

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF ARMENIA

**THE KURDISH ISSUE: MAIN OBSTACLE FOR TURKEY'S EU
INTEGRATION**

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ARGK- People's Liberation Army of Kurdistan

DTP - Democratic Society Party

EEC- European Economic Community

ERNK- National Liberation Front of Kurdistan

EU- European Union

EUTCC- EU Turkey Civic Commission

G20- Great 20

KDP- Kurdish Democratic Party

KPE- Kurdish Parliament in Exile

MGK- National Security Council (Turkish: Milli Güvenlik Kurulu)

NATO- North Atlantic Treaty Organization

OSCE- Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

PKK- Kurdistan Workers Party (Turkish: Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan)

TSK- Turkish Armed Forces (Turkish: Turk Silahlı Kuvvetleri)

Abstract

The purpose of undertaking this study lies in the necessity of finding out the current developments of the Kurdish issue in Turkey and how it is disturbing Turkey for the EU integrations. This essay is an attempt to describe and analyze the Kurdish issue in Turkey. It considers the origins of the Kurdish issue, the activity of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), Turkey's and EU's positions regarding the issue and the ways they foresee for the salvation of the problem. The paper examines the role of the Kurdish factor in the relationship of Turkey with the EU. It also tries to see the differences or similarities in the positions of both Turkey and EU regarding the Kurdish issue. Both Turkish and EU's standpoints on the issue and independent sources are presented in order to have more complete understanding of the positions of Turkey and EU.

Introduction

Ethnic conflicts have become part of the political life of many countries. Among these conflicts the one is the struggle of Kurdish people for their national independence, which has become the biggest unresolved ethnic conflict in Turkey and has received wide international response. One of the most important challenges for the Turkish republic is the existence of the Kurdish question. For Turkey, the Kurdish issue is the most difficult one to solve.

This paper describes and analyzes the Kurdish issue in Turkey and the role it plays in the relations between European Union and Turkey. It is essential to note that the subject undertaken for the study in this essay has been the focus of multiple researches, but it still poses a number of questions demanding a new research and new approaches to its solution. This is especially after the unexpected announcement of Kurdistan Workers Party (Turkish: Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan) that on May 8, 2013, it is starting the withdrawal of its thousands of fighters from Turkey. The paper considers the origins of the Kurdish issue in Turkey, the nature of the issue, problems that it raises for Turkey, the activities of the PKK, Turkey's official positions regarding the issue, the EU's official position regarding the issue and solutions for it.

In general the development of national identity is connected with the problems of interethnic relations. This process is complex, long and controversial. National consciousness of Turks, focused on isolation and self-esteem is one of the main causes of the conflict. The minorities, being poorly managed, become one of the most common sources of social conflicts and political instability in the world and they also pose a serious threat not only to those who turned out to be directly involved in the conflict. In the case of Kurds, they threaten the regional peace and stability and disturb the relations between Turkey and EU.

The Kurdish issue substantially affects Turkey's national interests by pulling the region into instability and threatening national security. Consequently, the study of this issue is needed for regional security, economic and geopolitical stability in the country.

There are several causes, which brought to the conflict between Kurds and Turks: the underdevelopment of the region, political weakness of the Kurdish population, the slow development of its social and cultural life and ignorance of national rights of the Kurds by Turks. Kurdish objective to national self-determination and the wish to play the proper role in the country also promotes to the development of the conflict.

Kurdish issue is also one of the major sources of human rights violations and is a great obstacle for the full integration with the family of European nations. According to Cornell “The Kurdish question is arguably the most serious internal problem in the Turkish republic’s seventy-seven-year history and central the main obstacle to its aspiration to full integration with European Institutions (Cornell, The Kurdish Question in Turkish Politics, 2001). There was a time in Turkey where it rejected the existence of the Kurdish problem, viewing it as a socioeconomic problem in the southeast of the country. Later still, it started to view the Kurdish problem as fight against terrorism. The Turkish state has treated the Kurdish issue as if it were identical to the PKK uprising, as if the problem would be over if the PKK was eliminated.

However after becoming the candidate state for the EU, Turkey somehow softened its attitude towards the Kurds. In 2009, the Turkish government started the Kurdish opening (the Kurdish initiative), which aimed to improve human and cultural rights of Kurds. Facing with great opposition within country, this effort came to an end.

Chapter 1

Literature Review

The Kurdish issue has been an obstacle for the Turkish government for a long time. The issue has an influence both on the domestic and foreign affairs of Turkey. This topic is important to discuss from the perspective of human rights and values because it is covered up in Turkey. In order to have a deep notion what the Kurdish issue is, the origins of the problem are represented in this paper, and the following questions must be answered: What kind of problems does the Kurdish issue raise for Turkey? How much does the Kurdish issue affect Turkey's relationship with EU? How do the Turkish government and EU treat the Kurdish issue? To answer these questions and to have a clearer picture of what the Kurdish issue is, I represent an overview of the literature in this field.

Svante Cornell in his article "The Kurdish Question in Turkish Politics" considers the Kurdish issue as the most serious internal problem during all the history of the Turkish republic and the main obstacle to full integration into the European institutions. Officially Turks consider that there is no Kurdish issue, rather there is a socioeconomic problem of the Kurds and a problem of terrorism promoted by external support from foreign states aiming to weaken Turkey. In contrast, in the west, the problem is defined as a violation of minority rights by the majority and the war that evolved in southeastern Turkey is seen as a national movement. However, Cornell's view differs from both mentioned opinions "In reality, neither the official Turkish view, nor the dominant Western perception holds up to close scrutiny, and a deeper study of the problem reveals its extreme complexity, with a number of facets and dimensions that tend to obscure the essentials of the conflict" (Cornell, *The Kurdish Question in Turkish Politics*, 2001). According to the author, Kurdish issue has ethnic aspects because the Kurdish portion of the

population feels discriminated against on the basis of identity. Cornell also suggests that the Kurdish problem in Turkey must be understood as distinct from the problem of the PKK and terrorism. He discusses the Kurdish issue by analyzing the national concept underlying the Turkish state and society and taking into account not only ethnic, but social distinctiveness of the Kurds and their relationship with state's leadership. Cornell concludes that the solution of this question depends on three factors. First, Turkey needs to accept that the Kurdish issue is distinct from PKK terrorism. Second, the economic measures consistently mentioned by the Turkish state must be realized, and finally the crucial issue for both democratization and economic development is the proper implementation of existing legislation (Cornell, 2001).

In contrast to Cornell's suggestions for a solution to the Kurdish issue, Turkey itself wants to take more harsh actions. As Scott Peterson and Ben Holland wrote in their article entitled "Verdict in Kurd Case Strains Turkey's ties with Europe" Turkey decided to sentence Abdullah Ocalan to death. Europeans tend to oppose the death penalty, and if Turkey will carry it out; this may damage to its relations with the West. The authors consider the Kurdish issue in relationship with Turkey's desire to join the Western family. However, human rights violations, many of which have occurred from the Kurdish conflict, are a key reason for denying Turkey's admission to the EU (Peterson & Holland, 1999).

Turkish writer Abdulhamit Bilic discusses EU and US models for the solution of the Kurdish issue in the article "EU and US Models for Solution of Kurdish Issue". If the previous two authors suggest that Turkey itself should solve the issue, Bilic discusses the European Union-backed model for the solution of the Kurdish issue in Turkey, whose success depends on Turkey's ability to increase economic prosperity and completion of the EU membership process. "Solving this issue could not be expected from the pioneering elites, who were in a hurry to complete a nation-state and modernization processes in a short period by applying Western

ideologies, contrary to that of the West which had completed the same processes gradually” (Bilici, 2003).

Cornell in his article emphasizes not only the ethnic aspect of the issue, but social one. Alic Kilic also express the same opinion. In his article “Democratization, Human Rights and Ethnic Policies in Turkey”, the author argues that the Kurdish problem in Turkey is not only an ethnic issue, but a problem of democracy and human rights. He looks at the Kurdish policies and on human rights in Turkey in detail. Author highlights the fact that democracy and human rights are universal aspirations of the contemporary world. In the developed as well as in the developing countries, democracy is seen as the only viable channel for the protection and promotion of fundamental human rights. Where the rights of racial, ethnic or religious minorities are concerned protection of human rights becomes even more vital and problematic. He concludes that the recognition of the Kurdish identity and separation of the PKK terrorism from the Kurdish problem will be an important step to democratic consolidation in Turkey. He states that the Kurdish issue is also an issue of international recognition, because Turkey’s relations with the international world are mostly indexed by the developments on the Kurdish issue, and the economic instability connects with issue too (Ayla, 1998).

As the previous authors stress that the Kurdish issue has implications on foreign policy, Michael Gunter in his article “The Continuing Kurdish Problem in Turkey after Ocalan’s Capture”, emphasizes the same idea. He states that Turkey’s EU membership, democratization processes and economic success are connected with the Ocalan’s execution and the continuing Kurdish problem. According to him, the Kurdish problem impedes the implementation of democratic and human rights reforms, limits Turkish foreign policy and has become the main source of political instability within the country and the biggest challenge to its future. From Cornel’s article it is obvious that Turkey consider that foreign states use the issue to weaken

Turkey. Gunter stresses the same idea that the Kurdish issue gives states a weapon to pressure the country (Gunter, 2000). The only way the author sees the solution to the problem is democratically by the negotiation process.

