progress in economic liberalisation and integration into global market, the EU leaders initiated dialogue with the Tansu Ciller government, which resulted in the signing of the Custom Union Agreement in March 1995. While entry into the Custom Union raised hope for Turkey's EU integration, the decision of the European Council at its December 1997 Luxembourg summit not to include Turkey in the EU's enlargement process disappointed the Turkish leaders.[124] Finally, at the Helsinki summit of the European Council in December 1999 Turkey was granted the candidate status but without any definite time set for the start of accession talks. In explaining the EU's turn-around on the issue of Turkey's membership, analysts have highlighted variety of factors, namely the intense U.S. diplomatic pressure, a relatively stable government in Ankara led by the veteran social democrat Bulent Ecevit, capture of the separatist Kurdish leader Abdullah Ocalan, warming of Turkish-Greek relations following the 1999 earthquake and Ankara's positive response to the 1998 annual report prepared by the EU Commission in carrying out appropriate changes in law related to torture and ill-treatment.[125]

Unlike other candidate countries, Turkey was, however, required to meet the Copenhagen political criteria before beginning the accession negotiations. Aspiring for long to become part of the EU, Turkey accepted the candidacy status and committed itself to comply with the accession criteria by adjusting its political system to the EU's norms of liberal democracy. Until Turkey successfully implemented the so called

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[124] See Meltem Muftuler-Bac (1999), "The Never-Ending Story: Turkey and the European Union" in Syilvia Kedourie ed., *Turkey Before and After Ataturk*, London: Frank Cass, pp. 53-68.

[125] See Aswini K. Mohapatra (2011), "Turkey's Transition to Liberal Democracy and the Issue of Its EU Membership", *India Quarterly*, Vol. 67, no. 2, pp. 149- 164.

Copenhagen Criteria of minority rights for its Kurdish ethnic population and suspended Ocalan's death sentence to conform to EU standards that ban capital punishment, however, it was clear that Turkey's long-treasured candidacy would only be a pipe dream. Although the election of Ahmet Necdet Sezer, a reform minded judge, as Turkey's new president (successor of Turkey's veteran politician, Suleyman Demirel) in May 2000 demonstrated a willingness to seek new, bold approaches, there were influential forces in Turkey opposed to further democratization, because they feared it would threaten their privileged positions and Turkey's territorial integrity. Nevertheless, there were positive signs indicative of change in Turkey's approach towards Kurdish problem.

For example, in March 2000 when the General Board of the Civil Panels of the Supreme Court of Appeals for the first time permitted the use of names of Kurdish origin after a long legal battle. Despite the problem in Istanbul noted above, March 2000 also saw a general willingness throughout Turkey to tolerate the Kurdish festival, *Newroz* celebrations previously banned because of their association with the Kurdish national cause. This 'bizarre bazaar' of implicit bargaining and uncertain policy responses within the Turkish political system over how to proceed with its continuing Kurdish problem and now closely related EU candidacy will probably continue for the foreseeable future. [126] Likewise, the reform legislation in August 2002 that allowed significant cultural-linguistic rights to ethnic Kurds, such as broadcasting in and teaching Kurdish, and the commutation of Ocalan's death sentence to life imprisonment in October 2002 were the unprecedented steps forward for Turkey in the direction of the normalization of the Kurdish conflict via demilitarization and liberal democracy.

With the adoption of the Accession Partnership Agreement by the European Council in March 2001 and announcement of the National Programme outlining specific reforms to be carried out to meet the requirements of the EU *Acquis* by the coalition government, Turkey came closer to the EU than ever before. At the same time, Turkey and the EU finally solved their dispute over the European security and defence policy

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[126] "Dialogue limps along with EU visitors", *Briefing*, Ankara, 10 April 2000, p 12.

(ESDP) in 2002,[127] and the decision adopted at the Copenhagen summit in December 2002 for the first time overtly stated that accession talks with Turkey should start without further delay, provided that the European Commission report of late 2004 recommended this.[128]

Rise of the AKP to Power

The third major development during this period was the victory of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in the November 2002 elections. An off-shoot of the Islamic Welfare Party, which was banned in 1997, won over 34 percent of popular votes and 563 out of 550 seats in Parliament to form a single party government in Turkey since 1987. Although the accession to power in Ankara of an Islamist political party in November 2002 raised concerns of many western governments about the future direction of Turkish politics, such concerns proved unwarranted. For the majority of the people who voted for the AKP, the reason was not the Islamist agenda of the party, but its pro- European/pro-western international outlook and neoliberal economic policies. The failure of the old parties to deliver economic success and the shifting of the economic centre from the Istanbul-based TUSIAD to the Anatolian Tigers contributed to the electoral triumph of the AKP.[129] It is, however, important to note that the AKP was perceived as an anti-establishment party and during the campaign in the Kurdish-populated region it stressed opposition to the official ideology by appealing for united struggle against oppression of

[127] It may be noted that Turkey during the NATO summit in Washington DC in April 1999 had effectively vetoed the European allies' European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI) proposal on agenda setting in NATO. The ESDI called for a future 50-60 thousand strong EU rapid deployment force that would have access to NATO equipment, especially the heavy lift capability and intelligence of the Alliance. Turkey viewed these proposals as another attempt by the EU to marginalize further Turkey's participation in European affairs and blocked NATO's approval of the proposal.

[128] See Ergun Ozbudun and Omer Faruk Genckaya (2009), *Democratization and the Politics of Constitution-Making in Turkey*, Budapest: Central European University Press, pp. 90-94.

[129] Anatolian Tigers is the name used for the medium- and small-sized economic entrepreneurs located in different parts of Anatolia, rather than Istanbul. They are assumed to challenge the Istanbul-based TUSIAD. Compared to the members of TUSIAD, the Anatolian Tigers are more sensitive to Islam and Turkey's conservative norms. E. Fuat Keyman and Ziya Onis, (2003) "A new path emerges," The Journal of Democracy\4, no. 2: 95-107.

the Kemalist state ideology.[130] Although committed to preserving Islam's social base (traditional values, practices and norms), the JDP leaders have rejected any project of 'social engineering' by using political power to transform society in accordance with the precepts of a certain ideology.[131] More importantly, the JDP, unlike its predecessors, has adopted a platform of staunch support for Turkish integration into global economy, membership in European Union, and overall alignment with the West. Commenting on the second successive victory of the ruling AKP in the July 2007 general elections, a Turkish commentator wrote:

The result is a clear vindication of the AK Party's performance. It is a "yes" to democratic reforms, a "yes" to a market economy and open society; it is a "yes" to the EU membership process and opening up to the world.[132]

There are several reasons why the AKP leadership views membership in the EU to be a key national interest for Turkey, particularly when assessed in terms of national security. The first is that Turkey can most effectively cope with the security challenges and risks of the globalization process by integrating with the global community through the EU accession process. For Turkey to avoid fragmentation or dismemberment through globalization, the safest strategy is to evolve into a liberal-pluralistic democracy. [133] Equally importantly, Turkey would be better able to deal with the centrifugal effects of globalization as a result of EU membership. If threats and risks to individual and societal needs are far more important than the traditional threats to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, Turkey will more easily address this new security understanding by

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[130] Hakan Yavuz and Nihat Ali Ozcan (2006), "The Kurdish Question and Turkey's Justice and Development Party", *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 108-109

[131] On the political rise of the JDP, see Ersin Kalaycioglu (June 2007), "Politics of Conservatism in Turkey", *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 233 -252.

[132] The JDP scored a landside victory, winning 341 seats and 46.6 per cent of popular vote in the July 2007 Ihsan Dagi, 'The Democratic Reflex', *Today's Zaman*, July 24, 2007 at http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/yazarDetay.do?haberno=117388.

[133] Kemal Kirisci, (March 2004) "Between Europe and the Middle East: The transformation of Turkish politics," *MERIA Journals*, no. 1.

trying to meet the EU's accession criteria, for the EU's conception of security dearly shapes these criteria. The idea that more security would come through more freedom and devolution of sovereignty to nonstate actors is prevalent within the EU and Turkey is slowly adopting the same outlook. Globalization through Europeanization does not mean that the capacity of the Turkish state to deal with new kind of threats would decrease. Indeed, the Turkish state's ability in this regard would likely increase. [134] The third reason for the AKP's interest in the EU is purely economic. It is quite likely that Turkey would attract new foreign investment if it is viewed as politically stable and a member of the western community of states.

The war on terror is also a factor behind the AKP's position. During the ongoing war, Ankara's membership in the EU will assist in increasing both its hard and soft power resources. For those who make this argument, EU membership might well assist the Greater Middle East project recently announced by the US, for the main reason that Turkey is the clearest example of a working democracy in the Islamic world.[135] The attractiveness of the Turkish model in the Islamic world is, nevertheless, more complicated than most commentators appreciate, and is contingent on the successful implementation of the reforms required by the EU's accession process.

