Nationalisms and Politics in Turkey

Political Islam, Kemalism and the Kurdish issue

Edited by
Marlies Casier and
Joost Jongerden

Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern Politics

Nationalisms and Politics in Turkey

This book examines some of the most pressing issues facing the Turkish political establishment, in particular the issues of political Islam, and Kurdish and Turkish nationalisms. The authors explore the rationales of the main political actors in Turkey in order to increase our understanding of the ongoing debates over the secularist character of the Turkish Republic and over Turkey's longstanding Kurdish issue.

Original contributions from respected scholars in the field of Turkish and Kurdish studies provide us with many insights into the social and political fabric of Turkey, exploring Turkey's secularist establishment, the ruling AKP government, the Kurdistan Workers Party and the institutions of the European Union. While the focus of concern in this book is with the social agents of contemporary politics in Turkey, the convictions they have and the strategies they employ, historical dimensions are also integrated into the analyses. In its approach, the book makes an important contribution to a widening investigation into the making of politics in the contemporary world.

Incorporating the importance of the growing transnational connections between Turkey and Europe, this book is particularly relevant in the light of the ongoing negotiations over Turkey's membership to the European Union, and will be of interest to scholars interested in Turkish studies, Kurdish studies and Middle Eastern politics.

Marlies Casier is research affiliate of the Middle East and North Africa Research Group at Ghent University, interested in (trans)nationalism, political mobilization, Kurds and Turkey. She has published on the transnational politics of Turkey's Kurds in *Ethnicities* and on the institutionalization of human rights protection in Turkey in the *European Journal of Turkish Studies*.

Joost Jongerden is Assistant Professor in the Social Sciences Department at Wageningen University, the Netherlands. He is a sociologist by training, and mainly interested in development and conflict studies, with a focus on Turkey and Kurdistan.

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Contributors

Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya is a PhD Candidate in the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences at the Ghent University, Belgium, and affiliated with the Middle East and North Africa Research Group (MENARG). His master thesis addressed the impact of the nation-building process in Iraqi Kurdistan on the Kurdish diaspora. He has worked as a correspondent and news editor for the daily newspaper *Özgür Gündem* and for the first Kurdish satellite channel, MED TV. Akkaya edited a documentary series on the history of the Partiya Karkêren Kurdistan (PKK; Kurdistan Workers Party) released to DVD as *Ateşten Tarih*. His doctoral research deals with the development of the PKK and the reconstruction of the Kurdish identity.

Tozun Bahcheli is Professor of Political Science at King's University College at the University of Western Ontario, London, Canada. He has written widely on ethnic conflict, Turkish foreign policy issues, Greek-Turkish relations and Cypriot politics. During 1995–6 he was senior fellow at the United States Institute of Peace in Washington, DC. He is the author of *Greek-Turkish Relations Since 1955* (1990) and co-editor of *De Facto States: The Quest for Sovereignty* (2004).

Marlies Casier is research affiliate of the MENARG at the Centre for Third World Studies, Faculty of Political and Social Sciences of the Ghent University, Belgium. The author is PhD candidate, researching the influence of immigrant's transnational political mobilization on homeland conflicts, with particular emphasis on the transnational political organization of Kurds in the Turkish-Kurdish conflict. The author has previously researched the freedom of partner choice and marriage among Muslim girls and women in Belgium. She is the author of 'Turkey's Kurds and the quest for recognition: transnational politics and the EU-Turkey accession negotiations', *Ethnicities*, 10/1, (2010); 'Grenzeloos thuisland, eindeloos conflict? Transnationale politieke mobilisatie en conflict' (Borderless homeland, endless conflict? Transnational political mobilization and conflict), in R. Doom (ed.), *Conflict en Ontwikkeling. Overleven in de grensgebieden van de Globalisering* (Conflict and Development. To survive in the borderlands of Globlization) (2008) 'Contesting the "Truth" of Turkey's Human Rights Situation: State-Association Interactions in and outside of the Southeast', European Journal of Turkish Studies, 10, (2009).

Menderes Çınar is Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science and International Relations of Başkent University, Ankara. He is a former Giorgia La Pira Research Fellow at the Robert Schuman Center for Advanced Studies, European University Institute, Florence. His research areas and publications cover Turkish politics; Islamism; republican and liberal political traditions; and political economy. Recent publications include 'The specific evolution of contemporary political Islam in Turkey and its "difference"', (co-authored) and 'The Justice and Development Party and Kemalist establishment', both in the edited volume *Secular and Islamic Politics in Turkey* (2008); the Working Paper by International Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI), Milan, February 2007, 'Turkey between secularism and Islam: the Justice and Development Party experience' (co-authored); and 'Turkey's transformation under the AKP rule', *Muslim World*, 96/3 (2006). Past works include: 'Modified Orientalism', *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 30 (2004), 'Turkey 2002: Kemalism, Islamism and politics in the light of "the February 28 Process",' *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 2/3 (2003) (co-authored); 'Kemalist Republicanism, Islamist Kemalism', in *Islamism* (Iletisim: 2004, in Turkish); 'From shadow-boxing to critical understanding: some theoretical notes on Islamism as a political question', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 3/1 (2002); and 'An Islamic critique of modernity in Turkey: politics of difference backwards', *Orient*, 40/ 1 (1999) (co-authored). A collection of his articles is published as *Islamism as a Political Question* (2005) (in Turkish).

Olivier Grojean is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Aix-Marseille 3 University, and was involved in the CONFLITS-TIP Project on the cultural conflicts in Turkey, Iran and Pakistan, financed by the National Research Agency. He holds a PhD in political sociology from the EHESS. The title of his doctoral thesis was 'La cause kurde, de la Turquie vers l'Europe. Contribution à une sociologie de la transnationalisation des mobilisations' (The Kurdish Cause, from Turkey to Europe. Contribution to a Sociology of the Transnationalisation of Mobilizations). His research focuses on the political commitment of the Kurds in Turkey and Europe, on the phenomena of radicalization in political movements and on sacrificial violence. His publications include 'Violence against the self : the case of a Kurdish non-Islamist group', in A. Blom, L. Bucaille and L. Martinez (eds.), *The Enigma of Islamist Violence* (2007) and 'Les répertoires du conflit kurde' (Repertoires of the Kurdish conflict), in G. Dorronsoro (ed.), *La Turquie conteste. Mobilisations sociales et régime sécuritaire* (Turkey contests. Social mobilizations and the security regime) (2005).

Michael Gunter is a professor of political science at Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville, Tennessee, and teaches during the summer at the International University in Vienna, Austria. He is the author of six critically praised scholarly books on the Kurdish question, the most recent being *The Kurds Ascending: The Evolving Solution to the Kurdish Problem in Iraq and Turkey* (2008); *Kurdish Historical Dictionary* (2004); *The Kurdish Predicament in Iraq: A Political Analysis* (1999); and The *Kurds and the Future of Turkey* (1997).

In addition, he is the co-editor (with Mohammed M. A. Ahmed) of *The Kurdish Question and the 2003 Iraqi War* (2005) and *The Evolution of Kurdish Nationalism* (2007). He has also published numerous scholarly articles on the Kurds in such leading periodicals as the *Middle East Journal, Middle East Quarterly, Middle East Policy, Current History, Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies, Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* and *Orient,* among others, and was a former Senior Fulbright Lecturer in International Relations in Turkey.

Joost Jongerden is Assistant Professor at the Social Sciences Department of the Wageningen University & Research (WUR). Key words characterizing his research are urban–rural transformation (the production of space/place), the social construction of technological artefacts and the social construction of identities. Recent publications include 'Crafting Space, Making People: The Spatial Design of Nation in Modern Turkey', EJTS 10, (2009), *The Settlement Issue in Turkey and the Kurds: An Analysis of Spatial Policies, Modernity and War* (2008); 'Environmental destruction as a counterinsurgency strategy in the Kurdistan region of Turkey', *Geoforum*, 39/5 (2008) (in co-authorship with J. van Etten, H. de Vos, A. Klaasse and E. C. E. van Hoeve), 'Forest burning as counterinsurgency in Turkish-Kurdistan: an analysis from space', *The International Journal of Kurdish Studies*, 21/1 & 2 (2007) (in co-authorship with J. van Etten and H. de Vos) and *Turkey's Alevi Enigma: A Comprehensive Overview* (2003) co-edited with Paul White.

Ayhan Kaya is Professor of Political Science. Lecturer at the Department of International Relations, Istanbul Bilgi University; Director of the European Institute, specializing in Euro-Turks in Germany, France, Belgium and the Netherlands, the Circassian diaspora in Turkey, and the construction and articulation of modern diasporic identities. Recent publications include *Islam, Migration and Integration: The Age of Securitization* (2009), co-written with Ferhat Kentel, *Euro-Turks: A Bridge or a Breach between Turkey and the EU* (2005); *Sicher in Kreuzberg: Constructing Diasporas*, published in English (2001) and Turkish (2000); and has various articles on Berlin-Turkish youth cultures, ethnic-based political participation strategies of German-Turks, Berlin-*Alevis*, historians' debate in Germany, identity debates and Circassian diaspora in Turkey. He has translated *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* by Fredrik Barth and *Citizenship and Social Classes* by T. H. Marshall and Tom Bottomore; co-edited a book *Issues Without Borders: Migration, Citizenship, Human Rights, Global Justice, Gender and Security* (in Turkish, 2003); co-edited *Majority and Minority Politics in Turkey: Citizenship Debates on the Way to the European Integration* (2005). His latest edited work (with Bahar Şahin) is *Roots and Routes: Migratory Processes in Turkey* (Kökler ve Yollar: Türkiye'de Göç Süreçleri) (2007).

Ferhat Kentel is Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Sociology at Istanbul Şehir University. His articles on modernity, new social movements, religion, Islamic movements, intellectuals and ethnic communities have been

published in different journals and books in Turkey and abroad. Publications include: *Ermenistan ve Türkiye Vatandaşları. Karşılıklı Algılama ve Diyalog Projesi* (Turkish-Armenian Citizens Mutual Perception and Dialogue Project), with Gevorg Poghosyan, (2005); *Euro-Türkler: Türkiye ile Avrupa Birliği Arasında Köprü mü mü Engel mi?* (Euro-Turks: A Bridge, or a Breach, between Turkey and the European Union?), with Ayhan Kaya (2005); '*Milletin bölünmez bütünlüğü': Demokratikleşme sürecinde parçalayan milliyetçilik(ler)* ('Undivisible unity of nation': Dividing nationalism(s) in the process of democratization) with Meltem Ahıska and Fırat Genç (2007); *Belgian-Turks: A Bridge, or a Breach, between Turkey and the European Union?*, with Ayhan Kaya (2007). *Undomesticated, Unflattened, Resisting* (2008), *Armenians in Turkey – Community, Individual, Citizen*, with Günay Gösku Ozdoğan, Füsun Üstel, Karin Karakaşlı (2009).

Sid Noel is Senior Fellow in Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict Studies at King's University College, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada. He has written widely on federalism and consociationalism in multinational societies. Among his publications are 'Making the transition from hegemonic regime to power sharing' in *Northern Ireland and the Divided World*, ed. J. McGarry (2001); 'Leaders' entourages, parties and patronage', in *Canadian Parties in Transition*, ed. A. G. Gagnon and A. B. Tanguay (2007); 'Imposed and proposed federations: issues of self-determination and constitutional design in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cyprus, Sri Lanka and Iraq', *Cyprus Review* (2005); and 'The rise of the AK Party and the changing role of Ankara: paving the way for the Yes', in *Reunifying Cyprus: The Annan Plan and Beyond*, ed. A. Varnava and H. Faustmann (2009), the latter two co-authored with Tozun Bahcheli. His most recent book is *From Power Sharing to Democracy: Post-conflict Institutions in Ethnically Divided Societies* (2005).

Murat Somer is an Associate Professor of International Relations at Koç University in Istanbul. Somer's research on ethnic identities and conflict, religious politics, public and private polarization, social discursive shifts, the Kurdish conflict, and political Islam have appeared in book volumes and journals such as *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *The Middle East Journal*, and *Third World Quarterly*. These include: 'Moderate Islam and secularist opposition in Turkey: implications for the world, Muslims, and secular democracy', *Third World Quarterly*, 28/7 (2007); 'Resurgence and Remaking of identity: civil beliefs, domestic and external dynamics, and the Turkish mainstream discourse on Kurds', *Comparative Political Studies*, 38/6 (2005); and 'Why aren't Kurds like the Scots and the Turks like the Brits? Moderation and democracy in the Kurdish question', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 43/2 (2008).

Mesut Yeğen is Professor of Sociology at Istanbul Şehir University. His research has focused on Turkish nationalism, the Kurdish question and citizenship in Turkey. His publications include 'Turkish nationalism and the Kurdish

question', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30, (2007); 'Citizenship and ethnicity in Turkey', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 40 (2004); 'The Kurdish question in Turkish state discourse', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 34 (1999). He is the author of *Devlet Söyleminde Kurt Sorunu* (Kurdish Question in State Discourse) (1999) and *Müstakbel-Türkten "Sözde Yurttaşa": Cumhuriyet ve Kürtler* (From Prospective-Turks to Pseudo-Citizens: Turkish Republic and Kurds) (2006). He has also written articles and book chapters on the ideology of Turkish modernisation, citizenship and Turkish nationalism.

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Abbreviations

ADYÖD	Association for Higher Education in Ankara (Ankara Demokratik Yüksek Öğretim Derneği)
AKP	Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi)
Ala Rizgarî	Flag of Liberation
ALDE	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
ANAP	Motherland Party (Anavatan Partisi)
ARGK	Kurdistan People's Liberation Army (Arteşa Rizgarîya Gele Kurdistan)
ASALA	Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia
ASKD	Anti Colonial Cultural Association (Anti Sömürgeci Kültür Derneği)
ATÖF	Federation of Turkish Students in Germany (Almanya Türk Oğrenci Federasyonu)
ATTF	Federation of Turkish Socialists in Europe (Avrupa Türk Toplumcular Federasyonu)
AYÖD	Association for Higher Education in Ankara (Ankara Yüksek Öğretim Derneği)
Bahoz	Storm
Bir-Kom	Common Committee (Birlik Komitesi)
Birleşik Kuvvetler	United Forces
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CHP	Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi)
CIA	Central Intelligence Service
CPT	Committee for the Prevention of Torture
Cumhuriyet	Republic (Turkish newspaper)
DABK	East Anatolia Region Committee (Doğu Anadolu Bölge Komitesi)
DDGB	Revolutionary Democratic United Force (Devrimci Demokratik Güç Birliği DDGB)
DDKD	Revolutionary Cultural Associations of the East (Devrimci Doğu Kültür Derneği)

DDKO	Revolutionary Cultural Hearths of the East (Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları)
DEHAP	Democratic People's Party (Demokratik Halk Partisi)
DEP	Democracy Party (Demokrasi Partisi)
Dev Sol	Revolutionary Left (Devrimci Sol)
Dev-Genç	Revolutionary Youth (Devrimci Gençlik)
Devrimci Karargah	Revolutionary Headquarters
Devrimci Savaş	Revolutionary War
Dev-Yol	Revolutionary Road (Devrimci Yol)
DHKD	Revolutionary People's Cultural Association (Devrimci Halk Kültür Derneği)
DHKP/C	Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front, Devrimci Halk Kurtuluş Partisi/Cephesi
DHP	Revolutionary People's Party (Demokratik Halk Partisi)
DTH	Democratic Society Movement (Demokratik Toplum Haraketi)
DTP	Democratic Society Party (Demokratik Toplum Partisi)
EC	European Commission
ECHR	European Court of Human rights
Ekim	October
EMEP	Labor Party (Emek Partisi)
EP	European Parliament
ERNK	Kurdistan National Liberation Front (Enîya Rizgarîya Netewayi Kurdistan)
EU	European Union
EUTCC	European Turkey Civic Commission
Fazilet Partisi	Virtue Party
FKBDC	Unified Resistance Front Against Fascism (Faşizme Karşı Birleşik Direniş Cephesi)
GAP	Southeast Anatolia Project (Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi)
Greens/EFA	Green/European Free Alliance
GUE/NGL	Gauche Unitaire Européen/Nordic Green Left
HADEP	People's Democracy Party (Halkın Demokrasi Partisi)
HAK-PAR	Right and Freedoms Party (Hak ve Özgürlükler Partisi)
HEP	People's Labor Party (Halkın Emek Partisi)
Hevra	Together
HPG	People's Defense Forces (Hêzên Parastina Gel)
HRK	Kurdistan Liberation Units (Hêzên Rizgarîya Kurdistan)
HRK	Military forces of eastern Kurdistan (Hêzi Rojhelati Kurdistan)
Hürriyet	Freedom (Turkish newspaper)
IDF	Israeli Defense Forces
IRA	Irish Republican Army
Inkilap	reform
KADEK	Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress (Kongreye Gele Kurdistan)
KA-DEP	Participative Democracy Party (Katılımıcı Demokrasi Partisi)

KAWA	Kurdish mythical figure and name of a Kurdish Political Party
KCDK	Coordination of Democratic Communities in Kurdistan
KCK	Association of Communities in Kurdistan (Koma Civakên Kurdistan)
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party (Partiya Demokrat Kurdistan)
KDPI	Kurdistan Democratic Party Iran (Partiya Demokrat Kurdistan Iran)
KHRP	Kurdish Human Rights Project
KJB	Community of Assertive Women (Koma Jinen Bilind)
KKK	Association of Associations in Kurdistan (Koma Komalan Kurdistan)
KNK	National Congress of Kurdistan (Kongra Netewiya Kurdistan)
Komala	Association (Kurdish political party in Iran)
Kongra-Gel	People's Congress (Kurdish political organization)
Köy Korucu	Village Guards
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government (name of the regional government in Iraqi Kurdistan)
KSSE	Kurdistan Student's Society in Europe (Komeley Xwendikarani Kurdistan li Ewrupa)
KUK	National Liberators of Kurdistan (Kurdistan Ulusal Kurtuluşçular)
Kurtuluş	Liberation
KYKB	Union of Patriotic Women in Kurdistan (Kürdistan Yurtsever Kadınlar Birliği)
MDD	National Democratic Revolution (Milli Demokratik Devrim)
MEP	Member of European Parliament
MGK	National Security Council (Milli Güvenlik Konseyi)
MHP	Nationalist Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi)
Milliyet	National (Turkish newspaper)
MIT	National Intelligence Organization
MLSPB	Marxist-Leninist Armed Propaganda Forces (Marxist-Leninist Silahlı Propaganda Birlikleri)
Mucadele Birlik/ Emeğin Birliği	Unity in Struggle/Labor Unity
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	non-governmental organization
NUKSE	National Union of Kurdish Students in Europe
ÖDP	Freedom and Solidarity Party (Özgürlük ve Dayanışma Partisi)
OHAL	state of emergency (Olağanüstü Hal)
	Özgürlük Yolu/

Rîya Azadî	Freedom Path (journal of the TKSP and name under which the TKSP was also known)
PAJK	Party of Free Women in Kurdistan (Partiya Azadiya Jin a Kurdistan)
PÇDK	Kurdistan Democratic Solution Party (Partiya Çareseriya Demokratik a Kurdistan)
PDS	Party for Democratic Socialism (Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus)
Pêkanîn	Realization (Kurdish Political Party)
PFLP	People's Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PJAK	Free Life of Kurdistan Party (Partiya Jiyana Azad a Kurdistan)
PKK	Kurdistan Workers Party (Partiya Karkêren Kurdistan)
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
PSE	Socialist Group in the European Parliament
PSK	Kurdistan Socialist Party (Partiya Sosyalîsta Kurdistan)
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (Yekîtî Nîstimanî Kurdistan)
PWD	Patriotic Democratic Party (Partiya Welatperez Demokratik)
PYD	Democratic Union Party (Partiya Yekitiya Demokratik)
RAF	Red Army Fraction (Rote Armee Fraktion)
Rizgarî	Liberation
RP	Welfare Party (Refah Partisi)
SDP	Socialist Democracy Party (Sosyalist Demokrasi Partisi)
Serxwêbun	Independence
SHP	Social Democratic People's Party (Sosyaldemokrat Halk Partisi)
Stêrka Sor	Red Star (Kurdish Political Party)
SVP	Socialist Fatherland Party (Sosyalist Vatan Partisi)
TBMM	Grand National Assembly of Turkey (Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi)
TDP	Revolution Party of Turkey (Türkiye Devrim Partisi)
Tekoşer	Fighter (Kurdish Workers and Student' association of Belgium)
Tekoşîn	Struggle (Kurdish Political Party)
TEP	Laborist Party of Turkey (Türkiye Emekçi Partisi)
THKO	People's Liberation Army of Turkey (Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu)
THKP/C	People's Liberation Party-Front of Turkey (Turkiye Halk Kurtulus Partisi-Cephesi)
THPP/C-Acilciler	People's Liberation Party-Front of Turkey-Urgency (Halk Kurtulus Partisi-Cephesi-Acilciler)
TİKKO	Workers and Peasants' Liberation Army of Turkey (Türkiye İşçi Köylü Kurtuluş Ordusu)
TİP	Workers Party of Turkey (Türkiye İsçi Partisi)

TKDP	Turkey Kurdistan Democratic Party (Türkiye Kurdistan Demokratik Parti)
TKEP	Communist Labor Party of Turkey (Türkiye Komünist Emek Partisi)
TKP Kıvılcım	Communist Party of Turkey-Spark (Türkiye Komünist Partisi- Kıvılcım)
TKP/İS	Communist Party of Turkey/Workers Voice (Türkiye Komünist Partisi/İşçinin Sesi)
TKP-ML	Communist Party of Turkey/Marxist-Leninist (Türkiye Komünist Partisi/Marksist-Leninist
TKSP	Turkey Kurdistan Democratic Party (Türkiye Kurdistan Demokratik Partisi)
TMMOB	Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects (Türk Mühendiş ve Mimar Odaları Birliği)
TOBB	Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey
TRT	Turkish Radio and Television (Türkiye Radyo Televizyon)
TRT6	Channel of the TRT broadcasting in Kurdish
TSİP	Socialist Workers' Party of Turkey (Türkiye Sosyalist Isci Partisi)
TÜSIAD	Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen's Association
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	The United Nations Children's Fund
USSR	Union of Socialist Soviet Republics
YDK	People's Democratic Union of Kurdistan (Yekîtiya Demokratîk a Gelê Kurdistan)
YJA-STAR	Free Women Units
YÖK	Higher Education Board (Yüksek Ögretim Kurulu)

Introduction

Marlies Casier and Joost Jongerden

Turkey has been attracting growing interest from scholars, policy-makers and the public in the Western world. Once mainly the playing field of international relations theorists, Turkey and its social and political changes are today the subject of an increasing amount of interesting scholarly work in sociology, anthropology and the political sciences. This book is an engagement with respected scholars in these fields, who provide us with many insights into the social and political fabric of the country. In particular, this volume engages with the ideological contestations in the country, stemming from the presence of political Islam and rising forms of Kurdish and Turkish nationalisms. However, rather than merely assessing the ideological fault lines, most of the contributors focus on the political and social agents of these competing projects. Different chapters therefore engage with Turkey's secularist establishment, the ruling AKP government, the Kurdistan Workers Party, (the PKK) and the Institutions of the European Union, with which Turkey, after being on a waiting list for long, has since 2005 finally started negotiating its future membership. In this respect, there is a growing consensus that Turkey's reforms, which were far-reaching during the early 2000s, have tended to stagnate since accession talks formally commenced, in 2005. Comprehending the difficulties of Turkey in meeting the conditions for membership to the European Union necessitates an understanding of its internal dynamics.

In order to understand the developments inside Turkey, however, requires also that we extend our vision beyond the boundaries of the country. Not only does internal competition and conflict affect its EU negotiations, they in turn impact greatly on the internal political discussions. What is more, approximately 3.5 million people from Turkey are currently living in Western Europe, outside of their homeland or the country of origin of their ancestors. Around one million of them are from Kurdish descent and are considered amongst the most politicized diaspora living in Europe, and their engagement with political contestation has also had a major affect on the political agenda inside Turkey. Through the presence and the organization of Turkey's primary political advocate of Kurdish demands, the PKK, many of the Kurds residing in Europe have extended their boundaries of belonging (Migdal 2004) and have formed an imagined community (Anderson 1991) of Kurds.

Many of the discussions that mark Turkey today are still intimately connected to Turkey's project of state-building that started in the 1920s. This volume does

not intend to recount the story of the Turkish Republic, which has already been thoroughly covered elsewhere (Kasaba 2008; Zürchner 2006; Taspinar 2005). However, in order to present a historical context for this work it is imperative that we address very briefly some of the main features of this state-building project – through which we will also be able to introduce current discussions and the ways in which the contributions to this volume engage with them.

Turkey's founding fathers wanted to break away from the Ottoman state-form, whose political structures had been deemed inappropriate insofar as they had not prevented the secession of many of its former territories (this regardless of the demise of empire and loss of land to foreign powers). The Ottoman state system, which was less concerned with engineering population than with expanding its territory, was replaced by a cultural one, holding that the borders of the political unit (the Republic) and cultural unit (the nation) should coincide – what Foucault refers to as the passage from 'territorial state' to 'state of population' (Foucault 2007). The spatial binding of polity and culture in the 'state of population', a benchmark of nationalism, has modelled politics in Turkey, but also accounts in large measure for the many crises with which the political system has been, and continues to be confronted.

The (January) 1923 Convention signed at Lausanne – which paved the way for the more widely known (July) Treaty establishing the independent Republic of Turkey – provided for a shuffling ('exchange') of populations between Greece and Turkey aimed at a culturally homogenization of the two countries' populations. Out of what had been a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, and multi-religious territory the government and its administration of the new republic set about to building a nation of Turkish citizens. A variety of policies were designed to turn these populations into Turks, starting with the naming of the country, '*Türkiye Devleti*' (the 'State of Turkey'), in the first (preparatory) Constitution of 1921, and repeated mention, in the second (first full) Constitution of 1924, of '*Türkler*' ('Turks') even though this was supposed to be understood as 'a political term, without distinction of, or reference to, race or religion' (Earle 1925). Part of the rationale in establishing a national army and a national educational system was to promote the official language, Turkish, as unifying tool by which was deemed necessary to imbue a sense of loyalty of the citizenry towards the governing elite. Settlement policies were also enacted, planned to Turkify sensitive, mostly border areas (often Arab, sometimes Christian) and disperse non-Turks (mostly Kurds) in order to accelerate assimilation. In the first decades of the newly established republic, the equation of citizenship with Turkishness virtually turned non-Turks into non-entities. In terms of number and inhabited territory the Kurds in the southeast of the country were the most important population thus neutralized (Barkey and Fuller 1998). Kemalist pressure to assimilate the Kurds led, conversely, to an increased awareness amongst the Kurds of their own ethnicity (Taspinar 2005: 65–6).

Furthermore, the Kemalist elite believed that Turkey could only succeed in the stated, revolutionary aim of modernization and become part of the Western, 'civilized', world by secularizing the political system and excluding religion from the public sphere. Under the 1924 constitution, the caliphate was dissolved. Religious

(clerical) legal, medical and educational institutions (Sharia, madrasa) were done away with, to be replaced by secular systems styled after those of Switzerland, Italy, Germany and so forth. Muslim brotherhoods and sects were closed down and the political influence of sheikhs – particularly keen in the more rural areas and in the Kurdish provinces – was formally called to an end. Headwear laws were employed to literally divest religious scholars of their authority, and religion came under state control through its institutionalization into the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

In today's Turkey we are constantly reminded of the need for a thorough revision of the decisions taken during this foundational period. The place of religion in politics and society is questioned, with the growth of Islamic capitalist enterprise (e.g. Asya Holding) under the umbrella of business organizations (like Müstakil Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği) establishing an Islamic bourgeoisie which provided the socio-economic base for the rise (during the 1990s) and coming to power (during the 2000s) of political Islamic parties (Maigre 2006). Since 2002, the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP) has run the government, which has lead to increased tensions in Turkey's political and social life, given the fearfulness and distrust over their true intentions by the Kemalist secularists in Turkey, as well as a real shift in the traditional power balance of the country.

In this volume, Menderes Çınar offers an account of the growing cleavage between the AKP and its followers on the one hand and the secularist establishment on the other. When the AKP came to power and took the lead in the pre-accession reform process, there was great optimism amongst many observers as to the party's role in the democratization of the country. Çınar argues that the AKP might indeed have had the potential to further democratize Turkey, but has been failing of late to deliver upon its promises. It is the author's argument that the AKP is currently facing an *ancien régime* in Turkey, a sneer to the Kemalist establishment's innate conservation, and that the AKP is consequently suffering from an anti-political reformism that expresses itself in a failure to raise public awareness of the reasons why reforms serve democracy, political unity and economic prosperity. These and other reasons that account for the current status quo are subjects of analysis. Murat Somer similarly engages with the discussion over the democratization of Turkey. He gives an account of the ways in which both sides in the conflict have envisaged and caricatured the other in a dichotomous opposition, while negating historical engagements of the secular Turkish political system with Islam and Islamism, and vice versa. This has greatly obstructed the emergence of a space for the 'twin tolerations' and mutual trust between Turkey's two sets of political players that would allow for a thorough democratization of the country.

The political demands that have come from the European Union and from a part of Turkey's civil society and its liberals involve a plea for measures that would end the discrimination of minorities and promote an expanded definition of the minority concept, so as to clearly establish the full rights of ethnic and religious minorities which make up Turkey's still rich cultural tapestry, such as Kurdish Sunnis, Zaza Alevites, Zaza, Yezidi, Armenian Orthodox Christians, and so on and including, as fundamental, a reconceptualization of the definition of Turkish

citizenship in the Constitution. Heated, protracted and (thus far) ultimately fruitless debates have taken place, though, when real propositions to replace the old definition were made, of which one of the best examples was the prosecution – private, but under the Constitution (Article 301) – of Baskın Oran and Ibrahim Kaboğlu in proposing the concept of '*Türkiyelilik*' ('Turkishness'), meaning 'Being from Turkey', as an umbrella concept under which various identities could find shelter (such private prosecutions are now prevented, but the offending article has not been repealed or revised).

The endorsement of the idea that Turkey is constituted by different ethnic and religious groups is enough to invoke the history of Ottoman disintegration and the Western attempt to carve up Anatolia (formally, with the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres), and create alarm over the future territorial integrity of the country. This is very well illustrated in the chapter by Ferhat Kentel in his psycho-sociological account of how Turkish nationalism has affected the mental maps of its citizens, particularly in a globalizing world in which the old boundaries become increasingly superfluous. Kentel shows that while many of the projected ideas and fears are incorporated in the ways individuals and groups construct their relations to the state and conceive of the relations between self and others, their anxious identities are, nevertheless, reconstructions of the grand narratives of trauma and thus testify to a constant tension between loyalty and resistance. Particular attention is drawn to the circulation of intrigue theories in Turkey and the ways in which the threats coming from without are projected onto the internal Others of the country, Armenians, Christians, Alevis and Kurds.

The chapter by Mesut Yeğen lends more insight into the particular approach of the Turkish Republic in relation to the Kurds as internal others and the Kurdish question more generally. He demonstrates that at first, during the few years prior to the foundation of the Republic, state officials declared they would recognize Kurds as an ethnic group with cultural and political rights – following which, from the mid-1920s to the 1990s, the state continually denied not only the cultural and political rights of the Kurds, but even the very fact of their existence. Their very identity, as well as their rights, was rendered invisible and nullified. It was only at the end of the century that the state finally began to concede the validity of this ethnic dimension. Concomitantly, Yeğen argues, in the last two decades the strategies employed by the state in tackling – or avoiding – this issue have morphed into an amalgam of old and new, blending the assimilation and oppression of the past with a new discrimination and recognition.

The Kurdish question has indeed been central in the political agenda of Turkey, with political actors using both bullet and ballot to deal with it. Several uprisings among the Kurds have been met with military force, and the south-east of Turkey – the Turkish part of the Kurdistan region – has been ruled under a state of emergency or martial law imposed from Ankara until 2002. Even so, from the beginning of the (post-World War 1) multi-party period, Turkish political parties actively searched for alliances with Kurdish tribal leaders and notables as 'bulk vote generators' (Barkey and Fuller 1998: 77). Their integration in the political system pacified, one might say, the Kurds as Kurdish political agents. And participation in the

political system (party list system allocating parliamentary seats on a provincial basis) gave tribal leaders access to national power and thus to resources by which to strengthen their tribal structures (Bozarslan 1996: 141–2).

The narrow political space, in which Kurdish representation was only enabled through the traditional tribal structures on the basis of a denial of their Kurdishness (and even then heavily restricted by systemic intervention from the capital), left few avenues for genuine, alternative political expression. When this state of affairs prompted the organization of the PKK guerrilla and its initiation of operations – the '29th Kurdish uprising', as characterized by former president Süleyman Demirel – the Turkish state responded with military force, in the conviction that war could replace politics. The first political personality to depart from this militarist approach was the late president Turgut Özal. More than this, Özal seemed to be ready to challenge and change the 'one state, one nation, one people' canon of Kemalism, and actually prepared for a re-foundation of the Republic. Michael Gunter's chapter accounts for the role President Özal could have had in resolving Turkey's Kurdish question.

Gunter compares the policies of the Turkish state before and during Özals time in office and speculates about the unifying role Özal might have had, despite being the leader under whom the Emergency Law was installed in the Kurdish provinces and the village guard system set up (which effectively created and armed local militia). With Özal's untimely death (foul play was suspected), it seems that a momentum was lost that could have made an end to the fighting between the PKK and the Turkish Armed Forces. Complementing Michael Gunter's chapter is the contribution from Tozun Bacheli and Sid Noel, which offers an analysis of the approach of the AKP towards the Kurdish question. Bacheli and Noel describe the welcoming climate for the AKP that prevailed in the beginning of the millennium, lending the party support from a part of the Kurdish constituency which enabled it to engage with some of the demands of the Kurds. The chapter than goes on to asses the difficulties the AKP government is currently facing in putting together the more radical reforms necessary to meet the demands of Kurdish nationalist parties (on the sine qua non, that is, of the territorial integrity of the state). Both authors nevertheless remain hopeful that an AKP government might actually be able to facilitate the conversion of Kurdish citizens into equals through a continued process of political and cultural incorporation.

It is, however, impossible to properly appreciate Turkey's Kurdish question without an in-depth understanding of its main political actor. This volume therefore pays considerable attention to the political development of the PKK. First, Joost Jongerden and Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya look at how the PKK came into being, analyzing the process of ideological group formation (1973–7), party-building (1978–9) and the organization of revolutionary violence as a means to political change (1980–94). The authors demonstrate that, rather than an ordinary Kurdish nationalist party, the PKK took its orientation from the revolutionary left in Turkey and built on the left's (armed) experiences. In their second contribution to this volume, Jongerden and Akkaya present an analysis of developments inside the PKK since the arrest of its leader, Abdullah Öcalan, in 1999, arguing that, despite experiencing

severe difficulties during the 2000s, and contrary to the expectations of most observers, the PKK nevertheless managed to reinvent itself, through a series of ideological and structural transformations. This leads Jongerden and Akkaya to argue, that, in spite of what is generally assumed, the PKK has neither abandoned the idea of a united Kurdistan nor been marginalized, but has remained a strong pan-Kurdish political actor as well as an important actor in Turkey's internal politics. The conclusions the authors reach differ markedly from some of the accounts that have been circulating, and which tend to argue the downfall of the movement (Özcan 2005; Uslu 2008). A more in-depth analysis, particularly engaging with primary sources, shows an altogether different picture of the viability of the PKK, shedding new light upon possible future developments of the still ongoing conflict.

Political solutions for these burning issues, the Kurdish question and the role of Islam in the secular republic, have thus far failed to materialize. The inability of subsequent governments to bring about change is related to the foundational rigidity of the political structure. The army, as self-appointed guardian of Kemalism, carefully watches over the boundaries of civil society. In a move of post-political politics, the foundations of the political system are attributed the status of exception: they cannot be changed, and belong to a domain of politics placed outside the realm of politics. Confrontational politics occur when some actors (the army, bureaucracy) try to mold society on the basis of this arrangement. Yet the Kurdish issue, created with the establishment of the Republic, can only be solved if the project of cultural nationalism is abandoned. And Islam can only be accommodated with a secular embrace. This asks for a re-foundation, or re-establishment of the Republic, and the right of the people to revise, reform and change its political system (Negri 2003).

The developments inside Turkey necessarily demand that account be taken of the influence of the growing émigré communities currently living in Europe. With this in mind, the last section of the book is given to three chapters explicitly dealing with the long-distance nationalism of citizens of Turkey. Ayhan Kaya's contribution lends insight into the (re)construction of the boundaries of Turkish immigrant communities in West European countries. Kaya argues that in the European Union, community boundaries are being redrawn due to the (re-)ascendancy of an identity-based ethno-culturalist and religious discourse, in opposition to the perceived destabilizing forces and effects of globalization, such as deindustrialization, insecurity, poverty and unemployment. He explains how it is in this light that migrants and their descendants feel the urge to find methods and tactics with which to come to terms with this, taking recourse to communal references strongly determined by Turkish/Kurdish and Muslim norms and values. Through honor, marriage and religion, are the boundaries of the Turkish communities maintained and redrawn. At the same time, however, they are being contested by members of these very communities.

Following Ayhan Kaya's sociological account of immigrant strategies in dealing with an increasingly unwelcoming environment, the final two contributions engage more specifically with transnational political practices that actively seek to affect Turkey's homeland politics. Olivier Grojean deals with the socio-political mobilization of the immigrants from Turkey of Kurdish descent. Grojean reminds us

that individuals do not just become active but are mobilized. In particular, he wants to draw attention to the importance of political organization in the politicization of identities, through an analysis of mobilization by the Kurdistan Workers Party in the EU member-states. The presence of different political organizations from Turkey in Europe contribute to a partisan environment particularly by enabling the (re-)activation of the identities and political dividing lines of the homeland. Contrary to many in the field of transnationalism studies, Grojean argues that it is not the political opportunities available in the countries where people from Turkey reside that determine their political engagement and the kind of activities they engage with: rather, the organizations that are actively mobilizing populations are prime actors, and it is their motivational abilities and organizational frameworks that need to be investigated in order to understand the phenomena of transnational politics and immigrant mobilization.

While Grojean pays attention to the different modes of action undertaken by Kurdish militants and supporters of the Kurdish movement, Marlies Casier draws attention to 'Kurdish diplomacy'. Casier's concluding contribution considers the initiatives undertaken in the European Parliament in addressing the Kurdish question. As the Kurdish question has become part of the EU–Turkey relationship, included now in the accession negotiations, large numbers of activities have been launched by Kurdish political activists in order to enforce their definition of the problem and its possible solutions. Some Members of the European Parliament have gone a long way in supporting the Kurdish demands, even when these demands have come from actors who are members of what is officially deemed a terrorist organization. The support in European Parliament has, however, been very much dependent on the smaller factions and many of the activities appear to be more to the service of strengthening the imagined community and the internal cohesion within the Kurdish movement than to have lead or be on a path to genuine political change. At the same time though, it is highly unlikely that the Kurdish question would have enjoyed significant attention during the EU negotiations had it not been constantly kept on the agenda by the efforts of the Kurdish activists and their MEP supporters.

This book is not meant to describe what Turkey is like, but to increase our understanding of how the political realities of Turkey are being constructed, contested and reconstructed by its different political and societal actors. These individuals, groups and institutions are organized locally, nationally and transnationally in order to affect the course Turkey's future might take. From the different contributions to this book we can make some preliminary predictions. First, it seems unlikely that the growing cleavages between the secularist establishment and the Islamist parties and their followers will be easily overcome. There is a lack of incentives for the secularist establishment to reconcile its position with the ruling AKP, whereas for the AKP the increased Euro-scepticism generally and plainly antagonistic stance on the part of some of the EU-member states regarding Turkey's entry to the Union, ever, has rendered it difficult to promote the needed reforms. A real danger exists that the EU–Turkey accession negotiations might become primarily a means for the current ruling party and the new Islamic middle class to improve their own political and economic positions and broaden their base

westwards. For the EU member states this would amount to be little more than a method of creating a more welcoming market environment for economic investment and consumption. The accession negotiations could than be extended indefinitely without ever to concretize in fully fledged membership. And this would imply that the great hopes for change – which the prospect of membership originally created amongst a wide range of actors within Turkey's civil society – will turn out to be in vain.

The prospect of a loss of genuine EU entry possibilities throws up many questions. Could Turkey yet be thrown eastward and into the arms of more militant, anti-Western forces? Shall we witness increased political apathy, or else might we expect the opposite, a stronger, internally driven demand for political change and an increased political mobilization? And would such an increase in political mobilization reduce or increase already existing tensions within society? This will very much depend on how much space for contestation will actually be allowed by the different opposed actors, which was exactly one of the points for which a positive EU membership perspective has shown itself to be a valuable tool, i.e. as providing an outside and thus relatively objective instrument to scrutinize (violations of) the political freedoms of expression and association.

The contributions to this book do not give reason to expect rapid solutions to the Kurdish issue either. The Kurdish movement in Turkey is still well organized under the ongoing influence of its imprisoned leader, active and able to attract new young recruits, and still able to depend on support at home and in Europe. A loss of faith in the possibility of a political solution will, however, reinforce the movement's belief that its armed wing needs to be maintained as a necessary insurance and negotiating lever in pressing for the acceptance of its demands – even though the use of violence, in the eyes of most outside observers, seem highly inappropriate for the realization of the more moderate demands the movement has confined itself to. Meanwhile, a nationalist backlash skulks behind the door and makes the political climate more and more hostile to the sort of compromises needed for a durable solution to the conflict.

The focus of concern in this book is with the social agents of politics. Since both solutions and stalemates are socially constructed, we hope that this book may make a contribution to a widening investigation into social agents of political projects. More than this, the contributions in this volume comprise an open invitation to further develop research agendas employing an agency-centered approach. This approach studies group construction. Though rendered as natural, groups are socially created, defined and developed, and in need of constant maintenance, even though boundaries between different groups are marked, patrolled and rendered fixed and durable (see here, particularly Kentel, Kaya, Somer and Çınar). Research should, therefore, start not with groups, but with group formation, and focus not solely on divisions between groups (in this context, secular vs non-secular, and Kurdish vs Turkish), but with the way they are constructed, boundaries created and rendered as natural and durable, and controversies which groups pertain to (Latour 2005: 28–9). In this volume we have discussed several processes of group construction and formation (particularly Jongerden and Akkaya, Grojean and Kaya); the

way various groups relate to each other (Kentel, Somer, Çınar, Gunter, Jongerden and Akkaya, and Bahçheli and Noel); and, furthermore, we have also considered how groups in the world of today operate in a transnational space (Grojean, Casier and Kaya). We are convinced that a research agenda focusing on (the dynamics of) group formation can bring about a better understanding of crisis and confrontation in politics, and of the politics of crisis and confrontation that we see today.

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Part I

Political Islam and Turkey's Secularist-Nationalist Project

1 Turkey's present *ancien régime* and the Justice and Development Party[1]

Menderes Çınar

Introduction

Looking at the current Turkish political landscape one can draw two diametrically opposing pictures reflecting the deep cleavage in almost every walk of life since the election of the former Islamist Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi or AKP) to office in 2002. Those who see things from the perspective of the secular establishment – comprising a military-led network of the top echelons of the judiciary and the academia; the main opposition party, the Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi or CHP); former President of the Republic Ahmet Necdet Sezer (2000–7); military-friendly non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and think tanks; older middle classes; and some of the centre-right politicians – regard the AKP government as representing 'the crisis' of the secular regime. Claiming the existence of a hidden Islamist agenda behind its seemingly democratic policy proposals, they believe that the AKP undermines the secular republic and should not be entrusted with power. Hence, since 2002, almost no day has passed without the secular establishment drawing attention to the AKP's acts undermining the secular regime. These acts can be as wide-range as moving the headquarters of the Central Bank from Ankara to Istanbul;[2] distribution of alcohol-free wet towels on Turkish Airlines flights (*Hürriyet* 2008b; Çölaşan 2006); defending the right to wear a headscarf on university campuses; Europeanization and democratization reforms; preparing a constitutional draft and advocating an Anglo-Saxon version of secularism.

On the other hand, the AKP has consolidated its predominant position in Turkey's party system by increasing its votes from 35 per cent in 2002 to 47 per cent in 2007 which has marked a change in Turkey's electoral behaviour, known for its instability, fragmentation and high volatility. Moreover, the AKP governments have lowered the inflation rates to single figures, stabilized the unemployment levels of a rapidly growing population, and accelerated the integration of the Turkish economy with the global markets through a series of substantial privatizations and legal reforms. The AKP governments have also taken important steps towards the civilianization and democratization of the regime as part of their early Europeanization drive between 2002 and 2004.[3] As a result of these reforms, Turkey has fulfilled sufficiently the Copenhagen Criteria and started accession negotiations with the EU in October 2005. Rapid progress in Europeanization and

stabilization of the economy have been the most concrete achievements of the AKP governments. Although unsustained, this track record has provided the ground for portraying the former Islamist AKP as true modernizers. It has also led Turkey's liberal intelligentsia and progressive groups in the West to consider the AKP at least a suitable actor to join forces with, if not become one of them, in order to further a genuinely progressive agenda in Turkey.

In what follows, this chapter will first suggest that the AKP represents a serious potential to weaken, if not cast away, the well-established Orientalist paradigm that categorically denies the possibility of a fully fledged democracy in a Muslim country. Compelled by the logic of the military-led 28 February (1997) process, the secular opposition, in its struggle against the AKP, has aimed at constraining the power of politics by way of reproducing essentialist arguments about its Islamic character and altering the ground rules of the game. This will be shown in the second section. In the third section, this chapter discuss the reasons why the AKP's potential contribution to go beyond Orientalism is limited only to a democracy-friendly political attitude. In doing so, this section will emphasize the AKP's failure to lead the democratization process and the consequences for Turkish politics.

The AKP as an opportunity to overcome Orientalist modernization

Because of its underlying Orientalist assumptions that reify Islam as an inherently political and thus dysfunctional religion for democracy and modernity – which inevitably has led to an illiberal practice of secularism that controls, instrumentalizes and contains Islam – Turkish Westernization has resulted in a limited modernization in the sense of foreclosing the possibilities of a fully fledged liberal democracy.[4] This is a vicious circle and, therefore, haunts the prospects of democratization in Muslim countries: 'modernization and democratization practically requires the submergence of Islam, yet submergence of Islam is paradoxically undemocratic and feeds back into authoritarianism' (Çınar 2002: 41). Consequently, the Orientalist debate over the compatibility of Islam and democracy results in an illiberal secularism, itself incompatible with democracy.

More recently, the verdicts of the Constitutional Court on the closure cases against the Welfare Party (1998) and AKP (2008) provide a restatement of the Orientalist assumptions of Turkish modernization. In both cases, the Court upheld that secularism in Turkey cannot be practised as in Western countries because of the [alleged] specific features of Islam.[5] This is a view also endorsed by centre-right politicians like Mesut Yılmaz, former prime minister and leader of the Motherland Party (*Milliyet* 2008a). In this way, Islam becomes a pretext for an authoritarian practice of secularism that denies the possibility and legitimacy of 'individual' religiosity and different practices of religion. Therefore, the words of the EU commissioner Olli Rehn did not make sense to the proponents of Turkey's current practice of secularism: 'if one is respecting democratic principles and at the same time attached to religious beliefs, this overlaps with the European culture and heritage' (*Radikal* 2007a). In fact, any argument contrary to the current practice of

secularism is seen at best as well-intended but naive, if not as a sign of conspiracy against Turkey (*Radikal* 2008a).

The domestic and international proponents of Orientalist modernization fear that democratization in a Muslim country would inevitably lead to an anti-Western Islamist takeover. They thus argue in favour of a trade-off between secularism and democracy; and display a willingness to turn a blind eye to the political role of the military on the pretext of protecting secularism. As a result, the proponents of an Orientalist modernization for Turkey are content to end up with a second-rate democracy.[6]

Against this background, especially by virtue of its Islamist pedigree, the AKP represents a challenge to the Orientalist modernization paradigm that restricts the range of options in a Muslim society to either illiberal Islamism or illiberal modernization/secularism. This is not just because the AKP has shouldered an important Europeanization/democratization process in its first years, making Turkey 'an ever greater source of inspiration for all those liberal minded people in the Islamic world who want more freedom and democracy',[7] but also because its political stance incorporates human rights, democracy and rule of law as universal values (Duran, 2008: 87) and allows engaging with it within a liberal frame. Moreover, at a time when the age-old strategy of pursuing stability at the expense of democracy is increasingly questioned in the Western world, the importance of the AKP's potential contribution to overcoming Orientalism is mounting also.

It is important to note that unlike the younger generation of Islamist movements elsewhere, the AKP does not speak from within Islam and does not stand for Islamic modernism.[8] Islamic modernism upholds the idea that Islam is a total way of life and devises arguments for a proper understanding of it under modern conditions. It claims the compatibility of an Islamic system with democracy, or the possibility of an Islamic system under a democratic regime. The AKP does not endorse an agenda for Islamic modernism. It does not assign the state with the task of building an Islamic community either. Moreover, unlike its ancestor, the Welfare Party (1983–98), the AKP does not equate itself with religion and does not want to instrumentalize the current illiberal institutional structure, originally set up to contain Islam, for imposing a top-down Islamization process (Çınar 2006). What the AKP stands for is a very loose redefinition of secularism in a way that accommodates Islamic public visibility in Turkey. In this respect, it is a secular party representing the claims of Islamic identity by employing the language of negative liberties.

Secular opposition and the institutionalization of the logic of the February 28 Process

Originally, the February 28 process was initiated by the military in 1997 to oust the Islamist Welfare Party (Refah Partisi or RP) from power; to eradicate Turkey's creeping Islamism; and to redesign the political sphere along Kemalist lines without taking over power directly (Cizre and Çınar 2003). The February 28 process was so named after a National Security Council (NSC) meeting on that date. In the

actual meeting the military handed down a list of measures which included, for example, asking the then Islamist RP-led coalition government to close the Prayer Leader and Preacher Schools. The RP could not implement such measures and was forced to resign. The following governments were made to implement most of the measures at the expense of their popular appeal. Consequently, in the 2002 elections Turkey's pro-state centrist parties were sent into oblivion and the military's project of designing the political sphere was defied by the electorate, who gave their overwhelming support to the recently established AKP as the least state-friendly party. The military, however, continued to guide and steer secularist opposition against the AKP in the post-2002 period. All three features of the February 28 process were therefore reproduced by the secular opposition to the AKP. These were a political party-like military; essentialist assumptions in approaching the AKP; and militaristic methods in dealing with Islamism.

Mobilization of the top echelons of the state institutions and the public by a political party-like military

In the February 28 process the military aimed at manipulating and mobilizing the top echelons of the judiciary, bureaucracy, academia, media and the public against the Islamist RP-led coalition government. This type of intervention marked the beginning of a military transforming itself more into a political party format (Cizre 2000). In the post-2002 period, the military continued to act as a political party (Cizre 2008a). It has repeatedly advanced the opinion that the reactionist elements are continuing with their anti-secular activities and that the level of threat has never been so high in the history of the Republic.[9] The military has also undermined and embarrassed the AKP government by obstructing its policy initiatives[10] and by supporting the pro-secular nationalist Republic Rallies in the spring of 2007, which aimed at preventing the AKP from installing its own candidate as the President of the Republic.

A document leaked to the Istanbul daily, *Taraf*, entitled 'Information Support Activity Plan,' and not denied by the office of the Chief of Staff, suggests that 'the central and local administrations [dominated by the AKP] are preparing a legal ground for reactionism and the spread of Islamic life style' (*Taraf* 2008). The plan aimed at bringing the judiciary, the media and public opinion to the military's line on matters it shows an interest in. Carrying out smear campaigns against 'anti-military' artists and authors, making the Kurdish southeast 'uncomfortable', and getting artists to produce work in accordance with the opinions advanced by the military were among the policy instruments mentioned in the plan. As part of this grand design, the military has classified the dailies, journalists and intellectuals in pro- and anti-military terms, and encouraged the establishment and development of 'friendly' NGOs in support (*Radikal* 2007c). Hence, civil society organizations, mass media outlets, professional associations, think tanks and societal platforms, led or counselled by a retired general or a civilian aligned with the military's political stance, have mushroomed (*Radikal* 2007d, e). These organizations appear to have a democratic status, but their political stance and style are not compatible with a democratic

outlook, for they expect a uniform subscription to official ideology, associate political diversity with the undermining of the unitarian state and the secular regime, and portray those who call for the military's compliance with the principles of transparency and accountability as traitors conspiring with foreign forces.

Essentialism and the emergence of ad hominem *politics*

The second feature of the February 28 process was essentialism in conceptualizing, 'understanding' and approaching Islamism. This is illustrated in one of the reports of the Western Study Group, which, during the process, provided the military with the necessary intelligence about creeping Islamism in Turkey. Submitted in 1998, in the immediate aftermath of the Islamist RP-led coalition government, the report states that reactionist Islamist elements have been hoping to survive by setting up special places to commemorate Atatürk – called Atatürk corners – in their schools, by forcing teachers to remove their headscarves and by organizing arts and sports activities, and thus trying to appear as sincere Muslims loyal to the secular regime (*Yeni Yüzyıl* 1998). Hence, the report not only suggests that the reactionist elements have been hiding themselves, but also implies a belief in the maxim 'once an Islamist, always an Islamist.' Rejecting the possibility of a change in the political intentions of the Islamists, this essentialism resulted in the condemnation of the AKP for being born with the original sin of Islamism, falsifying the AKP founder's expectation that the secular establishment would respect non-ostentatious religiosity which avoids showing-off and exaggeration (Taşgetiren 2001). Hence, in the eyes of the secular establishment, regardless of the content of its policy proposals, the AKP has represented Islamic reactionism by virtue of its members' headscarf-wearing wives and its Islamist pedigree.

The secular establishment's essentialist approach gave way to what might best be called a form of institutional *ad hominem*[11] politics, which focuses exclusively on who proposes policies rather than what is in them. *Ad hominem* politics not only makes the AKP more and more insecure, but also curtails the regenerative capacities of politics. For example, the promulgation of a new constitution to replace the current one established by the 1980 coup administration has been a 'staple' reform topic advocated by almost all political persuasions in Turkey. However, since the election of the AKP, the idea of constitutional reform has been rejected as a result of claims that the AKP is concealing an Islamist agenda. The opposition CHP went as far as dismissing the idea of a civilian and democratic constitution as a pretext for establishing a religious republic, and holding up the AKP's plan for a new constitution as an illustration of its willingness to invalidate the principle of secularism (*Radikal* 2008b, *Hürriyet* 2007). Maintaining that the members of parliament were elected not to create a new constitution but to implement the existing one, the CHP leader, Baykal, stated that only those who establish a new state or those who stage a coup can make a new constitution (*Radikal* 2008c).

By focusing on the personal traits of those who can be entrusted with power, *ad hominem* politics averted the Turkish public's attention away from the establishment of liberal democratic mechanisms like accountability and transparency.

Distrust of the institutions and values of democracy has been a natural companion to *ad hominem* politics. In this respect, *ad hominem* politics meant that both the secular establishment and the AKP have approached the question of fundamental rules and institutions in accordance with their conjectural interests, but not on the basis of their abstract merits. The net result of this situation has been a politics without any meaningful utility and an unruly power struggle without any binding norms or concept of what is normal and reasonable. The Constitutional Court's verdict altering the ground rules of the game in presidential election is an illustration of this unruly political struggle. Although the constitution does not define a specific quorum for presidential elections and although a quorum of two-thirds majority has never been required in previous presidential elections, the Constitutional Court, upon the petition of the CHP, decided that a quorum of two-thirds majority (367) was necessary for a round of voting to be valid. The court thereby tried to force the AKP to reach a consensus with the secular establishment's parliamentary extension, the CHP, by redefining the rules of the game in accordance with the conjectural interests of the secular establishment.

That the basic democratic concepts such as the rule of law, rights and liberties, checks and balances have been twisted by the secular establishment is a fact of life in Turkey. The secular establishment believes that the principle of secularism can only be interpreted by the Constitutional Court. Any attempt at opening a political debate on secularism is therefore portrayed as being against the rule of law and separation of powers. Similarly, the Turkish courts repeatedly ratify the ban on headscarves on the grounds that it threatens the rights and liberties of those who do not wear it. They, thereby, portray political criticism of the ban on wearing headscarves on university campuses as an act against individual liberties as well as secularism. Hence such statements as 'my dream is a Turkey in which veiled and unveiled girls will go to campus hand in hand' has become evidence of the AKP's anti-secular activities in the closure case filed against it just six months after it had received 47 per cent of the votes. In sum, *ad hominem* politics not only prevented the establishment of new institutions, but also eroded existing ones and took the concept of normal out of Turkish politics.

Militarism in approaching the conservative constituency of the AKP

The third feature of the February 28 process was the establishment of a trade-off between democracy and stability via somewhat militarist methods in the fight against Islamism. It is true that the military wanted the civil society, judiciary, academia, bureaucracy and politicians to deal with Islamism, but in the militarist way it has defined. This involved categorization of certain citizens as internal *enemies* of the republic and dispensing with the logic of inalienable rights and liberties, human dignity and legal procedures in dealing with them.

The tensions between the civilian governments and the military in the course of the February 28 process were illustrative of the rather militaristic intentions and methods for dealing with Islamism. After the forced resignation of the Islamist RP-led coalition government, both Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit and Deputy

Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz clashed with the military on more than one occasion on the correct method of fighting against Islamism. That the February 28 process involved not only an extra-political but also an extra-legal struggle against the Islamist threat became obvious when Prime Minister Yılmaz stated openly that he could not fight against Islamism using extra-legal methods, if that was what was being asked of him (*Radikal* 1998). Similarly, Ecevit complained that 'if, as some circles claim, reactionism is growing even after the closure of the RP and banning of its top political leaders, then there are serious mistakes in the methods used to protect the state and prevent the growth of reactionism. The first among these mistakes is to turn the concern about the reactionist threat into a nightmare and make people think that reactionism cannot be prevented through democracy' (*Milliyet* 1998). In the post-2002 period, the AKP Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, too, has drawn attention to similar divergences and ensuing tensions between militaristic and civilian approaches to the issue of reactionism, saying that reactionists should be pursued within the framework of law and order (*Hürriyet* 2006).

The post-2002 militarist engagement with the AKP is best illustrated in a recently popularized saying: 'if the country is at stake, all the rest is detail'. Indicating a willingness to resort to coercion politics, this alarmist statement has been turned into a maxim by some of the above-mentioned quasi-civil society organizations, politicians, academics, students and university administrators, with the barring of headscarf-wearing women from attending their husbands' award ceremonies and their children's graduation ceremonies, or from appearing in court rooms being some instances (*Radikal* 2005; Akgüneş 2005; Becerikli 2005). Some prominent centre-right political figures have also lent support to such acts by declaring, for example, that headscarf-wearing students should go to Saudi Arabia. What's more, such practices have started to be 'legalized' by the Turkish courts. A Council of State Court, which monitors administrative decisions and practices, found no wrong-doing in administration's refusal to promote a teacher because of his headscarf-wearing wife (*Radikal* 2006). The removal of the ban on headscarves in universities and in areas of public service is rejected by the argument that it will put secular lifestyles under risk. Such an argument provides the grounds for what might be called pre-emptive intolerance of one sector of society towards the other: 'we are afraid that you will not respect our lifestyles, that's why we suppress yours'.

Why the secular opposition embraced the logic of the 28 February process

Let us address the question of why Turkey's secular opposition has so willingly adopted an approach that fails to 'understand' a societal movement and problem, and deal with it in a democratic way. In answering this question, one can refer to the taken-for-granted legitimacy of the political role and prestige of the military (Cizre 1997). Turkey's established elite (in the judiciary, academia, media and politics) fails to condemn a retired officer who explicitly confessed that he had

blasted bombs to intimidate the judges and prosecutors, but who has established a link between political criticism of the ban on wearing headscarves on university campuses and the murder of a judge in the Council of the State by an alleged Islamist perpetrator. Similarly, this elite has established a link between the massacres of missionaries in Malatya and a pastor in Trabzon with the AKP government's alleged abuse of religion for political purposes, but has turned a blind eye to the fact that missionary activities were defined as threats to the regime by the military-dominated NSC in 2001, and to the fact that it was not the 'Islamist' AKP leader Erdoğan, but the 'leftist' Democratic Left Party's leader Bülent Ecevit who saw the Christian missionary activities as undermining the unity of the nation.

There are, however, other interlinked factors that can help us to account for the effective monopolization of the secular opposition by the military. First, those of a centrist political persuasion in Turkey have effectively subcontracted the issue of secularism/secular regime to the military and have endorsed the military-defined concept of secularism in the final instance (Çınar 1997). In fact, not engaging with the issue of secularism in any serious manner has been a precondition for a centrist political stance.

Second, and more important, the secular establishment, as the contemporary guardians of and proponents of the original cultural modernization, reject the notions of compromise and sharing power. Their power position, as defenders and maintainers of a pre-politically defined above-politics common good, is constructed on an anti-political foundation, which, in turn, results in a tendency to be disinterested in understanding societal developments as a determinant of politics.[12] This is because, drawing from Gadamer's claim that good knowledge has an identity cost, understanding societal developments has the potential to transform one's own political identity and thus approach to power, as well as have an impact on the actor's power position. Hence, the secular establishment understands neither the AKP, nor the societal dynamics that produced it and brought it to power with an overwhelming majority only 14 months after its establishment. Rather, it displays a suspicion about the capacities of ordinary people to make rational decisions and thus, for example, dismisses election results as irrational. Similarly, in the eyes of the many members of the establishment, the AKP is not the outcome but the cause of certain societal issues like the existence of female students willing to wear a headscarf. The same logic applies to other key issues like the Kurdish issue, which is seen as not the cause but the effect of the Partiya Karkêren Kurdistan (PKK; Kurdistan Workers Party) 'terrorism'.