The violation of human rights is strongly connected with the denial of Turkey's entrance to EU. In his article "Human Rights and the Kurdish issue in Turkey: 1984-1990" Hamit Bozarslan analyzes human rights violations in Turkey in depth. He states that the majority of human rights violations in Turkey from 1984 to 1999 were directly linked to the Kurdish issue, and especially to the war between Turkish state forces and the guerilla Kurdistan Workers Party. Bozarslan suggests that human rights situation in Turkey during the 1984-1999 period should be read against the background of human rights violations committed under the military regime of 1980-1983. He argues that disintegration processes that generate the central power blocks both within Turkey and within the PKK made worse the human rights situation between 1984 and 1999 (Bozarslan, 2001).

The relationship between Turkey and Europe is discussed in the Economist article "Turkey can be a part of Europe". As Scott Peterson and Ben Holland connect the absence of Turkey's membership to EU with the Kurdish issue, the Economist shares this idea too. According to the article, Turkey can be a part of Europe but the main obstacle to it is Turkey's handling of its Kurdish issue. Of course in theory there is no objection to Turkey becoming a full member of European Union, but in practice, the great obstacle is its records on human rights violations. In contrast to previous author Bozarslan, who states that violations in Turkey are mostly connected with the Kurdish issue, the Economist states that Turkey's human rights problem is not just Kurdish, because they are not the only minority in need of protection. If previous authors see the solution of the issue entirely, Economist conclude that it is hard to

imagine a separate Kurdish state in southeastern Turkey, yet some form of transfer of power over local government is needed (Economist , 1995).

In the book “Turkey’s Kurdish Question”, Henri Barkey and Graham Fuller tried to answer the question how to deal with Turkey’s Kurds. Authors stated that Kurdish issue is the major source of human rights violations and biggest irritant in Turkey’s relations with EU. As Kilic and Cornell, Barkey and Fuller also call attention to that Turkey has treated the Kurdish issue as if it was identical to the PKK insurrections and problem would over once the PKK was abolished. The authors call for a solution “within current borders” that establishes a legal Kurdish identity, radically reduces and alters the current military approach in the southeast, protects rather than harasses or bans Kurdish political parties, allows Kurds education in their own language, and decentralizes the administration of the state (Henri & Fuller, 1998). As for Cornell and Kilic, for them also Kurdish conflict is in essence an ethnic problem, and not only a problem of terrorism or economics, although both of them are parts of current conflict.

Philip Robins, in the article “The Overlord State: Turkish Policy and the Kurdish Issue” mostly call for the Turkey’s allies to recognize the complexity and the extent of the problems related to the Kurdish southeast of the country for the sake of all involved. The reason for this is that Turkey is widely seen as an oasis of stability in uncertain region by United Kingdom and United States. Robins conclude that Turkey’s allies should take more seriously the problem besetting that country (Robins, 2001). Robins explores the Kurdish issue in Turkey in the context of both domestic affects foreign policy and vice versa.

Pinar Bilgin in her article “Turkey’s changing security discourses: The challenge of globalization” speaks to what level will upgrade the EU-Turkey relations after the salvation of Kurdish Issue. The aim of the article is to analyze the ways in which Turkey’s security

discourses have been shaped by and the transformation Turkey has gone through in recent years. The author states that it was as a part of the process of joining the EU that the challenge of globalised security was strongly felt in Turkey. Since 1999 when Turkey was included in the list of official candidates, there emerged an elite-level debate regarding the security implications of the reforms demanded by the EU. Whereas the ‘Euroscptics’ have underlined the need for a broad security agenda by making references to ‘globalised security’ while seeking to shape practices in defense of ‘national security’, the ‘pro-EU’ actors have opened up Turkey’s definition of ‘national security’ for debate thereby sowing the seeds of an alternative security discourse. She also stresses out the seriousness of Kurdish issue for Turkey. She states “The 1997 amendment further reinforced the trend established in 1992 to prioritize internal threats; the Office of the Chief of Staff, who published this amendment to the National Security Policy Document, also declared that ‘internal threats against the territorial integrity of the country and the founding principles of the republic became graver than external threats” (Bilgin, 2005).

In the article “NATO's ethnic cleansing: the Kurdish question in Turkey”, Sinan Esim speaks about Kosovars and Kurds in order to compare the fates of these two minorities. After he discusses the nature of PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party), which is the leading force in the Kurdish revolt in Turkey, Esim argues Turkey has rejected even indirect negotiations with the Kurds for a peaceful political settlement. On the contrary, it has denied the existence of the Kurdish question and restored to militaristic methods to crush “separatism terrorism”. The author concludes his article by discussing the Revolution and Counterrevolution in Kurdistan in the beginning of 1990’s. He also argues that Turkey being a member of NATO was participating in the air operations in Yugoslavia. This is the same country which for decades, since the foundation of the republic in 1923, has subjected its Kurds to the most humiliating oppression and that recently

carried out one of the dirtiest wars that ever happened against a national liberation movement (Esim, 1999).

Hakan Yavuz in his article entitled “A Preamble to the Kurdish Question: the Politics of Kurdish Identity” provides basic information about Kurdish nation. This article mostly has an aim to make the reader familiar with the issue. He stresses out the fact that Kurds, in the meanwhile, have become a litmus test for democracy and human rights in Turkey. The author agrees with Kilic that democracy will cure the Kurdish problem, and the lack of democracy is mentioned as the main cause of this ethnic problem. Yavuz brings the idea of Paul White as opposite to Kilic, that the main cause of Kurdish issue is uneven economic development. This has been the argument of Bulet Ecevint, a deputy Prime Minister of Turkey, who sees the conflict in terms of economic disparity between different regions of the country. Based on many opinions and papers Yavuz concludes that there are no solutions to ethnic conflicts leading to its eradication, but that it requires proper management. He sees the difficulties of resolving the Kurdish ethno-nationalism reflects the complex nature of the multiple identities of the Kurds with regard to language, regionalism and tribal ties (Yavuz, 1998).

Halil M. Karaveli in his paper “Reconciling Statism with Freedom Turkey’s Kurdish Opening” share the opinion of most previous authors mentioned above. He also stress out that Kurdish issue has mired both the country’s domestic development and foreign relations. Turkey also has suffered domestically from its powerlessness to resolve the issue. On the external front, the Kurdish issue and the state’s response to it has been the largest obstacle, which is competitor only the Cyprus dispute, to Turkey’s accession to the European Union. However the main point of the article is to discuss the consequences and results of democratic or as it is well known Kurdish “opening”. Turkey’s Kurdish opening represents if not the “ end of history” then at least the culmination of an historical endeavor. The undeniable lesson of the Turkish history of the last

two centuries is that authoritarianism and nationalism have come not only at a terrible human cost, but have also failed to provide a solution to the eternal challenge faced by the Turkish state. The author stress out the two conclusions that impose themselves after one year of “ opening” are, first, that the Kurdish movement cannot be circumvented; and secondly, that the Turkish government cannot dispense with exercising leadership; the anxieties that animate popular Turkish nationalism need to be addressed head-on. Karaveli expresses a new opinion, which isn’t mentioned by the previous authors, that resolution of the Kurdish problem is difficult to imagine as long as the Kurdish minority is denied parliamentary representation (Karaveli, 2010).

The report entitled “A Roadmap for a Solution to the Kurdish Question: Policy Proposals from the Region for the Government” was prepared by TESEV (Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation). This report is unique, and it differs from previous ones, because it is based on the opinions of various experts, politicians, non-governmental representatives, and opinion leaders that are believed to represent Kurdish society. The comments, findings, and suggestions contained in this report belong to Kurds. They emphasize that diverse efforts toward a solution should be founded on democratic processes, whereby opinions and information should be sought from political and other representatives of Kurds in a comprehensive fashion before any policy is developed. There is also a group that believes a solution to Kurdish question requires a general political amnesty, ending the isolation of Abdullah Ocalan on Imrali Island. All military operations should be halted, mediation with representatives of Kurdish civil society and political parties should be sought to convince PKK lay down its arms, a ‘non-amnesty’ regulation should be introduced to sufficiently encourage PKK members to lay down their arms, and new plans should be tailored to allow former PKK members to have a secure place in society. They consider as a positive step that government officials visit the region recently tend to meet with the representatives of some local non-governmental organizations (TESEV (Turkish Economic

and Social Studies Foundation), 2008). From the report it can be concluded that unlike the opinions of expert authors, Kurds themselves see the resolution of the conflict only with cooperation of Kurds and Turkish government.

Murat Somer in his article entitled “Turkey’s Kurdish Conflict: Changing Context and Domestic and Regional Implications” express an opinion that Turkey’s chances of entering the EU will significantly increase if it can achieve a long-term resolution of its Kurdish issue. The next core idea mentioned by Somer is that more Turkey can secure its relations with its citizens of Kurdish origin through democratic and developmental means; the less it would be threatened by Kurdish nationalism in Iraq and elsewhere. Hence, it would be able to shift its focus more easily to playing a more positive role in Middle Eastern affairs, such as by contributing to regional development and cooperation. In cooperation with the US and the EU, Turkey can play a key role in the post-war economic and democratic development of the region. One limitation Turkey faces in promoting the compatible definition is the lack of effective representation of diverse Kurdish interests within Turkey. Another limitation is the difficulties of reconciliation with the PKK constituency (Somer, 2004). So, author tries to show how much Kurdish issue can be an obstacle for Turkey’s external relations.

Henri Barkey and Direnç Kadioglu in the article “The Turkish Constitution and the Kurdish Question” refer to the constitutional changes as the solution of the issue. The requirements of Kurds are directly linked with the new constitution. Authors introduce demands of the Kurds: change the constitution’s emphasis on Turkish ethnicity, remove the bans on cultural and political rights, and reduce administrative centralization. Barkey and Kadioglu in their article present what actually want Kurds. They conclude that a new constitution represents the first step otherwise Turkey will always live with internal disagreements, violence, and instability. Furthermore, it is also quite clear that Kurdish political groups are no longer waiting

for the government to take action. They are prone to push for what they believe to be their rights by devising new arrangements (democratic autonomy), articulating specific demands (education in the Kurdish language), and mobilizing politically (Barkey & Kadioglu, 2011).

