The Kurdish Minority Issue in Turkey: Escalating into Protracted Ethnic Conflict with International Dimension

by
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The purpose of this study is to explain the confrontational strategy espoused by the Republic of Turkey vis-à-vis the PKK *(Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan-*Kurdistan Workers' Party) and the state's persistent denial of Kurdish minority socio-political rights, despite the capture of Abdullah Ocalan, its founder and leader in February 1999. It looks at reasons for this relentless approach with emphasis on systemic factors for the purpose of contextualizing the Kurdish minority–Turkish relation.

The study explores whether or not ethnic concerns can be accommodated within a secularist paradigm and the effectiveness of confrontational strategies, which solely depend on militarism and oppression in dealing with minority issues.

The analysis is conducted within the framework of the relation between ultra-nationalism, which is reinforced by the nationalization of culture that negates the cultural diversity of the society, and the rise of counter-hegemonic ideologies and ethnic movements that often opt for violence as exemplified by the PKK.

Turkey's relationship with its Kurdish minority is seen in its broader historical context, which illuminates the former's hesitance concerning the adoption of a conciliatory approach rather than the current confrontational one, and provides the background for the incumbent government's preferences concerning minority socio-political rights. Therefore, the study assumes that the politicization of Kurdish ethno-nationalism has been essentially related to the idiosyncratic Kemalist nation-building process.

The study problematizes the notion that the struggle is between the Turkish state and the Kurdish movement, who are considered neither homogeneous nor essentially rational actors, due to the various strands within each side. This analysis therefore aims to pinpoint contradictory trajectories espoused by both sides, which further protract the relevant dilemma.

In the end Turkey may find it ever more difficult to ignore its Kurdish minority's socio-political rights, due to external factors such as the European Union's conditionality and the evolution of an autonomous Kurdistan in northern Iraq; and internal factors such as the imperative of an inevitable and irreversible democratization process, which allowed political Islam to crystallize into a mainstream modernizing entity.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The objective of this study is to explain the confrontational strategy espoused by the Republic of Turkey vis-à-vis the PKK *(Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan*-Kurdistan Workers' Party) despite the capture of Abdullah Ocalan, its founder and leader in February 1999. The study examines the underlining reasons that barred the contingent entities, in particular the Turkish state, from seizing the opportunity created by Ocalan's capture, which the establishment considered as a mere "template for ... PKK surrender"(ICG/ Europe report, 2007). The staggering human and financial costs of this chronic ethnic conflict-minority rights issue underscore the study's interest.

The study investigates why the secularist regime in Turkey fell short of accommodating the Kurdish minority as a distinctive ethnic group, probing the effectiveness of, or lack of, the regime's confrontational strategy that solely depends on militarism and oppression in dealing with this ethnic minority.

The interconnected facets of the Kurdish minority issue are considered by the study arguing that political, ethnic, economic and cultural dimensions have accounted for its persistence on both ethnic-identity and military levels. In this sense, it considers several variables underlining the Turkish confrontational stance that in turn hindered the country from tackling the question with the least human and financial costs. The first variable is related to the opportunities and constraints facing the successive Turkish governments, since 1999, to develop policies that could fulfill the socio-political demands of the Kurdish minority. This variable is viewed in light of the process of the establishment of the Turkish state by Mustafa Kemal. The second variable is Kurdish ethnic-nationalism dynamics that prove to be rather incapable of delivering unified socio-political needs' platform, thus enhancing the Turkish

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confrontational approach rather than steering it towards a conciliatory one. The third variable pertains to the ramifications of the advent of the moderate Islamist party, the JDP, 'Justice and Development '-(*Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi- AKP*) to governance in 2002. The study explores the hypothesis that the JDP is set to promote moderate egalitarian Islamist politics as an encompassing identity rather than Turkish vs. Kurdish identities. The fourth variable is the trajectory of the EU accession process that has been characterized by ebbs and flows and triggering nationalist Turkish anti-EU backlashes. In consequence, the study contends that this trajectory is making it more difficult for the incumbent government to effect and implement accommodation-human rights' approach to the Kurdish minority issue as the public links it to the accession's negative image. EU accession conditionality warrants the Turkish government to make necessary constitutional changes to ensure human rights and a degree of autonomy for the Kurds, as a significant factor in the enlargement process under the umbrella of the Copenhagen criteria.[1] The fifth variable is the US invasion of Iraq and its major aftermath: the evolution of an autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan, which is deemed to further exacerbate Turkey's unaccommodating strategy. The study concludes that Turkey may find it ever harder to maintain the intricate balance between preserving democracy and pluralization, as per EU

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[1] The Copenhagen criteria, which was adopted at the European Council Summit in Copenhagen, June 1993, for candidate countries' accession negotiations to begin for the EU's enlargement process, are as follows:

- Stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities (these criteria are integrated into the Charter of Fundamental Rights, adopted in the 2000 Nice summit of the European Council).
- The existence of a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competitive pressures and market forces within the Union.
- The ability to take on the obligations of membership including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union, in other words the ability to adopt the EU's acquis communautaire.

requirements, and negating the rights of its largest minority. The study perceives that the violent dimension of the issue, which essentially encompasses frequent military campaigns both inside and outside Turkish borders, as an ineffective strategy to tackle the Kurdish question. As a result, the issue has been further protracted rather than addressed and resolved.

The study is organized in five chapters and a conclusion, in tandem with the hypothesized five variables. The first chapter discusses the top-to-bottom republic-building process that had decisively contributed to structural limits and unyielding mindset, which, in turn, had constrained the Turkish state to tackle, in a conciliatory manner, its Kurdish minority issue in general and the PKK's violence in particular. The "father of the Turks" or "*Ataturk*," Mustafa Kemal planned and worked towards constructing a holistic identity solely based on 'Turkishness' in the context of a manufactured homogenous national culture, and which aimed at enhancing the citizens' sense of loyalty to the state rather than to ethnic affinity (Yavuz & Ozcan, 2006). Ted Robert Gurr's asserts (1993: 71) that ethnic conflict evolution emanates from government pressures for assimilation, which corresponds the Kemalist' Turkishness process, encountered by communal desires for cultural recognition. The tension between the two entities is also bound to be reinforced due to political and material inequalities, which are largely reflected in the region where the majority of the Kurdish minority resides in Turkey. Therefore, "the coincidence of cultural and material conflicts shapes the grievances and demands expressed on behalf of communal groups." In the same sense, Michael Gunter (1997) asserts that after more than seventy years, while some groups have been successfully integrated, the Kurdish question has not disappeared and indeed is growing. Gurr (1993: 5) further maintains that until 1990 the Turkish government referred to the country's Kurdish minority as

"mountain Turks" and banned speaking, writing, and publishing in the Kurdish language. "Minorities are often difficult to define and observe partly because their existence is largely denied or their significance is usually minimized by state elites"(Ibid).

Political Islam and the Kurdish minority movements, to a lesser extent, have challenged Kemalist reluctance to embrace pluralism, providing for a new phase that is more political in nature. Yet, as Ersel Aydinli (2002: 209) argues, the primacy of security and threat perceptions are far from subsiding, in particular due to the unwillingness of the Turkish security establishment to give up the management of the issue to the political groups. Moreover, to most Turks-whether due to a certain mindset or due to incessant media depiction- Ocalan seemed bent on destroying Turkey's territorial integrity through 'terrorist methods' (Gunter, 2000). Turkey therefore had been primarily geared toward fighting the PKK on the battlefield rendering the intransience of this conflict enormously costly. In this sense, the study conceives that it is imperative to examine the mind-set of the officials in particular and the public in general, as a crucial factor that further protracts the situation. A forthright evidence of the hypothesized rigid mindset influencing the approach to the Kurdish minority issue is the outcome of capturing Ocalan in February 1999, which crystallized in a euphoria that brought the ultra-nationalist 'Nationalist Action Party' (MHP) to a relatively robust status in the April 1999 legislative elections. The DSP, led by then-Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit's[2] party achieved exceptional share of 22 percent of the votes-seconded by the MHP- due to this nationalist sentiment celebrating the 'winning' of the war against the PKK (EIU, 2007). It is this

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[2] Mustafa Bulent Ecevit: Prime Minister from Jan.1999-Nov. 2002; Jan. 1978-Nov.1979; June 1977-July 1977; Jan. 1974-Nov. 1974.

triumphalism that hardened the Turkish state stance towards moderate Kurdish political movements, who had further lost ground due to the PKK's militancy that was fueled from the severe poverty, whereby around 60 percent of the Kurds in the southeast "are below the poverty line" (Park, 2005:59; Somer, 2005: 120; Tavernise, 2007).

Chapter two discusses the emergence of the Kurdish minority rights' issue and nationalism in the late 1970s, when Turkey was awash in leftist agitation and violence.[3] According to different references, and to the party's rhetoric then, the PKK was founded in 1978 as a 'Marxist-Leninist' political party by Abdullah Ocalan and since then it has been the strongest and perhaps the most commanding Kurdish organization. David Romano (2006: 256) contends that despite the awesome repressive capacity of the Turkish state the PKK was able to mobilize effective challenges. It has imposed itself as the single political reality dominating the scene for more than quarter a century, further being enhanced by the absence of rivals or alternatives as few Kurdish people were willing to oppose the PKK openly. "Communal grievances usually come to the attention of governments when they are coherently expressed by leaders of political movements who represent the group's interests and whose authenticity is hard to judge" (Gurr, 1993:68; EIU, 2007; Park, 2005:75). This group "managed to marry political activism to armed resistance" and somehow succeeded in internationalizing its peoples' issue (Barkey & Fuller, 1998: 34-35). In the same sense, Gurr (1993: 68) infers that apt evaluation of such groups'

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[3] The post-1980 coup period witnessed cultural struggles between secular identity and Islamic identity, between Turkish identity and Kurdish identity, and between European identity and Turkish national identity. This engendered the resurgence of nationalist ideology in the form of the (ethnic) identity politics of the 1990s. It furnished the ground for nationalist ideology that rendered identity as if it is coherent, fixed and constituted by an eternal essence, to redefine the political identity through the practice of inclusion/exclusion (based upon the 'us/them' distinction) and to pose itself as the foundational ground of political community (Aydin & Keyman, 2004).

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credibility is unattainable due to observers' inaccessibility to a "cross-section of group members," as well as due to the relevant relentless attempts of governments "to discredit or minimize the pertinent claims."

Henry Barkey & Graham Fuller (1998: 62) assert that there are no established numbers of the population of the Kurdish minority; yet the most used fraction is 20 percent of the Turkish population, an estimate that was popularized by President Turgut Özal[4]. The poor socioeconomic conditions of the Kurdish minority residing in southeast Turkey and the Kurds living in the slums of Istanbul and Ankara have lead to their population explosion (EIU, 2007).

Ocalan's proposal of a 'democratic solution' had successfully put the ball in the Turkish government's court at the start; albeit there was concern that an early response would have been interpreted as dignifying the PKK's new positioning. This opportunity of reconciliation and partial accommodation has been aborted by Turkish hardliners, who argued that Kurdish cultural rights are a tactic of 'separatist terrorism.'

Yet, increasing globalization and the significant role of the Kurdish Diaspora has contributed to limiting the ability of the Turkish state to further oppress this minority, whose increasing levels of politicization in turn have weakened the state's readiness to ignore them. Park (2005:48) contends that the Kurdish issue is now more openly and hotly debated in Turkey than before. Park underscores that the release of Leyla Zana, the former Kurdish Democratic Party MP, in June 2004, along with three of her colleagues-imprisoned a decade ago for their activism-and their subsequent call

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[4] Halil Turgut Özal founded Anavatan Partisi (Motherland Party) in 1983 and became its leader. His party won the elections and he formed the government to become the 19th Prime minister on December 13, 1983.On November 9, 1989, Özal became the eighth president of Turkey; on April 17, 1993 he died of a sudden heart attack in office. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turgut_%C3%96zal)

for a "peaceful and democratic solution" to the Kurdish minority rights' issue within a unitary Turkish state, as a fitting example.