Last but not the least, balance of power thinking is another reason for the AKP's support to membership in the EU. It is reasonable to assume that Turkey would increase its bargaining power vis-a-vis the United States by improving the quality of its relations with the EU. Given that the degree of interdependency of US-Turkish relations is highly favorable to the United States, a weak and non-Europeanizing Turkey would not be able to stand up to American demands. The 2003 Iraqi crisis demonstrated the fragile relationship between the US and Turkey, as they could not cooperate due to the existence

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[134] Priest and the Commander: Turkey's Identity Question at the Intersection of Freedom and Security, Istanbul: Alfa Yayinlari, 2004.

[135] Omer Taspinar, (2000) "An uneven fit? The Turkish model' and the Arab world: US policy towards the Islamic world," The Brookings Institution, analysis paper no. 5, August, www.brook-ings.org; and Graham E. Fuller, (summer 2004), "Turkey's strategic model: Myths and realities," *The Washington Quarterly 27*: 51-64.

of mutual suspicions over each other's real intentions. The EU played a balancing role in this regard mainly because of the fact that the Turkish leadership paid close attention to the Europeans before formulating its own view, particularly concerning the American demands to use Turkey's territory as a launching pad. In Iraq, Turkey and several of the EU members shared similar interests. For both, any US-led war to topple Saddam was viewed as illegitimate and unnecessary. While Turkey was wary of the possibility that any war in Iraq might lead to the emergence of an independent Kurdish state, many EU members were concerned that the US might resort to unilateral security actions elsewhere.[136]

The EU factor would also play a balancing role in another sense. If Turkey did not have a Kurdish problem at home, it would have certainly faced the US demands more confidently. The EU is important here because only through the reforms under-taken during the EU membership process can Turkey resolve its Kurdish dispute. If the Kurdish problem were solved, Turkey's relevance to the United States will be far less dependent o n Turkey's military capabilities and geostrategic location, as used to be the case, and more on its identity as a Muslim democracy. Indeed, Turkey's attractiveness as a US ally in the war on terror, as well as Ankara's ability to negotiate with foreign governments, would likely increase if Turkey could solve its internal (mainly radical Islamist and separatist Kurdish) security problems through pluralization and liberalization of domestic political order.[137] In other words, closer integration with the EU, including membership,

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[136] Turkey and the EU not only have similar policies on Iraq, but they also share similar views on how to pursue relations with Iran, and how to contribute to the democratization of the greater West Asian region. Rather than labelling Iran as part of an "axis of evil and urging coercive measures against it, both Turkey and the EU concur that a policy of constructive engagement or a critical dialogue based on credible incentives and costly punishments would likely yield better results in terms of cooperation on nonproliferation of WMD. Both Ankara and EU capitals believe the idea that external pressures, coercive strategies, and an immediate regime change would not likely result in true democratization. Instead, both hold that a long-term strategy of economic development and political liberalization, especially emanating from internal dynamics, would more likely result in democratization in the years ahead.

[137] H. Tarik Oguzlu, (Spring 2004), "Changing dynamics of Turkey's US and EU Relations", The Middle East Policy, pp. 98-105.

would, according to the AKP leadership, assist in removing political vulnerabilities that currently limit Turkey's foreign policy options.

It is also important to note here that the current government's pro-EU positions on domestic and foreign issues have been embraced, not only by figures in the AKP, but also by the allegedly more Euro skeptic Turkish generals. Many senior military commanders now view Turkey's membership in the EU as being in the country's interest, and this attitude is becoming more entrenched. Both the political elite and the military establishment have started to see the reforms undertaken within the EU accession process as strengthening Ankara's international profile. Indeed, statements by many senior generals indicate that the Turkish armed forces (TAF) have began to define Turkey' security identity and interests in a way consistent with EU norms and principles.[138] The new emphasis on economic development and political liberalization at home, and participation in multilateral peacekeeping operations and the use of economic diplomacy abroad, attest to this changing rationale. This attitude helps explain the acceptance of radical cuts in defence budgets, as well as reducing the overt political profile of the armed forces. While some observers, both at home and abroad, still believe that the TAF opposes the EU related reforms, in fact the opposite is the case. The TAF is only suspicious of the potentially negative impact such reforms might have on Ataturk's legacy should Turkey's efforts not be reciprocated by the EU.[139]

Democratization Process under the AKP

Predictably, the pace of democratic reforms initiated by the tripartite coalition government in 2001 gained momentum with the JDP coming to power. Committed to pro-EU reform agenda, Prime Minister Erdogan used his party's parliamentary majority to pass a string of constitutional amendments and legal packages apart from taking steps

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[138] Kemal Kirisci and Zeynep Culsah Capan (Summer 2004), "Turkey on the edges of convention on the future of Europe", *South European Society and Politics, Vol. 9, pp. 173-91.*

[139] Speech by deputy chief of staff, Yasar Buyukanit, conference on globalization and security, Turkish War Academy, 29-30 May 2003 at www.tsk.mil.tr.

to ensure their implementation. In response to the decision of the December 2002 European Council summit in Copenhagen Council, the AKP government carried out extensive constitutional and legislative changes in line with the priorities set out in the revised Accession Partnership Document of May 2003.[140] In the first three years after coming to power, the ruling AKP adopted six harmonization packages in addition to the 2004 constitutional revision involving ten articles. The landmark transformations that these reform packages brought about include the abolition of death penalty under all circumstances, closure of the controversial State Security Courts, prevention of torture and ill-treatment, expansion of freedom of expression by repealing the notorious Article 8 of the Anti-Terror Act often used for harassing journalists and publishers, restructuring of the once-powerful National Security Council (NSC) and removal of military personnel from civilian courts and the Higher Education Council.[141] Besides, the Turkish Parliament also ratified several international and European Conventions including the Protocol 6 of the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR), and passed the new Penal Code in September 2004, which introduced major improvements in the area of human rights.

By the end of 2004, Turkey had "sufficiently fulfilled" the Copenhagen political criteria, the impact of which was glaringly visible in the pro-active role of the civil society groups and public debate over such sensitive issues as the cultural autonomy of the Kurds and the 1915 Armenian "genocide."[142] Thus, at the December 2004 Brussels summit, the European Union agreed to start the accession talks with Turkey in October

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[140] The revised Accession Partnership was adopted by the European Commission based on the reviews of the 2001 and 2002 Progress Reports. It underlined priority areas which Turkey was expected to address in order to qualify for accession talks.

[141] For the recent changes in the Turkish military's political role, see Ersel Aydinli (2009), "A Paradigmatic Shift for the Turkish Generals and an End to the Coup Era in Turkey", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 63, no. 4, Autumn, pp. 581-596.

[142] During the World War I, it is claimed that as many as 1.5 million Armenians were systematically slaughtered or sent into exile by the Ottoman government in a campaign of deliberate genocide. Turkish government, however, argues that only 300, 000 Armenians were killed as part of an armed struggle in which both sides suffered causalities.

2005 pending Turkey's prior approval of extending the customs union agreement to the recently admitted 10 EU members, including the Republic of Cyprus. However promising such developments might appear for achieving Ankara's long-held goal of EU membership, problems remain. Although the accession talks formally started in late 2005 Turkey's status due did not radically improve in spite of its impressive democratization performance. Consequently, Turkey's eventual accession was tied to several non-Copenhagen criteria related conditions including, *inter alia*, the EU's absorption capacity and affirmative votes of European nationals.[143] Besides, the EU also made it clear that accession negotiations would involve an "open-ended" process in which the outcome could not be predicted beforehand.

The uncertainty surrounding Turkey's entry into the Union reduced incentives for the ruling AKP to push ahead with its reform agenda. Once skepticism about the EU membership set in, public support for the painful domestic reforms showed signs of progressive decline. With the "EU-phoria" receding, the state-centred, hard-line secularists raised the spectre of the AKP's secret Islamicizing agenda and sought the closure of the party in March 2008 following its initiative to lift the headscarf ban on female university students.[144] While the main opposition Republican People's Party (RPP) launched a fierce campaign against the proposed new constitution, the Turkish

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[143] Some European leaders even put forward the proposals for a "special enhanced relationship" with Turkey   instead of full membership. For the "Negotiations Framework Document prepared by the European   Commission"   on   the   eve   of   the   October   2005   accession   talks,   see http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/turkey/st2002_05_tr_framedoc_en.pdf.