Another article of Murat Somer called “Defensive and Liberal Nationalisms: the Kurdish Question and Modernization/Democratization” discusses modernization of Turkey. He stresses out that different values, ideas and policies were known and put forward during the development of Turkish nation- and state-building. Diffusely stated ideas and values that could have led to the emergence of rudimentary forms of liberal-nationalist perspectives (LNP) later were suppressed by ideas and values that became dominant and will be called defensive-nationalist perspectives (DNP). Somer concludes that Turkish modernization has largely failed to adequately address the Kurdish question, despite many other achievements of the Turkish modernization. The emergence of LNP Turkey’s EU-integration should also be seen as mutually reinforcing processes. He argues that EU actors who are in favor of Turkey’s membership and who are interested in the stability of the Union’s southeastern flank have much to gain from supporting the emergence of Turkish and Kurdish LNP (Somer, 2007).

From the above mentioned articles it is clear that both for experts and Kurds the issue is considered as a serious internal problem and needs to be solved. The idea of identification and separation of the PKK terrorism from the Kurdish issue were mentioned by authors as a big step, towards the resolution of the problem. Violations of human rights in Turkey are mostly connected with the Kurdish issue. The violation of human rights is a big obstacle for Turkey, who wants to join the European family. The Kurdish issue theoretically is not considered as a barrier for Turkey to enter to EU. However, in practice its records on violation of human rights are great obstruction.

Research Questions:

1. What are the origins of the Kurdish issue in Turkey?
2. What is the mission of the Kurdistan Workers' party?
4. How does Turkish government treat the Kurdish issue?
5. What kind of problems does Kurdish issue raise for Turkey at international level (EU)?
6. How much does the Kurdish issue affect Turkey's relationship with EU?
7. What is the official position of the EU regarding the Kurdish issue?
8. How does EU foresee the solution of the problem?

The above listed issues represent a separate subject for research. In order to answer to these questions, each of them are organized and discussed in-depth, separately in different chapters of this paper.

Hypothesis:

H_1 : Turkey prone to use force to solve the Kurdish issue

H_0 : Turkey prone to solve the Kurdish issue by democratic means

H_2 : Turkey and EU have contradictory positions regarding the Kurdish issue

H_0 : Turkey and EU have coinciding positions regarding the Kurdish issue

Methodology

The qualitative method would be used in this Maser's essay. The study will be both explanatory and descriptive. The study has an aim to discover different positions on this issue. It will review the general state affairs regarding the Kurdish problem in Turkey. Document analysis will be used, based on the review of different sources through a historical/comparative method. The right way to study the issue is to consider positions of various authors and specialists on the problem in a comparative perspective. Both Kurdish and Turkish viewpoints will be presented regarding the issue. The EU's position regarding the issue will be also presented. In order to fully understand this topic, independent sources will be reviewed too, where a historical perspective and the present developments of Kurdish issue will be presented.

Chapter 2

The Implications of the Kurdish Issue in the Internal Life of Turkey

2.1 The Origins of the Kurdish problem

What is the reason of ethnic conflicts arising in the world? Where do they come from? A political scientist Hakan Yavuz gave an appropriate definition of why ethnic conflicts exist. He stated that in the world of modern societies the most challenging question is to recognize cultural and ethnic diversity. Political leaders of the countries where problems exist dichotomize and classify the differences. Consequently, the conflicts are allowed and the effective management of cultural diversity is undermined. Many modern nations categorize, dichotomize and isolate minorities that are living inside the borders of the state. (Yavuz, 1998)

One of the classical examples of the ethnic conflicts is the Kurdish issue. Since the foundation of modern Turkey (1920's) the "Kurdish question", or Kürt Sorunu, has been and continues to be the most politically challenging problem that Turkey has (Somer, 2007). The constitution does not recognize Kurds as a national, racial or ethnic minority. There are no legal barriers hindering ethnic Kurds to participate in political and economic affairs, nonetheless Kurds who publicly or politically assert their Kurdish ethnic identity may suffer harassment or persecution. Although Turkey defines the Kurdish problem as a terrorism problem, the Kurdish question is not a mere 'terrorism problem,' but rather an issue with ethnic, cultural, legal, political, social, economic, and psychological dimensions. (TESEV (Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation), 2008)

The delay of the modern nationalist movement of Kurds, which is the largest ethnic bloc after the Arabs, Persians, and Turks in the Middle East, was because of political divisions. For at

least the past five hundred years the Kurds have been divided between Persian and Ottoman Empires and in the past seventy years they have been divided among the states of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. The isolation from the imperial centers slowed their development as a united and strongly self-conscious people (Barkey & Fuller, 1998).

During the existence of Ottoman Empire, the Kurds, along with other Muslims, were part of the Sunni Muslim community within a multiethnic empire. Kurds, as part of the Sunni community of the Ottoman Empire, were considered as a distinct group (emirate) by the sultan in the sixteenth century. The emirates were autonomous in their internal affairs. This type of interrelationship between sultan and Kurds existed until the nineteenth century. By the nineteenth century, political changes occurred in the relationship between the Kurds and the Ottoman administration. Increased intervention in the Kurdish regions and wars between Russia, Iran, and the Ottoman Empire created conditions for rebellion against Turkish rule throughout the empire. However, the revolts were suppressed. (Barkey & Fuller, 1998)

A turning point for the Kurds was the crush of the Ottoman Empire in 1918 and the signing of the 1920 Sevres Treaty. It “envisaged interim autonomy for the predominantly Kurdish areas of Turkey with a view to full independence if the inhabitants of these areas wanted this” (Barkey & Fuller, 1998, p. 9). The treaty mainly stated,

“If within one year from the coming into force of the present Treaty the Kurdish people...show that a majority of the population of these areas desires independence from Turkey, and if the Council then considers that these people are capable of such independence and recommends that it should be granted to them, Turkey hereby agrees to execute such a recommendation, and to renounce all rights and title over these areas”. (Robins, 2001)

In reality the terms of the treaty have never been materialized because of the Turkish nationalist movement, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and the international convention ignored them. Of course, if the Kurdish state had been created at that time, it would have weakened Turkey. The Kurdish issue was one of the first conflicts that arose in a newly born Turkish state. However, Kemal often called upon the equality and brotherhood of Turks and Kurds. Some Kurds revolted against Kemal, and Kocgiri was among the most significant ones in 1920 (Robins, 2001).

In 1925, the official position of Turkey concerning to various ethnic minorities, including the Kurds, was stated by the İsmet İnönü, Atatürk's confidant and successor: "we are frankly nationalists . . . and nationalism is our only factor of cohesion. In the face of a Turkish majority other elements have no kind of influence. We must turkify the inhabitants of our land at any price, and we will annihilate those who oppose the Turks or 'le turquisme' " (Barkey & Fuller, 1998, p. 10). In the 1924 constitution, the terms "citizenship" and "citizen" were mainly related to Turkishness. So, Kurds only could qualify as "Turks", if they deny their own ethnic identity. By stating this, the document engendered Kurdish dissatisfaction. The Kurds, de facto, became the single largest unrecognized minority with the potential to threaten the state.

In 1925, the first rebellion against the state took place. Eventually, the rebellion was suppressed by Ankara. Two other significant revolts were led by Sheikh Said, in Ağrı and in 1936-1938 in Dersim. (Robins, 2001). In 1950, by the success of the Democrat party and by the coming of multiparty politics to Turkey the pressure against Kurds, which existed during Kemal era, somewhat was depressed. Democrats promised to reduce discrimination against Kurds, but again nothing significant was done. In 1965, Democratic Party of Turkish Kurdistan was created. This party was a nationalist rather than a revolutionary one. These kind of left-wing Kurdish

groups provided a ground for other revolutionary Kurdish groups, including the Kurdistan Workers' party (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan), or PKK, which emerged in 1984.

On November 7, 1982, the Constitution was put on national referendum and received approval (91.4%) (Cornell, *The Kurdish Question in Turkish Politics*, 2001). So, the anti-Kurdish views of the government were legalized and the constitution was the best legitimate way to absorb Kurds. The 1982 Constitution (Article 26) stated,

“No language prohibited by the law shall be used in the expression and dissemination of thought. Any written or printed documents, phonograph records, magnetic or video tapes, and other means of expression used in contravention of this provision shall be seized by a duly issued decisions of a judge or in case where delay is demand prejudicial, by the competent authority designated by law.”(The Constitution of the Republic of Turkey of 1982, 1982).

Thus it was clear that the Constitution prohibited the use of the Kurdish language. The other article (42) of constitution comes to support the previous one, “No language other than Turkish shall be taught as a mother tongue of Turkish citizens at any institutions of training or education” (The Constitution of the Republic of Turkey of 1982).

These all led to the armed conflict between Turkey and Kurdish people's movements, which was mainly organized by the PKK and lasted until 1999, when Abdullah Ocalan was detained. As there was no significant change in state policy, by the late 1980s the Kurdish question raised into the political scene with its full power, and a new stage in the evolution of the Kurdish national movement started. The Kurdish question started to dominate the concerns of domestic and international policy of the government.

2.2 The mission of Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK): How do they (Kurds) view the solution of the issue?