Chapter three examines why the JDP neither did nor could launch a comprehensive, consistent strategy vis-a-vis the Kurdish minority issue. For the Turkish statist hardliners, the EU membership, which is the JDP's vital priority, implies increased pluralization and liberalization of the political structure, thus challenging and threatening the unitary character of Turkey. Both preservation of the territorial integrity and maintenance of secular democratic credentials of the country are deemed 'nationally sensitive' issues. In this sense, Tansu Demir & Efraim Ben-Zadok (2007: 263) argue that Turkish internal security concerns cut short its democratic development rendering it unlikely to meet the EU requirements related to improving freedom of expression and human rights. Consequently, the study conceives that JDP is deemed to become both reluctant and incapable of tackling the minority issue in a conciliatory manner.

In chapter four the study examines why the ongoing convergence with the EU criteria fell short from contributing to a non-confrontational, peaceful settlement of the Kurdish minority issue. According to Meltem Müftüler-Bac (1998) Turkey's membership to the EU encounters several obstacles such as, the country's inability to meet the Copenhagen criteria, the "EU's institutional set-up and the role of the member states' preferences, particularly in connection with Turkey- Greece relations, and the European public's support for Turkey's membership to the EU."[5] The effect

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[5] Greece, a member of the EU since 1981, (Müftüler-Bac, 1998) has used its membership in the EU as a platform in which it can further its own interests vis-à-vis Turkey. The conflicts of interests between Turkey and Greece can be summarized as territorial disputes over coastal waters of the Aegean Sea, the continental shelf and airspace over the Aegean, the issue of sovereignty over the Aegean islets and the Cyprus problem. EU has explicitly stated that ongoing disputes with a member state act as an obstacle to Turkey's closer integration to the European Union.

of EU-related political and judicial reforms on the management of the Kurdish minority issue is also analyzed. The discussion underscores that the JDP was counting on a positive EU accession process to solve the Kurdish issue within its framework in an attempt to avoid the wrath of the statist/secularist/Kemalist/military entities. Yet, the nationalist backlashes against this accession process have intensified, which in turn had a constraining impact on the government's approach to the issue. It is therefore observed that the incumbent government is increasingly becoming more reluctant to tackle the issue peacefully in an attempt to appease the general public, who link EU accession to more relaxed policies towards the Kurdish minority.

Chapter five discusses the conundrum that Turkey had to deal with in response to the American invasion of Iraq, in the framework of the PKK's becoming stronger due to better armament and to better access for spaces to regroup and train. The analysis here focuses on the consequences of the escalation of violence instigated by the two sides and their negative impact on establishing accommodating path as the conflict has further protracted.

The study concludes with a roadmap for action comprising two major scenarios related to either the present confrontational approach or a conceived conciliatory approach. It also underscores that Turkey's lack of an overall strategic vision, exacerbated by the increasing leverage of several external actors: Iraqi Kurdistan, EU Copenhagen criteria, the Kurdish Diaspora in Europe, and the American presence in Iraq have further confounded the JDP government. The latter is constrained as well by both its constituencies and prevalent public opinion, which limit its maneuvering ability to opt for any accommodation trajectory regarding the Kurdish minority socio-political rights. Thus, the confrontational approach has persisted. This is not to deny that incremental relaxation of Turkey's domestic policies

and acceleration of reforms in relation to the Kurdish minority. This has been mainly due to the advent, and the subsequent tolerance, of the concept of minorities' rights, which also ceased to be a taboo subject in Turkish political life. Hence, it forms a significant ingredient for an accommodation trajectory scenario in the future.

The conflict nonetheless has had immense economic and social consequences. Both sides have regarded the conflict as a separatist war prompting them to behave in an uncompromising violence culminating into the death of 40,000 persons (civilians and militants) and an estimated annual financial cost of $10bn. The conflict has also been associated with significant incidents of human rights abuse, such as "the silencing and detention of journalists and political activists, overt assassinations, torture, and scorched earth policies" that have enforced the inhabitants of around 4500 Kurdish villages to leave (Park, 2005: 24; EIU, 2007). On the human level, the Turkish army and police have responded to violent PKK raids with ruthlessness throughout Kurdish villages, arbitrarily harassing and arresting hundreds and displacing almost two million residents. On the economic level, "the Turkish economy went into a meltdown in 2001 with the lira devalued by 50 percent, inflation soared to 80 percent and hundreds of thousands lost their jobs or lands." However, the IMF's $16billion-package that made Turkey its highest borrower redressed relevant stability (EIU, 2007; Chazan, 2003).

The study emphasizes that Turkey's foreign and national politics have been deeply affected by the Kurdish issue's implications since its emergence. Hakan Yavuz and Nihat Ali Ozcan (2006) claimed that these politics have been held hostage to the issue, and consider it a conflict that has empowered groups within the two conflicting entities-at the expense of others: the military in Turkey and violent factions in the Kurdish minority. This is not to deny that the crisis has revealed profound nationalist

resentment and has the potential to stimulate dormant ethnic contention between Kurds and Turks (Tavernise, 2007). According to Paul Kubicek (1997:80-81) "it would be a mistake to assume that the Turkish state and the Kurdish movement are homogeneous, rational actors," since they lack the autonomy to reach bargains due to the various levels in each group that range from moderates to hardliners. Concurrently, Murat Somer (2005: 115) argues that conflicts materializing into ethnic ones often include multiple layers of private and public identities and interests, which become causes rather than effects of the conflict. Hence, instead of analyzing each actor as a unitary entity with a single defined interest, this study seeks to present the various levels within both actors. It is noteworthy that the study's timeline terminates in February, 2008, since this conflict has been witnessing ongoing ebbs encompassing several scenarios and possibilities.

The study is a purely scholastic effort that accessed a large amount of references and depended for its entirety on reading and analyzing printed materials-books and essays, in addition to benefiting from relevant data on-line. It comprises extensive overviews of the literature on current studies in the field. The majority of the references' authors are either Turkish or of Turkish origin, which in itself is an indicator of a significant shift of the discourse related to the Kurdish minority topic. However, the study's scope does not permit the opportunity to probe into the conditions under which these views were constructed.

CHAPTER I

INCEPTION OF THE TURKISH REPUBLIC AND THE

ORIGIN OF THE KURDISH ISSUE

The chapter discusses dimensions of Turkish history and politics in connection with the state-building that crucially contributed to the evolution of Kurdish ethno-nationalism. The analysis underscores the impact of top-to-bottom state building process on structural limits and inflexible mindset. The study argues that this process, in turn, had constrained the Turkish state to tackle, in a conciliatory manner, its Kurdish minority issue in general and the PKK in particular.

Therefore, shedding light on the processes of imposed nationalism that was vehemently implemented since the inception of the republic starting 1923, aims to prove that it has provided a historical context for the development of such an ethno-nationalism. The constitution, the educational system, the controlled media and the significant role of the military had been largely manipulated to establish unitary citizenship that was strictly secularist and solely based on the Turkish ethnicity.

A. Kemalist nationalism: Turkishness

Mustapha Kemal (*Ataturk*- Father of the Turks) nationalism aimed to overcome local ethno-cultural diversity and to produce uniform citizens whose loyalties to the nation would be unchallenged by extra-societal allegiances.[6] "This

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[6] By the end of summer 1922 the Greeks, who were occupying parts of the Ottoman Empire- in western Anatolia- had been forced to evacuate the country and by November 1922 the government under the leadership of Mustapha Kamal was in a position to start peace negotiations with the allies in Lausanne. This treaty recognized Turkey's independence and settled most of the outstanding problems. The Turkish Grand National Assembly broke with the Ottoman Empire when it abolished the Sultanate in November 1922 opening the way to

political nationalism was complimented by the nationalization of culture in pursuit of the creation of a national-social identity" [7](Axtmann, 2004: 260).

Yildiz (2005:2) asserts that the Kurdish minority was seen to constitute the greatest threat to Turkish conception of the integral nation-state as perceived by the Kemalists, who consider the state to be the encompassing entity of modernization.[8] Henceforth, non-Turkish ethnic groups, namely the Kurdish minority encountered harsh measures related to their language and other cultural dimensions rendering the taking up of Kurdish names and place-names illegal. The reality of Kurdish presence was denied and only a decade ago they were referred to as "mountain Turks who have forgotten their language" claiming that it is a sort of a Persian dialect (Badcock, 2002; Gurr, 1993:5; Ozcan, 2006: 82-83).

The Kemalist version of civil nationalism and secularism based on Turkishness started with the goal of consolidating the state power-primarily by modernizing the army- rather than the society. It also put emphasis on the importance of science and technology (Yavuz & Esposito, 2003: xviii). Therefore, denying the Kurdish minority its cultural rights is the very salient outcome of this trajectory since it was viewed as a reactionary tendency.

Sina Aksin (2007:226) contends that Ataturk was "the architect of revolutionary reforms, creating a new alphabet, a new university and a new legal system, and affecting the fine arts and religion." Hence, the Turkish people view him

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declare Turkey as a republic by the assembly in October 1923 with Mustapha Kemal elected as its first President (Kirisci & Winrow, 1997: 5-7).

[7] In the context of the Kemalist idiom: "happy is the one who calls himself a Turk" (Ozcan, 2006: 82-83).

[8] Ernest Gellner (1983) considered the Kemalist idea of the state to be a commitment to political modernity that regards the modernization of the society and politics as originating from the state.

as their savior because he bailed out the country from "disintegration and annihilation," in addition to putting Turkey on equal footing with European states as an independent entity with the same legal status within the context of the Lausanne agreement.

The westernization of the country went hand in hand with reconstruction of 'Turkic' culture, so parties that openly demand to deal with the Kurdish minority were officially closed down on the pretext of acting as a 'separatist' under "article 81 of the law on political parties that forbids mention of racial or religious minorities"[9] (Rumford, 2003: 383). Yet, Hakan Yavuz (1999:120) perceives the Kemalist notion of secularism to be a far cry from the formalized separation of religious and political authorities found in most Western liberal democracies. It demonstrated symptoms of a "vehemently antireligious tradition of the radical, Jacobean-styled left" having "little in common with the Western political tradition of religious tolerance advocated by Locke, Montesquieu, and Jefferson."

According to the European commission's Human Rights Report (2007) the Turkish Kurds do not encounter neither discrimination nor persecution "because of their ethnicity per se," especially those who are closely integrated within the state, as empirical evidence indicates that many among them are MPs while others hold official positions. Yet, attempts to assert Kurdish political or cultural rights are considered as illegal act that warrant ruthless punishment (Yavuz & Ozcan, 2006). Somer (2005: 113) further argues that close examination demonstrates that the beliefs underlying the concerns of Turkish elites are intertwined with identity- related beliefs that seem to

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[9] Turkey recognizes only the Christian and Jewish subjects of the state as minorities in line with the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923 that defines minority status on the basis of religious difference (Oguzlu, 2003: 293).

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cause policy rigidity. In this sense, "it is not enough to construct identities, to be successful identities have to be accepted" (Khazanov, 2003:87).

B. Manipulating the 'Sèvres Syndrome'

The 'Sèvres Syndrome' [10] had been one of the most effective discursive tools aptly manipulated by the Turkish military as it had steadily intervened in politics via its 'legitimate' context. Aydinli (2002: 211-220) identifies the dynamics of this national security syndrome that is embedded in the Turkish political system emphasizing its crucial effect on the formulation of Turkish policies towards the Kurdish issue. "Security was the end, while political liberalization was seen as the means-an understanding that provides evidence of the long-standing supremacy of security and stability demands." The Sèvres Syndrome is a very deeply rooted fear among both public officials and the society at large; therefore, any argument or movement which carries a separatist potential is seen through the Syndrome prism as dangerous and subversive. Aybet (2006: 545) describes the Turkish ruling classes' relevant stance as trapped in the "infamous" Sèvres Syndrome, thus rendering their perspective in regard to the recognition of cultural, social and educational rights of different ethnic communities as moves against the unitary nation-state character of the Turkish Republic. Somer (2005a:603) further underscores this concept asserting that the hardliners-nationalists abhor the accentuation of ethnic categories within the civil discourse because they assume a direct causal relationship between identity politics

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[10] The Sevres Treaty signed between the allies and the Ottoman government in August 1920 formalized the division of the Empire and had provided for local autonomy for 'Kurdish areas lying east of the Euphrates, south of the southern boundary of Armenia as it may be hereafter determined, and north of the frontier of Turkey with Syria and Mesopotamia' and referred to the possibility of independence for the Kurds under certain conditions. However, the treaty was never ratified by the signatories as the resistance movement in 1920 formed an alternative government in Ankara to the Ottoman one based in Istanbul. By 1923 the Ankara government succeeded in expelling the occupying powers from the country and obtained international recognition of Turkey's independence (Barkey & Fuller, 1998: 68-75).