[144] The headscarf issue together with the government's abortive attempt to improve the status of the *Imam-Hatip* schools in 2004 provided the grounds for the Chief Public Prosecutor's indictment against the AKP's anti-secular activities. Although the demand was for the closure of the AKP, the Constitutional Court held that the AKP had violated constitutional prohibitions and decided to deprive it partially of state funding.   Michael M. Gunter and M. Hakan Yavuz, (2007), "Turkish Paradox: Progressive Islamists versus Reactionary Secularists", *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 16, no. 3, Fall, pp. 289-301.

military already uncomfortable with some key elements of the EU's conditionality joined the civilian opponents in confronting the AKP. During the presidential election in April 2007, the military issued a dire warning to the government by way of a late-night posting on the website of the Turkish General Staff over the election of a President whose wife wears the headscarf. The e-memorandum was followed by stunning allegations of a plot involving *Ergenekon* – a sinister network of serving and retired military officers, intelligence operatives, journalists, businessmen and lawyers and judges - to foment wide-scale violence and provoke the military to step in.[145] Amidst the political polarization and intense power struggle, the EU-driven reform process in Turkey virtually stagnated since the end of 2005. The September 12 Turkish referendum on the constitutional amendment package has ironically deepened social fragmentation, rendering it all the more difficult for the governing AKP to build a broad consensus on its democratization project.[146]

EU Assessment of Democratization

A year after EU accession talks began in 2005, only one-third of Turkey's population dramatically fewer than merely a year earlier still believed their state should join the EU.[147] This negativity was mirrored in the EU itself, where a survey in June 2006 showed that 55 percent of the population opposed Turkish membership. In Austria, where memories of the Turkish siege of Vienna in 1683 still linger, 81 percent opposed Turkish membership. Turkey's nationalist-statist domestic elite has joined its nationalist-

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[145] On *Ergenekon*, see Gareth H. Jenkins (2009), *Between Facts and Fantasy: Turkey's Ergenekon Investigation*, Washington, DC: John Hopkins University SAIS, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. On another coup plan called "sledgehammer" published in a Turkish daily, see Ihsan Dagi (January 25, 2010), "When the Turkish Military Becomes a Threat", *Today's Zaman*.

[146] While the constitutional reforms promoted by the ruling AKP won 58 percent approval vote in the referendum, the 42 percent no vote is indicative of the fierce battle over how to define Turkey's political system and values. See Saban Kardas (September 20, 2010), "Referendum Deepens Fragmentation in Turkey", *Eurasian Daily Monitor*, Vol. 7, no.168,.

[147] Simon Hooper (October 25, 2006) "Turkey Caught at a Crossroads," *CNN*

xenophobic counterparts in the EU to oppose Turkey's EU candidacy. In Turkey, this has led to disillusionment, a slowdown, and even regression in the EU-required reform and harmonization process. Despite some improvements regarding women's rights and the theoretical curtailment of torture, the fundamental problem of putting state security before the rule of law and individual rights remained. This problem has been egregiously illustrated by Article 301, under whose terms even the recent Nobel-Prize-winning author Orhan Pamuk was prosecuted for denigrating "Turkishness." Since it has gone into effect, the vagueness of Article 301 has been used by extreme nationalists and statists to accuse writers, scholars, and intellectuals of treason and subversion. Although nobody has yet actually been imprisoned for violating Article 301, its mere presence has placed a chilling effect over freedom of speech and press in Turkey. Indeed, it is difficult to see how Article 301 represents any improvement over its predecessor in the Turkish Penal Code, Article 312, which during the 1990s could make mere verbal or written support for Kurdish rights cause one to be charged with "provoking hatred or animosity between groups of different race, religion, region or social class." Yasar Kemal, one of Turkey's most famous novelists, and Aliza Marcus, Reuters correspondent and U.S. citizen, were indicted in 1995 for violating these provisions through acts that came to be known as "thought crime."

Similarly, the new Anti-Terrorism law (TMY) that entered into force in 2006 represents a step backwards and constitutes an affront to the rule of law. Its definition of terrorism is too vague, overly broad, and lacking in clarity concerning the nature of the crime. Article 6 of the new law has the potential to make anybody who expresses an idea contrary to the official state ideology guilty of being a "terrorist," even when the accused may be completely opposed to the use of violence. Under Article 6, "terrorist offences" are broadened to include the carrying of an emblem, signs or placards of a terrorist organization and attempting to conceal your own identity during a demonstration. Indeed, mere criticism of the law can result in an accusation of "terrorism." *Info Turk* declared that even the "Turkish media criticized the government's proposal, saying the draft [of

the TMY] defined too many actions as terror and could easily be misused."[148] The *Cumhuriyet* newspaper devoted its front page to criticizing the proposed law: "The reforms passed in the European Union process will be erased by a definition of terror that encompasses all crimes. . . . There is nothing left out in the definition."[149] Furthermore, Article 7 of the TMY too broadly defines the offense of "financing terror" to include providing funds "directly or indirectly" knowing they would "entirely or partially" be used to commit terror crimes. Under such definitions, it will be difficult for the ordinary, law-abiding Turkish citizen to regulate his/ her behavior so as to avoid criminal liability.

It is worth mentioning that the Article 8 of the Anti- Terrorism Law during the 1990s notoriously made it possible to consider academics, intellectuals and journalists, when speaking up for Kurdish rights, to be engaging in terrorist acts: "Written and oral propaganda and assemblies, meetings and demonstrations aimed at damaging the indivisible unity of the Turkish Republic, with its territory and nation are prohibited, regardless of the methods, intentions and ideas behind such activities." [150] Under these provisions, practically anybody could be imprisoned for advocating a political solution to the Kurdish problem, and hundreds were.

Minority Rights

The fundamental legal problem regarding the definition and protection of minorities in Turkey stems from the definition of the term "minority" in the Treaty of Lausanne (1923), under which the West first recognized the new Republic of Turkey. According to this treaty, only non- Muslims such as Greeks, Armenians and Jews were

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[148] "New Anti-Terror Law: End of the Timid Democratisation," *Info Turk*, No. 333, May 2006, citing New Anatolian and other media, April 19, 2006. (http://www.info-turk.be/index.html#Activists).

[149] Ibid.

[150] O. Korket, (April 26, 2006) "Anti-Terror Schemes May Encourage Torture," *BIA News Center*, as cited in *Info Turk*, No. 333, May http://www.info-turk.be/index.html#Activists.

granted minority status in Turkey. The seemingly obstinate refusal in the modern Republic of Turkey to admit that its citizens of Kurdish ethnic heritage constitute a minority can be understood in light of the old Ottoman principle that Islam took precedence over nationality among Muslims and that only non-Muslims could hold some type of officially recognized minority status. In contemporary Turkey this concept of minority prevails within Turkey. For example, Necmettin Erbakan, who became modern Turkey's first Islamist prime minister in July 1996, declared: "We have bonds of brotherhood. There is nothing more absurd than ethnic differentiation among Muslim brothers."[151] Articles 14, 26, 27 and 28 of the current (1982) Turkish constitution allow Turkish authorities to incriminate nonviolent expressions of ethnic identity simply on the basis that they are contrary to the constitutional definition of "Turkish" and a danger to the integrity of the state. In 2005, for example, Professors Baskim Oran and Ibrahim Ozden Keboglu were prosecuted for simply arguing in a report regarding EU harmonization laws and commissioned by the prime minister's own office that "Turk" is an identity of only one ethnic group and that Turkey also includes other ethnic groups such as "Kurds."

Given the present Turkish position, even Kurdish names containing the common Kurdish letters "w," "x" and "q" cannot be officially recognized and used because children can only be given names that use the Turkish language's alphabet, in which these three letters do not appear. In addition, therefore, the Kurdish New Year's holiday "Newroz" is referred to by the government as "Nevroz." Ironically, of course, the letter "W" appears on the door of virtually every public toilet in Turkey. Finally, Article 49(9) of the constitution still mandates that no language other than Turkish can be taught as a mother tongue to Turkish citizens at institutions of training or education. The recent theoretical legalization of Kurdish language classes was in practice prevented by overly onerous technical requirements. In November 2006, Hans Jorg Kretscher, the outgoing head of the EU Commission in Ankara, called on Turkey to recognize the identity of the

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[151] "Prosperity Party Leader Interviewed," Ankara Show Television in Turkish, 2030 GMT, January 31, 1994); as cited in *Foreign Broadcast Information Service — West Europe*, Febuary 3, 1994, p. 41.

Kurds and supported the notion of Turkiyeli [of Turkey] as a replacement for the term "Turk." He also declared: "It is necessary to recognize the identity of the Kurds, to recognize that Kurds are Kurds, and Kurds are not Turks. They are Turkish citizens, and they want to be Turkish citizens, but they are Kurds. You cannot deny that." [152] Compounding the problem of Turkey's definition of a minority, even the Kurds decline to pursue official minority status within Turkey. They, instead, seek to be recognized as a "constituent people" of that state. This presumably would imply that, along with the ethnic Turks, the Kurds are equal stakeholders in the Republic of Turkey.

Minority status, though guaranteeing full democratic rights, would imply less than full equality as co-founders and co-owners of the Republic of Turkey. Kerim Yildiz is the executive director of the Kurdish Human Rights Project in London and a member of the Board of Directors of The EU Turkey Civic Commission (EUTCC), a nongovernmental organization (NGO) promoting Turkey's EU candidacy as a way to solve the Kurdish problem. Yildiz has aptly demonstrated the many pitfalls that Turkey, the Kurds and the EU must face along the way.[153] On the one hand; Yildiz optimistically declares that "for the Kurds, the stipulations in the field of minority and human rights attendant to the accession process offer unparalleled scope to achieve long-term justice and security. Already, the prospect of accession has triggered rapid and extensive legislative reforms since 2002."[154] On the other hand, Yildiz warns, "questions must be asked as to whether Turkey has truly changed her colours, and whether the EU's decision to open accession

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[152] The following citations and discussion are largely based on "EU, Buyukanit Clash on Ethnic Identity," *Turkish Daily News*, November 4, 2006.