A further result of this anti-political positioning is the rejection of the idea that other and better forms of societal existence are possible through human creativity. This is probably the reason why the secular establishment has been reproducing the traditionalist conceptualization of time/history as a degeneration of a past golden age and a yearning for the good old days of the single-party era, especially in the last decade. This may also be the reason why the secularist establishment finds a conspiracy behind the arguments for a liberal practice of secularism or further democratization.

The contribution of the AKP to political decay in Turkey

Despite the ardent secular opposition, the AKP increased its votes by 12 per cent in the 2007 elections and maintained its overwhelming majority in parliament. The election results were certainly an expression of the electorate's satisfaction with the AKP. They were also a rebuke of the military's involvement in daily politics and a rejection of the secular establishment's claim that the AKP poses a threat to the secular regime in Turkey. Moreover, in the aftermath of the elections, the AKP, with the help of the Nationalist Action Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi), managed to install its own candidate in the office of presidency.

However, it could be suggested that since 2007, the seemingly formidable single-party majority government of the AKP has been rendered increasingly impotent and mute on most policy issues, including the further reforms necessary for compliance with the EU. The government prepared a constitutional draft which has never seen daylight. It amended the constitution to allow the wearing of the headscarf on university campuses, but the secular establishment responded by a Constitutional Court decision which abolished *de facto* parliament's power to make and amend constitutions. Moreover, these two policy initiatives resulted in the closure case in the Constitutional Court, which, although not banning the AKP, still convicted it for being the focal point of anti-secular activities. This decision renders the AKP vulnerable, forces it to be extra-cautious in its policy initiatives and provides a firm ground for the secular establishment to continue blocking the government's actions. Moreover, if one takes into account the court's verdicts in a series of cases filed by the CHP, these decisions practically elevate the profile of the CHP as the parliamentary outlet of the secular establishment and force the AKP to reach consensus with an unwilling CHP on key policy issues. The CHP, on the other hand, refuses to collaborate with the AKP, claiming that the AKP has not yet resolved its conflict with the constitution, or with secularism.[13] Hence, after a brief revival of the constitutive capacities of politics under early AKP rule, Turkish politics now seems to be in a state of inertia again.

This situation is the making of not just the secular establishment, which weakened the AKP's reformist tendencies by making it feel as insecure and fearful as possible, but also of the AKP, whose reformist tendencies were expendable anyway, because it defined its political mission not in positive but in negative terms. Moreover, the political circumstances in Turkey allowed the AKP to roll back from a reformist position to one of status quo, at no or very little cost as far as its electoral fortunes are concerned.

The AKP defined its political mission in what I call a negative rather than positive way. This negative political mission of the AKP can be understood by revisiting the conclusions its founders have drawn from the above-mentioned 28 February process, which had triggered the crucial division within the Islamist movement and made a formative impact on the AKP's political identity. While problematizing the military-led secular establishment's rigidly illiberal understanding of secularism, the founders of the AKP *primarily* criticized the RP, particularly its leader Necmettin Erbakan, for not being able to survive in power and resist the repressive policies of the 28 February process on Islamic identity.

Hence, the founders of the AKP promised not to crack in the face of a secularist onslaught and not to let collective 'Islamic identity' pay a price for the mistakes committed by politicians claiming to represent them. In other words, the AKP claimed to be credible on the basis of its promise to protect democracy, but not necessarily on a promise to transform the Turkish political system in a liberal-democratic direction and to remove for good the possibilities of another extra-legal crackdown on Islamic identity as in the February 28 process. It is true that the AKP's claim to credibility was based on its promise to protect democracy, but, what it understood by democracy was the transfer of power by free elections without any military intervention. The mandate included to survive in power so as to provide a counterbalance to the secular establishment and thereby protect its constituency in the face of yet another attempt to discipline Islamic identity in the public sphere. But, again, it did not include a liberal transformation of polity so as to prevent the possibilities of such a disciplining for good.

To survive in power and to accomplish its defensive/protective mission, in contrast to its ancestor RP, the AKP paid extraordinary attention to not becoming a source of political tension and not causing a clash with the guardians of the Republic. It also refrained from employing exaggerated rhetoric and symbols. The founders of the AKP believed that the RP had become a source of tension because it had failed to do these things. The AKP associated the RP with ideological and polarizing politics, which, in turn, were portrayed as a leftover from the cold war era and as outdated in the contemporary age of globalization.

Coupled with its understanding of democracy as the absence of military intervention in the transfer of power, the AKP's consciousness about not being a source of tension has resulted in an essentially *anti-political attitude* that fails to recognize and come to terms with the conflict dimension of politics.[14] This anti-political nature of the AKP's politics can be seen in the way it framed its reformist agendas, some of which entail such fundamental changes as decentralization of the highly centralized public administration structure in Turkey. The AKP tried to justify its reformist agenda by reference to Turkey's EU membership bid or exigencies of the globalization process. Both Europeanization and globalization, in turn, were portrayed as the fulfilment of the Kemalist principle of 'reaching the level of contemporary civilizations.' In this way, the AKP perhaps hoped to avoid clashing with the guardians of the republic, but at the same time it portrayed its reformist agenda as being above and beyond politics and as a technical process of adjusting to European and global structures. In this latter aspect, the AKP's overemphasis on *consensus* can be seen as a consequence of its anti-political or unconsciously-political stance, as well as a strategy of avoiding a clash with the establishment.[15] The problem with this approach is that an anti-political position cannot help a political class to empower itself vis-à-vis the secular establishment, whose anti-political attitude is a product of their power position in the upper levels of hierarchy and is reproduced by it.

With this limited understanding of politics, the AKP could not engage with the secular opposition in liberal-democratic terms, and, more importantly, it could not pursue consistently a reformist agenda, especially on thorny issues. The AKP could

either dismiss the opposition's claims without any counter-arguments, or settle for a *modus vivendi* with the military at the expense of democratization, or, when it comes to its own survival, engage in a showdown with the armed forces to illustrate that, unlike the RP, it is not an easy catch.

The AKP's anti-political reformism is reflected not only in its failure to raise people's awareness of the reasons why the Europeanization reforms serve democracy, political unity and economic prosperity, but also in its failure to establish close links with the liberal sectors of the intelligentsia, as well as in its tendency to dismiss all political opposition, in an accusing fashion, as blocking Turkey's progress on the right track.

With the all-mighty military, the same anti-political stance resulted in a search for a *modus vivendi*. Hence, after a speedy reform process between 2002 and 2004, which dismantled some parts of the traditional power structure and challenged others, the AKP easily rolled back from some democratization reforms, like the anti-terror law, and aligned itself with the establishment on certain policy areas like the Kurdish issue.

On thorny issues, including those relating to Islamic identity, the AKP employed a 'politics of avoidance' towards the establishment and a 'politics of patience' towards its own constituency, including the liberal intelligentsia (Duran, 2008). In the former, it refrained from taking up sensitive issues that might raise tension in the polity and society, while in the latter, it asked reform-expecting constituents to wait for the right time without making an effort to politicize issues properly. For instance, the AKP constantly refused to talk about the headscarf issue by saying that talking about it would generate tension and that people do not accept (political parties generating) political tension. However, thinking that conditions were ripe in the aftermath of the 2007 elections, the AKP tried to resolve the headscarf issue by amending the constitution without engaging in any political debate, argument or persuasion. Similarly, it brought the issue of constitutional reform into the political agenda, basically as a one-party, if not one-man, show. In the aftermath of the elections, Erdoğan also reiterated his interest in operationalizing the referendum mechanism by stating that Turkey must get used to a referendum culture.[16] This, in a sense, was the AKP's way of bypassing a recalcitrant secular opposition in solving certain issues. But referendums are also mechanisms that allow charismatic leaders like Erdoğan to bypass democratic procedures, avoid public debate and popularly legitimize autocratic rule. The prevailing features of the AKP, especially when engaging with the secular opposition, have been a lack of political creativity and the existence of intellectual impoverishment.

The exigencies of accomplishing the negative or defensive political mission have dictated that the AKP should be assertive and determinant against the secular establishment, especially when it comes to its own survival as a political entity and as the elected government of the country. To the military's e-memorandum[17] hinting at a move against the AKP government in more threatening terms, it responded with an unprecedented assertiveness in a written statement which declared that it was 'unthinkable in a democratic constitutional state that an institution subordinate to the office of prime minister, like the chief of the staff, uses phrases against the

government on any issue/matter'. To the closure case, it responded with a document that was deliberately entitled 'reply' rather than 'defence'. The tone of the AKP's 'reply' was assertive and self-confident as well. It accused the prosecutor of being careless in preparing the indictment and ignorant about the concept of secularism, which the prosecutor defined as 'scientific lifestyle' or 'lifestyle based on science'. The famous Ergenekon investigation can also be considered as the AKP's reaction to the disruption of presidential elections by the secular establishment in the spring of 2007, as well as to the closure case filed against it in March 2008. The investigation certainly entails a defence of democracy as non-military intervention, but does not yet signal an initiative towards the establishment of a liberal-democratic order in Turkey. It was after the failure to conclude the presidential elections and in the run-up to the July 2007 elections that the AKP leader and Prime Minister Erdoğan declared their firm intention to fight against the 'gangs' disrupting democratic procedures and law and order in Turkey. Since then, the investigation has revealed a network of journalists, politicians, judges, criminals and retired generals, who are allegedly conspiring to prepare the ground for staging a coup against the AKP government. In the meantime, documents revealing the plans for the coup and the military's efforts to make the judiciary toe the military line[18] were all leaked to the press, making people think that the closure case filed by the prosecutor was not legal but political.

Concluding remarks

There is a tendency to associate the AKP's struggle for survival with democratization in Turkey. This tendency was especially predominant in the run-up to the presidential and general elections, during which the establishment and the AKP clashed head on. While it is true that the AKP's struggle for survival as a legitimate political party and as the elected government of the country is democratic in itself, it will be misleading to confuse this democratic struggle with democratization in Turkey. This is so especially when one takes into account the motive of the AKP's power orientation, which I have defined as negative or defensive. With this motive, the AKP does not lead its constituency, or the Turkish people in general, in the direction of a liberal democracy, but reinforces the already existing power orientations among the secular and conservative sectors of society.

In the absence of an alternative politics arguing for the peaceful coexistence of secular and conservative sectors under a liberal-democratic state, both sectors increasingly link their survival to holding on to power. Hence, while the constituency of the AKP links its survival with the AKP's survival in power and is increasingly intolerant towards even well-intended criticisms of the AKP from a democratic perspective, the secular camp demonizes the conservative people and rejects power-sharing, be it in the form of democratization and civilianization or opening up the public spaces to the conservatives. And, as such, however exciting the polarized clash between the secular establishment and the AKP is, the Turkish political soil seems to be a barren one, at least as far as the prospects of a liberal transformation is concerned.

Notes

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2 CHP leader Deniz Baykal interpreted the AKP's intention to move the headquarters of the Central Bank from Turkey's administrative capital Ankara to economic capital Istanbul as a reflection of its 'complex' towards the Republic and its founder Atatürk and his basic philosophy. See Hürriyet (2008a).
3 These include removal of the military from the official platforms – like the Higher Education Council, Supreme Board of Radio and Television and Office of Curriculum Development of the Ministry of Education – through which it played a role in policy-making; changing the composition and lowering the political profile of the National Security Council (NSC), which once functioned as a parallel government; abolishing the NSC Secretary General's unlimited access to any civilian agency and his authority to monitor the implementation of NSC recommendations; limiting broadcasting in Kurdish on state television; and altering the status quo-oriented policy on the divided island of Cyprus.
4 For the Orientalist nature of Turkish modernization see Sayyid (1997: 63–9).
5 The verdicts of the court can be found at <http://www.anayasa.gov.tr/eskisite/KARARLAR/SPK/K1998/K1998–01.htm> and <http://www.anayasa.gov.tr/eskisite/KARARLAR/SPK/K2008/K-2008–2SPK.htm>
6 See, for example, a speech delivered by Roberto de Mattei of Cassino University at the Hudson Institute, USA, cited in Poyrazlar (2007).
7 For an example see the statement by the British Foreign Secretary (Miliband 2008). Similar comments can be found in some Arab daily newspapers as well, see for example Erraşid (2007).
8 For the younger generation of Islamists in Egypt see Wickham (2004). See also Shadid (2002).
9 For an example, see the statement by the Chief of Staff General Yasar Buyukanit (Milliyet 2008b).
10 For example, the Chief of the Staff publicly diverged from the government's policy line, inter alia, on the Cyprus issue. See Bila (2007). Similarly, the military stalled Prime Minister Erdoğan's meeting with the Kurdish leaders of Northern Iraq when Chief of Staff General Buyukanit declared that he would not talk to them because they supported the PKK, see Radikal (2007b).
11 The term ad hominem denotes 'an argument which appeals to personal prejudice and emotions rather than reason' (see Stone 1996).
12 For the reality-blinding effects of anti-political reasoning, see Cizre (2008b).
13 Even though the AKP has accepted equal rather than proportional representation of each parliamentary party, the CHP refuses to join the Parliament's Conciliatory Committee for a new constitutional draft.
14 This paragraph draws from Çınar (2003).
15 That an anti-political outlook dominated AKP's politics can be seen in its failure to recognize power aspects of the relations between identity and interest differences in society, in its tendency to reduce politics to the business of politicians only and in its tendency to be intolerant of public criticism.
16 In the 2002 election declaration by the AKP, referendum was portrayed as a mechanism bolstering participatory democracy. The declaration promised to activate this mechanism, but throughout its rule the AKP has never attempted to do so.

17 On 27 April 2007, just a few hours after the first round of voting in parliament for the presidential election, in which the AKP's second man Abdullah Gul was the only candidate, a statement posted on the website of the General Staff pledged that the military, as the ultimate defender of secularism, 'will manifest its attitude and behaviour in an explicit and clear fashion when necessary'. Gul was eventually elected as president of the Republic on 28 August 2007, i.e. only after the general elections on 22 July 2007.

18 For example, a secret meeting of Deputy Chief of the Constitutional Court, Osman Paksüt, and the then Deputy Chief of the Staff, Ilker Başbuğ, just after the closure case against the AKP was filed, was leaked to the press.

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2 Democratization, clashing narratives, and 'Twin Tolerations' between Islamic-Conservative and Pro-Secular Actors

Murat Somer[1]

Introduction

The three-year period, which began in 2007 with the controversies preceding the election of Turkey's eleventh president Abdullah Gül, was critical for Turkish democracy. During these years, some examples of the tensions and intrigues in Turkish politics have included massive pro-secular and anti-government rallies; an online military ultimatum to the democratically elected government rooted in (former) Islamist parties; a case heard at the Constitutional Court to outlaw the governing party for 'anti-secularism'; fierce battles in the domestic and international media in which the adversaries have presented themselves as the defenders of democracy or of secularism, calls by the prime minister to boycott the country's largest, mainly pro-secular media group; and arrests of former military officers, along with pro-secular intellectuals, on various charges including conspiracy to topple the government.

These social and political crises and frictions represent an apparent paradox because, in many ways, Turkish democracy has made significant advances during the last decade. During the late 1990s reformist Turkish Islamists were transformed into a 'conservative-democratic' force represented by the ruling Justice and Development Party (JDP, AKP). This enabled the AKP to gain the support of major segments of the secular intelligentsia in the name of democratic reforms and EU membership.[2] Political stability, economic growth, and legal-institutional reforms since 2001 have combined to expand considerably the autonomy of civilian political actors from the military-dominated guardian state that has stifled democratization, in the name of democracy, since 1960 (Heper and Keyman 1998; Cizre 2004; Özbudun, 2007). For example, the AKP government publicly denounced the online military ultimatum in 2007, and former military officers have been prosecuted by civilian courts for conspiracy against the government, both of these being a first in the country's history. The legal-institutional reforms have strengthened the ground for military accountability as well as a more transparent and accountable government. They have also increased the *de facto* pluralism of the socio-economic and political space, if not exactly the normative acceptance of it by the actors themselves. Accession talks with the EU started in 2005.

Yet these steps of democratization seem to have divided the social and political actors, rather than unite them behind more reforms that would further strengthen

democratic institutions and secure the rule of law. In particular, the level of political polarization between the self-appointed protectors of secularism on the one hand, and the self-appointed defenders of democracy on the other hand – within the realms of politics, bureaucracy, and civil society – seems to have intensified, not diminished. The pro-secular actors turned suspicious of the reforms led by the government, while the government lost its reformist zeal and seemed to resort to 'illiberal' means in order to pacify the opposition and consolidate its power. Furthermore, the discursive clashes between the mutually distrusting pro-secular and religious-conservative actors have often taken the form of a seeming clash between secularism and democracy as competing values. These developments have undermined the growth and, worse, the stability of pluralistic democracy.

Rather than being seen as a paradox, this increased level of polarization in Turkish politics may actually be viewed as an expected outcome of the fact that democratic development is not necessarily linear (Carothers 2002). Democratization decreases the level of certainty about the future precisely because democracies produce 'uncertain outcomes' (Przeworski 1988). By increasing the possibility that opponents may come to power and have the power to make changes in laws and policies, the process of democratization may thus increase the sense of insecurity for many and thus induce polarization. Indeed, the coming to power of the AKP and the subsequent reforms were products of democratization and increased the autonomy of the civilian political actors and the opportunities available to civilian political actors to transform the state and society.

However, identifying enhanced polarization as a possible product of democratization does not imply that scholars do not need to examine the particular causal mechanisms that drive the sense of uncertainty in each case. On the contrary, this is the only way that scholars can produce concrete policy suggestions as to how actors can bridge these divisions so that the democratization process may continue.

A variety of domestic and international, political and socio-economic causal mechanisms drive the religious/secular polarization in Turkey today. In particular, the weakness of civilian-political checks and balances in the system needs more theorization, in addition to the long-standing deficit of Turkish democracy vis-à-vis military intervention in politics (Somer 2007a). A full examination of these mechanisms is beyond the scope of this chapter, however. Rather, the focus will be on examining how clashing extreme narratives inform many religious-conservative and pro-secular actors' perceived interests, increase their perception of zero-sum interests, and, ultimately, undermine their democratic cooperation.[3] These narratives concern issues such as secularism and democracy, the legacy of Turkish modernization, and the country's identity in the world. This chapter will also discuss whether or not there may be any room for the reconciliation of these narratives in the future.[4]

The current religious–secular divide

A religious/secular divide, or division between secular and Islamic visions of modernization, has marked Turkish politics and society since at least the 1920s and 1930s when modern Turkey was established through a series of secularizing and

Westernizing cultural and institutional reforms (Mardin 1973, 2003; Berkes 1998; Karpat 2000; Tunaya, 2007). During this period, liberals, Islamic-conservative and Islamist actors opposed radical transformations, such as the abolition of the caliphate and religious law.

Two differences distinguish the current rift from the earlier ones. First, the levels of legal-political and economic development and external support (insofar as the EU integration process continues) are significantly higher than before. Second, the current developments are taking place under the government of a political party founded by former Islamists. The latter used to be viewed as an anti-systemic, anti-democratic political force but went through a discursive and ideological transformation in the late 1990s. The current process is also occurring in an environment where Islamic-conservative actors in government, politics, economics, and the rest of civil society have gained newly enhanced self-confidence and self-assertion. In fact, this may be called Turkey's 'new Muslim pluralism' (Somer and Tol 2009). Conversely, pro-secular actors are less sure of their dominance, not only in a political and socio-economic sense, but also in terms of the dominance of the pro-secular 'master narratives' as the dominant narratives in state and society.[5] The results of these changes are highly visible in Turkish politics, as a brief account of some of the principle events over the last couple of years will illustrate.

In April 2007, the ruling AKP nominated its number two figure, the then Foreign Affairs Minister Abdullah Gül for president. The decision faced strong opposition from pro-secular state and non-state actors, partly because of Gül's earlier career in Islamist political parties and partly because his wife wore the Islamic headscarf that the pro-secular actors view as a symbol of opposition to secularism.[6] An online ultimatum from the military followed, and hundreds of thousands attended a series of 'republican' mass rallies 'to uphold secularism (*laiklik*).' The government called for an early election which it won in a landslide victory and duly elected Gül president.[7] In a conciliatory speech following his electoral victory, Prime Minister Erdoğan pledged that his government would embrace all Turkish citizens, secular or religious.

Soon afterwards, however, the party amended the constitution (with the support of two other parties) so as to lift the restrictions on the Islamic headscarf in universities. The main opposition party, the Republican People's Party (RPP or CHP), took recourse to the Constitutional Court, where the amendment was annulled for being in violation of the principle of secularism, as enshrined in the constitution. The chief public prosecutor charged the party with being 'a center of anti-secular activities' and called for its abolition. In July 2008, the Constitutional Court decided not to ban the party – by a margin of one vote – but issued a warning and financial penalty because some of the party members' activities and statements were viewed as being in contravention of the secularism principle.

Along with the unrelated problems in Turkey's EU relations, this political polarization contributed to the slowdown of the legal-political reforms. Although it had supported numerous constitutional reforms during the past decade, the CHP now declined to back the AKP's already waning efforts.[8] The 2008 report of the EU Parliament noted a third year of weakened reforms, following a period of major

reforms that had improved Turkey's freedom rating from nine in 2000 to six in 2005.[9]

The antagonisms between the political parties ran alongside polarization among the intelligentsia. Fierce 'media battles' occurred between the supporters of the government and its skeptics, suspicious of what they saw as a hidden Islamist agenda. Prime Minister Erdoğan called on his supporters to boycott the pro-secular Doğan media group soon after its newspapers published controversial reports linking the government to a Turkish-Islamic charity organization convicted of embezzlement in Germany. Soon thereafter, the Ministry of Finance charged the Doğan group with tax fraud and issued a penalty of over US$ 500 million.[10]

These battles divided the public support for crucial initiatives toward democratization, as revealed by the so-called 'Ergenekon' investigation and cases against the unlawful elements within the state apparatus, in particular the security forces.[11] Pro-secular political and civil society actors such as the CHP and pro-secular business and labor associations had supported similar initiatives against Turkey's so-called 'deep state' in 1996–7.[12] This time, however, they are divided as some feared that the government might use these initiatives to pacify the pro-secular opposition. The Ergenekon investigations were by some regarded as revenge on the part of the government for the attempt to ban the AKP, or, as a deliberate attempt to weaken the pro-secular army and other pro-secular actors as part of a long-term strategy to wrest the state away from its founding principles.[13]

A sure sign that democratization is the victim of the religious/secular confrontation is the deterioration in the level of media freedom.[14] According to one rights watchdog, the number of 'journalists, writers, politicians and children' prosecuted for thought-related 'crimes' doubled from 254 in 2007 to 435 in 2008.[15] Although many of these prosecutions ended with acquittals, they severely limited a free environment for thought and expression. The Turkish publisher of Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion* was among those prosecuted, alongside a novelist charged with insulting religious feelings.[16] While the government did not necessarily initiate these cases – many were opened by radical religious or nationalist groups – it did not denounce them either, or take concrete steps to protect freedom of thought.

When the popular science magazine of the governmental Foundation for Scientific and Technological Research cancelled an issue on Darwin commemorating the bicentenary of his birth, it was seen by many pro-secular actors as just another example of creeping Islamization.[17] In turn, religious-conservative actors have launched public debates on the issues of science, religion, and creationism, charging 'positivist secularism' with hostility against religion. They have also condemned a widely publicized qualitative study documenting secular individuals' experiences of religious-conservative pressures.[18] The study was critical of religious communities' growing clout in society and politics (Toprak *et al*. 2008). While the AKP government truculently dismisses the existence of any 'Islamization,' the perception is shared by major segments of society. A reported 32.6 percent of the people questioned in a survey believed there to have been an increase in the number of people desiring a Shari'a-based religious state and social system in the

last ten to fifteen years (Çarkoğlu and Toprak 2006).[19] Equally, it should be noted, many pro-secular actors tend to dismiss any research that documents religious individuals' experiences of exclusion in areas such as education, government, and the corporate world (Özdalga 2003; Bayramoğlu 2006). This tendency to dismiss information that discredits one's own version of social-political reality, prevalent among both types of actors, can be seen as both cause and product of social-political polarization.

Values and Turkish democratization

The current troubles of Turkish democracy have important aspects that revolve around struggles between secular and religious elites for material interests such as power, status, and wealth. A newly emergent religious-conservative 'counter-elite' has for some time now been challenging the power of the pro-secular elites within the state, business, and the intelligentsia (Heper 1997; Göle 1997a). However, the division cannot be reduced to a simple struggle for power or wealth. A thorough examination of the public discussions taking place shows clearly that it has a major ideological dimension.[20] The religious/secular divide is simultaneously a cleavage of competing narratives which reflect partly conflicting values and beliefs in regard to questions such as religion's role in state and society, social pluralism and women's rights, the nature and desirability of an ideal model of modernization, and the country's identity in the world.

The normative conflicts generated by the oppositional narratives held by religious and cultural pro-secular actors turn distributional and other conflicts into zero-sum divisions difficult to mediate for democratic institutions. They convert material conflicts into conflicts that look like conflicts of identity. Even a nationwide economic crisis may be seen by some elites as an opportunity to displace their rival elites.[21] The conflicts thus undermine the emergence of social and political consensus over reforms that would further strengthen democracy. Thus, the quality and strengthening of democracy may require some degree of reconciliation between conflicting narratives, and not just the resolution of distributional conflicts and cooperation based on material interests.

Current research and political analyses capture insufficiently the complexity of the division. Part of the research focuses on the social and ideological transformation of Islamic movements in Turkey and successfully illustrates their changing and modernizing nature. This body of work, however, tends to view all indigenous movements 'vernacularizing modernity' as necessarily or inevitably contributing to democracy (Göle 1997b; Yavuz 2003; Özdalga, 2006).[22] Journalistic accounts are also inclined to treat economic modernization as equivalent to democratization, and tend to reduce the politics of religious-secular divide to a class struggle over distribution.[23]

Yet, far from reflecting primarily class-based distributional interests, Islamist political parties have, it has been argued, brought together cross-class coalitions comprising groups normally expected to have conflicting distributional interests (Öniş 1997). It is true that pro-secular sensitivities are positively correlated with

wealth, urban background, and education, while religiosity is negatively so (Çarkoğlu and Toprak 2006; Çarkoğlu and Kalaycıoğlu 2007). However, unless the class and secular-religious cleavages are cumulative, i.e. the secular-religious cleavage more or less overlaps with socio-economic splits along the lines of rich/poor, urban/rural, or well-educated/poorly educated, then one cannot be reduced to the other. Nor can one overlook the fact that the contending parties do, in fact, argue mostly about values rather than about money and status. To offer an analogy, most ethnic conflicts, the Irish conflict for example, have a significant social class dimension, but this does not imply that we can ignore ethnic identity in explaining them.

The contingent nature of adaptation to political and economic opportunities would gradually and automatically give rise to democratization through a concomitant ideological evolution. In fact, while these opportunities provide an important potential for democratization, elite divisions and ideological conflicts can nevertheless hinder democratic consolidation.

In turn, studies that problematize democratic consolidation and elite divisions focus on the cleavage between Turkey's strong state elite on the one hand, and the political elite and social-political movements on the other (Heper and Keyman 1998; Özbudun 2000). In the 2000s, this categorization is less adequate. The religious/secular divide cuts across the other divisions. Former Islamists and religious conservatives have now, for example, become part of the state and political elite (and wealthy, urban, and highly educated). There is a need for new categorizations (Somer 2007b; Öniş 2009).

Pro-secular and religious narratives

Through a comprehensive examination of the pro-secular and religious media contents and the political actors' rhetoric over the years, as well as interviews with social and political actors, one can discern that extreme versions of two oppositional narratives underlie the political fissures.[24] While a systematic conceptualization of these narratives is not possible here, a brief discussion may be helpful. Three components of these narratives will be considered here with a view to inform the discussion ahead: secularism and democracy, the legacy of secular Turkish modernization, and, to a lesser extent, the issue of the country's identity in the world.

The first, pro-secular narrative can be called the *republican narrative* which, until recently, could claim to be the 'master narrative,' at least on behalf of the state and the mainstream elites. With respect to the three components above, it can be summarized as follows: (1a) Secularism is necessary for democracy *and* modernization; (1b) Islam-inspired ideologies such as Islamism are an impediment to modernization and democracy; (2) Turkey's secular modernization made democracy possible through political, economic, *and* social-cultural development, and (3) Turkey's pro-western and pro-EU orientation is incompatible with its growing political and socio-economic linkages to Muslim countries in general and to Middle Eastern countries in particular. These are viewed as mutually exclusive goals which cannot be sustained simultaneously in the long run.[25]

With respect to (2) above, religious actors have long claimed that Turkish secular modernization did not in fact translate into socio-economic development, especially in the 'periphery,' i.e. outside the major urban centers such as Istanbul and Ankara and especially in rural areas. A second claim has more emotive power because it pertains to people's private identities. Religious actors have maintained that secular modernization has alienated Turks from their history and tradition, and led to an ethical deficit, or a deficit of values, in people's private and social lives. This issue was recently raised also by Şerif Mardin when he seemed to refer to a normative and aesthetic deficit in the republican ideology, maintaining that the 'republican teachings' entailed insufficient efforts to produce new collective values about 'the good and the beautiful,' which weakened 'the republic's teacher and school "vis-à-vis" the imam and the mosque.'[26] Prime Minister Erdoğan seemed to agree when he argued that 'we adopted the West's immoralities in conflict with our own values, rather than its science.'[27]

With respect to (3) above, religious actors have maintained that Turkey should embrace its Ottoman past more and its potential roles in the Muslim world, especially with its Middle Eastern 'near abroad.' Economically, this is argued to be of benefit to Turkey's development by attracting capital from the Gulf region (as an alternative to western finance). Politically, religious actors have emphasized the leadership roles that Turkey can play by drawing on its relatively developed economy and government, Ottoman legacy, cultural links with the Muslim world, and strategic geography.

With respect to (1a) and (1b), religious actors have long criticized Turkish secularism for being 'anti-religious' and 'anti-democratic.' In the 1980s and 1990s, liberal Turkish intellectuals, mainly of secular orientation, endorsed secularism's importance for democracy but critiqued the authoritarian or undemocratic aspects of Turkish secularism. Such aspects include, for example, government involvement in religious affairs, which hinders the government's impartiality vis-à-vis different religions and different interpretations of Islam, the understanding of secularism as a lifestyle, and restrictions on the Islamic headscarf and religious education at private schools (Erdoğan 1990). This critique was also adopted by Islamist and Islamic-conservative actors who added that religious versions of 'multiple modernities' were possible.

One also observes, however, that the rejection of authoritarian secularism and the defense of 'democratic secularism' is often taken a stage further. It is transformed into an argument contradictory of (1a), that 'secularism is *un*necessary for democracy.'[28] In the religious-conservative media, the overwhelming majority of the discussions with a content related to secularism are focused on the problems caused by Turkish secularism. In the content of religious newspapers analyzed, the argument that 'there can be democracy without secularism' was supported 14 times in the context of a discussion on liberal democracy, and 50 times in the context of a discussion of secularism. Secularism in general was discussed 290 times, with negative terms such as prohibitionist (*yasakçı*), despot (*zorba*), ideological laicism, meddlesome (*müdahaleci*), and enemy of İslam (*Islam düşmanı*). There also was strong support for the idea that 'religion should be more influential in social affairs' (Somer 2009).

Twin tolerations, secularism, and democratization

Stepan (2000, 2005) observes that, first, many states with secular, or pro-secular, regimes are not democracies, and, second, advanced democracies have a variety of different institutional arrangements to organize the relations between state and religion (i.e. these arrangements do not fit a simple and narrow definition of secularism in the sense of a strict separation of state and religion. In fact, a strict separation of state and religion, as in the case of the US, is exceptional among democracies, and the more developed democracies in fact have more 'state involvement in religion' (Fox and Sandler 2005; Fox 2008). Stepan thus concludes that, first, secularism is not necessary for democracy, and, second, what enables democracy is not the separation of state and religion but the emergence of a 'twin tolerations' between political institutions on the one hand, and religious authorities on the other.

Stepan defines twin tolerations in terms of three freedoms, namely, (i) the freedom of elected governments from any 'constitutionally privileged' influence that religious institutions may have on them, (ii) complete freedom of worship, and (iii) the freedom of the pious to express their values in both civil society and politics unless they impinge on other people's liberties. Hence, he maintains that democratization requires simultaneous adjustment from both the state and religious actors. They should learn to share the public domain through constant 'construction and reconstruction' of the boundaries between the state and religion.

I will not concern myself here with the question of whether or not Stepan is right in his claim that democracy and secularism are unrelated principles. Suffice to say that cross-country evidence shows that a strict separation of state and religion is unnecessary for democracy per se, for the transition, say, from a military to an elected system of political leadership. But the same evidence also suggests that a broad notion of secularism may well be a necessary ingredient for a country to take the next step and develop into an advanced, pluralistic democracy. Almost all countries considered to be consolidated democracies seem also to be secular in a broad sense, i.e. in terms of a high degree of practical state *autonomy* from religion, coupled with freedom of religion and conscience in general. There is also strong cross-country evidence pointing to a strong correlation between socio-economic development, coupled with egalitarian democratic institutions, and the spread of pro-secular values such as individual freedoms and autonomy (Norris and Inglehart 2005). Thus, some notion of secularism supported by twin tolerations may be a necessary corollary of successful democratic development (Somer 2007a). Indeed, the three conditions that characterize Stepan's twin tolerations may be interpreted as pointing to such a democratic notion of secularism.[29]

The value of Stepan's model for the argument here is that he seems to propose a mechanism, the emergence of twin tolerations, through which the relations between state and religion can be configured in a way that is compatible with pluralistic democracy. Accordingly, successful democratization may not necessarily depend on *what* exactly the state–religion relationship is – although, as argued, some broad notion of secularism seems to be necessary – but, rather, on *how* the

state–religion relationship is determined, i.e. on whether or not it is established democratically, through the promotion of twin tolerations.

From this perspective, the key question for the success of Turkey's continued democratization is whether or not it can produce the emergence of twin tolerations between state and religion on the one hand, and between the pro-secular and religious-conservative social-political actors on the other hand. As I will consider further, Turkey's laicist model of secularism involves the state's control of religion through heavy regulation, and support, of religious institutions and activities. Both liberal and religious-conservative actors in Turkey demand that this model in society be reformed to reduce the state's involvement in religious affairs. This is necessary to make Turkish laicism compatible with a more pluralistic democracy in which religious actors enjoy more freedoms, the state is more neutral vis-à-vis different religions and religious interpretations, and the state's role is shifted from controlling public religion to ensuring that religious liberties do not impinge upon other liberties such as secular freedoms of expression (as implied by Stepan's third freedom). In light of the discussion here, it can be argued that the success of such reforms would not simply depend on the extent to which they reduce the state's involvement in religion, on quite *what* the future role of the state in religion would be. Rather, the key question is *how* the reforms are to be put in place, through which social and political processes are the state–religion relationship and religion's proper public role in society to be determined.

The gist of Stepan's argument seems to be that secular and democratic institutions should emerge through processes of cooperation, contestation, and compromise between religious and secular actors, rather than through authoritarian power-yielding in the name of rigid definitions of secularism or of hegemony-seeking notions of religious-conservative identity or morality. Applying this notion to the Turkish case, the republican and religious-conservative narratives become crucial because they shape the actors' perceptions of interest and, thus, the possibility of cooperation and compromise.

During the course of the present decade, many liberal, pro-secular intellectuals, writers, and academics have 'cooperated' with religious-conservative actors to promote a more democratic version of secularism, i.e. one that is more amenable to the emergence of twin tolerations. Appreciating the justice in many religious-conservative claims, they have supported a relaxation of the restrictions on religious expressions. Arguably, this has been a positive development from the point of view of twin tolerations.

However, such cooperation is much less conceivable if, for example, religious-conservative actors argue that secularism is not necessary for democracy. Floating the idea of democracy without secularism would raise the prospect of 'Islamic democracy', in the sense of a clerical democracy such as has been developed, however imperfectly, in Iran, or in the sense of an 'illiberal' democracy in which religious-conservative groups employ social and political pressures to homogenize society, and the state fails to protect individual and minority freedoms. This would threaten the fundamental interests of pro-secular actors, such as the freedom of (secular) thought and expression. Similarly, religious actors would not cooperate

for a rigid version of secularism that disregards their demands for more visibility and freedoms in public.

Turkish modernization revisited

Could the narratives informing the pro-secular and religious actors be reconciled so that cooperation between the two becomes more likely, or are these narratives just too different for this? What are the prospects of social and political actors with an interest in democratization producing more positive-sum versions of their narratives, versions that have more potential to produce twin tolerations? While the answer to this question depends on numerous factors outside the scope here, some limited projections can be made. With respect to the clashing claims of the two narratives regarding secularism (1a and 1b), the discussion above suggested that narratives that acknowledge the importance of secularism for democracy but envision less state-dominant and more democratic versions of secularism may be one way to reconcile the two and encourage cooperation between religious-conservative and liberal pro-secular actors – they have helped in the past. Thus, the focus in the rest of this section will be on (2), and, to a lesser extent, on (3).

Turkish modernization and religion

The more extreme claims of the religious-conservative and the republican narratives, that Turkey's secular modernization was anti-religious and that all Islamic world views are inherently opposed to modernization and secularization, are hard to reconcile. However, a dispassionate reading of the historical record does not corroborate either of these extreme claims – which suggests that there may be room for the emergence of more 'balanced' narratives.

Republican Turkish secularism resulted from a modernization project that was at the same time both an extension of and a radical break with Ottoman modernization (Shaw 1977; Ahmad 1993; Bozdoğan and Kasaba 1997; Mardin, 2005). Religion had been a crucial element in shaping the organization of the Ottoman state and the multi-confessional Ottoman society. However, Turkish *Islamism* emerged as a possible recipe to reverse the empire's long decline by employing an Islam-inspired version of modernization (parallel to the emergence of Islamism in places like India), as an alternative to the ideologies that were also emergent at that time, such as constitutional monarchism, Turkish nationalism, and, to a lesser extent, liberal cosmopolitanism (Karpat 2000; Hanioğlu 2008). In the late nineteenth century, Sultan Abdülhamid II also upheld Islamism as a means to depersonalize state authority and to enhance the state's legitimacy and image among Muslims worldwide. This occurred especially after *Ottomanism* failed to become popular among the empire's Christian peoples and became mainly associated with Muslim Ottomans.

But the Ottoman state was not a theocracy, and Islamists did not pursue a theocracy either. The state was in control of religion as much as religion was in control of the state. Especially, from the early nineteenth century on, the Ottomans made

major efforts to become a modern and secularizing European state. They tried to modernize the army and took steps to establish a constitutional regime alongside the sultanate which combined religious and temporal authority in the personage of the sultan. They formed secular schools alongside religious schools, and codified the Shari'a as a way to modernize the traditional-religious legal system. Many religious-legal scholars – *ulama* – did not oppose the adoption of either social-technological innovations, like the printing press, or legal innovations, such as aspects of European law selected with a view to supporting commercial modernization (Kuran 2004). The republican reforms, to a considerable extent, built on these Ottoman attempts at modernization, continuing many Ottoman institutions such as the Ministry of Religious Foundations.

The republican reforms resulted from the belief prevalent among some reformist elites that Ottoman modernization was partial and therefore ineffective, and were designed to surpass it and to avert the return of the Ottoman system. Under the leadership of Kemal Atatürk, republican reforms during the 1920s and 1930s constituted a complete overhaul of the traditional religious institutions such as the Islamic schools, orders, and foundations (*vaqfs*). Many were substituted by secular alternatives (e.g. the secular schools and legal system). Others were replaced by supposedly pro-secular yet religious institutions that were strictly regulated by state agencies, which thus led to a fusion of secular state and religion. An example is the colossal Directorate of Religious Affairs, which, among other things, pays the salaries of all the imams and oversees all the mosques in the country.[30]

Clearly, these reforms were aimed at controlling religion, especially the kind of Islam that has a claim to organize public life. But, apart from the more radical periods during the 1920s and 1930s, it is hard to interpret the laic system that emerged as 'anti-religious' in the sense of being comparable to the anti-religious secular models in countries like China. True, the constitution prohibits any political actor from trying to institute religious principles as a basis of the state's workings; [31] the legal principle of gender equality and the restrictions on Islamic headscarves in schools and government offices violate mainstream Islamic teachings (Kalaycıoğlu 2005);[32] and government business hours do not allow religious civil servants to observe some of their religious rituals such as praying five times a day.

Against this, however, many laws and state institutions actively support religion. The constitution tasks the state with supervising (and providing) religious and moral education, to which end the Directorate of Religious Affairs, the state manages, and partly finances, the 79,000 mosques in the country (compared with 42,000 primary and secondary schools); unlike their French counterparts, Turkish politicians freely flaunt their religious convictions and relationships for voter support; and many Turkish governments, in particular the 1980–3 military regime, have actively promoted religious (Sunni Muslim) feelings ostensibly to promote the national identity and unity.

Thus, neither republican narratives portraying the Ottoman heritage as a subversive heritage stemming from a theocratic ancient regime, nor religious narratives that portray the republican reforms as anti-religious, fit well with the reality of what actually happened.

Turkish modernization and democracy

Similarly, historical record corroborates neither the extreme religious-conservative claim that secular political and economic development completely excluded Islamic-conservative actors, nor the extreme republican claim that pro-Islamic actors are necessarily against democracy and modernization.

The early republican reforms were authoritarian reforms that built on an authoritarian state legacy. That it was possible for them to be implemented relatively peacefully was primarily due to Atatürk's charismatic leadership and the strong popular legitimacy that the Kemalists enjoyed after their leadership in the national War of Liberation (1919–22). The liberal wing of the Kemalists, the Islamists, and the traditional-religious elites never fully consented to these reforms, but their opposition was largely passive, or successfully oppressed by the Kemalists (Ahmad 1993; Küçükcan 2003; Zürcher 2005). However, the long-term vision of Kemal Atatürk and prominent republican leaders such as İsmet İnönü clearly included democracy (Heper 1998). There were, for example, short-lived experiments in establishing opposition parties during the 1920s and 1930s. Most importantly, while watchful of the external world the RPP single-party regime voluntarily introduced the multiparty system in 1946 and allowed a peaceful transition to opposition rule in 1950 (O'Donnell *et al*. 1986; Heper 1998). Thereafter, the opposition to secularist reforms translated into support for center-right (e.g. the Democrat Party in the 1950s and the Motherland Party in the 1980s) and religious-nationalist parties (e.g. the Nationalist Action Party since the 1970s), and, after the 1960s, into support for the new Islamist parties.

The resulting political system produced mixed incentives for Islam-inspired political actors. On the one hand, it was shaped by the security concerns of the pro-secular state elite vis-à-vis autonomous (i.e. free of state oversight) religious actors in general and Islamists in particular. The Turkish constitution outlaws the mixing of 'sacred religious feelings with state affairs and politics' and the employment of any rights and liberties with the purpose of dismantling 'the democratic and secular republic.'[33] Accordingly, eight political parties have been banned with the charge of anti-secularism since 1946. Perhaps more importantly than legal restrictions, the Turkish military, bureaucracy, and pro-secular civil society reigned in Islamist parties whenever they were perceived to cross the line. The last example of this was the bitter experience of February 28, 1997, the 'postmodern coup,' when a fierce pro-secular public campaign instigated by the military compelled the Islamist Welfare Party to resign and a political witch-hunt of alleged Islamists and liberal 'conspirators' in the government, business, and media followed.

On the other hand, comparatively speaking, the Turkish political system has allowed ample participation by Islamic actors. Being active within center-right parties and via political clientelism, they were able to gain representation as well as benefits, such as a steady increase in the religious *imam-hatip* schools (Bozan 2007). Moreover, the political system permitted significant participation for Islamist political parties, through what may be called 'conditional but promising participation' (Somer and Tol 2009). Participation was conditional because the

parties were faced with sanctions (by the judiciary and military) whenever they crossed pro-secular boundaries, but it was also promising in that they could participate in democratic politics, freely contest elections, and come to power in local or national governments.

Hence, the five Islamist parties founded after 1971 participated in democratic politics for an average of about six and a half years before closure. Two of them ruled the country in coalition governments, and they gained considerable experience in local governments especially during the 1990s. Islamist parties therefore had major incentives to adapt to secular democracy in order to influence the system through campaigning in freely contested elections and by coming to power, and to distribute social and economic benefits to their constituencies while in power. This becomes manifest quite clearly when these incentives are contrasted with those in many other Muslim countries such as Egypt and Algeria, where Islamists are either not fully permitted to contest elections or else are not permitted to rule if they win them.

However, a crucial point from the point of view of twin tolerations is that the opening of the system to religious demands did not occur through inclusive public-political deliberation, negotiation, and compromise. There were no political pacts that brought about these changes through open negotiations or through electoral contests based on clearly expressed political platforms. Rather, the changes occurred mainly through the administrative decisions of conservative governments, despite pro-secular opposition, implicit compromises between Islamist and pro-secular parties within coalition governments, or as a product of clientelistic relations with religious constituencies. As mentioned, some of the changes were merely authorized by the 1980–3 military government influenced by Islamic-conservative intellectuals who envisioned a synthesis of religion and nationalism (*Türk-Islam sentezi*).

Hence, neither pro-secular nor religious actors perceived these developments as positive-sum compromises. Secular constituencies perceived them as losses incurred through political deceit or corruption, while religious actors perceived them as gains that they wrested from unwilling pro-secular actors. In other words, the opening of the system to religious demands was mainly understood as prescriptive (determined by opponents and forced on actors) rather than elective (chosen freely as a positive move in the right direction). It hardly occurred in a way that could give rise to twin tolerations.

On the social-economic front, Turkish state-led development strategies displayed a focus on urban-based capital accumulation at the neglect of agriculture and the conservative countryside. Nevertheless, the system did allow for social mobility, and religious actors amply participated in economic development (especially, but not exclusively, during center-right governments). Most of Turkey's biggest business tycoons, such as the Koç and Sabancı family corporations, which now symbolize big business based in Istanbul, originated from Anatolian (then merely towns) such as Ankara and Adana. This process gained momentum during the 1980s when the country was opened up to the rest of the world through political and economic liberalization. Religious actors in relatively conservative Anatolian

provinces like Konya and Kayseri became active and salient in such areas as export-oriented businesses, business and labor associations, banks, charity organizations, and the media (Mehmet 1990; Öniş and Türem 2001; Buğra 2002; Yavuz 2003; Yavuz and Esposito 2003; European Stability Initiative 2005).

As a result of these political and economic opportunities, Islamic social and political actors have long been diversifying and adapting to both market economics and multiparty democracy (Öniş 1997; Yavuz 2003). Islamic entrepreneurs benefited from the legal opportunities provided by the transition from a mainly Islamic-based legal system to a Western-based system in such areas as inheritance, contracts, and corporations (Kuran 2004, 2008).[34] Islamists also benefited from these social and economic opportunities. Thus, contradicting the highly critical accounts of secular modernization developed by some religious narratives, Turkish Islamists are also beneficiaries and products of secular modernization. Their education, political socialization and culture, consumerism, technology, and visions often attest to this. To quote an insightful observation at the beginning of the 1990s:

> In the end, it was secular schooling and social progress that opened the 'eyes and minds' of the Turks and slowly but surely contributed to a new and more confident sense of Turkish national identity, strong enough to take a critical look at Kemalism itself, to weigh the relative benefits of westernization, and to attempt a synthesis with its Ottoman-Islamic past. (Mehmet 1990)

The last and most impressive product of this process has been the AKP, founded in 2001 by reformist Islamists who broke away from the Islamist Virtue Party. The AKP has a drastically more liberal-democratic and pro-West discourse and practice than its predecessors. The party has secured major legal-political reforms that have made Turkey a more pluralistic and democratic country according to most accounts. Thus, the record does not support the extreme republican claim that Islamic actors are necessarily subversive of modern democracy and economic development.

It is true that the AKP is a socially conservative party rooted in an Islamist ideology in many ways. Some of its polices in areas such as public recruitment and the indirect effects of its image as an Islamic party have increased the presence, visibility, and influence of Islamic and pro-Islamic actors in government and society, feeding religious–secular polarization (Çarkoğlu and Toprak 2006; Somer 2007a). However, the flaws of the Turkish political party system and the weaknesses of the pro-secular and 'effective and constructive' opposition parties, in particular a European-style social democratic party, are probably as much to blame for the AKP's liberal-democratic deficits as the Islamist roots of the party itself (Sayarı and Esmer 2002; Rubin and Heper 2002; Çarkoğlu and Kalaycıoğlu 2007, Somer 2007a; Öniş 2009). Indeed, under a more effective future political party system in which pro-secular and religious-conservative parties check and balance each other on a platform of EU-led reforms, the AKP may well adopt further liberal-democratic policies in order to maintain its constituency. Lacking effective opposition, the AKP's hegemonic and 'moralist' tendencies are gaining strength (Somer 2007a).

Zero-sum narratives are a major part of the polarization apparent in Turkish society and political life today. In fact, the difficulties of the political parties and other social-political actors in generating new narratives that promote secularism, democracy, religious *and* non-religious freedoms, and development generally in more democratic and inclusive ways can be seen as a major weakness of these actors.

In lieu of conclusions

This chapter has analyzed the current troubles of Turkey's democratization at the political and discursive levels and argued that the consolidation of a pluralistic democracy requires the emergence of mutual toleration and trust between religious and pro-secular social and political actors. This, in turn, requires normative adjustments of the dominant narratives of both types of actors, in addition to strong institutional and political checks and balances. Research should do more in the area of theorizing and documenting how such toleration and trust can emerge in a majority-Muslim society where secularism was a formative ideal of the state institutions and Islam is a main component of the majority society's identity and culture.

During the religious/ secular polarization of 2007–8, the supporters and critics of the government troublingly declared themselves the self-appointed defenders of, respectively, democracy and secularism, dismissing the legitimacy of each other's grievances. This gave rise to a misconceived trade-off between secularism and democracy and transformed the division into a zero-sum conflict.

The supporters of the government, critical of Turkish laicism's excesses, presented any restrictions on religious actors as an infringement of religious liberties, while the critics, skeptical of the Islamicists' intent and ability to truly endorse democracy, presented bureaucratic and authoritarian forces, the military and judiciary especially, as the ultimate checks against the growing influence of religious actors. The supporters of the government tended to claim that any qualms regarding secularism were simply disguised attempts by the pro-secular elite to cling to power. They tended to charge the pro-secular actors with trying to undermine the government and with excluding religious actors and symbols from the public sphere. Any evidence of problems related to religious-conservative exclusionism in areas such as government recruitment and procurement, or religious pressures on pro-secular individuals, was readily dismissed as 'biased.' In turn, many critics of the government all too readily dismissed any religious-conservative grievances as instruments of 'creeping Islamization,' even if these grievances were expressed as deficits of democratic freedoms.

The reconciliation of these opposing views and perceptions poses a major challenge, at a critical juncture, to the consolidation of pluralistic democracy in Turkey. Pro-secular actors may recognize that in a context of liberal democracy supported by effective checks and balances, religious actors can contribute to political and economic development by expressing and promoting their own versions of modernization. They may also acknowledge that under adequate institutional settings, religious actors can embrace modernity and secular democracy, and may have

legitimate grievances regarding religious freedoms and regarding social and political equality with secular actors.

Religious-conservative actors, equally, may recognize that Turkey's secular modernization has served them also, that they are products and beneficiaries of the country's modernization as much as are the secular actors. They may also acknowledge that pro-secular actors are not necessarily against religion and tradition, and may have legitimate concerns regarding anti-secular politics and religious pressures on freedom of thought and secular lifestyles.

Twin tolerations may require recognition on the part of both types of actors that their mutual interests might best be served by secular democratic institutions which are secured by shared principles of pluralism, and by a political system where consensus-seeking pro-secular and religious-conservative actors check and balance each other.

Notes

1 The main ideas in this chapter were presented in a lecture at Ghent University, November 6, 2008. The author wishes to thank the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Montreal, Canada, for funding; and Hande Özhabeş for excellent research assistance.
2 This support has diminished in recent years when the government seemed to take an 'illiberal' turn.
3 Note that the argument here does not claim that democratization necessarily requires a 'substantive compromise' between actors' goals and values. Any reconciliation of the religious-conservative and pro-secular narratives would be a mechanism through which trust could increase among actors and actors could more easily cooperate to achieve 'institutional compromises.' Stated differently, reconciliation of clashing narratives may help actors to make 'credible commitments' to each other vis-à-vis institutional reforms. See Kalyvas (2003) and Mecham (2004) for the importance of credible commitments.
4 Throughout the chapter, the argument will draw on observations made during research since the spring of 2006, which entailed the systematic content analysis of four 'religious-conservative' (Zaman, Yeni Şafak, Milli Gazete, and Vakit) and two pro-secular (Milliyet and Cumhuriyet) newspapers – covering about 42,000 relevant articles in about 5000 issues between 1996 and 2004 – together with interviews with newspaper editors and writers. The content analysis examined the coverage with respect to 13 categories including democracy, social and political pluralism, nationalism, and the external world. For more information, see Somer (2009) and Somer and Liaras (forthcoming, 2010), and Yenal Bilgici, 'Bencil Demokrasi' (Selfish Democracy), Newsweek Türkiye, 23, June 14, 2009.
5 For a conceptualization of 'master narrative,' see Migdal (1997).
6 Among others, 'Turkey's Foreign Minister Gul, in Presidential Bid, Pledges to Adhere to Secular Principles,' The International Herald Tribune, Monday, August 13, 2007.
7 Parliament's vote for Gül's election before the call of early elections was taken to the Constitutional Court by the main opposition party and annulled on a technicality.
8 Another sticking point is the issue of Kurdish rights and the definition of Turkishness in the constitution.
9 Adopted from Freedom House, Washington, DC.
10 Tülin Daloğlu, The Washington Times, March 4, 2009; Selcuk Gokoluk, Reuters, February 19, 2009; Andrew Higgings, The Wall Street Journal, February 23, 2009.

11 Daniel Steinvorth, Der Spiegel, January 26, 2009; Sarah Rainsford, BBC News, October 23, 2008.
12 Stephen Kinzer, 'In Turkey, New Accusations of Links Between Police, Politicians and Criminals,' the New York Times, December 31, 1996.
13 Among others, Sarah Rainsford, BBC News, October 23, 2008.
14 Freedom House reported that 'reform efforts toward enhanced freedom of expression stalled in 2007' – quantified as a slip from 48 in 2005 to 51 in 2008 (on a scale of 0–100, with 0 optimum).
15 BIANET, 'Medya Özgürlüğü ve Bağımsız Gazetecilik İzleme ve Haber Ağı (Media Freedom and Free Press Observation and News Network),' 2008 Report on Media Observations.
16 The Daughters of Allah by Nedim Gürsel. See International Freedom of Expression Exchange, IPA-IFEX – Geneva-Toronto, March 09, 2009.
17 Abbott, Allison (2009) 'Turkish scientists claim Darwin censorship,' Nature, published online 10 March 2009 <http://www.nature.com/news/2009/090310/full/news.2009.150.html> (accessed on 10 March 2009)
18 See 'Study: Secular Turks Face Discrimination, Pressure,' International Herald Tribune, February 26, 2009; Binnaz Toprak, 'Eleştiri sınırlarını aşıp kampanyaya çevirdiler' (They went beyond criticism and launched a campaign) Milliyet, January 20, 2009; Ekrem Dumanlı, 'Medya Ayak Uydurunca' (When the media goes along) Zaman, September 9, 2008; Ayşe Böhürler, 'Türkiye'de Farklı Olmak' (Being different in Turkey) Yenişafak, December 20, 2008; Fatih Vural, 'Binnaz Toprak'a tepki gösterdi: İnsanları kalıba sokamazsınız' (She [Elif Şafak] criticized Binnaz Toprak: 'You cannot categorize people!' Zaman, February 19, 2009.
19 Figures indicate that the actual number of people desiring Shar'ia decreased during that period. All figures were for 2006. See also Tarhan Erdem, 'Sorunumuz Andıç mı?' (Is our problem the [military] memo?), Radikal, June 15, 2009.
20 See above note 3.
21 Murat Yalnız and Metin Under, 'Paranın Dini,' (Money's Religion) Newsweek Türkiye, January 21, 2008.
22 Also see Zaman Online, 'Türkiye Muhafazakarlaşmıyor; Aksine Modernleşiyor, Batılılaşıyor' (Turkey is not becoming conservative, on the contrary it is modernizing, Westernizing) Zaman, September 19, 2008.
23 See Sabrina Tavernise, 'In Turkey, Is Tension about Religion? Class Rivalry of Both?' New York Times, February 19, 2008. For more qualified and nuanced academic accounts, see Gülalp (2001), White (2002).
24 See above, note 3.
25 Among others, see Türker Alkan, 'Türkiye'nin bölgesel liderliği' (Turkey's regional leadership) Radikal, March 3, 2009.
26 Ruşen Çakır, Interview with Şerif Mardin, 'Öğretmen'e kaybettiren küçük bir eksiklik' (A small deficit that made the teacher lose), Radikal, May 25, 2008.
27 'Erdoğan: Batının ahlaksızlıklarını aldık' (Erdoğan: We adopted the West's immoralities) Milliyet, January 24, 2008. http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2008/01/24/son/sonsiy18.asp.
28 See Murat Somer, 'Democracy-Secularism Relationship Revisited,' Today's Zaman, January 25, 2009, for a critique.
29 Note that the argument is not that all actual experiences of secularism are products of democratization. It is that successful democratization would entail some notion of secularism.
30 According to government statistics in 2008, the Directorate's personnel comprised 83,000 people, compared with the approximately 71,000 of the Ministry of Justice (excluding unfilled positions).
31 The Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, Article 24.
32 See also the the International Religious Freedom Report 2007, US Department of State. http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2007/90204.htm . Accessed on April 11, 2010.

33 The 1982 and 2001 (revised) Constitutions, the Preamble and Article 14.
34 Also see Enis Tayman, Interview with Timur Kuran, 'İslami sermaye çok ama Türkiye bir İslam ekonomisi değil' (Islamic capital is plenty but Turkey is not an Islamic economy) Referans Gazetesi, March 14, 2009.
35 Under Turkey's secular laws, adultery falls under the civil code as a possible cause of divorce. Under the JDP proposal, criminal prosecution would have been possible upon the complaint of a spouse. See also Fareed Zakaria, 'How Not to Win Muslim Allies,' Newsweek, September 27, 2004.

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3 'Nationalist' reconstructions in the light of disappearing borders

Ferhat Kentel

This chapter, based on field research,[1] studies the rise and functioning of nationalism in Turkey's everyday life over the past decades.[2] It is not about nationalism as instrumentalized by the statist actor or the role of the modernizing elites in the construction of the nation-state and the 200-year process of modernization. Nor is it concerned with those whose names and deeds are listed in the history manuals, the creators of the nation, with all their taboos and prejudices. On the contrary, we try to understand the meaning of this nationalism for ordinary individuals in different sectors of society – what it is they want to express through the intermediation of this permanent task of nationalism, how they carry with them this ideology or let themselves be carried by it, and what routes they follow. In this way we explore the 'ways of doing' (De Certeau 1984), the practices and expressions in everyday life.

We propose the idea that these ideas about and practices of nationalism testify to the impact of a range of contemporary dynamics, including the changing relations between state and society, the impact of globalization, the reconstruction of ethnic, religious, class and gender identities, the conflicts and prizes at stake, and, finally, the decomposition and recomposition of daily nationalism.

Traumatism of the maps

Nationalism needs a geographical map with clear state borders in order for an abstract identity to be visualized. This is how the citizens of a nation identify themselves with a piece of land and make it their own. In the case of Turkish nationalism and its borders, this map never seems to last, but varies with the historical temporalities. The map of the Turkish nation is more than a map of the new Republic of Turkey: multiple old maps are assembled, each of which carry sentiments of bitterness and resentment or pride and glory for those citizens who have been socialized generation after generation in the schools of the Republic. Consequently, every generation faces a terrible reality: this map, 'our map', can change at any time, as it has so many times through history.

Let us recall cartography from the history books of primary school. On an old map representing the world situation some thousands of years ago, the lands of the Turks were represented as an ellipsoid form – coloured pink – in the middle of Central Asia. From these pink lands emanated red arrows depicting the exodus of

the Turks spreading across the whole world. This map, which has little to do with current maps, gave us reasons to dream. It showed a legendary land that went beyond the limits of our imagination. The symbolic weight of the red arrows was heavy. The fact that they radiated out towards all continents showed how the world as a whole stood in relation to 'us Turks', notwithstanding the fact that our predecessors had been forced to flee their lands which had turned into deserts, leaving us with a taste of bitterness.

Another map showed the state of Anatolia following the 1918 Treaty of Sèvres, which signified dismemberment and the end of the Ottoman Empire. On this map the Turkish lands were scattered into pieces of different colours representing the territories occupied by the Allied Forces: the Greek occupation in blue, the Italian in green, French in red, Russian brown, British purple . . . leaving nothing more than a little yellow part in the middle of Anatolia to the Turks. A map, a nightmare.

The history books that every Turkish schoolchild is confronted with are filled with maps depicting the growth and shrinkage of the Ottoman Empire. However, these changes are lived in real time, as people's experiences. They have psychological effects, strengthening the symbolic representation of the country and inculcating into the public the founding mentality of Turkish nationalism, with its fixation on the question of boundaries or frontiers. An officer in the shrunken empire and future member of the republican elite – and thus witness to these radical changes of Turkish history – Sevket Süreyya Aydemir describes his personal relationship with these maps in his memoirs, *Suyu Arayan Adam* (The Man who Seeks Water) (Georgeon 2002). As a young student at military school, Aydemir starts out as an 'Ottoman patriot', but in a very short period of time he sees the maps changing completely, from the grandness of the Ottoman Empire to its dismemberment, through the utopian land of Turan (identified with the ancient Turks who conquered Central Asia), to finally find himself in the Republic of Turkey.