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and the evolution of separatism. They also oppose exclusively Kurdish political movements, even if these only express cultural-linguistic aspirations and denounce violence, because they consider such aspirations as stepping stones to political-territorial demands. Hardliners largely depend on historical interpretations to support these convictions depicting the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire-in the way that hurt Turks, arguing that the Empire's demise was largely caused by ethnic-religious movements that were not stemmed before they evolved into competitive nationalisms. Thus, it had become clear that the Kurdish minority would have no opportunity to express itself as an ethnic community. Denise Natali (2005:74) argues that instead of bridging internal dichotomies the Turkish elite allowed them to continue; whether or not this reason was a sufficiently weighty cause to initiate Kurdish nationalist potential, these highly ethnicized political boundaries furnished the ground for subsequent sub-ethnic identity construction (Aydin & Keyman, 2004).

C. Kurdish issue is not simply an 'economic problem'

Successive Turkish governments propagated and portrayed the Kurdish minority issue as primarily being a 'problem' based on economic and poverty issues, which in turn substantially impacted the appropriate handling of this issue. It played nonetheless handsomely in the state's hands as a factor that eases Turkey's dismissal of any political or culture-based arguments. [11]

Therefore, the state dealt with the issue, on official basis at least, in the context of a simple causal relation related to the concept that eliminating poverty is a function of eliminating the PKK, since it is understood that the PKK's fighters are strictly those

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[11] Prime Minister Ecevit has been a traditional supporter of this view and has proposed the continuation of the security-based regional governorship then for the purpose of dealing with 'economic and social' factors.

with no economic alternatives (Aydinli, 2002: 217). Donald Horowitz (2000: 13) explains that when the force of ethnic affiliations was acknowledged, ethnic conflict was often treated as if it was a "manifestation of something else: the persistence of traditionalism, the stresses of modernization, or class conflict masquerading in the guise of ethnic identity." Supporting this interpretation is the claim that the nearly 60 percent of the population of the Kurdish minority, who live outside the southeast region, are very much integrated into the socioeconomic structure of Turkey and are not, by and large, strong supporters of the PKK (Aydinli, 2002: 219). However, other references and studies claim that only one third of the Kurdish minority is assimilated.[12] Mustafa Akyol (2007) contends that the state hardly accepted the raison d'etre of the PKK to be the unsolved Kurdish question.

The economic dimension nonetheless cannot be ignored because it crucially bolsters the grievances platform, which in turn strengthens the PKK's 'resistance' actions in the eyes of the Kurdish minority. Feroz Ahmed (2007:163) argues that the Kurdish people demanded greater cultural freedom and questioned the state's assimilation policy in light of their region's backwardness. The market economy, implemented during the early seventies, "had only benefited large landowners, tribal sheikhs and rich peasants" culminating into increasing landlessness and unemployment in the southeast region of Turkey.

According to Kubicek (1997: 89) the successive efforts to develop the region economically did not bring immediate results as well. "Critics charged that much of the money went into the pockets of certain Kurdish tribal leaders co-opted by the state." The national development budget had earmarked less than 10 percent to the

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[12] Kurdish assimilation into the over-all population and deportation of Kurds to the Turkish areas in the west had given the false impression that the Kurdish 'problem' in Turkey has been solved (Gunter, 1997:59).

region, and according to McDowall (2004: 447) the South East Anatolia Project (GAP)[13] reflected the government's inability to comprehend the gravity of the economic dimension of the Kurdish minority issue. Moreover, without a fundamental agricultural reform the majority of the farming population could not benefit from this developmental project.

D. Suppression of moderate Kurdish groups

The Turkish government had systematically suppressed civil Kurdish groups, which has further bolstered the PKK stance related to the option of violence to assert demands (Yavuz & Ozcan, 2006; Barkey & Fuller, 1998: 98; EIU 2007); in this sense the banning of the HEP[14] (*Halkin Emegi Partisi* – the People's Labor Party) in 1992, which explicitly expressed that its goal was to campaign for laws that would guarantee equal rights for the Kurds within a democratic Turkey, and DEP[15] (*Demokrasi Partisi*- Democracy Party) in 1994, are empirical evidences. This action deprived legally elected Kurdish- civil parties to peacefully relay pertinent demands within the democratic system. Barkey & Fuller (1998) envisage that such a wholesale approach

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[13] It was an ambitious project proposed to harness the power of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers to produce hydro-electricity, and which in the final analysis was claimed to offer residents of the provinces substantial economic benefits.

[14] "On the ground that it had undermined the integrity of the State on account of statements made by its leaders and officers which were contrary to the Constitution and in breach of the legislation on political parties, but also on account of the fact that it had lent its protection and assistance to some of its members who had committed illegal acts" The European Court of Human Rights' Chamber judgment in the case of Yazar, Karataş, Aksoy and the people's labor party (HEP) vs. Turkey (http://turkey-law.com/HEP%20Presse.doc 9.4.2002).

[15] The DEP's objective was similar to that of its predecessor (HEP): to promote civil rights for all citizens of Turkey. When the DEP was banned in June 1994, Kurdish deputies formed the new People's Democracy Party- HADEP (*Halkin Demokrasi Partisi*) (http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/kurdistan-turkey.htm).

to Kurdish demands leaves to moderate Kurdish actors very limited alternatives such as either remaining subordinate to radicals or even joining them.[16]

Turkey's rigid electoral system discriminates against small parties that do not pass the 10 percent barrier. The threshold prevented the popular Kurdish DEHAP (and later DTP)[17] from attaining seats in the national assembly when it won between 35 percent and 56 percent of the votes in nine different Kurdish regions in the 2002 elections. For the same reason, Natali (2005: 113) asserts that the 10 percent of the vote as a prerequisite to be represented in the parliament has deprived nearly half of the electorate in the 2002 elections from representation in the Turkish parliament. JDP is adamant against lowering the threshold to 5 percent-upon the recommendation of the EU, because, according to Yavuz & Ozcan (2006: 108-113), "small parties' seats would go to the winner." The JDP, nonetheless, argues that a 5 percent threshold would undermine stability of coalition governments. Alternatively, counter arguments maintain that due to the DTP wide popularity in the Kurdish region the JDP refused to lower the threshold to ensure Kurdish politics remaining under the latter's aegis (Yavuz & Ozcan; 2006: 113-114).

E. The role of media

The Turkish media has been employed as means of domination rather than an element of change and tolerance since it systematically disseminated prejudices and

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[16] Nonetheless, the impact of the late President Turgot Özal in reversing Turkey's traditional policy of denying the existence of the Kurds by setting a precedent regarding holding talks with Kurdish leaders from northern Iraq and even suggesting that the allowing of radio and television broadcasting in Kurdish and the teaching of Kurdish as a second language at school could help the government to deal with the question more effectively was temporary (Kirisci & Winrow, 1997: 137; http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/kurdistan-turkey.htm).

[17] A group of DEHAP politicians formed (*Demokratik Toplum Partisi*-DTP) in 2005 before the former closed itself and before the constitutional court decision to close it (Yavuz & Ozcan; 2006: 119).

hostility towards the Kurdish minority. In this context, the manipulation of the media and the way the Kurdish minority issue has been portrayed through all means of communications and even more importantly in the educational curriculum is a salient factor that has further contributed to the rigidity of an unrelenting mindset. Subsequent stereotyping formed the framework for the relevant actors to communicate their positions through fabricated inter-subjective knowledge.

According to a case study of *Hürriyet* newspaper conducted by Sezgin & Wall (2005) to detect the way the Kurds image is constructed in the Turkish press, their findings demonstrated that the Kurdish people are mostly associated with 'terrorism,' portrayed as divisive and depicted as putting forth unreasonable demands. Their study also verified that the choice of words used by journalists to describe members of the Kurdish minority suggest bias. The writings and analysis also present the issue as the 'Kurdish problem', constructing the people as a problem for the state. They discern that the coverage has been discriminatory towards the minority and used a degrading tone in describing its people. The relevant contents suggest that their culture is not worthy of respect and question the validity of their language and the authenticity of their culture. Yegen (1999) has also examined the Kurdish question in Turkish state discourse pointing out that it has been referred to and discussed as an "issue of political reaction, tribal resistance, or regional backwardness, but never as an ethno-political question." Hence, the Kurdish issue has been relegated to the category of "national security problem," thereby rendering most open discussions largely taboo (Kubicek, 1997: 98). Moreover, an official monitoring policy- indirect state censorship, set up in 1993 and terminated in 2002, aimed to prevent and reduce broadcasting information that contradicts the state's secularity and engenders plurality,

since the government was concerned with the influence of Kurdish nationalists and Muslim fundamentalists broadcasts on the public (Demir & Ben-Zadok, 2007: 265).

However, new media technologies outside the state's control as well as the EU pressures turned out to be particularly helpful to escape this trajectory as it offered the Kurdish Diaspora communities, in particular, to take full advantage of these new communications technologies to propagate a specifically Kurdish view. These efforts have partially succeeded in prompting Turkish government's acknowledgement in the 1990s of Kurdish identity and aspirations. As several openings became available, such as the MED-TV[18], a Kurdish satellite station based in London and Belgium, it formed an alternative source of news and information about the different Kurdish civil political parties and the PKK thus, filling a large cultural vacuum. The satellites permitted them to "counter the disproportionate power that states wield in the realm of information...The Kurds became the world's first stateless television nation" (Romano, 2006:153-154). Moreover, the state TV eventually embarked on broadcasting programs in Kurdish: for half an hour each week in two dialects (Barkey & Fuller, 1998:33; Yavuz & Ozcan, 2006: 114). Yet, the conflict persisted and escalated without any prospect of settlement in sight (Gurr, 1993: 294; Romano, 2006: 147-151).

Levent Kirval (2007: 198) contends that the privatization in the educational and media sectors "with around 100 TV stations supplementing the single state channel that had the monopoly until the mid-1980s" had posed serious challenges to

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[18] The Turkish government itself estimated that around 90% of the people in the Kurdish region of Turkey watch the channel-even the village guards were among its audience. Another important satellite is Roj TV station that broadcasts from Denmark (Romano, 2006:155).

the "ideological basis of the Turkish republic." This proliferation is inferred to the economic diversification that in turn led to cultural broadening of discourse.

F. Ocalan's capture repercussions

Following Ocalan's capture in February 1999, the incumbent government had a definite intention of trying the PKK's leader rapidly and executing him in the hope of ending this group struggle. The April 1999 legislative elections allowed Bulent Ecevit's party, the DSP, to top the poll with unprecedented 22 percent due to a nationalist sentiment celebrating the 'winning of the war against the PKK,' since in times of crises, nationalism becomes more visible and more aggressive, which explains the advent of the ultra-nationalist (MHP) to a close second (EIU, 2007). At this time, nonetheless, the candidacy of Turkey for the membership of the EU[19] has reached its pinnacle when Turkey was at last accepted as a candidate member at the EU's meeting in Helsinki-to consider new members on December 11, 1999 (Gunter, 2000). Consequently, Ocalan was spared the execution but his capture constituted a lost opportunity for the Turkish state to initiate a conciliatory political strategy vis-à-vis his people.

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[19] The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR)-to which Turkey belonged-quickly issued interim measures asking Turkey to suspend the execution until it could rule on his appeal, a process that might take as long as two years then. Yet, it has been extended until the present as execution has been abolished all together from the constitution.

G. Staggering toll of protracted conflict[20]

Categorizing the Kurdish minority issue as a national security problem had dire implications that led to extensive human rights abuse. Among the most significant outcomes of such labeling were the enacting of the 'state of emergency' that encompassed almost the entire southeastern region of Turkey allowing the military and governors free hand, the setting up of the village-guard system in addition to the abrogation of the 'anti-terror law,' which comprised vague, rigorous limitations to human rights and freedoms of expression. According to the 1997 Human Rights published by the US State Department Reports, from 1984 through November 1997: "26,532 PKK members, 5,185 security military members, and 5,209 civilians lost their lives in the fighting;" in addition to the complete or partial depopulation of almost 3,185 settlements since the start of the conflict[21]. Consequently, hundreds of thousands of Kurdish people have been internally displaced as they moved- whether voluntarily or being forced -to slums throughout Turkish towns (Brown, 2005; Yavuz & Ozcan, 2006; Varoglu & Bicaksiz, 2005:586). In this sense, Kubicek (1997) perceives that security forces often failed to differentiate between insurgents and innocent civilians while chasing the PKK fighters; Turkish military had also evacuated these villages in an attempt to prevent the PKK from using them as hideouts and sources of logistics.