[153] Kerim Yildiz, (2005) *The Kurds in Turkey: EU Accession and Human Rights* (Pluto Press). See also the background papers for the second and third international conferences sponsored by the EU Turkey Civic Commission (EUTCC) on "The EU, Turkey, and the Kurds," European Parliament, Brussels, September 19-20, 2005: by Hans Branscheidt, "Turkish Accession to the European Union: Human Rights and the Kurds"; and Kerim Yildiz.et al., "Third International Conference on EU, Turkey and the Kurds," European Parliament, Brussels, October 16-17, 2006.

[154] Yildiz, *Kurds in Turkey*, p. 20

talks was based on a genuinely objective appraisal of Turkish progress on democratization and human rights."[155]

In September 2006, Camiel Eurlings, a Dutch parliamentarian and the Turkey rapporteur of the EU Parliament, submitted a new draft report approved by the Parliament's Foreign Relations Committee.[156] The Eurlings Report harshly criticized Turkey and concluded that it was not ready for EU membership. Specifically, the report complained that the pace of Turkish reforms had slowed down since 2005. Significant further efforts were required in regard to fundamental freedoms and human rights, in particular with regard to freedom of expression, women's rights, religious freedoms, trade-union rights and cultural rights, as well as further measures against torture. In addition, a dispute over the rights of new EU member (Greek or Southern) Cyprus to use Turkish sea and airports threatened to result in what Olli Rehn, the EU Enlargement Commissioner, termed a "train crash" in Turkey's EU candidacy talks. Turkey refused to accede to the EU demands on Cyprus as long as the EU failed to honor its own pledge to reduce the isolation of the Turkish community in (Turkish or Northern) Cyprus.[157] In November 2006, the EU Commission released its new Progress Report on Turkey which would guide its policies towards it in the following year. This new report basically reiterated the oft-repeated criticisms already broached by the earlier Eurlings Report cited above that Turkey was dragging its heels in implementing required political reforms and demanded significant improvements in 2007 if Turkey were to remain on track to join the

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[155] Ibid

[156] The following discussion is largely based on "Heading for a Crisis in Turkish-EU Ties?" *Briefing* (Ankara), September 11, 2006, pp. 7-14.

[157] In 2004, the Turkish Cypriots supported a UN plan to end the longstanding Cyprus dispute, but the Greek Cypriots refused. Nevertheless, the EU went ahead with rewarding the Greek Cypriots with EU membership, while the Turkish Cypriots remained economically isolated and ostracized. Turkey argued that the situation resulted in a biased and hypocritically unfair situation.

EU.[158] In December 2006, the EU appeared close to suspending accession negotiations in several sections because of the Cyprus imbroglio.

Discourse on the EU Membership

Turkey's approach towards the EU has traditionally rested on ideological grounds, rather than on a rational cost-benefit analysis. Turkey has long argued that it should be admitted to the union due to its European character. At the same time, the majority of the Turkish elites have believed that to solidify Turkey's European/western/modern identity, EU membership is a must. The problem with such an approach has been that Turkish policy-makers have long failed to understand why the EU members hesitated to offer a clear membership prospect to Turkey based on their own cost benefit calculations.[159] Turkish elites have tended to believe that just as Turkey wants to join the EU on identity related grounds, the EU also adopts the same rationale vis-à-vis Turkey. Rather than believing that the EU's reluctance might emanate from its own cost-benefit calculations with respect to Turkey's admission, Ankara has long believed that the EU does not want Turkey mainly because it sees Turkey as non-European. In fact, the Eurosceptic circles, which include a disparate grouping of organizations and institutions, the Democratic Left Party, Nationalist Action Party, the former Welfare Party, elements of the Republican People's Party, some senior officers in the general staff, and a large portion of the well-established state bureaucracy. This group questions the current form of the EU in general, and the structure of the accession process that Turkey is undergoing in particular. Consistent with their inclination to see the EU as an intergovernmental in situation, these circles have found it difficult to accept that the relationship with the EU would be asymmetric. The EU skeptics support integration as long as the whole process relies on a bilateral negotiation process open to give-and-take, rather than the imposition of Brussels' views on Ankara.

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[158] Commission of the European Community, *Commission Staff Working Document: Turkey 2006 Progress Report* (Com [2006] 649 final), November 11, 2006.

[159] Malcom Cooper, (2002) "The legacy of Ataturk: Turkish political structures and policymaking," *International Affairs* , Vol. 78, no. , pp. 115-28.

Equally, the Euro skeptics have focused on the domestic political implications in Turkey of EU membership. They argue that, rather than contributing to the emergence of a healthy liberal pluralist political environment, the ongoing accession process will significantly damage the internal peace in Turkey, whose foundations have rested upon the Lausanne treaty of 1923 and the political reforms of Ataturk. The sensitivity of some members of the elite concerning the founding principles of the republic, namely secularism and an all-inclusive Turkish nationalism has generated suspicions with regard to specific EU demands.[160] As Turkey is the heir to the Ottoman Empire, a multi religious and multinational polity, Euro skeptics believe that it is entirely justified for Ankara to be sensitive about these issues and reluctant to embrace rapid changes to existing policies. Lurking behind such arguments lies the main reason for this skepticism, namely that Turkey' stability would be undermined if all of these liberal reforms are implemented but the EU still does not admit Turkey. For these liberal reforms to produce and augment security and stability in Turkey, full membership in the union is a must: otherwise, Turkey would be exposed to international pressures while vocal ethnic separatist and political Islamist circles inside the country demand more reform that would threaten further instability.[161]

The pro-EU circles, however, believe that Turkey's EU candidacy would also help put the lie to the clash-of-civilizations thesis of inevitable war and even Armageddon between the Christian West and Islamic East.[162] As a member of the EU, Turkey would offer the Muslim world an attractive moderate model of cooperation benefit all. In addition, young, hardworking Turkish immigrants will help solve Europe's

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[160] Henri J. Barkey, (2000) "The struggles of a 'strong' state," Journal of International Affairs 54, no. 1: 87-105, and Hasan Kosebalaban,(2002) "Turkey's EU membership: A clash of security cultures," *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 130-46.

[161] See Tarik Oguzlu (Spring 2004), "The Impact of Democratization in the Context of the EU Accession Process on Turkish Foreign Policy", *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 9, no. 1 pp. 94-113.

[162] The adherents of this view include, among others, the Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen's Association (TUSIAD), the Economic Development Foundation (IKV), the Motherland Party, the True Path Party, and some elements of the Republican People's Party. They are committed to the idea of European integration and are content with the current structure of the EU.

population problem of a zero growth rate not being sufficient to support the EU's welfare states. Those who are pro-EU look at security from a different perspective than that shared by Euro skeptics. In an age of diminished threats from other states, they argue that the main security referents in Turkey should be society in general and each Turkish citizen in particular.[163]" Turkey's accession process with the EU is, therefore, good for the country due to the promotion of pluralism and the liberalization of domestic political life. The pro- EU group believes that Turkey can only solve the problem of Kurdish separatism and the challenge of accommodating political Islam through the process of democratization of society as a whole.[164] They fear that if Turkey turns away from the EU, no credible incentive would continue to exist for the traditional state elites to try to embrace peaceful solutions for such issues. In any case, EU admission would help guarantee Turkey's territorial integrity and linked to it, the Kurdish problem would also become the EU's problem and responsibility.

Of the two, the pro-EU perspective gained the upper hand during the 1999-2002 periods. Turkey's traditionally skeptical view of the EU started to change. The military victory over the PKK and the rapprochement with Greece helped contribute to the emergence of a more favourable environment for undertaking radical EU-related reforms at home and adopting a more pro-EU oriented foreign policy abroad, particularly with regard to Cyprus. Nevertheless, the most significant external development that helped produce an EU-friendly atmosphere in Turkey was the 9/11 attacks on the United States.

The US Invasion of Iraq

The March 2003 invasion of Iraq, named "Operation Iraqi Freedom" by the US administration and the toppling of the Saddam Hussein regime entailed the risk of change in the territorial status quo and made a dismemberment of Iraq a distinct possibility. A military occupation was established and run by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), which later appointed and granted limited powers to an Iraq Interim Governing

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[163] Ihsan Dagi (2001), "Human rights and democratisation: Turkish politics in the European context," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol. 1, no. 3, pp. 51-68.

[164] Soli Ozel (2003);, "After the Tsunami," *Journal of Democracy* 14, no. 2, pp. 80-94.