From the beginning of 1973, an idea of creating a nationalist movement was born among the left-wing Kurdish students. In 1978, the PKK decided to hold its first congress and secretly established itself under the leadership of Abdullah Ocalan (Barkey & Fuller, 1998). The formation of the PKK in 1984 as a revolutionary organization is the longest Kurdish rebellion in modern Turkish history. However, to connect the transformation of the Kurdish problem in Turkey in its present form with the PKK would be a naive statement. This is because as one can understand from previous chapter, the PKK was born due to the Kurdish national movement, not vice versa. However, there are some Kurds who argued that the emergence of the PKK actually worsened the situation for the Kurdish. The PKK was the single and the most important political fact of life for Kurds in the southeast, since its creation has begun its “armed struggle”. After its emergence, it pushed large parts of the region into violence and greatly increased the armed presence of the Turkish army.

From the beginning, the PKK divided itself into three elements: the party itself, the National Liberation Front of Kurdistan (ERNK) and the People’s Liberation Army of Kurdistan (ARGK) (Barkey & Fuller, 1998). From 1984 the PKK began to increase its strength. As this was not one of the many small groups that had appeared and disappeared over the history of the Kurdish national movement, but the one that had a well-defined political agenda, Ankara was unprepared for this kind of a challenge, which was coming from the PKK. The success of the PKK was connected with its ability to break traditional ties in Kurdish society. The ultimate goal of the PKK was to establish an independent, unified Kurdistan on Marxist-Leninist lines (Kilic, 1998). The PKK did not only seek independence, but also wanted a political and social

revolution among the Kurds in order to transform their society's feudal structure (Barkey & Fuller, 1998).

Although from the beginning the PKK has proclaimed its goal to be the creation of a unified, independent Kurdish state, until the 1990s, the PKK's only goal was to weaken the Turkish state authority and gain the power to control the region. As an organization, the PKK took itself very seriously. Thus, the PKK was committed to revolutionary violence against the Turkish state. From the beginning the PKK has adopted classic revolutionary tactics, combination of violence and terror with political organization. The terror has systematically and primarily been directed first at potential rivals (Barkey & Fuller, 1998).

Mainly, they were trying to reach their goal by illegitimate means. Those means, which threaten the peace in some Turkish regions, include bombing train stations, government buildings and warehouses (Kilic, 1998). The PKK tried to create a political vacuum in the southeast not just by denying the state access to towns and villages but also by limiting the access of Turkish institutions, including the press and political parties to the region. In order to isolate them from the rest of Turkey, the PKK damaged or destroyed the electricity transformers, radios, television sets and telephones. To fight against culturally merging with Turkey, schools were bombed and teachers were kidnapped and killed (Kilic, 1998).

One of the most important indicators of tactical change in the PKK, however, has been the creation of the Kurdish Parliament in Exile (KPE). The task of the parliament was to serve as the "authoritative representative of the Kurdish people" and eventually the settlement of the Kurdish problem in Turkey. It denies that it is an instrument of the PKK. However, the political wing of the PKK, the National Liberation Front of Kurdistan, is a key element within the KPE ranks (Barkey & Fuller, 1998).

“The PKK understood that it cannot fight against a well-armed and determined Turkish state without the support of left-of-center forces in Turkish politics and society who themselves challenge some of the traditional ideological tenets of the old Kemalist state” (Barkey & Fuller, 1998, p. 25). Since the beginning of 1995, a significant shift was made in the PKK’s political orientation. Now the PKK speaks of a political settlement within the existing borders of Turkey. The PKK no longer considers itself to be the sole political representative of the Kurdish people. Ocalan has reportedly said “If and when negotiations take place, they need not necessarily be held with him personally” (Barkey & Fuller, 1998, p. 25).

Late in 1995 the PKK was enthusiastic in increasing attention to the role of outside forces in helping to strengthen its political influence for negotiations with the Turkish government. According to Barkey and Fuller, the change of the PKK’s policy regarding this issue could have two reasons. The first could be an increasing concern about the military failure of the PKK in the field. In contrast to the early 1990s, when it controlled towns, villages, and even roads it now lost control of many of the major cities in the southeast (Barkey & Fuller, 1998). “The second reason for the PKK’s emphasis on negotiations with Turkey is that they represent the ultimate political goal of the PKK at this stage—to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the Turkish state as an interlocutor” (Barkey & Fuller, 1998, p. 27).

Before the Turkish government captured Ocalan in 1999, the clashes between Turkish armed forces and the PKK continued, and Turkey realized many military operations in its southeastern provinces. Military operations in the southeast continued until 1997. The clashes were accompanied by intensive bombardments.

“The longtime leader of PKK, Turkey's sudden and dramatic capture of Abdullah Ocalan in Nairobi, Kenya on 16 February 1999 signaled a whole new beginning in the attempt to solve

Turkey's continuing Kurdish problem” (Gunter, 2000, p. 849). As Ocalan is the very center of the PKK, his capture was a turning point for it. By all accounts, the PKK is mostly Ocalan’s creation. The ‘Ocalan factor’ has been very important during the history and activity of the PKK. Despite his earlier reputation as a Stalin-like, murderous terrorist, his image has been charismatic. He has done more to re-establish a sense of Kurdish self-esteem and nationalism in Turkey than any other Kurdish leader in recent years (Gunter, 2000). According to Barkey and Fuller “Irrespective of the terrorist label that has stuck to him, he has achieved, at least among a significant segment of Turkey’s Kurdish population, a stature that no other Turkish Kurdish personality has reached, certainly not since Shaykh Said” (Barkey & Fuller, 1998, p. 42).

On June 28, 1999 Ocalan was condemned to death (Esim, 1999). However, the sentence was commuted to aggravated life imprisonment when Turkey abolished the death penalty in support of its proposal to be admitted to membership in the European Union. After his capture a wide range of Kurdish violence in Turkey and Europe spread out. This was led by Ocalan's brother, Osman Ocalan. Later, when he had an opportunity to do some statements, Abdullah Ocalan surprisingly declared that he really loves Turkey and the Turkish people. Then he announced “A solution based on the unity and independence of Turkey, which would guarantee peace and real democracy ... is also our innermost wish” (Gunter, 2000, p. 852). As to support its strong position regarding this issue, Ocalan said, “The historical conclusion I have arrived at is that the solution to this Kurdish problem which has grown so big, is democratic union with the democratic, secular Republic. The democratic option ... is the only alternative in solving the Kurdish question; separation is neither possible nor necessary” (Gunter, 2000, p. 854). Consequently, the early violence that had broken out upon his capture stopped.

Turkey's Kurdish question returned to the top of the international agenda. In the end of 1999, the PKK declared its withdrawal from Turkish territory and in 2000 put down its arms and

became publicly known as a political movement. By neutralizing the PKK, Turkey did not still solve the Kurdish issue, because as Cornell states “the PKK has never represented the opinions of a majority of Turkey’s Kurds” (Cornell, *The Kurdish Question in Turkish Politics*, 2001). According to Cornell, only a minority of Kurds see the PKK as their main representative. The majority of Kurds wants to remain within the Turkish state. In 1992, a survey was conducted in the southeast of the country. It showed that only 29% of the population viewed the PKK as their representative (Cornell, *The Kurdish Question in Turkish Politics*, 2001).

What was the success of the PKK? What did ensure the endurance and intensity of the PKK’s rebellion? This can be explained first and foremost by the PKK’s organizational skills and the support it gained from the Kurds who were dissatisfied with Turkish government. Besides, the PKK had huge international support and managed to mobilize these international resources successfully. Cornell divided these resources into three categories: support from Kurds in exile (Western Europe), financial resources gained from the drug trade, indirect and direct support from the states that wanted to see Turkey weakened (Cornell, 2001). Of course, support or some money collected from the membership fees was not enough for the huge military and terroristic acts of the PKK; there was huge financial support behind these actions. The PKK stated that most of its funds came from the contributions from Kurds living in Turkey and abroad. In contrast to this, official Turkey claimed that the money came from the robberies and from drug trade between Turkey and Europe. There were other sources that were mentioned as a source of income from the PKK’s small and medium businesses (Barkey & Fuller, 1998).

Other factor of success of the PKK was the support of Iran and Iraq, which had its own reasons to fund the PKK. These funds were used in various ways: to support activity of the PKK and to purchase arms. Syria was also one of the main supporters of the PKK. It provided the PKK with training facilities in Beka valley (Barkey & Fuller, 1998).

Why did the PKK lose its power and come to its end after this kind of success? Cornell highlights six such reasons. First, the PKK's violations against the population raised complaints among Kurds, who saw little difference between the repressive Turkish government, army and the repressive PKK. Second, Ocalan developed a cult around his personality. This led other Kurdish leaders to abandon him and consider him as a madman. Third, the PKK's Marxist-Leninist ideology became an obstacle after the collapse of the communism. Fourth, the PKK failed to stay out of the tribal politics it aimed to destroy. Fifth, westward migrations were partly the result of the war. Sixth, the vision of a separate Kurdish state was not shared by the majority of Kurds.

So, the PKK's armed struggle did not achieve any significant positive results. Compared with the losses that were huge, the military successes were few. In the end, the PKK did not succeed to establish an independent Kurdish state. It did not have any positive achievements, and it caused damages as much as possible. According to some data, more than 37,000 people died in the war between Turkey and the PKK from which 5,000 victims were civilians with 3 million people forced to leave their homes. A thousand people were arrested during that period, and many of them are still in prison. Among them are PKK and KPE members, writers and journalists (Bozarslan, 2001).