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[20] "The operations between 1984 and 2002 in the southeastern region were no smaller than a war, with its peak period of 1989–1994, having a marked effect on recruitment among volunteers and conscripts especially that the military has lost more than 5,000 security personnel -army, gendarmerie, and police collectively" (Varoglu & Bicaksiz, 2005:586).

[21] In July 1997, Ecevit, who was Deputy Prime Minister, announced that this has not been an orderly evacuation procedure, but a punitive measure that was frequently conducted with considerable brutality. The exact number of displaced is unknown because no independent group has been freely able to conduct research in the region (Yavuz & Ozcan, 2006: 104). The government reported that 369,278 residents migrated from the south-east during the conflict while various NGOs estimated that there were up to 4.5 million internally displaced persons (Aydin & Keyman, 2004).

Systematic evacuation and deportation are tactics frequently implemented by governments confronted by insurgencies and guerilla warfare as an attempt to dry the swamp from which the fresh recruits would be commissioned by militant groups. These tactics also aim at depriving the militant groups from financial and logistical support the villages frequently offer.

The PKK attacked Kurdish villages and their inhabitants that were allegedly involved in the village-guard system, which culminated into placing the inhabitants of the region in a critical predicament between the PKK and the Turkish state, thus furthering their suffering and increasing the pace of mass migration outside the region (Aydin & Keyman, 2004). Thus, the conflict had transformed the demographic structure of the region in particular, and the big cities in general.

Despite several voices that recognized the failure of the military approach to stop the violence the government would not make concessions while under pressure from 'terrorists.'[22] Romano (2006: 255) asserts that repression cannot serve as a long or even-medium term solution, and the use of "coercion to force an opponent to compromise is likely to be dysfunctional as it tends to promote protracted conflict, even after a settlement."

It is undeniable that the Kurdish identity has been more discussed in a way that would have been unthinkable before1999. The sociopolitical and discursive-informational spaces that became more plural and less controllable have crucially contributed to this phenomenon. Somer (2005a:602-603) contends that the accommodation of the Kurdish culture and identity may diminish the support for

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[22] Turkey's Chamber of Commerce and Commodity Exchange (TOBB), the country's main business federation, issued in August 1995 a 168-page report that illustrated both the importance of the Kurdish problem to the future of Turkey and the country's bitter, almost paranoid fear of compromising its Turkish identity. It was entitled "the Southeast Problem: Diagnosis and Observations" (Gunter, 1997: 127; Aybet, 2006:544; Aydinli, 2002: 212).

political-territorial demands.[23] Romano (2006: 55) conceives that the moderate-nationalist perspective seemed to delink the identity and security aspects of the conflict from the national unity. Accordingly, the Kurdish minority can have interests that can be accommodated within the current political and social setup and without threatening Turkey's territorial integrity. The awareness that a fundamental change was necessary to assure the Kurdish minority its rightful status prompted some conciliatory steps, albeit very limited upon implementation.[24]

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[23] The announcement in 1989 of President Özal, that he was partly Kurdish, had substantial impact especially that it was uttered by someone at the top of the state, who by raising the issue of his own ethnic background, killed several birds with one stone. He made the Kurd category incontestable, sent a powerful message to ethnic Kurds that he shared their identity, and acclaimed the legitimacy of the state that allowed him to ascend to presidency regardless of his ethnic background (Somer, 2005a:612). Towards the end of 1991, Özal succeeded in repealing law 2932 thereby permitting the public use of Kurdish language-except in broadcasts, education, publications, institutions and political campaigns. Nonetheless, it was Özal, who instituted the "draconian" anti-terror law. This law was so broad that anyone could be arrested on the most flimsy of pretexts, "terrorism is any kind of action…with the aim of changing the characteristics of the Republic" (Romano, 2006: 57-58).

[24] In one nationally representative poll taken in April 2002, 72.7% opposed the views that "Kurdish should be taught in schools as an elective" and 66.3% of the polled opposed that "there must be Kurdish broadcasting on TV and in radio" (Somer, 2005a:620).

CHAPTER II

KURDISH ETHNO-NATIONALISM: STRUGGLE FOR

RECOGNITION

The dimensions of the Kurdish ethno-nationalism and the struggle for recognition by several groups among the Kurdish minority are examined here to the extent leading to the rise of militant insurgency and the setup of the PKK by Abdulla Ocalan.[25] However, since 1984, and in parallel to the atrocious armed struggle with the express intention of carving out a separate Kurdish state, Kurdish resistance to the process of enforced 'Turkification' has encompassed elements of non-violent politics to achieve socio-political rights for Kurds within an integrated Turkish state. Even though the PKK does not represent the majority of Kurds, according to GlobalSecutiry.org (2007) it nonetheless strived to create an independent so-called 'Marxist' state in the Kurdish region in southeast Turkey-at the outset, but later the group sufficed with calling for autonomous rule within a fully democratic Turkey. The PKK had even embarked on adopting Islamic discourse, following the fall of the Soviet Union (Ahmed, 2003: 164).

The Kurdish minority awareness of their socio-political needs was enhanced by two forces: the first is the deliberate Turkish ethnicization process that has resulted into what Helmuth Berking (2003: 257) perceives, "what is deliberately forgotten is

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[25] PKK members and sympathizers call Ocalan "Apo," the Kurdish word for uncle. PKK members often refer to themselves as "Apocus" (Apoists), emphasizing Ocalan's central role in shaping the group's identity and destiny (Barkey &Fuller, 1998: 23).

always in danger of being remembered by third parties," which may engender violence "as an ultima ratio against failing permanence." The second force is the process of identity construction carried out by an ethnic political entrepreneur, namely Ocalan, in a way that legitimated violence and accentuated the military dimension of an identity-based action.

The fundamental experiences of injustice and the dominant model of cultural representation (Berking, 2003:257) reflected in the banning of Kurdish language use in addition to the difficult socio-economic situation in the southeastern region, which is one of the poorest regions receiving the least investments and agricultural subsidies, constitute components that guarantee the mobilization of alienated people. In this frame of analysis the spread of norms of equality has also made ethnic subordination illegitimate and spurred ethnic groups everywhere to compare their standing in society against that of groups in close proximity (Horowitz, 2000: 5).

Modernization theories of ethnicity consider the asymmetrical distribution of socio- economic prospects as a significant platform for contention among pertinent ethnic groups; additionally the hard-line pursuit of a military solution without any political reform had simply boosted the sympathy for the PKK among its people (Horowitz, 2000: 101-102; Kirisci & Winrow, 1997: 4; Gunter 1997: 126). Nevertheless, it took hard ideological work by Ocalan to transform unfocused resentments into a framework of grievances that would rationalize violence (Aspinall, 2007: 968).

A. Kurdish minority demographics: assimilated vs. alienated

In comparison with other ethnic groups the Kurdish minority has been more difficult to assimilate due to several key factors such as the geographic concentration,

remoteness and tribalism, and their region's economic backwardness. The large numbers within the Kurdish population who are aware of their Kurdish ethnic background is a salient feature as well. Years of negligence left the southeastern region as the least developed part of Turkey, lagging behind the western part of the country (Kirisci & Winrow, 1997: 210; Demir & Ben-Zadok, 2007).

Ali Kemal Ozcan (2006: 82-83) perceives that Kurds in Turkey were not assimilable due to their deep-rooted culture and indigenous large population with a homogeneous demography. In the same sense, Gurr (1993: 226) contends that even at the most severe times of the PKK/Turkish state conflict, most of the Kurdish peoples were reluctant to be assimilated into the dominant group; instead they promoted their own culture, preserved their own customs and language, and were determined to win regional autonomy if not independence. However, Tansu Demir & Efraim Ben-Zadok (2007) contend that about one third of the Kurdish minority is integrated economically, politically, and culturally; in the same sense Barkey &Fuller (1998:1-17) reiterate that many assimilated Kurds occupied important high ranking positions in the Turkish society on political, economic and even military levels.

While Demir & Ben-Zadok (2007) estimate that almost two thirds of the Kurds reside in the eastern and southeastern regions the ICG/ Europe report (2007) reckons that almost half of the Kurdish minority lives in the big cities west of Turkey. Somer (2005: 117) asserts that since the Kurdish minority in Turkey forms a heterogeneous group with different levels of ethnicity, in addition to the fact that an estimated half of this minority lives west of Ankara it becomes unlikely that they would seek a separate entity. He further argues that while the increased visibility and politicization of the Kurdish identity might make some among them assert their

ethnicity, it might make others, who are well-integrated into the mainstream society, further suppress their Kurdishness.[26]

Ascertaining the number of the Kurdish minority in Turkey is rather a difficult task largely due to the denial of their existence as a separate ethnic group within the state. Hence, official consensus data is nonexistent and their size remains disputed. Kerim Yildiz (2005:6) points out that they amount to approximately 15 million and make up around 23 percent of Turkey's population of 69 million; Kirisci & Winrow (1997: 106) underline that there are 12 million Kurds in Turkey according to Turgut Özal; Kurds are estimated to constitute almost 18% of Turkey's population, or 12 out of 70 million (Demir & Ben-Zadok, 2007); the Kurdish minority forms roughly 23 percent of Turkey's population (Romano, 2006: 269); probably over half of the world's 25 to 30 million Kurds reside in Turkey and their numbers could range from 12 to 20 million (Ozcan, 2006: 1); Kubicek (1997) estimates them to be thirteen million, about a quarter of the total population of the state; McDowall (2004) has estimated the Kurds to be around 19% of the total population; it is worth noting that according to ICG/ Europe Report (2007) a survey of around "50,000 people published in March 2007 revealed that ethnic Kurds were 15.6 percent of the Turkish population"- i.e. about 11.4 million people.[27] Therefore, it could be discerned that the Kurdish population ranges from 12 to 15 million. Yet, Kirisci & Winrow (1997: 197)

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[26] The existence of two main language groups, Kurmanji and Sorani inhibited the development of a common language. Kurmanji is spoken in Turkey, northern Iraq, Syria and a few parts in Iran; a second dialect Dilimi or Zaza is spoken by a very small group in central Turkey and is not mutually intelligible with Kurmanji. The language has survived but did not flourish due to the strict rule banning its use. Sorani is dominant in Iran and southern parts of Iraqi Kurdistan. The Alevi factor casts considerable complications into the Kurdish question (Gurr, 1993: 67). There is around 1million Kurds in Europe, with the largest grouping in Germany (Barkey &Fuller, 1998:31).

[27] It revealed significant social indicators showing Kurds to be more tolerant of religious and ethnic diversity, poorer, with much larger family groups and nearly half as likely to go to university (Milliyet, 22 March 2007).

claim that a great majority of the Kurdish people in Turkey are not geared towards achieving total independence and proved to have agreed to live as citizens within the Turkish state. As many Kurds bear multiple identities, it is possible to produce an environment for reforms, which furnishes a platform for an accommodation trajectory. [28]

B. The militancy of ethnicization

In an attempt to achieve its utmost goal of creating an independent Kurdistan in the southeast the PKK espoused violence as means and on many incidents as an end. Hence, it embarked on armed attacks on various state's outlets since 1984, which naturally provoked severe reactions on behalf of the Turkish military and entailed an intensive and prolonged processes of mass arrests, torture, trials in martial law courts among other practices that the government had regarded as its natural right to fight 'terrorism', but which had fell far short of international standards of justice on most occasions. Cagaptay (2007) asserts that the Kurdish villages' inhabitants bear the brunt of these retribution policies as they were frequently "abused, tortured, and even disappeared, or extrajudicially executed." According to the Human Rights Watch (2002) the indiscriminate retaliation approach exercised by the military had in fact enhanced the PKK's recruitment among resentful, humiliated young Kurds[29]. Kubicek (1997: 79) infers that the PKK, labeled separatists, terrorists, insurgents or freedom

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[28] According to a report conducted in 1995, at the height of the conflict, only 13% of the Kurdish population favored secession from Turkey (Kirisci & Winrow, 1997: 197).