Council. In mid-2004, the direct rule of the CPA was ended and a new sovereign and independent Interim Government of Iraq assumed the full responsibility and authority of the state. On June 28, 2004, the occupation was ended by the CPA, which transferred limited power to a new Iraqi government led by Prime Minister Iyad Allawi. The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1546 in 2004 recognized the end of the occupation and the assumption of full responsibility and authority by a fully sovereign and independent Interim Government of Iraq. The Iraqi Interim Government was replaced as a result of the elections which took place in January 2005. A further milestone was the creation of a democratically-elected administration on April 6, 2005 which included Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari and President Jalal Talabani who had been elected in January 2005. The main Kurdish parties -KDP and PUK- cooperated with the US-led coalition during the invasion which led to Saddam Hussein's overthrow and Kurdish politicians were represented on the Iraqi governing council. The Kurdistan Regional Government (KTG), which was already in place for twelve years, had a constitutionally recognized recognized authority over the provinces of Erbil, Dohuk, and Suleimaniya, as well as *de facto* authority over parts of the provinces of Diyala and Kirkuk.

Meanwhile, the special relationship that the US had shared with Turkey for more than half a century was badly shaken by a series of developments in the run-up to the 2003 Iraq war. Despite the financial benefits the US was willing to bestow on Ankara, public opinion inside Turkey was overwhelmingly against the war, which partly accounted for the Turkish Parliament's refusal on March 1, 2003 to the American request for the passage of 62,000 US troops to northern Iraq through its territory. Although the government position remained ambiguous throughout the crisis, Parliament's negative attitude cost Turkey a great deal in its relationship with the US. Not only did the US withdraw its offer of partnership with Turkey even after the Turkish Parliament had agreed in October 2003 to deploy peace-keepers in Iraq, its forces also increased their cooperation with the Iraqi Kurdish groups at the cost of Turkey's security concerns.[165] As the US forces took the control in Iraq, Washington warned Ankara to desist from taking

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[165] Olson, 2005; Park, 2003

any unilateral military action. Turkey has repeatedly called on the US to close bases in northern Iraq belonging to the PKK and prevent attacks made by the PKK stationed there.[166] In fact, the detention of the Turkish Special Forces by the US soldiers on July 4, 2003 in the northern Iraqi province of Sulaymaniyah triggered a sharp rise in anti-American sentiments leading to a virtual collapse of their bilateral relations. At the core of the crisis were the erosion of mutual trust and more importantly, the commonality of interests between the two NATO allies in the wake of the 2003 Iraq war. While Turkey's priority was, for instance, to maintain status quo in Iraq, the US believed that its interest would be better served by altering it. In other words, Turkey's prime concern was to protect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq so as to prevent the creation of a Kurdish state on its southern border, which could intensify separatist pressures within.[167]

Although with the capture of the PKK leader, Abdullah Ocalan in 1999 the Kurdish separatist movement in Turkey began to subside, the possibility of the PKK cadres re-grouping in the border areas with the active support of the Iraqi Kurdish factions became a constant source of worry for the Turley's decision-making elite. In addition to the fear of the revival of Kurdish irredentism, Turkey was also concerned about the future of an estimated 2 to 3 million Turkmen living in Kirkuk, the oil-rich northern Iraqi area. The KRG's attempts to annex Kirkuk also turned many Turks including those supportive of the strategic alliance with the US apprehensive about the American long-term agenda in the region. Its alleged plan to re-draw the map of West Asia, which would entail territorial losses for Turkey added fuel to the existing nationalist conspiracy theories and further aroused anti-US feelings as evident in successive opinion polls.[168]

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[166] Gorvett, 2006.

[167] For derails, see Asa Lundgren (2007), *The Unwelcome Neighbour: Turkey's Kurdish Policy*, New York: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, pp. 99-118.

[168] See Fusun Turkmen (March 2009), "*Turkish-American Relations: A Challenging Transition*", Turkish Studies, Vol.10, no.1, pp.109-129; Barak A. Salmoni (July 2003), "*Strategic Partners or Estranged Allies: Turkey, the US and Operation Iraqi Freedom*", Strategic Insights, Vol.11, Issue 7.

In the backdrop of the growing divergence of interests and objectives in post-Saddam Iraq, the Turkish decision-makers turned towards the EU as a policy alternative to protect its interest in the changed regional context. Indeed, both Turkish military and political elites viewed that the EU's recently announced neighborhood policy might be positively affected by Turkey's membership. This would send the strongest signal to the Muslim world that the EU does not define its security identity and its interests in opposition to the Muslim world. More generally, the AKP leadership argued that Turkey's member-ship in the EU would bolster the claims of those who argue that the war on terrorism should not be viewed as a class of civilization between the developed Christian north and the underdeveloped Muslim south.[169] Because the furtherance of democratization and liberalization is increasingly considered an effective means of combating religious extremism, the EU's role in projecting democracy to the West Asia might become important in the years to come.[170] At the same time, Turkey adopted a multi-dimensional foreign policy based on the principle of zero problems with the neighbours, which led to the normalization of bilateral relations with Syria, Iran, and later on, with the post-Saddam rigime in Iraq.[171] For example, Turkey and Syria have recently implemented an agreement whereby citizens of either country holding valid passports may cross the border and stay for 90 days without needing a visa. More importantly, in 2005 Syrian President Bashir al-Assad has recognized Turkey's claim to Hatay, which was incorporated into Turkey in 1939 following the collapse of the short-lived Republic of Hatay, as well as supported Turkey in its 2007 invasion of Iraq over international denunciations of its illegality.

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[169] See Timothy M. Savage (summer 2004), "Europe and Islam: Crescent waxing, cultures clashing," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 27 pp 25-50.

[170] "Turkey in Europe: More than a promise?", (September 2004), *Report of the Independent Commission on Turkey*, p. 18; Richard Youngs, (Spring 2002) "The European Union and Democracy Promotion in the Mediterranean: A new or disingenuous strategy," *Democratization*, Vol. 40, pp. 1-16.

[171] See Philip Robins (2007), "Turkish Foreign Policy Since 2002: Between a 'Post-Islamist Government and a Kemalist State", *International Affairs*, Vo. 83, no. 1, pp.289-304.

In any case, the rift between the United States and Turkey in the wake of the US-led occupation of Iraq facilitated the PKK cadres in regrouping, reorganizing and rectifying its leadership structure after the capture of Abdullah Öcalan in northern Iraq. Taking advantaged of the American air cover that prevented Turkish jets from entering northern Iraqi, the PKK resumed cross-border attacks in 2005 on Turkish military positions in south-eastern Turkey. The most notorious of these attacks was the October 2007 raid on the Daglica outpost, which created an intense public reaction that forced the Turkish authorities to make renewed efforts to negotiate with the US officials, to open the northern Iraqi airspace to Turkish jets. Following such public uproar in Turkey and the subsequent negotiations between American and Turkish militaries, the United States agreed to back limited Turkish incursions into northern Iraq[172] . Shortly, Turkey launched two cross-border air and ground raids against the PKK in late 2007 and early 2008. However, the Turkish military was very well aware of the fact that these raids could do no further than temporarily disrupting the PKK's operational capability.

AKP's Kurdish Initiative

From early 2008 onwards, Turkey took steps to disrupt PKK's operational capability by launching periodic air raids and troop incursions into northern Iraq, while the PKK managed to break-through and launch several small scale attacks against several Turkish military outposts[173]. This low-intensity stalemate was broken by the PKK's captured leader Abdullah Öcalan in early 2009, who had declared that he would announce a 'roadmap for the resolution of the Kurdish question' by August. Although statements of some Turkish officials point to the contrary, Öcalan's declaration created a

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[172] 'US backed Turkish raids in Iraq'. BBC News. December 16, 2007. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7147271.stm

[173]Some of these incursions exposed what some analysts call as 'negligence' on behalf of the Turkish military. Turkish daily Taraf's publication of the leaked military documents and video footages tarnished the reputation of the Turkish armed forces. So far the Turkish military hasn't presented any tangible counter-proof against these allegations. For more on this, see: 'Documents held by terrorists prove negligence in Aktütün'. Today's Zaman. August 27, 2010. http://www.todayszaman.com/news-220181-101-documents-held-by-terrorists-prove-negligence-inaktutun. html

momentum within the government to pre-empt his plan and announce a counter 'Kurdish initiative' that would render his plan useless. Indeed, the Turkish government had been considering the possibility of taking steps that would help diffuse tensions with the Kurdish population and increase the AKP's vote share in the Kurdish areas, which would at the same time fulfill some of the Copenhagen criteria for European Union membership. To this end, an earlier signal had come in January 1, 2009 by the launch of TRT-6, the only Kurdish language TV channel of the state-owned Turkish Radio and Television Corporation.[174]

After 'testing the waters' and seeing a more or less positive public reaction to the creation of TRT-6, in May 2009 President Abdullah Gül and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan attracted all media attention by making separate statements that there would be *"new openings regarding the Kurdish question"* and that "this [was] an important opportunity that shouldn't be missed."[175] On May 12, 2009 a news report from the Turkish daily *Hürriyet* wrote that the 'Kurdish initiative' that the government was working on was comprised of six preliminary steps: Establishment of the Kurdish institutes, abolishment of the restrictions previously imposed on local Kurdish radio and TV stations, introduction of the Kurdish language as an elective course in schools, reverting back the names of the Kurdish villages and towns that were 'Turkified' after the 1980 coup, recruitment of Kurdish speaking civil servants in the south-east, abolishment of the ban on Kurdish language in prisons and the ban on giving Kurdish names to the

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[174] The success of TRT-6 is subject to another debate. Some Kurds in the south-east were unable to understand the Kurdish dialect spoken in TRT-6 and rather followed TRT-6 broadcasts through their Turkish subtitles. Many of the initial programs on TRT-6 were old news events that the Kurds would hear from the Turkish media anyway.