In the first five years of the 2000s, the PKK cut down its attacks and tried to gain legitimization in the international arena. Armed clashes started again in 2004, but in 2005 Kurdish rebels declared a formal ceasefire with Turkey. However, a wave of violence, launched by the insurgent PKK in the middle of 2011, had broken the 2005 ceasefire. During this time the PKK changed its policy from the aim of establishing a separate Kurdish state to achieving a confederation within Turkish borders with recognition of the Kurdish identity through social and

civil reforms (Defence and Security Policy of the Turkish Republic, 2010). Now, common demands of Kurds in Turkey are the following:

- Full language rights for Kurds: Kurds demand the possibility of "mother language education" and the usage of Kurdish language in all areas of public life, currently banned by the Turkish Constitution.
- Non-discriminatory Constitution and laws: Kurds want discriminatory elements, based on ethnicity (e.g. definition of citizenship), to be removed from the Constitution;
- Amendments to legislation, such as the Anti-Terrorism Law and the Criminal Code, and a lifting of the ban on using Kurdish in courts.
- Greater political and cultural autonomy: support for far-reaching options (federalism or independence) is low among the majority of Kurds. The Kurdish movement (including the PKK apparently) now aims for (not clearly defined) "democratic autonomy" within Turkey.
- Political representation: electoral reform is demanded, in particular dividing the current 10% threshold for a party to enter Parliament (Barkey & Kadioglu, 2011)

2.3 The attitude of the official Turkey towards the Kurdish issue: How does Turkey treat the Kurdish issue?

Turkish official definition states "separatism covers factions that aimed to divide, separate a community and the circles that are supporting them" (Bayramoğlu & Insel, 2010, p. 123). Although this definition refers primarily to the PKK, everybody, who adopts and puts forward views that do not comply with the official view on the Kurdish issue, can be included as "supporting circles" within the TSK's (Turk Silahlı Kuvvetleri/ Turkish Armed Forces) concept

of domestic threat. Domestic threats can be divided into two groups. The first of these is the expression of demands based on ethnicity, which are perceived as developments that would harm the unitary state. The second consists of separatists threats (democratization reforms, human rights, etc) that were believed to weaken the unitary structure of the state in other ways. As we can see the Kurdish issue can be categorized in either threat (Bayramoğlu & İnel, 2010). However, the Turkish authorities do not recognize the existence of a Kurdish minority, considering them to be simply Turks of Kurdish origin. Besides, during many years of armed struggle, Turkey did not accept that it is dealing with a Kurdish problem that has drawn the country into a civil war. Turkish authorities stated “the Kurdish issue is a problem created by 'some armed people ... terrorizing the mountains of Turkey and, this problem will end by breaking the 'backbone of the terrorists’” (Kilic, 1998). The first attacks were made on Turkey in 1984 by the PKK. After the first attacks, Turkish President Turgut Ozal called them “a bunch of marauders”. However, in the following decade the conflict changed into a civil war between the security forces of Turkey and armed PKK militants (Defence and Security Policy of the Turkish Republic, 2010).

In the early period Turkey did not accept the concept of 'war' to define the Kurdish crisis since the acceptance of 'war' would give legitimacy to the PKK and turn it into counterparty. In the Turkish view, there can be no counterparts between the state and its people. As it was mentioned in Kilic’s article, Turkish state solves its problems within the framework of 'national unity' without harming the undividable nature of the state. In contrast to this statement of Turkish government, the Turkish political elite regarded the role of the army as crucial to the solution of the problem. The Turkish security forces became the key decision makers on the adoption and implementation of the policies regarding the Kurdish issue (Kilic, 1998).

Although Turkey denied the existence of the Kurdish issue in the country, the reality shows other undeniable facts. Turkey is struggling against its internal rebellion by Kurds. Some economic and social measures are taken towards the solution of the Kurdish problem. However, it was made clear and approved by various Turkish governments many times that there can be no political solution to this problem. The first and foremost aim of Turkey is to collapse the terrorist organization, the PKK. Only after solving this problem other issues like social and cultural reforms can be considered as a main concern for Turkey. Priority is, therefore, given to military solutions (Kilic, 1998).

Gunter also highlights the government denial of the Kurdish problem. According to his article, Turkish authorities argue that their citizens of Kurdish ethnic heritage (who probably number as much as 20% of the total population in Turkey) enjoy full rights as Turkish citizens and that, therefore, there is no Kurdish problem in Turkey, only a terrorism problem (Gunter, 2000).

This continuing refusal of the Turkish government regarding the issue resulted in the rise of Kurdish anger. Since the middle of 1970s an increasingly significant proportion of Turkey's Kurds has actively demanded cultural, linguistic, and political rights for Kurds. The government suppressed these demands, because it had a fear that they would lead to the break-up of the state. This official refusal to accept any moderate Kurdish opposition has resulted in emergence of Kurdish extremism (Gunter, 2000). Reasonably, as we have already known from the previous subchapter, in August 1984, Ocalan launched a revolution that by the end of 1999 resulted in deaths and dissatisfaction of both Turkish government and the majority of Kurds, and had no effective results at all.

However, during the time when everything became obvious and it was quite difficult to solve this internal problem, Turkey started to treat this issue as an internal security problem. In April 1997, Kurdish separatism was identified as a major threat to Turkey's security. "The 1997 amendment further reinforced the trend established in 1992 to prioritize internal threats; the Office of the Chief of Staff, who published this amendment to the National Security Policy Document, also declared that 'internal threats against the territorial integrity of the country and the founding principles of the republic became graver than external threats'" (Bilgin, 2005, p. 188).

The new position of Turkey towards Kurdish issue is reflected in the National Security Policy Document. It was stated in the 2010 updated version of the National Security Policy Document of Turkey also known as the "Red Book". In the Defense and Security policy of the Turkish Republic it is mentioned "Turkey's main security concerns, which have remained unresolved for decades, can be identified as the armed conflict with the PKK as an internal security issue" (Defence and Security Policy of the Turkish Republic, 2010). It should be stressed that Turkey accepts the existence of the PKK as a security concern, not the Kurdish issue itself.

Of course speaking about the Turkish military actions one cannot fail to mention the important role of the National Security Council (Turkish: Milli Güvenlik Kurulu, MGK), which was established by the Supreme Defense Assembly on April 24, 1933. It was composed of the Chief of the General Staff and members of the Council of Ministers, gathered under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister (<http://www.mgk.gov.tr>). Through the whole period of military actions against the Kurds, the MGK has played an important role. After Islamic-oriented AKP (Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi/ Justice and Development Party) achieved a clear victory on September 12, 2010, it changed the balance of power in the MGK. The reform package was

mainly aimed to meet the terms of the European Union's Copenhagen Criteria, which required greater civilian control over the MGK, a body which gave recommendations to the legislative and executive branches on national security issues, both domestic and foreign. With the AKP in the power since 2002, control over the MGK thus passed to the party's hands (Yanarocak, 2010).

Since its establishment in 1961, the MGK has had the real power in Turkish politics. Now, on paper, the MGK can only advise the Cabinet in decision-making, and its most important official task is to update, once every five years, the National Security Political Document. As it was already mentioned previously, the 2010 edition appeared to represent a major shift in official thinking regarding the country's external and internal challenges, and the appropriate policies for dealing with them. Before these changes, the Red Book reflected the orientation of the TSK, as it represented a solid power and influence in the country (Yanarocak, 2010).

The new Red Book's changes are rooted in the “zero problems with the neighbors” strategy of the AKP foreign minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, which is intended to encourage friendlier relations with neighboring states in order to deepen Turkey's influence in the region. So, it is obvious that Turkey seeks to bring the Kurdish issue to a new level, which provides an opportunity to solve the issue by democratic means (Yanarocak, 2010).

Returning back to the military activities of Turkey towards Kurds it is worth to highlight the village guards system, which was a critical component of the military response to the Kurdish problem. It existed as early as in 1924 but it came to the forefront only after 1985 when the “temporary village guards” were introduced as a security organization (Bayramoğlu & Insel, 2010). In the framework of the Kurdish problem in Turkey, the village guards system is used to make pressure and suppress anti-state members of society in a region exposed exclusively to

militarized, domestic and security-oriented approaches. Consequently, the village guards system created a group of armed and empowered men who are used to act with impunity (Akay, 2010).

Although the system of temporary village guards is often justified as a necessary measure to protect civilian lives and properties, a report by the Parliamentary Investigation Commission shows that the system actually breeds problems with public order and safety. It is obvious that this system is acting under the MGK. As a result of considerable pressure from the international community, the abolishment of the temporary village guards system became one of the pertinent reforms in Turkey. However, Turkey failed to carry out its promises on its EU accession reports and legal and political reform packages to completely remove the system of village guardianship and has so far failed to act in that direction (Akay, 2010).

By this adopted military policy towards Kurds, Turkey in attempting to solve the problem of human rights violation, which is one of the fundamental values of democracy. The majority of human rights violations in Turkey have been directly linked to the Kurdish issue, and especially to the war between Turkey and the PKK (Kilic, 1998).

Some organizations devoted to Kurdish human rights defense have been formed but they had a rather marginal position. For the PKK, the human rights issue was essentially an instrumental one (Bozarslan, 2001). The Kurdish armed struggle denounced human rights violations committed by the state without respecting even minimal levels of human rights codes. According to Bozarslan, during 1987 and 1988, the PKK's fighters massacred civilians, and Ocalan stated, "at least some of these practices were gang activities, conducted by uncontrolled elements within his party" (Bozarslan, 2001). In reality, human rights violations have been committed by both the Turkish state and the PKK. Turkey considered military acts not as

violations but the means to preserve the territorial integrity of the country; the PKK considered violations committed as having no relation to human rights but to national liberation struggle.