In front of the map of the Ottoman lands, showing territories stretching from the west of Africa to the Indian Ocean, Aydemir and his friends were filled with pride and felt overwhelmed by emotions ('Our lands! Our State!'). These sentiments would not last very long, however, and defeat in the Balkan wars of 1912 seemed to render resurrection impossible. As with many of the Ottoman intelligentsia of his time, Aydemir's pride turns to frustration. The map he is looking at changes: Ottoman Africa, Yemen, the Balkans, they all forsake the imagination. This is how, with new maps and the new dreams and myths, he comes to discover the Pan-Turkist movements. The fatherland, for him now, is a land of utopia, *'Turan'*, opening up into the depths of Asia: the Crimea, the Caucasus, Turkistan, and so on. Forgetting the Ottoman lands, Aydemir and his friends pick up on the new dream ('The Great Turkish Nation'), a new reality. But this reality changes in its turn: while crossing the Caucasian frontiers he discovers, disappointingly, Anatolia and its 'backward' population, which has not gained 'the Turkic conscience'. Before Turan – which is very quickly stranded – there is first and foremost the need to restore and repair the state, into something capable of creating a new nation, with a new map.

According to François Georgeon, who interprets Aydemir, 'The map is not only a symbolic representation of realities, but it serves to nurture dreams' (Georgeon

2002: 36). The life of Aydemir is one of successive dreams, and successive frustrations. The 'maps' of Aydemir changed during his lifetime and Turkish nationalism has become frustrated. The maps are also those of future generations; they continue their symbolic activities as the collective memory, nurturing dreams, while at the same time producing frustrations. The outcome is a total absence of fixed or stable and durable references which could establish the ties of the nation with the past. The territories and the history upon which the Turkish nation believes itself to be built are at best changing and fragile. The borders move from Central Asia to Anatolia, to the Balkans and the gates of Vienna – only to be reversed, moving back from the West, towards Central Asia. And now they take a new direction, desiring again to find themselves at Europe's gates (the European Union), to reverse again. The gaze turns first this way, and then the other. Replaced without end, the maps and the borders are never fixed.

Is this nation then 'nomadic'? Definitely not. What we are talking about is a 'nomadic nationalism', which presents itself in a 'nomadic history' to finally instrumentalize it, while at the same time instrumentalizing an uncertainty and a sentiment of insecurity which ends up being the very cement of nationalism and the cause of a permanent suffering. To be socialized in such a reading of history makes it impossible to have peace in one's soul. The nation lives under this risk of losing its way at any given moment; it learns to live as if other territories have always been part of it, yet at the same time as if the actual territory does not really belong. It is as if this territory will again fall apart and fragment. The nation submits itself to this schooling in the instability of the maps.

Finally, Turkish nationalism possesses a subject 'us', but an 'us' – just as the maps – which is never stable, since it is constituted along the fault lines of these traumas and produces a 'Turk' who is deterritorialized and seeks his/her territory while living constantly under the threat of losing it.

The big nation that grew small: a disgrace

The inquiry into Turkey's 'everyday nationalism' on which this chapter is based (see note 1) has shown that behind the nationalist discourse which penetrates the current public space, individuals not only consume the maps, the history manuals or an ideology, but they produce other feelings as well, which, while taking up the nationalist discourse, express a desire to survive socially, economically, culturally or politically. Referring to Michel de Certeau, we suggest the following central hypothesis: Turkish nationalism – as any nationalism – can be considered as consumed and reproduced by individuals, a reproduction, however, which is at the same time a reconfiguration and reshaping. In this sense we cannot talk about one single nationalism but have to consider a multitude of nationalisms reflecting the different interpretations of this heterogeneity of individuals. These interpreted nationalisms seem to be 'tactics', responses of individuals to this nationalist strategy. Meanwhile, the secular nationalist strategy, which took shape at the beginning of the twentieth century, is undergoing a permanent transformation in order to consolidate its 'place' (its national territory), and to control this in confrontation

with the tactics of the individuals who have lived or who are living in (or under) the strategy (De Certeau 1984).

In a world where multiple voices, discourses, practices and experiences intervene, it is the voice of the nation state that is weakened the most. The voice of this entity representing the 'us' becomes lost in a forest of voices; it becomes a voice no longer able to provide total confidence. Experiencing feelings of insecurity, the state can no longer appease what is 'ours'. It is impossible to master the sense of complexity of the different dimensions of globalization. The individual, forced to live the consequences of this, thus engages with the discourses of 'conspiracies': the trouble or the instability one is suffering from is a consequence of conspiracies which have been fabricated by external forces, by a coalition of enemies who want to undermine our identity and integrity. Faced with this conspiracy, the nationalist task sets out to save the state and reinstall 'our place' on the universal map.

A psychology of tension feeds these feelings of insecurity and spreads itself through the veins of social life. It is at this micro-level that one can observe the unexpected outcomes of nationalism at work. The nationalist reconstruction of the state is reproduced in all aspects of the formation and definition of social and cultural identities: in religious and ethnic appearances, in the sense of belonging to a region or a city, in the consumption of tradition and in sex/gender identification. If one looks at these aspects of identity formation/definition one can perceive what seems to be a rich spectrum of emotions: the reproduction of the nationalist logic takes very diverse shapes, combining the feeling of insecurity in its locality (be it cultural, religious, urban, etc.) and the means to fight against this sentiment, that is, the search for trust in these local references.

Now, the (re)production of nationalism is hugely affected by the forces of globalization and global capitalism, with their strong neoliberal ideology and lack of need for the nation state. The actualization of globalization is not the same for all social groups. Nevertheless, an ontologically deterritorialized state under globalization (thus one which is not necessarily physical) awaits every sector of society. This corresponds with a sentiment of detachment from place and identity, a sense of insecurity, fear and permanent impotency. The world one knows is no longer the same: it is a world of risks (Beck, Giddens and Lash 1995) turned upside down. Individuals and socially or culturally weak groups can no longer think of themselves as the modest masters of their own small lives and futures. It is in this state of weakness and hopelessness that nationalism appears as an ideology of reinforcement against this disempowerment, but at the same time as a kind of pseudo-capacity.

The discourse shared by the majority of the people we have interviewed shows a state of mind locked somewhere between the glorious past of a 'great nation' and a present full of shortcomings and the shock of the 'small nation'. In relation to the image of the great nation imprinted in the collective memory, today's little nation creates an impression of weakness that provokes a fear of being crushed at any moment by international and global forces. While imagining borders and raising them to the level of the absolute, comparison is made with the past, but also with other countries and, in particular, with Europe.

This negative situation and the feelings of shame are the starting points of a vicious circle. The shame feeds a sentiment of 'culpability' which feeds the prejudices of the society in which one lives; the prejudices then feed the 'self-humiliation'. Finally, in order to escape from this humiliation and to salute the national, the individual projects themself towards the other extreme, to 'pride', seeking strength to reinforce the 'national pride', which may be found in secularisms, religion, ethnicity, or a city, etc.

A society that feels itself locked in between the West and the East, while its members are different from both, loses the identity of society, and this is a danger. From ultranationalists to moderate nationalist social democrats, from those in high-ranking socio-economic categories to those who find themselves at the bottom of society, in all the milieus that may be defined as 'nationalist' in a very broad sense, it is possible to see the inability either to become a society or to see how a society is dissatisfied with itself. This dissatisfaction carries feelings of uncertainty for the individual living among his/her fellow citizens, who does not show confidence. In this way the ordinary Turkish nation does not love itself and creates its own barriers.

The pendulum movement experienced by the average Turkish individual, going from humiliation to pride, is the consequence of 'the transformation of a great society into a small one' or of the socialization of this 'knowledge'. Put another way, in the mind of each ordinary Turkish citizen there is an image of a strong state and a strong society that existed in the past and occupied a central place in history. The path of this great society is paved with the reproduction of regrets for 'missed opportunities', but also with humiliations due to the fact that 'we have not been able to keep our heads up high'.

The anxiety of relative identities and the quest for fixation

When one starts to travel through the corridors of a national identity seeking salvation, evaluations become more complex. The definitions change over time, changing places with other ways of belonging. 'Turkishness' becomes a relative and unstable identity, while creating a permanent feeling of being 'different', 'foreign'. This 'foreignness' happens gradually; it is possible to consider the whole world as 'foreign' and imagine that the whole world finds itself a 'foreigner'. Insofar as one moves away from one's own surroundings or from a kind of initial belonging, at each step one can encounter 'foreigners' who exhibit different forms of belonging and find different signifiers. As one changes borders – be they the borders of family, neighborhood, city, ethnic or religious group – the definition of the 'outside', of what can be considered 'foreign', changes. Finally, the national borders help to formulate the most straightforward definition of the 'outside'. This implies that the definition of nationalism changes as well. The generic term 'nationalist' which defines the bond with the modern imagined nation (or a common culture of the national territory) can lose its existential meaning completely and refer to more confined entities, such as the city, ethnicity or religion.

The complexity of the relativity, the anxiety that is provoked by it, is visible foremost in the stress that is put on the differences and imagined borders of the

nation. In order to escape from this anxiety – which is heightened by the multiplication of borders – a tendency emerges to put detached pieces back together. The interchangeable use of two solid and conjoint references, Turkishness and religion, turns into a vital operation. The protected domain of Islam on the one hand, and Turkishness on the other, cover the uncertainty of belonging for the 'small nationalisms'. The fact of being Muslim, with reference to the traditions, plays a role in domains where Turkishness or secular nationalism leaves one unfulfilled. Turkishness, moreover, brings legitimacy into the hierarchical domain of the state, where power is condensed and religious belonging is unable to become a major force.

The ordinary individual creates self-confidence by tapping into both resources. In order to protect oneself from the risks of the centre and yet not fall into the margins, the interpenetration of religiosity and Turkishness guarantees a safe identity. And this becomes the reason for the 'dominance of the average'. Thus it is that 'Turk' and 'Muslim' become treated as synonymous, as interchangeable. The result is that this average, composed of a certain religiosity and a nationality that is increasingly ethnicized, coexists with a tendency to define ever more clearly the differences in the nation. It is in this vicious circle that differences weaken national unity. The national strategy mobilizes itself and the idea of unity it imposes; without being able to suppress the differences and to recreate a coherent unity, it tends to evaporate and be incapable of repressing the differences. Nationalism is interpreted according to this multitude of differences and thus becomes the main cause of a great fracture.

To talk about difference is fashionable in these times. It is a new language, the language of postmodernity, of the crisis of the centre and its institutions, and of the crisis of a modernist metanarrative. This new language calls also for a defence. Parallel to the feeling of humiliation in the 'international competition' and to the global external dynamics that bring to the fore the 'right to be different' on the inside, the discourse on difference in the Armenian and Kurdish questions provokes this nationalist defence. Instead of confronting the 'international' or 'global' dynamics, this nationalism takes the interior identities that symbolize the treason and the danger of disintegration of the nation as its targets. In this way, the definition of the outside changes.

The reconstitution of the 'outsiders' of the inside serves to satisfy the need for a national identity that contracts the imagination of each individual. Insofar as the number of those considered 'foreign' is multiplied, the efforts to redefine Turkishness multiply and the feeling of being Turk becomes more and more dense. However, the 'otherness' is relative. At first sight, even if this evokes the idea of those who find themselves beyond the borders of the model of the nation state, when confronted with global processes the otherness of the outside is not that far away. It is not necessary for the Other that becomes visible to be present physically. Individuals living in a particular area or city, finds themselves, due to the circulation of messages and global values, as 'foreign' and send out signals of this 'foreignness'. They transform themselves into a 'foreigner' with different characteristics in relation to 'us'. Each becomes a stranger to another. By stressing the

same word 'foreigner', but attributing to him or her a different feeling, each produces his or her 'own nationalism'.

If we were to reach an intermediate conclusion we might say that nationalism is a representation learned through the intermediary of mechanisms of socialization, education, institutions, media and public opinion leaders. But being able to 'define' this representation does not mean that one can master the meanings that are given to it by those who consume it, or that one knows how it is manipulated by them. Nationalism, if one refers to Michel de Certeau, is a concept like the city (1984: 91–110); being nationalist is similar to belonging to a city and not knowing how to use this city. Certainly a word 'city' exists along with something that this word represents, but living in the city is an art and the ways in which the city is used are innumerable. Everyone living and walking through the city experiences it in a different way; the city cannot be represented in an eternal way, as an absolute. Because of this multitude of perceptions of the 'national self' and the very diversity of this national identity, just as in the case of the urbanites who never stop replanning the city, so also the laboratory activities of the state (or the strategy of nationalism in general) never stop redefining nationalism. The reaction is permanently assured in defence of every kind of image: the mental image of being a Kurd, the questioning of the obscure records of the official history, the headscarves of the Muslim women and so on disturb order.

Looking at the changing global conditions, where living with economic, social and cultural tensions is perceived as a war, nationalism too is experienced as a war. Nationalism appears as a demand and a permanent attempt to create 'the nation that suits us best' from a nation that can never be reified.

The search for the nation is undertaken at several levels, including regional, ethnic and religious. Whether it be in the East or the West, the Kurd or the Circassian, the Sunni or the Alevi, this search is accompanied by fear and uncertainty in this world, and in this country that is becoming more and more diverse and unstable. Among the issues that concretize or symbolize this fear, that of 'missionary' activities by Christians can be cited as a first example. The word 'missionary' itself carries a heavy meaning, evoking the past, the loss of lands, the Armenian revolt as a 'consequence of missionary activities' during the Ottoman Empire. But the feelings the word provokes are also paradoxical, as it provokes the same negative feelings among 'secularists' as among 'Islamic milieus'. The missionary provokes not just a response of the religious but also of Turkishness, as the exemplary symbol of 'otherness'. It reveals the Islamic foundations of the Republic, especially in relation to non-Muslim communities who were obliged to leave the country or who were dispossessed of their belongings during the period of national construction and purification. The word provokes an image of danger and it works as a catalyst for the construction of an identity in which 'Turk' and 'Muslim' combine.

'Rational' or 'conservative' Muslims, 'ultra' or 'moderate' nationalists, all these people who come from different geographies, with wide-ranging political, ethnic and cultural identities, people of all ages and living in all social conditions, look upon the missionaries as 'spectres', as 'otherness' or 'foreignness' incarnate. None of them fears the missionaries for themselves, for their own identity, but for the others, in

particular for the 'ignorant', 'who are in need of money and are easy to fool'. And each one of them incorporates the spectre of the missionary as 'counter-symbol', thereby further feeding the nationalist discourse. In general, through the 'things they have heard', and as their confidence vis-à-vis the society in which they are living is lost and they find a refuge or a defensive language in the nationalist discourse, the missionary as counter-symbol acquires a striking potency.

The missionaries come from 'outside': this makes the work of the nationalist strategy against the danger easier, makes it easier to point out 'the enemy'. To see them on Turkish territory provokes some. In Malatya, the April 2007 slaughter by five youngsters of three Christians (two Turks and one German) in a library where books on Christianity were sold is one example. But the enemies are not just 'outside'. The endogenous Armenians, who, after the massacres of 1915 and subsequent political discrimination which continued throughout the republican period, were reduced to a small population (just 70,000 out of a population of 70 million now), are an example. Through the memory they evoke and also the crisis they provoke in relation to the questioning of the official history, the Armenians are a symbol of this 'foreignness within' too, with their different religion, their different language and their different memory. Another example, the January 2007 murder of Hrant Dink, editor-in-chief of the Turkish Armenian journal *Agos* published in Turkish and Armenian – a democratic intellectual who dreamt of a historical transparency and the reconciliation of Turks and Armenians – reveals the instrumentalization of the 'fear of the difference' by obscure putschist forces, in a Gladio-style.[3]

A further instance of the creation of 'otherness' can be observed in the case of Alevism, a heterodox branch of Shia that took on Anatolian colours, married with a mixture of Shaman and even Christian traditions, that was in permanent conflict with the orthodox Sunnism of the Ottoman era. Alevis aligned quickly with the secular republic in order to defend themselves against domination by Sunnis. However, despite opting for the statist politics (and the adoration of Atatürk, who is seen almost as a holy person, together with Ali, cousin and son-in-law of the prophet Muhammed), Alevism remained absent at state level and has continued to remain a reference to the Other in the reproduction of ordinary nationalism in its religious colours.

Accompanied by prejudices that have persisted for centuries, Alevism is a phenomenon that one scarcely dares to mention: the Alevi are not 'real Muslims', the meat they cut is not *halal*, it is 'besmirched'. What is more, there are even rumours about certain practices, never witnessed by any person, but whispered from ear to ear and accepted as truth – rumours about the 'strange' religion of the Alevi which creates borders in relation to them and functions as a reason for their exclusion. A prime example of an unfounded rumour concerning Alevis is the one about the infamous religious practice of '*mum söndü*' (the snuffed-out candle), which supposedly involves 'collective sexual relations'.[4]

'The meat that is cut, the meal prepared by Alevis' takes on aspects comparable to those in the Bible, the book of the Christian missionaries with whom one should have as little contact as necessary. These are pollutants endangering tradition, morality, existence. And as the examples cited of unprovoked murders testify, the

imperative to cleanse the national body of these insidious impurities is enacted by men as a lived reality, expressed in a brutal drama.

Everyone's religion is interpreted: Sunnism (or Islamism as a political and social movement) and Alevism are interpreted also, and these interpretations sometimes produce profound differences. The main distinctions are to be found in their relation to the national strategy. Very generally, even though the outlook of the two groups can be accepted as coming from the same cultural sphere, deep fissures exist between them. Even in surroundings where one makes reference to the capacity of religion to unite individuals, one can see the discourses that produce the contrasts. Religion, despite its universal message, loses its authority under the nationalist discourse. The two groups recognize themselves beyond the fissures, employing the religious universal for self-identification, but ultimately define themselves in relation to these fissures, leaving the last word to the crushing capacity of the national discourse.

The nationalist discourse is irreversible. It is an agglomeration of techniques and long-time defence-based propaganda, fed by the *coups d'ètat* and the permanent crises, the fear of disintegration (especially the fear provoked by the Kurdish question), the instrumentalization of Atatürk, turned into an idol and guardian of everything. In order to survive in a world full of risks, with threats on all sides, and in order not to give in to the dangers posed by the Other Side, maliciously trying to create ruptures, the state and its nationalist ideology serve as safe harbours. Each group tries to bind itself with this ideology in order to gain a supplementary asset and to create a new force for itself. This results in a desire for confirmation, at least in appearance, and the employment of techniques to realize this desire. All cultural units are validated and thus empowered by their proximity to the nationalist discourse, to its terms of reference and its agenda. Put differently, individuals as well as groups are visible in the nationalist 'format'. As the winds of economic and social change blow, everyone adapts to the aspired discourse in the new conditions, adjusted as necessary in accordance with their own interpretation. Here, fear and interest play primordial roles. More important than the external factors is the internal personality transformation experienced by the individual. The individual who confirms himself ends up 'believing' in what he has adapted himself to. Whether this be profoundly Islamic or secular, each one 'believes'. Islam and its different religiosities, resting upon memories, techniques of survival and ways of acting, turn into 'reservoirs of meaning' (Hervieu-Léger, 1990), and produce new means to accompany practices and interpretations under a modern, capitalist and national strategy. Finally the religion and its derivatives adapt themselves to this strategy.

Religiousness is, to a large extent, tamed in the structures of modern and secular life. The traditional Muslims or radical Islamists of the eighties start to enter economic and social life as a new rising social class, but while religion takes on new forms, adapted to modernity, and plays a role in socialization or constitutes a new means of doing politics, new hybrid forms of expression and resistance have started to appear. These new forms fill the places left empty by religion, they are born in the nationalist strategy. They repeat the language of nationalism, but reveal

something other than the national unity: they express a kind of revolt against the conditions of exclusion, uncertainty and permanent risk.

The Muslim individuals, for example, who live a pious life revolt against republican elitism and 'anti-Islamic' secularism, in particular the prohibition of the headscarf in public places, especially universities. However, they balance this revolt, which carries the risk of subversiveness, with another, legitimate discourse: 'it is always us who are willing to fight for our country against the PKK'.

One can argue that religion, once derogated under the category of the 'ancient regime', continues to live on in the new strategy of the 'Turkish nation' and engages with its perception of the fatherland and its institutions. Turkishness here is a means of defence: it acts as an assurance, a kind of passport enabling people in religious milieus to circulate in the dominant structure (the institutions of state). Turkishness is not, however, a simple pragmatic collage: its articulation is interiorized over time. That is, a community that cannot consolidate itself as before, continues its existence under the framework of another 'imagined community'. Sometimes this religious community revolts symbolically or violently against the imagined community in order to express its difference and frustration, while some other times it follows a different way: under the pressure of nationalism, the religious space, even though it becomes less and less visible, turns into a space of continuity, in defense of tradition.

The itineraries followed by the religiosities in the daily practices enlighten practices of nationalism as well. As there is no 'essence' or 'true religion' in the religion that is 'realized' in practice, it makes no sense to seek the 'essence' or 'true nationalism' in nationalism either. What is important here is not so much belonging as how this belonging is experienced. Under these common terms (the categories of religion or nationalism), individuals pass along different paths, using different techniques – and yet these different paths both constitute identity and demonstrate how fiction is produced and transformed. The fiction of nationalism produced now is on the same tracks as those that served the fiction of religious identities in the past.

The secular nationalism of modern society accompanied by 'laicism' is at the same time 'religious', and it occupies the place Islamic religion occupied in the old regime. It pretends to erect a new religion, completely unable to replace the six centuries of Ottoman Islamic religion, but drawing upon definitions of 'Other' according to Ottoman Islam. The initial positioning of the language or strategy of nationalism against 'foreignness' is particularly visible today in relation to the issue of the 'spectre of the missionaries'. It reveals itself not only in the defensive nationalisms, imprinted with religion and produced by weak social actors, but also among the 'secular' and 'Westernized' middle classes. We could say that almost all versions of Turkish nationalism draw upon xenophobia (or at least, 'the fear of the foreigner'). The founding role of xenophobia (of which the content is filled by the prejudices towards non-Muslims and by means of anti-Westernism) is central in Turkish nationalism. Parallel to popular nationalisms that are conflated with religiosity, actual efforts of secular nationalism towards xenophobia through anti-Americanism, and also anti-Europeanism, demonstrate the historic background that has made possible this kind of endeavour.

To summarize, nationalism (or religion) is a language or a strategy that possesses a grammar which dictates what one should or should not say or do. It has its rules and defines a space of meaning or a physical territory. However, what is told by one who uses its language is another question: the meaning of what is being told is in line with the tactics of the consumers of the language. Therefore, what the consumer wants to say can be something entirely different from what the strategy expects him to say.

'Nationalisms' under the nation: 'Turkey is disintegrating'

One of the findings of the research on nationalism in daily life in Turkey is the effort made to forge a synthesis between past and future, in the search for a harmony or conformity that one can qualify as a desire to 'coexist' or 'to live together' or to 'resist disintegration'. This permanent desire, however, is accompanied by another result, beyond the desired coexistence. It is a 'decomposed' and 'decomposing' language used of necessity, without the freedom of alternative options. This language thus reveals the differences both in the definition and content of the coexistence, and in the enunciation of this desire, that is to say, in the components of this same discourse. In essence it expresses a 'fear of disintegration'.

This fear of disintegration is fed permanently by a 'rhetoric of disintegration' produced, in large part, by a 'psychological operation' (*Psikolojik Harekat*), under the direction of 'obscure agencies' which have been at the root of several incitements and nationalist murders (including that of Hrant Dink). But a policing reflection upon this subject is not the aim of this chapter. Following De Certeau, what is of interest here are the ways in which this rhetoric is consumed and utilized, and the 'secondary production' of this rhetoric by individuals (De Certeau 1984).

The fear of distintegration works through the conspiracy scenarios: 'conspiracies prepared by foreign forces in order to bring about the disintegration of Turkey'. In almost all the interviews that we have conducted we have found this rhetoric of decomposition, in different versions: 'There are those who provoked social and cultural tensions'; 'The Jews are silently taking over the Turkish territories'; 'The Americans want to break us apart to get at our boron mines which will be the new source for future energy and of which Turkey possesses 70 per cent of the world's reserves'; 'The Christians want to degenerate our culture and morale, in order to take over our lands'; 'The missionaries want to transform our identity'; 'The Armenians or Syriacs asking for recognition of genocide want to occupy part of our territories', and so on.

The 'rhetoric of conspiracy' is built upon the uncertainties and the feeling of insecurity. The reasons for social, political and cultural problems are sought and found abroad and the fiction of the conspiracy is construed as a 'macro-explanation'. This relationship of the macro-explanation to external realities turns inward and explains the realities on a micro-level. What explains the disintegration is the 'provocation by traitors'. Most of the time these traitors are democratic intellectuals, Kurds or Armenians, people 'who are paid by the enemies of Turkey' and who are 'the subcontractors for those fabricating the conspiracies'.

This fear of disintegration is not without foundation, but not to the extent that it figures in the rhetoric. The authoritarian state and its politics that do not allow for different forms of modernization, and that fail to recognize the dynamism of change, become themselves the source of crises. The Kurdish crisis, the crisis of secularism versus Islam, the ethnicities, the different religiosities, even the competition between neighbouring cities, all reveal the potential for tension and polarization. The concepts that best summarize all these tensions are 'communitarianization' and 'decommunitarianization', or the permanent reconstruction of borders separating different types of belonging.

We could say that in the imagination of a community there is a 'cultural' dimension, and that due to this dimension the community creates an image of 'totality'. However, the visibility of this complete identity offers no straightforward idea about the interior of the community. Even if the community displays a network of internal solidarity as seen from without, even when it displays its individuals as 'identical', it is never perceived as homogenous when viewed from the inside. We might add that a community that carries the same name reproduces itself over time in very varied ways, thanks to mobility and the different relations with the Other.

In this case, the identities transform themselves into 'enemies', or, more simply, they enter into relations of tension. This tension doubtless relates to physical conditions: there is a correspondence with a 'material' dimension. It is also possible to argue that the different practices of the one destabilize the economic, social and cultural capital of the other. For example, an individual in a certain Muslim community may not be able to enjoy his wealth in a prosperous neighbourhood of villas because the poverty of the Other risks opening up the question of how he uses his material fortune. The practice of the Ramadan fast and the issues concerning fasting in an environment that is not fasting or, vice versa, not fasting in an environment where people are doing so, occurs as a recurrent theme in debates and is a cause of significant social tensions. In the same way, someone speaking in Kurdish can disturb those speaking Turkish. That is, a situation experienced as 'normal' by one person (a Kurd) can disturb another (a Turk). More generally, the 'conditions of normality' and the physical comfort one has, be it material or sentimental, become 'disturbed'. It is the degree of subjective, 'felt' disturbance that pushes an individual to impose on the normality of the other and intervene in order to recreate his own normality.

As the larger cities grow rapidly due to migration, and societies become increasingly cosmopolitan, these types of encounter inevitably become more common. And it is in such situations that, while new 'imagined' communities are being built, these very communities are dissolving.

About 100 kilometres east of Istanbul lies the city of Adapazari, home to several ethnic groups, and ironically known as the city where 'seventy-two nations' live (metaphor used in order to compare with the multiplicity of the nations in the world). If the multicultural structure of this city designs a community of individuals who 'live together with their differences', it carries at the same time the indicators to make sense of the identities that are able to express themselves or have a problem with expression, and the stress that is put on the 'nationalist identity' in Turkey.

First of all, one can observe that individuals in the different ethnic minorities in Adapazari are attached to and identify themselves with their ethnic group. These groups broadly fall into two categories, those who installed themselves (or were installed) following the exodus and exchange of populations after the First World War (Laz, Circassians, Abkhazes, Georgians, Bosnians, Albanians, etc.), and those who have arrived in more recent years, during the conflict in the 'South East' (Kurds). The encounters we have had with the first of these, the migrants of the early Republic (i.e. the non-Kurds) have revealed two major dimensions in their discourses: a Turkish nationalism in tandem with ethnic communitarianism. The inherent tension between, if not incompatibility of, these two dimensions reflects a kind of uncertainty in these typically third generation immigrants about their past and their future. It is a defence, the defence of an identity that manages neither to install itself, nor to consolidate itself. Defined and divided as minorities by shared histories of resettlement as well as, perhaps, by ethnicity, these communities feel themselves to be on unstable ground with a deeply ingrained memory of exodus that can return to haunt and be relived at any moment. And now they find themselves facing a new 'danger', one caused by the Kurds who are perceived as the new reason for instability. Thus, each distrusts the other, but, while holding to its communitarianism, associates itself with the others in an overarching 'Turkish nationalism', pointing to the Kurds as responsible for the inflammation and the danger against which there is a need to create an imaginary unity.

In this case the familiar exclusion process of immigration groups – the latest arrivals going to the bottom of the pile, defined as outsiders by previous incomers which thus serves the earlier groups in their ongoing integration process into the whole (the 'host' society) – combines with a clash of nationalist narratives (Turkish vs Kurdish). The result is a potently divisive expression of the primary nationalist discourse in which social actors defined as relatively vulnerable in the nationalist discourse ('ethnic minorities') employ the fears and prejudices of nationalism against the Other (even weaker social actors, Kurds). In this situation, the latest migrants embody the threat to the nation against which the earlier migrants must defend their own internalized nationality.

What counts is not the 'national territory' but rather 'a territory', 'a place' where one belongs and to which one wants to belong. Nationalism reveals itself as an average and ambiguous identity that addresses each kind of desire for identity. Passing from a local identity to a national one does not seem to be very difficult. As such, the city presents a small-scale model of the national strategy, a condensed version of the macrocosm. The rhetoric that is produced in the nationalist strategy and that tries to answer the feeling of insecurity at the national level is applied to the local urban environment. The discourse of unity and integrity that is valid for the whole country is reflected at the level of the city, and, paradoxically, in the name of unity, produces division. The problem of (in)security is experienced within the city, which decomposes itself under the discourse of integrity.

The same logic that divides Anatolian cities internally also separates them from one another. The outside of the city is made up of other cities. The city is surrounded by competitive forces, each sucking the resources of the state, ending in

their transformation into threats to the survival of the (home) city. There has never been an 'open war' between cities at the economic level, but there are occasions where the tensions and animosity manifest themselves, for example during football matches. The examples are multiple; tensions that have erupted at matches between football teams have kept on going over the course of several years, notably between Sivas and Kayseri, Bursa and Eskisehir, and Elazig and Malatya. In the latter case, the content of the spectators' slogans on both sides has revealed and designated a fracture going far beyond the context of football. Elazig and Malatya football fans insult each other as 'belonging to the PKK' or 'being Armenians' – the 'dangers' that come, par excellence, from 'outside' are here attributed to the neighbours.

By way of conclusion: nationalism as disintegration

The modern national identity that has developed as the new fiction of 'home' over the course of the last 200 years or so, and that has assured the cohabitation of different ethnicities and religions, is no longer able to comfort individuals in the increasingly globalized context of life in Turkey today. New types of communities replace the nation that is no longer able to satisfy these subjects. The nation catches the drift coming from above (the global) but also from below, from local, daily life. Culture as a reservoir of meanings and references becomes ever more complex. From now on, 'the outside' is not just external; it penetrates inside. Everything one is living through shows that the idea of the nation as a home can no longer be sustained. A feeling of insecurity, in every sense of the word, destabilizes those in search of new 'warm homes'. On the contrary, it is hard to realize such security of belonging, whatever the desired level. In this situation of complexity, the different discursive languages cannot assure harmony or complete communication. A language that could keep individuals – or their home – together seems impossible.

Despite the fact that a shared common language cannot be produced, the nationalist strategy that resists the global risks produces an irreversible language which obliges one to conform, through the use of symbols. This language resembles a fortified concrete building, employing the paranoid vocabulary of a bunker mentality. The strategy is a rigid type of construction, a discourse to which those who live in the territory it controls are impelled to adapt. Indeed, all the buildings in this territory are composed of the same combinations of bricks, concrete and mortar, their contours militarily straight. Round lines and curved forms are not allowed (except for the domes of mosques, which are obligatory). With strikingly few exceptions, buildings here are prefabricated, built to just two or three templates (the mosque, the house, the apartment block), and are accepted as such; they represent convenience, the ordinary that carries no risk or creativity. With such little investment of creative energy, housing here reminds one of buildings in which people live of 'necessity' and 'for the time being'.

The owner or the constructor of the building is unimportant. The buildings constructed by the Islamists, the Kurds, the Laz of the Black Sea Region, the Circassians, they are pretty much all identical, and they are poorly constructed. In Erzurum the most nationalist, in Antakya the most multicultural, in Corum the 'Calvinist tigers'

of the rising Anatolian economy, in Istanbul the most cosmopolitan; all 'modern' and 'new' buildings are lookalikes – just as the totalizing nationalism.

Yet the most important difference is hidden on the inside of the concrete structures. The interior of the buildings has the character of a 'home': oriental, arabesque, occidental, modern, traditional homes; homes where one can enter with or without shoes; interiors of poor and rich houses; baubles, photos, paintings, souvenirs, korans on the walls, paintings of Saint Ali for the Alevi – living 'nests'.

The fortified concrete buildings and the interiors of these homes are conflicting parts of a whole. The resistance against the discourse of the fortified concrete building – this modernist nationalism – is coming from the interiors of these buildings, which reproduce themselves. Through the medium of the strategic language each interior (home, family, individual) tries to express its desire for survival, for happiness, for equality and respect for its difference. Even though this language cannot assure the residents of a common sentiment, it nevertheless imposes 'common words'; individuals, families, groups, communities, all identify their feeling of insecurity with that experienced by the strategy. The discourse of the strategy – that 'there are conspiracies afoot being hatched to divide us!', 'the whole world sees us as an enemy!' – is imposed on the East and the West, and it transforms itself into a localized discourse of fear.

With this fear the individuals install new myths, 'memories' and 'autobiographies' to make the present 'bearable'. They instrumentalize the old narratives passed on from generation to generation. These histories touch upon the close environment and daily life and they ease coexistence. Put differently, 'at the bottom', in the midst of social life, harmony continues. 'Above', however, the nationalist strategy's world of discourse and fiction breaks up this harmony. The language of 'home' is rendered invisible, silenced. The home that does not manage to speak, that is unable to surmount the muzzling, turns towards the nationalist rhetoric. While feeding and subverting this rhetoric, it confirms its own muteness. Deprived of a voice of its own, frustration grows rapidly. Under the dominance of the common language of nationalism, the struggle for survival (or for life) continues through the construction and reconstruction of new unities and separations. While there is a permanent state of recomposition, the prejudices, the nationalist reactions, reproduce themselves reflexively, indefinitely.

Those individuals who have not been respected up to now, carrying the memories with them, search tragically for enemies among the targets pointed out by the strategy and seek vengeance for their traumas. In order to set themselves free from their sufferings, they want to see the suffering of the others, the Other incarnate. They construct their communities with the master discourse and they revolt. And the nationalisms constituted through fears create groups that nurture themselves with these fears.

Notes

1 The research upon which this contribution is based (Kentel, Ahıska and Genç 2007) was conducted through the use of qualitative research techniques, in particular in-depth

interviews. Some 90 interviews were conducted in 17 cities in Turkey, from the west to the east of the country, representing a full range of demographic, geographic and cultural differences as well as differences in living standards. These interviews were combined with focus groups and participatory observation. We did not seek to develop a map of nationalism in Turkey through the use of these techniques, but rather to elucidate the relations between the nationalist fiction and daily life, and to establish a connectedness between the two. During the interviews we questioned individuals on the meanings they attached to a variety of cultural entities, including institutions and concepts such as the state, the army, Turkishness, Kurdishness, relations between the social classes, differences between the east and the west of the country, between various cultural identities, men and women, etc. Most importantly, we sought to look at how people relate their daily experiences and life stories to these issues, taking into account their socio-economic situation, their religious and ethnic backgrounds and their social positions, touching on the boundaries of in- and exclusion.

2 A previous version of this chapter was published as F. Kentel, 'Reconstrucciones nacionalistas frente a la desaparición de las fronteras'/ 'Reconstructions nationalistes face à la disparition des frontières', Revista Cidob d'Afers Internacionals, 82–3 (2008): 135–66, 325–55. We are grateful to coordinator Yolanda Onghena for allowing this chapter to be republished in English.

3 'Gladio' (known also as super NATO) is an organization, built up 'against communism' in 1952, as a product of the Cold War in order to create a chaotic atmosphere 'necessitating' military measures. Even though in Europe its tentacles are now mostly dismantled, the Turkish versions (Kontrgerilla, JITEM, Ergenekon . . .) are still secretly operative.

4 This rumour is probably produced with reference to the mixed-sex ritual practice of Alevis (as opposed to the strict Sunni separation of men and women), but also due to the secretive way in which the Alevis have operated (necessitated by the repression during the Ottoman period and ambiguous legality during the Republic – even now Alevi houses of worship or 'cemevi', cannot be formally registered as such and thus continue to function outside the public sphere.

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Part II

Facing the Kurdish issue

4 The Kurdish question in Turkey

Denial to recognition[1]

Mesut Yeğen

Probably no other issue has plagued the Turkish state as incessantly as the Kurdish question. The Turkish Republic has, since its establishment in the early 1920s, wrestled with the Kurdish question, which has assumed many forms since then, including armed resistance, massive political discontent, lack of cultural integration and acute poverty. In due course, the state employed a rich vocabulary of rhetoric and varying policies of citizenship in dealing with this enduring and multifaceted question. While it has perceived the question, at turns, as one of 'the resistance of the past', 'banditry', 'regional backwardness', 'foreign incitement' and 'disloyalty', it has utilized recognition, oppression, assimilation and discrimination in its attempts to cope. This chapter aims at documenting the Turkish state's varying perceptions of the Kurdish question and the citizenship policies that have accompanied these perceptions.

Below, I split my examination of this issue into three major periods: pre-denial, denial and post-denial. In the years immediately preceding the foundation of the Turkish Republic, state officials declared they would recognize Kurds as an ethnic group with cultural and political rights. Between the mid-1920s and the 1990s, however, the state continually denied not only Kurds' cultural and political rights, but even the ethnic aspect of the Kurdish question. It has only been since the 1990s that the state has begun to concede the validity of this ethnic dimension. Concomitantly, while the question had until this point been dealt with using strategies tantamount to assimilation and oppression, in the past two decades these strategies have morphed into an amalgam of old and new, blending assimilation and oppression with discrimination and recognition.

After the empire, before the denial

The end of World War I proved that the Ottoman Empire was defunct. By the end of the war, the Ottoman imperial territory contracted to the space of the Anatolian peninsula, some regions of which were occupied by the Allied forces. Furthermore, the state apparatus following the war was in no position to enforce genuine administrative, political and military power over what remained of the empire.[2]

There emerged a state of dual power in the years between the end of the war and the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923. While the palace-backed government in Istanbul endeavored to save what remained of the empire, some officers of the Ottoman Army and the remnants of the Committee of Union and Progress, which

had ruled the Empire between 1913 and 1918, organized an armed resistance against the occupation of Anatolia and established a new government in Ankara in 1920. What is striking is that both governments conceded, in the years preceding the foundation of the Turkish Republic, that there was an ethnic aspect to the Kurdish question, and both promised that it would be tackled with a politics of recognition.

A British Foreign Office document from the period indicates that the Istanbul government welcomed the idea of granting autonomy to regions inhabited by Kurds.[3] It is understood that a meeting took place on 10 July 1919 in the office of the prime minister between Kurdish notables and ministers of the Istanbul government, and that the Kurdish delegate was promised a Kurdish governor and Kurdish officials would be appointed to Kurdistan. Likewise, representatives of the future Turkish Republic, which would later not only deny the ethnic aspect of the Kurdish question but even the existence of Kurds, also promised to recognize Kurds' cultural and political rights. In fact, it was the future republic's founder himself who articulated this promise. In a secret meeting of the Ankara Assembly, Mustafa Kemal declared that Muslims of Anatolia such as Kurds, Circassians, Laz and Turks 'are genuine brothers who would respect each other's ethnic, local, and moral rights' (Public Records Office 1919). *The Amasya Protocols*, a document signed at a moment of consensus in 1919 between the representatives of the Istanbul government and the founders of the prospective republic, also indicates that both parties were prepared to recognize Kurds' cultural rights. The document stipulated that the Kurds would be given ethnic and social rights that would ensure their free development (Unat 1961).

Another record indicating that the founders of the Republic had at one point acknowledged Kurds to be an ethnic community with group rights can be found in the minutes of the Ankara Assembly, when it articulated that a kind of autonomy was to be granted to the Kurds. 'Building a local government in the lands inhabited by Kurds' was defined as a part of the 'Kurdistan policy' of the Ministry of Council. This policy too had been endorsed by Mustafa Kemal. In a public interview held immediately before the proclamation of the Republic, Kemal stated:

> In accordance with our constitution, a kind of local autonomy is to be granted. Hence, provinces inhabited by Kurds will rule themselves autonomously. [. . .] The Grand National Assembly of Turkey is composed of the deputies of both Kurds and Turks and these two peoples have unified their interests and fates. (Kemal 1993: 105)[4]

The documents above testify to the fact that Turkish governments of these difficult post-Empire, pre-Republic times were open in their acceptance of Kurdish ethnicity and pledge to tackle the Kurdish question by means of a politics of recognition toward the aim of group rights.

The Republic, the denial

By 1922, the Ankara government ended the occupation of Anatolia and recaptured some international recognition as an autonomous power over what remained of the

Ottoman Empire. Having achieved power and legitimacy, the Ankara government declared the foundation of the Republic in 1923, leaving its difficult past behind and reforging its political identity based on a national model. It was within this context that the Turkish state abandoned first its earlier politics of recognition, then, second, its acknowledgment of the ethnic aspect of the Kurdish question.

Even though the state still acknowledged that its citizenry was composed not only of ethnic Turks at the time the first republican constitution was enacted in 1924, it nevertheless asserted that, with the exception of the religious minorities protected by the Treaty of Lausanne, no other ethnic groups would enjoy cultural rights (Gözübüyük and Sezgin 1957: 7). All non-Turkish citizens of the Republic other than Greeks, Armenians and Jews now had to become Turkish. The politics of recognition was over.

The ~~Kurdish~~ question: the endurance and the resistance of the past

At this point it became evident not only that the Kurdish question would not be tackled by a politics of recognition, but instead by a politics of *inkılap* (reform), oppression and assimilation. For the founders of the Republic, the Kurdish question was no longer a political issue requiring recognition. During the first few decades following the establishment of the Republic, its founders reframed the question as a social clash between *past* and *present*.

This revised conceptual framework was crystallized by 1925, as the state assessed issues surrounding the Kurdish rebellion of that year. An exemplary text to this effect can be found in the speech of the chairman of the Court of Independence, which sentenced the leaders of the 1925 rebellion to death:

> [S]ome of you used people for your personal interests, and some of you followed foreign incitement and political ambitions, but all of you marched to a certain point: the establishment of an independent Kurdistan. [. . .] Your *political reaction* and rebellion were destroyed immediately by the decisive acts of *the government of the Republic* and by the fatal strokes of *the Republican army*. [. . .] Everybody must know that as the young Republican government will definitely not condone any cursed action like incitement and political re-action, it will prevent this sort of *banditry* by means of its precise precautions. The poor people of this region who have been exploited and oppressed under the domination of *sheikhs* and *feudal landlords* will be freed from your incitements and evil, and they will follow the efficient paths of our Republic which promises progress and prosperity. (Aybars 1988: 325–6, emphasis added)

This long text demonstrates that for the Turkish state at this time, the Kurdish question was an issue of the resistance of the past against the present. In other words, the new regime believed that the Kurds, who in their view represented backward social forces, were rebelling against a modern state power that promised progress and prosperity. Having left the politics of recognition behind, the Turkish state now began to manage the resistance as a purely social question, wherein the modern state

was obliged to subdue the obstructive influences of ~~Kurdish~~ sheiks, ~~Kurdish~~ landlords, ~~Kurdish~~ tribes, and ~~Kurdish~~ bandits. To this logic, what the Kurdish rebels resisted was not the establishment of a nation-state over what remained from a multi-ethnic empire, but the present which was embodied in the republican government and the republican army. Accordingly, the Turkish state would proceed with a policy of 'solving' the Kurdish question by way of razing the *past*.

By 1930s, the characterization of the question as one of 'resistance of the past' was amended. It was alleged that there were no Kurds in Turkey, and thus the question at stake, that is, the incidences of Kurdish unrest, had no ethno-political component. The resistance was reframed in the vocabulary of tribes and banditry threatened by the dissemination of centralized state power into the region. Having left the politics of recognition behind, the Turkish state now began to manage the resistance as a purely social question, wherein the modern state was obligated to subdue the obstructive influences of sheikhs, landlords, tribes, and bandits.

Accordingly, in the summer of 1930, newspapers reporting on the suppression of the Kurdish rebellion of that year labeled the rebels brigands and bandits. This, despite the fact that the rebellion had been spearheaded by a modern and secular Kurdish organization (*Hoybun*). On 9 July 1930, a piece in Cumhuriyet reported that the aircrafts bombed the *brigands* (Cumhuriyet 1930a). On 13 July, the same paper reported that citizens were defending *the Republic* against *bandits* (*Cumhuriyet* 1930b, emphasis added). Similarly, the prominent leader of the 1937–8 Dersim revolt, Seyyid Riza, was sentenced to death after being found guilty of brigandage. Even more contemporary Kurdish movements from the 1970s and 1980s have been represented as banditry in the media.

During the 1930s, the state made an attempt to 'solve' the Kurdish question by means of massive compulsory resettlement. The official explanation for the legislation mandating the resettlement was the Turkification (assimilation) of non-Turks, but the language of the main text reveals the attitude that the intended parties for assimilation were tribal peoples having no specific ethnic identity. In other words, the state purported to disperse those whose mother tongue was not Turkish, but the central articles of law spoke to the dismemberment of the political and administrative authority of the tribe (Resmi Gazete 21 June 1934).

The ~~Kurdish~~ question, framed as an issue of banditry and tribal unrest, was also, then, a state project of the 'introduction of civilization.' For instance, the prime minister of the time, İsmet İnönü, interpreted the 1937 Kurdish rebellion in the following terms:

> The Government has been implementing a reform program for Tunceli for two years. This program includes extensive work [. . .] in order to civilize the region. Some of the tribal chiefs of the region [. . .] have not welcomed the program. [However], the program of reform and the *civilizing of Tunceli* shall go on! (Besikçi 1990: 82–3, emphasis added)

Likewise, for Yunus Nadi, the lead columnist for Cumhuriyet, what the republican regime was doing in Tunceli was 'not a military operation, but *the march of*

civilization.' (*Cumhüriyet* 1937a, emphasis added). The government, Nadi claimed, was simply telling '*the mountain Bedouins* [to] either accept this program or get out.' (*Cumhuriyet* 1937b, emphasis added).

~~*Kurdish*~~ *question: regional underdevelopment*

To sum up, from the 1930s until the 1950s, the Turkish state conceptualized the Kurdish question as an issue of the endurance of backward social structures. By the 1950s, armed Kurdish resistance had ended, indicating that the republican government had succeeded in compelling Kurds to recognize its political and military authority. However, the lack of economic integration between regions inhabited by Kurds and the rest of the country that became evident prompted the state to make moves to disseminate market relations into the Kurdish regions.

In this context, the state's perception of the dilemma came to be framed in terms of regional underdevelopment. The ~~Kurdish~~ question became a product of the backwardness of the regions inhabited by Kurds due to a lack of economic integration. Thus, the Turkish state's response came in the form of a wave of government programs during the 1950s and 1960s. Citing massive underdevelopment in eastern and southeastern Anatolia, which were regions inhabited mostly by Kurds, the 1965 administration promised to alleviate economic disparity between geographic zones (TBMM 1988: 104). Likewise, the 1969 government stressed the issue of 'the development of the eastern [Kurdish] region', adding that it was necessary to introduce 'special measures in the regions where backwardness is massive and acute'. The aim of these special measures, it was underlined, was not to create privileged regions, but *to forge integration*' (TBMM 1988: 155, emphasis added).

The economic integration model became very popular in Turkey throughout the second half of the twentieth century. It was true not only of the left-wing governments of the 1970s, but, as Ömer Faruk Gençkaya showed, governments during the 1980s and 1990s also perceived the issue to be a 'socio-economic problem of underdevelopment enhanced by the feudal structure' (Gençkaya 1996: 94–101).

The ~~Kurdish~~ question: an outcome of foreign incitement

The preceding two sections illustrate how the Turkish state denied the ethnic component of the Kurdish question and reconceived it as a socio-economic question to be resolved by social reforms. Furthermore, the issue was, under some governments, represented as having no social validity at all. In this more extreme perception Kurds' discontent was a consequence of foreign incitement, wherein the state was forced to manage disorder provoked by foreign elements.

Behind the 'foreign incitement' hypothesis was the state's anxiety towards foreigners, especially Western elements. The great political powers of the time, Britain in particular, were believed to be responsible for huge territorial losses by the Empire between 1913 and 1918. The specter of the immediate past informed the new state's suspicion of these powers with respect to the Kurdish revolts.

This view was first asserted in the wake of the 1925 rebellion. The Court of Independence expressed in its verdict that year that the rebellion had been incited by foreigners, and this perception persisted thereafter. One point must be highlighted here, however. Since the Turkish state opposed itself against a series of different political Others from one period to the next, the forces blamed for Kurdish incitement changed as well. After the War of Independence, the outsiders were Western imperialist powers, particularly Britain. During the Cold War, NATO-member Turkey opposed itself against the USSR; thus Kurdish unrest in the 1960s and 1970s was believed to be an outcome of communist incitement. After the Cold War ended, the state took the position that its major threat lay to the south. Today, it is again the West's turn to fill this role. The gradual establishment of a Kurdish regional government in northern Iraq under American mandate since the second Gulf War has been interpreted by many as an agitation of the Kurdish question by the USA.[5]

This attitude is on display in a 1963 case, in which leading figures of the Kurdish opposition of the time were charged:

> During the Republican period [. . .] some foreign states intended to cause trouble in Eastern Anatolia. As a matter of fact, the Sheikh Said, Ağrı and Dersim rebellions were due to the counter-revolutionary actions of some tribes which were incited by foreign powers. [. . .] The content of foreign incitement at present [however] is not the same as that of the past. While previous foreign incitements [. . .] were caused by the imperialist states which had interests in the Middle East, at present, these incitements are caused by communist activity. Today, [. . .] the Kurdish ideal is entirely the product of incitement by international communism. (Şadillili, 1980: 184–5)

The text makes explicit the fact that the Turkish state drew a correlation between those it perceived as its external threats and whom it blamed for inciting Kurdish unrest. What is significant is the state's characterization of the ~~Kurdish~~ question as one of public disorder, rather than one having a social basis.

Inkılap, oppression and assimilation

The quotation above testifies to the fact that between 1924 and 1990 the Turkish state denied the ethnic aspect of the Kurdish question, perceiving it primarily as a social issue generated by the endurance of backward social structures and even occasionally as a security concern posed by foreign rivals. The state coped with the question by employing strategies that mirrored these perceptions: those which aimed to erode traditional social structures (i.e. a politics of *inkılap*) on the one hand, and those which were intended to reinforce public order (i.e. a politics of oppression) on the other. The politics of *inkılap* and the politics of oppression mingled with a third policy: the politics of assimilation. This was inevitable, since denial of ethnic difference did nothing to abate Kurdish identity, the endurance of which was at the root of the Kurdish question.

Before documenting the politics of assimilation, it is important to underline that although assimilation can be identified as a third discrete policy, it was also the goal of both the strategies of *inkılap* and oppression. Since the Kurdish tribe was, as a matter of last resort, a site of reproduction of Kurdish identity, the politics of inkılap that liquidated tribal structures in effect weakened this identity. Likewise, the displacement and resettlement of Kurds into predominantly Turkish regions of Anatolia that were part of the politics of oppression also served the purpose of assimilation. For instance, Kurds who joined the 1925 rebellion were displaced and resettled, together with their families, to western Turkey following the rebellion. Law 1204, enacted in 1927 with the title 'Law concerning persons being moved from the East to the West', announced that 1500 persons and 80 families were to be displaced (TBMM, *Zabıt Ceridesi*: 153; Tezel 1982: 346).[6] Another settlement law was enacted in 1934. At the heart of this law was the goal of Turkifying non-Turkish elements, either by settling Turkish elements in non-Turkish areas or vice versa (*Resmi Gazete* 1934). Data shows that 25,381 citizens from 5074 households in predominantly-Kurdish provinces were displaced and resettled in the West (Tekeli 1990: 64).

Yet another wave of Kurdish displacement took place in the 1990s, when the Kurdish resistance began to regain strength. During these years, the Turkish state evacuated and burned hundreds of Kurdish villages in mountainous regions on the grounds of 'national security'. According to a report written by the National Assembly, more than 3000 villages were evacuated.[7] Results of recent research indicate that more than one million people were forcibly evacuated from their villages during this decade (HÜNEE 2006).

Still, the politics of assimilation has been implemented by even more direct and efficient means. After the foundation of the Republic, traditional religious schools in Kurdish regions, which had been instrumental in reproducing Kurdish cultural practices and values, were closed. Kurdish language publication was disallowed. During the heyday of the Republic, the state even successfully enforced a ban on speaking Kurdish in public (Bayrak 1994). Even today, Article 42 of the current constitution prohibits the Kurdish language instruction at schools (Kili and Gözbüyük 2000: 276).

The ensuing Turkification of surnames, names of villages, and names of local places are additional examples of the deployment of this strategy. The third article of the Surname Law of 1934 prohibited using 'the names of tribes, foreign races and foreign nations' as surnames. Likewise, the Provincial Administration Law of 1949 authorized the Ministry of Internal Affairs to change the names of places,[8] an authority that was enforced regularly.[9] Moreover, Article 16 of the 1972 Population Law expressly prohibited giving newborns 'such names which are not in accordance with our national culture'.[10]

A more favored instrument of assimilation employed by the Republic came in the form of state-established boarding schools. A number of these schools were established in Kurdish regions with the aim of educating Kurdish boys and girls away from their families and outside of their normal cultural contexts. These boarding schools are still in operation today. Figures provided by the Ministry of National

Education indicate that, of 299 boarding schools in Turkey, 155 (52 percent) of them are located in Kurdish-populated provinces in eastern and southeastern Anatolia. To conclude, the Turkish Republic, from its foundation until the 1990s, essentially denied the ethnic aspect of the Kurdish question and perceived the question as one of the resistance of the past, banditry and foreign incitement. In the same period, the Kurdish question was tackled with by means of three politics: those of *inkılap*, oppression and assimilation.

From denial to non-denial, from assimilation to what?

By the early 1990s, things had started to change. Both the Turkish state's perception of the Kurdish question and its methods of addressing the issue underwent significant shifts. The growing discontent of the Kurdish masses and the increasing number of armed clashes between Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militants and government forces made it ever more difficult for the state to cling to the attitudes of previous decades. The 1991 elections proved that Kurdish discontent had reached a critical mass. Aligned with the leftist Social Democratic Populist Party (SHP), the pro-Kurdish People's Labor Party (HEP), which had been founded just one year earlier, won 22 seats in Parliament. It was clear that the Kurdish and Turkish masses were no longer persuaded by the old arguments that had been used to justify inkılap, oppression and assimilation.

It was within this context that officials first revealed that the state was prepared to 'correct' the dictums that there were no Kurds in the Turkish territory and that the Kurdish question was without an ethnic dimension. To this end, the Turkish Assembly enacted a law in 1991 lifting the 1983 ban on speaking Kurdish in public. The same year, the then prime minister Süleyman Demirel gave a historic speech in Diyarbakır (a major Kurdish town in southeastern Turkey) in which he declared that Turkey recognized 'the Kurdish reality'. Demirel went on to suggest in 1992 that Turkey adopt a constitutional citizenship. Meanwhile, the then president Turgut Özal seemed to have been trying to persuade bureaucrats and the public alike to support a PKK amnesty. In the 1990s, the attitude of denial was left behind.

Of course, such moves could not so easily solve an issue that had plagued the Republic for the duration of its history. While the PKK declared a unilateral ceasefire in the spring of 1993, the sudden death of reformist president Özal in April 1993 and the murder of 33 unarmed Turkish soldiers by the PKK in May 1993 poisoned the climate of resolution. The years immediately following these events can be counted among the bloodiest chapters in the history of the Kurdish question in Turkey.

In this climate, the state revisited the politics of oppression between 1993 and 1999. Having now acknowledged the ethnic aspect of the Kurdish question, however, the state now had to recast the unrest as an ethnic (Kurdish) uprising with separatist aims and requiring military measures. To this end, a relentless campaign was launched against both PKK militants and civilians who were believed to support them. Thousands of militants and civilians were killed during these years, with hundreds of Turkish soldiers killed by the militants as well.

The politics of oppression during these years was not enacted by military means alone. Citizens of thousands of Kurdish villages lost their homes, land and husbandry as thousands of villages were evacuated and burned down. Since they were not provided any means of resettlement elsewhere, sheer poverty took its hold on many. Kurds in towns and cities were also harassed. Human rights activists and Kurdish politicians and professionals were killed, imprisoned or tortured. Two pro-Kurdish political parties, the People's Labor Party (HEP) and the Democratic Party (DEP), were banned by the Supreme Court in 1993 and 1994 respectively. In 1994, parliamentary immunity for eight Kurdish deputies was revoked, four of whom, Leyla Zana, Hatip Dicle, Orhan Doğan and Selim Sadak, were arrested and sentenced to 15 years of prison. Others fled abroad (Yavuz 2008). The politics of oppression in these years was accompanied by a politics of discrimination against Kurdish citizens, with both political rights and the basic civil rights of property and settlement violated.

The early 1990s witnessed a major shift from denial to recognition in the perception of the Kurdish question. Unfortunately, recognition came at the cost of military operations, internal displacement, and political oppression. Toward the end of the decade, however, the tide turned again. A timid politics of recognition began to replace the politics of repression and discrimination in the wake of two important developments. First, PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan was captured in Kenya in February 1999. In December of the same year, Turkey was recognized as a candidate for European Union membership at the Helsinki Summit.

Following the capture and imprisonment of Öcalan, the PKK declared a ceasefire and withdrew its militants inside Iraq. The organization announced that its endgame was no longer the establishment of an independent Kurdistan on Turkish territory, but to live in a democratic Turkish Republic wherein Kurdish cultural rights would be awarded. In 2002, the Turkish parliament eliminated capital punishment, sparing the life of Abdullah Öcalan in the process, as he had been sentenced to death on 29 June 1999. That same year, the two decades long state of emergency (OHAL) in Kurdish regions was lifted. Subsequently, the parliament introduced reforms that effectively lifted the ban on use of the Kurdish language. First, private bodies were permitted to teach Kurdish. Then the public television channel TRT began broadcasting in Kurdish for 30 minutes per week.[11] Finally, private television and radio channels were permitted to broadcast in Kurdish as well, albeit for only a few hours per week. In brief, the capture of Öcalan and the recognition of Turkey as a candidate for EU membership in 1999 marked the beginning of a period of peace on the Kurdish question, in which the state reluctantly took early steps on the road to recognition of Kurdish identity.

In 2004, another sudden shift was prompted by three developments. These were the establishment of a Kurdistan regional government in Iraq after the collapse of the Baath regime, the growing resistance of top Turkish bureaucracy toward the EU membership process, and the PKK's decision to relaunch their armed struggle. These developments inflamed nationalist sentiment in Turkey. Traumatized, the Turkish public was seized by a growing sense of insecurity, which resulted in a preoccupation with the Kurdish question. Like Kurds in Iraq, it was believed that

Kurds in Turkey were haunted by separatist ideals, and furthermore that this agenda was backed by the USA and the EU. It was also believed that reforms ensuring individual cultural rights would open the floodgates to a demand on collective cultural and political rights.

An immediate consequence of this change in spirit was a cessation of the politics of recognition. Criticizing the EU's push for amelioration of minority rights in Turkey, the army openly announced its opposition to further recognition of cultural rights in 2004. European Commission president José Manuel Barroso urged Ankara 'to ensure both cultural and political rights for the Kurdish people of Turkey'. In his response, General İlker Başbuğ, commander of the Turkish Land Forces, fired back that 'nobody can demand or expect Turkey to make collective arrangements for a certain ethnic group in the political arena, outside of the cultural arena, that would endanger the nation-state structure as well as the unitary state structure' (*Today's Zaman* 2008a). This warning set parameters for the politics of recognition.

More important than the cessation of the politics of recognition were suspicions of disloyalty among Kurdish citizens in Turkey after 2003. In this new climate, PKK members and even ordinary Kurds began to be accused. In one instance, for example, the Turkish General Staff labeled participants in the Newroz (Nevruz)[12] demonstrations of 2005 'pseudo-citizens'. The demonstrations of this year were unprecedented in both the size of crowd and the symbolism employed. They were attended by hundreds of thousands of Kurdish citizens who carried posters of Öcalan and Kurdish flags. In one instance, two Kurdish boys desecrated a Turkish flag at a demonstration in Mersin. Immediately afterward, the General Staff issued a response addressed to the 'Great Turkish Nation':

> [T]he innocent activities organized to celebrate the coming of spring have been undermined by a group [. . .] to the extent that the Turkish flag, the symbol of the sublime Turkish nation [. . .], was desecrated. In its long history, the Turkish nation has lived good and old days, betrayals as well as victories. Yet, it has never faced such treachery committed by *pseudo-citizens* in its own homeland. This is *treachery*. [. . .] (*Hürriyet* 2005a, author's translation, emphasis added).

This statement was significant in that, for the first time, Turkish authorities accused the perpetrators of this affront of being 'pseudo-citizens'.