[175] It must be highlighted that Abdullah Gul's statement came right after the March 2009 elections, which resulted with the defeat of the AKP in the predominantly Kurdish cities of Sirnak, Hakkari, Van, Siirt, Batman, Diyarbakir, Tunceli, Igdir and Sanliurfa. One might argue that Öcalan's announcement of the 'roadmap' caused the Kurds in these cities to vote for the DTP (or independent, in the case of Sanliurfa). While Öcalan's roadmap was not taken seriously by the AKP, the election results had showed that the Kurds did. President Gül's statements coming right after the election may suggest that this electoral behavior was unexpected, and caused the AKP to take the Kurdish question seriously.

newborns. [176] The government also issued a follow-up statement indicating that under no circumstances, can the Kurdish initiative imply Kurdish only education in the south-east, any possible constitutional amendment that would highlight the Kurdish ethnicity, release of Abdullah Öcalan, any form of autonomy for the Kurdish majority cities or towns, or halting Turkish military operations against the PKK. Weeks later during the June 2009 National Security Council meeting, the National Intelligence Organization (*Milli Istihbarat Teskilati* - MIT) was asked to prepare a report that would discuss possible scenarios on how best to approach a peaceful solution.

Meanwhile, the ruling AKP tried to allay fears that its single-party government is making irreversible decisions on traditional state policy regarding perhaps Turkey's most important domestic issue without consulting opposition parties and civil society groups. This was also necessary, as Abdullah Öcalan's plan was structured upon a certain 'consensus' he claimed to have reached after discussing his views with "numerous civil society groups via his lawyers".[177] Therefore the AKP leadership thought that approaching this critical issue without a parallel consensus and alliance building policy would ultimately backfire and be interpreted as AKP unilateralism. In pursuit of building national consensus on the Kurdish policy, the AKP government thorugh the Interior Minister started a series of meeting with the academics and experts, the influential Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges (TOBB), labor unions Hak-_Is, Türk-_Is and the Union of Turkish Bars (TBB) as well as the leaders of political parties including the center left Democratic-Left Party (DSP), right-wing nationalist Great Union Party (BBP), center-right Democrat Party (DP) and pro-Kurdish center-left Democratic Society Party (DTP).

While the consultation process was in order, initial specific details of the Kurdish initiative were introduced via the media. The prime objective of the government's program emphasized was "to eradicate violence once and for all, aiming to end the armed

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[176] Hürriye,. May 12, 2009. http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/11633389.asp

[177] CNN-Turk Online. July 20, 2009.
http://www.cnnturk.com/2009/turkiye/07/18/ocalanin.yol.haritasi/535532.0/index.html.

conflict permanently." This specifically meant the disarmament of the PKK and its disbandment, as well as undertaking intense intelligence and covert operations to prevent radical segments within the PKK to sabotage this very delicate process by conducting acts of provocative violence. Additionally, TRT-6 programs would be re-designed and would include more specific Kurdish cultural elements, rather than the mundane recitation of old news reports. An economic and developmental investment program was also emphasized, as economic well being of and employment opportunities in the Kurdish areas were considered very important for the solution of the question. Final component of the initial plan was to cooperate with the Northern Iraqi Kurdish Administration and the United Nations and get their support for the evacuation of the Makhmour refugee camp in northern Iraq, which had been one of the primary recruiting grounds for the PKK.[178] The plan also suggested the PKK militants to surrender to the UN camp administration and receive rehabilitation there. In addition, easing of certain articles of the Turkish Penal Code related to 'willing surrender' of the PKK militants would be re-considered to hasten PKK's peaceful disarmament. Finally, establishment of a tripartite mechanism of consultation between Turkey, Iraq and the US that would oversee the PKK's disarmament, was suggested.[179] However, the Turkish government

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[178] Makhmour camp is a United Nations refugee camp in northern Iraq, which is about 60 miles south-west of Arbil. It was established by the United Nations in 1998 in order to shelter about 12,000 of Turkey's Kurdish refugees that were evacuated between 1993-94 as a result of the intensification of violence between the Turkish army and the PKK. Turkish military officials argue that the Makhmour camp area used to host one of the largest weapons bazaars in Iraq before the Gulf War and the Kurdish inhabitants of the camp, who were able to defy a loose UN control, were delivering some of these stashes to the PKK in secret. Also, the Turkish military officials had complained that the PKK was using the camp as a recruiting pool, as well as a supply outpost; both claims have been denied by the United Nations.

[179] See *NTVMSNBC News Report* (July 28, 2009), http://video.ntvmsnbc.com/hukumetin-kurt-acilimi-1.html

claimed authorship of the Kurdish initiative while making sure that the imprisoned PKK supremo Abdullah Öcalan was kept out of the process.[180]

Democratic initiative to National Unity and Brotherhood

While the government was pursuing two parallel processes in August, of consulting with the civil society and calculating more sensitive options with the military and intelligence branches, perhaps as a cosmetic touch to the process, the 'Kurdish' part of the initiative disappeared from the AKP discourse (which was also reflected in pro-government media outlets) and the title of the plan suddenly became 'democratic opening'. According to some accounts, the main reason for this cosmetic touch was then Chief of General Staff Ilker Basbug's statement of August 25, 2009, where he emphasized the unitary character of the Turkish Republic and that the military would not support any plan that would jeopardize the Turkish character of the republic.[181]Meanwhile, encouraged by Basbug's statements two opposition parties, the Republican People's Party (CHP) and the Nationalist Action Party (MHP) that were mostly pursuing a policy of low-profile involvement, begun raising criticism of the AKP's initiatives. Even these parties were officially supportive of the initiative, albeit with a cautious tone, they accused the ruling AKP of having prepared the full roadmap in advance without consulting the opposition parties and the civil society representatives. As a result, the plan was considered by them as partisan unilateralism to be shunned away as the AKP's attempt to impose a fait accompli.

Amidst the acrimonious debate and public differences, the developments in October 2009 created an impasse, which has in the past years not only stalled the process

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[180] It was reported in the press that Öcalan had prepared his 'road map' document, which was released through his lawyers in August. It contained 10 main points, but the full text of the plan was confiscated. In March 2010, the European Court of Human Rights demanded the Turkish state to release the documents to the ECHR. For more on this, see Radikal daily online. June 16, 2010. http://www.radikal.com.tr/Default.aspx?aType=RadikalYazarYazisi&ArticleID=1002790&Yazar=CENG %DDZ%20% C7ANDAR&Date=16.06.2010&CategoryID=98

[181] For a critical commentary of this episode, see *Hurriyet daily online.* August 28, 2009. http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/haber.aspx?id=12363933&yazarid=215.

of settlement, but also someway reversed the process by triggering the recurrence of violence in the Kurdish areas. As an initial part of the Kurdish initiative, the Turkish security operatives had began negotiating with the families of the PKK members back in August and had succeeded in convincing 17 of them to surrender peacefully to the authorities. The peaceful and supportive manner in which the authorities received these 17 PKK members would set an example to many others in the mountains and would help weaken the prevalent argument within the PKK, which was a direct result of the 1984 Diyarbakir prison massacre: 'if you surrender to the state, you will be tortured and killed'. After several other incidents of PKK members surrendering and the security officials (with strict orders from their superiors) receiving them in a peaceful manner, the government now decided to arrange the peaceful surrender of a larger group.