However main reforms took place in 2002-2004. Turkish government began to gradually embark on a more independent policy to solve the question. In 2009 it set in motion a new initiative to deal with the Kurdish question. The initiative, originally known as the Kurdish opening and later referred to as the democratic opening, the national unity project and the democratic initiative, was set to transform “the basic institutional structure of the post-1980 regime through enlarging the understanding of citizenship which would lead to re-defining political community, strengthening association and grassroots participation, and engaging in a relative decentralization of the state with local levels of government carefully integrated to the national centre” (Nykanen, 2011, p. 77). It’s essential aim was to bring the armed conflict in Southeast Turkey to an end by disarming and disbanding the PKK.

The initiative had its roots in internal politics and external conditions. Four key factors can be distinguished behind the initiative. First, the initiative complemented the policy ‘zero problems with neighbors’ for the Turkish government, giving domestic and international credibility to it. Second, with the Democratic Society Party (DTP closed down in December 2009 by the Constitutional Court of Turkey) gaining votes in Southeast Turkey, the government attempted to win back its lost seats by appealing to the Kurdish electorate with a new initiative. Third, with its unsuccessful efforts to destroy the PKK strongholds in the Iraqi Kurdistan territory, the government was forced to come up with a new solution to the situation in the Southeast. Finally, there were significant economic factors that privileged a non-military solution to the question. In addition to the need to cut the military expenditures, Turkey’s role as an energy power and crossroads for pipelines was part of the equation (Nykanen, 2011)

For Turkey, the Kurdish issue and democratization are interconnected, because the Kurdish problem is the most important one to Turkey's democratization, which is not only an ethnic issue, but also an issue of human rights. From the above mentioned it is obvious that Turkey has covered up the Kurdish issue under the guise that the PKK is seen as a terrorist organization. As Kilic mentioned in his article, recognition of Kurdish identity and the separation of the PKK terrorism from the Kurdish problem will be an important step to democratic consolidation in Turkey (Kilic, 1998). As journalist states in Ismet Berkan in Istanbul's daily Radical, "If Turkey wants to stay a part of the democratic world, it has to accept that Kurds live in the country, and respect their desire to preserve their identity" (Peterson & Holland, 1999).

2.4 Towards the solution to the Kurdish issue: Turkey's perspective

Turkey has a broad spectrum of options in handling the Kurdish problem. It can totally repress all ethnic expression of Kurds or give the Kurds total independence. Both of these are extreme solutions to the problem. Barkey and Fuller found that the realistic solutions are ones that satisfy Kurdish aspirations without truly threatening the modern democratic Turkey. This is a complex but quite achievable goal (Barkey & Fuller, 1998).

As it was already mentioned in the beginning of this essay, the Kurdish issue has multiple aspects, each of which makes it more difficult to resolve the problem. First of all, the Kurdish issue in Turkey is fundamentally an ethnic conflict, which requires an ethnic solution. The emergence of ethnic politics among the Kurds comes as a reaction to the official Turkey's nationalism and brings with them Kurdish ethnic consciousness. The existence of this consciousness causes danger to Turkish state. Second, it is an economic problem as the southeastern Turkey is economically underdeveloped. Turkey itself is emphasizing the economic factor, which is more preferable than calling it ethnic conflict. The former Prime Minister Bulent

Ecevit once mentioned that the issue Turkey faces is not ethnic or Kurdish, as the Europeans like to call it, it's the issue of underdevelopment. Of course, major economic improvements and increased democratization in the southeast will help to make some improvements, but anyway, ethnic solution to the problem is required. Third, it has a political aspect, as the Kurds want to create an independent statehood. Fourth, the Kurdish issue is also a cultural problem. This means a clear recognition of the existence of the Kurds as a culturally distinct identity, and recognition of the Kurds' rights to express their culture fully under a system of cultural autonomy (Barkey & Fuller, 1998). Each of these is interconnected with each other. In their book, Barkey and Fuller state that the Kurdish conflict is not only an economic or terroristic problem but an ethnic one, as well although both terrorism and economic hardships are part of the conflict (Barkey & Fuller, 1998).

Morton Abramowitz also agrees that Turkey has never accepted Kurdish ethnic minority with its ethnic rights. They accept Kurds as Turks. During the whole period of its existence, the issue has been transformed by many factors: demographic, economic and geopolitical. As a result of the Turkish government politics, the regions, populated by Kurds, have been underdeveloped. Turkish authorities prohibited Kurds to open their national schools, which entailed to a huge number of the illiterate in the southeast of Turkey than in the west, which has a direct influence on the economy of that part of the country (Cornell, 2001).

As we can see there is a large scale of opinions. If the economic problem of the southwest is solved the Kurdish problem itself will be solved. In other words, the economic growth will ultimately solve the problem. So, the Kurdish government has recognized the importance of the economic issue. The Southeast Anatolia Project has been directed to the growth of the economy in this part of the country. The project was emphasizing the development of the commercial forms of agriculture and an increase in the cultivation of cash crops. Improved economic

conditions somehow reduced the incentives for separatism and gave the Kurds a chance in Turkey, which has a potential of becoming the member of the EU (Barkey & Fuller, 1998). This project can help to improve the situation with the Kurds. However the implementations of the economic programs are not enough to solve the problem completely.

It is obvious that Turkish officials see this problem as a social and economic problem. They do not accept the possibility of the political solution of the Kurdish issue. They are prone to military solution. Indeed, during the whole history of the conflict Turkey has repressed all kind of Kurdish rebels and demands. In the actions, which are directed towards the salvation of the issues, an important role was given to TSK (Turkish Armed Forces), MGK (National Security Council) and village guards system, which were giving only military solutions every time the tensions were escalated. One cannot speak about a political solution if the military solution is still the priority one.

Taking into consideration the fact that Turkey became a candidate state in the EU, it somehow changed its approach towards the Kurds. Turkey started to find alternative ways rather than the military ones for the solution of the problem. The government of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was the first to launch a comprehensive effort for a solution package. One of the biggest steps to solve the problem in a peaceful and democratic way was the Kurdish Initiative adopted by the Turkish government. The proposal is believed to include greater cultural and human rights for the Turkish citizens of Kurdish origin, to end a 25-year conflict between Turkey and the PKK, some form of local autonomy and incentives to PKK fighters to lay down the arms. On July 29, 2009, Interior Minister Beşir Atalay announced the government promises to solve the problem through more freedom and more democratic ways. Atalay hopes that these developments will bring into life their domestic policies with the European Convention on Human Rights. Of course the initiative was not accepted unambiguously. The Republican People's Party (CHP) and

the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) did not support the process, arguing that the project carried the ultimate goal of “dividing” Turkey. The government was heavily criticized by everybody, including its own supporters that it had given in to the “terrorists.” The opening came to an abrupt end. Following this turning point, the government returned to the military means as the right method to deal with the problem (Turan, 2011).

Despite the opposition some minor changes took place. In January 2009, the state-owned TRT devoted one television and radio station to 24-hour Kurdish broadcasts without subtitles and with no time limit on the news broadcasts. On November 13, the government approved the regulations to allow privately owned television and radio stations to broadcast in the languages other than Turkish.

So, if say in short the following measures are taken within the context of the democratic initiative; constructing an independent human rights institution, creating an Anti-Discrimination Committee, allowing election campaigns and propaganda in languages other than Turkish, allowing prisoners to speak languages other than Turkish with their visitors, allowing private television stations to broadcast for 24-hour in the languages other than Turkish, approving the universities to teach the Kurdish and Zazaki language among the other "living" languages, renaming of residential areas in the line with demands from the locals, fewer roadblocks in the southeastern Turkey and free access to agricultural areas, permitting access to social and religious services in the languages other than Turkish and national mechanism to prevent torture (<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/>, 2009).

What is going on in Turkey today appears to be an attempt to stifle the Kurdish voices and impose a unilateral Turkish solution to the fundamental issues of the security and the future of the country. However, what Turkey still lacks is the willingness to negotiate genuinely with the

PKK, because the PKK is the key actor. So, Turkish attempts to solve the Kurdish problem with minor unsatisfactory gestures while ignoring or even trying to eliminate the other side (the PKK) will not work obviously (Gunter M. , n.d.).

Ocalan and the PKK know that without solving the Kurdish problem Turkey will not have a chance to join the EU. Once Ocalan said, “It is no more than an illusion to expect the democratization of Turkey without a resolution of the Kurdish problem. Countries which have not resolved the Kurdish problem inevitably had to shape their laws and institutions in an anti-democratic manner in order to keep the Kurds under control. This meant that these countries, and primarily Turkey, continue to be authoritarian and oppressive regimes. Again, I wish to reiterate my conviction that solving the Kurdish question and creating the grounds for democracy in Turkey will be a guarantee for peace in the Middle East and far beyond” (Gunter M. M., 2000).

Chapter 3

The EU's Official Position Regarding the Kurdish Issue: Is the Kurdish Issue the Main Obstacle for Turkey's EU Integration?

3.1 Turkey-EU relations

It is not a secret that Turkey wants to become a member state of the EU. In recent decades, Turkey's goal has been to reach the membership to the EU community, and for many years this seemed to be unfeasible.

The EU-Turkey relations have a long history. Turkey's involvement in the European integration dates back to 1963, when Turkey and the European Economic Community entered into an Association Agreement containing a membership perspective. In 1995 the Customs Union was formed. In December 1999, in Helsinki, the European Council decided that Turkey could be a candidate for accession to the EU.