[29] PKK tactics gave the Turkish authorities a great deal of leeway in portraying them as 'terrorists,' a task made all easier by the rigid censorship of events in the southeast region and the obliging attitude of most of the Turkish media. It was only after some Turkish journalists noticed that many victims of the so-called "Red Kurds" had been killed by army weapons that the dimensions and consequences of Turkish martial law began to breach the wall of silence surrounding Kurdish region (Kutschera, 1994)

fighters-depending upon one's viewpoint, has widely benefited from the Turkish state's overwhelming oppression. The group imbued Kurdish nationalism with the idea of separation, at the outset, albeit autonomy at a later stage, in the context of demands for legitimate recognition and representation of Kurdish culture.

In 1997 the PKK comprised approximately "10,000 to 15,000 guerrillas" and had thousands of supporters in Turkey and Europe (GlobalSecurity.com, 2007). The group nonetheless created paradoxical sentiments among ordinary Kurds triggering feelings of fears, hate and admiration that began to have serious impact during the years 87-88, when the group started to strike against villagers armed by the state to resist its progress (McDowall, 2004: 420-427; Brown, 2005: 120-124). However, in the late 1990s, the organization started scaling down its demands for an autonomous Kurdish state, calling instead for more self-governance for the Kurds within the border of an integrated Turkey.

From the perspective of McDowall (2004: 84) "history offers many such cases of evolving sense of identity in which conflict, for better or for worse, polarizes identity denying individuals the right to remain neutral or disengaged." Therefore, it forces even those who are least aware of their ethnic identity to opt towards an assertive ethnic stance, primarily because of the behavior of extremists on either side of the conflict.

The Turkish president Turgot Özal instituted the village guards as a paramilitary group a sort of tactic to counteract the PKK's influence throughout the southeastern region. Thomas Grove (2007) asserts that the village guards system is a civil "defense force of about 60,000 persons that was established to fight the PKK in mountainous and rural areas where the Turkish military experienced logistical

problems." Village guards have acquired a vested interest in the conflict with the PKK due to the income generated from the state-payroll and their ensuing sense of power emanating from being armed.[30] This system was criticized in the latest EU progress report, indicating that their armed presence has hampered the efforts of displaced villagers to return to their homes in the southeast (Barkey & Fuller, 1998: 71-72; Gunter, 1997: 64; Grove, 2007).

Turkey's entire reliance on military means to stamp out PKK resistance is explained by Gurr (1993: 294), who asserts that communal demands for secession highly threaten the state's sovereignty, challenging the nationalist ideologies held by most dominant groups and implying the breakup of the state. Hence, separatists are frequently resisted by asymmetric force. PKK's hard-line policy was also severely costly, but despite the substantial decrease in the number of its fighters, the group drew international attention to the Kurdish minority plight (Kubicek, 1997).

The PKK's recurrent ceasefires, which used to be interpreted by the successive governments as a weakening sign of the group, are perceived to be lost opportunities to create an accommodation platform with the minority. Eventually, the PKK called off its final cease-fire and resumed its armed, violent struggle at the start of June 2004, under the pretext that the Turkish military refrained from respecting the truce (Romano, 2006: 144-145).

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[30] Village guards' knowledge of the remote mountainous terrain has been important to Turkish operations in guerrilla warfare. Although village guards were theoretically set up to defend villages from attack, the Turkish security forces have used them as auxiliaries for raids into neighboring villages. Village-guard service is in theory voluntary, but any village that refused to join the paramilitary system was suspected of being sympathetic to the PKK and therefore subjected to frequent security raids, or forcibly evacuated and burned to the ground. On the other hand, enrollment in the village guard system automatically puts that community on the hit-list for attack by the PKK. There is no middle ground for the Kurdish peasant, who is completely trapped between the two sides to the conflict. In the 1980s and early 1990s, the PKK itself committed many massacres of Kurdish men, women, and children in attacks on "collaborator" villages (Grove, 2007).

Gurr (1993: 313) infers that the Turkish state lacked the "foresight and the political will" to preempt the conflict before the Kurdish movements, of which the PKK is the most outstanding, "cross the threshold of sustained violence." Therefore PKK's initial 'Marxist- Leninist' and its attachment to armed struggle can be rightfully perceived as outcomes of the successive Turkish governments' intransigence to offer the Kurdish minority some sort of a socio-political autonomy (Shishkin, 2006). Nevertheless, while the PKK had been weakened militarily, it had gained in diplomatic strength (Ahmed, 2003:165).

C. Ocalan's Capture: lost opportunity for accommodation

Bagci & Kardas (2003: 20-22) contend that it was Turkey's threat of military confrontation and several military maneuvers that prompted Syria, who gave the PKK a safe-haven and training camps in Lebanon's Bekaa valley, to force Ocalan and the group to leave the country. This severe blow to the group was the first part in a series of events culminating into the arrest of its leader in Kenya. A major consequence on the Turkish scene was the nationalist euphoria that offered Ecevit an unexpected bonus from a resurgent wave of nationalism, but rendering his party to create a coalition government with the MHP, which had persistently taken an "ultra-hawkish line on the Kurdish issue" (Hale, 2007: 84).

As these conditions led to the PKK's disintegration largely decreasing the number of its militants to probably around 4,000 to 5,000 guerrillas, which relocated to northern Iraq, the group became more predisposed and willing to negotiate with the Turkish government. The PKK appeared to have given up its more far-fetched demands of a 'united independent Kurdistan,' as it began to speak of solutions within the existing framework of Turkey. Several indicators point out that this trajectory had

been visited by the PKK even from the early 1990s onward. Yet, it picked up momentum since the arrest of Ocalan prompting the group to further scale down its demands to merely cultural rights, political liberalization and releasing imprisoned PKK members. To further augment such trajectory Ocalan announced, from his prison cell on the island of Imrali near Istanbul, a solution based on the territorial unity of Turkey that would guarantee peaceful settlement of the issue through the practice of real democracy (Gunter, 2000).

It is argued that through shifting its strategies and "communalizing the Kurdish minority issue" the PKK attempted relentlessly to exploit openings brought about by the EU's conditionality related to minority rights and the increased democratization in the country. It consequently introduced a new tactic related to the announcement of a five-year unilateral ceasefire and embarked on a scheme endeavoring to change its militant image and bolster its appeal as a non-violent entity (Jwaideh, 2006: xii; Yavuz & Ozcan, 2006; Brown, 2005: 120-124; O'Toole, 2007). Nevertheless, due to a prevalent mindset and reasoning perspectives that stereotype the movement Turkish officials were often deterred from constructing a conciliatory approach to the Kurdish issue. Kayaoglu (2007) claims that since the PKK's operating language is not Kurdish, but Turkish, including "intra-organizational memoranda and tactical communications on the field," and since Ocalan is not fluent in his native Kurdish, the group should be rightfully labeled as a "terrorist group" and not a "rebel" faction fighting for Kurdish autonomy.

As experience shows, Turkish activities to this end resulted in turning down the offer to negotiate with the 'terrorist/separatist' group offering merely a limited amnesty to its members.

D. The metamorphosis of the PKK

The PKK attempted to have a sort of a 'face-lift' to enhance its credibility in a global setting that is bent on fighting 'terrorism' by all means. The group has changed its name to the Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress (KADEK) in 2002, and declared its pledge to seek Kurdish rights via nonviolent actions. In 2003, the group has further introduced another change by renaming itself Kongra-Gel (KGK) and presenting its "peaceful" intentions. Brown (2005: 120-124) infers that PKK/KADEK's statement related to the group's intention to refrain from laying down its arms underscored the group's readiness for both military and peaceful solution. But the group's reconfiguration can be considered as an indicator of its attempt to move itself out of the post 9/11 terrorism camp and into the category of human rights and pro-democracy movements. Therefore, its actions tended to emphasize peaceful protests demanding Kurdish language education and similar minority rights at that period. Such grievance frame has also fitted perfectly into EU's principles related to pluralism and minority rights (Romano, 2006: 144-145).

However, following the invasion of Iraq "the PKK and its aliases, Kongra-Gel (KGK) KADEK" were announced as terrorist organizations by the US Government in January 2004, and were designated as such under US law[31] (Brown, 2005: 120-124).

Serious economic discrimination, harsh policies such as banning the use of the Kurdish language and pronounced economic differentials are functions of political and religious hostilities (Gurr, 1993: 67; Barkey & Fuller, 1998:10-11). Hence, this strategy had intensified rather than discouraged latent Kurdish nationalist feelings and contributed to increasing the appeal of the PKK.

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[31] The Coalition Provisional Authority, coalition forces and Iraqi security forces would treat the PKK/KADEK/Kongra-Gel as terrorists.

E. The rising tension within the only remaining political Kurdish party

The Democratic Society Party (DTP) is virtually the last citadel of political representation for the Kurdish minority. The party has been demonstrating symptoms of internal struggle between two major factions: pan-Kurdish scope -Leyla Zana-versus holistic Turkish scope with emphasis on Kurdish nationalism-Aysel Tugluk- (Bal, 2007). While Zana does not refrain from addressing Ocalan as her hero and persistently supporting the PKK, Tugluk conceives the issues of education, health and infrastructure as important as identity and cultural rights. Against this background it is undeniable that there are trends among the Kurdish minority to distinguish themselves from the militancy of the PKK in an attempt to converge with and at the same time benefit from JDP's success in the southeast region. Therefore, such trends adopt the JDP's pertinent tactics to approach the regional problems. Nonetheless, it was Zana who was honoured with the Sakharov Prize,[32] by the European Parliament in 1995-during her imprisonment, and received the prize in Brussels in 2004. The Turkish media endeavours to portray her as endorsing the violence and the militancy of the PKK since her faction in the party emphasizes the ethnic dimension, with its socio-political needs as priorities, rather than merely satisfying some economic needs. These tensions substantially contribute to the weakening of the Kurdish stance and further hamper the formation of an integrated and solid Kurdish platform that addresses the minority's issue in a systemic manner. In consequence, the corresponding Turkish stance would further harden accentuated by its very own internal paradoxes.

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[32] Sakharov Prize is annually given by the European Parliament to honor outstanding achievements in the fight to protect freedom of thought and expression against intolerance, fanaticism and hatred. The prize underlines the freedom of expression and of the press and indicate those as two of the most effective means of fighting oppression and key yardsticks by which to judge whether a society is democratic and open (Bal, 2007).

CHAPTER III

JDP: INDISPUTABLE VICTOR WITH INCOHERENT

STRATEGY

The Justice and Development party-JDP (as per its Turkish name: *Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi-AKP*) raised its share "from 34.3 percent in 2002, when it first swept into power, to 46.7 percent in 2007" (Öktem, 2007). This unprecedented stance in the modern history of Turkey is analyzed here in the context of the effectiveness of handling the Kurdish minority issue, since it relieved the government from the constraints of coalitions; "the perennial Turkish problem of holding coalition governments together" that in turn were too occupied with the basic task of staying in power rather than attempting to develop effective and sustained strategies (Hale, 2007: 66). This overall reordering of the political landscape, which paved the way to the single-party majority by the JDP (Keyman & Duzgit, 2007: 70) emanates from the democratization process that is also supposed to create space for ethnic presentation via the assertion of minority rights.

The study focuses largely here on JDP's incoherent strategy towards this minority issue, despite the party's relatively solid status and the apparent weakening of the military hold over politics. In this context, the study conceives that the 'Islamist' ideology prevalent in the JDP's wide-based electorate constrains the governing party's related options, in addition to its fear from secularist/nationalist backlashes. The governing party therefore prefers to wrestle with opponents on issues related to its Islamist agenda, such as the decision to abolish the headscarf ban, which

has been endorsed by the parliament in early 2008.[33]The JDP appears to appease and ensure the loyalty of its electoral base, rather than strain its efforts for controversial issues such as the Kurdish minority.