The General Staff was not the only public institution to use the term 'pseudo-citizens'. Several days after the General Staff issued its statement, the Senate of Ankara University issued its own response to the same events. In its declaration the Senate condemned '[. . .] the desecration of the Turkish flag [. . .] by a group of our pseudo-citizens'.[13]

Doubts concerning the loyalty of Kurds were not limited to 'exceptional times' as with the incident outlined above. The Turkish state also voiced concerns about the foundation of a Kurdish regional government in Iraq, which 'brought a political, legal, military and psychological power to the Kurds of the region'. Land Forces Commander General İlker Başbuğ continued that 'this situation may create a new

model of belonging for a segment of our citizenry'. Along the same lines, Prime Minister Erdoğan did not hesitate to threaten his fellow citizens with deportation. Angered by the protests of pro-PKK and pro-DTP Kurds during his visit to the Kurdish town of Hakkari on 2 November 2008, the Prime Minister declared that those who would oppose the motto 'one nation, one flag, one motherland, one state' should leave the country (Karabat 2008).

Suspicion over Kurdish loyalties were expressed not only through jargon like 'pseudo-citizens', 'new model of belonging' or 'love it or leave it', but also took some official forms. Since 2003, warplanes have made a series of low-altitude passes over the Kurdish towns of Yüksekova and Cizre, both known for their popular support for the PKK and the DTP.[14] Other times, these passes took place overhead as Kurdish citizens made public demonstrations (Demirdöğen and Saymaz 2005; Milliyet 2005a; *Stargazete* 2008). In still another instance, a gendarmerie barracks in Özalp was named after a general who had ordered the killing of 33 local Kurdish peasants in 1943 (Milliyet 2004). This group of Kurdish peasants from Özalp, who had been caught smuggling goods from the Iranian border, were executed without trial. In 1950 General Mustafa Muğlalı, who was discovered to have ordered the killing, was tried and found guilty of the offense, and was sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment. Over the years the incident came to occupy a privileged symbolic place in the collective memory of [dissident] Kurds, thanks in large part to a famous work by Kurdish poet Ahmed Arif, entitled 33 Bullets. Given the nature of the incident, naming the barracks after Muğlalı points to the degree of alienation between the Turkish army and the Kurdish citizens of Turkey.

The association of the Kurdish question with disloyalty prompted a new wave of sanctioned discrimination against Kurds at all levels. For example, it was occasionally reported between 2003 and 2008 that the governor of the Black Sea province of Ordu issued a circular disallowing Kurdish seasonal workers from entering the province during the hazelnut harvest season.[15] In another such example, the governor of Adana province announced in October 2008 that anyone who participated in pro-PKK demonstrations would be denied the free medical care and financial aid normally provided for the poor (*Radikal* 2008). In yet another instance, a student in the town of Aliağa in the province of İzmir was barred by the district governor from reading a poem at a back-to-school ceremony because the girl's name was Rojda, a well-known Kurdish name (*Today's Zaman* 2008c). The name means 'sunrise' in Kurdish.

The discrimination extended to deputies and mayors from pro-Kurdish parties. Defining discrimination against pro-Kurdish politicians as a politics of disengagement', Kerem Öktem, in his excellent analysis of the Turkish state's recent Kurdish policy, argues that the politics of disengagement 'proceeds on a number of levels' (Öktem 2008). While disengagement has taken the form of 'non-cooperation with [pro-Kurdish] DTP municipalities on the level of state agencies', at 'the level of representatives of the military' it has taken the form of 'active non-engagement' with DTP members, especially during national celebrations. Lastly, at 'the legal level' it has taken the form of 'court cases against mayors for minor offenses like speaking Kurdish during public service and against members of Parliament'

(Öktem 2008: 5–6). In one stunning example, DTP deputies were not invited to a reception hosted by the Chief of the General Staff in commemoration of Victory Day on 30 August 2007.[16] In another, Prime Minister Erdoğan has refused to shake the hands of DTP deputies who were elected to parliament in 2007.

Official discrimination against Kurds has occasionally been accompanied by instances of popular hatred of Kurdish citizens in pockets around the country. During these periods there have been several instances of harassment, mob attacks and lynch attempts against Kurds. In a few cases, Kurdish families or seasonal workers were forced out of small towns in western Turkey, as was the case on 30 August 2006, when hundreds of people were reported to have 'gathered to lynch Kurdish workers in Bozkır town, central Turkey, Konya region'.[17] In July 2006, in the town of Ödemiş in İzmir province, 'a lynching attempt occurred against a whole family of seasonal workers'.[18] On 3 October 2008 a mob attacked Kurds in Altınova, a small coastal town in western Turkey (Korkut 2008). And in May 2008, two laborers speaking Kurdish in public were beaten by a crowd (*Haber Diyarbakır* 2008).

In sum, the last two decades have been marked by several vital changes in the Turkish state's perception of and preoccupation with the Kurdish question. After having denied the existence of Kurds and the ethnic aspect of the question for decades, the state at last conceded both during the 1990s. However, this recognition was soon superseded as Kurds began to be perceived as disloyal to the Republic. In other words, for the past 20 years, state and popular perception has oscillated between the view that 'Kurds are citizens of a different ethnic origin' and that 'Kurds are disloyal pseudo-citizens'. The shy politics of recognition of the early 1990s gave way to a new wave of the politics of oppression between 1993 and 1999. A more remarkable politics of recognition reappeared during the early 2000s which yet again gave way to a politics of discrimination that has plagued the past few years. It is of utmost importance to remember that all of these political strategies were accompanied by an underlying principle, namely the politics of assimilation.

The Turkish state has pursued the politics of assimilation more enthusiastically than ever during this most recent period, but what has set the modern policies apart from their predecessors is that, alongside banal instruments of assimilation such as national education, new techniques and new actors have begun to be employed. Recent campaigns expressing sentiments such as 'Father, Send Me to School', 'Girls, Off to School', and 'Pre-School Education' have been particularly significant in this respect. Implemented primarily in predominantly Kurdish regions and western provinces with large Kurdish populations, these campaigns were an attempt to increase school attendance among girls.

The most popular of these campaigns, 'Father, Send Me to School', was initiated by the newspaper *Milliyet* in the following 15 provinces: Ağrı, Diyarbakır, Hakkari, İstanbul, İzmir, Kars, Mardin, Muş, Siirt, Şanlıurfa, Şırnak, Van, Tekirdağ, Tokat and Osmaniye. Of these, the first 12 provinces are home to a significant number of Kurds. The campaign centered around providing grants and constructing schools and dormitories for the education of girls. The 'Girls, Off to School' program has been organized by the Ministry of National Education and UNICEF in

collaboration with several public institutions, NGO's and local administrations. The campaign was initiated in 2003 in the ten densely Kurdish provinces of Ağrı, Batman, Bitlis, Diyarbakır, Hakkari, Muş, Siirt, Şanlıurfa, Şırnak and Van. It is understood that the Turkish state intends to further its assimilation efforts, this time with the support of 'civil society'.

There have also recently been efforts on behalf of the Ministry of National Education to expand and improve pre-school education in Kurdish regions, particularly in eastern and southeastern Anatolia. According to the Minister of National Education, it is necessary 'to solve the language (Turkish) problem before school' (Ergüdür 2004). A similar campaign called 'Children, Off to Nursery' was launched in 2005 in the following predominantly Kurdish provinces: Ağrı, Bingöl, Bitlis, Elazığ, Erzincan, Erzurum, Hakkari, Kars, Malatya, Muş, Tunceli, Van, Ardahan, Iğdır, Adıyaman, Diyarbakır, Gaziantep, Mardin, Siirt, Şanlıurfa, Batman, Şırnak and Kilis (*Hürriyet* 2005b). Finally, a third program was launched in 2005 by the Ministry of National Education, in partnership with the Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (TÜSİAD) and the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB), which impacts the same regions. The initiative's stated purpose is 'to enable children in whose houses the spoken language is Kurdish to speak Turkish well', and suggests increasing the number of weekly hours of Turkish courses in eastern and southeastern Anatolian primary schools from five to twenty (*Milliyet* 2005a). These campaigns clearly detail the state project of assimilating Kurds with assistance from non-official bodies.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to examine the Turkish state's perception of and preoccupation with the Kurdish question. My overall argument is that there have been several important ruptures both in the perception of and preoccupation with the Kurdish question. As I have tried to show, prior to the foundation of the Turkish Republic, both the Ottoman government of the time and the prospective republicans agreed that Kurds were an ethnic group deserving of group rights and autonomous administration. But only one year after the foundation of the Republic, in 1924, the state reneged on these assurances. From the 1930s until 1990, the state represented the ~~Kurdish~~ question as one of social backwardness and was in turns approached with an amalgam of *inkılap*, oppression, and assimilation.

In the early 1990s, after 60 years of denial, the administration finally acknowledged Kurds as a distinct ethnic group, but this did not result in the cessation of the politics of oppression and assimilation. To the contrary, this recognition came at the cost of suspicions of disloyalty to the Republic, paving the way for a politics of discrimination. Methods of coping with the Kurdish question have oscillated dramatically in the wake of major political events, and in the past ten years alone a shy politics of recognition has been overruled by, or at best mingled with, a reinforcement of the politics of assimilation and discrimination.

The coda of this analysis is a note that the year 2009 has opened with some major steps toward the politics of recognition. State broadcasting agency TRT launched,

at the beginning of the year, a 24-hour Kurdish language channel, TRT 6 (Balcı and Karabat 2008). Also, the Higher Education Board (YÖK) has resolved to establish Kurdish language and literature departments in universities (*Today's Zaman* 2009). These rank among the most radical gestures on the road to true recognition of Kurdish identity in Turkish history. However, given that the ban on the use of Kurdish goes on in many areas paves the way for the doubts about the sincerity of the reforms introduced by the present government.[19] As long as the ban on public use of Kurdish, which includes its use in educational settings and political campaigns, is not formally overturned these doubts are not unfounded. This brings us to the following conclusion: though some important steps have been taken on the road to recognition, the Turkish state is, at best, begrudgingly on this road.

Notes

1 The first two sections of this contribution are based on essays published elsewhere. See 'Turkish Nationalism and the Kurdish Question', Ethnic and Racial Studies, 30/1 (2007): 119–51 and 'From Prospective-Turks to Pseudo-Citizens: Kurds in Turkey' *Middle East Journal*, 63/4: 597–616.
2 For a factual narrative concerning these years see Lewis (1965).
3 See The National Archives (TNA), Public Records Office, FO 371/4192 Document no: 112204, 5 August 1919.
4 Note that while this interview has been published several times in the republican period, the statements indicating that the new regime was to give autonomy to Kurds were censored. For a censored version of this interview see Inan (1982). It is only in 1993 that an uncensored version of this interview was printed.
5 This conviction is most obvious in the results of a recent poll which shows that the discontent from the recent policies of the USA is the highest among the Turkish citizens. See <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/6796810.asp?gid=200> (accessed 28 June 2007).
6 It is understood from the speech delivered by the prime minister of the time, İsmet İnönü, in 1929 that 2000 hectares of these persons' estates was confiscated. See Tezel (1982).
7 TBMM, Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu'da Boşaltılan Yerleşim Birimleri Nedeniyle Göç Eden Yurttaşlarımızın Sorunlarının Araştırılarak Alınması Gereken Tedbirlerin Tespit Edilmesi Amacıyla Kurulan Meclis Araştırması Komisyonu Raporu, Ankara, 1998.
8 <http://www.hukuki.net/kanun/2932.15.frameset.asp.> (accessed 15 February 2009).
9 For the instances of changing the names of places see 'Türkiye Mülki İdari Bölümleri: Belediyeler Köyler', TC İçişleri Bakanlığı İller idaresi Genel Müdürlüğü, Genel Yayın No: 408 Seri III No. 4.
10 < http://www.hukuki.net/kanun/1587.15.frameset.asp.> (accessed 15 February 2009). Population Law of 1972 was amended in 2003. Law numbered 4928 enacted on 15 July 2003 cancelled the statement 'in accordance with our national culture'. For this amendment see <http://www.hukuki.net/kanun/2932.15.frameset.asp> (accessed 15 February 2009).
11 Here it has to be noted that the term Kurdish was not used in the law which enabled broadcasting in Kurdish. Instead, the text of the law preffered to use the phrase 'broadcasting in local dialects and languages'. The logic behind this bizarre gesture was to avoid of using the term Kurdish in a legal text. Accordingly, the TRT used the term 'broadcasting in Kirmanci' (a dialect of Kurdish) and not Kurdish.
12 A spring festival celebrated by many peoples of the Middle East and Asia.
13 <http://www.ankara.edu.tr/yazi.php?yad=2802> (accessed 24 March 2005). Following the statement of declaration, an internet discussion took place among the academic staff at the University and Nusret Aras, the president of the University. The president began

his comments with: 'the flag crisis which started in Diyarbakır and went on in Mersin [. . .]' (<http://www.ankara.edu.tr/yazi.php?yad=2838> (accessed 30 March 2005). This was a misleading phrase because the flag incident did not occur during the demonstrations in Diyarbakır, the town hosting the largest crowds during the Newroz demonstrations of 2005. Perhaps this phrase should be taken as a slip of tongue which could suggest that what prompted the usage of the term pseudo-citizens was not simply a 'flag incident', but the Newroz demonstrations in their entirety.

14 <http://www.nethabercilik.com/haber/f-16lar-cizre-uzerinde-alcak-ucus-yapti.htm> (accessed 15 February 2009) <http://www.yuksekovahaber.com/news_detail.php?id=5964&uniq_id=1208648208> accessed 15 February 2009)

15 This particular act of discrimination has been reported in different places and at different times. See for instance 'The European Commission Report on Measures to Combat Discrimination in the 13 Candidate Countries Country Report Turkey, which was prepared in 2003 and the reports in 2008' <http://www.humanconsultancy.com/TURKEY%20Final%20EN.pdf> and <http://www.bianet.org/english/kategori/english/109120/discrimination-adds-to-the-plight-of-seasonal-workers> (accessed 15 February 2009) and <http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/article.php?enewsid=112013> (accessed 15 February 2009).

16 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/turkish/europe/story/2007/08/070830_victory-day-turkey.shtml> (accessed 15 February 2009).

17 <http://www.sendika.org/english/yazi.php?yazi_no=7376> (accessed 15 February 2009).

18 <http://www.sendika.org/english/yazi.php?yazi_no=7376> (accessed 15 February 2009).

19 Kerem Öktem for instance suggests that AKP Governments' 'great asset has been the absence of an explicit Kurdish policy.' In his view, the AKP of last six years 'went for pragmatic problem management, misunderstood by many as a major softening in Turkey's security-minded Kurdish policy'. See Öktem 2008: 2–3.

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5 Turgut Özal and the Kurdish question

Michael M. Gunter

Second only to Kemal Atatürk himself, Turgut Özal was possibly the most influential politician in the history of the Republic of Turkey. During his short presidency (1989–93), he challenged the Kemalist consensus on several levels and introduced new ideas and methods of action. In many ways, therefore, he was an early post-Kemalist.

One of Özal's most interesting initiatives was his willingness to abandon the state's historical intransigence on the Kurdish question and seek new policies. Indeed, shortly before his death, Özal wrote a six-page letter to his prime minister, Suleyman Demirel, in which he warned about the growing alienation of Turkey's ethnic Kurdish population, the growing appeal of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), and the resultant long-term threat all this posed to Turkish territorial integrity. 'The Turkish republic is facing its gravest threat yet. A social earthquake could cut one part of Turkey from the rest, and we could all be buried beneath it' (the *Independent* 1993). After a brief analysis of traditional Turkish policy towards the Kurds, this chapter will seek to analyze Özal's Kurdish initiatives, which were rooted in the common Islamic religion shared both by most Turks and Kurds as well as a recognition of Kurdish nationalism. Twenty years after he first broached them, Özal's proposed initiatives have proven to be the road not taken, much to the disadvantage both of Turkey and its ethnic Kurdish population. Nevertheless, lessons can be learned for today from an analysis of what Özal proposed.

Turkey's historic policy towards the Kurds

When Mustafa Kemal first began to create the new Republic of Turkey, it was not clear what constituted a Turk.[1] Indeed, in appealing for unity against the Greek and Armenian invaders immediately after World War I, Ismet Inönü – Atatürk's famous lieutenant and eventual successor – initially spoke of the new state as being a 'homeland for Kurds and Turks' (Vanly 1970: 115). Kurdish troops played an indispensable role in the overall Nationalist victory. The Nationalist parliament in Ankara included some 75 Kurdish deputies. For a while Mustafa Kemal apparently even toyed with the idea of meaningful Kurdish autonomy in the new state. The minutes of the Amasya interview and the proceedings of the Erzurum and Sivas

Congresses in 1919, as well as two other occurrences in 1922 and 1923, make this clear (Imset 1996: 53 and Olson 1991).[2] Kurdish autonomy, however, proved to be the road not taken.

After the Nationalist victory, a series of steps was taken in an attempt to eliminate the Kurdish presence in the new Republic of Turkey through legal proclamation and gradual assimilation. On 3 March 1924, for example, a decree banned all Kurdish schools, organizations, and publications, as well as religious fraternities and *madrasas* (Islamic religious schools), which were the last source of education for most Kurds. The Sheikh Said rebellion in 1925 sealed this determination.[3] In an attempt to dilute and assimilate the Kurdish population, Kurdish deportations to the West were initiated. Only the sheer impossibility of fully carrying out such a task prevented its fulfillment. The Kurdish areas in the southeast were declared a military zone forbidden to foreigners until 1965. In 1928, the entire civil and military administration of the Kurdish provinces in the east was placed under an Inspector-General of the East. Subsequently, regimes of martial law, a state of siege and state of emergency complete with a supra-governor were established. Given the Kemalist insistence on a unitary framework for the Turkish government, these special measures were ironic, since they in effect placed the Kurdish provinces under a special administration.

After another major Kurdish rebellion around Mount Ararat was finally crushed in 1930, new further deportations followed. Law No. 2510 of June 1934 sought to disperse the Kurdish population to areas where it would constitute no more than 5 percent of the total. It was even suggested that Kurdish children be sent to boarding schools where they would speak exclusively in Turkish. Only the lack of state resources and the sheer size of the growing Kurdish population defeated the intention. Nevertheless, an extreme form of Turkish nationalism developed, with its associated historical myths and absence of Kurdish ethnic awareness. The Turkish Historical Thesis claimed that all the world's civilizations had been founded by the Turks, while the so-called Sun-Language Theory held that all languages derived from one original tongue spoken in central Asia. Turkish, the closest extant descendant of this primeval language, was the source from which all other languages had developed. Isolated in their mountain fastnesses, the Kurds had simply forgotten their mother tongue. The Kurdish language supposedly contained fewer than 800 words and thus was not a real language. Indeed, the very word 'Kurd' was declared to be nothing more than a corruption of the crunching sound (kirt, kart, or kurt) one made while walking through the snow-covered mountains in the southeast. The much-abused and criticized appellation 'Mountain Turks' when referring to the ethnic Kurds in Turkey served as a code term for these actions.

During the 1960s, Turkish president Cemal Gürsel lauded a book written by Şerif Fırat that claimed that the Kurds were Turkish in origin, and helped to popularize the phrase 'spit in the face of he who calls you a Kurd' as a way to make the word 'Kurd' an insult (Kinnane 1964; Besikçi 1991). At the same time, Law No. 1587 furthered the process of changing Kurdish names, 'which hurt public opinion and are not suitable for our national culture, moral values, traditions and customs', into Turkish names. As recently as 1995 – when Turgut Özal was already dead – the

Turkish government suddenly announced that the Kurdish new year's holiday, *Newroz*, was in fact a Turkish holiday commemorating the day that the Turks first left their ancestral Asian homeland, Ergenekon. The day was renamed *Nevruz* since the letter 'w' was not in the Turkish alphabet. A year later, the Turkish media launched a campaign to 'prove' that the traditional Kurdish colors of green, red, and yellow were actually those of certain crack Ottoman regiments. This concern with color recalled another recent attempt to change traffic lights in some south-eastern cities of Turkey such as Batman by replacing the supposed Kurdish green with blue. An assessment by the US Central Intelligence Agency concluded: 'In the early years of the Turkish Republic, the government responded [. . .] by ruthlessly [. . .] attempting, albeit unsuccessfully, to eliminate all manifestation of Kurdish culture and nationalism' (National Foreign Assessment Centre 1979: 25).

The new Turkish Constitution written in 1982 attempted to revitalize the policy of denying the existence of the Kurds in Turkey. Publications began to appear claiming that the Kurds were really Turks and that there was no separate Kurdish language. Efforts to illustrate otherwise were said to be simply fabrications of Western intelligence services and separatist groups seeking to divide Turkey.[4] When several ethnic Kurdish MPs from the Social Democratic Populist Party (SHP) voted in favor of the Minority Languages Report of the Council of Europe in 1988, they were accused of having joined certain hostile European states in a conspiracy to create a Kurdish minority in Turkey where one did not exist. This situation was essentially replayed as recently as 2005 when Professors Baskın Oran and Ibrahim Kaboğlu 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' (*Turkish Daily News* 2007).[5]

To be fair to Atatürk and his associates, their ultimate purpose, of course, was to achieve unity and modernization by mobilizing the population in Anatolia behind a territorial and civic-determined national identity.[6] Many Kurds, of course, perceived this attempt to be at the expense of their own religious, traditional, and ethnic identity. Indeed, a case can be made that, far from succeeding to assimilate them, Turkey's historic policy towards the Kurds actually made them more aware of their latent ethnic identity (Natali 2005). It is true, of course, that since the Republic of Turkey was established in 1923, many ethnic Kurds who were willing to identify as being Turkish were readily admitted into the ruling elite. Abdulmelik Fırat, the grandson of Sheikh Said, was a good example. Many other ethnic Kurds served as MPs, cabinet ministers, city mayors, state prosecutors, directors of state enterprises, and so on. They did so, however, only by denying their Kurdish ethnic heritage. Those who refused to do so were penalized, as was the case of the 55 Kurdish tribal chiefs exiled to western Turkey after the military coup in 1960 (*Christian Science Monitor* 1960: 14) and Serafettin Elçi, who served as Minister of Public Works in the government of Bülent Ecevit in the late 1970s. Elçi was sentenced to two years and three months in prison for 'making Kurdish and secessionist propaganda.' He had declared: 'I am a Kurd. There are Kurds in Turkey' (Howe 1981).

Özal's initiatives

When he first came to power, Turgut Özal continued Turkey's traditional policy of assimilation towards the Kurds. For example, in April 1985 he instituted the village guards system of civilian, pro-government Kurdish militia to supplement the state's military and to divide the Kurds. Then, in the summer of 1987, he also established a system of emergency rule (OHAL) with a regional governor for most of the Kurdish areas in the southeast. The PKK and other critics of official state policy have long considered both measures prime examples of official state repression.

Perhaps because of his Islamic proclivities and their stress on religious equality and/or his earlier studies and work in the United States, Özal began to change his stance and advocate imaginative reforms after he became president in 1989. Possibly too as president, he began to see himself as more above the everyday fray of politics and a spokesman for all citizens of Turkey and thus charged to take the longer-term view of the future of the body politic. On the other hand, in his previous task as a partisan prime minister he might have seen himself as simply heading the ruling party or coalition. If so, however, in September 1989, while still prime minister, in his cryptic response to a question about the existence of a Kurdish minority in Turkey Özal hinted at a reassessment: 'If in the first years of the Republic, during the single-party period, the State committed mistakes on this matter [of the Kurds], it is necessary to recognise these' (*Briefing* 1989: 4). In April 1990, he gave further hints of a new Kurdish policy at the meeting of the Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen's Association (TÜSIAD). At this time he let it be known that the government was 'engaged in a quest for a serious model for solving the Kurdish problem in a manner that goes beyond police measures' (Seçkin and Sağırsoy 1990: 38).

At about the same time, Abdullah (Apo) Öcalan, the leader of the PKK, told two Turkish reporters:

> Let us declare a ceasefire and sit at the negotiating table. If Turkey abandons its oppressive policy in the region, then we will refrain from violence [. . .] In fact, separating the region from Turkey immediately is out of the question. Our people need Turkey and we cannot separate, at least, not for another 40 years. (*Hürriyet* 1990)

Özal was not the only Turkish politician seeking new concepts. In the summer of 1990, the SHP (which was at that time the main opposition party) issued a comprehensive policy report on the Kurdish question that went far beyond anything ever before offered by a mainstream Turkish party. Describing the ban on the use of the mother tongue as 'primitive' and a 'tool of assimilation', the document called for

> the abolition of all restrictions on the use of the mother tongue, the enshrinement of the right of citizens to speak, write and teach their own language and use it in daily life and in various cultural activities and the establishment by

> the state of research centres and institutes undertaking research into different cultures and languages. (*Briefing* 1990)

Shortly before his death in a car accident on February 5, 1993, Adnan Kahveci, a state minister and close aide to Özal, went so far as to warn that Turkey was headed for a civil war if a democratic solution was not found (Pope and Pope 1997: 56).

Why did some Turkish authorities begin to reassess their historic position? Certainly, the growing PKK insurgency was one reason. Repetitive 'groupthink' on handling this situation appeared to be stuck,[7] while thoughtful new measures might offer a way out of the growing quandary. The exploding ethnic Kurdish population relative to the slower growing demographics of the ethnic Turks themselves represented another reason.

According to one study, by 1990, some 13.7 million Kurds were living in Turkey, a figure that constituted 24.1 percent of the total Turkish population (Izady 1992). Furthermore,

> if present demographic trends hold, as they are likely to, in about two generations' time the Kurds will also replace the Turks as the largest ethnic group in Turkey herself, re-establishing an Indo-European language (Kurdish) as the principal language in that land. (Izady 1992: 119)

Corroborating these figures, a report drawn up by the National Security Council (MGK) Secretariat in Turkey and released at the end of 1996 after Özal had been dead for over three years, declared 'the Kurdish people will make up 40 percent of the population in the year 2010. That they will increase to make up more than 50 percent of the population in the year 2025 is a possibility' (*Milliyet* 1996: 2). However, Özal himself believed that as ethnic Kurds moved west they tended to assimilate and that already '60 percent of the Kurds live west of Ankara' (Ankara TRT 1992c: 28). On the other hand, Servet Mutlu has disputed these large population figures for the Kurds by concluding that as of 1996 there were only slightly more than 7 million Kurds living in Turkey, which constituted only 12.60 percent of the country's total population, 'far lower than the 12.5 million to 15 million claimed by some' (Mutlu 1996: 532–33). Mixed marriages and partial assimilation may account for these demographic discrepancies.

In addition, the results of the Gulf War in 1991 stimulated Özal's new thinking. Suddenly a nascent Kurdish entity appeared on Turkey's southeastern border and demanded attention. On 8 March 1991 Turkey broke its longstanding policy against negotiating with any Kurdish groups when Ambassador Tugay Özceri, under-secretary of the foreign ministry, met in Ankara with Jalal Talabani, the leader of the Iraqi Kurdish Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and Mohsin Dizai, a representative of Massoud Barzani, the leader of the other main Iraqi Kurdish group, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). A second meeting between Özceri and Dizai took place on March 22, 1991. In his typical mercurial style, Talabani concluded 'that a new page had been turned in relations between Turkey and the Kurds of Iraq' (Ankara Anatolia 1991b: 39).

For the first meeting, the two Iraqi Kurds arrived together in Istanbul on a flight from Damascus and were immediately flown to Ankara's military airport by personnel of the National Intelligence Organization (MIT). Afterwards, Talabani declared that for the Iraqi Kurds, 'the most significant result [. . .] was Turkey's lifting its objection to the establishment of direct relations between the Kurdish front in Iraq and the United States' (Ankara Anatolia 1991b: 39). He stated that he had assured the Turkish officials that the Kurds did not want to establish an independent state in northern Iraq and then explained that 'Turkey has for years been putting forth effective and significant obstacles to the struggle we have been waging in northern Iraq. We wanted to explain our goals and eliminate Turkey's opposition [. . .] We were received with understanding' (Ankara Anatolia 1991c: 39).

Özal's bold gesture towards the Iraqi Kurds soon evolved to the point that Turkey actually issued Turkish diplomatic passports to Talabani and Barzani to facilitate their travel abroad. At one point, Talabani even suggested that the Iraqi Kurds might want to be annexed by Turkey (Fuller 1993). By inviting the Iraqi Kurdish leaders to Ankara, Özal also might have been seeking another way in which to deflate the PKK insurgency in Turkey. Being seen as trying to help their ethnic kin in northern Iraq, might be well received by the Turkish Kurds. It might illustrate to the ethnic Kurds in Turkey that the Turkish state was not necessarily hostile to the Kurds in general, but only to the violence of the PKK.

Özal's actions created a furor in Turkey. To some he was simply being realistic in seeking to build reasonable relations with those who looked likely to establish an autonomous Kurdish region on Turkey's border. Better to be seen by this fledgling entity as a friend and protector than inveterate enemy. To others, however, Özal was dangerously opening up a Pandora's box of troubles that would come back to threaten Turkish territorial integrity. If the Turkish president could countenance some sort of federal solution for the Iraqi Kurds, might he not also be contemplating one for the ethnic Kurds in Turkey? Indeed, Özal was soon to shock his countrymen by declaring he was willing to discuss a federal system, if only to oppose it (McDowall 1996: 430). In another break from the past, Özal revealed that his grandmother had been of Kurdish origin (Barkey and Fuller 1997: 72). He went on to explain that Turkey was being prevented from progressing by a series of taboos and that he intended to challenge them (*Hürriyet* 1992a).

Turgut Özal also played a seminal role in the establishment of a safe haven for the Iraqi Kurds in their northern Iraqi homeland. Following the defeat of Saddam Hussein in February 1991, the Iraqi Kurds rebelled only to be crushed by Iraq's still formidable forces. The failed rebellion quickly led to a human tragedy of incredible proportions as 1.5 million Kurdish refugees fled to the Iranian border while another half million fled to the Turkish border. There they joined some 30,000 Iraqi Kurdish refugees remaining in Turkey from the 1988 exodus following the end of the Iran–Iraq war.

These new refugees threatened to overwhelm their hosts. In response, Özal called on all states to join together as they had in the war against Iraq that had just been concluded. He added that 'otherwise, a new dispute will be created in the Middle East and that a problem threatening peace and stability will be created'

(Ankara TRT 1991: 29). Elaborating, he argued that 'even the most perfect organization cannot cope with such an influx within such a short period [. . .] It is impossible for any country to solve a problem of such proportions by itself.' Turkey's decision to keep most of the refugees on the border, instead of allowing them into the country as had occurred in 1988, may actually have helped the refugees by forcing the United States to become more involved.

The resulting 'safe havens' in northern Iraq in time morphed into the KRG of today. United Nations Security Council Resolution 688 of April 5, 1991 gave a certain amount of legal sanction for this action when it condemned 'the repression of the Iraqi civilian population [. . .] in Kurdish populated areas, the consequences of which threaten international peace and security in the region' and demanded 'that Iraq [. . .] immediately end this repression.' It was the first time in its almost half century of existence that the world organization had so explicitly addressed the Kurdish question. Turkish willingness to allow the United States to enforce Operation Provide Comfort and the no-fly zone over northern Iraq from bases in southeastern Turkey provided the military protection necessary for the fledgling KRG to begin to develop.

Turkey was caught between a rock and a hard place since by allowing Operation Provide Comfort to continue, it was in effect encouraging nascent Iraqi Kurdish statehood. To abandon the force, however, would simply lead it to regroup elsewhere and strip Ankara of any influence whatsoever over the course of events much as would later occur after Turkey's decision not to join the United States in its invasion of Iraq in 2003. At best, some argued, 'Turkey appears to have been selling support for the multilateral force against silence on its own Kurdish question' (*Briefing* 1992: 15). Therefore, Turkey repeatedly allowed the operation to be renewed at six-month intervals. Ankara, however, added the provision that the territorial integrity of Iraq must be respected. This meant, of course, that Turkey continued to oppose the creation of a Kurdish state in northern Iraq.

For their part, the Iraqi Kurds felt dependent on Turkey. Hoshyar Zebari, a KDP spokesman and later the foreign minister of the post-Saddam Hussein government in Iraq, explained: 'Turkey is our lifeline to the West and the whole world in our fight against Saddam Husayn. We are able to secure allied air protection and international aid through Turkey's cooperation. If Poised Hammer [Provide Comfort] is withdrawn, Saddam's units will again reign in this region and we will lose everything' (Ankara TRT 1992a: 43). By 2008, Saddam Hussein was gone for good, but Turkey's indispensable role for the Iraqi Kurds' survival continued.

As a result of Özal's innovative diplomacy, Jalal Talabani (later to become president of post-Saddam Hussein Iraq) concluded: 'Turkey must be considered a country friendly to the Kurds' (Ankara Anatolia 1991d: 58). By the time he met with Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel in June 1992, the Turkish prime minister was referring to the Iraqi Kurdish leader as 'my dear brother Talabani' (Ankara TRT 1992b: 42) while the Iraqi Kurdish leader declared that 'the people in northern Iraq will never forget the help of the Turkish government and people in their difficult days' (ibid.: 42). Following Özal's sudden death on 17 April 1993, however, Demirel as the new president decided to reverse Özal's initiatives towards the Iraqi

Kurds and permitted relations with them to deteriorate. As a result, one might argue that Turkey lost its ability to influence the development of events in northern Iraq, which it otherwise might have had if Özal's policies had been maintained.

Domestically, Özal also partially repealed Law 2932, under which the military government had banned the usage of the Kurdish language in 1983. Özal now allowed the language to be used in everyday conversation and folkloric music recordings. However, using Kurdish in official agencies, publishing, or teaching would still be a crime. Asked when Kurdish could be used in newspapers, audiocassettes, radio broadcasts, and schools, Özal replied: 'In the future the use of the written language may also be allowed, but everything has its time' (Sağırsoy and Ersamel 1991:26). Metin Gürdere, the assistant leader of Özal's Motherland Party (ANAP), added that further liberalization 'would depend on developments that will take place in Turkey' (Ankara Anatolia 1991a: 56).[8] Events moved quickly under Özal and in the following year he was suggesting that the GAP Television Network should carry 60- or 90-minute programs in Kurdish and that the appropriate schools even teach in that language: 'What would happen if we do it? We should not be afraid of this at all' (*Milliyet* 1992: 39). Years later, after Özal had been long dead, the well-known Turkish journalist Cengiz Çandar revealed how Özal had once warned him not to write about the need for Kurdish language TV and education. Six months after this warning, however, Özal himself came out with just such proposals. When the two next met, Özal told Çandar 'who says it and when it is said matters. If you had suggested this six months ago, the military would have been all over you. But when I, the president, suggest it six months later, it might have better traction' (Çandar 2008).

Response

The response of many influential Turkish politicians demonstrates how Özal's modest proposals to begin to change his country's historic position on the Kurdish question were very controversial. Suleyman Demirel, who, as noted above, succeeded Özal as president following his death in 1993, declared for example: 'this move is an attempt at dividing the country [. . .] This is the greatest harm you can inflict on Turkey' (Cumhüriyet 1991h: 36–7). Others expressed themselves even more forcefully. Oltan Sungurlu, the ANAP Minister of Justice, exclaimed: 'What language is that? I do not know of such a language' (Nokta 1991a: 29). Alparslan Pehlivanlı (ANAP), the chairman of the justice committee in the Turkish parliament, asserted:

> If the word 'language' now in the bill stays in, we will have admitted that the Kurds are a nation [. . .] If it passes this way, tomorrow there will be cafes where Kurdish folk songs are sung, theaters where Kurdish films are shown, and coffee houses where Kurdish is spoken. If this is not separatism, what is? (Cited in Sağırsoy 1991: 41–42)

Other Turkish leaders, however, seemed to cautiously approve Özal's initiative.[9] Erdal Inönü, the leader of the SHP, said that it was a positive step and that he was

pleased that the government finally had accepted a policy that was originally his. Hüsamettin Cindoruk, the speaker of the Turkish parliament, declared that Özal's initiative was an 'end of a constitutional embarrassment' (Institut Kurde de Paris 1991: 2–4). Even former president Kenan Evren, who had led the military takeover in 1980 and had been the architect of the laws reinforcing the prohibition of the use of Kurdish and especially Law 2932, expressed his guarded support 'as long as this does not enter the schools or appear on placards during demonstrations' (Institut Kurde de Paris 1991: 2–4). Many years later, Evren even implicitly supported Özal's language reform when the general mused that his original ban 'was not a proper step to be taken on the path toward modernization and democratization' (*Today's Zaman* 2007).

A number of news reporters also reacted with cautious approval to the Özal language initiative. Mehmet Ali Birand, long one of Turkey's most distinguished journalists, noted how this step would improve Turkey's image in Europe (Institut Kurde de Paris 1991: 2–4; *Briefing* 1991: 6–9). Ertegrül Özkök of *Hürriyet*, who sometimes served in effect as an unofficial spokesman for Özal, found the president's move 'the first positive consequence of the [1991 Gulf] war'. Oktay Eksi, also from *Hürriyet*, declared that 'we must thus acknowledge with satisfaction the ANAP's initiative, or rather, Turgut Özal's, to abolish this shameful prohibition of a language' (*Today's Zaman* 2007).

Even more cautiously, Uğur Mumcu, the famous leftist journalist who was notoriously assassinated in January 1993, pointed out that there were still various other laws concerning separatist propaganda that could be used against the Turkish Kurds and their supporters.[10] He also recalled that the political parties' law still prohibited parties from asserting that any minorities existed in the country with the exception of the non-Muslim ones specifically defined by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923.[11] Mumcu explained Özal's initiative in terms of the 1991 Gulf War and the need to preempt the possible creation of a Kurdish state in northern Iraq.

Kendal Nezan, a leading Kurdish dissident who has long headed the Institut Kurde de Paris, reacted to Özal's initiative more favorably: 'The bill is a positive step towards finding a peaceful, democratic, and civilized solution to the Kurdish problem in Turkey. Turgut Özal is the first statesman [. . .] to accept and recognize the Kurdish presence in Turkey' (Nokta 1991b: 39–41). Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the PKK, concurred with Nezan's assessment: 'To tell the truth, I did not expect him [Özal] to display such courage [. . .] In this context, he shamed us [. . .] He has taken an important step' (Birand 1991: 39). At approximately the same time, the PKK leader also announced that his organization 'might opt for a diplomatic-political solution' and was ready to hold 'conditional' negotiations with Turkey (Paris AFP 1991: 44–5). Öcalan added that the PKK no longer sought independence, just 'free political expression' for Turkey's Kurds.

Abortive ceasefire

In the second half of February 1993, Jalal Talabani, the Iraqi Kurdish leader and frequent foe of the PKK, nevertheless met with Abdullah Ocalan in Syria to discuss

Özal's initiatives and how to react to them. Following this meeting, Talabani presented Özal on 8 March 1993, Öcalan's proposal for a ceasefire:

> I am giving up the armed struggle. I will wage a political struggle in the future [. . .]Turkish officials can hold talks with Kurdish deputies in the National Assembly. We agree to live within Turkey's existing borders if the necessary democratic conditions are created to allow us to do so. (*Hürriyet* 1993: 43)

Then, on 17 March 1993, Öcalan followed up this message with a formal declaration of 'unilateral and unconditional' (Daghi 1993: 42) ceasefire at a press conference in the Bekaa valley town of Zahlah, some six miles from the Syrian border. Symbolically, the PKK leader doffed his guerrilla fatigues and put on a suit and tie for the occasion.

During his press conference, Öcalan made some of the following conciliatory points. The Kurds in Turkey 'want peace, dialogue, and free political action within the framework of a democratic state.' He explained that 'we are not working to partition Turkey. We are demanding the Kurds' human rights (cultural, political, and so on) in the framework of one homeland.' After praising Talabani's role 'in bringing this initiative to fruition', the PKK leader then stressed that 'we want guarantees, because we cannot be betrayed, as happened with our historic leaders like Shaykh Said and the Badrakhaniyyin.'[12]

A truly historic opportunity, the ceasefire failed for two basic reasons: (1) the attitude of the Turkish authorities, who interpreted Öcalan's move as a sign of weakness and therefore their chance to finish his movement off, rather than as a way to achieve a permanent solution to the Kurdish question; and (2) the sudden death of Özal, the Turkish leader who was probably most receptive to some type of compromise that might have ended the struggle.

Apparently, the Turkish authorities believed the PKK's back had been broken the previous October during their joint operation with the Iraqi Kurds in northern Iraq. Thus, when Öcalan announced his ceasefire, 'all were agreed that the PKK was in a position of weakness' (*Briefing* 1993a: 3). Although there were offers of partial amnesty and an end to the state of emergency in the southeast, 'Ankara's response [. . .] had never gone further than words. While the PKK ceased its raids, reports of mystery killings, torture and the burning of villages in the region persisted' (*Briefing* 1993b: 6). Further, 'the State authorities have chosen to act as if they believed that the PKK would refrain from terrorism unconditionally and simply allow itself to be mopped up by the security forces.'

While the ceasefire hung in the balance, the sudden death of President Turgut Özal on 17 April 1993 dealt it a fatal blow by removing the Turkish official most receptive to bold, imaginative thinking on the issue. Citing 'very senior sources within the security apparatus', Ismet G. Imset claimed that if Özal had lived, everything would have been different. A major reform package would have been underway and even the hawks [hard-liners] would have fallen in line' (Imset 1993e: 52).

Apparently, an important meeting of the MGK – until recently the military body that decided security matters in Turkey – had been scheduled for a week after

Özal's death. The president had ordered a special group within the MGK to be set up 'to seek political solutions to the crisis, to brainstorm and produce ideas, and to carry them out', in the words of one official, 'it would have been [just] short of a revolution'. After Özal unexpectedly died on 17 April 1993, however, the meeting was postponed. For several weeks Turkish policy drifted until Süleyman Demirel finally emerged as the new president and Tansu Çiller as the new prime minister. When the MGK meeting Özal had originally planned was finally held, Demirel, who was unwilling to take bold steps, was now in charge. 'What happened is that Özal was a momentum, a political one, that was thrusting us out of a vicious cycle. Now, we have fallen back into orbit again. We are part of the vicious cycle', declared a senior officer.

During an interview at the end of 1993, Jalal Talabani agreed with this interpretation when he argued that 'in the past, when I acted as a mediator, there was a good person like Özal', and that 'Özal was making [an] enormous effort for this problem. Özal's death was a great loss for democracy and peace' (Özgür Gündem 1993: 35).[13] Even before Özal's death, Ocalan himself seemed to have had similar beliefs. In an interview with a Turkish newspaper, the PKK leader was asked, 'How do you assess Turkish politicians?' (Balli 1993: 65). He cautiously responded that Özal 'seems to be open to progress. He seems to be open to change. He has confirmed this in his statements and in the concepts he has put forward'. Following Özal's death, Öcalan even declared that 'a solution to the problem could have been reached had the late President Özal lived' (Imset 1993d: 75). The PKK leader also claimed that Talabani had told him that Özal had intended 'to put some radical changes on Turkey's agenda'.

Final considerations

This chapter has made it clear that Turgut Özal was not only willing to experiment with imaginative new ways of thinking about the Kurdish question, but also had even introduced modest but important reforms. What is more, he was contemplating further, apparently more thorough-going moves, which death prevented. Therefore, it is interesting but difficult to speculate what would have happened to the Kurdish question in Turkey if Özal had lived. For example, in a recent interview, Altan Tan, a Kurdish intellectual and writer, discussed the attempts of the current prime minister, Reçep Tayyip Erdoğan, to solve the Kurdish problem. Tan concluded, that 'the prime minister [Erdoğan] did not have a vision similar to the late President Turgut Özal, whose mind was set to solve the Kurdish issue' (Doğan 2008). Given the long established Turkish mindset regarding the problem, however, even for a reformer of Özal's reputation, a solution would have been very difficult.

Nevertheless, given how much Özal seemed to be attached to this issue, taking actions that presumably threatened not only preconceived ways of thinking and doing things, but pre-existing, important interests, conspiracy theories abound that he was murdered to prevent his pursuing the issue further The distinguished Turkish journalist Muammer Kaylan has an entire chapter in a recent book on his lifetime experiences

in Turkish politics and history entitled 'Was Turgut Özal Murdered?' (Kaylan 2005). Some have even questioned the sudden death of Esref Bitlis, the supposed reform-minded Gendarmerie Commander in a plane accident in February 1993.

Moreover, a series of mysterious killings of civilian Kurdish leaders by apparently right-wing, government-sanctioned hit squads – which had begun in the summer of 1991 with the murder of Vedat Aydın, a HEP party official in Diyarbakir[14]– continued. One report claimed that as many as 225 assassinations had occurred by the end of January 1992 (Moorehead 1992). Another report added that there were 360 'unsolved murders' in the southeast in 1992 (Imset 1993f: 67). These figures expanded to include the entire country, as well as ethnic Turks: 510 people were murdered in 1993, 423 in 1994, and 99 in 1995 (Van Bruinessen 1996: 23). Yet another report pointed out that not a single one of the slayings of Kurdish leaders or sympathizers had resulted in an arrest: 'Many of the individual killings still go unexplained amid local claims that certain officials prefer not to pursue such cases' (Imset 1992f: 43). 'Executions without verdict' was a term often heard to explain what was occurring.

Moreover, evidence that began to emerge following the notorious Süşürlük car accident in November 1996 indicated that the state had indeed probably created a secret organization, which employed right-wing gangsters and convicted drug dealers to kill its enemies. In return the state ignored the gangsters' criminal activities.[15] During the fall of 2008, the continuing Ergenekon trial of ultranationalists and retired military officers charged with planning violent campaigns to destabilize the AKP, government continued.[16] Given the violence that had long been going on in Turkey in connection with the Kurdish question, therefore, one might argue that Özal himself might have fallen victim to these same forces.

On the other hand, one should not be too quick to rush into judgment on the matter of Özal's untimely death. He was in notoriously poor health and weighed over 300 pounds. Muammer Kaylan writes that Özal 'was also known as Tonton and the Fat Man. He had an enormous appetite and loved to eat anything he could get his hands on. In 1987 he had heart bypass surgery in Houston, Texas, and treatments there for heart and prostate problems' (Kaylan 2005: 396). Just before he suddenly collapsed and died of a heart attack, he had completed a long and arduous trip to central Asia and had returned complaining about how tired he felt. Although we will probably never know for sure, it is more probable therefore, that Özal died of natural causes.

Notes

1 On this point, see Lewis 1968: 1–5.
2 Imset was an objective observer of the entire Kurdish question who had published a great deal about the PKK during the 1980s and early 1990s until threats against his life led to his exile. For an example of his work, see Imset 1992.
3 For background, see Olson 1989 and Van Bruinessen 1992.
4 See, for example, Giritli 1989.
5 For background, see the monumental compilation by Andrews (1989: 18), in which Andrews states: 'The popular view in Turkey is in fact quite realistic: . . . In Turkey there are seventy-two and a half peoples.' The half refers to the gypsies. Andrews also

lists as ethnic groups in Turkey the Sunnis Kurds, Alevi Kurds, Yezidi Kurds, Sunnis Zazas, and the Alevi Zazas.

6 For background, see Landau 1984 and Ahmad 1993. On the primitive state of the Kurdish national identity and language during the 1920s and 1930s, see Strohmeier 2003.

7 On this concept, see Janis 1972. Janis defines 'groupthink' as 'a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action' (1972: 9).

8 As president, of course, Özal had to resign as leader of the ANAP party. Subsequently, when a growing number of ANAP members became critical of his innovative position on the Kurdish question, Özal considered establishing a new party that 'would embrace the Kurds' (Hürriyet 1992b).

9 See also 'Language Freedom to Herald Democracy Drive?' Briefing, 11 February, 1991, pp. 6–9.

10 Indeed, Article 8 of the Anti-Terrorism Law that entered into force in April 1991, made it possible to consider academics, intellectuals, and journalists merely 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.' Similarly, under Article 312 of the Turkish Penal Code, mere verbal or written support for Kurdish rights could lead one to be charged with 'provoking hatred or animosity between groups of different race, religion, region or social class.' Despite his Kurdish initiatives, Özal himself supported these new legal provisions which critics termed 'thought crime.' Indeed, almost 15 years after Özal's death, Article 301 of the Turkish penal code makes it a crime to denigrate 'Turkishness,' while a new anti-terrorism law (TMY) defines terrorism so vaguely as to possibly make anybody expressing an idea contrary to the official state ideology guilty.

11 As already noted, in 2005, Professors Baskın Oran and Ibrahim Kaboğlu were persecuted 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.' Their case continued as of this writing in 2010.

12 After crushing his rebellion, the Turkish authorities hanged Sheikh Said on 29 June 1925. See Olson 1989. Bedr Khan Beg ruled the powerful Kurdish emirate of Botan – which at its height included much of present-day southeastern Turkey and even parts of northern Iraq – from approximately 1821–47, when the Ottomans forced him to surrender and sent him into exile where he died. See Van Bruinessen 1992: 177–82.

13 Talabani expressed similar sentiments concerning Özal's intentions when I spoke with him as this home in Irbil in northern Iraq on 16 August 1993.

14 HEP or the Peoples Labor Party was a legal Kurdish party that existed in Turkey from June 1990 until it was banned in June 1993.

15 For background, see Gunter 1998: 119–41 and Gunter 2006: 334–48.

16 See Hyland 2008; and Jenkins 2008. For a different view, see Rubin 2008.

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6 The Justice and Development Party and the Kurdish question

Tozun Bahcheli and Sid Noel

Introduction

Kurds make up about 15 per cent of Turkey's population of 72 million and successive Turkish governments have acknowledged, either explicitly or implicitly, the failure of the longstanding official policy – derived from the ideology of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic – of assimilating them into an exclusively Turkish, secular and centralized nation-state.[1] But whenever those governments followed up by proposing alternative approaches that were intended to address Kurdish demands for cultural recognition, and thus counter periodic outbursts of Kurdish separatism, their proposals proved too contentious and politically unrewarding to be adopted. Until very recently, therefore, the 'default position' remained unchanged: Turkey's governments refused to allow the free expression of Kurdish language and culture. And when confronted by a Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) insurgency that began in 1984, they relied on the same draconian methods that had been used in the past to suppress Kurdish cultural demands and root out separatism in the Kurdish region in the country's south-east.

The most notable stirrings of a possible change in Turkish policy occurred during the leadership of Turgut Özal (prime minister, 1983–9; president, 1989–93), who took a number of steps – despite the continuing PKK insurgency – that suggested he was willing to breach old orthodoxies in finding a solution to the Kurdish issue, including revoking the ban (imposed by Turkey's military rulers in 1981) on the public use of the Kurdish language. He also looked for help outside Turkey's borders, inviting Iraqi Kurdish leaders Jalal Talabani and Massoud Barzani to Ankara in a bid to enlist their help in persuading the PKK to end its violent campaign. More boldly still, he publicly aired an idea that had previously been considered anathema by Turkish political and military elites: that Turkey should at least consider the idea of adopting a federal solution that would allow the Kurds a substantial measure of territorial autonomy (McDowall 1996: 430). Among Turkey's leaders of his era, Özal alone openly discussed the kind of political accommodation that would be necessary to satisfy Kurdish cultural and political aspirations. However, his death in 1993 effectively ended any chance that might have existed of those aspirations being realized, and he had no political heir.

During the 1990s, several other Turkish government leaders issued statements suggesting that a change in the official hard-line policy toward Kurdish demands might be forthcoming. Suleyman Demirel, when he was elected prime minister in

1991, famously declared 'We recognize the Kurdish reality'. Similarly, following a meeting with her Spanish counterpart in 1993, Prime Minister Tansu Çiller broached the possibility of autonomy for the Kurdish region along the lines of the 'Basque model'. In the same vein, Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz, an enthusiastic supporter Turkey's EU membership, acknowledged the need to improve Kurdish rights when he declared in December 1995 that 'the road to the EU passes through Diyarbakır'. However, nothing concrete came of these promising statements. Beyond electoral considerations, specifically concern over the alienation of nationalist constituencies, any change in the official policy meant challenging the Kemalist establishment, including the powerful military, who saw themselves (and were widely accepted as being) the legitimate guardians of the state's unitary and Turkish identity. Few politicians were prepared to take such a bold and politically risky course. Following her comments about a 'Basque model' Çiller 'was so sharply reprimanded by military commanders that she not only retracted her suggestion, but denied ever making it' (Kinzer 1999).

The late 1990s saw a decline in the fortunes of the PKK, culminating with the capture of its leader, Abdullah Öcalan, by Turkish agents in February 1999. While Öcalan's capture had the immediate effect of strengthening the hand of hard-liners in Turkish politics, with support for nationalist parties surging in the parliamentary elections that were held two months later, his surprising call (from prison, where he was facing a death sentence) for PKK fighters to lay down their arms and pursue a negotiated democratic solution raised hopes that the long and brutal conflict with the PKK might at last be entering a new and more productive phase. These hopes were boosted still higher by the European Council's decision in December 1999 to declare Turkey a candidate for membership in the European Union (EU), conditional on its making satisfactory progress towards meeting the EU's Copenhagen political criteria, which specifically include democratization and the protection of minority rights. These developments, occurring within the span of a single year, promised to introduce a new dynamic into Turkey's handling of the Kurdish issue.

The obstacles to that happening, however, were still formidable. As noted above, several government leaders had previously tried to move towards a rapprochement with the Kurds, only to find that their efforts aroused more suspicion and hostility than support. And these were the leaders of *secular* parties, the products of education and political experience that was imbued with nationalist and Kemalist beliefs, who might reasonably be trusted not to betray Kemalism in searching for a solution to an undeniable problem. Islamic parties were also present in the Turkish party system, but their periods in national office had been rare and brief, and they were automatically suspect as potential betrayers of Kemalism. Their prospects of outdoing their secular rivals on the Kurdish question were therefore slim to non-existent. In 2002, however, a new party with Islamic roots – the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) – came to power at a time when the pressures and prospects of EU conditionality were transforming the political landscape. Our aim in this chapter is to examine how that party defined the Kurdish question, dealt with the political challenges it faced, both domestic and external, and responded with a programme of reform.

Islamist parties and their approaches

Generally speaking, Islamist parties such as Refah and Fazilet, while at times sounding no less nationalist than the secular parties in relation to the Kurdish issue, have also displayed considerable variation – and often considerable ambivalence – in their responses to expressions of Kurdish identity and Kurdish political demands. Christopher Houston identifies three different discourses that have been followed by the main Islamist parties: 'statist Islam, Islamist, and Kurdish Islamist' (Houston 2003: 147–68). *Statist Islam* 'conceives the Kurdish problem as residing in the Kurdishness of the Kurds. Transform this identification, and there will be no Kurdish question left to ponder' (155). *Islamist* discourse views Kurds essentially as fellow victims of the secular Kemalist republic and acknowledges them as a people with a language and identity of their own, 'but calls for the subordination of such an identity to an Islamic one' (157). Compared with statist Islam, Houston notes, 'Islamist discourse is sympathetic to the realization of the cultural rights of Kurdish people, to the teaching and speaking of Kurdish in schools, to the broadcasting of Kurdish by the mass media etc.' (168). *Kurdish Islamist* discourse is more stridently nationalistic, asserting the right of Kurds to a separate national life and rejecting the (Turkish) Islamist discourse as lacking in recognition of that right.

Remarkably, one man, Necmettin Erbakan, Turkey's pre-eminent Islamist politician, headed virtually every political party with an overt Islamic agenda from the 1970s to the 1990s, all of which were ultimately banned, as was Erbakan himself, most recently in 1998. Over the course of his long career, whether as opposition leader or briefly as prime minister (1996–7), he personified Islamist responses to the Kurdish question – in all their deep ambivalence. At times he employed language that reflected unusual sensitivity to Kurdish demands for greater cultural recognition and, unlike his political rivals in the secular parties, a willingness to distinguish 'between terrorism and the Kurdish problem' (Houston 2003: 148). But at other times he denied even the existence of a Kurdish problem, or echoed the Kemalist establishment line that the problem in the Kurdish region was terrorism. Such obvious contradictions no doubt reflected the pressures and constraints that all political leaders face in Turkey, but they also illustrate the genuine unease felt by Turkish Islamists when confronted with Kurdish national demands. The result, inevitably, was that Erbakan disappointed the elected Kurdish members of his various parties and many Kurdish voters. Nevertheless, his Islamic agenda, and the fact that he represented a challenge to the secular nationalist parties, continued to earn him some credit among Kurds: all his parties managed to win a respectable portion of the votes in the Kurdish region before being banned (White 2000: 37–40).

The Origins and Rise of the AKP

Following the banning of Fazilet – an Islamic party of which Erbakan (being under a ban) was mentor rather than official leader – in 2001, a group of that party's younger members led by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, a businessman and Istanbul's

popular former mayor, and Abdullah Gül, an economist and member of parliament since 1991, decided to split from it and start another new Islamist party, the AKP, to contest the 2002 parliamentary elections. But this time the new party was clearly different from its predecessors. Adroitly downplaying the AKP's Islamist roots, Erdoğan and Gül positioned the party as a moderate, reformist, business-oriented party of the centre-right (Tepe 2005; Çayır 2008). As Bülent Arınç, a reformist colleague of Erdoğan and Gül, put it: 'we need to steer ourselves from the margins of society and become a party that can be trusted by everyone' (*The Economist* 1999). Skillfully capitalizing on the shortcomings of the incumbent three-party governing coalition, which had become deeply unpopular as a result of a series of corruption scandals and its ineptitude in the face of a severe economic recession, the AKP first and foremost held out to voters the promise of clean, competent government – a promise that was lent credibility by Erdoğan's widely admired reformist administration of Istanbul – and was duly rewarded by the electorate. The AKP had been in existence for only 15 months when it was swept to power with a huge majority in the parliamentary elections of 3 November 2002 and formed the first majority government in Turkey in over a decade.

As noted above, the AKP's leading members had formerly been members of the Fazilet party (and before that the Refah party, which had also been banned). They also had other past links to Islamic organizations. Both Erdoğan and Gül, for example, had been members of the National Turkish Students Union, an organization 'which combined Islamism with an assertive Turkish nationalism' (Jenkins 2006: 202). The influence of these connections, however, can easily be misinterpreted. While they show that the AKP did not 'come out of nowhere',[2] and was led by leaders with substantial political experience behind them, it was not a party that developed in linear succession to its predecessors. On the contrary, in key respects the previous Islamic parties appear to have been regarded as *negative* models – perfect exemplars of what to avoid in founding a new party. In organization, policy positioning, funding methods, advertising, and campaign tactics and strategies, the AKP more obviously emulated a type of party – identified by Angelo Panebianco as the 'electoral-professional party' – that was already well developed and a proven vehicle of electoral success in various European countries (Panebianco 1988).

One of the distinguishing features of such parties is their reliance on a small team of technocratic party managers who are assembled by, and work closely with, the party leadership. These include experts in designing election campaigns that incorporate modern techniques of marketing, fundraising using computerized databases, leader and party image management, and the refinement of campaign messages and strategies to maximize their appeal (Panebianco 1988: 264). Other Turkish parties had begun to adopt some of these methods, including the Welfare Party in the 1995 election campaign, but only the AKP made them central to its operation and employed them in a coordinated and systematic fashion from the very beginning. At its launch in 2001, for example, a huge portrait of Atatürk was placed in a way that ensured it would be prominently framed by the television cameras when the party's leaders were speaking, thus signifying to the public the AKP's preferred self-identification as a *national* rather than a religious party. The party's programme

was skillfully crafted around universal themes of democracy and justice, expressed in a litany of phrases designed to resonate favourably with a wide cross-section of voters. But it contained no specific policy proposals (AK Party Program, n.d. [2001]). And in the same vein, as the 2002 election approached, the party adopted an election slogan – 'Everything for Turkey' – that was patriotic in tone but otherwise open to whatever construction voters might wish to place upon it (AK Party Election Manifesto, n.d. [2002]). When the campaign began, the AKP was thus unencumbered by specific policy commitments and positioned to appeal to voters of various political leanings who wanted a change of government.

For reasons that are readily understandable, political parties that seek to appeal to a wide cross-section of voters tend to be neither entirely consistent in their policy prescriptions nor entirely forthcoming about their approach to issues that are deeply divisive and known to be politically unrewarding. For such a party to be too clear about its intentions should it win power is to invite defeat, not least because to do so presents its rivals with a tempting target. And this is especially the case when – as in Turkey – there is a high level of electoral volatility, a fragmented party system, and a history of parties suddenly rising and just as suddenly disappearing. It is not surprising, therefore, that the AKP, during the brief period between its formation and the 2002 election, chose to present itself as a clean, efficient, ably led, 'democratic conservative' alternative to the discredited incumbent parties, without providing much in the way of specifics. Hence, while its use of the word 'conservative' implied a general commitment to Islamic values (as did the political backgrounds and affiliations of the party's leaders), it did not attempt to spell out a detailed Islamic agenda that the party would pursue if it formed a government. And on the Kurdish question, while it allowed that 'cultural diversities within the framework of the democratic state of law should prevail' (AK Party Program, n.d. [2002]), 29–32), as the EU application process required, it put forward no concrete proposals.

However, after the AKP's transition from opposition to power in November 2002, its leaders found that they could no longer confine themselves to generalities. The same long-unresolved questions that had confounded their predecessors were now inescapably part of their agenda and they had to respond with some kind of programme even if there was no clear consensus on specifics, either within the party or in the country at large. Hence their response to the Kurdish question. With no guidance to be found in their party's programme, and having not previously held office and therefore having no record to defend, the AKP leaders had either to continue in the same general policy direction as their predecessors or head in some new and untried direction, essentially making policy 'on the fly'. Not surprisingly, they opted to continue in the same general direction as their predecessors.