Turkey has been a candidate for the EU membership since 1999. Despite quite a long time, it still possesses only the status of a candidate. Anyway, Turkey is not an average EU candidate country, but is a key actor in the development of the European Union's role in the world. Turkey's geopolitical value as a model of Islamic democracy and a territorial partition in regards to the Middle East is indispensable for the EU (Nykanen, 2011). Turkey's role as an important energy transit country and a growing regional power means that losing Turkey as a partner would have significant strategic, political and economic effects for the EU. Considering the shared foreign policy principles of peaceful regulation of armed conflicts, territorial integrity, and regional cooperation and reducing reliance on Russian energy, the EU and Turkey have more points of agreement rather than of differences in opinions.

Any country seeking a membership to the European Union must conform to the conditions set out by the Article 49 and the principles laid down in Article 6(1) of the Treaty on the EU. The criteria were established by the Copenhagen European Council in 1993 and strengthened by the Madrid European Council in 1995. So, the first step for the country is to meet the key criteria for accession. Countries aiming to join need to have:

- Stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities;
- A functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competition and market forces in the EU;
- Ability to take and implement effectively the obligations of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union (<http://ec.europa.eu/>).

The Copenhagen European Council in December 2002 concluded that "if the European Council in December 2004, on the basis of a report and a recommendation from the Commission, decides that Turkey fulfils the Copenhagen political criteria, the European Union will open accession negotiations with Turkey without delay" (<http://ec.europa.eu/>).

The first bullet of these requirements appears to totally contradict the internal situation of Turkey. Instead of stable institutions, guaranteeing democracy, Turkey has the TSK which is protecting the “democratic values” in the country. As it was already mentioned, human rights were violated as much as it was possible during the war between Turkey and Kurds. In addition, respect for minorities is absent in Turkey, which is also a pivotal feature for a democratic country. The constitution does not even recognize Kurds as a national, racial or ethnic minority, and the main shortcoming of the Turkish government is the fact that it has accepted the Kurdish issue as the problem of the PKK terrorism.

Indeed, if we look to the conditions for membership to the EU, we will find many contradictions and obstacles to become a member state. Only those can become members who are able demonstrate their willingness to play their part as members fully. The Treaty of the EU states confirms that any European country, respecting the democratic values of the EU and committing to promote them, may apply for membership. At this point we may make a pause. Turkey being a candidate state diffuses actions against the Kurds, which were outrage for main democratic values and human rights. Violations that took place within the borders of Turkish state were far away of what is called democracy.

Despite the fact that Turkey failed to meet this criteria, accession negotiations started in 2005, and a revised Accession Partnership was adopted in 2008. As it is mentioned in the EU's official website, Turkey as a major emerging economy and the member of the NATO and G20 is a key partner for EU. It is recognized as an active regional foreign policy player with an influential role in supporting reforms in its region. The EU is therefore dedicated to political dialogue with Turkey on foreign policy issues of mutual interest (<http://eeas.europa.eu>).

3.2 The EU's position regarding the Kurdish issue

Many scholars and specialists are continuing to argue that the Kurdish issue is the main obstacle for Turkey to join the EU family. According to Cornell, the Kurdish question is arguably the most serious internal problem in the Turkish republic's seventy-seven-year history and certainly the main obstacle to its aspirations to full integration to the EU. "Most of the western scholars define the problem simply as a matter of oppression and as a denial of rights of ethnic minorities (the Kurds) by a majority group (the Turks)" (Cornell, 2001). Gunter also highlights the fact of the Kurdish issue as an obstructive reason for Turkish membership to EU.

The EU has mentioned about the widespread human rights abuses, many of which have come from the Kurdish conflict and it is one of the key reasons for denying Turkey's admission into the EU (Gunter, 2000). However, Turkey's prospects of joining the EU after 1999 gave the Kurdish question a move forward. The reforms during the period of 2002–2004 were an opportunity for Turkey, which was opened by the EU accession process. As Kirisci argues, “there is a consensus that the EU has played a decisive role in encouraging democratization and reform in Turkey” (Nykanen, 2011, p. 75).

The EU officially declares that the main threat to the Turkish democracy is the Kurdish issue. Prior to Turkey becoming a candidate state, the EU's emphasis was strongly on human rights and on finding a holistic solution to the situation in Turkey. According to the European Commission's 2012 report, the Kurdish issue remains a key challenge for Turkey's democracy. In the report it is mentioned that Turkey is looking for opportunities to make progress on the Kurdish issue, but unfortunately there was no any further development. The main challenge for the reforms in different areas of the country is considered to be the Kurdish issue, as the EU has mentioned. The same report states “Regarding the substance of the constitution, the key challenges to consensus include views on the separation of powers, state-society-religion relations and the Kurdish issue (citizenship, use of the mother-tongue, and decentralization)” (European Commission , 2012, p. 8). The document assesses the works done for the changes in the constitution overall as positive, but the new constitution should strengthen the stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities. In addition it should address longstanding problems, in particular the Kurdish issue (European Commission , 2012).

Two figures have been central in bringing the Kurdish question to the EU agenda. One is the European Parliament, which was pressuring the Commission and the Council to take the

issue into consideration in their approach towards Turkey. In the run-up of Turkey's EU candidacy in 1999, the EP was an important player in the relations between Turkey and the EU through its numerous resolutions in Turkish politics. This role was possible after the EP's powers were increased in the Maastricht Treaty (1993). While criticizing the violence of the PKK, the EP requested the European Council and the European Commission to take the initiative in seeking a negotiated solution to the Kurdish question (Nykanen, 2011).

Throughout the 1990s, the European Parliament continued its calls for a political solution of the question. It urged Turkey to grant a general amnesty to people jailed because the laws are 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 in order to reach a possible political solution (Nykanen, 2011). The EP's efforts to raise the Kurdish question and reach a negotiated solution, included in the EU's policies towards Turkey, were not in vain. Its stance was clearly present in the first EU Commission Regular Report on Turkey's Progress towards Accession in 1998. The report called for Turkey to find a political and non-military solution to the problem of the south-east. The largely military response was costly in human and financial terms and is slowing down the region's social and economic development. It has also damaged Turkey's international image. For these reasons the Kurdish question was part of Turkey's eventual EU candidacy in the 1999 Helsinki Summit. According to the EU civil solution of recognition of certain form of Kurdish cultural identity and greater tolerance towards its expressing, it did not advocate separatism or terrorism.

The EP has consistently called for a political solution to the Kurdish issue through inclusive democratic dialogue and constitutional reform. The European Parliament's resolution of 29 March 2012, on the bases of 2011 Progress Report on Turkey, mainly calls Turkey to demonstrate resilience and intensify its efforts towards a political solution to the Kurdish issue.

In addition it asks all political forces to work in alliance towards the goal of reinforced political dialogue, a process of further political, cultural and socio-economic engagement and participation of citizens of Kurdish origin in order to guarantee the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly; the right to education in one's native language is considered to be essential. Government of Turkey should strengthen its efforts in promotion of socio-economic development in the south-east: it should take the position that the constitutional reform provides a very useful framework to promote a democratic opening. The European Parliament recalls a political solution be built upon an open and truly democratic debate on the Kurdish issue. It also expresses its concern towards the arrests of several Kurdish politicians, locally elected mayors and members of municipal councils, lawyers, protestors and human rights defenders, as well as a large number of cases launched against writers and journalists, who write on the Kurdish issue. It also calls on the Government of Turkey to create a peaceful basis for political figures of Kurdish origin to have a free and pluralistic debate; underlines the importance of promoting the discussion of the Kurdish issue within the democratic institutions (The European Parliament, 2012).

Another important player in the relations between Turkey and the EU regarding the Kurdish issue is the EU Turkey Civic Commission (EUTCC). The EUTCC was established in order to monitor and conduct regular audits of the European Commission's performance in ensuring Turkey's full compliance with the accession criteria as defined in the accession agreements. As we already know, on December 17, 2004, the EU Council of Ministers decided to open accession talks with Turkey. The essential accession criteria for the EU membership are the Copenhagen criteria. On this basis, many civil society organizations in Turkey and Europe have considered it important to monitor the implementation of the European human rights standards and the rule of law in all phases of the accession negotiations by Turkey. The

undersigned organizations sponsored a conference in November 2004 on “The EU, Turkey and the Kurds”. During the conference, which was held in the EP in Brussels, a resolution was passed to establish a standing civic commission. The EUTCC encourage Turkish membership to the European Union. The EU insists on full compliance with the Copenhagen criteria in all its aspects. The EUTCC claims that Turkey will become a genuine democracy, with “respect for and protection of minorities”. This change will resolve one of the most difficult political problems that Turkey has so far failed to even recognize as a Kurdish problem (EU Turkey Civic Commission).

Although there were claims from the EU and the EP that a little progress was made on freedom of assembly and freedom of association, a number of demonstrations took place without official consent: there were cases of violence and uneven use of force by the security forces, especially where the demonstrations related to the Kurdish issue. Of course European Commission recorded some progress made by Turkey on cultural rights, and fewer restrictions on the use of Kurdish language. However, some part of legislation, including the Constitution, still restricts the use of languages other than Turkish (European Commission , 2012).