A. Justice and Development Party: snapshot

The JDP comes from Islamist lineage, but most of its leaders moved to the center and declared their party to be secular democratic and comprising conservative Muslim democrats rather like the Christian Democrats in Europe (Ahmed, 2003:181); but despite the party's significant secular feel, the deeply secular regime distrusts it. "Although Islamist in orientation, it has spent its first five months in office attempting to prove its centrist bona fides" (Bandow, 2003). "Secularism is the protector of all beliefs and religions. We are the guarantors of this secularism, and our management will clearly prove that," statement made by Erdogan.[34]

A key momentum for shaping its nature and trajectories since it came to governance in 2002 has been the 'identity' question. As JDP largely focused on meeting the political conditions and other prerequisites for starting the accession process, in tandem with maintaining economic stability, further progress in human rights, freedom of speech and protection of minorities came second. The JDP actions indicate that it is committed to transform Turkey's politics within the process of the remaking of the party's own identity. Therefore, JDP's adoption of a conservative-democratic identity is based on its own interpretation of westernization and

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[33] Pending the constitutional amendments made in Article 10 and 42 to ease the ban on women wearing headscarves in universities.

[34] *The New York Times*, Nov. 4, 2002.

secularism, and the role and relevance of Islam in politics in a democratic context (Cizre, 2007; EIU, 2007; Gwynne, 2007; Rumford, 2003: 380-381).

Yavuz (1999) argues that a "booming middle class and a confident civil society have outgrown the authoritarian, Kemalist-endorsed model" and engendered economic liberalization that warranted relaxation on media and communication means. This in turn bolstered demands for the expansion of politics, which have further enhanced the moderation and mainstreaming of Islamic groups.[35]

According to EIU (2007) Recep Tayyip Erdogan,[36] the co-founder of the JDP along with Abdullah Gul, was a former mayor of Istanbul and had formerly been member of the "Welfare party"[37] and its pro-Islamist successor, the Virtue party." However, following the closure of the latter, Gul and Erdogan moved towards accommodating the prevailing secularist environment, promoting the JDP as an economically modernist party that is committed to preserving the Kemalist/secularist character of Turkey. Abdullah Gul, an economist,[38] has become the first *Muslim* as president, "breaking an 84-year grip on power by the secular establishment" (Tavernise and Arsu, 2007). Concurrently, a vast segment of the JDP's electorate voted for it because

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[35] In an early general elections held in November 2002 the JDP emerged with a landslide victory, when virtually all the parties in the previous parliament were eliminated because they failed to pass the 10 percent threshold. The EIU (2007) infers that its victory was a clear sign of "the public's disgust at the mismanagement and corruption of the old parties."

[36] "He was a new kind of leader who did not come out of the system…he came out of a rough-and-tumble district in Istanbul, from a humble background , and did not speak a foreign language" (Ahmed, 2003: 181).

[37] From his first days in office, in 1996, Necmettin Erbakan, head of Islamist Welfare Party, embarked on an Islamic agenda, on both the domestic and foreign policy fronts. This included a drive for the Islamicization of the educational system, a promise to bring Turkey closer to the Arab world, and a vision of the creation of a "NATO-like" alliance of Islamic states (Bir & Sherman, 2002).

[38] Between 1983 and 1991, Gul worked as a specialist at the Islamic Development Bank in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

they appreciated the party's good management of the economy "rather than due to its leaders being pious men"[39] (EIU, 2007; Gwynne, 2007; Oguzlu, 2003: 297).

Yilmaz (2007) argues that nonetheless the JDP supporters perceived themselves as being "more Muslim" and "less Turkish" than the typical Turkish citizen, and they manifested significant Euro-skeptic predisposition. Yet this did not deter the JDP from committing itself to "the cause of bringing Turkey into the EU," perceiving that it will eventually free up the prevalent mindset in Turkey rendering it more tolerant to the explicit display of Muslim identity. The JDP became the voice of liberal opposition in Turkey and received the backing of big industrialists in Istanbul, who perceive EU accession as crucial.[40]

B. Wide support from the Kurdish minority

The phenomenon of the wide support the party received from the Kurdish electorate in the southeast region-doubling its share from "roughly 26 percent in 2002 to 53 percent in 2007" (Öktem, 2007) and which made it the sole party that legitimately represents both Turks and Kurds, warrants analysis to evaluate its implications on the JDP's strategy towards the Kurdish issue. The Party approached

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[39] The 2007 parliamentary elections were highly organized allowing for both the voting and the counting of votes to move along quickly due to a newly digitized system, catering for 84 percent of Turkey's 42.5 million voters who cast ballots. The parliament has three party blocs, as well as contingents of independents. Out of 550 seats, 341 belong to the JDP, 112 to the CHP, 71 to the far-right Nationalist Action Party and 26 to the independents, most of whom are representatives of the Kurdish minority (Öktem, 2007).

[40] In his vehement response to an article criticizing the governing party's decision to abolish headscarf ban, written by Dutch journalist, Mustafa Akyol asserts that it is the JDP that have just passed the Foundations law, which gives Turkish non-Muslim minorities the rights that the Turkish state, in the heydays of its secular nationalism, took away from them. On the other hand, the party that represents the "modern elite," the CHP, was getting ready to appeal to the Constitutional Court in order to have the law cancelled (Turkish Daily News, February 23, 2008).

this minority maintaining that "secularism is the cause of division between the Turks and Kurds;" hence its solution was: "Islam as cement." [41] The party argued that the "Kurdish *problem* is not about nationalism but rather forced secularism" imposed by the Kemalist ideology. In this context, the JDP approached the Kurdish electorate stressing the common Islamic ties among both sides (Natali, 2005: 108; Yavuz & Ozcan, 2006:103; Oguzlu, 2003: 297).

The Kurdish vote of confidence can be viewed as an indicator to the will of several groups of the Kurdish minority to work within a Turkey-wide framework. Yavuz & Ozcan (2006:103) perceive this vote however, as a weapon effectively used by the JDP against secularism in Turkey that is regarded by the Islamists as their number one enemy. Watts (2004) considers that it is also likely that some Kurdish voters elected this party because they believe that it would be in a better position to deliver services and bring about investments to the southeast than any Kurdish party. Ocalan highly criticized JDP's Islamist appeal in the context of his fear of the "Islamization of the Kurdish identity" at the expense of the secular Kurdish ethno-nationalism, which he tolled hard to nurture and disseminate (Ferentinou, 2007).

The foremost victim of this trajectory is the Kurdish Democratic Society Party *Demokratik Toplum Partisi*: DTP, which is the principal Kurdish representative that failed to become a political force mainly due to the election threshold of 10 percent (ICG/Europe report, 2007). As has been demonstrated before, Yavuz & Ozcan (2006:113) contend that the JDP refuses to lower the threshold to 5 percent in an

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[41] Recep Tayyip Erdogan began a concerted effort to win the Kurdish population since 1994, while presenting the Refah program as mayor of Istanbul, promising to defend the need to break all laws forbidding the recognition and development of Kurdish culture, in an attempt to appeal to Kurdish support (Natali, 2005: 108). In 2005, basic health care for the poor and aid for school children were arranged. Perhaps most important, is his public statement in a landmark speech that same year that Turkey had a 'Kurdish problem,' a remark that was almost unprecedented for Turkish leaders and made a deep impression in the region. His call for "brotherhood" won many among them (Tavernise, 2007).

attempt to "prevent the DTP's parliamentary representation to ethnic Kurds." Yet, 24 members of the DTP reached the parliament as independent deputies.

C. JDP's incoherent strategy

Despite several relaxations on Kurdish-language use, such as authorizing limited broadcasts in Kurdish and passing a law in the parliament permitting the use of Kurdish language,[42] the level of violence has steadily increased from mid-2005 (Natali, 2005: 110; Yavuz & Ozcan, 2006). It is argued that the resumption of PKK's violence is related to the failure of the EU accession in late 2005, in as much as it is related to the JDP's incoherent strategy.

There have been high expectations that the JDP government would be in a relatively strong position to manage the Kurdish minority issue and thus pin down the increasing social rift. However, the party refrained from taking a well-defined course due to several reasons of which its fear from opportunistic attacks by political rivals, namely the secularists and the military establishment, is the most salient. Yavuz & Ozcan (2006:103) elaborately examine JDP's failure to develop consistent course of action on the Kurdish minority issue inferring that several reasons explain this stance. The most significant is the party's reluctance to alienate its core Islamic supporters, who refuse giving any sort of self-rule to the Kurdish minority as they "conceive the issue as a tool in the hands of Turkish secularists, the US and even Israel." The issue's propensity to trigger a major confrontation with the military is another factor, since it

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[42] Nonetheless, it was still illegal to give newborns Kurdish names, speak Kurdish in political context, or travel with Kurdish language books without risk of confiscation or arrest (Natali, 2005: 110; Yavuz & Ozcan, 2006). Moreover, amnesties offered for ex-PKK members have been half-hearted and inconsistent; while the 2003 law on "social reinsertion" had little impact (ICG/ Europe report, 2007).

is asserted by several analysts and scholars that the military tends to amplify the PKK's threat and demonize it as a pretext for the conflict to continue, which in turn justifies their ongoing spending and imperative role in Turkish politics. The military nonetheless has been relatively losing influence over the National Security Council (NSC) due to changes in the structure of the council and the frequency of its meetings. The number of civilian representatives started to increase and in 2003, a civilian was appointed for the first time to the post of the NSC secretary general (Aybet 2006: 543). Henceforth, such a pretext is invalid. PKK's unpreparedness and unwillingness to fully disarm and to respond to the government's 'shy' efforts to approach the issue differently have further contributed to the JDP's reluctance to assume a coherent pertinent approach.

According to Keyman and Duzgit (2007: 76-77) fundamental changes have been made to the military spending in order to increase transparency whereby in 2005-budget the defence spending ranked second behind education. However, the military "remains the most trusted and respected institution" in the country by both the politicians and the citizens.

The general public has also been putting tremendous pressure on the JDP to take a clear stand vis-à-vis the resurging Kurdish assertiveness on both military and political levels. The JDP's lack of commitment to 'Turkish identity' is regarded by both the public and military as a major setback. Only when the violent events at the end of 2007 and when the "toll has struck a nerve in the Turkish society, prompting protests across the country that JDP government was compelled to demonstrate to the public that they are doing something" to restrain the PKK (Tavernise, 2007; Yavuz & Ozcan, 2006).

Henceforth, it is undeniable that large segments of the public opinion are much oriented towards anti-Kurdish rights' concessions for fear that it would lead to autonomy. In this context, Kubicek (1997) asserts that public opinion in Turkey is not aware of the government's policy in the southeast, and therefore there is little pressure from below on Turkish decision-makers to redress the situation, except for what is being fed via the controlled media. It is perceived henceforth that democracy, which is assumed to foster conditions for conflict resolution, hardly contributes towards solving this issue unless the notions that are uttered rhetorically are translated into concrete policies. On November 1, 2005 Erdogan addressed Kurdish people in the town of Semdinli (Hakkari province) saying that "Turkey would not be based on ethnic nationalism, and would accept all ethnicities and cultures and Kurds should be free to call themselves Kurds, their primary identity being that of citizens of Turkey, with their secondary identity Kurdish" (Hale, 2007:147).

D. JDP-EU intricate balance

According to several viewpoints the JDP seems unlikely to move forward towards new policies on the Kurdish question than the Kemalist establishment wishes. Romano (2006: 166) asserts that the party opts to quietly promote Islamic values and uses Turkey's EU candidacy to lessen the military say in politics and bolster the current democratic setting to integrate the Islamist politics notion in a context of pluralization (EIU 2007). However, ICG/ Europe report (2007) contends that "Turkey had achieved, by 2005, a tolerance of Kurdishness unimaginable a decade ago." The significant acceptance of a valid 'concept of Kurdishness' in the media rendered the Kurdish issue more debated.

As the current government remains steadfastly dedicated to fulfilling accession's prerequisites notwithstanding opposition within EU countries to Turkish accession and the subsequent decline of support in Turkey for such membership, the JDP has been encountering substantial challenges that threaten the intricate balance it has constantly attempted to strike. In May 2005, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) called for a retrial of Ocalan, in line with reforms enacted in the Turkish judicial system, which allow for a retrial of legal cases that have been challenged by the ECHR. Aybet (2006: 537) argues that the "JDP government has handled the issue with care, emphasizing that the matter is a solely legal and procedural one, in an attempt to avoid exacerbating the already latent nationalist tensions." Additionally, several ultra-nationalist groups are keen to rally the public opinion against the government, whenever it attempts to further the settlement of sensitive issues such as the Cyprus question and minority rights (H.Yilmaz, 2007; EIU 2007).