The AKP's Kurdish reforms: auspicious beginning and hard realities

In the 2002 elections the AKP had garnered a substantial level of support among Kurdish voters and had even won a majority of the seats in the Kurdish region – an

anomalous outcome, given that the Peoples' Democracy Party (Halkın Demokrasi Partisi, HADEP) was the most popular party among Kurds and had won a majority of votes in the same region. But HADEP had not been awarded any seats because it failed to reach the threshold of 10 per cent of the *national* vote that a party must obtain in order to be represented in parliament. Following the election, as a gesture to Kurds (and perhaps with an eye to future elections in which the AKP might build on its promising start in winning over Kurdish voters), Erdoğan appointed an elected Kurdish AKP member of parliament, Dengir Mir Fırat, to serve as deputy leader of the party. A series of enactments relating to the Kurdish question soon followed.

The AKP was fortunate in that a number of difficult reforms had already been enacted by the previous government in order to satisfy EU accession requirements. In October 2001, for instance, the government had passed constitutional amendments removing legal prohibitions on the use of languages other than Turkish (which, without saying so, were aimed primarily at the use of Kurdish). These amendments paved the way for the AKP to introduce a series of comprehensive 'democratization packages' that (among other far-reaching measures) improved human rights by broadening the scope for freedom of expression and association in general and in particular removed numerous restrictions that were strongly resented by Kurds. New legislation, for example, permitted limited Kurdish television broadcasting and the offering of courses in the Kurdish language by private schools. These changes were hailed as necessary to advance Turkey's EU membership prospects: 'We shall shock the Europeans', Gül boasted.

In addition, again following its predecessor, the government completed the lifting of the state of emergency (OHAL) in the Kurdish region in response to the almost total cessation of political violence, apart from sporadic clashes between the security forces and insurgents in mainly rural areas, following Öcalan's call for the PKK to cease all military operations. Originally imposed in 1987, OHAL had placed the entire region under the control of the security forces, whose harsh and violent regime disrupted every aspect of its economic and social life. The campaign against the PKK during the OHAL period had been marked by brutality and widespread human rights abuses, including arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, and extra-judicial executions of those deemed to be PKK members or sympathizers. Under the AKP, legislation (passed by its predecessor but unimplemented) providing for the granting of partial amnesty and reductions in prison sentences for convicted PKK members and those associated with the PKK was put into effect. Among the OHAL measures that had caused the greatest mass suffering was the forced evacuation of thousands of Kurdish villages that were suspected of providing assistance or refuge to PKK militants, making over three million Kurds homeless and compelling them to seek refuge in the cities, particularly those in western Turkey (McDowall 1996: 440). The AKP response was to continue the previous government's project of assisting internally displaced Kurds to return to their former homes and properties.

These measures, undertaken during what now appears to have been the AKP's 'golden era of reform' from 2002 to 2004, were generally well received by Kurds

who saw them as a sign that the Turkish state was at last beginning to right past wrongs in its dealings with them. But there was also considerable scepticism and, when the application of new legislative provisions fell short of what Kurds had expected (or hoped for), it predictably sparked widespread complaint. However, that was only part of the problem. From the viewpoint of Kurdish nationalists, the AKP response appeared piecemeal and half-hearted, and more importantly, fell short of their perennial demands for cultural recognition and some form of territorial self-government. These demands were supported by virtually all shades of opinion among Kurds. But every Turkish government had found them enormously problematical, however defined, and in practice impossible to meet. The AKP government was no exception. It had continued to build on the policies of its predecessor in removing restrictions on Kurdish cultural expression, but, like its predecessor, it had declined requests for state-funded Kurdish education. Even more politically sensitive and difficult to meet was the demand for autonomy for the Kurdish region – a demand that had been omitted by the PKK for a few years after Öcalan's capture only to re-emerge later in various formulations. But, as the leaders of the AKP well knew, even if they were inclined to experiment with decentralization (and there is nothing to suggest that they were), any hint of receptivity on their part to altering Turkey's unitary state structure would risk unleashing a fierce national debate and put them into conflict with Turkish nationalists and the Kemalist establishment. This was not a risk they were willing to take.

In easing restrictions on the Kurds, the AKP government was on safer ground when it was able to portray its actions as advancing Turkey's human rights agenda, which is widely acknowledged to be a policy imperative if EU membership requirements are to be met, and the AKP's democratic agenda as proclaimed in its programme, which (in principle) enjoys widespread public support. Nevertheless, the harsh reality is that the AKP capacity for political action remains constrained by the Kemalist establishment, particularly as embodied in the senior ranks of the military. The latter have traditionally identified Islamic fundamentalism and Kurdish separatism as two of the greatest dangers facing Turkey and have not hesitated to throw their weight against proposed measures that they regard as threatening (Jenkins 2006). AKP leaders have therefore found it prudent to probe the military's reaction before taking initiatives on the Kurdish question, or indeed on any issue of particular interest to the Turkish General Staff. That, however, has not stopped the party's leader from rhetorically framing the Kurdish question in terms that Turkish nationalists would regard as provocative and 'pro-Kurdish'. Prime Minister Erdoğan, for example, won Kurdish praise when he declared 'More democracy, not more repression, is the answer to Kurds' long-running grievances' (*The Economist* 2005). A year later, he took another important step when he addressed the issue of the relationship between ethnic identity and citizenship in terms that clearly ran counter to official Kemalist orthodoxy. Since the founding of the Turkish republic the official view had been that 'everyone in Turkey is a Turk' – a claim resented by Kurds as an implicit denial of their identity. According to Erdoğan, 'Ethnic identities are subsidiary identities. Our overall identity is the

one which binds us together, and that is the bond of citizenship' (International Crisis Group 2007: 13). Statements of this kind, however, were not translated into action, leaving many Kurds unhappy about the AKP's Kurdish agenda.

Adversities at home and abroad

During the period when the AKP government was pressing ahead with its democratization packages and other reformist initiatives, three key factors were on its side. The PKK was observing a ceasefire; the senior military establishment was generally restrained and in certain matters even supportive; and European leaders, as well as European opinion generally, seemed impressed by the AKP's strong pro-membership stance and more receptive than previously to the idea of Turkey's accession, thus raising Turkish hopes and mobilizing popular and media opinion in support of the AKP's reform agenda. By 2005, however, all these factors had turned around and become negative.

The ending of the PKK ceasefire

The AKP was soon faced with an immediate, though familiar, threat. Even during the period when it was enacting reforms, Öcalan and the leaders of the legal Kurdish parties, HADEP and its successor Demokratik Toplum Partisi (DTP), had continued to enunciate the 'core' or 'traditional' Kurdish demands, thus implicitly rejecting what they considered to be the AKP's paltry offerings. They demanded, for example, a general (rather than a limited) amnesty for PKK members, unrestricted freedom (rather than specific and limited authorization) to publish and broadcast in Kurdish, and the disbanding (rather than the reform) of the government-sponsored Kurdish village guard. Then, on 1 June 2004, having evidently decided that the government had no intention of granting full cultural and political rights to the Kurds, the PKK terminated the ceasefire that they had observed since 1999 and resumed their war against the Turkish state.

The PKK's renewed violence confronted the AKP with the same predicament that previous governments had faced. On the one hand, it was inevitable that violent acts by Kurdish militants would arouse nationalist sentiment among Turks and renew calls for tough measures. However, none of the possible responses to the PKK challenge was risk free: draconian responses reminiscent of the anti-insurgency measures of the 1990s would imperil the government's reform agenda, disturb the peace prevailing in the Kurdish region and hurt Turkey's EU accession prospects. On the other hand, a less than forceful response to PKK violence would expose the government to criticisms by a wide cross-section of opinion. The AKP government's problem was compounded by the fact that many PKK attacks on Turkish targets originated from bases in northern Iraq. The US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the emergence of a self-governing Kurdish entity ('Iraqi Kurdistan') had made it easier for PKK fighters to operate from safe havens and to obtain a share of the abundant arms and explosives that became available when Iraq's army was disbanded following the invasion. There were also political ramifications. Turkey's

political and military establishment viewed the rise of a *de facto* Kurdish state in post-Saddam Iraq with alarm, fearing that it would inflame nationalist sentiment among Turkish Kurds and destabilize the country. Moreover, Ankara was effectively without influence. Neither the nominal Iraqi government in Baghdad nor the US government were prepared to take measures to prevent PKK incursions into Turkey, the former because it was run by a Shia-Kurdish coalition whose writ did not extend to Iraqi Kurdistan and the latter because its armed forces were fully occupied with fighting a fierce insurgency in Iraq's Arab provinces.

So sensitive was the Turkish government about doing anything that might enhance the legitimacy of a Kurdish *de facto* state that it pointedly avoided any formal contact with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) regarding the PKK or any other issue. With PKK attacks from northern Iraq unhindered by any government, a frustrated Erdoğan was reduced to engaging in occasional angry rhetoric with KRG president Barzani, accusing his government of not just tolerating but providing the PKK fighters with logistical support. In turn, Barzani protested that the key to solving the PKK problem rested with Ankara's willingness to achieve a political settlement of its Kurdish problem, thereby putting the onus on Turkey to resolve the issue domestically.

But as casualties mounted, with over 600 Turkish deaths blamed on the PKK in 2006 alone, the AKP government came under enormous domestic pressure to authorize military operations in northern Iraq. Turkish media coverage, including emotional televised funerals of Turkish police and soldiers killed by PKK actions, aroused Turkish public opinion and generated calls for vigorous retaliation. The parliamentary opposition and civil society groups joined forces in calling for decisive measures, including launching cross-border attacks on PKK camps in northern Iraq. Yaşar Büyükanıt, Turkey's military chief, took a predictable hard line, threatening that a military operation in northern Iraq might involve wider aims than attacking the PKK. At a press conference in Istanbul in June 2007, he asked: 'Are we going to fight only the PKK once we enter northern Iraq or will something happen with Barzani?' (*Turkish Press Review* 2007).

Relations with the military

Even before their party achieved power, Erdoğan and his colleagues in the AKP knew well that the senior ranks of the military would suspect their commitment to Turkey's secular order and that an AKP government would therefore have to contend with the military's implicit or explicit threat of intervention. It could possibly face outright removal from office. Luckily for Erdoğan, Chief of Staff Hilmi Özkök respected the democratic will of the people and believed in the merits of EU accession more than other members of the Turkish General Staff. In consequence, the two established a good working relationship that lasted until Özkök's retirement in 2005. Nevertheless, as shown by later revelations, in 2003 and 2004 there were unsuccessful covert attempts by some senior members of the military to remove the AKP from office,[3] and Erdoğan and Gül had become aware of them.[4] Although the main concern of the would-be coup ringleaders was the AKP government's

suspected Islamist agenda, they also saw Kurdish nationalism as a serious threat and hence were opposed to expanding Kurdish rights.

Relations between the government and the senior military deteriorated following Özkök's retirement and General Büyükanıt's appointment as chief of staff. Unlike his predecessor, Büyükanıt did not hesitate to issue public pronouncements that were critical of the AKP. It was under his leadership, for example, that the Turkish General Staff issued a blunt warning in April 2007 against Gül's election to the presidency. In an address at the Istanbul War Academy, he issued a reminder that 'the unitary, national, secular state is the foundation of our country and our regime and these characteristics are, and shall continue to be, the military's raison d'être'. On another occasion, to the consternation of the AKP, Büyükanıt again openly interfered in politics by becoming 'the first state official to call directly for the DTP to be outlawed' (Jenkins 2007a).

The EU Dimension

While the AKP endeavoured to fend off threats at home, a growing chorus of opposition to Turkey's EU membership in several EU countries confronted it with a major distraction beginning in late 2004. Relations with the EU were already soured by the admission of still divided Cyprus into membership in May 2004. Although that decision was anticipated, it nevertheless angered Ankara because the whole of Cyprus was represented by the Greek Cypriot-controlled Republic of Cyprus (while leaving out the Turkish Cypriot-controlled part of the island), thus placing another potential obstacle in Turkey's accession course. Then, by the latter part of 2004, other more immediate obstacles began to surface. Even as the AKP was working energetically to satisfy EU pre-accession requirements and begin formal accession negotiations, European opinion was shifting. Public opinion polls conducted in several major EU countries, including France and Germany, showed an appreciable and growing decline of support for Turkey's membership.[5] Equally ominous from the AKP's viewpoint was the turnover of European leaders. A few, such as German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, had remained supportive of Turkey's membership despite negative public opinion at home. But by 2005 Schroeder had gone down to electoral defeat and three of the EU's new leaders – Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany, President Nicholas Sarkozy of France, and Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel of Austria – were united in their opposition to Turkey's membership. They advocated instead a 'privileged partnership' between Turkey and the EU – an option that Ankara flatly rejected. Predictably, the Turkish public's enthusiasm for EU membership began to wane as many Turks increasingly felt that Europe would not accept their country regardless of its efforts to satisfy EU requirements.

Turkish doubts about European intentions aside, few would doubt that the EU had been the catalyst for a broad range of democratizing reforms. This was certainly the case during 2002–2004 when the AKP was determined to get Brussels to agree to begin a formal accession process. However, since then the EU's effectiveness as a motivator for reforms aimed directly at addressing the Kurdish question has been

less certain. The EU Commission has promoted the expansion of individual rather than collective rights for the Kurds and other minority groups but has refrained from promoting a specific political solution for the Kurdish issue. As Nathalie Tocci observes, 'EU actors have paid only sporadic attention to the Kurdish question' and 'with the resumption of PKK violence and the EU's greater sensitivity to towards global terrorism after the September 2001 attacks, EU actors have become far less outspoken on Kurdish collective and territorial rights' (Tocci 2006: 135).

In general, the Commission's annual progress reports serve as a reminder of how far Turkey still lags behind EU-proclaimed standards of human rights and democracy and point to measures that need to be undertaken. Every report makes references to the continuing restrictions that Turkish Kurds (as well as Turks) face with regard to freedom of expression and association. In particular, the reports repeatedly single out the infamous Article 301 of the Constitution (which penalizes insulting 'Turkishness') and calls for its repeal. They also take a dim view of laws that make it possible to ban political parties for allegedly 'engaging in activities against the unity and integrity of the state', which led to the closure of the Kurdish DEHAP and HADEP parties (among others) in recent years. But the impact of the reports appears to have diminished with time and repetition, and in making policy decisions the AKP government must weigh them against other, often more pressing demands and the electoral necessity of maintaining their base of popular support.

In the AKP, neither its elected members of parliament nor its grassroots organization play a very significant role in the making of party policy, which is largely set by the top leadership and their circle of advisers. But that is not to say that the members and the organization do not have other important functions. Foremost among these is communication: mass opinion can be measured by polling, but elected members and local party officials are essential conduits to the leadership of the opinions of the local elites in their districts, on whose support the party's electoral fortunes substantially depend. Given the negative alignment of the factors noted above, it is not surprising that the AKP leaders found it prudent to take a breather from their reform agenda.

Contesting the parliamentary elections of July 2007

While struggling to fend off mounting pressures, particularly at home, Erdoğan and leading members of the party could take comfort from the fact that the AKP rode high in every opinion poll in the run-up to the 2007 elections. Turkey's generally stellar economic performance, political stability and the weakness of the opposition parties all contributed to the AKP's popularity. Nevertheless, certain issues remained fundamentally contested and none more so than the place of Islam in a constitutionally secular state – as Erdoğan was forcibly reminded when he had to abandon his bid to become president (by election by members of parliament, with a two-thirds majority required) because of strong Kemalist opposition to his candidacy over his suspected Islamist agenda. Erdoğan then boldly designated foreign minister Gül (whose wife, like Erdoğan's, wears a headscarf) as the party's candidate, but Gül's nomination proved almost as provocative as his own and the

Kemalist counter-attack was swift. Huge demonstrations, organized by ultranationalists, protested Gül's candidacy in the major cities. More ominously, the General Staff posted a memorandum on its website threatening to intervene if Gül were elected. None of this, however, appears to have had any negative effect on the AKP's overall popularity or the intentions of voters.

Unable to elect its presidential candidate in the face of the opposition parties' boycott in parliament, the AKP deftly turned the political crisis to its advantage by calling early parliamentary elections on 23 July 2007. The AKP won 47 per cent of the vote and another comfortable majority of seats, thus emerging from the elections with a strengthened national mandate. Its performance in the Kurdish districts was particularly impressive. There, the party received over 50 per cent of Kurdish votes (see Table 6.1) and captured the majority of seats. In Diyarbakır the AKP won 41 per cent of the vote, almost tripling its vote share of 16 per cent in the 2002 elections. Erdoğan could boast that with 75 Kurdish members, the AKP was *the* party that represented Kurds (*Radikal* 2007).

In appealing to Kurdish voters, the AKP benefited greatly from the economic improvement that the east and south-east regions of the country experienced after 2002. Polls taken in these regions indicated that employment and economic conditions were issues of primary concern,[6] and they partly explain the outcome. But they do not tell the whole story. The 2007 parliamentary elections were also the first real test of Kurdish opinion since the PKK abandoned its ceasefire. The results may therefore be interpreted as indicating that many moderate Kurds were unhappy about the resumption of violence, perceived the AKP government to be moving in a positive direction, and rejected the extremists' argument that the government was barely distinguishable from previous governments and would never address Kurdish issues in a satisfactory way.

The AKP also benefited from the weak or non-existent appeal to Kurdish voters of the other parties, apart from the DTP, which ran on a standard Kurdish nationalist platform. The DTP's performance was quite respectable, with the party winning 33 per cent of the votes in the 'major Kurdish populated provinces', but this represented a decrease from the 40 per cent that DEHAP, its predecessor, had won in the 2002 elections (Kirişci 2007: 11–12). The main opposition party, the CHP, under its leader Deniz Baykal, generally took a hard line against reforms that benefited Kurds, and Kurds could expect even less sympathy from the ultranationalist Nationalist Movement Party (Milliyetci Hareket Partisi, MHP). Not surprisingly, the CHP and MHP did not elect a single member in the Kurdish region.

Table 6.1 2002 and 2007 Election results by party (% vote), Kurdish region

2002	*AKP*	*DEHAP*	*2007*	*AKP*	*DTP-IND**
E. Anatolia	32.2	21.4	E. Anatolia	54.6	19.4
S.E. Anatolia	27.7	26.7	S.E. Anatolia	53.1	24.4

Source: Adapted from Bahar (2007): 2.

*In 2007 DTP candidates were nominally designated as 'independents.'

Finally, for Kurdish voters, the AKP's troubled relations with the military lent credibility to its claim to be different from the other parties. The military's implacable opposition to Kurdish nationalism, its resistance to human rights reforms, and not the least, its use of harsh methods in its campaign against the PKK, which caused much suffering among the civilian population, meant that it was feared and loathed by most Kurds. In general, therefore, Kurds sympathized with the AKP whenever it was seen to be harassed or threatened by the military chiefs and applauded Erdoğan's defiance of them.

The AKP and the politics of war

The challenges facing the AKP government in its handling of the Kurdish issue were made immeasurably more difficult by the war against the PKK that was raging across its northern border with Iraq, giving rise to regional and international complications and, inevitably, domestic political tensions. Knowing that the United States was opposed to any major Turkish military incursion into northern Iraq, and that Brussels too had grave misgivings, the government had no good options at its disposal. To do nothing would run directly counter to an increasingly vociferous public opinion and, with an election approaching, leave it vulnerable to attack by its nationalistic party rivals. Yet to give in to the military commanders, who were pressing for authorization to strike across the border with full-scale counter-attacks, would almost certainly antagonize Turkey's most important allies and set back, if not wreck, its EU accession prospects.

The domestic implications were also matters of concern. Escalating the cross-border war was bound to inflame Turkish Kurds and could even backfire if it led to increased support among the Kurdish civilian population for PKK violence. Moreover, despite tensions between Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan over PKK safe havens, the government was anxious not to jeopardize the lucrative cross-border trade that had grown up between them, which particularly benefited the Kurdish region.[7]

The AKP's response was, first, to a launch a concerted and ultimately successful diplomatic effort to bring Washington around to the viewpoint that a limited and carefully targeted Turkish attack on PKK bases in northern Iraq should be considered part of the global 'war on terror'– and that the US military should participate to the extent of providing 'actionable intelligence' on PKK positions via satellite and other means, which it did. Second, Erdoğan in his public speeches struck a carefully modulated tone that was firm but not as strident or belligerent as was customary when past leaders had spoken in similar circumstances and which helped to sooth public anger with the United States, which in turn helped his diplomatic initiative. But, with a massing of Turkish troops along the Iraq border and PKK incursions raising the toll of Turkish casualties, some kind of military action was inescapable. Even so, perhaps at least partly with an eye on Kurdish votes in the upcoming 2007 elections, the government postponed a parliamentary vote authorizing cross-border military operations by several months. And when operations began they took the form of air strikes on PKK bases and limited incursions by

Special Forces. These neither upset key allies nor, if the results of the 2007 parliamentary elections are indicative, Kurdish voters. For Erdoğan and the AKP this was a better outcome than they could reasonably have hoped and a considerable diplomatic and political triumph.

The future of the AKP's Kurdish agenda

The PKK and its imprisoned leader Öcalan continue to enjoy a great deal of popularity among Kurds, despite some misgivings about their methods, past and present. They are credited above all with compelling the Turkish state to address the Kurdish issue as never before. Turkish Kurds have also watched with satisfaction as a self-governing Kurdish state emerged next door in Iraqi Kurdistan and their admiration of Iraqi Kurdish leaders Barzani and Talabani is genuine and unrestrained. While politically by no means of one view, it is evident that many, and perhaps even most Turkish Kurds would prefer the Turkish government to pursue a policy of accommodation and conciliation rather than confrontation in dealing with both the PKK and the KRG. It is therefore noteworthy that although the AKP has taken an uncompromising stand against PKK violence, and has at times provoked confrontational exchanges with KRG leaders, much of what the party stands for seems to resonate favourably with a large and significant minority of Kurdish voters.

This can be explained by reference to a number of factors, both contextual and policy-oriented. Among the contextual factors is the Turkish party system, in which the AKP stands out as a new type of party, structurally different from its main rivals and, unlike them, unburdened by a past record of failing the Kurds or of displaying outright hostility towards them. Kurds tend to view it as a party with anti-establishment credentials, a reputation enhanced by the fact that it has been threatened with closure by the same secular-nationalist camp that has repeatedly outlawed parties representing Kurds. Moreover, it is not lost on many Kurds that the AKP pursues EU membership for at least some of the same reasons as Kurdish nationalists – namely, to secure better protection of human rights and civilian control over the military. In addition, the 'face of the party' that the AKP presents in the persons of Erdoğan, Gül and other leaders at all levels of the party's organization is that of a of modern and moderate Islamic party. Their public, open religiosity – which they delicately balance against their party's self-identification as a conservative rather than an Islamic party – is attractive to the many Kurds who are religious to some degree and who view the PKK and the DTP as anti-religious organizations. This is indirectly acknowledged by the DTP, which has countered by becoming more Islamic in an effort to stem their loss of Kurdish votes to the AKP (Jones 2008).

Not only the DTP, but all parties, have been forced to make adjustments by the very presence in the political system of the AKP, which has changed the Turkish political culture in subtle ways that not even the party's most ardent supporters could have anticipated when it first came to power. Political cultures, of course, change slowly, but they do change. And one area where the change is most significant – and for many Turks even startling – is in the nature of the discourse over Kurdish identity and rights, which were once taboo subjects but are now are openly

debated as never before. After being officially shunned for decades, the word 'Kurd' is now freely used by government officials and Turkish media alike. Once banned, the Kurdish language is now a commonly heard and increasingly a legitimate voice in the democratic arena, though some irritating restrictions remain. In an historic innovation, Bilgi University in Istanbul introduced courses in Kurdish in 2009 and similar courses are planned in other universities. These changes have been accompanied by a softening attitude towards Kurdish rights, even in some previously hard-line political quarters. The leader of the CHP, Deniz Baykal, whose nationalist rhetoric and negative stance on democratization and Kurdish rights were once uncompromising, has found it necessary to adopt more restrained and nuanced language – which does not necessarily signify a change in his party's policy, but is a noteworthy development nevertheless. As he explained following a visit to the Kurdish region, 'I could not speak in these terms five years ago. A new atmosphere now prevails, one that allows a dialogue' (*Radikal* 2008).

The main policy-oriented reasons for this change of atmosphere stem from the reforms enacted by the AKP during 2002–4, as previously noted. While those reforms were not new and indeed most were introduced before the AKP took office, it was the AKP that turned them into a coherent reform agenda, had the political will and talent to sell them to an often skeptical public, and allocated the financial and other resources that were needed to implement them. After winning a renewed mandate in July 2007, the AKP disappointed many Kurds by deferring any new initiatives on the Kurdish issue for several months. However, the party was at that time under threat of closure and faced with the possibility of a judicial ban on political activity by its leading members. On 16 November 2007, the chief state prosecutor filed a case at the Constitutional Court accusing the AKP of anti-secular activity, a charge sparked by a controversial piece of legislation – later ruled unconstitutional – that removed the headscarf ban at Turkish universities. The AKP was spared from closure by a single vote when the justices delivered a seven–six verdict against banning the party in July 2008. While the Constitutional Court deliberated, Erdoğan travelled to Diyarbakır on 27 May 2008 to announce huge new investments aimed at boosting employment by completing the South Anatolia Project (GAP) and additional expenditures to improve the region's educational services. But perhaps the most dramatic measure in this new round of initiatives was the authorization of the country's first 24-hour national Kurdish-language television station (TRT-6), which began broadcasting on 1 January 2009. The AKP government's performance may be found wanting in certain respects, particularly on the pace and thoroughness of implementation. But it is fair to say that no previous government has ever made as much progress on Kurdish rights.

Conclusion

Further measures by the AKP government to accommodate Kurdish interests are likely to face severe political constraints, particularly if they require constitutional amendments to be enacted. For example, any attempt by the AKP to decentralize the Turkish state in order to give Kurds some form of regional autonomy would

be powerfully contested, as would any educational reform that introduced state-funded Kurdish education at all levels. That the main opposition parties would resist such changes on the grounds that they would encourage Kurdish separatism can be taken for granted. The AKP would also have to contend with the perennial resistance of the Turkish military and possibly adverse rulings by the Constitutional Court. Furthermore, as a party that has succeeded by winning support from a wide cross-section of the electorate, the AKP would have to be mindful of the need to maintain the support of its constituents, many of whom would be difficult to convince of the need for further reforms, particularly those promoted by Kurdish nationalists. And acts of PKK violence have the potential to ignite anti-Kurdish sentiments among the wider public. Any or all of these factors could complicate the AKP government's political calculations concerning the viability of proceeding with its reform agenda.

In order to maintain or possibly increase the level of electoral support that it has thus far managed to achieve in predominantly Kurdish districts, the AKP will need to win a greater degree of trust from its new Kurdish constituents, who tend to be only weakly connected to the party. Just how difficult this could be was illustrated by the uproar generated by Erdoğan's statements in a speech in the predominantly Kurdish town of Hakkari in February 2008 when, in terms that echoed hard-line nationalist rhetoric on the Kurdish issue, he declared: 'We have said, one nation, one flag, one motherland and one state . . . Those opposed to this should leave'(quoted in Karabat 2008). His words were widely reported in the media and variously interpreted. Kurdish critics were quick to conclude that they represented his true beliefs, and that his government was no different from other nationalistic Turkish governments, while his defenders insisted that they were merely a short-tempered, off-the-cuff reaction to the hostile demonstrators he faced in Hakkari. There was no direct follow-up, either in the form of an apology, as the DTP demanded (on the grounds that his words were offensive to Kurds and racist in tone), or in the form of a discernible hardening in AKP policy towards the Kurdish issue, and Erdoğan soon reverted to the more conciliatory language that had characterized his earlier addresses. Perhaps what the episode most clearly demonstrates is the cross-pressures that the AKP leader is under in attempting to satisfy Kurdish – and EU – demands for further reforms that will expand democratic and minority rights. He is confronted on the one hand by a vocal Turkish nationalist opposition that is adamantly opposed to any form of recognition for the Kurds, and on the other hand by Kurdish nationalists who do not accept that he and his government have done anything to benefit Kurds and resent his attempts to cut into their power base by winning Kurdish support.

Despite AKP efforts to control the damage caused by Erdoğan's Hakkari outburst, it probably contributed to the party's relatively poor performance among Kurdish voters in the local elections of 29 March 2009. The clear victor in the south-east region was the explicitly Kurdish DTP, which improved its share of the vote and captured a majority of the mayoralties, while AKP support fell by more than 15 per cent (*Hürriyet Daily News*, 1 April 2009). Inevitably, this outcome gave rise to speculation about whether the AKP could retain its 2007 level of support

among Kurdish voters in the next parliamentary elections and was heartening to the opposition parties, particularly the DTP.

The AKP, however, has shown itself to be adept at keeping its finger on the pulse of Turkish public opinion and adopting well-calculated campaign strategies. Its leaders know better than anyone that, even if they wished to do so (which they have never so much as hinted is the case), it would be politically impossible to accede to some long-held Kurdish nationalist demands, such as designating Turkey as a bi-national state or adopting a federal form of governance. For the most part, the AKP has therefore carefully crafted its reform agenda around the concepts of individual rights and general minority rights rather than Kurdish collective rights as such – a position that also happens to be aligned with the predominant EU approach to such matters.

Prime Minister Erdoğan's announcement of a major new 'Kurdish initiative' in the summer of 2009 seemed to herald a change of approach, but at the time of writing (November 2009) the full extent of this initiative remains unclear. The few specific reform measures that have been introduced thus far are similar to other such measures that have been enacted in recent years with a view to expanding cultural rights and improving legal protections for Kurds. Thus new provisions would permit Kurdish to be used in all broadcast media and political campaigns, and restore Kurdish names to towns and villages that had been assigned Turkish names. In addition, an independent commission would be established with a mandate to safeguard and promote human rights and strengthen mechanisms to prevent the occurrence of torture in Turkish prisons. In announcing these new measures, dubbed the 'democracy initiative' by the government, Interior Minister Beşir Atalay promised that further measures would be announced in the future, and also that 'a new pluralistic constitution would be adopted'. At the same time, Atalay assured those Turks who oppose making far-reaching constitutional changes to meet Kurdish demands by declaring that Turkey will remain a unitary state and that Turkish will continue to be the country's official language (*Today's Zaman* 2009). Similarly, when new incentives for PKK fighters to return to civilian life in Turkey were introduced, the Erdoğan government also declared that it had no plans for a general amnesty.

None of these assurances averted the predictable ire of the opposition parties, who accused the government of capitulating to the PKK and undermining Turkey's unity. Nor were Kurdish nationalists satisfied with reforms that fell short of their demands for constitutional guarantees of Kurdish rights and extensive changes in the way Turkey is governed. Nevertheless, having improved Turkey's ties with the KRG and other regional actors, thereby helping isolate the PKK, the AKP government is internationally well positioned to move forward with its Kurdish initiative. It is also well aware that in doing so it runs the risk of alienating large segments of the Turkish public and its own electoral base.

The ultimate prize that Erdoğan has promised is nothing less than the settlement of the Kurdish issue, thereby ending the 25-year PKK insurgency that has cost thousands of lives and sapped the energies of the country. However alluring this prospect is, the AKP government will face formidable obstacles in convincing

Turkish nationalists, and indeed many Turks, that Turkey's unity will not be undermined by the new reforms and that the government has not yielded to what they regard as PKK terrorism.

On the Kurdish front, the AKP will face no less a challenge in convincing moderate Kurdish nationalists that its agenda is a work in progress, will be continued in the future, and is in their long-term interest. That may be a tall order, considering that the traditional Kurdish nationalist demands have been for constitutional recognition as a distinct ethnic group, full control over their culture, and the right to be represented by their own political parties, on a par with Turkish parties. But if the AKP can somehow manage to bridge this divide between itself and the Kurdish nationalists, and by so doing bring Kurds into Turkey's cultural and political life as equal citizens, then Erdoğan's boast that his is *the* party of the Kurds will be truly justified.

Notes

1 Turkey's Kurdish population is variously estimated. Some Kurdish sources claim that Kurds represent more than 25 per cent of the population whereas several Turkish sources maintain that they constitute less than 10 per cent. Mutlu estimates that Kurds constituted 12.6 per cent of Turkey's population in 1990 (Mutlu 1996). McDowall estimates that Kurds make up over 20 per cent (McDowall 1996: 3).
2 Or, as Erdoğan put it, they were 'not aliens coming from outer space' (quoted in Dağı 2006: 88).
3 The existence of a conspiracy to overthrow the AKP government has been widely reported as fact in the Turkish media following revelations associated with the 'Ergenekon' case which became public during 2007–8.
4 Tozun Bahcheli, interview with Dr. Bulent Aliriza, Director of the Turkish Programme at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, 10 February 2009.
5 'Survey Shows Fall in Public Support for Turkey's EU Entry' (EurActiv.com, 7 September 2005). A 2005 Eurobarometer survey reported: 'The populations of France and Germany along with those of Austria, Cyprus, and Greece have been the most critical of the prospect of allowing Turkey to join the Union, with proportions against membership as high as 80 per cent' (cited in 'Turkey in the EU – What the Public Thinks', EurActiv.com, 29 May 2008).
6 Citing an opinion poll conducted by Turkish Metropoll, Jenkins reported that 'people in the [Kurdish] region are more concerned about job security than the PKK. A total of 41.9 % named unemployment as the biggest problem in the region, followed by 14.7% who cited terrorism . . .' (Jenkins 2007b).
7 Nicholas Birch wrote: 'At least 100 AKP deputies are of Kurdish origin. With unemployment in some Turkish Kurdish towns higher than 50 per cent, they know that war in Iraq is the last thing their constituents want. For a start, much of Turkey's $2.7 billion trade with Iraqi Kurdistan is in the hands of Turkish Kurds' (The Independent 2007).

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Part III

Challenging the state

7 Born from the Left

The making of the PKK

Joost Jongerden
and Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya

> The movement known as the PKK movement, which emerged after 1972, is not an organization; it is an ideological and political movement. That movement has the intention to unite [the divided revolutionary left in Turkey].
>
> (Kemal Pir, Court Defence, 1981)[1]

Introduction

In 1953 Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai took part in peace negotiations held in Geneva to end the war in Korea. Being co-founder of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), a guerilla-war veteran, and one of the architects of the People's Republic, he was asked what he thought about the French Revolution of 1789. Zhou Enlai replied: 'It is still too early to tell' (Sick 1995; Zizek 2007). The French Revolution, he implied, was not simply history, but continuing to extend its effects, and any evaluation of its meaning would therefore be premature. This tactful reply from Zhou Enlai told by Slavoj Zižek in his book on Robespierre, came to mind when working on this chapter on the Kurdistan Workers' Party, the PKK, which, grammatically, is not even situated in the past tense, as is the French Revolution, but in the present. This makes it even more difficult to evaluate the PKK. Rather than trying to assesss the social and political meaning of the PKK, this chapter will discuss its becoming. In so doing, the main focus will be on the process of ideological group formation (1973–7), party building (1978–9), and the organization of revolutionary violence as a means to political change (1980–94). It will show how the PKK not only took its orientation from the revolutionary left in Turkey, but also built on its (armed) experiences.

In the first section we briefly introduce the PKK with a few words about its significance and its objectives and methods. In the second section, we go back to the 1970s and discuss the Kurdish political spectrum at that time, with the PKK as one of the many political parties taking up the issue of Kurds and Kurdistan.[2] In the third section, we take a closer look at the PKK process of group formation, and its relationship to the left in Turkey. Finally, in the fourth section, the issue of revolutionary war and the left in Turkey is discussed (but not the course of the war).[3] Analysis of the history of the PKK is relevant today, not only because the PKK is present tense, but also in the context of discussions about the PKK emerging after the imprisonment

of its leader, Abdullah Öcalan, in 1999. It has been argued that the party lost its way and betrayed its own past (Özcan 2006). A close analysis of the establishment of the PKK however, shows that it did not emerge from a mere Kurdish nationalist political tradition, but from the left in Turkey, and thus, in fact, has always had a strong orientation to Turkey too.

Background

The Kurdistan Workers Party or PKK is one of the most important secular insurgent political movements in Kurdistan and the Middle East. Unlike most Kurdish political parties, which adopted a rather conservative outlook and were organized around tribal leaders and structures, the PKK originated from the left in Turkey and drew its leaders, members and militants from the disenfranchised. Following its incubation during the 1970s and after ample preparation, the PKK initiated a prolonged guerilla war in 1984, and by 1990 the 'liberation of Kurdistan' had become not at all unthinkable. The threat posed by the PKK to the political system and territorial integrity of Turkey has been recognized as the most serious faced by the Republic since its establishment in 1923 (Özdag 2003: preface).

The PKK is widely known for its strategic employment of violence, the party name being commonly used as a synonym for its guerilla army. Although the PKK uses violence to obtain its goals, however, it would be wrong to characterize it as a military organization. The PKK is a political organization using violence to reach its objectives (Barkey and Fuller 1998: 26), and might best, therefore, be considered a 'militant political organization'. In fact, the use of violence was prompted by the narrow political space and should be considered instrumental and rational, in the sense that it was guided by and based upon a political programme (intended to change the social and political status of the Kurds and Kurdistan) in circumstances in which there was no alternative avenue of genuine political expression (Bozarslan 2004: 23).[4]

Initially, the political objective was the liberation of Kurdistan through a process of creative destruction: the simultaneous destruction of colonialism and the creation of an independent state. In its 1978 manifesto, *Kürdistan Devrimin Yolu* (The Path of the Kurdistan Revolution), written by (or at least accredited to) Abdullah Öcalan, the PKK made itself known as a 'national-democratic' and 'revolutionary' movement. A destruction of colonialism (not only Turkish colonialism, but also the colonialism of the other occupying state-forces in Kurdistan) and the construction of a democratic and united Kurdistan, based on Marxist-Leninist principles, were to be effected from an alliance of workers, peasants and intellectuals. During the course of the evolution of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan tried to develop his own version of socialism, breaking away from conventional Marxist-Leninist principles and replacing pan-Kurdish aspirations with a new political agenda, namely, a commitment to the idea of a constitution of Kurdish rights under the principles of 'radical democracy' and 'democratic confederalism'. A territorial strategy (the creation of liberated land) and state-building seems to have been replaced by an institutional strategy, which aims at the development of a civil society recreating Kurdistan 'bottom-up'.[5]

The Partîya Karkêren Kurdistan (PKK) was formally established on 26–27 November 1978. At its founding congress no name was attached to the party. At the beginning of 1979, publications of the organization were still signed with the name Kurdistan Revolutionaries (Kurdistan Revolutionaries 1979). The name PKK was given to the organization only a few months later, in April 1979 (Akkaya 2005: part 8), and its existence announced soon after that, in July 1979, with a daring assault on someone considered to be a 'comprador landlord'.[6] The party seemed to take time in planning its actions, and this was certainly not something out of the blue. A process of *group-formation* had started years before, as early as 1972–3, and by the time the PKK was formerly established the party was already organized throughout the Kurdistan region in Turkey, led by a committed member with strong convictions. In the course of the 1980s the PKK would develop into the only Kurdish political party of significance in Turkey, attracting many who had previously been members or sympathizers of rival parties.

Several Kurdish political parties were active in the 1970s. The oldest of these parties was the Türkiye Kurdistan Demokratik Parti (TKDP; the Turkey Kurdistan Democratic Party). Established in 1965, the TKDP was probably the only and certainly the most influential such party up to the beginning of the 1970s. In the 1970s, several Kurdish political parties came into being, partly as a result of a crisis in the TKDP, and partly influenced by an emerging left in Turkey. At the time of the military coup (12 September 1980) the most important Kurdish political parties were the following: KİP and KUK (both successors of different wings or fractions within the TKDP), at least three different Kawa fractions, Rizgarî and its break-away Ala Rizgarî; TKSP; (the Socialist Party of Kurdistan Turkey) and the PKK. Some other, smaller groups also existed, such as Tekoşîn (Struggle), Stêrka Sor (Red Star) and Pêkanîn (Realization).

Looking at the backgrounds of these parties, we may classify them as follows. First, there were the political parties established under the hegemony of or inspired by the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) (and later also the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, PUK) from Iraq, such as the TKDP and is successors KUK and KİP, and the left-wing cleavages of Kawa, Rizgarî and Ala Rizgarî. Second, there was the Türkiye İşçi Partisi (TİP; the Workers Party of Turkey), to which Kawa, Rizgarî and Ala Rizgarî were sympathetic. The TKSP was very close to the legal left, its leader Kemal Burkay had been a prominent member of the TİP. Third, there were Tekoşîn, Stêrka Sor and the PKK, which had their roots in the (illegal) revolutionary left in Turkey (Ballı 1993; Jongerden 2007; Güclü 2008).

Although illegal, these parties were still able to establish legal platforms for political action, however. Kawa, Rizgarî and Ala Rizgarî published journals under the same name, and the TKSP was widely known by the name of its journal, *Özgürlük Yolu* (Path of Freedom, Kurdish *Rîya Azadî*). In addition to these journals, most of the illegal political parties organized legal fronts in the form of associations. The most important of these associations was the Devrimci Doğu Kültür Derneği (DDKD; Revolutionary Cultural Associations of the East – the word 'Kurdistan' was carefully avoided). The DDKD was dominated by the left wing of the TKDP, also known as Şiwancılar (after its leader Dr Şiwan). In Ankara, the founders of Rizgarî played an important role in the establishment of the DDKD,

but it was the Şiwancılar who actually controlled the association. Later, Rizgarî founded the Anti Sömürgeci Kültür Derneği, ASKD (Anti-Colonial Cultural Association) and the TKSP established the Devrimci Halk Kültür Derneği (DHKD; Revolutionary People's Cultural Association) (Aslan 2006; Gündoğan 2007). The group that would later establish the PKK, was neither active in these Kurdish associations nor attempted to establish its own, but was active in ADYÖD, an association related to the revolutionary left in Turkey (see below).

Reviewing the early history of the PKK, it is clear that the party distinguished itself from most other Kurdish political parties in several ways. In respect of its political positioning and distinctive ideology, for example, it was unusual or unique. Most importantly, the PKK did not emerge from 'Kurdish politics': its members did not have significant previous relations with any of the Kurdish political parties active in the 1970s. For this reason the PKK is often depicted as a party 'without history' (Güçlü 2008).

Group formation

The PKK does not have its political background in Kurdish politics, it was not a party without history, but born from the revolutionary left in Turkey.[7] At the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, the revolutionary left in Turkey gained momentum, getting morale and inspiration from revolutionary struggles elsewhere in the world – from Cuba to Vietnam, Laos to Angola, Mozambique and Guinea, and Algeria to Palestine. Several left-wing political associations and parties were established and became active in Turkey during this period. When we say the PKK has its roots in the left in Turkey therefore, we should be precise in determining which left. At the time, the left in Turkey, as elsewhere in the world, was composed of many different factions, with very distinct ideologies and practices.

Two main currents of thought can be distinguished. One held that capitalism had advanced in Turkey, and a transition to socialism was possible. The main representative of this current was the Türkiye İşçi Partisi (TİP; Workers Party of Turkey), a legal party adhering to parliamentary democracy. The other current of thought held that Turkey was still a semi-feudal society and not fully independent, but dominated by the United States. Accordingly, therefore, a national-democratic revolution (the Milli Demokratik Devrim, or MDD thesis) was necessary, one in which workers, peasants and progressive forces within the bourgeoisie needed to work together, to be followed by a socialist revolution. Adherents to this school were a minority faction within TIP, and received most response from the youth organization Dev-Genç. The national-democrats were convinced, furthermore, that an armed struggle was necessary to bring forward change (Lipovsky 1992). Crucially, those who established the PKK had been close to Dev-Genç, while other Kurdish political parties had been close to TİP.

The parties by which the PKK was inspired were the Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu (THKO; the People's Liberation Army of Turkey) and Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Parti-Cephesi (THKP-C; the People's Liberation Party-Front of Turkey). THKO and THKP-C were politico-military organizations, in the sense that they

practised the idea that only an armed struggle, guided by a political party, could bring the necessary changes to Turkey. However, the leadership of both parties was killed, through the passing of death sentences and in military operations in 1972. The leaders of the THKO, Deniz Gezmiş, Yusuf Aslan and Huseyin Inan, were arrested at the beginning of 1971, and were executed on 6 May 1972. Most of the core members of the THKP-C, among them their leader Mahir Çayan and two members of the THKO, were killed in Kızıldere, Ankara, on 30 March 1972, having been trapped in the course of a hostage operation in which they had intended to exchange military personnel against the convicted, but as yet unexecuted, THKO leaders.

Mass protests took place in Turkey against the upcoming execution of Deniz Gezmiş and his comrades and the killing of Mahir Çayan and his fellow fighters. Abdullah Öcalan, too, was involved in these protests. In interviews, Öcalan affiliates himself with the THKP-C as a sympathizer. Moreover, he explained on several occasions that the PKK was developed from the experiences – or rather, the mistakes – made in the organization of the armed struggle by the revolutionary left in Turkey during the early 1970s.[8] The reason these revolutionary parties had been defeated such a short time after their establishment, Öcalan argued, was that they had rushed into a direct confrontation with the state while they were still weak. With this insight, the group around Öcalan, decided to organize itself thoroughly before entering into such a conflict (Sayın 1997: 71–83).

The core group establishing the PKK was carved out from a student environment in Ankara in the 1970s. Initially, many of them were active in the student organization Ankara Demokratik Yüksek Öğretim Derneği (ADYÖD; Ankara Democratic Higher Education Association). The association was established by Türkiye Sosyalist İşçi Partisi (TSİP; the Socialist Workers Party of Turkey), but revolutionary students, THKP-C and THKO sympathizers, took control of ADYÖD within a short time. In this context, close relations should be noted between ADYÖD and Dev-Genc (Revolutionary Youth), an important revolutionary youth organization close to THKP-C and THKO. Among the members of ADYÖD at this time were those students who would play an important role in the establishment of the PKK, including Abdullah Öcalan, Haki Karer, Baki Karer, Kemal Pir, Ali Haydar Kaytan, Duran Kalkan and Cemil Bayık. Among the most influential were Haki Karer and Abdullah Öcalan, who were part of the *de facto* ruling body of ADYÖD.[9]

Initially, the group around Abdullah Öcalan was mainly a loose network of students. In 1973, the core group consisted of Öcalan himself, Kemal Pir, Haki Karer, Ali Haydar Kaytan, Duran Kalkan and Cemil Bayık – three Kurds (Öcalan, Haydar Kaytan and Bayık) and three Turks (Pir, Karer and Kalkan). Öcalan had met Pir and Karer at the end of 1972, after his release from prison. Öcalan had been imprisoned between April and October 1972, for his role in organizing a boycott at the Political Science Department, protesting the death of Mahir Çayan and his friends. Looking for a house to stay in, Öcalan was introduced by a friend to the two revolutionaries from the Black Sea region (Pir was a sympathizer of the THKP-C and Karer of the THKO), who lived in the Emek district of Ankara. They stayed in the house for about a year, to the end of 1973 or the beginning of 1974,

after which they dispersed to houses in other parts of Ankara, in which there were dense networks of parties from the revolutionary left (Dikimevi, Anıttepe and Tuzluçayır). Tuzluçayır, in particular, is much mentioned in PKK historiography. At the time, in the mid-1970s, Tuzluçayır was a poor, '*gece kondu*' neighborhood with a large proportion of (Turkish) Alevi and Kurdish inhabitants. It was a very important area of activity for the group and maybe the only place other than universities in which a considerable number of the members were recruited.[10]

ADYÖD was important as a platform where the group members could meet people of like mind. However, more important than ADYÖD for the organization of the PKK were the house meetings, of which tens or maybe hundreds must have been organized between 1973 and 1977. Sometimes two or three meetings a day took place, with up to around 10 or 20 participants. The frequent, long and intensive discussions at these meetings contributed to the carving out of a distinctive ideology, the enlisting of new recruits and the forging of a close camaraderie. Kemal Pir would later say about this period: 'We were busy convincing people to work with us; that was the kind of work I was engaged in.' For that, they took their time. 'If three hours were needed to convince people, we would be busy for three hours, if 300 hours were needed to convince them, we would be busy for 300 hours. We were working to convince people'.[11] New people were introduced to the group through these house meetings. For example, Cemil Bayık was a friend of Pir, who introduced Bayık to Öcalan. Bayık then introduced Duran Kalkan to the group. Apart from Cemil Bayık, Haki Karer recruited, among others, Mazlum Doğan, a celebrated PKK martyr.[12]

Doğan was clearly impressed by Haki Karer. 'I admired him and over time this admiration changed in acting together, in making their ideology my own,' he is quoted as saying (Doğan 1994). At this stage there was a clearly a developing approach, but it had not yet coagulated into a cohesive whole. 'At the time I did not know if these persons were a group, a movement or something else,' said Doğan, 'I only wanted their approval, I wanted them to entrust me with duties' (Doğan 1994). The group around Öcalan was organized as a fluid network. The rented houses, which were changed frequently, and in which ideological group formation and recruitment took place, provided a space for the development of the group.

Finally, at the beginning of 1975, the group around Öcalan detached itself from ADYÖD. This followed the closure of the association in December 1974, after a police raid which resulted in 163 students being taken into custody.[13] Although a new association was soon established, under the name Ankara Yüksek Öğretim Derneği (AYÖD; Association for Higher Education in Ankara), Öcalan, Karer and others from their network did not become a part of it. They thought the association had lost its dynamic, and the 'Kurdistan revolutionaries' decided instead to develop their loose network itself, into a coherent, independent organization (Sayın 1997). Actually, the split seems to have been mutual, with the founders of AYÖD not wanting the group around Öcalan to become active in the association either: Haki Karer, a former board member of ADYÖD was not allowed into AYÖD meetings (Yüce 1999: 244–6). In 1975, the house-room network around Öcalan took shape. They settled on a name, '*Kurdistan Devrimcileri*' (the Kurdistan Revolutionaries,

Şoreşgerên Kurdistan in Kurdish), although some knew them as '*Apocu*', followers of Apo, the nickname of Abdullah Öcalan ('*apo*' is also Kurdish for 'uncle'), or else '*Ulusal Kurtuluş Ordusu*' (National Liberation Army).[14]

The Kurdistan Revolutionaries did not consider the student and urban environment in Ankara to be well suited for the further advancement of their political and social struggle. They decided to disassociate from Ankara and establish themselves in (Turkish) Kurdistan (or, what is referred to as the Kurdish region in Turkey).[15] This decision was taken at a gathering in Ankara at the beginning of 1976, known in PKK circles as the 'Dikmen meeting' (after the neighbourhood where the gathering took place), and referred to as a 'return' (Yüce 1999: 261; Akkaya 2005). Turkish Kurdistan was considered the most appropriate area to start a political and armed struggle for revolutionary change in Turkey. It was also decided at the Dikmen meeting to establish a centre (*merkez*) of the movement, of which Abdullah Öcalan would become the chairman. Haki Karer was also member of the centre, and assistant to Öcalan, becoming the second person in rank in the organization.

The 'return' decided upon at Dikmen involved the Kurdistan Revolutionaries first moving to different provinces in the Kurdistan region in Turkey to investigate the situation. This marked a major change in the political geography of the movement. Between 1973 and 1977, the period of ideological group formation, recruitment activities had been mainly concentrated in Ankara. Together with the first group activities in Kurdistan, the recruitment of new members now started to take place in regions other than Ankara. On the eve of 1978, as the political struggle of the movement gathered pace, the movement gained momentum in the regions of Dersim/Tunceli, Maraş-Pazarcık, Batman, Antep and Urfa. In Dersim/Tunceli, for example, the teacher training school was a recruitment focus of the movement. Several students in this school from different parts of Turkish Kurdistan participated into the movement.[16]

At the end of 1976, nearly a year after the Dikmen meeting, another meeting was held, this time in the Dikimevi area of Ankara. The results of the move out of Ankara were evaluated, and it was decided to progress with the new strategy. Two more decisions were made at Dikimevi: the first to present the movement to the different parties and factions in the revolutionary left in Turkey, and the second to present the group to the people in Turkish Kurdistan.[17]

In order to introduce the organization to the revolutionary left, the Kurdistan Revolutionaries organized a meeting at Türk Mühendis ve Mimar Odaları Birliği (the Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects) in Ankara, referred to as the TMMOB meeting.[18] The leftist organization Kurtuluş (Liberation) helped the Kurdistan Revolutionaries to find the meeting place, and some of its members actually participated in the meeting. Other members from other leftist political parties also participated in the meeting, in which the Kurdistan Revolutionaries presented themselves.

In order to introduce the organization to the people in Turkish Kurdistan, the Kurdistan Revolutionaries organized a series of meetings there in 1977. Abdullah Öcalan and some associates visited Ağrı, then Kars, Dersim, Karakoçan, Diyarbakır and finally Antep. Together, the two meetings at Dikmen and Dikimevi, the

decisions taken and activities embarked upon as a result, signified the transition of the Kurdistan Revolutionaries from an ideological group to a political organization. The Kurdistan tour, however, ended abruptly. On 18 May 1977 Haki Kaker was killed in a coffeehouse, allegedly by Alaadin Kaplan, one of the leaders of Stêrka Sor. Inspired by Maoism and having been active in the revolutionary movement since the beginning of the 1970s, Kaplan was well known in Antep at the time. The Kurdistan Revolutionaries declared Stêrka Sor a satellite organization of Turkey's intelligence services.

The death of Karer was a cause for much unrest in the organization (the Antep branch of the Kurdistan Revolutionaries fell apart, with most of its members joining Tekoşin). The Kurdistan Revolutionaries responded with two decisions following the killing: first, that it was impossible to do political work without armed protection, and second, that they needed to organize themselves more tightly, and to establish a political party. The killing of Karer thus became instrumental in the decision to become a political party for the liberation of Kurdistan. As such, the formation of the PKK became the promise to continue the struggle of the martyr Haki Karer, as well as a symbol for Turkish-Kurdish brotherhood (Karer being a Turk).[19]

The PKK, revolutionary war and the left in Turkey

After 1978, the PKK entered into a period of party construction and the development of armed struggle. Party construction and armed struggle have always been intertwined in PKK history. Previously, until 1977 (the death of Haki Karer), the PKK had defended armed struggle ideologically but without any serious attempt to organize one. After 1977, the organization of the armed struggle became important as a means of self-defence, and also to overcome 'obstacles'. Among these obstacles were the local feudal clans exercising dominance over people and territory. The struggles in Hilvan in 1978 and in Siverek in the Urfa province in 1979 were particularly relevant from this perspective. Indeed, the struggle in Siverek against the Bucak clan denoted the declaration of the foundation of the PKK (above, note 8).

Serious preparations to organize a guerilla war started a few months before the military takeover in Turkey. From the beginning of 1980, the PKK began to train its first group of militants (some 40–50 people) in Lebanon. The aim was to send these trained militants back into Turkey in order to develop the armed struggle in the Kurdistan region. With the military coup, however, that plan had to be changed, and the PKK straightaway withdrew its militants back from Turkey. Training continued, in Lebanon, and by 1982, the PKK had built a force of some 300 guerilla fighters. From September 1982 onwards, these militants were sent to Southern Kurdistan (Northern Iraq), close to Turkey (the central Iraqi government had no control over this territory at that time due to the ongoing war with Iran and emerging strength of Iraqi-Kurdish organizations). Therefore, but also as a result of an agreement with the Partîya Demokrata Kurdistan (the KDP, Kurdistan Democratic Party), the PKK was able to construct bases in the mountainous area in southern Kurdistan. Until 1984, the PKK mainly undertook reconnaissance activities,

infiltrating into northern Kurdistan (eastern and south-eastern Turkey) in small groups of three–five guerilla fighters.

On 15 August 1984 guerilla units of the PKK attacked the towns of Eruh (Siirt province) and Şemdinli (Hakkari province).[20] In Eruh one soldier lost his life and six were wounded. In Şemdinli officer housing and a military guard post were shot at with machine guns and rockets. Several soldiers and officers were killed and wounded. The guerillas handed out leaflets in the coffeehouses and hung up banners with slogans and martyrs of the liberation army.[21] This was a large-scale, daring and well-coordinated twin attack. With this operation, the start of the people's war under the leadership of the PKK against what was called a colonial and fascist Turkish state was announced. Of course, in the years ahead, armed actions had been executed in Turkey (Kurdistan), but against people collaborating with the state. State institutions themselves and their representatives had not yet been the direct target of armed operations of the PKK (Çelik 2000: 71).

The authorities in Turkey were caught by surprise. Yet they could have known. In court in 1981, both Mehmet Hayri Durmuş and Kemal Pir had announced during their defence that the PKK would start a people's war when the conditions were in place and the means available. The following excerpt is from the interrogation at the court (translation by the authors):

MEHMET HAYRI DURMUŞ: We believe in the necessity of uniting all forces that are on the side of independence and democracy, in the necessity of creating a people's army and in this way will be able to create a strong and unified people and people's front [. . .] we believe in the creation of a people's army and by making a prolonged people's war will be able to liberate our country.

Kemal Pir entered into further detail:

KEMAL PIR: Because the revolution in Kurdistan is a revolution of national liberation, because it targets the colonial political and economic structure, we are working towards a prolonged people's war.

COURT JUDGE: How will it be, this people's war?

KEMAL PIR: The PKK has a military wing. [. . .] This is not an organization appropriate for the strategic objectives of the PKK. This is for the protection of the movement, of the people, for protecting itself. [. . .] But when it organizes itself for a people's war it will be different. [. . .] That is aiming at a professional army, an armed organization. [. . .] The PKK could not do this yet. [. . .] If it had done it, we would have been with less people here [in court] and we would have heard stronger voices. [. . .] It could not do it because either it did not found the right conditions, or it could not do it because it did not have the means. [. . .] But our aim is to do it. We will do it. After 10 years, after 20 years.

It did not take 10 or 20 years to start a people's war, but only three.

In PKK historiography '15 August' is celebrated as a turning point, a day of awakening. It is believed that through the dual attack, which marked the start of

the armed struggle, the chains of submission and assimilation were broken, and Kurds rediscovered themselves. In the decades before, PKK historiography says, Kurds felt ashamed of their Kurdishness, and were in a process of forgetting their culture and language. The first bullet shot on 15 August thus hit Kurdish enslavement and colonial dictatorship simultaneously.[22] It is as if we hear Sartre speak. In his preface to Frantz Fanon's book *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Sartre had written that in the colonies, the violence perpetrated by the colonizers seeks to dehumanize the colonized. Everything is done to wipe out the traditions and culture of the colonized and to replace their language with that of the colonizer. Sartre argued that no gentleness can efface these marks of colonial violence – and that colonial violence could only be destroyed by counter-violence. Without hesitation he argued that to shoot down a colonizer is to kill two birds with one stone, at the same time to both destroy an oppressor and the man he oppresses. What remains are a dead man and a free man. This counter-violence is 'man re-creating himself' (Sartre 1961). The twin attack on Şemdinli and Eruh was considered such an act of re-creation, from out of non-entities were born Kurds (Barkey and Fuller 1998: 12).

The liberation struggle (people's war) was neither implemented nor framed in ethnic or nationalist discourses. In the statement published at the time of the 15 August attack, the PKK directly addressed the revolutionary left in Turkey, calling them to join forces and to fight against dictatorship. It emphasized that the struggle was not just a Kurdish cause, but also in the interests of Turkish people. The statement implored the Turkish people to make the struggle their own, as part off the struggle of the working class against fascism:

> Democrats and revolutionaries in Turkey, laboring Turkish people, the HRK [the name of the armed wing of the PKK at the time] is fighting the barbary which lays as a dark cloud over your life and over your future. (Çelik 2000 496–7, translation by the authors)[23]

This approach was later confirmed by Öcalan in interviews with Mahir Sayın, a prominent leader of the left in Turkey (member of THKP-C, co-founder of *Kurtuluş*, and leading member of ÖDP and SDP):

> This [the struggle by the PKK] is not a war of liberation for the Kurds. The day the Kurds will be free, the Turks will be free too. [. . .] The national liberation struggle of the Kurds is also a liberation struggle of the Turkish people. [. . .] This is what I mean to say. Some announce they will make a similar step as the PKK did. It is not necessary to make such a step; that step has already been made for you. Ha! But you can add something to our struggle, make a contribution. (Sayın 1997: 40, translation by the authors)

Actually, when we look at the history of the PKK post-1980, we see several attempts of both the PKK and the left in Turkey to come to terms with each other and establish a united front. This is not surprisingly, since there were personal

linkages between the PKK and the leftist parties from the period when they had been active in Ankara, among others in ADYÖD (many of these parties also had their roots in the THKO or the THKP-C). We will not attempt to give a full overview of the efforts to create united fronts, but mention a few of the most important, as judged in terms of the number of parties signing a protocol of collaboration, or in terms of concrete results at operational level.

In 1982, the PKK together with several parties from the left in Turkey established the Faşizme Karşı Birleşik Direniş Cephesi (FKBDC; Unified Resistance Front Against Fascism) (Aslan 2005: 72–9). The parties participating were: the PKK, Dev Yol (Devrimci Yol, Revolutionary Path), Türkiye Komünist Emek Partisi (TKEP; the Communist Labor Party of Turkey), Türkiye Emekçi Partisi (TEP; the Labour Party of Turkey),Devrimci Savaş (Revolutionary War), THKP-C-Acilciler (People's Revolutionary Party-Front of Turkey), Sosyalist Vatan Partisi (SVP; the Socialist Fatherland Party) and Türkiye Komünist Partisi/İşçinin Sesi (TKP/İS; the Communist Party of Turkey / Workers Voice). In terms of strength, the PKK and Dev-Yol were the most important political parties in the front against fascism, and as such they took the lead. However, Dev-Yol had to cope with serious difficulties. Some of its members had stayed in the Middle East, and prepared a return to Turkey in order to organize the armed struggle, while other members had fled to Europe, mainly Germany, and were supposed to provide financial and logistical support to the guerilla. For a few years, Dev-Yol guerilla units were active in rural Turkey, but the party was seriously hit by arrests. Meanwhile, the attempt to organize financial and logistical support from its organization in Europe failed, and the guerilla collapsed (Aslan 2005). Other than the PKK, no organization in the FKBDC was able to organize significant resistance, and eventually, in 1986, the FKBDC dissolved (Jongerden 2007: 60).