Although the government tried to keep Öcalan out of the process, it had to use him to negotiate the peaceful surrender of 30 PKK members on October 21, 2009. While predictably, Turks cringed whenever they heard the name 'Öcalan', he was nonetheless intent on playing a key role in the disarmament process of the PKK. All parties to the process, AKP, PKK and DTP wanted this to be a high-profile and advertised event; after all, this would set the tone for the reception of further surrenders. To this end, DTP prepared a massive reception rally in Diyarbakir; in this very symbolic ceremony, 30 former PKK members took out their mountain gear and wore civilian clothes as a way of conveying their intention to lay down their arms and integrate into the society. On the one hand, this rally set a good example to other PKK members in the mountains; they could surrender peacefully, and they could be received well, and unharmed. But from the Turks' perspective the rally included almost everything Turks had stood against and considered 'alarming'. Abdullah Öcalan posters, fireworks, flying of the Kurdish flag and singing of the Kurdish anthem, were all more than enough to infuriate the Turks who read about and watched this event from TV and newspaper sources that also played their part in amplifying all negative aspects of what was going on. While the Turks had expected the PKK members to disarm and surrender to the authorities as a show of regret and remorse, the DTP had reframed the entire debacle as 'the proof that the Kurds have won' and their decades'-old demands were finally accepted by the Turkish state. This was the

DTP's way of 'getting the Kurdish electorate back' that would otherwise support the AKP for managing a very delicate process of PKK's disarmament. DTP's attempt to over-emphasize its role in facilitating this surrender at the expense of the AKP, where clear statements about Abdullah Öcalan being the leader of the entire movement were made, the DTP not only caused the Turkish public support for the Kurdish opening wane almost overnight, it also opened the way for its own closure by explicitly associating itself with the PKK and Abdullah Öcalan.[182]

The stalling Kurdish initiative therefore came to a full halt after the October 21st rally. One of the most enthusiastic supporters of the process, President Abdullah Gül issued a statement next day emphasizing that the surrendering process "shouldn't be turned into a show", also warning the DTP not to agitate the Turkish public opinion during such an early phase in the process. Yet Kurdish hardliners pushed their rhetoric even further; one of the founding members of the PKK assented provocatively the same day, "further surrenders will not take place until the Turkish state recognizes the will of the Kurds."[183] Both the CHP and MHP issued strong statements next day, CHP leader Deniz Baykal stating that "the PKK is being allowed to become a dominant political force in the region" whereas an infuriated MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli asserted that this

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[182] DTP had been trying to play an intermediary role between the Turkish state and the PKK, claiming to be a party along Sinn Fein lines. Most Turks believed that DTP was not a Sinn Fein type party, because it wasn't impartial; it had organic ties to the PKK and the party leadership had actively supported the PKK. While the proponents of the DTP – Sinn Fein analogy point to the fact that Sinn Fein did in fact have organic ties to the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and was its very explicit political wing, critics of this analogy argue that the DTP is too dependent on the PKK to be able to act as a mediating party. Proponents of the latter argument point to DTP's October 21st rally as a proof of their position. There is no comprehensive study comparing DTP and Sinn Fein, but for a review of the Turkish media on this, see *EurActiv News Portal.* September 3, 2009. http://www.euractiv.com.tr/ab-ve-turkiye/article/kurt-acilimi-dtpye-uyari-sinn-feini-ornek-al-pkk-silahvesayetine- boyun-eme-006839

[183] 'Cemil Bayik: Kürt iradesi kabul edilmedikçe dagdan inis olmaz' [Cemil Bayil: {Surrenders} won't take place until the Kurdish will is recognized]. Gündem online. October 20, 2009. http://www.gundem online.net/haber.asp?haberid=80330.

was a 'scene of betrayal' in which "plans of Turkey's partitioning are made and finalized."[184]

As a direct consequence of the DTP's rally, the government decided to relocate Abdullah Öcalan to another prison room in *Imrali* on November 3, which Öcalan declared through his lawyers as 'punishment conditions'. Soon, mass Kurdish riots started in numerous part of the country, protesting what Öcalan had defined as poor prison conditions. This was one of the reasons why the DTP decided to run another rally and demonstration, this time in the *Hatay* town of *Izmir*, known for being dominantly Turkish-nationalist. On November 23, 2009, DTP rally in *Izmir* met with widespread anger from the crowd during which stones were thrown at the DTP politicians. Citizens of Izmir called this a 'provocative act' as it was intentionally taking place in a Kemalist town, whereas DTP complained that this showed Turks' intolerance for anything Kurdish, including a peaceful rally. About two weeks later however, the PKK attacked and killed 7 Turkish soldiers in *Resadiye* town the Blacksea city of *Tokat*, perhaps as a way to threaten the Turkish government by showing their violent reach further from the predominantly Kurdish areas. DTP's gambit, coupled with the AKP's dragging consultation process, Öcalan's prison conditions and subsequent provocative Kurdish moves created sufficient destabilization of the momentum and caused the initial episode of the Kurdish opening to collapse. Meanwhile the opposition parties took agitation further, referring to the process as one in which "the AKP is testing waters for the partitioning of Turkey" and defined the Kurdish initiative as one of 'partition initiative.'

Following this ordeal, the 'democratic initiative' news gradually disappeared from the media agenda. The AKP had to slow down the process and pursue minimal progress; sufficiently intent to create a sense in the Kurdish areas that the government still cared about their problems, but without advertising and publicizing it to a degree that it would provoke the Turkish public opinion, which was seriously annoyed with the DTP rallies and PKK attacks. In early January 2010, the AKP prepared and published a Q&A booklet

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[184] *Sabah*(Ankara)October 22, 2009,

on the democratic initiative, this time titled 'National Unity and Brotherhood Project', which was intended to answer all questions regarding the initiative, but this was more of a PR move, rather than a direct contribution to the process. [185]

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[185] Ibid.

Conclusion

The essentials of the Kurdish problem can be reduced to four key elements in any search for a solution. First, while there are multiple aspects to the Kurdish problem, it is essential to recognize that the problem is fundamentally an ethnic one, thereby requiring an ethnic solution. The emergence of ethnic politics among the Kurds comes as a reaction to the official Turkish nationalism of the modern Turkish state and reflects a wider growth of ethnic consciousness on a global basis. The internal violence and virtual civil war or "anarchy" of the 1970s in Turkey mobilized many left-wing Kurds into ideological movements struggling to dismantle the existing state structure. It was out of this milieu that the PKK emerged, bringing by far the most serious Kurdish armed struggle into Turkish politics since the founding of the state. State violence in response against the PKK and the suffering this military campaign visited upon the Kurds in the southeast have clearly exacerbated the problem and served to polarize the conflict.

Paradoxically, an increasing schizophrenic attitude of the Turkish state has strengthened the symbolic value of the PKK, the only surviving organisation that upheld the concept of Kurdish identity. Rather than pursuing an exclusively military solution, there is the need for major economic improvements and increased democratization in the southeast, which will help alleviate some symptoms of the crisis, but in the end a solution that addresses the ethnic character of the problem is required. At a minimum that means clear recognition of the existence of the Kurds as a culturally distinct identity, and recognition of the rights of Kurds to express their culture fully under a system of cultural autonomy. In this context, Turkey's political community needs to be aware that their problems are not unique; large numbers of other states in the world have faced and still face similar problems.

Second, the onus of responsibility for a solution lies with the Turkish state rather than with the Kurds as people. In Turkey the conflict is not, as it often is in other countries, between two mobilized and competing communities; here it is between a weak community attempting to mobilize and the state. The state is fundamentally responsible for the creation of the problem by its fateful decision in the 1920s to create a nation-state defined as consisting of Turks alone, compounded by several decades of enforced

assimilation of Kurds a decision that can no longer be sustained. Thus, with the state wielding most of the power, compromise depends more on the state than on any other factor. Only the PKK has offered the Kurds a genuine element of power vis-à-vis the state through military resistance and the costs it can impose on the state. Actual initiatives in negotiations can come only from the parties that hold the power.

Third, a critical part of the problem lies in the need to reformulate the very concept of the Turkish state as perceived by its citizens. The former, statist concept, which emerges from nation-building concepts of an earlier era, was indeed relevant to Turkey in the Ataturkist period, when entirely new concepts were required to replace those of the collapsed imperial, multinational, and authoritarian Ottoman Empire. But today, it has become evident to all that the state has partially failed in its mission to homogenize the population. While some groups have been successfully integrated, the Kurdish question has not disappeared and indeed is growing. Thus, until the vision changes in which the state is no longer the master but the servant of the people it is unlikely that Turkey will be able to progress toward a solution to the Kurdish problem. The recent progress in the EU-inspired democratization and the emergence of a broader public sphere has opened up the possibility of challenging the dogma of homogeneity imposed by Ataturk. If Turkey fails to satisfy the cultural aspirations of its own Kurds, it not only becomes permanent hostage to its own Kurds but also to events in the Kurdish regions of Iraq, Iran, and Syria whose own internal political situations are very repressive, unstable, and doomed to face major upheaval. Nor can Ankara achieve its goals by pretending to ignore the Kurdish reality in Iraq, especially because it may not be able to influence it in the long run.

Failure to acknowledge Kurdish ethnicity and cultural aspirations can only damage Turkey's economy, moral tone, stability, democratic order, and international standing. Some Kurds in Turkey have over time become assimilated that is, Turkified but a significant number have not and are unlikely to become assimilated, especially during a period of conflict. In fact, it is more likely that the trend will be in the other direction that is, toward assertion of the Kurdish identity. The process of politicization is difficult to

reverse, especially with the degree to which international boundaries are rendered irrelevant with modern communications techniques. The Kurds in Turkey do not live in isolation anymore, cut off from the rest of the world, from their government, from their brothers and sisters in other cities and townships in Turkey. The Turkish government has, bombed its own territory for more than ten years and it is no closer to resolving the issue than it was before the Gulf War. Violence can be undercut only when Kurds realize that they have clear reason for hope for progress using other means. In terms of public debate, which includes officials and politicians, most institutions and individuals acknowledge the need for change.