Nowadays the Kurdish question for the EU changed its essence. A shift was made in the EU approach towards Kurdish question. The security aspect was emphasized and became separated from the rights-based dimension. “The previous position of viewing the security and human rights dimensions as two sides of the same coin got divided into two largely independent policies of counter-terrorism and human rights” (Nykanen, 2011, p. 79). These different approaches can be seen in the reports of the EU in 1998 and 2008. In the progress report of 1998 the EU demanded a civil, non-military solution to the situation in the Southeast of the country, since many of the violations of civil and political rights observed in the country were connected in one way or another with this issue. In the progress report of 2008, however, there were no

longer calls for a political solution but a reaffirmation of the EU's support in the fights against terrorism. Nykanen mentioned three factors pushing forward this shift. First, after the successful wave of legal reforms during 2002–2004, the EU believed that the Kurdish question would be solved and that it could thus focus on other pressing issues instead. Second, the Kurdish lobby in the EU became somewhat disorganized following the capture of Ocalan. It was no longer as effective as in the 1990s. Third, the changing global security landscape after the attacks of 9/11 had at least a partial impact on the EU's policy priorities. There was now a greater emphasis on fighting against terrorism, which had a negative impact on the human rights dimension of the Kurdish question. The previous fight against terror in Turkey was beginning to obtain more legitimacy now: the EU as a Western bloc was drawn into the same global fight. Other shift was made in the EU's official position towards Turkey: from emphasizing a solution based on a minority status for the Kurds it now focused on cultural rights. This shift took place after Turkey was granted a candidacy status in 1999. One can conclude that the EU is doing everything to weaken the ways of solving the Kurdish issue. This, in its turn, is going to support the fact that after the European Parliament campaigned for granting the Kurds a minority rights status for years, the term 'minority' was entirely absent from the Accession Partnership of November 2000 (Nykanen, 2011).

Both Turkey and the EU considered the PKK as a terrorist organization. However, the ways to deal with this problem are different for Turkey and for the EU. Turkey eliminates the threats by military and force, the EU sees the solution of the PKK problem by improving the conditions of Kurds in the state as a minority. It was mentioned in the report that Turkey suffered significant increases in terrorist attacks by the PKK and continued to face them (European Commission , 2012)

Along with this, Turkey is actively engaged in the counter-terrorism dialogue with the EU. However, the absence of some laws prevents Turkey from concluding a cooperation agreement with Europol and limits judicial cooperation with Eurojust and the EU Member States. According to the EU, Turkey should make changes and improvements in the sphere of legislation, which will help to solve the problem in the democratic level by excluding solutions by military actions. The report of the European Commission concludes that overall, there was no progress towards a solution in regards of the Kurdish issue. Terrorist attacks enhanced, as well as military operations (European Commission , 2012). It is clear that until Turkey does not solve this issue, the EU membership cannot become a reality for Turkey. Besides, the current situation in the southeast of the country is in full contradiction with the Copenhagen Criteria. So, Turkey's membership into the EU will mean the Kurdish problem becoming the EU's problem and responsibility as well. This is the reason why many leaders of the EU member states dispute around the Turkey as a European country. The EU continues to demand reforms that will apparently lead to Turkey's ultimate membership in the Union, while at the same time, some of its member states oppose it. As such, they question the legitimacy of the whole accession process.

3.3 The Kurdish issue as the main obstacle for Turkey to join the EU

If one looks through the articles of various scholars, we can see that the Kurdish issue was mentioned as the main obstacle for Turkey to enter the EU. The EU also officially declares that the main threat to Turkish democracy is the Kurdish issue. It becomes obvious from various EU reports and articles that the Kurdish question in Turkey is one of the most pressing issues facing the EU in its near neighborhood. It involves a rights-based dimension caused by the lack of cultural rights and freedoms for the Kurds, and a security dimension caused by the violent conflict between the militant PKK and the Turkish military (Nykanen, 2011). As Scott

mentioned in his article “The EU has cited allegations of widespread human rights abuses - many of which have stemmed from the Kurdish conflict - as a key reason for denying Turkey admission” (Peterson & Holland, 1999). As it was mentioned above, Cornell and Gunter also agree that the Kurdish issue is a major obstructive for the EU membership.

The roots of becoming a part of the EU are going far back of history. Ever Ataturk had announced that Turkey's goal was the achievement of the level of contemporary civilization, as Turkey sought to join the West. In recent decades this has ultimately meant the membership in what has now become the EU. For many years this seemed to be the impossible dream (Gunter, 2000).

On 18-19 November 1999, in Istanbul, the conference of the twentieth century was held where the representatives of more than 50 states gathered there for a summit meeting of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Although the Kurdish problem was not officially mentioned, it was on the minds of many. “Until Turkey successfully implemented the OSCE'S Copenhagen Criteria of minority rights for its Kurdish population, and broad human rights reforms as demanded by the EU, Turkey could not hope to break through the membership logjam set by the EU” (Gunter, 2000, p. 862). In particular, Turkey's membership to the EU depends on solving its Kurdish problem to the satisfaction of the EU.

Every time speaking about possible membership into the EU, the Kurdish issue cannot be split apart from Turkey. During any kind of meetings or debates, in the framework of EU-Turkey relations, Turkey's question of membership always was mentioned in “yes, but” format. During one of the debates that took place between the Eurosceptic and pro-EU actors, the focus was mainly on the security implications of some of the reforms demanded by the EU. Although both sides of the debate have continued to agree upon support for Turkey's EU membership, their

discourses began to diverge on the issues of the national security. Although they do not openly oppose Turkey joining the EU, the Eurosceptics make their arguments in ‘yes, but ...’ form: Professor Erol Manisalı said that “...the EU is going to take over the market, diminish the national industry, govern the bureaucracy from Brussels, make demands contrary to the national interest on Cyprus, the European Army, PKK and Armenian issues, and refuse to admit Turkey unless these demands are met. But at the same time he expresses the fear that even after the precondition of EU regarding Kurdish issue will be overcome, EU won’t let Turkey in. He said that “it is trying to divide up Turkey and make dependent and is putting forward these conditions so as not to admit Turkey” (Bilgin, 2005, p. 189).

3.4 Towards the solution of the Kurdish issue: the EU’s perspective

As we already have seen from the previous subheading, the Kurdish issue is the main key obstacle for Turkey’s EU integration. EU has its own solutions and suggestions regarding this issue. Of course for the EU Turkey is the key country, not a common candidate. Productive relations need to resume both for Turkey’s democratic future, and for the EU to become an effective global power in the 21st century. That is why the EU has its own interests to see the problem solved as soon as possible. However, the EU, like Turkey, does not accept any kind of solution to the problem. First and foremost it is against the military actions and human rights violations. Only democratic means are applicable for solving the issue. Therefore, for the EU civil solution could include recognition of certain form of Kurdish cultural identity and greater tolerance of the ways of expressing that identity: it did not advocate separatism or terrorism (European Commission , 2012).

As it was already mentioned, the EUTCC is a very important player in this problem solving process. It wishes to support to a democratic, peaceful and permanent solution of the

Kurdish problem. It believes that this can only be achieved through a dialogue between the parties concerned, in which the EU must play its part too. This will require not only further changes in legislation, but a change in the ideology and mentality at all levels of Turkish society. The commission highlights the fact that Turkey from being a state which seeing Kurdish culture and language as a threat to the state, it must become a state which recognizes differences of cultural diversity, and freedom as necessary element of democracy. The Commission itself is focus particularly on this problem (EU Turkey Civic Commission).

Conclusion

The topic undertaken for the study in this work is of great importance for any political scientist: the solution of the Kurdish problem has an important role in the regional stability. Every development in Turkey has its significance and implications for the Middle Eastern stability.

The Kurdish issue in Turkey has been one of the most painful issues, if not the most one for Turkey, which is difficult to resolve. It is essential for Turkey to find out appropriate solutions, which will satisfy the both conflicting sides. The Kurdish issue has been the most serious internal problem of Turkey during all its history. During the period, the Turkish government has carried out the policy of rejecting national rights of the Kurdish minority and oppressing Kurds. In accordance to this policy, Turkish officials declared that there were no Kurds but only Turks.

So, Turkey continuously rejects the existence of the Kurdish problem considering it as a socioeconomic problem in the southwest of the country and viewing it as a problem of the PKK terrorism. This denial brought to the rise of anger of Kurds. So, in 1984, the PKK emerged, which is the longest rebellion of Kurds, living in Turkey. After the emergence of the PKK, Turkey started to foresee the option of the possible problem solution by itself in case of the PKK's terrorism to be abolished.

The Kurdish issue has been the major source of human rights violations in Turkey and it creates a big obstacle for Turkey's full integration with Europe, for becoming a member of the European Union. Currently, the membership of Turkey to the EU is mainly connected whether Turkey will be willing to find a political solution to the problem or continue to foresee the military activities as the best solution for the problem.

Turkey has really broad options in handling the Kurdish issue: from granting the Kurds with total independence to repressing all ethnic expressions. Of course, these options are too extreme. If Turkey wants to achieve some positive results it should combine several activities. With solving the ethnic aspect of the issue, Turkey also should implement economic reforms, which in the reality has been done, but did not reach to the desired goal. This happened because Turkey only considered the issue of underdevelopment excluding the very crucial aspect of the problem, the ethnic one.

After 1999, when Turkey became the candidate state in the EU, it somehow changed its attitude. Turkish government started to find alternatives rather than military option for the solution of the problem. Soon, it came back to the military activities as the best way to solve the problem. Of course some cultural rights were given to Kurds, but these changes are not enough to solve the problem completely.

EU's position regarding the issue also passed through the transition. After 1999, the security aspect was emphasized and got separated from the rights-based dimension. "The previous position of viewing the security and human rights dimensions as two sides of the same coin got divided into two largely independent policies of counter-terrorism and human rights" (Nykanen, 2011, p. 79). These different approaches can be seen in the reports of the EU in 1998 and 2008. In the progress report of 1998 the EU demanded a civil, non-military solution to the situation in Southeast Turkey, since many of the violations of civil and political rights observed in the country are connected in one way or another with this issue. While in the progress report of 2008 there were no longer calls for a political solution but a reaffirmation of EU support in the fight against terrorism. So, the attitude of both Turkey and EU regarding the Kurdish issue are intertwined with each other. The transition from one option to solve the issue to another is occurred depends on the party's attitude and demands.

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