In 1993, the PKK together with several leftist parties created the Devrimci Demokratik Güç Birliği (DDGB; the Revolutionary Democratic United Force).[24] The DDGB remained a coalition only on paper, however, and gradually dissolved over time, the main reason being that the small leftist parties could not gain momentum and become significant players in the political arena in Turkey. In 1996 a protocol for cooperation was signed between the PKK and DHKP-C. In addition to a shared history in ADYÖD in 1974, members of both parties had received education in the Beka'a valley in Palestinian training camps (in separate camps, but very close to each other). At the operational level, combined guerilla operations of the armed wing of the PKK, the ARGK, and units of the DHKP-C took place in Tokat. This was in accordance with the PKK strategy to expand the revolutionary struggle in Turkey. However, in other areas, collaboration failed to materialize. At the political level, cooperation did not develop well. The DHKP-C accused the PKK of preferring collaboration with so-called 'reformist' parties, such as the ÖDP (DHKP-C 1998). In 1998, the year the collaboration with the DHKP-C ended, the PKK formed a platform with a number of parties from the left in Turkey called Devrimci Birleşik Güçler (DBG; Unified Revolutionary Forces).[25]

In reality, the united fronts agreed upon had little more than a symbolic function. They gave the impression of a united revolutionary left, but attempts at collaboration

by the PKK and the revolutionary left in Turkey largely failed to materialize, politically or militarily. Only with the Devrimci Halk Partisi (DHP; Revolutionary People's Party) and the Türkiye Devrim Partisi (TDP; Revolutionary Party Turkey), did the PKK enter into close collaboration. At the operational level, joint guerilla units were established – known under the name Birleşik Kuvvetler (United Forces) – which were active in the Black Sea coast area, including the mountainous Mesudiye region. The TDP, however, which had emerged as a break away party from TSİP in 1978, dissolved at the beginning of the new millennium, and the DHP, a party newly established in 1993, was not able to develop itself. Many of its members were arrested in 1994, after a central committee member became a police informer. Also, its close relationship to the PKK made it vulnerable to the accusation of being a mere satellite party.[26]

It would be wrong to look at collaboration between the PKK and the revolutionary left just at the level of parties. Individual members of the revolutionary left in Turkey also participated in the PKK guerilla movement. In 1984, when guerilla operations began, the PKK had informal relations with, among others, Mucadele Birlik/Emeğin Birliği (Unity in Struggle/Labor Unity), a party which had its roots in the THKO. One of its members (codename Kerim) was active in the guerilla unit under the command of Mahsum Korkmaz, responsible for the 15 August attack (Çelik 2000: 80). There were more from the Turkish left, who would join the PKK and its armed organization, including people from the SVP. Others were trained by the PKK, as is the case with militants from Devrimci Karargah[27] (Revolutionary Headquarters, an armed organization from the left which emerged in the 2000s and has its roots in the THKP-C tradition).[28]

Finally, we should not forget cooperation in the legal domain. In 1995, Halkın Demokrasi Partisi (HADEP; the People's Democracy Party) entered the national election in coalition with other leftist parties under the name of Emek, Bariş ve Özgürlük Bloku (the Labour, Peace and Freedom Block). The Block would have had 34 members in parliament, had the Turkish election system not included its threshold of 10 per cent (of the national vote). In the national elections of 2002, a collaboration was entered into between Demokratik Halk Partisi (DEHAP; the Democratic People's Party, successor to HADEP), Emek Partisi (EMEP; the Labour Party) and Sosyalist Demokrasi Partisi (SDP; the Socialist Democracy Party). This would have secured 53 MPs, but again the 10 per cent threshold left the Kurdish-Leftist coalition with no representation in parliament. In local elections, legal parties of the left in Turkey (i.e. those which were not closed down by the state) and the party close to the PKK party complex collaborated, and managed to get a strong position in the Kurdistan region, and some small pockets in Turkey outside this area. Finally, the breakthrough for Kurdish-leftist representation at national level came in the July 2007 parliamentary elections, when the alleged legal wing of the PKK, Demokratik Toplum Partisi (DTP; the Democratic Society Party, successor to DEHAP), in merger with Demokrat Toplum Hareketi (DTH; Democratic Society Movement), collaborated with legal leftist and revolutionary parties in Turkey, EMEP, SDP, ÖDP and some independents. Success was achieved by candidates running as independents, and thereby circumventing the threshold.

Presenting themselves as '*Bin Umut Adayları*' (the Thousand Hope Candidates), 22 of these 'independents' were elected to parliament, with all but one then going on to form a DTP faction in parliament.[29]

Final remarks

In this contribution, the period 1973–7 has been depicted as one of ideological group formation, with the period 1977–9 portrayed as the stage of party construction. The period 1979–84 may be characterized as the time when the guerilla warfare was prepared and organized. Initial preparations to enter into armed struggle in northern Kurdistan / the south-east of Turkey in 1979–1980 were interrupted by the military coup in, followed by a retreat of PKK militants south, to southern Kurdistan (Syria) and Lebanon. The period September 1982–August 1984 was marked by preparations to organize a prolonged people's war and to return. Guerilla units were mainly concerned with developing a network of support and reconnaissance activities. 15 August 1984 marks both the end of these preparations and the beginning of a prolonged people's war.

The main argument of this chapter is that in the process of party formation and building, the PKK was clearly influenced by the revolutionary left in Turkey. Not only did its personnel emerge from the revolutionary left in Turkey (and Ankara in particular), but it was also crucially informed by the discourse of the revolutionary left in Turkey, which played a central role in the process of group formation. The militants considered themselves Marxists engaged in making a revolution with Kurdistan as their focal area. Linkages with 'traditional' Kurdish parties did not exist and for this reason it is not surprising that these parties were not familiar with the PKK's process of party formation, and regarded the party as one 'without a history'. Of course, the PKK had a history, but a very different one from the other parties involved with the issue of Kurds and Kurdistan. It took its orientation from the left, and built upon the experiences of the left (in particular, the experiences of THKP-C and THKO with armed struggle).

In the process of party formation and party building, and in the implementation of revolutionary violence, the PKK aspired to collaboration with the revolutionary left in Turkey, although such collaboration never bore fruit. In the legal sphere, however, collaboration between the lawful political party close to the PKK party-complex (DEP, HADEP, DEHAP, DTP) and permitted revolutionary parties has been more successful. The legal party close to the PKK managed to establish long-standing collaboration with leftist parties, and, although this never resulted in crossing the election threshold of 10 percent, it has managed to win the popular vote in eastern and south-eastern Turkey, securing representation at national level and gaining municipal control in several areas at regional level. All in all, we may conclude that historically the PKK is firmly rooted in the revolutionary left in Turkey, and, in this respect should be considered a political party of Turkey.

Appendix

PKK Congresses 1978–86

Throughout its history, the PKK has held ten congresses, the last one on 21–30 August 2008. In this appendix we include only the first three congresses, because only these are relevant for the period covered in this chapter.

First Congress or Constitutional Congress (foundation of PKK)

26–27 November 1978
Fis (Ziyaret), Liçe district of Diyarbakır province

At the meeting in a village in the northern Liçe district in Diyarbakır, delegates were to discuss the establishment of a political party and its programme. The name of the party was proposed later, in April 1979, at the meeting of the Central Committee.

Some 24 people were called to the meeting, but only 22 were able to participate.[1] It was not a random gathering. Those who attended represented a particular region, and were to be considered delegates (for example, Cemil Bayık, Sakine Cansiz and Huseyin Topgider represented Elazig whereas Mehmet Şener and Ferzende Tağaç represented Batman; etc.).[2]

At the meeting several decisions were made, among others to become a party (although the party was not yet given a name). It was decided that the delegates at the meeting and the revolutionary martyrs were the party's first members. A document named 'the Way of the Revolution in Kurdistan' was accepted as the party programme. Abdullah Öcalan was elected General Secretary, and Mehmet Karasunğur and Sahin Donmez as members of the Central Execution Committee. After Karasunğur resigned, Cemil Bayık replaced him. In 1979, the number of members of the Central Committee increased to seven, including Öcalan, Bayık, Donmez, Mehmet Karasunğur, Mehmet Hayri Durmuş, Mazlum Doğan and Baki Karer. Mehmet Karasunğur, who led the armed struggle of the party in Siverek-Hilvan, was elected as responsible for the party's military affairs. However, within a year positions were reallocated because of arrests.

Second Congress

20–25 August 1982
Palestinian Camp on the Jordan–Syria border

In this particular congress the PKK determined its guerilla strategy. Three phases in guerilla warfare were distinguished: strategic defence, strategic balance and strategic offence. Small units returned to Kurdistan for making armed propaganda. It was decided to start with guerilla actions – the second phase of strategic defence

– in the autumn of 1983. However, preparation took longer than expected and this phase actually started on 15 August 1984 with the attack on the towns Semdinli and Eruh. Together with this attack the establishment of the Hêzên Rizgarîya Kurdistan (HRK; Kurdistan Liberation Units) was announced (Çelik 2000).

The congress was overshadowed by the Çetin Güngör incident. Güngör criticized the lack of internal democracy, and did not back off when he had left. In public meetings he agitated against the dogmatism and lack of democracy within the party. On one of these meetings in Sweden in 1985 Çetin Güngör (Semir) was killed by a PKK militant. Baki Karer left the PKK in 1984, and became one of its most bitter critics.

Third Congress

25–30 October, 1986
Helve Camp (Mahsum Korkmaz Academy), Beka'a Valley, Lebanon [3]

In this particular congress it was decided to advance the armed struggle (from guerilla actions to strategic balance), the size of the guerilla units was increased and the size of the area these units were deployed increased. The HRK was dissolved and the Arteşa Rizgarîya Gele Kurdistan (ARGK; Kurdistan People's Liberation Army) was founded. At this congress a so-called military draft law was approved (which obliges every family to send someone to the guerilla forces: the implementation of this decision was heavily criticized at the Fourth Congress). For political and military instruction the Mahsum Korkmaz Academy was established, which became the new name of the Helve Camp.

The Enîya Rizgarîya Netewa Kurdistan (ERNK; Kurdistan National Liberation Front) was founded, a popular front which had been viable mainly in Europe. The ERNK was officially recognized by the Central Committee of the PKK.

Foundation of HPP (internal intelligence) and TEVSAL (external intelligence).[4]

Foundation of the Kürdistan Yurtsever Kadınlar Birliği (KYKB; Union of Patriotic Women in Kurdistan) for the organization of women.

Cemil Bayik, one of the founders of the PKK, however qualifies this congress as the congress at which internal accounts were settled. Öcalan had severely criticized those responsible for the guerilla forces during 1984–6, in particular Duran Kalkan and Selahattin Çelik. According to Öcalan they missed many opportunities to enlarge the guerilla force and were too dependent on the KDP in terms of logistics. In addition there was harsh 'self-criticism' in the congress in the form of personality analyses with the motto '*What hereby is analysed is not the person but the society and not the moment but the history*'. ('Burada çözümlenen kişi değil toplum, an değil tarihtir'). The personality analysis was directed by Öcalan and surged through the whole organization. In general terms, it can be said that in this congress the PKK was transformed from a Leninist organization into one in which Öcalan gained special status. After the congress, Öcalan was referred to as the party leadership (*Önderlik*).

Appendix Notes

1 The persons who participated in the congress were:
   1 Abdullah Öcalan (Prisoner at the Imrali island in Turkey)
   2 Cemil Bayık (Active in the PKK, holding a leading position)
   3 Şahin Dönmez (after arrested, cooperates with the police and betrays his former comrades. Founds a Kemalist organization in prison, killed by the PKK in Istanbul in 1990)
   4 M. Hayri Durmuş (died in a hunger strike in Diyarbakir prison in September 1982)
   5 Mehmet Turan (killed in 1979 in Mardin by the PKK on the accusation of being a Turkish agent)
   6 Mehmet Cahit Şener (founder of PKK-Vejin, killed by the PKK in Qamislo on November 1, 1991)
   7 Ferzende Tağaç (left the PKK and active politics)
   8 A. Haydar Kaytan (Active in the PKK, holding a leading position)
   9 Mazlum Doğan (member of the central committee of the PKK, committed suicide at 21 March 1982 as a protest against the torture and inhuman treatment he and the other political prisoners were submitted to)
   10 Sakine Polat /Cansız (Active in the PKK, holding a leading position)
   11 Hüseyin Topgider (left the PKK in 2000, lives in Germany)
   12 Ali Gündüz (works with the Turkish security forces)
   13 Kesire Öcalan/Yıldırım (left the PKK, alive)
   14 Duran Kalkan (Active in the PKK, holding a leading position)
   15 Ali Çetiner (lives in Germany)
   16 Faruk Özdemir (Prisoner, released and left active politics)
   17 Abbas Göktas¸ (Unknown)
   18 Abdullah Kumral (killed by Israelian troops when they invaded Lebanon in 1982)
   19 Baki Karer (fled from the PKK in 1984, lives in Sweden)
   20 Result Altinok (killed in 1984 by PKK)
   21 Suphi Karakuş (was killed in 1985 by PKK)
   22 Seyfettin Zoğurlu (killed in combat in 1986)

   Alaatin Zoğurlu (killed by the police in Diyarbakir in 1987), younger brother of Seyfettin, was responsible for security.

   Mehmet Karasungur (killed in 1983 by the PUK) and Kemal Pir (died in prison in a hunger strike in 1982) were called to the congress, but were not able to participate. Mehmet Karasungur at that time was in the Hilvan-Siverek region, where the organization was engaged in an armed resistance against tribes supporting the state. Karasungur was coordinating the armed struggle in that region. Kemal Pir had been arrested and was in prison.
2 The congress in the Fis village in the Lice district of Diyarbakır province was hosted by the family of İsmet Zoğurlu. Of his sons at the meeting, Seyfettin was among the delegates and Alaattin was responsible for security. Seyfettin and Alaattin Zoğurlu left Turkey after the coup and received military training in Lebanon. Seyfettin Zoğurlu was taken prisoner by the Israel Defence Forces while resisting the Israeli invasion in 1982 in Lebanon. After his release, he returned to the PKK and was active in a unit which is operational along the border between Iraq and Turkey. In 1986 he was killed in a clash with Turkish troops in Uludere. His older brother Alaattin was killed on 11 June 1987 in Diyarbakır (Melikahmet quarter), together with another militant, when the apartment they were staying in was surrounded and attacked by the police.
3 At the time of his death, Mahsum Korkmaz was the highest commander of the HRK. Together with Abdullah Ekinci he had been responsible for the daring attack on Eruh and Şemdinli in 1984, which announced the beginning of the guerilla war against the

Turkish state. Mahsum Korkmaz was killed in 1986 in Şirnak in an ambush by Turkish armed forces.

4 It is disputed whether these two institutions have been really founded. Former members of the PKK claim that internal intelligence is mainly organized in the form of written self-critique and critique, which PKK members are obliged to write and which directly go to Abdullah Öcalan. External intelligence allegedly also runs through Öcalan, who sometimes simply used the phone for getting information.

Notes

1 See <http://www.diyarbakirzindani.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=65&Itemid=39>.

2 Kurdistan refers to a geographical region in the Middle East covering large parts of south-east Turkey, northern Syria, northern Iraq and north-western Iran (the territory regarded as the homeland of the Kurds and claimed politically for a pan-Kurdish nation-state).

3 For a treatment of the war between the PKK and the Turkish Armed Forces, see Jongerden 2007.

4 During the 1920s and 1930s, the newly established Republic of Turkey imposed its authority over the Kurds and annexed Kurdistan, and, at the time of the emergence of the PKK, the south-east of Turkey, or the northern parts of Kurdistan, had been ruled under martial law and emergency regulations since 1927. Until 1952, the area, or more specifically Bitlis, Diyarbakır, Elazığ, Hakkari, Mardin, Siirt, Urfa and Van, was administered by an Inspector General, an office established in 1927 to bring order and discipline. In 1935, two further Inspector Generals were appointed to administer 'Kurdish' areas, one for the 'Murat and Munzur' region, covering Dersim (Tunceli), and the other for the northern part of the South-eastsouth-east, covering Ağri, Çoruh, Erzincan, Erzurum, Gümüshane, Kars, and Trabzon (the two other Inspector Generals – of five in total – administered Thrace in the north-west and Antakya in the south). The South-east was closed to foreigners until 1965, and the region ruled under state of emergency from 1980 to 2002 (Jongerden 2007). The Turkish state refused to accommodate Kurdish aspirations or enter into political discussions on the matter. In the Republic, 'citizenship' was considered to be equivalent to 'Turkishness', and in practice Kurds were required to qualify themselves thus, as cultural/ethnic Turks (Barkey and Fuller 1998: 10).

5 For a discussion, see Chapter 8, this volume, on the PKK in the 2000s (Akkaya and Jongerden).

6 On 30 July 1979 the PKK made an attempt to kill Mehmet Celal Bucak, a high-ranking member of the conservative Justice Party and an exploitive landlord, who owned thousands of hectares of land with more than 20 villages including the town and district of Siverek in the south-eastern province of Urfa (Jongerden 2007: 55). Bucak was not only targeted for what he represented – an exploitative landlord class and a repressive state – but also for what he did. As the co-founder of a society for the struggle against communism, Mehmet Celal Bucak had announced that he would not allow the left to gain support in Siverek and boasted he already had drawn up a black list of leftists to be killed (Büyükkaya 2008: 39, 100). His position as a bad landlord and ally of the state, and his reputation as an anti-leftist roughneck made him an ideal target for the PKK. The assassination failed, however. Mehmet Celal Bucak was wounded, though his son of eight was killed, while the PKK lost one of its prominent members in the Siverek-Hilvan region, Salih Kandal.

7 There are several books in which PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan, together with others, looks back on the seventies, the period in which the organization was formed. Such discussions of PKK history and the political situation in the 1970s were undertaken largely by leaders of the revolutionary left. See, among others, Sayın 1997 and Öcalan and Belli 1999.

8 Not only the THKP-C and THKO, but also the historical Türkiye İşçi ve Köylu Kurtuluş Ordusu, TİKKO (the Workers and Peasants Liberation Army of Turkey) led by İbrahim Kaypakkaya.
9 In the official records that had to be handed to the police the names of board members were different.
10 Among them, Riza Altun (who still is a high-ranking PKK member, and has been member of the PKK Central Committee and Chairmanship Council). Others are Sahin Kilavuz, Ibrahim Bilgin (of Turkish origin), Dogan Kilickaya (of Turkish origin), and Haydar Altun, who were killed in different clashes in Kurdistan after 1982.
11 See <http://www.diyarbakirzindani.com/index.php?Itemid=39&id=65&option=com_content&task=view>.
12 Mazlum Doğan was born in 1955 in Teman, a village in the Karakoçan district of Elazığ province. Doğan studied to be a teacher at Eskişehir and Balıkesir before starting a course in economics at Hacettepe University in Ankara in 1974. He committed suicide by hanging on the evening of the Kurdish New Year, 21 March 1982. In PKK historiography, it is said that before killing himself, he lit three matches (symbolizing the fire of Newroz, a major ritual celebration for Kurds, public observance of which was banned). His act of suicide is celebrated as an act of resistance against the torture he and others detainees were submitted to in Diyarbakir prison, regarded as a symbol not to surrender to the daily tyranny or conform to humiliating prison regime (PKK prisoners refused to wear prison uniforms, sing the national hymn or repeat the oath that one is 'proud to be a Turk').
13 The raid took place after a clash with students.
14 In their court defense, Mazlum Dogan, Kemal Pir, Hayri Durmus reject both the names 'Apocu' and 'UKO'. Available online at <http://www.diyarbakirzindani.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=category&sectionid=6&id=16&Itemid=39> (accessed 20 August 2008).
15 The usage of names here is obviously politically prejucial (and cannot be otherwise). The leaning of this text is henceforth toward the Kurdish bias, employing the perspective of its subject, the PKK. More profoundly, however, any reference to ethnicity in specifying territory implicity assumes a nationalist discourse, with all that might imply. See Jongerden (2007: 29–30) for a brief discussion.
16 Among them were Cuma Tak, Mehmet Sevgat, Şeymus Yiğit, Veysi Badem and Seyfettin Zoğurlu, who took part in the armed struggle and were killed in different clashes, and Nizamettin Tas, a long-time member of the PKK Central Committee and Chairmanship Council who separated from the PKK and established a new political party, Partiya Welatparez'e Demokratik (PWD; Patriotic Democratic Party).
17 The group had a central emphasis on the Kurdish question, but this was not in the form of nationalist framework. Cemil Bayık, one of the founders of the PKK explained this as follows: 'We gained national understanding through socialism; not vice versa. First we became familiar with socialism, and through this we comprehended the national question' (Akkaya 2005: Part 3).
18 The meeting took place at the Chamber of Architects head office, at Konur Sokak, Kızılay, in the centre of Ankara. As the translation of its name perhaps suggests (with 'union' for 'birliği' rather than, say, 'association') this professional body is also actively political, with a leftist leaning (e.g. see its current declaration of 'Fundamentals', at http://www.tmmob.org.tr/images/eng.htm.
19 There is also a dissident reading of the killing of Haki Karer. According to Baki Karer, the brother of Haki, Haki was killed after a conflict with Öcalan. The reason for this political murder, Baki Karer argues, is Abdullah Öcalan's close relations with a person known under the code name of Pilot and suspected of being an intelligence agent. Others within the party were agitated by the relationship between Öcalan and Pilot, and Baki Karer, as member of the political centre of the movement, allegedly raised the issue in a personal meeting with Öcalan, at which Haki is said to have announced an investigation into the

issue. It was on the following day that Haki was killed. Accordingly, the death of Haki was (and is) symbolic of the way Öcalan led (leads) the party (Karer 1999). However, this account and interpretation of the events surrounding the death of his brother was only made by Baki Karer after he had left the party in 1984, seven years after the killing.

20 15 August was planned not to be a twin but a triple attack. The third town was Çatak in the province of Van, but the commander of the unit cancelled the operation. The decision to start the armed struggle against the state was already taken at the second congress of the PKK in 1982. Tactical preparations had taken much time. Eventually, on 22 July 1984 Abbas (Duran Kalkan), Fuat (Ali Haydar Kaytan), Fatma (Kesire Yildirim), Ebubekir (Halil Ataç), Cuma (Cemil Bayik) and Selim (Selahattin Çelik) unanimously gave the green light to the military operation in which the two towns were attacked (Çelik 2000: 73).

21 The name Hêzen Rizgarîye Kurdîstan (Kurdistan Liberation Units) was used. This name resembles the name given by General Giap to his army in Vietnam, the Vietnam Liberation Units.

22 On a PKK-related website, it was written: '15 Ağustosla patlayan ilk kurşun bu anlamıyla herşeyden önce Kürt köleliğine sıkılan bir kurşundur. (. . .) [S]onra da sömürgeci zorbalığa sıkılmıştır': <http://www.rojaciwan.com /haber-39286.html> (accessed 18 August 2008).

23 See also Sayın (1997: xx).

24 TDP, TKP-ML Hareketi, TKP-Kıvılcım, MLSPB, TIKKO, TKEP, and Ekim.

25 With TDP, MLKP, DHP, TKP-ML, DABK, TKP-Kıvılcım and Dev Sol (which had split off from the DHKP-C).

26 See <http://www.gomanweb.com /2008_gomanweb/Yazarlar/Tayfun_isci/tayfun_isci21.htm>, and PKK Nereden Nereye (PKK from Where to Where) in the Özgürlük journal, at <http://www.ozgurluk.org/kitaplik/webarsiv/kurtulus/eskisayilar/H-icin84/pkk.htm> (accessed 3 October 2008).

27 See <http://www.devrimcikarargah.com>.

28 See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3UEvvAVk69w>.

29 The exception being an ÖDP member, who went his own way.

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8 The PKK in the 2000s

Continuity through breaks?

Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya
and Joost Jongerden

Introduction

The Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) has been, and is, one of the most important secular political movement in the Middle East. The party's radical political outlook (with its view of Kurdistan as an international colony and its objective of unification, both of Kurdistan and the revolutionary forces in Turkey) and strategy (the determination that liberation can be accomplished only by a means of a people's war, and its lack of hesitation in adopting violence as a tactic, not only against the state but also against powerful Kurdish tribal leaders and those considered to be collaborators) have been at the heart of controversy (Van Bruinessen 1988; Kutschera 1994; McDowall 2007). Yet since the capture of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan, the focus of discussion has shifted towards an alleged radical break in the PKK's political outlook and its capacities to act.[1] Did the organization in the Imralı period throw off its PKK heritage, and give up the ideal of a united Kurdistan (Özcan 2006)? Or was the PKK undergoing a similar fate as Shining Path in Peru, an organization losing its way after the capture of its leader (Hoffman and Cragin 2002)?[2] In this contribution, we argue that the PKK experienced severe difficulties in the period following the arrest of Abdullah Öcalan, but has managed to reinvent itself through a series of transformations. We discuss some of the changes that the PKK has experienced in the 2000s, considering its ideology, politics and organization. And we argue that the PKK has neither abandoned the idea of a united Kurdistan nor its efforts to accomplish radical political change in Turkey, but is trying to accomplish these in new ways. Furthermore, the PKK has not been pushed into marginality, but rather has remained both a strong pan-Kurdish political actor and an important actor in Turkish politics.

In this chapter we try to understand changes in the PKK from the party's own perspective. Data has been collected through the study of Abdullah Öcalan's defence texts and the 'prison notes', along with key PKK documents, such as congress reports and formal decisions. This chapter is composed of three parts. In the first, we discuss the developments between the autumn of 1998 and August 1999, during which Abdullah Öcalan was forced to leave Syria where he had lived for almost 20 years and was finally captured in Kenya and brought to Turkey. In the second part, we take a closer look at the changes the PKK underwent after the arrest of Öcalan. We consider the organizational structure of the PKK (the transformation

from a classical political party to a party complex); its ideology (the transformation of a statist approach to one centred on a democratic republic, envisioning radical change in Turkey, and democratic confederalism, through which society-building in Kurdistan is sought); and the political-military struggle (the transformation from a classical people's war aimed at a military defeat or retreat of the state army from Turkish Kurdistan, towards an approach aimed at political settlement).[3]

Shock and retreat

On 16 February 1999, Turkish Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit made a statement in an extraordinary press conference that hit the headlines and shocked Kurdish communities all over the world: PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan had been captured in Kenya and brought to Turkey: 'He [Abdullah Öcalan] arrived in Turkey at 3 a.m. this morning. The operation has been accomplished due to a complete harmonious cooperation between our Intelligence Organization and General Staff of Armed Forces' (Yetkin 2004: 177, authors' translation).

The news was too good to be true for the Turkish state, which had been looking for Öcalan for 20 years, ever since he had left Turkey for Syria in July 1979. Pursuit had begun in earnest after Öcalan was forced to leave Syria on 9 October 1998, following mounting pressure on the Syrian regime from Ankara. From the summer of that year, first Turkey's army commanders and then its politicians, including the president, had openly threatened Syria with war over its support for the PKK. How real that threat was is questionable, but Syria took it seriously (Bila 2004: 76–8). The message to leave was conveyed to Öcalan by Syrian vice-president Abdul Halim Khaddam (*Sabah* 2006).

Öcalan's ejection from Syria became a final countdown for the Kurdish leader, who turned into the 'Flying Dutchman' (Gunter 2008: 60),[4] seeking political asylum in different European countries. This odyssey saw Öcalan pass through Russia, Italy and Greece before landing up in Nairobi, Kenya, where he found shelter in the Greek embassy. Then, on his way from the embassy to the airport under the impression that he was being transported to a safe haven, he was captured and delivered to Turkish intelligence officers. Contrary to Ecevit's remarks quoted above, which gave all the credit to the Turkish authorities, it is widely believed that the USA played a significant role in this clandestine operation (*New York Times*, 20 February 1999).

Kurdish sympathizers and PKK militants across the world reacted furiously, with demonstrations, riots and occupations of Greek embassies.[5] Some 75 people set fire to themselves between October 1998 and February 1999 in protest at the hunting down of the PKK leader (Özcan 2006: 278–9). The Kurdish response to Öcalan's capture showed the extent to which the Kurdish national movement had become a transnational phenomenon, as well as its unity in the sense that Kurds everywhere closed ranks (Van Bruinessen 2000).[6] Uproar and violence ended with the first statements of Öcalan, who called for calm.

Regional and international politics concerning the Kurds had proved decisive in the denouement of the Öcalan saga. With the Washington Agreement between the

two, hitherto battling, Iraqi Kurdish parties (the Kurdistan Democratic Party [KDP] and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan [PUK]) in September 1998, the US administration had designated a new project for Kurds in which there was no place for the PKK (or its leader), which had been included in the US Department of State list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations since 1996. The fourth of the seven articles of the Agreement, had explicitly stated that 'no concessions would be granted to the PKK, and they should not be allowed to be based in Iraqi Kurdistan' (Stansfield 2003: 102). The US government was actively involved in the fight against PKK thereafter. Although Prime Minister Ecevit stated that he did not understand why the US had helped in capture of Öcalan (Yetkin 2004: 148), the Deputy Undersecretary of the Turkish National Intelligence Service (MIT), in direct communication with the CIA during the pursuit, admitted that Öcalan had represented an impediment to American policies toward northern (Kurdish) Iraq when he was handed to Turkey (*Vatan* 2008). At the level of international politics, a favourable bipolarity that created room for manoeuvre for liberation movements all over the world came to end with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Syria, without the indirect protection of the Soviet Union, had become vulnerable to intervention by Turkey (backed by the United States). Developments both at the regional level and in world politics thus made the PKK vulnerable.

The PKK and Abdullah Öcalan thought they could make a virtue of necessity. Öcalan announced that with his move to Europe, the PKK were making a decisive step forwards: 'By moving out off Ankara we established a Party; by moving to the Middle East we formed an army; and now by moving to Europe we will become a state' (Öcalan 2000: 82). Yet since his departure from Syria, Öcalan had been under heavy pressure. He felt obliged to leave the Russian Federation, Italy and Greece, and was denied access to the Netherlands. It was clear, nevertheless, that the PKK and its leader were not prepared for the dramatic changes they faced. This is demonstrated in Öcalan's odyssey and the fact that his move to Europe was enforced and unsuccessful, just as was his move out again, to Africa – and, in less than six months (from October 1998 to February 1999), the PKK faced the most dramatic event of its existence: its leader landing in the hands of their number one enemy.

Under arrest and facing charges of treason, Öcalan started to study and work on his defence, which also resulted in the development of a new political project. This was centred on the concepts of the democratic republic and, later, democratic confederalism, both of which are based on a radical rethinking of the concept of democracy. During this period, through a combination of important practical steps, including the declaration of a unilateral ceasefire which anticipated the withdrawal of the majority of the guerilla forces from Turkey into the mountainous areas of northern Iraq, and political gestures such as the surrender of two small groups of militants (eight from the guerilla forces and eight from the political wing in Europe), Öcalan attempted to show his 'good will' and open up a space for dialogue. It seemed as if he were levering his demands concerning the Kurdish question to a minimum, confining them to the 'recognition of the Kurdish people's rights to [unrestricted use of their] language and free cultural expression' along with the

abandonment of the military approach by both sides, the state and the militants (Öcalan 1999: 93–5).

In spite of his arrest, conviction and incarceration on the now high security Marmara island prison of Imralı, Abdullah Öcalan was able to continue to guide the PKK. That he was able to maintain his leadership position as a prisoner is remarkable; it was facilitated by the loyalty of a significant number of party members and militants. The way he has led the organization, however, has changed over time. In the first years, until 2005, Öcalan was concerned with the nitty-gritty of daily affairs and intervened in the practical issues of the organization. Since 2005 though, he has been more concerned with general issues of strategy, mainly contemporary world and regional politics and the challenges the PKK faces. Instead of both tactical and strategically leadership, he now primarily exercises strategic leadership.

Öcalan's main channel of communication with the party and the outside world is through his regular meetings with lawyers and immediate family members. He is permitted to see his Turkish lawyers for one hour once a week (in the first years, it was twice a week), and his immediate relatives for an hour a month. In addition, he occasionally meets with his European lawyers and the delegation of European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT, of the Council of Europe). Naturally, all meetings are made under strict surveillance, and visits have also frequently been prevented.[7] Öcalan has no TV, and books and papers are supplied by the lawyers but are not always passed through. His main source of information is a radio that cannot receive anything but the state channel broadcasting.

Through these weekly meetings with his lawyers, Öcalan produced two groups of texts which served his work as the leading ideologue of the party. One is his defence texts, delivered in handwritten pages to the lawyers and which became the main ideological reference for the party. The second is the notes of the lawyers taken during the meetings. As one of Öcalan's lawyers narrated:

> At the beginning, all meetings were recorded separately by the four lawyers participating. Returning from the island, we would combine our notes and making one general record. Since 2005, all of our notes have been taken from us and not returned. After that we started to record the meetings afterwards, from memory. (Şakar 2008, authors' translation)

The notes taken down and records compiled of these meetings have been made public by Kurdish TV channels, news agencies and newspapers. They have been mainly oriented towards actual political matters. The meetings in effect served to communicate a series of weekly messages to PKK followers, in which Öcalan commented on regional and world politics and on the challenges faced by the PKK. Among other things, he explained, in the light of contemporary political developments, his political project of democratic republic and democratic confederalism.[8]

Transformation of the organizational structure of the PKK

When the PKK was established as a political party in 1978, it had the classical organizational structure of communist parties, with a General Secretary as the leading party official and an Executive Committee responsible for direct operations. The highest executive institution was the Central Committee, and the Party Congress was the highest decision-making body of the party. Over the years, however, the PKK grew more complex. In 1995, for example, Ismet Imset commented thus on the organization of the party:

> Currently, the PKK consists of a main political body which is the Party itself. In effect, this body functions as the legislative while the Kurdistan National Liberation Front (ERNK) and the Kurdistan National Liberation Army (ARGK) are executive bodies. The overall political, social and military apparatus of the organization is highly complicated. It does not function in the form of a secretive small group, as would be the case in a terrorist organization, but as a well organized, massive and complicated machine. Each function or activity is carried out by separate committees. (Imset 1995).

Today, the organization has grown even more complex, and what we refer to as the PKK is actually a party complex, a complex of parties and organizations comprising several parties (including the PKK as a party) and sister parties in Iraq, Syria and Iran,[9] the co-party which separately organizes women,[10] the armed organizations and the popular front Kongra-Gel. It is difficult to represent the organization with a traditional organizational flowchart. As the members and sympathizers of the PKK refer to Abdullah Öcalan, as a sun (*güneş*), we may develop this analogy and compare the organization of the party-complex as a planetary system: The planets (PKK, KONGRA-GEL,[11] KKK/KCK[12] KNK,[13] and guerilla forces[14]) are in orbit around a sun (Abdullah Öcalan), and various moons (institutions, committees) are in orbit around these.

In order to understand this complex system, it can be helpful to trace the history of developments in the organizational structure since the capture of Öcalan. During the period between 1999 and 2005, the PKK movement held many congresses on organizational reconstruction. When Öcalan was captured in 1999, the PKK was in fact holding its sixth congress, in northern Iraq. The congress ended abruptly, authorizing its military arm to fight against the capture as well as electing party bodies, including a Presidential Council of the PKK composed of seven members. Due to the extraordinary situation, the organizational structure of the PKK remained mostly unchanged, the aim being to protect the unity of organization and to fulfil the leadership functions in the absence of Öcalan.

In January 2000 an extraordinary congress was held. This seventh congress sought official acceptance of the new party line based on Öcalan's project for a democratic republic. In addition to the political-ideological change, the Congress decided on important organizational restructuring. The most important change was the abolition of the old army front structure, the ARGK and ERNK, and their

replacement with the new bodies, HPG and YDK. These were not merely technical adjustments, but introduced new ideological and political lines which involved a major strategic shift, from the approach based on armed struggle to one of 'democratic transformation'. On the basis of this congress, the PKK was radically reorganized and a campaign of militants' re-education was launched.

The eighth congress of the PKK was held two years later, in 2002. With this congress, the PKK ceased its activities in all areas and a new organization, Kongreya Azadiya u Demokrasiya Kurdistan (KADEK; the Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress) was founded. This was enabled by the completion of the organizational restructuring based on Öcalan's proposal for the process of a 'Peace and Democratic Solution within the line of Democratic Civilization'. Outlined by Öcalan in his defence submitted to the European Court of Human Rights, this process aimed at the creation of a coordinating organization. In the final resolution of the eighth PKK congress, entitled 'PKK becomes KADEK', the change was explained thus:

> It was decided that this would accommodate the various different organizations to be created within parts of Kurdistan and related countries with due attention being given to the new line as well as the objective conditions of the area in question. [15]

Although the transition from PKK to KADEK was not a simply a change of names, the relinquishment of the historical name was obviously likely to affect PKK supporters, all the more coming so soon after the capture of their leader. In official statements, therefore, words like 'abolition' or 'closure' (of the party) were avoided:

> the PKK style struggle is now out of date and that is why all the activities under the name of PKK were ceased as of 4 April 2002. Our Congress which was attended by four living founder members of the PKK as well as many other members who participated in the founding process of the same decided that all activities under the name of PKK are now ceased in all areas and that any activities which may take place under the name of the PKK are illegitimate.[16]

The change presumed that the transformation process which the party complex had been undergoing since the seventh congress had reached a new level. A pioneer party, the PKK, which controlled all fields of activities, was replaced by a congress organization that was to coordinate, not rule, the different parties and organizations in the party complex. Within this framework, the different parties for different parts of Kurdistan were founded. KADEK itself was not able to launch the new beginning, however, since it was designated as a terrorist organization by the EU almost immediately after it was formed. This created great frustration among the supporters of the PKK, and showed the changing atmosphere post 9/11.

Also a part of this changing atmosphere, the US invasion of Iraq and fall of the Baath regime in the spring of 2003 had a deep impact for Kurdish movements,

creating a new power balance in Iraqi Kurdistan. Against the concrete gains of Iraqi Kurds, the PKK and its democratic transformation project seemed somewhat irrelevant and appeared marginalized. The US invasion and change in the status of the Iraqi Kurds also had a direct bearing on the PKK structure and its supporters.

In the midst of all this, Öcalan proposed a new organizational structure on the basis of his new defence, submitted for his case in Greece and concerning his capture. The discussion over the organizational restructuring ended in a new congress in November 2003, where it was declared that Öcalan's proposal for a people's congress would include all parts of Kurdistan but would not involve a state-building project. Öcalan said:

> The People's Congress of Kurdistan can envisage a peaceful solution for the Kurdish question on the basis of a democratic politics within the existing nation-states. If Kurdistan was one part, such an organization [a people's congress] would not be required. The different parts and nation-states are influencing each other strongly, however, so such an organizational structure and politics are needed. (Öcalan 2003: 100–2, authors' translation)

Öcalan tried to assure the existing nation-states that the Kurdish question could be solved without partition – contrary to what seemed to be emerging in the Iraqi case at the time. The invasion and toppling of the regime in Baghdad seemed to allow the Kurdish north even greater independence, guaranteeing it a high level of autonomy and raising existential questions about the long-term integrity of the Iraqi state.[17] Against this, 'Instead of a nationalist and statist Kurdistan project which has been perceived as a second Israel in the region by Turks, Arabs and Persians' (Öcalan 2003: 97), Öcalan believed that his project of a democratic Kurdistan could be positively received. With the Congress of November 2003, Kongra-Gel, the People's Congress of Kurdistan, was formed. However, this step did not prove strong enough to hold back the winds blowing from Iraqi Kurdistan, which continued to present itself as a model for other parts of Kurdistan, and the PKK ranks during and after the foundation congress of Kongra-Gel were seriously affected. The Kurdish movement thus faced one of the most serious splits in its history. A group of PKK cadres under the leadership of two members of the Presidential Council and a number of long-time militants (among them the former representative for Europe) established a new political party, which they named Partiya Welatparez Demokratik (PWD; the Patriotic Democratic Party). However, while size, group composition and the political atmosphere were advantageous for this initiative of creating a new party, the PWD turned out to be not much more than a website (Özcan 2007).

Notwithstanding the failure of the PWD, the turmoil that was created within the PKK and amongst its supporters continued to influence the movement. During the period from November 2003 to 2005, an estimated total of almost 1500 militants left the organization, to settle in northern Iraq and Europe and discontinue political activities. In this period, Öcalan and the PKK mainly dealt with getting the

movement in order. For that purpose, congresses were held in quick succession. Only four months after the founding congress, Kongra-Gel held an extraordinary congress in order to solve the problem of the split. Öcalan tried to deepen his project of democratic Kurdistan(s) by proposing the concept of democratic confederalism.

At the same time, during the upheavals of 2004, Öcalan called for the formation of a 'Preparatory Rebuilding Committee', concerned with the re-founding of the PKK as a distinct party (PKK 2005). This 'new' PKK was not designated as a pioneer party in the old mold of classical Leninist terminology, but as an ideological and philosophical power grouping, mainly concerned with membership. Or rather, Öcalan wanted to re-establish the PKK as a force of assurance because of the turmoil that had shaken the members and movement. Political and military activities were left to the control of the KKK/KCK, in coordination with other military and political organizations such as the HPG, HRK and political parties in each part of Kurdistan.

The reconstruction congress was held from 28 March to 4 April 2005, as the ninth PKK congress.[18] The re-founded PKK party structure now consists of a Party Leadership[19] (*Parti Önderliği*), a Congress (*Kongre*), two Co-Presidents (*Eş Bakanlar*), a Party Council (*Parti Meclisi*), an Executive Committee (*Yurutme Kurulu*), a Disciplinary Board (*Disiplin Kurulu*), and Committees (*Kurullar*). The Congress is the party's main decision-making institution. It has the right to determine and change the party programme and the party statute. It chooses the Co-Presidents, the Party Council and the Disciplinary Board. The Congress also has the authority to evaluate the practices and activities of the Co-Presidents and Party Council, but no reference is made to the authority of the Congress to evaluate the practices and activities of the Party Leadership, which is therefore beyond control of the party institutions. The Congress assembles at least once every two years, with a minimum participation of two-thirds of the delegates. Between two congresses, the highest authority of the party is the Leadership together with the two Co-Presidents and the Party Council. Of the two Co-Presidents, one is male and the other female. They are chosen by the congress with a two-thirds majority. Should two rounds of voting fail to yield a two-thirds majority, a third round follows in which a simple majority is enough. The Executive Committee and the Party Council are chaired by Co-Presidents, who are also responsible for the functioning of these institutions.

In the past, Arteşe Rizgarîya Gelê Kürdistan (ARGK; the Peoples' Liberation Army of Kurdistan) and popular front organization Eniya Rizgariya Netewa Kurdistan (ERNK; the National Liberation Front of Kurdistan), functioned as the executive bodies of the PKK. As mentioned above, the successors to the ARGK and ERNK, were, respectively, Hêzên Parastina Gel, HPG (the People's Defence Forces) – with HRK in Iranian Kurdistan and YJA-STAR the main female guerilla force – and Yekîtiya Demokratîk a Gelê Kurdistan (YDK; the People's Democratic Union in Kurdistan). Mainly active among the Kurdish diaspora in Europe, the YDK was disbanded and replaced by the Koordinasyona Civata Demokratik a Kurdistan (the Coordination of Democratic Communities in Kurdistan).[20] In Turkey, and in

the different parts of Kurdistan political activities are currently run by various organizations, all oriented towards the realization of the PKKs political project.

Ideological transformation

Initially, in its 1978 manifesto, the PKK had called for a destruction of all forms of colonialism and the construction of a united Kurdistan. At the same time, revolutionary forces in Turkey were to be united, since the two peoples were considered to be united in their struggle for liberation.[21] In this, the PKK's ideological formation of that time was not much different from other national liberation movements of the period. During the course of the party's existence, however, Abdullah Öcalan tried to develop an original understanding of socialism. Since his capture especially, he has elaborated further a distinctive understanding of socialism and revolution, breaking away from conventional communist doctrine imported from Russia and China. This has gone hand in hand with the organizational transition of the PKK, from a classical national liberation movement based on Marxist-Leninist principles to a *sui generis* organization, embodied in the figure of a 'Divine King' (the supreme leader), Abdullah Öcalan.

After 2000, the PKK's ideological framework was established through the defence texts, written by Öcalan and submitted to the different courts in which he had his cases. The defences can be grouped into two: those submitted to the Turkish courts, and those submitted to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in Strasbourg, France, and to a court in Athens (in a case concerning his expulsion from Greece). The defences have been published in Kurdish and Turkish as well as other languages. The first group consists mainly of two defence texts, the main text, submitted to the court in Imrali and an annex, submitted to the Court of Appeals in Ankara in 1999 and to a local court in Urfa in 2001. These first texts were published under the names of 'Declaration on the Solution of the Kurdish Question', and 'Urfa: The Symbol of history, divinity and wretched[ness] in the basin of the Tigris-Euphrates'. The second group of defence texts, submitted to the ECHR in 2001, to an Athenian court in 2003 and to the Grand Chamber of the ECHR in 2004, consisted of two books which together comprised three volumes. The first book (of two volumes) was published as *From Sumerian Clerical State towards People's Republic I-II* (2001), while the second book (and third volume) was published as *The Defence of Free Man* (2003) – known in PKK circles as the Athens Defence – and *Defending a People* (2004).[22]

As we have seen, these defence texts were published and accepted in the PKK congresses as the official party line. The first texts, submitted for the case in Imralı and then the Court of Appeal, were the most shocking, since Öcalan did not take the assumed defence position expected by the party militants and the Kurdish population. On the contrary, he rejected claims for an independent state, proposing instead a new, 'truly' democratic Turkish republic, and a project of democratic confederalism, approaches confirmed later: 'In my defence, I did not revert to either a classical Kurdish nationalist line or a leftist interpretation of a similar tendency. Developments went beyond both tendencies' (Öcalan 1999: 10).[23]

The first texts did not engage with theoretical or ideological considerations; they were mainly based on the historical background of Turkish-Kurdish conflict in the twentieth century, in which Öcalan stated that he had struggled in favour of a democratic republic, and thus not against the Republic. Öcalan argued that Mustafa Kemal had also intended to establish a democratic republic, but was confined by external forces. As a matter of fact, among Öcalan's defences, this first one can in the main be considered as a genuine defence in the usual sense of the term, although he stated that he is not concerned with a legalistic defence (ibid.).

In his second group of defence texts, submitted to the ECHR, Öcalan deepened his theoretical considerations. The first of the three volumes dealt mainly with a historical analysis of civilization, starting in the Middle East, and focusing upon the Sumerians as 'the earliest state-based' society. Although Öcalan elaborated in later parts of the book on other societies and periods, his main concern was to present the state as the 'Original Sin' of humanity. This was surprising as he was and remains one of the foremost political leaders of a society which has been widely depicted as 'the largest people in the world not to have their own state'. Initially it created a kind of alienation among Kurdish circles (a *Verfremdungseffekt*, in the Brechtian sense). However, Öcalan continued to elaborate on his critique of the state, including the socialist experiments, arguing that liberation cannot be achieved by means of state-building, but rather by the deepening of democracy. Like the first defence text, this one also was accepted as the new manifesto for the movement, named the Manifesto for a Democratic Civilization during the eighth congress of PKK in 2002 (Serxwebun 2002).

In the second volume of his ECHR defence texts, Öcalan dealt intensively with Kurdish society, history and specifically the role of the PKK. He places Kurdish society into the history of civilization, as representing of a kind of natural society or community versus state-societies, which he attributes to a long standing and a deep Neolithic culture among the Kurdish tribes. For him, class (state) societies and modernization have, therefore, caused destruction for the Kurds, and the PKK is considered the locus of the last resistance to this pernicious process. Within this framework, Öcalan tried to show the limits of the PKK and its deadlock, trapped in the ideological-political constraints of the Cold War, which was continuing to condition the PKK, even a decade after its conclusion. Through this work, he aimed to evaluate the history of the PKK, addressing past mistakes.

In his later defence texts, submitted to an Athens court and the ECHR Grand Chamber, Öcalan transformed his theoretical considerations into a conception of radical democracy. This idea of radical democracy – radical in the sense that it tries to develop the concept of democracy beyond nation and state – is developed in two projects: one for the democratic republic and one for democratic confederalism. The concept of the democratic republic comprehends a reform of the Republic of Turkey. It aims at the disassociation of democracy from nationalism. Originally, in the eighteenth century, democracy was formulated in terms of citizen's rights and a rule of everyone by everyone. In the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, however, modernity lost its content of radical democracy and acquired a cultural meaning, referring to a unique people (Jongerden 2007: 7–8). A vein in

modern thought emerged, holding that cultural homogeneity is a requirement of the modern state, an inescapable imperative that manifests and erupts in the form of nationalism (Gellner 1983: 39). This 'national' condition of modernity is exclusive and intolerant, dictating that people who do not have the 'right' cultural characteristics choose between assimilation (genuine or superficial) and migration, while the options of the state range from assimilation to eviction and ethnic cleansing, or genocide (Gellner 1997: 240).[24] In Turkey, Kemalism became formulated as a project of modernization in cultural terms, resulting in harsh assimilation politics towards the Kurds. With his proposal for a democratic republic, Öcalan tries to return to an understanding of democracy in terms of citizens' rights.

Öcalan's radical democracy of the later defence texts is further developed in the concept of democratic confederalism. The idea of democratic confederalism is defined as a model for 'democratic self-government' (Öcalan 2008: 32). 'This project', Öcalan argues, 'builds on the self-government of local communities and is organized in the form of open councils, town councils, local parliaments and larger congresses. The citizens themselves are agents of this kind of self-government, not state-based authorities.' Since he proposes to build these self-governing bodies throughout Kurdistan (and wherever there are Kurds living), democratic confederalism is to be considered the main mechanism for the unification of Kurdistan and Kurds. The Kurdish liberation movement, Öcalan argues, should work for the establishment of such a system for self-organization. Thus was the KCK established, as just such an organizational system. In the end the project of democratic confederalism is interlinked with the project for a democratic republic – and ultimately, moreover, Öcalan argues that a free Kurdistan is only conceivable in a democratic Middle East (ibid.: 34–5; see also note 15).

Transformation of the political-military struggle

After Öcalan's capture, the main concern was the future of the PKK: would the party survive? Accordingly, the PKK took a defensive position. For the movement, the period between Öcalan's trial in 1999 and the reorganization of the party in 2003, was a period of retreat and consolidation. The PKK levelled down its demands, ceased military activities, withdrew the majority of its guerilla forces from Turkey into Northern Iraq and consequently gave an impression of introversion. The political activities of the PKK were confined to Öcalan's case, the sentencing in particular.

Öcalan was convicted at a State Security Court in Ankara for the crimes of treason and separatism and condemned to death in June 1999. Shortly afterwards, in July, the European Parliament passed a resolution condemning the sentence and calling into question the validity of the judicial process (e.g. there was a military judge presiding).[25] Meanwhile, Turkey's application for candidate membership of the EU was in its latter stages of completion. Clearly, the Öcalan case was a delicate issue. Finally, with the legal process completed after the Supreme Court of the Appeal Chamber had upheld the lower court rulings (in November), the government acceded, to an ECHR request for a stay of execution until it had ruled on the case (in January 2000) (Gunter 2008: 85).[26]

In August, 2002 the death penalty was abolished in Turkey. During the same period, Turkey gained acceptance as a candidate member to the EU, and made further reforms within the framework of EU accession process, including limited permission for Kurdish-language broadcasting. The PKK tried to claim credit for these developments. Turkish officials, on the other hand, considered the PKK defeated and dissolving. Not unpredictably, the partial success of the Demokratik Halk Partisi (DEHAP; the Democratic People's Party,) in the November 2002 election – when it won 6.2 per cent of the popular vote, thereby failing to reach the 10 per cent threshold but managing to become the leading party in the Kurdish region – did not change the attitude of the Turkish officials to Öcalan's case, the PKK or the Kurdish problem in general. The PKK leader was in jail for life and the movement he had led essentially broken. The overall approach of the Turkish state to the threat posed by the revolutionary party was vindicated in the prospect of victory – implied if not proclaimed – and a slight relaxing of control from Ankara was possible.

This 'All Quiet on the Kurdish Front' atmosphere changed with the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. Iraqi Kurdistan gained an unprecedented opportunity for recognition as an autonomous self-ruling territory, and turned out to be a new centre of attraction for many Kurds. The PKK found itself caught in the crossfire: at the same time as dealing with the major effects of the extensive restructuring process, it faced a transformed and mostly disadvantageous regional and international environment. Öcalan understood that the transformation of the PKK into KADEK in 2002 fell short of what was required to properly confront this new reality, and tried to develop a new project in his defence in Athens. The People's Congress of Kurdistan was the outcome of this attempt. It aimed to present a pan-Kurdish alternative, realized from below, contrary to the US-led state-building from above that was taking place in Iraqi Kurdistan. Öcalan also proposed a more active political struggle in this defence text, including campaigns for education in the mother tongue (i.e. Kurdish).

However, this new attempt underestimated the influence on the PKK ranks of the changes in the region, particularly in Iraqi Kurdistan, for the party was confronted with one of the most serious organizational crisis in its history. In this sense, the movement suffered a kind of limbo between 2004 and 2005, struggling to come to terms with the internal and external developments. There was deadlock, an impasse created by the difficulties in forward movement in a period of uncertainty. At the same time, in the local elections of 2004, the pro-Kurdish party DEHAP lost votes in comparison to 1999. Some of the Kurdish cities were taken by the Islamic ruling party, the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP; the Justice and Development Party), which swept to power in a wave of national populism. Organizational steps were taken in order to overcome the crisis, including the re-foundation of the PKK as the main mechanism to hold the militants together and the establishment of a new pro-Kurdish party, the Demokratik Toplum Partisi (DTP; the Democratic Society Party). Meanwhile, the unilateral ceasefire which had been in force since 1999 August came to an end, in June, 2004. The military wing, the HPG, announced its decision to apply a more active military line. Although the PKK emphasized that this was not a declaration of war but a matter

of self-defence, since 2004 the clashes between Kurdish guerillas and Turkish armed forces continued to increasing, reaching a peak in 2007 and 2008.[27]

During this period, in political terms the PKK concentrated on civil campaigns, such as the right of Kurdish language education and a campaign for Öcalan in which more than three million Kurds in Turkey signed up to a petition stating that they 'recognize Öcalan as their political representative'. The civil activities, openly demonstrating a Kurdish identity claim and mostly in accordance with the politics of the PKK at the time, predominated the political agenda of PKK followers in Turkey. With the election of a group of 21 DTP deputies in the national election of July 2007, Kurdish politics became included as more integral to Turkey's political agenda. The DTP started to voice more openly its political project, the 'Project for Democratic Autonomy', very much in accordance with Öcalan's concept of democratic confederalism.

Turkey, on the other hand, the government, its diplomats and the army, focused on improving the relationship with the US. The relationship between Ankara and Washington had been damaged by the invasion of Iraq, and Turkey hoped to find more support in its fight against the PKK.[28] After a meeting between the Turkish prime minister and the US president in November 2007, the US opened Northern Iraqi air space to Turkish military aircraft and started to share intelligence. This resulted in increasing air raids on the guerilla bases in northern Iraq. In February 2008 Turkey made a cross-border incursion into northern Iraq. Contrary to Turkish expectations, however, this did not yield successful results and the armed forces were withdrawn within a week. The PKK and its supporters considered this a victory of the resistance of its guerilla forces. Equally, further (currently ongoing) air raids have not thus far managed to eradicate the PKK armed forces.

Meanwhile, the AKP focused its attention on the Kurdish areas in which the DTP had control of many municipalities. AKP policies consisted of economic development initiatives as well as some cultural reform, such as the launch of a new 24-hour Kurdish language television station under the state-run broadcasting agency (TRT), in January 2009. In south-eastern Turkey, the next election campaign (conducted nationwide for the municipalities) turned into a political contest between the AKP and DTP, which in the end gained the upper hand. The DTP won the local elections of March 2009 and nearly doubling the number of municipalities under its control – to almost 100 Kurdish cities and towns, including Diyarbakır and seven other important cities. It has been argued that, the DTP should be taken as interlocutor, and 'with its incontestable success in the southeast at least should be accepted as the main player in the region' (Birand 2009; Ergin 2009). Some newspaper columnists even considered the PKK and Öcalan as among the actors in a possible dialogue, suggestions rarely read in mainstream Turkish press (Ozkök 2009; Akinan 2009). Thus, it would appear that the PKK not only reinvented itself, but also returned to the forefront of politics in Turkey.

Conclusion: continuity through breaks?

The PKK has shown a strong ability to transform and return after its virtual defeat. Here, we have discussed organizational, ideological and political-military features

of this remarkable return. Rephrasing Öcalan, we may say that by moving out off Ankara, a party was created, by moving to the Middle East, an army was created, and with Öcalan's 'return' to Turkey, a strong civil society movement was created. The implications of this return are important. In asymmetrical warfare – between a guerilla and a regular army – state forces have to defeat the enemy in order be politically successful, but for a guerilla it is sufficient not to be defeated. 'The guerilla wins if he does not lose. The conventional army loses if it does not win' (Henry Kissinger, cited in Mack 1975: 184).

It is clear that the 2000s have been the most critical period yet for the PKK. It has experienced this critical experience in different phases, which can roughly be divided into three stages: a) shock and retreat (1999), b) impasse and reconstruction (2000–2004) and c) return to the stage (2005–today). Kurdish and leftist criticisms of Öcalan's new policies and the PKK during this period have ranged from accusations of surrender to the Turkish state, even with allegations of being in the service of the Turkish General Staff, to charges of a complete break with the movement's past and its aims, with the conclusion that they are saying farewell to the dream of an independent united state.

What we have attempted to do here has been to trace the changes concerning the lines of organizational, ideological and political-military struggle. Organizationally the PKK has grown into a complex system of parties and institutions, as opposed to the Leninist style of pioneering party directly over ruling all activities that it had been previously. Although there have been considerable changes in the organizational structure, the devoted militant body as a group of 'professional full-time revolutionaries' continues to occupy the central role. The change in the organizational level towards a more complex organizational structure – or, towards a multiplicity of interacting institutions – is a reflection of evolving praxis.

A primary objective of the PKK has been the realization of an independent Kurdistan, but the road to realizing independence has been transformed from one of state-building to one of society-building. At the time of its establishment, the PKK aimed at the establishment of a united socialist state of Kurdistan, a so-called 'People's Republic'. Today it aims at the construction of a Kurdistan Democratic Society, the project of democratic confederalism. This does not mean the abandonment of the ideal for a united Kurdistan, but rather that this ideal is aimed at in a different way. The ultimate aim of independence is no longer embodied in the realization of a classical state, but in the establishment and development of self-government (calling into mind the current council-communism). Instead of a classical state-building process, that is, from above, establishing the overarching structures of governance, a process of constructing Kurdistan from below is being attempted,that is, a genuinely democratic confederalism.

Critics have argued that Öcalan renounced the establishment of an independent state after his capture. This argument is incorrect in two respects. First, the PKK had already hinted of a compromise with Turkey as far back as 1993, *de facto* dropping its demand for the establishment of a separate state. At the time, Öcalan let it be known that his understanding of independence was different from

mainstream thought, although, however, without specifying his understanding at the time (see Jongerden and Akkaya). Secondly, with his new specification of independence, Öcalan does not now simply reconsider the idea of an independent state of Kurdistan (as something to be maintained or forgone), but re-envisions it. Öcalan's critique of the (classical) concept of the nation-state brings him to a fresh conceptualization of politics. He considers the nation-state as outdated, and instead pleas for a system named democratic confederalism as an alternative to the state.

The political-military struggle, meanwhile, shifted more and more in the direction of a political struggle in which the DTP, with its grassroots organization and elected representatives (nationally and locally), has started to take the lead. Especially after the elections of 2007 and 2009, a more powerful Kurdish public sphere emerged. A prominent Turkish columnist wrote: 'After the painful period which Turkey experienced in the last quarter of the twentieth century, a separate state could not be established on its soil, but a separate political geography has been formed in its Southeast.' (Bila 2004: 10, authors' translation).

The preservation of Öcalan's leadership position and the relatively unity of the organization contributed to the return of the PKK to the political stage after a virtual defeat. More importantly, however, the PKK has managed to keep Kurdish identity demands in Turkey politically alive. This has been made possible mainly through the elaboration of new ideological and political approaches, which created opportunities for the PKK to enlarge its scope of interest and activities, thereby creating more space for a Kurdish public sphere. In aiming at the transformation of society in all aspects rather than the capture of state power through armed struggle, PKK efforts now allow for a broader field of operation. The capacity to struggle and the nigh miraculous return of the PKK is suggested in its motto, '*Berxwedane Jiyane*' ('Resistance is Living').

Appendix

PKK guerilla forces losses 2004–2008

Table 1: Country of origin versus year of decease

	Country of origin				
Year	*Turkey*	*Syria*	*Iran*	*Iraq*	*Total*
2004	79	16	11	4	110
2005	102	32	11	1	148
2006	104	27	5	3	139
2007	156	22	21	2	201
2008	114	18	19	5	156
Total	555	115	67	15	**754**

Table 2: Country of origin versus year of recruitment into the guerilla

	Country of origin				
Year of participation	*Turkey*	*Syria*	*Iran*	*Iraq*	*Total*
Before 1999	176	30	7	11	224
1999–2003	310	83	45	2	440
After 2004	59	1	15	2	77
Total	545	114	67	15	**741**

Table 3: Year of decease versus gender

	Gender	
Year	*Male*	*Female*
2004	103	7
2005	124	24
2006	128	11
2007	179	22
2008	132	24
Total	666	**88**

All tables based on information compiled from <http://www.hpg-online.com/ sehit/sehit_kunyeleri/ index.html>, which also contains personal data about the guerillas who lost their lives.