The state can make several cultural gestures to the Kurds, particularly in the areas of the Kurdish language. Language is one of the dearest and most emotional vehicles of any culture. Kurdish, despite its different dialects, is a distinct language, quite unrelated to Turkish. Among various cultural reforms, among the easiest to achieve and most effective are the freedom to publish and broadcast in Kurdish, the right to give Kurdish names to one's children and to offer private education to children in Kurdish, the reversion to original Kurdish place names in Kurdish regions, and tolerance for cultural activities of all types that celebrate Kurdish diversity. Above all, the state could explicitly and publicly recognize the existence of the Kurdish identity. Such steps would undoubtedly attract Kurdish attention and encourage a certain spectrum of Kurds to start looking to the state for further steps toward full acceptance of the Kurdish identity via negotiations rather than by armed conflict. As simple as they may appear, these cultural reforms undermine one of the more fundamental principles of the Kemalist state: the notion of a unitary ethnic polity. It is worth remembering, however, that at present the challenge to the Kemalist state does not come exclusively from the Kurds. The Islamists seek a revision of the strict secularist ideology of the Kemalist project as well.

Another often sought cultural reform regards the creation of institutes at universities for the study of Kurdish and Kurds. To Kurds this not only represents the official recognition of their existence but also provides the means to further develop a language that has suffered from neglect. Already, independent Kurdish cultural

associations exist with branches indifferent cities in the country, especially in Istanbul and Izmir. Often harassed by the security services, such groups are not in fact associations per se but are incorporated business establishments, a necessary legal tactic to circumvent the rather restrictive association laws. A potentially positive development is the recent licensing of the Kurdish Foundation for Research and Culture. Likewise, a string of constitutional and legal reforms carried out by the Turkish government to comply with the EU conditionality has not only facilitated broadcasting and publication in Kurdish language, but also spurred national debate among civil society groups and intellectuals over the acceptance of the cultural diversity of Turkey.

Finally, Turkey has gone too far in trying to deny Kurds' existence by explicitly forbidding the use of the Kurdish language, by changing the names of villages from Kurdish to Turkish, and by not permitting parents to give Kurdish names to their offspring. Not only will these policies have to be reversed as some have already been but, more important, the Turkish public will have to be educated that these do not represent separatist or threatening activities. The imperatives of military solution, not the acknowledgment of diversity, are an expression of the state's weakness. For a state unable to achieve consensus politically will remain fragile.

In sum, the political solution entails not simply cultural and administrative autonomy for the Kurdish minority, but also the economic advancement in the southeast to slow down the exodus of large numbers of peasants from the area and reduce incentives for separatism, legalization of the Kurdish political parties, devolution of power (transfer of more authority to locally elected officials) and decentralization. For example, the stifling centralization of the Turkish administrative state does not allow for the resolution of conflicts at the local level. This is as applicable to the southeast as it is to other parts of the country. Just as with other legacies of the earlier republican period, this degree of centralization may have been dictated by the requisites of that period. Metin Heper has argued that state elites, "who posed as guardians of Atatürkism as they

themselves interpreted it," were intolerant of the periphery and tended to smother it.[186]In the end, the devolution of power to localities will play a significant role in helping defuse the Kurdish question, because then local Kurds and not Ankara would be seen as responsible to local community needs. Rule in the southeast thus becomes less "foreign" and more sensitive to local conditions. In fact, it is not just the Kurdish areas that would benefit from this devolution, but all localities in Turkey, including the large cities.

The task of decentralization of power and control, however, begins with reduction of the lingering role of the Turkish army in politics. With the frequency of military interventions 1960, 1971, and 1980 the public has almost come to accept the *de facto* primacy of military in the political system. The political weight of military in Turkey is derived partly from its role as vanguard of national liberation movement, and in greater part, from the legal-constitutional powers accorded to it after each intervention.[187] As a result, Turkish military, not simply defies civilian control, it has also asserted its political effectiveness by issuing demands, policy suggestions and warnings in matters of national concern, particularly in defence of official ideology of Kemalsim. Among institutional channels, through which military has extended its authority, the most important is the National Security Council (NSC) composed of highest military and civilian leaders of the country.

Although legal and political reforms that Turkey underwent between 2001 and 2005 in its efforts to fulfill the requirements of the EU membership criteria concerning democracy and human rights have undermined the primacy of military, the essential

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[186] Metin Heper (1988), "State and Society in Turkish Political Experience" in Metin Heper and Ahmet Evin, eds., *State, Democracy and the Military: Turkey in the 1980s*, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, p. 5

[187] See Gareth Jenkins (2001), "Context and Circumstance: The Turkish Military and Politics", *Adelphi Paper*, No. 337, London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, pp. 9-14.

power imbalance has not significantly changed. Furthermore, the reform process has come to a virtual halt since 2006 with the EU adopting the "yes-but" approach towards Turkey's final accession. Consequently, with the public support for the EU membership declining, the ruling AKP faces difficulties to push ahead with its reform agenda. At the same time, the military already uncomfortable with some key elements of the EU's conditionality, notably the recognition of Kurds as national minority with distinct cultural and linguist rights, democratic control of the armed forces and decentralization of power has joined the nationalist forces hell-bent on preserving the status quo.[188]

Wary of its formidable opponents who had already sought the closure of the party in March 2008, the moderate Islamist AKP, which is in power since November 2002, has preferred to refrain from changing radically the state discourse and policy as regards the Kurdish question. In other words, it has failed to develop and implement a coherent policy on the issue despite having acknowledged "the Kurdish realty" and criticised the past assimilative state practices. By refuting the contradiction between ethnic sub-identities and the concept of Turkish citizenship in his public speeches in Diyarbakir, the biggest city in the Kurdish southeast in August 2005, the Prime Minister Recip Erdogan, in fact, incurred the wrath of the military.[189] The government was subsequently pressurized by the NSC to enact a new anti-terrorism law in the wake of the resumption of terrorist attacks allegedly by the PKK cadres in summer 2005.[190] Similarly, the AKP government coming under the intense pressure from the NSC rechristened its so-called 'Kurdish initiative' as 'democratic initiative' in the May 2009 and finally, replaced the much-publicised 'initiative' by the so-called 'National Unity and Brotherhood Project.'

Apart from a series of laws passed by the Turkish Parliament granting rights to

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[188] Aswini K. Mohapatra (2011), "Turkey's Transition to Liberal Democracy and the Issue of Its EU Membership", *India Quarterly*, Vol. 67, no. 2, pp. 155-156

[189] See Robert Olson (2007), "From the EU Project to the Iraq Project and Back Again? Kurds and Turks after the 22 July 2007 Election", *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Vol. 18, no. 4, pp. 32-33.

[190] See Umit Cizre (2008), "The Justice and Development Party and the Military: Recreating the Past after Reforming It?" in Umit Cizre, ed., *Secular and Islamic Politics in Turkey: The Making of the Justice and Development Party*, London: Routledge, p. 155.

Kurdish language publications and Kurdish television broadcasting, there has been no major policy change to end the alimentation between the Turkish state and its Kurdish citizens. Even implementation of some of the laws has so far been slow and fall short of politically conscious ethnic Kurds' expectations for change. Nor is the Turkish government prepared to meet such demands of the Kurdish opposition as "education in one's mother tongue" and "right to self-government." "The state", as an analyst has recently commented, "continues to pursue the ideal of a homogenous, monolingual political community within its borders and seems determined to reduce the political community to an ethno-cultural community."[191] As a result, the Kurds who overwhelmingly supported the ruling AKP in 2002 and 2007 elections have begun to desert the party notwithstanding its goodwill gestures.

Indicative of this, the Kurdish political parties along with the mainstream opposition voted against the government in the September 12, 2010 Turkish referendum on the constitutional amendment package. More significantly, the AKP's vote share declined substantially in the recently-concluded national elections particularly in the Kurds-dominated eastern and southeastern region of the country. Faced with the erosion of the Kurdish support, the AKP, as the recent media reports suggest, seems to be turning towards the nationalist-right by adopting the politics of avoidance as regards the issue of Kurdish ethno-nationalism. Disillusioned with the lack of progress in the accommodation of the Kurdish aspirations and the stagnation of the EU-inspired reform process, the PKK, which changed its name to the Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress (KADEK) in 2002, has reinitiated the armed struggle.[192] Although the scale of violence has no so far assumed the proportions of the mid-1980s, the PKK persist with its armed opposition as its survival strategy as the government struggles to neutralize the PKK though a variety of initiatives rather than addressing the core issue of identity-based claims. For this to happen, Turkey will have to undergo a deeper paradigmatic shift

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[191] Mesut Yegen (Autumn 2009), "Prospective Turks or Pseudo-Citizens: Kurds in Turkey", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 63, no. 4, p. 615.

[192] See Gunes Murat Tezcur (2010), "When Democratisation Radicalises: The Kurdish Nationlaist Movemnt in Turkey", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 47, no. 6, pp. 757-789

involving not simply formal institutional changes, but also in foundational ideology of the country based on the outdated Kemalist notion of national state.

In any case, the attempts to deal with the issue of Kurds in Turkey politically rather than framing it in security terms and granting a measure of cultural autonomy to the Kurds represent an important change in state policy. This may be the beginning of the process of the development of a Kurdish autonomous region, which Turkey could accommodate only when it is accepted into the European Union.

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