In line with the study's assumption that both actors are not homogeneous entities, the hardliners in the Turkish military and within the PKK and the Kurdish minority have strong interests in the persistence of the conflict. This in turn prompts the JDP to refrain from taking great risks to change established policies, except within the defined borders of the EU accession prerequisites. Then again, JDP's hesitant tactics- reinforced by other catalysts- engenders the recurrence of the PKK's violence that has frequently provoked combative clashes and the reemergence of latent militant mindset on both the Turkish public and official scenes. Therefore, the intricate balance is bound to tip towards the retardation of the democratic process and the dysfunction of the economy as the confrontational trajectory has been undertaken by the Turkish state.

CHAPTER IV

EU ACCESSION IMPACT: ENHANCING THE IMAGE OF

THE KURDISH ISSUE

The effects of EU-related political and judicial reforms[43] on the management of

the Kurdish minority issue are analyzed in the framework of the hypothesis that the

issue's progress into an international dilemma has further made it more difficult for

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[43] Reforms undertaken on the Kurdish issue:
• The constitutional amendments of October 2001 removed the restriction on the use of any language prohibited by law in the expression and dissemination of thought from Article 26 of the constitution. Similarly, restrictive language on broadcasting was also removed from Article 28.
• Broadcasting in Kurdish was permitted with the third democratization package in August 2002. The seventh package adopted in July 2003 further amended the broadcasting law to provide for such broadcasting by public and private radio and television stations.
• The law that deals with the teaching of foreign languages was also amended with the third package in August 2002, opening the way for private courses in Kurdish. The seventh package adopted in July 2003 allowed the teaching of such languages in existing private courses without requiring that new courses be created altogether. It also prescribed that the Council of Ministers alone would regulate and decide which languages are to be taught (without having to obtain the approval of the National Security Council).
• The Civil Registry Law was amended in July 2003 to permit parents to name their children in Kurdish. The General Board of the Civil Panels of the Supreme Court of Appeals permitted for the first time, in March 2000, the use of names of Kurdish origin after a long legal battle (Gunter, 2000).
• In an attempt to foster social peace in the region, parliament adopted a law on 'social reinsertion' in August 2003. The law provides for a partial amnesty and reduction in sentences for persons involved in the activities of an illegal organization, namely the PKK. The law excludes the leaders of the organization as well as those who have committed crimes. By December 2003, 524 prisoners out of 2067 applications had been released and about 586 PKK militants have surrendered.
• Implementation of the "Return to Village and Rehabilitation Project" (where the aim is to support the return of those displaced during the conflict to their villages) has continued. According to official sources, 124,218 people were authorized to return to their villages from June 2000 to May 2004. More than 400 villages and hamlets have reportedly been reopened with government assistance. Other reforms of a general nature have had a significant impact on the lives of Kurds in the country (Aydin & Keyman, 2004:35).
Music and video stores in cities like Diyarbakir proudly display posters advertising the latest locally produced Kurdish films; and pro-PKK Kurdish-language newspapers are sold openly on the streets. However, speaking Kurdish in public is still not without its risks (Watts, 2004).

the government to tackle it. Some groups in Turkey perceive EU membership as a threat to the country's unitary character because it engenders increased pluralization and liberalization of the political structure (Oguzlu, 2003: 293). The accession is therefore considered to potentially offer the Kurdish minority prospects of real and lasting integration into a more pluralist society whereby their cultural dimension is emphasized.

However, fears are mutual among the Turks and the Europeans; EU fears that Turkey's possible membership in the union may have grave repercussions for migration, identity and security. Turkey's fears, on the other hand, are about the 'loss of sovereignty' and fears of division. Yildiz (2005:23) asserts that before Turkey could commence formal accession negotiations with EU,[44] the Copenhagen Criteria should be fulfilled, of which the political element is salient. Additionally, the human rights dimension related to the respect for minorities and the stability of the "institutions that guarantee democracy and the rule of law" are significant priorities. Alternatively, Aksin (2007:318) discusses the attractions of the EU-Turkey relationship contending that for the EU the strategic location of Turkey, its large market, and its investment potential are considered. For Turkey the EU membership is perceived as a solution to its economic problems and a guarantee for apt functioning of democracy.

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[44] However, in its 2004 report the European commission barely referred to the need to end the conflict with the PKK and did not mention the pressing need for constructive dialogue between the different sides to the conflict to reach a sustainable, peaceful resolution (Yildiz, 2005:146).

A. The trajectory of JDP-EU relation

Hakan Yilmaz (2007) argues that JDP's pro-EU attitude is a sort of "tactical choice," whereby the European accession process is used as a shield against the rigid policies of the secularist/statist groups in Turkey. The party further pursued this course despite its Euro-skeptic constituency, [45]thus rendering the espousal of a confrontational militant approach-in an attempt to avoid the wrath of the hard-line Turkish nationalists- a negation to its commitment to the pro-EU course (Aybet, 2006: 545).

The Kurdish minority issue started to weigh on the Turkish foreign policy when the country initiated the process to join the EU, which openly criticized the incompatibility of some actions of Turkey with EU standards on human rights. As a result, Turkey has encountered a dilemma between its security-oriented internal policies and its liberal institutionalism-oriented external policies.

Nonetheless, the EU's official acceptance of Turkey as a candidate for full membership in 1999 triggered an unprecedented process of legal reform in Turkey's history.[46] A most notable outcome, temporary though, was the 'golden-years' era, roughly from 2001 to 2004, when the relationship between the government and the PKK encountered relative tranquility (ICG/Europe report, 2007). Keyman and Duzgit (2007: 75) perceive another significant, positive outcome of the EU conditionality, which is the creation of a strong language of rights, as this process provided

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[45] In the same sense, Ferentinou (2007) argues that Turkey has manipulated the recent Kurdish upsurge using it as a "platform where the Turkish political, diplomatic and military leadership found an opportunity to advance other pending issues;" Turkey envisaged to trade off the non-invasion of northern Iraq with the postponement of the decision over the resolution of the Armenian "genocide" by the US House of Representatives.

[46] Turkey's ability to meet the Copenhagen criteria did not significantly improve from Luxembourg summit of December 1997-when it was excluded from the enlargement process-to the Helsinki summit of December 1999-when it was included as a candidate country (Müftüler-Bac, 1998).

legitimacy for a substantial number of civil society organizations and associations demanding the recognition of cultural, civil rights and freedom of expression.

According to EIU (2007) Turkey's membership is not certain despite the fact that it entered into a customs union with EU since 1995,[47] and even if the country may meet all the conditions, the Cyprus issue will always pose the largest point of contention.

B. Implications of the EU Copenhagen political criteria

According to successive European Commission Progress reports Turkey's main problem was its compliance with the political requirements of the Copenhagen criteria (Müftüler-Bac, 1998). The main problems in view of the reports were the interference of the military in civilian politics, the lack of respect for human rights and the persistence of the Kurdish issue. Thus, prompting the Helsinki Council to stipulate the elevation of Turkey's status to a candidate country upon its fulfillment of the political conditions. "Despite a number of constitutional, legislative and administrative changes, the actual human rights situation, as it affects individuals in Turkey, needs improvement."[48]

The Copenhagen Summit of December 2002 announced that the EU will open negotiations for final acceptance of Turkey without delay if the country meets the Copenhagen political criteria by December 2004. However, according to media and relevant surveys many Turkish people from various political sides sounded skepticism

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[47] Turkey became an Associate member of the EC/EU when it signed the Ankara Treaty/Association Agreement on September 12, 1963. It has the longest association with the European Union among the candidate countries. It signed an Additional Protocol in 1970 and a Customs Union Agreement – as foreseen by the Association Agreement- in 1995.

[48] European Commission, the Regular Report on Turkey's Progress towards Accession. Brussels, 13.11.2001, Sec (2001) 1756, p.32 (Müftüler-Bac, 1998).

related to EU's double standard in connection with its candidate-nations and member states, "which had permitted the accession of several Eastern Europe states despite serious human rights issues"[49](Duzgit, 2006). In the same sense, the media, intellectuals and many analysts sounded also their skepticism in regard to the EU ultimate intention toward Turkey's accession, thus triggering various debates underscoring anti-EU membership.[50] However, Romano (2006: 168) perceives that the reform requirements of EU accession have allowed the Turkish government to "extricate itself from the box that its grievance-framing had created."

Cagaptay (2007) envisages that if the EU rejects Turkey's accession it would have negative connotations for the only common denominator between the secular liberals and the Islamists, which is the pro-EU stance. Consequently, he cautions, such situation may result in an "anti-Western backlash among Islamists who desire greater alliance with Iran and the Arab Middle East." Moreover, it might incite nationalist backlashes that would further restrain the Turkish government from dealing closely with either the EU or Washington. Empirical evidence demonstrating the substantial displeasure of large segments of Turkish citizens- [51]from different walks in life-

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[49] Latvia, for example, which entered the EU on May 1, 2004, continues to disenfranchise its large Russian minority (Cagaptay 2007).

[50] "When Convention on the Future of Europe president Valery Giscard d'Estaing declared in November 2002 that "Turkish membership of the EU would spell the end of the European Union," he actually voiced the doubts in many European minds as to whether Turkey is a European country or not. The general feeling in various European capitals was that Turkey's capital is not in Europe and 95% of its population does not even live in Europe" (Muftuler-Bac, 2003).

[51] According to a nation-wide study, 61.8 percent of the Turkish population believes that the EU has treated Turkey with double standards, by imposing on Turkey conditions that it has not imposed on the other candidate countries. The same study also suggests that 49.7 percent of the Turkish population does not expect Turkey to become a full member of the Union, even if the country satisfies all the necessary conditions. Such widely held conceptions have a strong potential to discourage democratic transformation in Turkey (Duzgit, 2006).

regarding the EU admittance criteria is a crucial variable that largely affects the government's efforts-if any-to peacefully accommodate the Kurdish minority issue.

Pro-European reforms advocates in Turkey have also been facing difficulties to foster the reform process due to the apparent inconsistency of the EU policies towards the country; simultaneously there are many doubts regarding the desirability of the Turkish state of a "fully European Turkey and the necessary transformation that this would entail" (Tocci, 2003).

C. Significance of EU-induced reforms

"The subordination of domestic law to international law in the area of fundamental rights and liberties" is a significant feature of the accession process (Natali, 2005:188). According to Tarik Oguzlu (2003: 297) Turkey internalized "the constitutive norms of the EU's security modeling," thus the use of non-Turkish mother tongues in education and broadcasting has been allowed and the new 'National Strategy Document' dropped Greece from the list of prime threats to national security[52] (Bagci & Kardas, 2003). Even though there is still ambiguity in terms of the final decision of full Turkish accession, it is undeniable that this process has been influential in effecting reforms and bringing about public support for these transformations.

Among the important reforms, which entered into force in 2003, are the liberalization of the 'Political Parties Law', the strengthening of the fight against torture, the expansion of the freedom of press and expression, the reduction of

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[52] Aside from the general reservations towards enlargement, the EU has specific concerns towards Turkey in the sense that the EU has explicitly stated that ongoing disputes with a Member State act as an obstacle to Turkey's closer integration to the European Union. This means that Turkey's relations with Greece are an important factor in determining the nature of its relations with the EU (Müftüler-Bac, 1998).

limitations for setting up associations, the adoption of a new civil and penal codes, the abolition of the death penalty, the abolishment of the 'State Security Courts,' the lifting of the state of emergency in the southeast region, and the abolishment of restrictions related to the acquisition of property by non-Muslim community foundations[53] (Aybet, 2006: 540; Aydin & Keyman, 2004:35; Watts, 2004; Gunter, 2000).

Such reforms that have undeniably engendered a vital change in Turkish politics in regard to the Kurdish minority issue are nonetheless still being defied by the military establishment on the grounds of "protecting the institutional norms." In spite of setting specific measures to ensuring the effective implementation of the reforms the Turkish authorities would still find difficulty in enforcing the legislative changes[54] (Rumford, 2003). This resistance to effect reforms lies in "entrenched ideological legacies" accentuated by "monolithic, exclusive, traditional interpretation of the Turkish nationalism," which is further hampered by fear of Kurdish separatism and the subsequent partition of the country (Keyman and Duzgit, 2007:80). The judiciary is the most conservative and pro-status quo force in Turkey.