Notes

1 Özcan for example concludes that the PKK gave up the struggle for an independent Kurdistan. Yet this critique is not new. PKK dissidents have argued the same long before Öcalan's capture in 1999 (Beşikçi 1992). Our argument is different. In this contribution, we will argue that one has to distinguish between the establishment of a state and independence.

2 The leader of the Shining Path, Abimael Guzmán, was arrested in 1992 by Peruvian state forces, after which the organization lost all forward momentum. It was thought that Turkey had achieved a similar success after capturing Abdullah Öcalan (Hoffman and Cragin 2002).

3 From which perspective, the analogy is less with the Shining Path than the IRA.

4 The Flying Dutchman, according to folklore, is a ghost ship that can never go home, doomed to sail the oceans forever.

5 The government in Greece was held responsible for the Öcalan's capture and abduction. The fact that Öcalan had resided in both Greece and the Greek Embassy in Kenya was seen as the apparent involvement of Greece in Öcalan's extradition to Turkey, causing considerable embarrassment for the Greek government and resulting in the immediate resignation of three senior cabinet ministers.

6 Nationalist fervour among Turks also hit a peak after Öcalan left Syria. For an analysis of nationalist campaigns on Turkish TV during the time of the capture, see Bilgiç (2008);

for an account of the success of the main nationalist party in the period following, see Yavuz (2002).

7 In the nine years from 1999 to 2007, Öcalan met with his lawyers a total of 283 times (1999: 60; 2000: 37; 2001: 40; 2002: 35; 2003: 21; 2004: 25; 2005: 14; 2006: 22; 2007: 29): <http://www.firatnews.com/index.php?rupel=arsiv&anf=nuce&nuceID=38551>.

8 For a conceptual exposition of this initiative, see the prison notes. Available online at <http://www.gundem-online.com/haber.asp?id=35>.

9 Iraq: Partiya Çareseriya Demokratik a Kurdistan (PÇDK; the Kurdistan Democratic Solution Party), formed in 2002; Syria: Partiya Yekitiya Demokratik (PYD; the Democratic Union Party) formed in 2004; Iran: Partiya Jiyana Azad a Kurdistan (PJAK; the Free Life Party of Kurdistan), established in April 2004.

10 Women's organizations in the PKK have a long history. The first Union of Women guerillas was formed in 1995, followed by the first women's party in 1999. The name of the women's party has changed several times – it currently operates under the name of Partiya Azadiya Jin a Kurdistan (PAJK; the Party of Free Women in Kurdistan). The PAJK functions as the ideological centre for women's groups organized autonomously, with Koma Jinen Bilind (KJB; the Community of Assertive Women) as front organization and YJA-STAR (the Free Women Units) as the organization of women guerillas.

11 Kongra-Gel is the people's front within the PKK complex (PKK 2005: 97), to some extent taking over the functions of the ERNK, which was abolished in 2000. It can be considered the legislative body, as can be understood from its name, which means People's Congress.

12 Koma Komalan Kurdistan (KKK; the Association of Associations in Kurdistan), later renamed Koma Civakên Kurdistan (KCK; the Association of Communities in Kurdistan), is both a concept embodying the idea of democratic Confederalism, as developed by Öcalan, and a societal organization presented as an alternative to the nation-state and which, Öcalan sees as a model for the resolution of the problems of the Middle East (for an extensive discussion, see PKK 2005: 175–243). In the PKK party complex, the KCK can be considered the executive body, with all parties and organizations coordinated through it.

13 Kongra Netewiya Kurdistan (KNK; the National Congress of Kurdistan) is a pan-Kurdistan umbrella organization comprising representatives from the Kurdish diaspora in the Middle East, Europe, North America, Australia and Asia as well as representatives of political parties from all parts of Kurdistan, religious and cultural institutions, independent political entities and intellectuals and non-Kurdish ethnic groups.

14 The guerilla forces are organized mainly into three bodies: the Hêzên Parastina Gel (HPG; the People's Defence Forces), which constitutes the military organization of the party-movement; the Hezi Rojhelati Kurdistan (HRK; the military force of Eastern Kurdistan), which is working parallel to the political goals of PJAK; and YJA-Star (the Free Women's Units), the organization of women guerillas.

15 See < http://www.kurdistan.org/Current-Updates/kadek.html>.

16 Ibid.

17 These eventually led to the idea – voiced by Peter Galbraith (2006) in the US especially and contrary to US (Bush) administration policy – that Iraq, never a 'natural' country, would inevitably and should, as a mattter of practical politics, be split into three self-determining regions (Kurdish, Suni and Shi'ite), i.e. that the Iraqi state of Iraq be effectively dismantled.

18 A tenth congress was held in August 2008, the last to date.

19 The Party Leadership (Parti Önderliği) is the party's main theoretical-ideological institution. It determines party philosophy, ethics, politics and strategy. The function is fulfilled by Abdullah Öcalan.

20 The KCDK allegedly falls under Kongra-Gel and coordinates, among others, the associations (Fed-Kom, Yek-Kom) and the various mass-organizations and branch

organizations in the party-complex, such as the youth organization Komelen Ciwan, the student organization YXK, the organization of lawyers and jurists YHK, the union of writers YNK, the organizations of religious groups (such as Yezidi, Alevi and Muslim), and the organization of employers Karsaz.

21 See also Chapter 10, this volume.

22 The first volume was also published in Turkish and in English by the Pluto Press as Prison Writings: The Roots of Civilization (2007). For reviews of this book, see Michael Gunter, Middle East Policy 14/3 (200) and Stan Newens in The Spokesman Journal, 95 (2007).

23 The anti-Öcalan campaign among the various Kurdish circles starting from his first declarations about the Turkish state and call to his supporters for a refrain from violence peaked with his Imralı Defence. Accusations of 'selling out' and 'saving his own neck' among political circles were expressed in academic writings by such phrases as 'In his trial, the PKK leader Öcalan defended himself – if that is what he did – in Turkish, not Kurdish' (O'Leary, McGarry and Salih 2006: 12).

24 What has become known since the Bosnia conflict as 'ethnic cleansing' – including, but not limited to, 'mass expulsions of defenceless civilians from their homes' – is regarded by the UN as 'a form of genocide' (UN General Assembly RES/47/121, 1992, Preamble). Available online at <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/47/a47r121.htm>.

25 The EU resolution also noted, in its preamble, that Turkey had observed a *de facto* moratorium on capital punishment since 1984, and that a draft law abolishing capital punishment was currently in committee at the parliament in Ankara. See <http://www.europarl.europa.eu>.

26 The legal process at the ECHR had been ongoing throughout 1999, with applications lodged immediately following Öcalan's capture and again after the initial sentencing. See <http://www.khrp.org/content/view/178/2/> and Trilsch and Rüth, 2006. For solitary confinement conditions of Öcalan, see <http://www.freedom-for-Öcalan.com/english/download/the-Öcalan-case.pdf>.

27 See the appendix to this chapter.

28 A ruling party rebellion of over 100 MPs had joined the opposition to prevent the government from allowing the US to use Turkey as a base for a northern offensive on Iraq.

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Part IV

Calling upon Turkey

Agents of long-distance nationalism

9 Constructing communities in the Turkish diaspora

A quest for politics

Ayhan Kaya

It has become apparent since the late 1990s that European integration politics did not work out well (Kaya 2009). Multiculturalist policies and assimilationist policies have failed to prompt migrants and minorities to organize and represent themselves in legitimate political structures. On the contrary, these two types of policies might have had the effect of further imprisoning migrants and their descendants in their own ghettoes. Various governmental policies concerning immigrants have contributed to the othering, re-minorization and re-ethnicization of immigrant populations in Western European countries, especially those of Muslim origin. Aras Ören, a Turkish novelist and poet, warns of the dangers inherent in the acceptance of otherness and cultural difference:

> [I am afraid that while] the conservatives [assimilationists] lock us into our cultural ghetto by preserving the culture we brought with us as it is and by denying that there can be symbiosis or development . . . the progressives [multiculturalist liberals] try to drive us back into that same ghetto because, filled with enthusiasm, by the originality and exoticism of our culture, they champion it so fervently that they are even afraid it might disappear, be absorbed by German [Western] culture. (quoted in Suhr 1989: 102)

In the last decade, in several countries, we have been witnessing a shift from an indifferent multiculturalism to a more coercive form of monoculturalism. Community boundaries in the member states of the European Union are being redrawn due to the (re)ascendancy of ethno-culturalist and religious discourse as opposed to the perceived destabilizing forces and effects of globalization, such as deindustrialization, insecurity, poverty and unemployment. In this chapter, I argue that it is in this light that migrants and their descendants feel the urge to find methods and tactics to come to terms with the new forms of governmentality,[1] in turn themselves taking recourse to ethnic and religious references and communal values. In particular, this chapter aims to examine how 'Euro-Turks' reconstruct their community boundaries, focusing on honor, marriage and religion. The term 'Euro-Turk' is used here for convenience, employed to refer to the migrants and their children of Turkish national origin who live in Western Europe. It is not employed in an attempt to propose new labels that contribute to or obstruct the integration of immigrant populations of Muslim Turkish

origin into the European way of life, or any such efforts by the people and their communities themselves.[2] The term does manifest the existence of two antithetical processes taking place simultaneously in the life-worlds of immigrants of Turkish descent and their children. And such hyphenated identities do also refer to the fact that identities and cultures do not have fixed boundaries, and thus that they are always in the making. In fact, the hyphen addresses the fact that there is something anew on the way. This chapter will shed light upon the contemporary dynamics of community construction by Turkish origin migrants and their descendants, referred to as Euro-Turks, in Western European countries.[3]

The politics of honor

In the aftermath of September 11, Islam has by and large been considered and represented by the majority of the European public as a threat to the Western way of life. It is widely believed that Islamic fundamentalism contributes to the rise of xenophobic, racist and violent attitudes directed against Muslim origin migrants and their children in the West (Kaya and Kentel 2005 and 2007). I argue that religious resurgence should be seen (at least in part) as itself a symptom of the existing structural social and political problems in Europe. Deeply engrained, wide-ranging and interlinked, these problems can be listed as including poverty, poor housing and unemployment; racism, violence and xenophobia; cultural subordination, institutional discrimination and social exclusion; Islamophobia and also, sometimes, assimilation. My work on Euro-Turks reveals that migrant origin groups tend to affiliate themselves with a politics of identity, ethnicity, purity and religiosity in order to tackle such structural constraints. This is actually a form of politics initiated by outsider groups as opposed to the kind of politics generated by those within, as analyzed by Alistair MacIntyre. According to MacIntyre (1971), there are two forms of politics: *the politics of those within* and *the politics of those excluded*. Those *within* tend to employ legitimate political institutions in pursuing their goals (parliament, political parties, the media), and those *excluded* resort to honor, culture, ethnicity, religion and tradition to achieve theirs.

Individuals, or groups, tend to use the languages that they are accustomed to in order to raise their daily concerns such as poverty, unemployment and racism. If they are not equipped with the language of deliberative democratic polity, then they are inclined to use the languages they think they know by heart, that is, religion, ethnicity and even sometimes violence. In an age of struggle and insecurity, those wretched of the earth become more engaged in the protection of their *honor*, which, they are led to believe, is the only thing left. In understanding the growing significance of honor, Akbar S. Ahmed (2003) draws our attention to the collapse of what Mohammad ibn Khaldun (1969) once called *asabiyya*, an Arabic word that refers to group loyalty, social cohesion or solidarity. *Asabiyya* binds groups together through a common language, culture and code of behavior. Ahmed establishes a direct negative correlation between *asabiyya* and the revival of honor. The collapse of *asabiyya* on a global scale prompts Muslims to revitalize *honor*. Ahmed claims that *asabiyya* is collapsing for the following reasons:

> Massive urbanization, dramatic demographic changes, a population explosion, large scale migrations to the West, the gap between rich and poor, the widespread corruption and mismanagement of rulers, the rampant materialism coupled with the low premium on education, the crisis of identity, and, perhaps, most significantly new and often alien ideas and images, at once seductive and repellent, and instantly communicated from the West, ideas and images which challenge traditional values and customs. (Ahmed 2003: 81)

The collapse of *asabiyya* also implies for Muslims the breakdown of *adl* (justice), and *ihsan* (compassion and balance). Global disorder characterized by the lack of *asabiyya*, *adl* and *ihsan* seems to trigger the celebration of honor by Muslims. For migrants as well as for everybody else, fear of the present leads to a mystification of the past, authenticity, religion and honor in the 'imaginary homelands' of Salman Rushdie:

> It is my present that is foreign, and . . . the past is home, albeit a lost home in a lost city in the mists of lost time . . . [Thus,] we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands. (Rushdie 1991: 9)

As James Clifford also rightly states, those migrant and/or minority groups who are alienated by the neo-liberal political economy, and swept up in a destiny dominated by the capitalist West, no longer invent local futures. What is different about them remains tied to traditional pasts embroiled with ethnicity, culture, religion and honor (Clifford 1988: 5). Remaking the past, or celebrating honor, serves at least two purposes for the diasporic communities. First, it is a way of coming to terms with the present without being seen to criticize the existing status quo. The 'glorious' past and the preservation of honor is, here, handled by the diasporic subject as a strategic tool by which to absorb the destructiveness of the present. Secondly, it also helps to recuperate a sense of self, independent of criteria handed down by others, that is, the dominant and domineering 'host' culture – the past is what the diasporic subjects can claim as their own (Ganguly 1992: 40).

Honor crimes in the Muslim context illustrate the way in which honor becomes instrumentalized and essentialized. Recent honor crimes among Euro-Turks seem to have prompted some of the conservative political elite and academics in the West to explain honor crimes as an indispensable element of Islam. However, one should note that honor crimes are not unique to the Islamic culture: they are also visible in the Judeo-Christian world (Elman and Maud 1991; Seager 1997; Mojad and Abdo 2004). Honor crimes are rather structurally constrained. The traumas of migration and the grinding difficulties of the new life, especially, for example, as experienced by uneducated migrant workers without work, prepare a fertile ground for domestic violence, honor crimes and delinquency. Here is the way an interviewee perceived 'honor' among the Turks and the way he distances himself from that state of mind:

> There are cultural differences between the two societies in terms of the way they live. I used to have a Belgian acquaintance. He was around 65 years old. He used to come to work from 15 km outside of Brussels. One day he was complaining. I asked 'What's up? 'Is there a problem?' and he replied 'I have a daughter of 19 years old. She brought home a guy two months ago.' I thought he was angry at her because she had stayed with the guy outside marriage. He said 'I am 65 years old and working. Now there is one more plate on the table. He will exploit me too.' Can you imagine? In our culture, we would take it as an offence to our honor, wouldn't we? Imagine that a 19-year-old girl brought home a guy and wanted to stay together. How many fathers could accept this? The financial aspect is the last concern for a Turk. But the main concern of the Belgian father is money. (Kaya and Kentel 2007: 77)

Generally speaking, although women of Turkish origin are not as visible as men in the public arena, they have an essential role in the construction and protection of the diaspora community. A woman's honor, perceived by men as something to be protected, seems to be the tacit cement holding the community together. The dominant discourse of community may be primarily based on ethnicity, religiosity and nationalism, but the discourse of protecting the honor of women cuts across all other discourses.

Another strategy employed to keep the community alive is parents' attitude towards their daughters' relations to 'European men', particularly if marriage is mooted. In cafés in Germany, Belgium, France and the Netherlands one often hears comments like 'How could a father look the other in the face?' Not only parents but also other members of the extended family still seem to be hugely influential in deciding who their children will marry. The way girls are raised in their families puts pressure on them to be more inward looking, an upbringing that prevents them from taking counter-hegemonic decisions. The ultimate sanction, of course, is ostracism, with the consequent loss of communal security, support and comfort, to be left to an uncertain fortune in an often hostile environment. A young woman expressed her reluctance to consider marriage outside the community with a German quite simply: 'If we get married to a German man, we risk losing all our family and relatives.'

During a focus group discussion with married women of Turkish origin, a debate was instigated by the question of whether these women, all mothers, would consider it a problem if their daughters wanted to marry a non-Turk (in this case, a Belgian). One participant summarized the discussion as follows:

> Most of the women are scared that they will lose their prestige in the eyes of the people around them [in the case of their daughters having a relation with a Belgian], so they would ignore their child for a while . . . At the beginning, the parents fear the criticisms from the people around them or the neighborhood, because this is important for them. If they lose this they become isolated, so what will they do? They'll ignore their child and after a while, when the people around them have forgotten about it, little by little they'll pick up contact with their child again. (Zemni *et al*. 2006: 60)[4]

In the movement from her family (parental) home to her marital home, a woman becomes more isolated. Until she has established herself in the community over the course of time, a woman is even more restricted in her private space, and her role even more determined by the community: that of being a mother and a decent woman. Women become truly 'private women' when they marry, a very different status from the 'public women' that describes their European counterparts.[5] In marriage and as mothers, women then become active agents in replicating the community through complying with, policing and enforcing its customs, traditions and values. Typically, they do not even question why they cannot go beyond the boundaries of the community. It is just 'impossible'.

Despite everything, however, there is always a way out. The boundaries of the community are not so rigid:

SUZAN: 'My mother is someone who wants him [husband] to be a Turk. Not a Moroccan or whatever. My mother wouldn't want it, and maybe I myself wouldn't want it either.'

RESEARCHER: 'Does this count for you as well?'

SEVILAY: 'I heard my father say once, 'Here, in this house, not even one guy gets his foot inside the door if he's not a Turk', and I thought by myself: 'Shit!', as I was going out with someone at that time who was not a Turk, but who was a Muslim. I found this so strange that he was saying this, as if he wanted to warn me, as if he knew that I was going out with him . . .. So they are against it. But I don't think that if I came home with someone [who was not a Turk] that they would throw me out of the house.'

TANSU: 'No, Sevilay, I can't believe that!'

SEVILAY: 'No, no, I know my father, he is not like that. He is not so religious.'

TANSU: 'I don't know.' (Zemni *et al*. 2006: 49)

One might describe the masculine power of man as 'hard power', and the power of the habitus as 'soft power'.[6]. Individuals usually have the capacity to escape from the restraints of both hard power and soft power, using their 'fugitive power'.[7] Fugitive power is elusive, mobile, shifty and slippery; it is used by individuals to reposition themselves against the power of strategies and ideologies that operate at the social and communal level. Compared with men, women in the community are much more resistant, diversified and elusive in their daily life. Their success in employing fugitive power tactics provides them with spaces in which they can occasionally detach themselves from the restrictive power of communal strategies and ideologies intertwined with the politics of honor.

Making and unmaking communities: tactics of the weak

The growing affiliation of Euro-Turks with culture, authenticity, ethnicity, nationalism, religiosity and tradition provides them with an opportunity to establish solidarity networks with which to deal with the structural problems of the hegemonic culture they encounter in their day-to-day lives. Accordingly, the

> revival of honor, religion and authenticity emerges on a symbolic, but not essentialist level, as a symptom. Such a revival, it is argued, is in large measure an outcome of the processes of structural exclusion of migrant origin individuals from political and socio-economic resources.

In order to provide reasons for the failure of the integration regime in the West, one should look into the ways in which 'communities' are producing and reproducing themselves. Neighborhoods like Kreuzberg (Berlin), Schaerbeek, Port Namur (Brussels), Keupstrasse (Cologne), Villier le Bel, La Courneuve, St Denis, or Créteil (Paris) and Bos and Lommer (Amsterdam) all provide good examples of locations where one can find diasporic Turkish Muslim origin communities. The first thing someone strolling through the streets in these places will notice is that the symbols, colors, languages, sounds, figures, postures and dress-codes are all replicas of what exists in the homeland. It is quite apparent to any Baudelairian *flâneur* of such spaces that they provide the members of the community with a symbolic 'fortress' protecting them against structural problems, a safety valve for diasporic subjects under stress, a sanctuary softening the harsh strokes raining down from the external world. As one middle-aged-man interviewed in Schaerbeek put it, 'Schaerbeek is a place where an ignorant peasant from Emirdağ comes as soon as he has put his shepherd's crook on the shelf'.[8] The Schaerbeek community is a protective shelter for the vulnerable social actor and repository of culture in the dynamic of (non-)integration:

> I think there are a lot more advantages of living in Schaerbeek than disadvantages. At least we aren't splitting up and vanishing. If we spread out and lived separately, our children would be in a worse situation: they would be exposed to degeneration. At least this way they're familiar with our traditions. (A working-class man in his 40s, in-depth interview, Brussels, 20 March 2007)

Because the wider society in which they live is an 'alien' society full of 'dangers', the community provides its members with a kind of social control:

> Let me be frank, it is very easy for a young man to get whatever he wants here. Let me be more frank, he can get women, alcohol, whatever he wants anytime. Prostitution is everywhere. You can get drugs in certain areas. They're legal. Young people who came here from Turkey have also gone down the wrong path. But I cannot say that this is true for the majority. Maybe you'll call it tribalism, but I tell you there is an advantage in living together: it stops us from splitting up. (A young man in his 20s, in-depth interview, Brussels, 21 March 2007)

The community meets a collective need and presents a collective demand. While the community affords individuals security, its strategy of keeping people together requires, for example, that girls marry 'their own', although this community demand may, as noted, be resisted by fugitive power. The state, equally, meets needs and makes demands which may be counteracted by individuals, through a

form of 'necessary conformism' (Dubet 2002). Conformism is a tactic deployed by people in order to comply with the rules of the game set out by the power of the majority, 'society', the state. Thus, individuals employ *tactics* – such as necessary conformism – in order to deal with the *strategy* of the dominant – which involves keeping people together (e.g. in the case of the state, through identification with the nation).

The strategies and tactics used in everyday life are explicated very well by Michel de Certeau (1984). *Strategies* entail deliberate and reflexive attempts to position the subjects in relation to the broader politico-ideological space. *Tactics*, by contrast, constitute more subversive third spaces, in so far as they represent the becoming of identities in the absence of a central reference point. Tactics are characterized by improvisation, spontaneity and geographies of the now. De Certeau (1984: 35–6) defines a strategy as 'the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power . . . can be isolated. It postulates a place that can be delimited as its own and serves as a base from which relations with an exteriority composed of targets or threats . . . can be managed.' Strategies, thus, are the conceptual instruments of a rationality that operates within a model of centre. A tactic, meanwhile, is defined by De Certeau (1984: 36) as 'a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus' – that is to say, in the context of this argument, a move that comes not so much from the margin but from within.

'The space of a tactic is the space of the other,' says De Certeau. He continues:

> A tactic operates in isolated actions, blow by blow. It takes advantage of 'opportunities' and depends on them, being without any base where it could stockpile its winnings. It must vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers . . . It can be where it is least expected . . . In short, a tactic is an art of the weak . . . The more a power grows, the less it can allow itself to mobilize part of its means in the service of deception. Power is bound by its very visibility. In contrast, trickery is possible for the weak, and often it is his only possibility as a last resort. (1984: 37).

As the central power (the state) becomes mightier, so does its locus of power become more removed from individuals and their daily concerns, and so, conversely, the less effective and persuasive it becomes in respect of its subjects, especially those in the margins. In such a case, individuals try to create their own centers of resistance. Accordingly, subordinated subjects like migrant origin individuals with working-class or underclass background, who are positioned deep in marginality and feel excluded and neglected, become more oriented to their homeland, ethnicity, culture, religion and the past. The process of home-seeking, as James Clifford (1994: 307) suggests, can result in the existence of a kind of defensive diaspora nationalism which is, in itself, critical of the majority nationalism found in the country of origin. The nature of diaspora nationalism here is cultural,

which is based on alienation, and a celebration of the past and authenticity. As Clifford rightly states, those migrant and/or minority groups who are alienated by the system and swept up in a destiny dominated by the capitalist West, no longer invent local futures. What is different about them, their uniqueness from which they derive a sense of identity and self-value, remains tied to traditional pasts (Clifford 1988: 5).

The distinction between strategy and tactic as put forward by De Certeau (1984) implies that the compliance of individual members or sub-groups of a society with the social rules does not necessarily mean that they internalize the society. Indeed, sub-groups like migrant communities are defined by their difference from the center, that is, by the ways in which they differ from the hegemony. Islam is one of the key elements in helping the communities with Muslim background cohere, and thus one of the major vehicles for conformity as demanded by the members of these communities. A young man defined religiosity in the district:

> Schaerbeek is number one in religiosity. Many young people attend Quran courses, generally at the Fatih Mosque or the Ulu Mosque . . .

While the community provides its members with an opportunity to maintain their religion and ethical system, it also keeps the mother tongue alive. However, if the community is not properly regulated and governed, the result may be a failure to learn the language of the country of settlement:

> The children know neither Turkish nor French . . . But the education is more serious in Flemish schools. I am sending my children to Flemish schools. Turkish parents want to have money . . . It seems that if the children earn money, the difficulties will end . . . I am advising the children here to go to school. But at the same time, they should learn the Turkish culture. That's why we go to Turkey in the summer holidays with the children. They get bored in Eskişehir. They go out but after two hours they get bored. They want to come back here as soon as possible. This is their home . . .

Despite the protection provided by the community, it cannot insulate its members completely. They bear other risks, in addition to failing to learn the language(s) of the host society:

> There's no way that you can suffer economically in Europe. But what is essential is peace at home. The Turkish community is getting more restless. They experience the difficulties of being inward-looking. They can't make their children go to school. The children envy the world outside . . .

It seems that some parts of the Turkish communities in Western Europe are going through a transition process and their 'ghetto' qualities are dissolving. It is the youth that go through this process most fully, and it is they who feel the difficulties of ghettoization. Loyal to their parents and families, they cannot escape the

restraints of their community, yet their being in the community is rather notional. Their minds and behavior transcend the boundaries of the community. They always feel the tension between the community and wider society in the process of individuation.

RESEARCHER: 'Thus you all want a relationship, but you would keep it silent in front of your parents?'
TANSU: 'It'd have to be that way.'
NALAN: 'Otherwise: Third World War!'
RESEARCHER: 'They wouldn't allow it?'
SEVILAY: 'No, not really.'
RESEARCHER: 'What is the reason why they would not allow it?'
NALAN: 'Naturally, the gossip. That's the biggest problem. Our people are such gossips, that's just the way it is.' [. . .]
RESEARCHER: 'So if you had a relationship, it would be very hard to keep it a secret?'
NALAN: 'Yes, you always have to think of excuses. Than you feel inside like 'Ah, I am lying, I am cheating on my parents'. You feel very bad about it. You can't do it actually.' (Zemni *et al*. 2006: 53–4)

Those who are aware of the crisis of the community and are experiencing the dangers and limitations of the ghetto are gradually leaving communities in order to 'protect their children'. They tend to move to other districts. Departure from the community is regarded as a path to success by the educated. The traditional methods of older generations to 'protect' their children have proven to be unsuccessful. Those interviewed during the field research explained this through stories of 'lost generations', 'insecurity' and 'crime':

> If parents are strict, then the children leave home . . . You can't achieve what you want by locking them in. If you prevent your daughter from going out, she'll run away as soon as she has the chance and become a prostitute . . . (A young man in his 20s, in-depth interview, Brussels, 22 March 2007)

A tactic is, let us reiterate, an art of the weak, determined by the power of the center. The more a power grows, the less able it is to mobilize part of its means in the service of deception. Power is bound by its very visibility. In this case, the community is the central power, and the weak, its members, create their own centers of resistance in the form of a *fugitive power* – which can be quite literally, to escape.

Despite all the limitations and failures of the ghetto, however, many people do successfully find ways to overcome them. It is possible to see several individuals who manage to integrate the traditional and the modern, the democratic, the nationalist and the communitarian. A 16–17-year-old teenager who was born in Schaerbeek and goes to Turkey every year illustrates the difficulties of dealing with the problems experienced in Turkey and Belgium:

> Here, we can't get the tastes they have in Turkey. The Belgians think that there is happiness, money and everything in Belgium, in Europe, but it's the opposite, here everything is more difficult. This isn't the kind of life I want. How can I explain? The place we live in is very disordered. It's filthy . . . The environment isn't good. Everybody's after money. What are they doing for money? They sell joints, or steal, or cheat the '*gavurs*' (a Turkish word for unbelievers). The Belgians and the others are afraid of us, and they say we're foreigners and we rob them. The Flemish are afraid of Turks. When they realize that you're a Turk, they get frightened. When I go somewhere, Belgians don't even turn and look at me. When a Belgian walks by right there at night, the policeman does not even look at him. But when we pass by, he keeps on looking at us and chases us to find out what we are doing there at night. (A lower middle-class man in his 30s, in-depth interview, Brussels, 19 March 2007)

For this young man, all Belgians are '*gavur*'.[9] He uses the categorization of 'exclusion' and 'othering' with ease, applying it reflexively also, in respect of the attitudes of Belgians to Turks (including the behavior of the hard power representatives of the state, the police). Nevertheless, he also knows that he is subject to the same kind of categorization in Turkey. It is as a response to this categorization of exclusion, I would argue, that he tends to demonstrate stronger loyalty to Turkey and Turkishness. This state of feeling even more Turkish is actually an individual tactic developed to overcome exclusion from within the Turkish nation:

> When we go to Turkey, we're not regarded as Turks. The neighbors in the village call us '*gavur*'. But despite all this, Turkey is different. They say 'the *gavur*s have arrived'. They sell us things in the market at very high prices, they cheat us. Despite all these things, everything is different in Turkey. You are ready to pay 100 Euros for something which actually costs 5 YTL. The taste of things is different. You don't want to spend money here [in Belgium]. But it tastes different when you spend money in Turkey. (A young woman in her 30s, in-depth interview, Ghent, 23 March 2007)

For the youth preferring the 'taste' of Turkey to that of Europe, life in the limited space of the ghettoized communities seems akin to imprisonment. Many of them do not have German, Belgian, French or Dutch friends except those at school. In fact they have no ties outside the ghetto. In contrast to the ways in which young males affirm the attitudes of the older generations towards them, young females feel confined. The fact that the young women are not allowed to go out at night gives us some clues about a male-dominated world. This 'male to male world' offers no hope for the future.

The community is based on the constituents of religion, tradition, ethnicity and nation. When such a community goes into a crisis, the traditional imagination of the community is replaced by another form of imagined community, namely, 'an essentialist and ethnicist national identity' that is characterized by a concrete

understanding of nation. A (28-year-old) woman interviewee in Charleroi draws our attention to the increasing level of isolation among the Belgian-Turks:

> What we heard from our parents is very different from what we experience now. When I look at my parents' pictures I see that they were dancing with their Flemish landlords, living next to the Greeks, getting help from the Belgians. They had solidarity with the outside people then. Now, Turks are becoming more and more isolated compared to the past.

The quotations extracted from the in-depth interviews display the existence of a reflexive relationship between the 'nationalist construction' created both in the homeland and among the diaspora, and demonstrate how the externally imposed nationalist identity fills the gap resulting from weakening communal ties due to the generational and structural (social, political and cultural) changes within the community. This transformation corresponds to a transition from religiosity towards nationalism.

There has lately been an alliance among many Euro-Turks on issues like the position of Turks in Europe, Turkey's situation vis-à-vis the European Union, the 'Armenian Genocide', and so forth. Conferences are held in the mosques on special days such as the anniversary of the establishment of the Republic (on 20 October), or the Commemoration Day of Martyrs (on 18 March). Although the people attending such conferences and gatherings have different political agendas, they all agree on the survival of the state, the nation and the flag.

'Imported' brides and bride-grooms: the search for purity

Migrants of Muslim origin residing in the West have also developed another tactic to reinforce their community boundaries in trying to cope with the destabilizing effects of migration and resettlement and the oppression of the structural problems encountered in daily life: marriage with someone from the homeland. A significant issue among Euro-Turks is the increasing number of spouses brought to Europe from the countries of origin. Such partners are known as 'imported brides and bridegrooms'. These marriages are often preferred by conservative families, who believe that brides from the homeland are culturally 'pure' and thus capable of raising 'better-educated' children. Bride-grooms on the other hand are often chosen from candidates who fit the occupational prospects required by the extended family in question. For these families, marriage seems to be regarded primarily as a child-bearing institution and/or in terms of purely economic prospects. The (European/Western) ideal of romantic love is given little or no importance – it is enough that the prospective partners acquiesce with the choice being made for them (and even that may not be necessary).

The family remains one of the most important spaces of protection for Euro-Turks, but it also produces constant tension and crises. The family provides transnational individuals with a sense of protection, because it is where the socialization of diasporic culture begins. A Belgian-Turkish married couple convey how Turkish

culture provides an ideal intimate family atmosphere: 'The best thing about the Turks is that they are attached to their families. I often see my parents, for instance.' German-Turks and French-Turks similarly underlined the significance of family through their comments during the field research in the aftermath of the extraordinarily hot summer of 2003, which resulted in the deaths of thousands of elderly people in France and Germany. Their common view on these deaths was that the families, and European culture, were culpable, that contemporary Western societies lack some essential values such as solidarity, respect for the elderly, family, and basic humanity. They made it clear that Euro-Turks still maintain such values, which give them what Bourdieu (1984) calls distinction vis-à-vis the majority society. Contradictory moral values have been reported by the Euro-Turks as the most important problem faced in everyday life in their countries of settlement (Kaya and Kentel 2005 and 2007).

As many as two-thirds of all the women of Turkish origin living in Belgium marry someone from the country of origin (Reniers and Lievens 1997). Similar numbers are to be found in the Netherlands (Hooghiemstra 2003). The preference to marry someone who has grown up in the homeland is present not only with the majority of the parents but also with many of the young brides themselves, who refer to the importance of sharing the same culture, traditions and language, which are considered important to 'get along with each other' and to 'integrate the partner into the family' (Zemni *et al*. 2006).

A large proportion of the marriages with woman or man 'imported' from Turkey are marriages arranged between the families, sometimes with and sometimes without the consent of one or both of the partners. The marriages lacking consent are forced marriages. Zemni *et al*. (2006: 93–100) reveal that there are some major motives behind the pressure initiated by parents to get their children married: they are concerned about the morality and good behavior of their children who are believed to have come of age; they are concerned about the risk of their daughter losing her virginity; parents believe that they can make the best choice for their children; they are convinced that this is the ongoing tradition; they are concerned that their daughter will not be able to marry once past the age of 25 or so; and finally, they may be motivated to help a family in the country of origin (probably with a lower socio-economic background). What is striking is that parents present forced marriages as a religious order, a maneuver which leaves no room for the youngsters to act.

Contemporary reports suggest a fluid situation. Zemni *et al*. (2006) observe resistance among Euro-Muslims to forced marriages, revealing that young generations of Belgian Muslim females raised in Belgium are more emancipated than they were ten years ago. Recently, youngsters have begun to challenge their parents, trying to convince them that this has nothing to do with Islam, but with tradition. Gaby Strassburger (2004) claims that the parental preference is relevant to a certain degree among Euro-Turks, insofar as young people sometimes decide of their own free will to marry someone from their country of origin. For instance, marrying a man from Turkey may in fact provide some women of Turkish origin with certain advantages, such as the loosening of patriarchal ties with the man becoming dependent on the bride because of a lack of competence in the local language (German, Dutch, etc.),

and the loosening of parental authority on both sides. Similarly, in the research on partner choice and marriage of Muslim women in Belgium, Zemni *et al*. found that some young women opt in particular to marry someone raised in the home country, as it sets the couple free from the social control exerted by the family of the groom – patrilocality is traditional in Anatolia and the power structures implicit in such kinship arrangements (including subservience of the wife to her mother-in-law in particular) still a major feature of family culture in Turkey and the migrant Euro-Turk communities; a woman marrying a man from Turkey also gives the women more responsibilities in public life – again because the power relationship is radically reversed, with the newly arrived husband very much dependent upon the knowledge and social ties of his wife (Zemni *et al*. 2006). Alternatively, the choice to marry someone from the home country can be related to the opinions of young women about the young men in the community. Many young women prefer to marry a young man from the country of origin, as they expect these men to show more responsibility and maturity than the boys they have grown up with. The following excerpt from a focus group discussion demonstrates this:

RESEARCHER: 'So you think that the boys in Turkey are better than the Turkish boys who have grown up here?'
SUZAN: 'Yes, when I look at most of the boys here, everything they are doing . . . Yes, that's why. And in Turkey, for example, my parents used to live in a village and when I see boys over there, there are decent boys, and real boys, you know . . .'
NALAN: 'Their education is different.'
SUZAN: 'Yes, their education is different.'
NALAN: 'They are entirely concentrated on going to school. School comes first.'
RESEARCHER: 'For the boys in Turkey?'
NALAN: 'Yes, how the boys in Turkey think . . .'
TANSU: 'They think more realistically.'
NALAN: 'And they look at the future. The boys here, they live from day to day. Do you understand? They think that they can carry on living with the money from their fathers and mothers.'
RESEARCHER: 'Is that why you would want to marry someone from Turkey?'
SUZAN: 'Yes'. (Zemni, *et al*. 2006: 40)

Many boys, on the other hand, incorporate the belief that young women that have grown up in the home country are more honorable, as they expect them not to have had sexual relations before marriage and expect them to take the responsibilities of raising a family more seriously than girls of Turkish origin who have grown up in Europe and are often considered too 'demanding'.

Conclusion

In conditions of structural oppression, migrant communities become more engaged in the protection of their *honor* – indeed, they may seem to believe it is the only

thing left. It is apparent that the politics of honor, of ethnicity, culture, identity, purity and religion, is extensively employed by various marginalized groups of people such as migrant origin communities at a time when the culturalist paradigm has become mainstream. Culturalist rhetoric is not only deployed by minorities, it is also employed by majority societies. Culturalist rhetoric generates a dominant understanding in the West compelling receiving societies to perceive migrants and their children within the framework of cultural difference, including differences of religion, ethnicity and morality. Ideally, one should rather try to generate the idea that migrants, or transmigrants, are *individuals*, people with similar concerns in their everyday life to the other ordinary citizens of receiving countries, such as sending their children to good schools, getting better paid jobs and living in a decent environment. It should also be kept in mind that almost all migrants want to be liberated from the labeling of 'Other', and that they do actually want to blend into the majority society. Defining them by their cultural and religious attributes is however likely to compel them to emphasize their authenticity, religiosity and ethnicity – which in turn prevents them from blending in.

The attempts by many (trans)migrants to celebrate their ethno-cultural and religious identities partly derives from their feeling of insecurity and ambiguity stimulated by structural constraints such as poverty, unemployment, lack of education, and institutional racism. The reification of culture and religion seems to be a practical tactic employed by migrants and their children in order to create a safe haven for themselves in transnational space. Emphasizing honor and 'importing' marriage partners serve the same purpose, namely, to protect what is deemed to be left in an age of insecurity: culture, ethnicity, religion and the past. It is believed by migrant communities that brides and bride-grooms brought from their homeland can sustain the power of their community as they are considered to have remained 'pure' (untarnished, intact, wholesome). The discourse of purity seems to be the last resort for migrants, where they believe they can defend their norms, values and families. However, one should not forget that the discourse of purity is to be found in the representational space of reality. The everyday life of Euro-Turks reveals that they are nevertheless competent in developing hyphenated identities, combining different traditions, cultures, norms and values in dynamic new forms.

Notes

1 'Governmentality' refers to the practices that characterize the form of supervision a state exercises over its subjects, their wealth, misfortunes, customs, bodies, souls and habits (Foucault 1979a).
2 The personalized, politically based term 'Euro-Turk' is related to (and largely subsumed under) the more abstract, religiously based 'Euro-Islam' (e.g. Tibi 2007). Many of the issues raised by use of the two terms are the same, but for various reasons (including but not limited to religion). As 'Euro-Turk' is term of convenience, definitional issues such as its range of reference – e.g. whether/how it applies to children of mixed (Turkish/non-Turkish) parentage – are not directly considered here (although they are strongly implied, below).
3 For detailed information on the research, see Kaya and Kentel (2005, 2007). The research included in-depth interviews and focus-group discussions, as well as structured

interviews with 90 questions in Germany, France, Belgium and the Netherlands. A total of 1065 interviews were carried out in Germany, with 600 in France, and 400 in Belgium. The research in Germany and France was conducted in 2004, and that in Belgium in 2007. The research in the Netherlands was conducted during the winter of 2007, and consisted of qualitative research techniques only.

4 All translations from Zemni by the author.

5 The difference between 'private women' and 'public women' has been very successfully drawn by Claire E. Alexander. She used this classification in mapping out the modes of courtship of black male Londoners (Alexander 1996: 157–86).

6 The term habitus was coined by Pierre Bourdieu (1984) to refer to a system of durable, transposable dispositions which function as the generative basis of structured practices.

7 The concept of 'fugitive power' is used by Zygmunt Bauman (2000), Katherine N. Farrell (2004) and Robin Cohen (2007). It describes the modes of democratic power operating beyond the reach of 'hard power' (guns, laws, violence, enforcement agencies, etc.) and 'soft power' (norms, customs, culture industry, ideology, etc.).

8 Schaerbeek is a municipality of Brussels and home to large immigrant communities, mostly from Morocco and Turkey. Emirdağ is a small, rural town and mountainous district in central western Anatolia, from where a large number of the Schaerbeek Turks, indeed many of the Dutch and Belgian EuroTurks, originated.

9 The Turkish word 'gavur' refers literally to unbelievers, but is used also as a general term of derogation.

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10 Bringing the organization back in

Pro-Kurdish protest in Europe[1]

Olivier Grojean

Introduction

While the Kurdish movement in the Middle East has already been conceptualized from the perspective of the theory of mobilizations (Romano 2006), pro-Kurdish protest in Europe has been rarely studied by scholars of social movements. And yet, since 1982, not a month has gone by without a pro-Kurdish demonstration in a European country, and the average number of these events annually could be several hundred.[2] This makes the Kurds probably the most 'demonstrative' group in Europe, and undoubtedly the most 'Europeanized' group, if one understands by this term a mass group operating at the European level, making claims on the European authorities, and frequently demonstrating in European countries other than in the country of residence. To explain this, one has to consider that the Kurdish mobilizations in Europe have to be related primarily to the situation of the Kurdish people in Turkey (the country of origin for the overwhelming majority) and to the developments of the pro-Kurdish struggle in the Middle East: these pro-Kurdish mobilizations in Europe are the transnationalized component of similar mobilizations in Turkey.[3]

The main hypothesis proposed here, therefore, is that the dimensions of the pro-Kurdish mobilizations in Europe (emergence, strategies, forms of the protest, temporalities, rhythms, individual engagements, commitment to the cause, etc.) have to be understood not within the political structures of the countries where these mobilizations take place, but within the whole, interdependent complex of the Kurdish movement: they vary according to several interacting systems (relationships with the authorities, media and other mobilized groups, and internal relationships) that are not limited to the objectively present actors in a given interaction site. That is, the 'political opportunity structure' (McAdam 1982; Tarrow 1989)[4] of the European countries, which is still considered a good explanatory set of contextual variables with which to understand migrant mobilizations (see e.g. Koopmans *et al*. 2005), is not appropriate for an explanation of the action repertoire of the Kurdish movement in Europe, for an appreciation of the temporality of the mobilizations, for an account of the individual engagements in the Kurdish cause, etc. At a theoretical level first, this is because a structural, objectivist and static analysis cannot enlighten individual choices of identity or processes of

participation in social movements (Goodwin and Jasper 2003, Fillieule 2005); and at an empirical level too, because political organizations – Kurdish, but also Turkish – play a central role in the Kurdish migrant mobilization, as we will see below: individuals do not mobilize themselves, they are mobilized by organizations (Siméant 1998: 53). These organizations, moreover, interact not only with the state (in the country of residence), but also with the media, and with their opponents or supporters, even if these actors are far away (Turkish authorities, other groups in Turkey or in the Middle East, etc.).

The sources used in this chapter are both qualitative and quantitative. First, in order to analyze the identity construction of Kurds in Europe and to understand their participation in the pro-Kurdish mobilizations, direct observation of public demonstrations, meetings and daily activism were favored, supported by interviews conducted with numerous supporters of the Kurdish cause in Germany and France (the majority of them supporters, militants or ex-militants, and ex-fighters of the Kurdistan Workers Party, the PKK).[5] Combined with the study of newspapers, magazines, books and other partisan sources of the PKK and Partîya Sosyalîsta Kurdistan (PSK; Kurdistan Socialist Party), these interviews afforded detection and analysis of the discursive grammars instituted in the parties and the degree of subjection of the militants to the partisan discipline. Second, to investigate the temporality of the mobilizations, to explore the variations of the protest (the forms of action and violence, reactivity, targets of the protest, etc.) in all the European countries where Kurds are living, recourse was necessary to 'Protest Event Analysis' (a statistical method based on the longitudinal study of variations of protest events across spaces and times: see Koopmans and Rucht 2002). To build a corpus of protest events, we searched the *Bulletin de liaison et d'information* at the Kurdish Institute of Paris (an international specialized press review published since 1982), collated 1052 protest events in Europe between 1982 and 2001 and associated to these events 1258 forms of action, or performances (most events consist of a single form – a rally, for example – but a single event can comprise two or even three performances: – a march, a sit-in and a clash with the police, for example).[6]

The first part of this contribution will show that political organizations the Turkish and Kurdish facilitate the activation or reactivation of the identities and political dividing lines of the homeland within the European migratory space, and operate in the maintenance and framing of the 'partisan environment'. Then, analyzing more precisely the case of the Kurdistan Workers Party, we will see that these organizations are able to produce norms, rules and values that can affect the mobilizations in exile (although the contexts are very different in each European state arena), through their (attempted) control of their militants and the Turkish Kurdish population generally. Finally, it will be shown that these mobilization processes have undeniable effects in terms of protest: while observation of the temporality and the rhythms of Kurdish protest highlights the internal agenda of and interactions between Öcalan's party and the Turkish authorities in the Middle East, analysis of the different forms of action underscores the importance of partisan socialization in the constitution and structuring of the action repertoire of the PKK.

Transnational movements, identity construction and political engagement

The transnationalization of Turkish and Kurdish political movements

The Kurdish Movement and political actors from Turkey that developed abroad in the 1970s did not find virgin territory, lands and people, that is, without associations or political activism. Indeed, many Turkish and Kurdish associations had existed in Europe, Germany especially, since the late 1950s. The first such were student associations. The Almanya Türk Öğrenci Federasyonu (ATÖF; Federation of Turkish Students in Germany) was founded in 1962, financed by the Turkish government until 1968. Among Kurdish associations were the Kurdish Student's Society in Europe (KSSE), founded in 1956, and the National Union of Kurdish Students in Europe (NUKSE), founded in 1965, which attracted many Iraqi Kurds (as well as some from Turkey). As student organizations, these associations are not strictly political, but their actions and discourses were progressively politicized, affected by a variety of processes in Turkey and the Middle East. For this reason, for example, ATÖF cannot be considered a 'state arm' of Turkey in Europe, since, sympathetic to Türkiye İşçi Partisi (TİP; Turkish Labor Party), it became the strongest opponent of the regime abroad after 1967 (and thereby forgoing Turkish state sponsorship in 1968). Founded by ex-members of the KSSE, NUKSE was also active in politics, taking a position critical of the Soviet Union.[7] And KSSE member Hemreş Reşo was also founder member of the more little Hevra (Together) and Bahoz (Storm) groups, two associations founded in 1965 and 1970 respectively, which rallied and politicized Kurdish students from Turkey.

After the increase in migrations from Turkey in the 1960s, many Turkish workers associations (Türk işçi dernekleri) were then created in Germany and Europe. There were no real Kurdish worker associations as such, because the Kurds from Turkey – or the Turks with Kurdish descent – preferred to rally to the preexisting and mushrooming Turkish associations, such as Avrupa Türk Toplumcular Federasyonu (ATTF; the Federation of Turkish Socialists in Europe) founded in 1968. Enjoying close ties with ATÖF, ATTF supported TİP in the 1969 elections and rallied many smaller associations which had not previously been politicized. The 1971 coup, however, changed the situation, with many Turkish and Kurdish political parties and organizations establishing themselves in Europe, and not only because of the repression. Indeed, it was the Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (MHP; Nationalist Movement Party) that was the first party to enter Europe unofficially in the late 1960s.[8] The MHP was soon followed by the Islamists, then by left-wing parties, and finally by the Kurdish parties by the end of the 1970s and beginnings of the 1980s. These organizations were clearly following a 'boomerang pattern' (the activation of external networks intended to act as pressure groups back at home, on their own state – see Keck and Sikkink 1998). Nevertheless, it is clear that these organizations could not afford to ignore their rivals in Europe: the transnationalization of the Kurdish movement cannot be understood without observing the transnationalization of the left-wing or right-wing Turkish radical movements.

Two main processes can be observed at work here (Ögelman 2003), even if distinguishing between the two is often difficult. First, because of the great politicization of the Kurdish and Turkish migrants, many workers' associations supported the political movements and became in a way the 'legal wings' of parties banned in Turkey. Second, some parties created new associations when they realized that they could not 'infiltrate' the existing ones – which was the case for the Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu (THKO; People's Liberation Army of Turkey), the Türkiye Komünist Partisi (TKP-ML; Marxist-Leninist Communist Party of Turkey), and Dev-Yol/Dev-Sol (Devrimici Yol, Revolutionary Way; Devrimci Sol, Revolutionary Left),[9] all organizations originating out of Dev Genç (Devrimici Gençlik, Revolutionary Youth). In respect of the Kurdish movement, all political parties extended their influence in Europe at the end of the 1970s by creating or rallying pro-Kurdish associations. Only two of these, however, the PKK and the PSK led by Kemal Burkay, survived politically beyond four or five years. Despite some cooperation, relations between the two organizations were marked mainly by competition, reproducing the scheme of relationships between left-wing parties in Turkey. While the PSK was the leading of the two parties in Europe at the end of the 1970s, the PKK outstripped Burkay's party and came to permanently monopolize the Kurdish cause in Europe after the beginning of its guerilla war in 1984.

The Turkish and Kurdish population in Europe was estimated at more than a million by the end of the 1970s. Therefore, unlike Palestinian, Armenian or Iranian organizations who had begun or were beginning to be active in Europe a few years before or around the same time, Turkish and Kurdish organizations were able to mobilize large numbers of people and could attempt to develop social movements over and above their involvement in violent actions (attacks, bombings, etc.).

Identity production and political engagement

Mobilizing people requires their identification with and conversion to a cause, but it was the high number of Turkish and Kurdish rival political organizations in Europe and the fight between them to gain support that explains the extent of identity production and political engagement of Turkish and Kurdish migrants in 'homeland politics'. A general concept of identification that neglects the importance of the organizational specificities at work on the ground fails to account for the realities of mobilization. Indeed, just like the hypothesis of a 'long-distance nationalism' (Anderson 1998) or of a 'diaspora nationalism' (Gellner 1983: 101–9) produced by exile, economic conditions or the encounter with otherness, the hypothesis of the role of citizenship regimes in the construction of identity and engagement in the direction of the homeland (Koopmans and Statham 2001) is too abstract, overarching and mechanistic to give an account of uncertain micro-sociological processes.

Three problems with an approach based on the role of citizenship hypothesis may be identified here. First, researchers who tested this as a variable in identity production wanted to know 'how Turks became Kurds, not Germans' (Leggewie 1996), without considering that Turks could also become, for example, Alevi,

Sunni, Yezidi, Zaza or, for example, 'Dersimli' (a native of Dersim). The identification, that is, of Turkish nationals in Germany was not necessarily, solely or primarily determined by macroethnicity (i.e. Kurdish), but could rather, also or more importantly be based on such structures as religious sect, linguistic/ethnic sub-grouping, or place of origin. What is more, ethnicization is not the (inevitable) product of an absence of 'integration', as is demonstrated by the cases of the many 'integrated' Turkish migrants who 'became' Kurds or Alevi.

Second, the citizenship regimes (Koopmans *et al*. 2005: 31–73) and migration policies (Guiraudon 2000) were (and are) rather different in each European countries to which Turkish nationals flocked. According to the role of citizenship approach, the production of identity would have been affected by these differences – which, indeed, is precisely the conclusion reached by Koopmans *et al*. (2005) in their research based on claims related to ethnic relations and citizenship in five European daily newspapers. The problem here, however, is that the authors confuse *journalistic representations* with the *reality* of migrant identities[10]: the observation of the landscape of the identities in Europe of Turkish and Kurdish individuals, and the observation of the landscape of their associations and political organizations showed in fact a great homogeneity across European borders (Østergaard-Nielsen 2001).

Third, the interviews we and many other researchers (e.g. Østergaard-Nielsen 2003; Rigoni 2001) conducted with immigrants from Turkey in several European countries showed that the actual processes of identification with a cause were to be found in individual trajectories, familial environment and socialization in associations or political organizations. In other words, there is evidence that flatly contradicts the over generalizing and somewhat simplistic role of citizenship thesis. This all leads us to conclude that it is *mobilization*, the work of associations and organizations, and the arrival after 1980 of thousands of refugees from Turkey who were often already very politicized, that has been crucial in, indeed the most important factor (and product) of the activation or reactivation of the ethnic (especially Kurdish) identities and political dividing lines of the homeland within Europe.

This is not, of course, to say that the variable of 'country' is insignificant, that the local politics of the different European nations play no material role in the construction of identity and orientation towards homeland politics. On the contrary, the nature and scope of plurality of the participation systems, the very different foreign policies vis-à-vis Turkey and Kurdish human rights, and the varying degrees of tolerance to the activities of the Turkish/Kurdish radical organizations within the individual European states certainly could, and does, affect the processes of identity construction and, more, of political engagement – but, crucially, in point of fact, as mediated by the activist organizations. The significance of the political environment of the country of residence, that is, cannot be properly assessed without taking into account the organizational dimension. This requires a finer appreciation of the complexities involved in discriminating between 'homeland politics' and 'immigrant politics', as proposed by Østergaard-Nielsen (2001).

To begin with, there needs to be a recognition of a critique of the value of this distinction. More inclusive political structures – that is, those which support the

representation of migrants and the cooperation between them – could encourage, it is argued, the absence of dialogue on the political situation in Turkey and reinforce the political dividing lines of the homeland in the European migratory space. Against this, however, the distinction does continue to make sense for many migrants in Europe. All the PKK activists we met considered the PSK to be working more for the integration of immigrants in their host country than for an independent Kurdistan – while PSK activists take the view that the integration and formation of the Kurdish 'diaspora' in Europe is a more realistic way of influencing European countries and thereby contributing to go back to Kurdistan after finding a political solution in Turkey. This underlines not the role of the political structures but the framing processes of this division between homeland and immigrant politics at work within the organizations.

Finally, we need to appreciate that the transnationalization of the Turkish and Kurdish political movements produces more complex processes than may otherwise be anticipated by a lot of researchers. For example, when confronted with repression in one country, an organization may intensify its mobilization there in opposition, and/or it could delocalize its activities in another country and again/or else mobilize the Kurdish population in other countries to pressure the repressive authorities in the first country. In this respect also, the so-called 'political opportunity structure' is clearly just too static a model to serve as an appropriate and sufficiently explanatory conceptual vehicle with which to account for the complicated dynamics of the pro-Kurdish mobilizations in Europe.

Framing the pro-Kurdish mobilizations in Europe: PKK activism policy

Beginnings and homogenization of the pro-Kurdish Protest

The first protest actions of the Kurdish movement in Europe go back to 1981, but one has to wait for 1982 to observe the first actions by the PKK, after the deployment to Europe of many activists from the Central Committee of the Party in July 1981. In accounting for the beginnings of this protest, one obviously recognizes the *coup d'état* in Turkey and the influx of political refugees as playing a great role. However, we need also to place the Kurdish mobilizations in Europe in the larger framework of a cycle of mobilizations that started in Turkey in the 1960s. Furthermore, we have to keep in mind that many other ethnically or nationally oriented organizations (Iranian, Armenian, Palestinian, etc.) had already begun a struggle for their cause in Europe, using spectacular and often violent means of protest like bombings, hostage-takings and hijackings.

The first actors from Turkey to appropriated the idea of 'homeland protest', operating already in the 1970s and even more after the 1980 coup, were from the left-wing movement. Given its contacts with the radical left within Birlik Komitesi (Bir-Kom; Common Committee), the PKK could hardly afford to stay out these mobilizations (the PSK refused to participate in Bir-Kom). But the Kurdish struggle in Europe also fits into the scheme of the 'national liberation struggles' in

Europe, which started in the late 1960s. Indeed, the PKK had close ties with Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) – they claimed joint responsibility for two bombings in 1980) and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) – PKK activists were engaged alongside the Palestinians in Lebanon in the war against Israel in 1982, both of which were active in (Western) Europe. While the climate cannot said to have been favorable for the Kurdish mobilizations – the competition to gain access to the European authorities was strong – it is apparent that the example of these existing mobilizations influenced Kurdish leaders, encouraging them to think that they could do the same for their cause and launch similar protest campaigns in Europe (McAdam 1995). In a kind of tacit division of labor, the monopolization of protest by the PKK encouraged the other pro-Kurdish actors (notably the PSK) to favor the less dramatic path of cultural mobilization and lobbying.

Faced with the fragmentation that comes with transnationalization, the need for cohesion and homogeneity on the European-wide scale became important from the early 1980s. While this was a concern of all pro-Kurdish parties, it was the PKK that developed the most systematic strategy. Several journals and magazines (*Serxwêbun* [Independence], *Kurdistan Report*, etc.) were published to inform and agitate the population ideologically. The Eniya Rizgarîya Netewayi Kurdistan (ERNK; National Front for the Liberation of Kurdistan) was created in 1985, with its European Committee (Avrupa Cephe Merkezi) – as yet not outlawed – in charge of managing the pro-PKK associations, which were grouped together in a European Federation. Specialized transnational associations were also created, including associations for artists (1983), for women and for the youth (1987), and for intellectuals (1988), etc. These associations were not always strictly PKK organizations – there was no PKK executive in another association, for lawyers, for example – but they clearly fell within the general PKK approach to the 'Kurdish question'. A territorially based organization was enacted, with Germany and the other European countries being divided into regions administrated by party officials. The spaces and times of the struggle were also homogenized, with European demonstrations set for at the same date or transnational marches organized realizing the connection and symbolically marking all the European territories. All these mechanisms would help Öcalan's party to control its militants and develop the specific new kind of activism it supported.

The weight of the institution: norms and values of the New Man

While all the pro-Kurdish and left-wing parties were influenced by the Leninist and Guevarist models of the 'revolutionary militant' (notably Dev-Sol), only the PKK placed this at the center of its fight. After the establishment of a training academy in the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon in 1986, a new model of PKK militant was founded and exported to Europe. It concerned the clandestine activists rather than lone supporters, but could be understood as an ideal for the population at large, with a view to creating a New Kurdish Man, in the leader's image (Grojean 2008b). This New Man was highly disciplined along the principles of the party, and

obedient to his superiors (and ultimately to the leader); he had to love Öcalan and to develop a new personality liberated from Turkish colonialism and domination. These were not merely theoretical principles, but had to be put into practice: the activist had to cut all his earlier relations (with family and friends) and forgo marriage (which would distract him from the fight), he had to speak well and be normally dressed (the contrary would show a personality corrupted by consumer society), and he didn't drink or smoke (to stay in good health), etc.

After a political training of six months, a militant's progress was evaluated using various disciplinary techniques. Then, self-criticism, biographical rewriting and family supervision of the clandestine activists were permitted to re-normalize the militants. It is impossible to estimate the proportion of activists who effectively integrated these principles and norms in Europe; nevertheless, we know that it was and it still is difficult – not to say suicidal – for a clandestine activist to challenge these rules or to lead a different, hidden way of life. Activists can leave the PKK if they desire, but only under the condition of ceasing all political activities. In the 1980s, contesting this system was tantamount to contesting the leadership of Öcalan, and could lead to death (Marcus 2007: 89–96).

In charge of organizing the protest in Europe, these activists sought to mobilize the population. The numerous pro-PKK associations were the sites of these activities. While primarily social spaces – where people could meet friends, drink tea, watch Roj-TV, play chess, or have their hair cut, where children could take Kurdish language or saz courses and new migrants could receive help in dealing with officialdom – these associations were also in charge of organizing public meetings and demonstrations, collecting funds and recruiting new members from among the migrants. Through visits to families, young supporters and senior activists tried to mobilize financial support and to persuade parents to send their son or daughter to the 'mountains'. Social, cultural and political actions thus all overlapped, tending to concern all aspects of life. This control and supervision had a real impact on PKK-activism, and on the social representations of PKK supporters at the European level. This also had consequences for the protest itself.

Temporalities and forms of the pro-Kurdish Protest in Europe

Referents and temporalities of the protest

The temporality of protests in Europe was determined above all by the contentious interactions between the Kurdistan Workers Party and the Turkish state in the Middle East and on the threats against the PKK and its leader, Öcalan, in Europe and in Turkey. The protest also became more important in the 1990s as the PKK realized that European countries could play a major role in the resolution of the Kurdish conflict (with a higher level of protest in Germany and France in particular because of the large Kurdish populations resident in these two countries). Four main waves of protest can reasonably be identified *in all European countries*, in 1982, 1986–7, 1992–6 and 1998–9 – respectively, the time of the Kurdish resistance in

Diyarbakır prison, the first big military operations after the establishment of the *Korucu* (village guards), the five years 'dirty war' (with its 24,000 deaths, 1200 'unknown political murders' and 3000 'evacuated villages'), and finally Öcalan's journey to Europe, followed by his arrest, trial and condemnation to the death penalty. There was, it is true, no automatic, 'mechanical' connection between the conflict and the protests, primarily because the interactions with the European authorities impacted on the formation of these waves, specifically, repression in Germany in 1987 and the banning of the PKK in France and Germany in 1993 (a repression that constituted a threat against the PKK and led leaders of the party to call in turn for a greater mobilization).

While the statistics for pro-Kurdish protest rhythms show no correlation with the political rhythms of the host countries (elections, annual protest cycles, etc.), they do underline the influence of the seasons. With the exception of the years 1998–9, there were always more mobilizations between March and August than between September and February. Given that guerilla war and military counter-operations are easier during the first period (spring/summer) than during the second (fall/winter), and, furthermore, and that the 1998–9 mobilization was essentially due to Öcalan's arrest (after a third ceasefire), then the link between the war events and protest appears clear. Similarly, while there are more demonstrations in general in France at weekends (Fillieule 1997: 83), there were more pro-Kurdish mobilizations there during the week. This could be seen as a sign of their relationship to dramatic events in Turkey: one does not wait for the weekend in an emergency, even though mobilization is generally easier on Saturdays and Sundays.

Lastly, many demonstrations were related to the internal political agenda of the PKK and more generally of the Kurdish Movement. These included the anniversary of Öcalan's arrest (February 15), Women's day (March 8), anniversary of Halabja (March 16), *Newroz* (March 21), the anniversary of Öcalan (April 4), International Workers' day (May 1), the anniversary of the death of the 'Martyrs of July 14', numerous festivals during the summer, the anniversary of the first guerilla actions (August 15), the anniversary of the coup (September 12), etc. The party has obviously had the capacity to create its own agenda, independently of temporalities institutionalized in the host countries. Again, this shows that organizational factors and the contentious interactions between the PKK and the Turkish state in the Middle East are more relevant for an understanding of the dynamics of the protest than the structural political factors of the European host countries.

The invention of a protest tradition

The same is true for the action repertoire of the movement, that is, the forms of the pro-Kurdish protest. Developed by Charles Tilly (Tilly 1986, 1995), the notion of 'action repertoire' refers to the set of performances at the disposition of a group engaged in contentious interactions. As a transnational example, however, the pro-Kurdish case helps to complete some blind spots in the notion and place some of Tilly's conclusions into perspective, notably those on the influence of political regimes and on the use of political violence.[11]

First, analyzing long periods, Tilly does not try to understand how repertoires are built. For him it is sufficient to state that it is the accumulated experiences of the actors' that create a familiarity with certain performances (Tilly 1984: 99), and it is this familiarity which creates the repertoire (Tilly 1978: 153–4). But how do people with little experience, located in foreign cultures and dispersed across different countries constitute their own repertoire in a short time span? The action repertoire of the PKK has contained performances adopted from other migrant groups and political organizations in the host countries, performances from the revolutionary and 'national liberation 'arena' in Europe and imported performances from Turkey (hunger strikes in public spaces for example, which were used at the same time in Turkish prisons).[12] It was, one assumes, a sentiment of social, cultural or ideological proximity with these groups and organizations that encouraged the PKK activists to appropriate these techniques – but they did not indiscriminately employ all the means used by these groups. Rather, the activists 'chose' the performances they considered most suitable for their struggle, partly according to interactions with the other political actors (movements, counter-movements, the press or the authorities), but also according to their militant *ethos*. For example, using 'moderated' and 'controlled' violence in Europe (the goal was not to kill) was a means for the PKK both to show its force without being perceived by their Western host governments as 'terrorists', and to control the potential radicality of its activists. Hunger strikes or arson attacks, some risky actions were for example a way of testing the commitment of its militants and supporters. Transnational marches and European demonstrations or festivals, as mentioned above, were also a way of symbolically marking the European territory and homogenizing the protest in Europe. The violent forms of political action, therefore, did not occur only 'as by-product of negotiations that were not in themselves intrinsically violent' (Tilly 1978: 177),[13]) but also implemented as the result of the leader's perspectives or as a product of a partisan socialization (the numerous self-immolations in Europe were perhaps the best example here, see Grojean 2007).

These remarks concern Europe as a whole, but were there also action repertoire variations specified by space and time? First, the action repertoire of the PKK was very similar in all European countries, notwithstanding the different development by individual countries of specific policies vis-à-vis the Kurdish party and the Turkish authorities. And analysis shows that the variations in time were also very similar in Germany, France and Switzerland: the main explanatory factor was again the dynamics of the war in Turkey and not the so-called 'political opportunity structures' of the host countries. Nevertheless, one can observe a more common recourse to arson attacks in Germany in the 1990s. As Germany banned the PKK in 1993, this fact might lead us to question the hypothesis regarding the autonomy of Kurdish mobilization in respect of the local political context. However, Germany was the country with the largest population of Turkish and Kurdish in Europe, and statistics show that the arson attacks were not launched against the German authorities, but against Turkish institutions and businesses (restaurants, banks, travel agencies, associations, etc). The more frequent recourse to arson attacks in Germany would thus appear to have been the consequence above all of the larger Turkish

and Kurdish population there, combined with very significant internal dividing lines, even if the repression of the German state doubtless acted as a catalyst in these dynamics. The arson attacks were primarily aimed at Turkish opponents but also functioned as a way of telling Germany that the PKK was still alive after the ban and calling the authorities to negotiations. Indeed, far from undermining the autonomy thesis presented here, an account of these dynamics requires that we relinquish structural approaches in favor of an interest in the interactions between the organization and its environment, and a concern with militant practices and subjectivities, produced within the partisan institution.

Conclusion

We have tried here to revise the place generally attributed to the political structures of states in the analysis of social movements by pointing out several interaction systems of the political actors involved in the pro-Kurdish protest in Europe. Undeniably, identity construction and political engagement are dynamics that are principally a function of individual trajectories and the work of organizations. The emergence of protest cycles and the developments of the mobilizations have to be related to 'initiator movements' and the organizational structure of a given movement. Temporalities and forms of the protest cannot be explained without taking into account other mobilized groups, the media, the distant actors (like the Turkish state) and the internal culture of the organizations. While the political environment does have a role in the structuring of the protest (foreign policies or repression, for example), an appreciation of transnational mobilization as a process requires that we take more seriously into account the consequences of transnational practices and examine how and why variables are sometimes effective or otherwise. The specific case of the Kurdistan Workers Party is notable for the radicalism of the organization. If we consider the term 'radicalization' to refer not to violence or 'extremism' but to cutting oneself off from the social and political norms and rules so as to build a counter-society, then the influence of the political context is necessarily less significant in radical groups. This helps to us remind that sociology is first and foremost the study of particular social configurations (Elias 1978).

Notes

1 I thank Sami Zemni, Marlies Casier, Joost Jongerden and Andy Hilton for their remarks and comments on earlier versions of this chapter, which benefited from the financial support of the French National Research Agency (ANR, Thematic Program 'Conflicts, War(s), Violence', 'Conflits-TIP' Project).

2 'Pro-Kurdish demonstration' refers to a public gathering and action/protest in support of Kurdish rights and demands (human, political, cultural, etc.) and generally, although not necessarily or exclusively, composed of and organized by Kurds; 'European country' refers to all European countries where Kurds are living, but primarily to the countries of (north)western Europe, where the Kurdish migrant populations are centered. Regarding the number of pro-Kurdish demonstrations in Europe, a low estimation – based on the comparison of a corpus of protest events based on a variety of journalistic sources between 1982 and 2005 (Grojean 2008a) with an exhaustive database set up with articles

from the pro-Kurdish daily *Özgür Politika* between November 1998 and June 1999 (Küçük 2002) – suggests that something like 170 demonstrations annually – approaching one every other day – were organized in Europe during the 1980s and 1990s. A much higher estimation, however, results when calculating from a nine month observation of the pro-PKK association in Berlin (during a period of weak mobilization), which showed the association to have called two demonstrations a month. Given that there are 52 other similar associations in Germany and more than 50 others in Europe, then, assuming only one demonstration every two month, there would have been well over 600 Kurdish protest events annually across Europe, an average of some two every day. To put this figure in context, the number of demonstrations in France is estimated at approximately thirty a day (Fillieule 1997: 14), and France has a population of over 60 million, while Turkish Kurds number (only) one million in Europe as a whole.

3 On the Kurdish question, see Bozarslan (1997). On the Kurdish movement in Turkey, see White (2000).

4 Tarrow's definition of the notion of 'Political Opportunity Structure' is built on five factors (the openness of the political system, the existence of allies or support groups, the stability of political alignments, the unity between political elites, and the governmental capacity to launch public policies); however, other factors have been introduced to take into account the context of specific populations (such as the citizenship regimes for the migrants). More recently, Nedim Ögelman has tried to link the factors of the host countries and those of the country of origin in the notion of 'Transnational Political Opportunity Structure' (TPOS): see Ögelman, 2003.

5 Founded in 1978, the Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan (PKK) has been waging a guerilla war against the Turkish state since 1984. Its leader Abdullah Öcalan was arrested and sentenced to death in 1999, but continues to 'advise' the party through his lawyers (the death sentence was commuted later to life imprisonment).

6 Compared with police data (primary sources) and newspaper articles (secondary sources), a press review is a tertiary source and in this respect even less reliable than classical journalistic sources, already criticized by social movement scholars (for a synthesis, see Ortiz et al. 2005), and, more radically, by French scholars (see e.g. Fillieule 2007). To evaluate the selectivity degree of this source and the systematicity degree of this selectivity, a comparison of our corpus to three other databases was necessary: the first striving for exhaustiveness in a short period at the European level (Küçük 2002); the second aiming at representativeness over a long period in Germany – the country that saw the greatest number of Kurdish protest events (see Küçük 2002, based on the data of the PRODAT Project, led by Dieter Rucht); and the third aiming at representativeness over a medium time period in Germany, France, Great-Britain, Switzerland and the Netherlands – the five countries that saw the greatest number of Kurdish protest events in Europe (see Koopmans et al. 2005, based on the data of the MERCI Project, led by Ruud Koopmans). This testing showed the corpus biases employed here to be generally reduced compared to 'classical' journalistic sources and indicated the types of questions that could reasonably be asked of these data (Grojean 2008a: 217–311).

7 Indeed, according to two of its founders, Jemal Nebez and Bruska Ibrahim, NUKSE was the only association at the time to voice such ideas (Tschavisch 1996: 160–170).

8 This entry was unofficial, insofar as legal representations of political parties from Turkey are forbidden in a foreign country. In fact, with over forty associations in six European countries the MHP had become probably the most important organization from Turkey abroad by 1973, and, profiting from its participation in the government between 1975 and 1978, reinforced its presence in Europe in 1979–80.

9 Dev-Yol and later Dev-Sol came from the Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi (THKP-C; People's Liberation Party-Front of Turkey).

10 In a previous article (1999), Ruud Koopmans and Paul Statham had tried to deal with this problem with the use of two measures, one based on journalistic descriptions of the

claimants and the other – considered an effective indicator of migrants' self-perception – based on their organizations' names. And having found that the two measures gave similar results, Koopmans and Statham concluded that the identities they found in the press were not, in fact, ascribed by journalists (or by society as a whole), but rather conformed to the subjective perceptions of the migrants. However, the names of the associations do not reflect necessary the identities (and activities) of their members – the choice of a name might, for example, be determined by the scheme of a legitimating strategy. And even if the association names did reflect identities, the Koopmans–Statham statistics were never compared with a third set of ('objective') data, such as the 'real' numbers of associations indicating a homeland and or an ethnic identity in their name.

11 Tilly devotes only four pages to 'Transnational Social Movements' at the end (just before the Conclusion) of his last book on repertoires (2006: 204–8).

12 Hunger strikes in Turkey are also probably – and at least partially – themselves an import from Northern Ireland, as practiced by Irish republicans from the early twentieth century and revived by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) during the 1970s. While – to the knowledge of this author – an individual hunger strike occurred in a Turkish jail in 1950 (by the poet and communist activist Nâzim Hikmet), and the first collective hunger strike was organized in Ankara prison in 1971 (by 23 THKO activists), the first death fast (ölüm orucu) in Turkey was launched by PKK activists in Diyarbakir Prison on March 1981, only three days after the beginning of Bobby Sand's strike. But we never found any confirmation of a link between the two events. Also, because of the great number of radical left activists supporting the PKK in the early 1980s in Germany, collective hunger strikes in public spaces there could also probably be seen as an adaptation of this mean of protest used by the Rote Armee Fraktion (Red Army Fraction) in German prisons during the 1970s.

13 For a self-critique, see Tilly (2003: iv).

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11 The Politics of solidarity

The Kurdish question in the European Parliament

Marlies Casier

> It was late summer 2006 and we were sitting on a boat crossing the Bosphorus when a dark-skinned man sitting opposite offered us tea. 'Where are you from?' he asked, launching into conversation. 'We are from Belgium', I uttered in broken Turkish. 'Belgium, Brussels?!', he replied with a smile, 'Belgium is a good country, I know. You have Nelly Maes!' My husband and I were startled. Here we found ourselves having tea with an ordinary Kurdish man in Istanbul who spoke with great respect of a Flemish politician probably unknown to many Belgian citizens. The man went on to recount having seen the former MEP many times on RojTv, the Kurdish satellite television channel broadcasting from Denderleeuw-Brussels – and the senior female politician in question was one of the fiercest defenders of the Kurds' plight in the European Parliament.
>
> (author's observations, Istanbul, September 2006)

Indeed, the European Parliament ('Brussels' or 'Strasbourg') carries a special meaning for millions of Kurds living in Turkey and the Kurdish diaspora in Europe. Although less enthusiastic than a few years ago, Kurds from Turkey remain among the staunchest supporters of Turkey's accession to the European Union. In particular, politicized Kurds have been hopeful that Turkey's entrance to the Union would create opportunities to solve the Kurdish question. Considerable energy has been devoted in staging demands to European institutions, with Kurdish political activists addressing their concerns to the Council of Europe, the European Commission, and the European Parliament as well as to the European Court of Human Rights. This chapter will concentrate on activities in the European Parliament.

The European Parliament (EP) was established in 1979 as a directly elected body, and by the 1980s its Members (MEPs) were already raising their concerns about human rights violations in the southeastern, mainly Kurdish-inhabited provinces of Turkey. During the early 1990s, MEPs started to call attention to Turkey's Kurdish problem, the Kurdish question per se. In 1995, the president of the EP awarded its Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought to Leyla Zana, an imprisoned MP of the pro-Kurdish DEP Party, in an effort to push forward political change in the country. This gradual development of MEP involvement in the Kurdish question ran alongside Turkey's endeavor to join the EU, which culminated in its acceptance for candidacy in 1999 and the commencement of full accession

negations in 2005. MEP disquiet regarding the Kurdish question has thus been heightened over the last decade with concern about Turkey's progress towards meeting the political criteria for full accession specified in the 1993 Council at Copenhagen, namely, a 'stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities' (Doc. SN 180/193: 7.A.iii). This, of course, is the leverage Kurdish activists have hoped to exploit. A third dynamic here has been the growing power and self-confidence of the European legislature as a relatively accessible, democratic institution, and the increasing range of MEP activities. This, however, must be set against its continued limitation, particularly as regards Turkey and the Kurdish question, insofar as it is other EU bodies (the Council, with the Commission) that deal with the accession of a new state (something that the EP can merely block at the ratification stage, and then only with a majority of the whole vote).

This chapter will look at how MEPs have engaged with the Kurdish question. It will also review the role of Kurdish political activists and their relations to EU member-states (i.e. at the national level), and the importance of this in staging demands at the supranational level of the European Parliament; and it will look at the ways in which Kurdish political activists have assisted representatives of Kurdish political parties to access an international audience directly, through their visits to the European Parliament.[1] Particular attention will be paid to how MEPs have dealt with the presence of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in their institution. We will see that the support base for Kurdish demands rests with a particular group of politicians who share certain characteristics, and are primarily engaged with the plight of Turkey's Kurds out of solidarity – which proves both its strength and its weakness. Finally, having uncovered the realities of Kurdish 'diplomacy', some general conclusions and questions will be drawn.[2]

European Parliament calls for political change in Turkey

From the beginning of the 1980s onwards, Turkey's internal political situation came under increasing international scrutiny. In EP debates, particular attention was paid to Turkey's worrying human rights record. The 1980 coup had led to the suspension of the activities of the EU–Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee, but the coup and its consequences were a divisive issue for the parties in the Parliament (Grojean 2008). The leftist parties in Europe were generally critical of the heightened political and societal control exercised by the Turkish state and its military, which most affected the leftist political parties, labor unions and Kurdish nationalist parties in Turkey (the extreme right was also affected, but to a lesser extent). Many organizations were closed down and their publications forbidden, and in the years following the coup over 100,000 people were jailed. There were still 80,000 political prisoners even in 1985, two years after the ending of military rule (Romano 2006). The 1982 constitution instituted by the army had extended the powers of the president and the National Security Council and restricted the rights of civilians, in particular freedom of speech, which could easily be disregarded on the grounds of threats to public order, national security, the national interest or to the Republic.

As of 1984, the PKK was at war with the Turkish state, an armed conflict would lead to yet further human rights violations in the country.

In 1985, a report on Turkey's human rights record was drawn up by MEP rapporteur Richard Balfe for the EP Political Affairs Committee. The first part of this report consisted of a motion to the Parliament for a formal resolution on the matter, stating, in its principal clauses, that the Committee

> Expresses deep concern at the continuing seriousness of the situation with regard to human rights observance in Turkey and strongly condemns all forms of violence against the person practised in that country; Calls on the Turkish Government to move rapidly towards a restoration of human rights in the country. (Doc. PE 98. 572/fin.: A.1,2)

Particular concerns listed in the main body of the motion included the rights to life, integrity of the person and a fair trial, and an amnesty for prisoners of conscience. In the explanatory statement supplying background information to the motion it was noted that

> Whereas for five years before [the 1980] coup not a single motion for resolution was tabled in the Parliament on human rights in Turkey, since [then] no fewer than 11 resolutions expressing concern on the subject have been passed by the Parliament and more than 20 motions for resolution, and numerous oral and written questions have been tabled by Members from many different political groups of both left and right tendencies. (Doc. PE 98. 572/fin.: B.1.1).

The Balfe report did not address the ethnic dimension of the human rights situation in Turkey in the main body of its motion for a resolution. That no mention there was made of the specific problems Kurdish activists and their families were experiencing indicates that at that time there was still a lack of consensus among MEPs about whether to demand Turkey's special attention to issues related to the Kurdish question – especially given that both the preamble to the motion and also several of the motions for a resolution mentioned in the report did make such reference, explicitly, including two motions that had been referred to the Committee and were thus appended to the report. The preamble included a clause stating regret that 'widespread violation of the human rights of the Kurdish minority is still occurring in Turkey and, even more so, of those who are politically active as Kurds' (Doc. PE 98. 572/fin.: A.M); and of the nine appended motions, one was concerned with 'the alarming situation of Kurdish prisoners in Turkey', calling for the Turkish government to 'put an end to the violation of the human rights of the Kurdish people' (Doc. B 2–89/85: 1), while another addressed 'the fate of the Kurdish minority in Turkey', protesting 'strongly' at their 'oppression' (Doc. B 2–63/85: 1).

When, in 1987, Turkey requested membership to the European Economic Community (predecessor of the European Union), the European Parliament voted a resolution over the Armenian genocide that comprised its first unequivocal recognition of the problem in southeast Turkey. Focusing on 'the question of minorities',

this resolution included a rejection of Turkey's application that specifically directed attention to the Kurdish issue, thus:

> [T]he refusal by the present Turkish Government to acknowledge the genocide against the Armenian people committed by the Young Turk government, its reluctance to apply the principles of international law to its differences of opinion with Greece, the maintenance of Turkish occupation forces in Cyprus and *the denial of existence of the Kurdish question*, together with the lack of true parliamentary democracy and the failure to respect individual and collective freedoms, in particular freedom of religion, in that country are insurmountable obstacles to consideration of the possibility of Turkey's accession to the Community . . .'. (Doc. A2–0033/87; 4, emphasis added)[3]

The 1984–9 term of the European Parliament counted a total of 12 resolutions on human rights in Turkey, but none specifically addressing the Kurdish question (Grojean 2008: 176). The Kurdish question thus failed to enter into EU resolutions before the 90s even though it had figured clearly in the motions for resolutions submitted by Members as early as 1984 and was specified in the 1987 Armenia resolution. A significant change took place in the following (1989–94) legislature, however, as the issue of the Kurdish peoples entered the European consciousness with the genocidal campaigns of Saddam Hussein's regime against the Kurds in northern Iraq, and the Turkish state response to the PKK insurgency and developing guerrilla war in its southeast. A total of 16 EP resolutions concerning the Kurds were passed during this period, of which five concerned the Kurds from Turkey. A further six resolutions were also passed concerning human rights in Turkey – as the Turkish state responded to the PKK insurgency and developing guerrilla war in its southeast – with five resolutions concerning the Kurds from Turkey, as well as another six concerning human rights generally in Turkey (ibid.: 183). In March 1992 the European Parliament condemned Turkey for its use of excessive force following incidents during the Newroz celebrations there, and asked for an international investigation into the oppressive measures taken. Moreover, while criticizing the violence of the PKK, the EP requested that the European Council and the European Commission take the initiative in seeking a negotiated solution to the Kurdish question through the UN, and also that the Turkey–EU Joint Parliamentary Commission discuss the human rights situation in Turkey (Robins 1996, in Grojean 2008: 183).

As concern mounted in Brussels and Strasbourg, for EP (and EU) recognition of the Kurdish question, matters came to a head with the 1994 arrest and detention of Leyla Zana and seven other DEP MPs on the charge of separatism (following the lifting of the parliamentary immunity from criminal prosecution normally enjoyed by MPs in Turkey).[4] The Public Prosecutor in Ankara had filed a case against Zana and her (then HEP) colleagues following the 1991 inauguration in the Turkish General Assembly, during which Zana, after pledging the oath of loyalty, had added (in Kurdish, itself a criminal offense) that she took the oath 'in the name of fraternity between the Turkish and Kurdish peoples' ('*Ez vê sondê li ser navê gelê kurd û tirk dixwîm*'). Following guilty verdicts (to the changed charge

of membership of an armed organization, i.e. the PKK) that led to 15-year prison sentences for four of the ex-DEP deputies (including Zana), members of the EP Committee of Foreign Affairs decided to take a major step and repeat the response to the 1980 coup, suspending the reunion of the EU–Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee. It was in this context that the European Parliament made its important symbolic gesture of awarding (the imprisoned) Zana the Sakharov Prize for the Freedom of Speech.[5]

Thus it was, in the new climate of recognition (of the Kurdish question), that when Turkey and the EU were negotiating Turkey's entrance into the EU Customs Union in 1996, the European Parliament asked Turkey for progress in solving the issue, along with changes to the 1982 constitution and the anti-terror law, plus improvement of the positions of the detained DEP MPs (Çelik and Rumelili 2002: 7). MEPs even passed a resolution demanding the suspension of the Customs Union negotiations, and the ratification process came close to rejection by the EP specifically because Turkey did not improve the laws related to human rights and the Kurdish problem (managing only some amendments of Article 8 of the anti-terror law). However, the Council of Ministers decided not to follow the EP line, and Turkey duly entered into the Customs Union.

During the same period, the EP passed resolutions demanding, for example, the release of Leyla Zana, imprisoned for 'for championing democracy and recognition of the rights of Kurdish people by peaceful means' (Doc. B4–0252/97); and it urged Turkey to grant a general amnesty to people jailed under 'laws in conflict with the principles of free speech and human rights', end its military operations in the southeast and open negotiations with 'all Kurdish organizations' for a possible political solution (Doc. B4–0769: 2,3). The EP was also able to flex its political muscles when it effectively managed to secure from the Commission involvement in the decision-making process for financial aid to Turkey, which was worth hundreds of millions of ECUs (Doc. COM/98/0711: A.b). During the middle part of the 1990s, therefore, the three strands of the story all came together: the EP acquired increased powers following the Maastricht Treaty in 1993 just as the situation in the southeast worsened and Turkey pushed towards the threshold of the EU. Thus the conclusion that the Parliament had now become 'an important player in the relations between Turkey and the EU through its numerous resolutions on Turkish politics' (Müftüler-Baç, 2000: 165).

Concerns over the Turkish state's human rights record and treatment of its Kurdish minority were among the issues that played an important role in the rejection of Turkey's application for EU candidacy during the Luxemburg Summit of the European Council in December 1997 (Çelik and Rumelili, 2002). The formal shift from an associational relationship to one of acceptance as a candidate for membership as of 1999 opened many more opportunities for the EU to pressure Turkey for durable political change. Notably, from 1998 onwards, the Commission commenced evaluation of Turkey's bid for membership through regular reports on Turkey's progress towards accession. The EU has never specified its preferred solution to the Kurdish question, but, the progress reports on Turkey have, from the first, called for a political solution:[6]

> Turkey will have to find a political and non-military solution to the problem of the south-east. The largely military response seen so far is costly in human and financial terms and is hampering the region's social and economic development. It has also damaged Turkey's international image. A civil solution could include recognition of certain forms of Kurdish cultural identity and greater tolerance of the ways of expressing that identity, provided it does not advocate separatism or terrorism.(Doc. COM/98/0711: B.1.2).

Kurdish activism in the European Parliament

The Commission would arguably never have taken the strong position it has were it not for the history of EP calls for political change in Turkey vis-à-vis its Kurdish question – but these calls are not to be seen as spontaneous demonstrations of support for the plight of the Kurdish people in Turkey. Without the lobbying activities of the European Kurdish diaspora, there would probably have been little to document. In this section, we will focus on the role of Kurdish political activists and pro-Kurdish EP parties in the staging of Kurdish demands in European Parliament.

Kurdish activists consider Turkey's long-time relationship with the EU in general and the current EU–Turkey accession negotiation period in particular as offering the brokers of Kurdish organizations and parties their best bargaining position from which to realize change at home. Lobbying activities are currently being directed towards members of the European Parliament, members of the Council of Europe and, to a lesser extent, towards members of the European Commission. Additionally, the legislative and judiciary bodies in Turkey are influenced indirectly by Turkey's many convictions on charges of human rights violations by the European Court of Human Rights – convictions that increase the legitimacy of the demands being made by Kurdish lobbyists and facilitate the advancement of claims regarding Turkey's policies towards its Kurdish minority (Casier, 2010). We confine ourselves here to the European Parliament as a political space in which Kurdish political activists operate.

Either as accredited EP lobbyists or as press card holders, several Kurdish political activists now hold special entry cards that allow them to walk freely in and out of the European Parliament without the need for personal invitations from MEPs. This allows the activists to visit MEPs regularly in order to update them on developments within Turkey and request initiatives, such as writing resolutions for amendments on the progress reports, forwarding written questions to the European Enlargement Commissioner, writing letters of concern to Turkish ministers, and requesting joint organization of (press) conferences on EP premises.[7] MEPs have also, upon request, taken part in delegations to Turkey in order to observe elections, the Newroz celebrations, and trials of politicians, labour unionists, journalists and writers. Delegations to important events and trials function as a semi-formal 'international monitoring' of Turkey's internal affairs, and, in some cases, help to attract media attention and raise public awareness, both in Europe and in Turkey itself.[8] They also contribute to an increased legitimacy of those individuals who are

prosecuted, and are intended to discourage the prosecution of others in similar cases. MEPs have shown particular concern when parts of speeches given by Kurdish politicians inside the European Parliament have been incorporated in the indictments, as was the case for Leyla Zana.[9]

Making use of the political means of the MEPs

The European Parliament presents its opinions through the use of resolutions (as demonstrated, above). It passes yearly resolutions regarding Turkey's progress, incorporating reference to the regular reports of the Commission, as well as to other resolutions passed by the Parliament, reports of the Parliament's committees and decisions of the European Council. These regular resolutions on Turkey's progress toward accession (commonly referred to as 'progress reports') have become the main instrument through which the EP has addressed issues related to the Kurdish issue in recent years, and through which amendments to the Commission reports are requested. MEPs also forward written or oral questions to the members of the European Commission and the European Council.

In this work, the EP is given structure by its Political Groups, which unite the national parties and independent MEPs along lines of political orientation. Certain of the EP Political Groups host conferences on issues related to Turkey's accession, with particular attention given to the Kurdish question. The groups that have most actively supported the plight of Turkey's Kurds thus far, notwithstanding their relatively small size, have been the Confederal Group of the European United Left (Gauche Unitaire Européen) / Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL) and the Greens / European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA).[10] The GUE/NGL houses communist and socialist parties (17 at time of writing), including the German PDS/die Linke, the Italian and French communist parties, and the Irish Sinn Féin. The EFA is made up of regionalists and democratic nationalists, with MEPs (currently) from Scotland, Wales, the Basque Country, Romania and Latvia who advance the cause of Europe's stateless nations, regions and disadvantaged minorities.

Most of the political parties (and independents) aligned with the GUE/NGL and Greens/EFA groups support Turkey's accession to the European Union, on condition that Turkey lives up to the Copenhagen criteria. The GUE/NGL, which lists support of human rights and cultural diversity among its 14 policy issues, tabled two of its nine resolution motions in the first three months of its existence (in the new Parliament of 1999) in solidarity with the Kurdish cause in Turkey.[11] The Greens/EFA group, which includes an emphasis on human rights and on solidarity in its five main aims, has performed such acts as organizing a belated (2004) reception in honor of Leyla Zana, when she was released from prison.[12] Among the Green parties, MEPs from the Dutch, German, and Belgian Green parties in particular have been engaged with issues related to Turkey's Kurdish question.

MEPs serve as members of committees. For Turkey, the Foreign Affairs Committee, and its Subcommittees on Human Rights and on Security and Defense, along with the Committee of Women's rights and Gender Equality are probably the most important ones. The MEPs in the GUE/NGL and Greens/EFA groups

most actively involved on the Kurdish question hold (or have held) seats on these committees. Some MEPs are also (have also been) members of the European Delegation to the EU–Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee, headed (in the legislature of 2004–9) by the Dutch Green Party MEP, Joost Lagendijk.[13] MEPs also come together on the basis of specific themes or topics through 'intergroups', often informal and loose associations. There is an intergroup, 'Friends of the Kurds', (until spring 2009) coordinated by Vittorio Agnoletto, GUE/NGL MEP for the Italian Communist Party.[14]

MEPs, the committees and the delegations, we might also note, might themselves be influenced, directly or otherwise, by the EP administrators, from whom input is regularly requested and who can easily switch between EU institutions. Michael Rupp, for example, worked at the EP Secretariat, going to Ankara with the Human Rights Subcommittee delegation, before moving to the Commission's Directorate General for Enlargement. Rupp summarized the Commission's proposed Accession Parnership (2005) for the Human Rights Subcommittee, drawing attention to the emphasis on political criteria (under which matters such as human rights are subsumed), interpreting the compensation issue (related to war/terrorism related losses) to be essentially a general problem with the functioning of compensation law in Turkey, and advising that the EP encourage the Council to adopt the proposed Accession Partnership 'as soon as possible'.[15]

Even though many MEPs, particularly members of the groups and committees mentioned, are openly concerned about human rights and the rights of minorities, many of the activities in European Parliament that address the Kurdish question in Turkey, or related problems with Turkey's (dis)respect of human rights would not have occurred without the instigation and support of the many Kurdish political activists active at the national and regional levels of the member-states and behind the scenes at the European institutions. In the following section we will look at the origins of EP party involvement in the staging of Kurdish demands and the initiatives taken.

Regional and national activism and its translation to the European Parliament

The different migration waves from Turkey to Western Europe were accompanied by the political organization of the new immigrant communities. Turkish, Kurdish, Alevi and other associations were established and then politicized with the arrival of members of political parties from Turkey and political refugees (Argun, 2003; Grojean, 2008). These communities and associations formed the base of agitation and mobilization informing MEPs who had their own sympathies to the Kurdish plight, and which eventually translated into EP motions for resolutions. The development of MEP support for the Kurds in Belgium exemplifies this.

In the first section of this chapter, we recalled the first motions for resolutions during the 1980s that made explicit reference to the plight of Kurds in Turkey and called upon the Turkish government to take action. The MEPs who submitted the motion on the fate of the Kurdish minority in Turkey mentioned above as appended to the Balfe report (Doc. B 2–63/85) – which explicitly referred to the prosecution

and death sentences of Kurdish militants by the Diyarbakir special court – were Willy Kuijpers and Jaak Vandemeulebroecke, two Belgian MEPs from the Volksunie or People's Union, the main Flemish nationalist party at that time. Paul Staes, MEP for the Flemish Green Party Agalev, in an earlier motion had written that 'every possible attempt has been made to impose Turkish culture on the Kurdish area, with the population of this south-eastern part of the country being forbidden to speak their own language' (Doc. 2–595/84). Three motions were submitted by members of the Belgian Socialist Party: Marijke Van Hemeldonck, Anne-Marie Lizin and Jef Ulburghs (Docs. 2–556/84, 2–1521/84 and B 2–89/85). The motion for a resolution submitted by Jef Ulburghs was the other motion referred to as appended to the Balfe report. Like Kuijpers/Vandemeulebroecke, Ulburghs also made reference to the Diyabakir special court trials (and to the PKK, by name) as well as to other matters related to court rulings and prison conditions in the region – including, for example, the 'degrading practices' carried out against Kurdish prisoners in the Diyarbakir Military Court –and, more generally, to 'the growing repression of the Kurdish people' and their right to 'their own cultural and linguistic identity'.

Unsurprisingly perhaps, the Belgian MEPs who tabled the motions directly addressing the Kurds as a people included Flemish nationalists, generally concerned about the fate of stateless people and proclaiming people's right to self-determination. However, more was needed to convert this concern into a real engagement with the Kurdish question. Within the Volksunie, the youth wing was actively engaged with the Kurdish issue by the end of the 1970s. One of the important figures in these circles was Derwich Ferho, who had arrived in Belgium as a (Kurdish) political refugee (from Turkey) and was taken under the wings of MEP Willy Kuijpers. Derwich Ferho established Tekoşer in 1978, the Kurdish Workers and Students' Association of Belgium, later to become the Kurdish Institute of Brussels. Assistant to Kuijpers and Vandemeulebroecke in the European Parliament was Bart Staes, Flemish nationalist and pacifist, who went on to become MEP for the Flemish Green Party. Thus, from the end of the 1970s onwards, relations were established between the Kurdish Institute of Brussels and Flemish politicians (relations still alive today). Whereas the aforementioned MEPs were actively raising their concerns in the 1980s, by the 1990s MEPs Bart Staes and Nelly Maes were the main figures addressing the Kurdish issue in Flanders and the European Parliament.

When a split occurred in the Volksunie party and MEP Staes moved to the Greens, he continued to engage with the Kurdish issue, even though it was of little concern to his voters. Upon the suggestion of the Kurdish institute and other associations, tens of written questions were submitted by Staes following the commencement of the accession negotiations with Turkey. MEP Nelly Maes, the senior politician so well remembered by the man on the boat on the Bosphorus, recalled how difficult it was, back in the 1990s, to get the word 'Kurdish' accepted into the resolutions by the Parliament (personal interview 17 July 2007). Nelly Maes was (and still is) president of the European Free Alliance, which hosted the main activities surrounding the Kurdish issue at that time. The EFA brought

together about forty MEPs, who then individually lobbied within their own political parties for the support of resolutions or other actions. The relationship between the Kurdish institute and the Volksunie (and its later split-offs) shows the importance of the awareness raising activities of Kurdish activists within political parties at regional and national levels in order for the Kurdish issue to get addressed at the European level. This example holds not just for Belgium, but for France, Italy and Great Britain also – and especially for Germany.

With its developing politicization and effective (primarily PKK) organization (through associations, publications, activism, etc), the growing constituency of Kurds in Germany was able to win attention from the major political parties there, primarily the Social Democrat PDS (Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus) and the Greens. German Kurds even managed to gain direct representation through these parties at the European level when Feleknas Uca, a young Kurdish Yezidi woman, became the sole MEP of Kurdish origin in 1999, with the help of German Kurds supporting her party, the PDS.[16]

The PDS had been very actively involved in Turkey's Kurdish question long before Uca was elected to the European Parliament (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003; Eccarius-Kelly 2002). In fact, the Kurdish question had been a hotly debated topic in the German *Bundestag* (parliament) since the 1980s, with the PDS as well as the German Green Party actively involved with the issue. In 1983, the two parties demanded a halt to the financial and military support given to Turkey, and in 1984 they argued that a war was being fought against the Kurdish people (Grojean 2008). While German politics became divided over the PKK and its status during the 1990s, the PDS held firm as the party that refused to brand the PKK with the label of 'terrorist'. Instead, it demanded an end to the expulsion of Kurdish asylum seekers back to Turkey and a termination of the military and police cooperation between Germany and Turkey, and accused the government of complicity in genocide against the Kurds (Grojean 2008). Thus it was that the PDS became the political advocate of the PKK related associations in Germany (Grojean 2008) and later in the European Parliament (in the GUE/NGL Group).

In the service of Kurdish politicians: homeland politics

These days, European based Kurdish political activists often provide assistance to representatives of the pro-Kurdish Demokratik Toplum Partisi (DTP; the Democratic Society Party, successor to DEHAP/HADEP/DEP/HEP).[17] Flown over from Turkey, DTP representatives address MEPs on specific problems of their party and their constituents, Turkey's (lack of) reforms, and the need for a political solution to the Kurdish question. From 2004 until 2007 in particular, DTP mayors, such as Osman Baydemir, mayor of Diyarbakir (the most populous city in the Turkish southeast and unofficial Kurdish capital of the region), and Abdullah Demirbaş of Diyarbakir's Sur municipality paid visits to MEPs (Casier 2010), to discuss the international role of the region's mayors (see also Watts 2006).

Since the 2007 election of DTP representatives into Turkey's General Assembly, MPs from the region have also been paying regular visits to European Parliament.

They are assisted by their DTP Brussels representative, who is supported by members of Kongreya Netewiyé Kurdistanê (KNK; the Kurdistan National Congress) – which unites several Kurdish parties from the different parts of Kurdistan but is mainly dominated by the PKK – along with the Kurdish Institute of Brussels and other Kurdish associations. DTP mayors and MPs not only engage in personal meetings with MEPs who are potential supporters of their demands, but also take part in the conferences and press conferences hosted by the parliament. These EP visits are often combined with visits to national and local politicians in different EU-member states and to Kurdish associations in different European countries with Kurdish populations, in order to rally for political support.

Conferences on the premises

Conferences in the European Parliament related to the Kurdish question are organized at Group level. Since 2004, the GUE/NGL Group has hosted the annual 'International Conference on the EU, Turkey and the Kurds', as well as the commemorative conference, 'Dersim 1937–1938: 70 Years After', on the massacres committed in putting down the Dersim rebellion of 1937. In March 2008, the ALDE, PSE and Greens/EFA Groups combined to organize a conference on the new Turkish civil constitution and the Kurdish question. The biggest of these conferences however is the International Conference, which is organized by the European Turkey Civic Commission (EUTCC). This body, whose advisory council has a membership overlapping with that of the GUE/NGL Group, was founded by the London-based Kurdish Human Rights Project (KHRP), the Norwegian Rafto Foundation, the Germany-based Medico International and the Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales. The intention in establishing the EUTCC was to monitor the accession process, with a particular concern for human rights and the rights of minorities in Turkey, especially the 'festering sore' of the Kurdish question.[18]

In order to affect opinion formation amongst MEPs, the International Conference on the EU, Turkey and the Kurds is mostly held shortly after the publication of the European Commission's annual progress report and thus during the period in which the Parliament is in preparation of its draft resolution over the progress report. Different years of the conference have brought together DTP politicians, members of human rights and women's NGOs from Turkey, Turkish and Kurdish intellectuals and opinion makers, members of the KNK, lawyers of imprisoned PKK' leader Abdullah Öcalan, members of the Turkey Peace Assembly, European academics, and members of European Parliament. The aim of the conference is to reflect upon the accession negotiations, but addressing primarily the Kurdish question and the need for a political solution. Every year, conference participants make calls upon the EP and the EU as a whole to take a firm stance on Turkey's lack of reform and take up the role of broker in the conflict.

Whereas MEPs supportive of the Kurdish cause are present on the panels, the conference room has largely been occupied by members of Kurdish associations, activist journalists engaged in the Kurdish print and online media, and members

of NGOs. The conference is covered by the Kurdish satellite station ROJ-TV, broadcasting from Denderleeuw-Brussels. News coverage in the Turkish press, on the other hand, is very limited, and TV coverage in the EU member-states close to non-existent. The conference thus appears to contribute first and foremost to an internal solidarity amongst Kurdish political activists and supporters. It also creates opportunities for Kurdish activists and Kurdish politicians, based in Turkey and Europe to engage with one another and to strengthen ties. Thus, not surprisingly, the conference attracts Kurdish activists from all over Europe and even some members of the Kurdish diaspora in the USA, as it is an opportunity to be amongst people of like-mind, critical of the Turkish state and its institutions, and to meet with old friends, some of which have not seen each other since they fled Turkey at the time of 1971 or 1980 coups or during the heated 1990s.

In Turkey the annual EUTCC event is perceived as a 'PKK-conference', which has led to hesitation amongst Turkish academics as to whether or not to accept invitations. And while Turkish NGOs are represented, members of Turkish political parties other than the DTP have shown no willingness to attend the conference. The result is a tendency for Kurdish nationalists to be talking to Kurdish nationalists. Similarly, a March 2008 conference hosted by the ALDE, PSE and Greens/EFA groups was also unable to bring the sides together. Focused on the theme of the need for a new civilian constitution for Turkey and how this could contribute to a solution of the Kurdish question, this conference failed to attract representatives of Turkish parties despite gathering all the main Kurdish nationalist parties from Turkey (e.g. HAK-PAR and KA-DEP), and thus not solely the DTP, together with the importance of the topic and the increased legitimacy conferred by an opening address from Enlargement Commissioner Ollie Rehn, and was disregarded in Turkey.

To be or not to be PKK

The best organized network of politically oriented Kurdish groups in Europe is the umbrella of PKK-related organizations, which managed to homogenize the Kurdish diaspora after the marginalization of its main competitor in Turkey and Europe, Kemal Burkay's Partiya Socialist Kurda (PSK; Socialist Party of Kurdistan) (Grojean 2008). Unsurprisingly, these organizations are also very present in what could be called the 'Kurdish diplomacy', the lobbying of national and European MPs. The openness of a number of MEPs to PKK-related organizations and politicians is peculiar. It has been argued that European politicians do not recognize the PKK, despite the longtime objective of the PKK itself to establish international recognition (Grojean 2008: 171). The realities on the ground, however, are ambiguous. Members of the European Parliament do make time to receive political activists and are sometimes willing to take certain actions that support their cause, but they never openly support the PKK *as such*. Indeed, the 'keeping up appearances' appears to be mutual, with the PKK discussed in the 'third person' as if it is an entity outside of the meeting rooms. Political activists do not present themselves as militants of the PKK, and politicians, although often aware of the fact that they are most probably facing a militant, go along with the game. For them it less costly

to pretend to ignorance about the true identity of their discussion partners, especially given the fact that the PKK figures on the US' international list of terrorist organizations, endorsed by the EU.

By engaging with Kurdish political activists, who clearly have strong affiliations with the PKK, present the demands of the movement, and address developments in Turkey from that very perspective, using its rhetoric, MEPs (as well as politicians at other levels within the member states) clearly show their recognition of and support for at least some of the goals of the Kurdish national movement. Nevertheless, while the demands might be seen as rightful and legitimate, MEPS do not want to (be seen to) legitimize the PKK's leading role in formulating and presenting them. There is no *public* acknowledgement of the PKK as the main representative of Kurds from Turkey, far less as the major political force that they undoubtedly are. This serves to confirm the international public image of the PKK as no more than an armed guerrilla/terrorist organization and prevent recognition of it as, at the same time, a social movement enjoying considerable popular support (Eccarius-Kelly 2002; Romano 2006). Such recognition would, of course, counteract the one-sided attention drawn by the Turkish state, both internally and externally, to the violent acts ('terrorist' activities) of the PKK.

MEPs have tended to echo the Turkish demand that the DTP declare the PKK a terrorist organization, and challenged the legal party over its relationship with its outlawed cousin on many occasions.[19] Many of the participants on the panels at the yearly EUTCC organized conference have resisted this, however, and instead insisted on the inclusion of the PKK as a political actor, arguing that requiring the DTP to distance itself from the PKK amounts to asking the DTP to distance itself from the Kurdish people. At the 4th International Conference, in December 2007, for example, the restoration of the legitimacy of the PKK appeared as one of the most central issues. Joost Lagendijk (Dutch Green head of the European Delegation to the EU–Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee) argued that

> Political actors need freedom to move, but this is hindered by the actions of the PKK. We strongly support the DTP in finding a political solution. It is not with parties like CHP that we are going to find a solution . . . If you close down the DTP, you strengthen the hardliners amongst Kurds and Turks. The PKK has to stop its actions without any conditions. The DTP is now the victim of the PKK. The Turkish government needs to advance its reforms. It should not allow them to be hijacked by the PKK. The DTP has to say that it does not agree with the actions of the PKK. It is necessary to enervate those who think that violence can bring a solution. (personal conference notes of the EUTCC-Conference of 3–4 December 2007)

Lagendijk found himself to be one of the few 'dissidents' in the room, however, with the Kurdish National Congress (KNK) representatives making disapproving noises in the background while he was speaking and then refusing to applaud when he finished. By contrast, DTP president and Turkish MP Ahmet Türk received a standing ovation for his reply:

> Maybe you think of the PKK as a terrorist organization, but if you leave it out (of the negotiations) than you are not being realistic. The PKK needs to be democratically incorporated. (personal conference notes of the EUTCC-Conference of 3–4 December 2007)

Members of the DTP have shown particular caution not to be too open about their relationships with the PKK. Many MEPs have shown their sympathy for DTP members and their predecessors, and would like to believe that the DTP is a political party and the PKK an armed movement, that the two are very different entities – a distinction which allows the European parliamentarians to more easily support their Turkish-Kurdish counterparts. In fact, of course, the DTP and PKK are probably better described as two wings of a single movement, and were the exact nature of the relations to be more openly revealed, the harder it would be for those MEPs to continue to support the political representatives. For its part, the DTP depends on the support derived from the organizational structure of the PKK and its supporters (through the use of its media, mobilization by its militants), while at the same time being in need of support from Europe (which means MEPs, at least initially) as the party members continuously face judicial investigations and trials, and the closure of the party (like that of its predecessors). Therefore, the DTP it chooses to present itself in the European Parliament as a party that could be a broker between the PKK and the Turkish authorities. In short, it has been sending out different messages, compromising by observing the need to distance itself from the PKK, but always attesting to the importance of considering the PKK as a political actor, and yet at the same time defending the demand for a non-violent solution.

Some MEPs dislike the PKK and its use of armed struggle, but are still open to meeting its representatives (directly, without DTP mediation) as they consider this to offer an opportunity to pass on messages, particularly (and continuously) calling on the 'party' to refrain from the use of violent means.

The support that is given to Turkey's fight against terrorism in the various statements, progress reports and resolutions emanating from the EU, including the EP, is seen by members of Kurdish organizations as belittling the problems of the Kurds in Turkey. It leads them to judge European politicians as having a 'statist mindset', in accordance with the statist approach they find in the Turkish authorities. Since Öcalan's capture in 1999, the PKK itself has tried to shed its violent image and present itself as a peaceful political movement. With the announcement of a (unilateral) ceasefire following the new (non-separatist) direction outlined from prison by Öcalan, clashes have been explained as matters of self-defense and occasional bomb blasts in cities in the west of Turkey attributed to splinter organizations 'no longer under its control'. One of the means intended to increase the legitimacy of the PKK was a 2006 petition that gathered over 3 million signatures from Kurds living in Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and the diaspora stating that they considered Abdullah Öcalan to be their representative leader – the petition was presented at a press conference held, on September 12 of that year, in the European Parliament.

Taken as a whole, this mix of rhetoric and ambiguity, meetings direct and implicit, and clear initiatives show that a large part of the lobbying work of the European Parliament by Kurdish organizations and other groups and individuals is particularly directed at the creation of a political space which is inclusive off the PKK, and thus devoted to the survival and strengthening of the position of the party and its leader. This has been severely criticized by Kurdish political activists who operate independently of the PKK and are consequently marginalized (personal interviews, winter 2008).

Assessing the political activities in the European Parliament

This exploration of the initiatives taken by MPEs and the background lobbying work of the Kurdish political activists, can be assessed as demonstrating four main points. First, it shows that the European Parliament offers a range of opportunities to raise concerns about the political situation in Turkey, and in particular the human rights situation in the southeast and for Kurds generally. Moreover, the EP has shown itself to be a political space accessible to Kurdish political activists even if their party figures on the EU list of organizations deemed to be involved in terrorism. Within the European Parliament, Kurdish activists have always found allies to voice their cause, particularly among parties with which there were already working relations at the regional and national levels and/or with which they are ideologically aligned (including parties with a particular concern for the rights of national minorities). Notwithstanding this support and the significant number of activities, however, the weight of this politics of solidarity has been relative. Many motions have been tabled and resolutions recorded, but the European Commission has always maintained its own policy regarding the way in which it addresses issues related to the Kurdish question with the Turkish government and its administration – notwithstanding some well publicized instances in which EP views have found their way into Commission documents (see Casier 2010). An overall assessment here would probably be that the European Parliament has contributed to the fact that the Kurdish question has found its way to and remained high on the political agenda.

Secondly, the opening of this chapter noted the attention drawn from the Kurdish media: most of the public activities in the European Parliament addressing the Kurdish cause have figured widely on Kurdish websites, have been well covered in Kurdish newspapers and enjoyed plenty of broadcasting time on Kurdish satellite stations. The coverage of EP initiatives, and particularly the presence of famous Kurdish personalities on its premises, contribute to an expanding Kurdish public sphere, one that transcends the boundaries of the Turkish state and reaches into the Kurdish diaspora spread across Europe, the Caucasus and the United States, thereby contributing to an increasingly transnational image of the Kurdish nation. On the other hand, the initiatives have seldom managed to attract attention outside of Kurdish circles. Similarly, in the conferences and seminars one finds oneself amongst politically engaged Kurds listening to their brethren, and – as an outsider – left wondering when they will run tired of listening to the repetition of their own

demands. EP activities have also been unable to raise much concern from the European public, as what is happening inside the Parliament rarely attracts attention from the national media in the member-states, and Europe still lacks a European public sphere (Balibar 2001).

Thirdly, especially interesting have been the repeated efforts – through petitions, conferences, and visits – to reinforce the legitimacy of the main Kurdish political actor, the PKK. However, these efforts have enjoyed only limited support within the EP itself. When Kurdish mayors or members of Parliament for the DTP pay visits to the EP they are confronted with the very same issue that they face in Turkey, which is the need to distance themselves openly from the PKK. Many MEPs still show a willingness to talk to members of PKK-related organizations, but without granting the public recognition that could have them branded as supporters of a terrorist organization. The existence of the terrorist list creates risks for representatives of the PKK to openly identify themselves, as this could lead to prosecutions and arrests. Turkish authorities and Turkish media, meanwhile, express continual indignation at the fact that a number of people against which national and international warrants of arrest are running have been able to walk freely in and out of the buildings of the EU institutions.

Fourthly, the continuous support of the GUE/NGL Group has been a source of strength, as it allowed the Kurdish political activist to have nearly unconditional access to the European Parliament to host different kinds of initiatives. Indeed, GUE/NGL MEPs have generally denounced the classification of the PKK as a terrorist organization, and they were the sole group that registered its objection to the listing when it was officially endorsed by an EP vote. Nevertheless, GUE/NGL Group support might also have contributed to a marginalization of the Kurdish question within the European Parliament. Over time, the Kurdish question has come to be seen as something of a GUE/NGL issue instead of as a subject that could win endorsement form MEPs across the board, and less efforts have been made to actively seek the support of MEPs in groups in which there is less consensus over whether or not to engage with this kind of political hot issue. There has been a tendency to fall back upon what activists themselves jokingly call ‘the usual suspects’, which makes it harder to reach out beyond this circle of politicians. There is still occasional support of Green and EFA MEPs, but this group and the GUE/NGL are among the smaller EP groups, representing small national parties that still have little say at either the national or supranational level. Observations by this author of the conferences organized and their panel discussions, moreover, suggest a lack of openness towards critical voices, which over time surely must discourage politicians to engage further with what the activists call ‘their struggle’. There is an introversion, a sense of a space only for the already converted. People that have voiced criticisms openly, meet increased suspicion and are often not to be seen again the following year. A clear example of this was the reception afforded to MEP Joost Lagendijk (above). This lack of tolerance for critique leads to narrowing circles of support and erodes the credibility of the Kurdish activists’ repeated calls for ‘democratization’ along with the self-representation of the Kurdish movement as the vanguard of Turkey’s democratization in general.

Conclusion

The European Parliament has shown itself to be increasingly vocal regarding Turkey's Kurdish question since the 1980s. The criticisms voiced at the European level by MEPs reflect the concerns of Kurdish political activists and pro-Kurdish parties, who have developed networks of support in the EU-member states. Additionally, MEPs are addressed directly by Kurdish political activists and DTP mayors and MPs from Turkey. The main instrument through which MEPs have tried to influence EU involvement in Turkey's internal political affairs has been through the use of resolutions. However, the effect of the resolutions should not be exaggerated, as the main author of the accession negotiations is the European Commission. For example, EP resolutions on the EC reports can merely 'adjust' parts of the existing texts. The EP may be a 'player', but it has not been dealt a very strong hand. Moreover, the Turkish government and the administration have shown an increased reluctance to engage more seriously with the reforms of late, and many of EC demands remained unimplemented.

We have argued that, the Kurdish issue would probably not have been addressed as it has been were it not for the political engagement of members of the Kurdish diaspora, and their cooperation with Kurdish politicians from Turkey. Kurdish political activists and politicians try to affect EP resolutions and opinion making through numerous personal visits to MEP's of different political groups and the organization of conferences and press conferences. They find particular solidarity and support in this from the GUE/NGL Group – which although invaluable, might also be preventing a more active dialogue with other, more powerful EP groups (e.g. ALDE). This is compounded by the fact that the support from EP Members/parties/groups depends upon their relationships with parties at the national level, that is, in the member-states: the smaller EP Groups tend to represent smaller national parties, which consequently have less political weight in general, including, for example, with the Commission.

In addressing the content of the activities, we see that discussions taking place within Turkey continue on the premises of the European Parliament – such as the debate about whether or not the DTP should distance itself from the PKK. The opportunity allowed by (in) the Parliament for PKK-related organizations to be influential is particularly interesting, as it testifies to a clear – although not publicly attested – engagement with what is officially considered to be a terrorist organization. Many of the activities in the European Parliament over recent last years have specifically aimed at restoring the legitimacy of this movement, but with limited results thus far. This brings up questions over the future role of the Parliament in the resolution of the Kurdish question. Amongst activists there seems to be a growing fatigue, due to the absence of strong interest in their cause and the lack of serious reforms in Turkey since 2005. In the European Parliament itself, it is unclear whether we will see an ongoing, high level of engagement with the Kurdish question. As the support for initiatives in the EP addressing problems related to the Kurdish question depends heavily upon the relationships of solidarity with one group in particular and the ad hoc support of a number of MEPs from other factions, Kurdish 'diplomacy'

is vulnerable to electoral shifts, both in the EU member-states and in the EP. 2009, for example, has seen an EP shift to the center right, but a fracturing of its Group and while the socialist and communist parties lost seats the Greens saw an increased representation. It thus remains to be seen whether we will see the same intensity of activities on the premises of the Parliament in the years ahead.

Notes

1 Data for this paper were collected through research of the archives of the European Parliament and European Commission and other EU institutions, and through semi-structured interviews in Europe and Turkey with leading members of the main politically active Kurdish associations, members of human rights' organizations, politicians, academics, intellectuals and journalists, as well as with national and European politicians in Western Europe who have engaged themselves with the Kurdish question and thus have to some extent become mediators to certain levels of organization. Further to this, the author joined Kurdish delegations to the European Parliament in Brussels in order to observe their meetings there, and also observed conferences held on the premises of the European Parliament, during the period fall 2006 to spring 2009. The interviews and observations were important sources of information on the initiatives of the subjects under study, both those already in progress and those being planned for the future. Researching what could be called a political activist 'elite', for whom it was of strategic importance not to reveal their activities very openly (Aberbach and Rockman 2002), approaching them personally, conducting long conversations with them, and, in particular, observing them in their daily activities provided a form of information that could not be gathered through classical, quantitative surveys. The interviews and the observations, that is, provided insight into the networks and their spatial arenas, the political demands and discourses, and the political activities directed towards members of the European institutions. This contribution is thus written from an agency-oriented perspective, which incorporates the ways actors present their problems and develop coalitions (Smith and Bakker 2005).

2 The notion of Turkey's 'Kurdish question' assumed here is that conventionally employed, i.e. without regard to any issues arising from other, related identities (Alevi, Zaza, etc.).

3 The Commission/Council, meanwhile, postponed any consideration of Turkey's candidacy in 1989–90, partly on the grounds of its own agenda for integration and partly because of the economic and political situation in Turkey. No specific reference was made to the Kurdish question, but merely general remarks on 'the human rights situation and . . . respect for the identity of minorities' (Doc. SEC (89) 2290: II.9).

4 A total of 15 DEP deputies were involved, either arrested to face (various, revised) charges or fleeing the country. See e.g. the press release in Istanbul by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU 1996) – a body of which the EP is an associate member, with some MEPs also being members of their countries' IPU delegations (ten in the 2004–9 term, including four who were also in the (sub)committees most pertinent to the Kurdish question).

5 Leyla Zana has become something of a human litmus test for human rights and the Kurdish question. The first female Kurdish MP in Turkey, and co-founder of the DTP with her three colleagues who had been imprisoned and released at the same time, Zana was again handed a lengthy prison sentence for her words in December 2008 – this time ten years for spreading anti-Turkish terrorist propaganda in her speeches, most notably for referring to PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan as one of the three Kurdish leaders. Within a month of the indictment, (two) MEPs had tabled three written questions on the matter, one to the Commission and two to the Council (Doc. Doc. P-6975/08, E-6800/08 & Doc. E-6984/08).

6 It is the Council of Ministers that decides upon accession of a member-state, requiring a unanimous vote, after consultation with the European Commission and a majority vote in favor from the European Parliament. According to Tocci – and to the frustration of many a Kurdish political activist – the EU prescriptive steps for dealing with the Kurdish question have remained extremely vague and open-ended. In fact, however, the EU has spelled out precise guidelines on a wide range of issues relevant to the Kurdish question, through timetabled priorities spelled out in the Turkey Accession Partnership developed over the last decade by the Commission, including detailed, short-term political goals (see Doc. 2008/157/EC). A subsection on 'The situation in the East and in the Southeast' prioritizes needs to 'abolish the village guard system' and 'clear the area of landmines'; and a subsection on 'Internally displaced persons' requires the state to facilitate their 'return . . . to their original settlements' and ensure 'compensation of losses due to terrorism and the fight against terrorism' (Doc. 2008/157/EC: Annex 3.1).

7 The alacrity of the response to the recent Zana case (above, note 5) would be a case in point.

8 E.g. 2004 EP Turkey Rapporteur Camiel Eurlings made a fact-finding tour to Diyarbakir immediately prior to a top level meeting with, among others, Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül (Doc. PE 342.075).

9 In 1996, when the EU–Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee had reconvened in Ankara following its suspension in protest at the trial of the DEP MPs,, the meeting was 'overshadowed' by the refusal of the Turkish authorities to allow the delegation to visit Leyla Zana in prison.

10 The GUE/NGL group was established in its current format in 1995 and has had 30–50 MEPs. The Greens alone, and in alliance with the EFA since 1999, have also numbered 30–50 MEPs since the mid-1990s. The combined total of these two groups has therefore never amounted to much more than 10 percent of all MEPs.

11 The first motion, on 'the Öcalan case', referred to 'the Kurdish people's right to self-determination', while the second, on 'relations between the European Union and Turkey', criticized Turkey's military approach (Doc. B5–0012/99: 4; Doc. B5–135–99: 4). See: http://www.guengl.eu

12 See <http://www.greens-efa.org >.

13 At the request of the EP Subcommittee on Human Rights, the Joint Parliamentary Committee has also dealt with specific cases of alleged human rights violations in Turkey since 1989.

14 Agnoletto tabled two of the three quickly tabled questions regarding the latest Zana case (above, note 5).

15 At <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/fd/d-tr20051123_09/d-tr20051123_09en.pdf>.

16 Just 22 when elected, German born Uca was the only female Yezdidi MP worldwide until the 2005 Iraq election. She served two terms (1999–2009, was a member of the Turkey-European Union Joint Parliamentary Committee and substitute member of the Human Rights Subcommittee as well as the Womens' Rights and Gender Equality Committee). One of Uca's first acts as an MEP was to put her name to the GUE/NGL resolution on Öcalan (above, note 10), while the photos featured on her website homepage include one of her with Leyla Zana, and another of her at a Newroz rally in Diyarbakir sharing the stage with the (ex-)HADEP leader Murat Bozlak and the HADEP city mayor.

17 Ahmet Türk, current leader of the DTP, was one of the DEP MPs arrested in 1994 (i.e. with Leyla Zana).

18 See <http://www.eutcc.org>. EUTCC patrons include Desmon Tutu, Shirin Ebadi and Noam Chomsky, as well as Yaşar Kemal and Leyla Zana – who addressed the 1999 International Conference, along with the EP Vice President, Italian MEP (GUE/NGL) and Human Rights Subcommittee member Luisa Morganti. See <http://www.khrp.org/content/view/439/1/>

19 E.g. in the resolution on the latest progress report (March 2009), the EP 'Urges the DTP and all its elected members to distance themselves clearly from the terrorist PKK' (Doc. B6–0105/2008: 20).

20 Most EU documents (prefixed 'Doc' are online). See: <http://www.ena.lu>; or <http://www.europa.eu>; or <http://www.europarl.europa.eu>; or <http://eur-lex.europa.eu> Document reference details in the main text are to sections/clauses (rather than pages).

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