Aybet (2006:529) asserts that the EU accession process "has left Turkey with the dilemma of how to reconcile its internal and external policy challenges."[55] This

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[53] In July 2003, the Turkish parliament revoked Article 8 of the Anti-Terror Law, which prohibited the dissemination of separatist propaganda. However, the updated laws still restrict non-violent expression, and court cases were still being brought against writers and publishers. Prosecutors in some cases based speech-related charges on laws not included in the scope of the reforms.

[54] EU criticized the use of article 301 of the reformed penal code to prosecute individuals for allegedly insulting the Turkishness, the republic or the parliament that gave in to highly different interpretations of the law (EIU, 2007).

[55] External factors include the issue of Cyprus, the Armenian issue and the Aegean dispute with Greece. The external factor that has an impact on internal dynamics is the decision of the European Court of Human Rights calling for a retrial of PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan (Aybet 2006:530).

situation is further augmented by an intense discourse between "Euro-skeptics who frame Turkey's national security within a traditionalist military dominant perspective, and pro-EU actors who view economic instability as more significant than traditional military threats." In this context, the PKK has become one of the strongest advocates of Turkey's accession to the EU perceiving it as the best guarantee for Kurdish cultural rights. As the reforms have the potential to reduce the military's infringement on the civilian political institutions,[56] the prospect of membership in turn confers adequate assurance of the continuity of such reforms (EIU, 2007; Jwaideh, 2006: xii).

D. Ramifications of diversifying perspectives

The European view of the Kurdish issue is broadly different from the official Turkish one. The EU refrains from simply confining it to fighting against 'terrorism' but links the issue to political and cultural rights, and the very democratization process. The Turkish view relates the issue to mere economic conditions in the southeastern region, claiming that it is further provoked by 'terrorist' activities of PKK, which the government perceives as being "supported by external actors trying to undermine Turkey" (Bagci & Kardas, 2003). Therefore, the divergence between the EU and Turkey is basically related to the concept of *terrorism* and the approach to tackle it. In this context, the EU emphasizes the importance of proactive strategy whereby political and economic factors become crucial since retaliatory military measures proved their ineffectiveness empirically.[57]Another significant challenge

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[56] Defense expenditures have been curtailed in recent years by the need to improve Turkish finances, but it remains substantial. According to a London-based think-tank, the International Institute for Strategic Studies, Turkey spent US $ 11.7 bn (3.2% of GDP) on defense in 2005, compared with official figure for defense budget of US $8.1bn (EIU, 2007).

[57] Turkish elites and many intellectuals repeatedly emphasized that the events of 11 September proved the validity of Turkish arguments, as the country claims to have suffered

lying ahead for EU-Turkey relations in this regard concerns the EU's attitude towards the other civil aliases of the PKK, which the Turkish government classifies in the same category of the group, but the EU considers as civil political parties (Bagci & Kardas, 2003). In the European Commission's November 2007 Progress Report, Turkey is called on to "accelerate the reform process as there has not been any significant progress in the political reforms since 2005;" nonetheless it also stated that "cross-border terrorist activities of the PKK, listed on the EU list of terrorist organizations, represent a security challenge to Turkey" (Güney, 2007). Therefore, the EU treats the Kurdish minority issue separately from the violence and militarism of the PKK.

The nationalist backlashes against the EU accession process have some indirect impact on the government's approach to the Kurdish issue, in the sense of hardening its stance and becoming more reluctant to tackle the issue. At the same time, the setting of the "Cyprus problem" as a priority for EU rather than the Kurdish minority issue has also hardened the PKK's militant position.[58] It is therefore plausible to explain the start and the end of 'golden-years' period in this context (ICG/Europe report, 2007; Güney, 2007). The EU membership is not only essential for the purpose of offering tangible economic opportunities, but could constitute a potential opportunity for "resolving the division of Cyprus and enhancing the democratic

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under terrorism. They maintained that Turkey's European partners have been mistaken in criticizing Turkey and envisaged that European policies vis-à-vis Turkey should be readjusted in the face of the new realities, which had proven the credibility of Turkey's perspective (Bagci & Kardas, 2003).

[58] However, criticisms expressed in the European Commission's draft progress report of 2006 has included comments on the deterioration of conditions in the southeast of the country, upon the revival of clashes between the PKK and Turkish security forces (Aybet , 2006:537).

process in Turkey,"[59] (Bandow, 2003) which in turn positively affects the official

approach towards the Kurdish issue.

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[59] A year of negotiations regarding Cyprus under the aegis of the United Nations collapsed, albeit the Turkish state demonstrated enthusiasm to resolve the conflict within UN framework, in part because a *modus vivendi* would make EU membership more likely. But Turkish leaders fear from further and wider nationalist backlash if the Turkish Cypriot leader is pressed too hard.

CHAPTER V

THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE KURDISH ISSUE

The conundrum that Turkey had to deal with as a consequence of the US invasion of Iraq is examined in this part, in the framework of the PKK's becoming stronger due to better armament and to the more space to regroup and train. In consequence, the group has become more assertive militarily making it even more difficult to the incumbent Turkish government to establish pertinent initiatives to launch a peaceful settlement. Because of its security concerns of and approach to its own Kurdish minority, Turkey has advocated a centralized structure for Iraq, in contrast to the more federal principles that most Europeans support. Hence, the analysis also focuses on the consequences of the escalation of violence instigated by the two sides in the context of the critical regional milieu and its negative impact on establishing an accommodating path.

While Turkey offered strong support to the US in the first Gulf war in 1991, the government largely scaled down such support for the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 by referring the decision to the parliament in an attempt to cover its disapproval foiling it as the Turkish people's free choice. Turkey therefore attempted to attain an intricate balance between a hesitant stance behind the US, and demanding from the Americans the support to stamp out the PKK fighters from north Iraq, while simultaneously, remaining accountable to its citizens' popular will.

In line with the argument of Rumford (2003: 384) related to the notion of the increasing constraints for nation-states to "implement global norms while domestic actors are animated and supported by international organizations acting from afar,"

PKK's resurgence and assertiveness since 2004, due to American-created safe-haven in northern Iraq, can be rightfully viewed. Despite US's designation of the PKK its military in north Iraq was reluctant to suppress it because it did not want to provoke conflicts with the Iraqi Kurdish leaders in one part of the country which is pro-American and relatively peaceful (Hale, 2007:131).

A. Repercussions of the American support to the 'good Kurds' of Iraq

US support for the self-determination of Iraqi Kurds, the presence of the PKK camps in northern Iraq and the fear of Kurdish separatism spillover into Turkey instigated a substantial anti-American attitude in the Turkish street and largely undermined the US image in the country (Yavuz & Ozcan, 2006: 110). Cagaptay (2004) contends that the antiwar, anti-Americanism was "not isolated to the Islamist camp;" the 2003 war further stirred leftist anti-Americanism among intellectuals and media elite. The invasion of Iraq reignited the tendency among Turkish leftists to visualize happenings through the prism of US' conspiracy perceptions; in consequence, "over the past few years Turkish newspapers have been awash with theories attributing all problems in the Middle East to the US."

However, for years the US had given Turkish intelligence training and weapons to battle against what it saw as the 'bad' Kurds of Turkey,[60] while ironically

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[60] The US proved itself a staunch ally during the Turkish-Kurdish conflict. Between 1993 and 1997, the Clinton administration approved $8.3bn worth of weapons sales and 'giveaways' to Turkey, including frigates, helicopters and F-16 fighter parts. When the US Congress stopped credit for Turkish arms purchases in 1998, they continued to receive large quantities of free or heavily discounted 'surplus' weaponry (Badcock, 2002).

supporting the 'good' Kurds of Iraq against Saddam Hussein[61] (Gunter, 1997; McKiernan, 2006).

The Turkish parliament rejection in March 2003, of the government's "proposed motion to allow 62,000 American troops to be deployed in Turkey for a second front to attack against Iraq," (Tocci, 2003) [62]led to a more problematic relation with Turkey's most traditional ally, and concurrently empowered the PKK. The deterioration of this old alliance has in consequence created a gap through which the PKK was allowed to enhance its cadres, to relocate its bases in Iraq, to attack targets inside Turkey and to interact with similar Kurdish allies in Iraq and Iran (Altunisik &Tür, 2006: 230; Yavuz & Ozcan, 2006:109).

This, in turn, hardened official stance vis-à-vis the Kurdish minority issue and triggered unusual tone of official criticism of the US. It also prompted further public backlash, depicting the PKK as "an American tool to get back at the Turkish people for their decision to prohibit US forces' deployment,"[63] according to several journalistic debates.

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[61] Security Council Resolution 688, which sanctioned the creation of the safe havens in Iraq at the end of the Gulf war, was intended to protect the Kurds against Saddam Hussein.

[62] By rejecting the motion, Turkey lost the $6 billion war compensation grant and the $24 billion package of cheap long-term loans offered by the US, negotiated by Turkish policy-makers who had recalled the considerable economic costs of the 1991 Gulf War. By the end of March, however, the US announced their intention to support Turkey with a grant of $1 billion (Altunisik &Tür, 2006: 230).

[63] In an interview published on September 3, 2004, Erdogan reiterated: "The Turkish government is gradually loosing patience as America continues avoiding taking military actions against the Kurd rebels who are presently based in northern Iraq (Al-Ahram Weekly, 2006).

B. Iraqi Kurdistan ramifications

Horowitz (2000: 275-276) argues that Turkey took a pro-Iraqi Kurdistan neutrality to avoid dimensions of irredentism. Hence, it pursued a policy of appeasement with some Iraqi Kurdish factions in context of the notion that "states suppressing separatists may be able to offer potential foreign supporters things they value, in exchange for their forbearance" (Marcus, 2007; Yavuz & Ozcan, 2006). Concurrently, the PKK cause was rarely supported by the Kurdish people in Iraq, because the latter depended on Turkey to protect them from the forces of the late Iraqi president Saddam Husain. Their relation went to the extent of carrying out several joint military operations-some Iraqi Kurdish factions with the Turkish army- against the PKK bases in Iraqi Kurdistan, often forcing the surrender of scores of PKK fighters (Bandow, 2006).

According to Yavuz & Ozcan (2006) Turkey's policy toward Iraq was largely steered towards the prevention of "transregional Kurdish politicization" and to a lesser extent towards the protection of the interests of the Turkoman minority of Iraq. Turkey has also frequently endeavored to keep ongoing economic relation with Iraqi Kurds (ICG/Europe report, 2007). It had a vested interest in Iraqi Kurdistan, which has been an important outlet for Turkish farmers and factory owners, "with about 80 percent of foreign investment in the area now comes from Turkey." According to ICG/ ME report (2007), some 300 Turkish companies were doing $2 billion worth of business in the region mostly in construction, with some investments in the oil and gas sector during 2006; in Dohuk, the largest city in northwestern Kurdistan, "the seven largest infrastructure and investment projects are being built by Turkish construction companies."

The major concern for Turkey remains the possibility of Iraq's disintegration and the establishment of a Kurdish state. The ending of the PKK's ceasefire in 2004 and a subsequent escalation of violence has increased Turkish sensitivity on the issue; simultaneously it amplified its fear of possible instability in Syria, a factor that might further facilitate the establishment of a Kurdish state (Altunisik &Tür, 2006: 241).

The PKK has regained its might because the Iraqi insurgency has enabled it to lay hands on huge quantities of arms, thus making it a more formidable force than in the recent past. Moreover, the border area- Qandil, is ideal guerrilla terrain, high, rugged, inhospitable mountains, permitting around 3,500 PKK members to take refuge in northern Iraq and scattered into small cells across the mountains in hideouts.[64] It is therefore argued that the PKK made itself a relevant force, which has even polarized the Kurdish opinion within Turkey and thereby weakened the Kurdish moderates' stances (Popham, 2007; Cagaptay, 2007).

C. The aftermath of the invasion of Iraq

The war in Iraq that permitted the PKK to strengthen its presence in its north region, has exacerbated distrust in relevant American support on behalf of Turkey's politicians and even among Turkish army, due to the US reluctance to confront the PKK. This war also put back the Kurdish issue on the forefront and enhanced Iraqi Kurds efforts towards autonomy. These developments revived old Turkish fears

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[64] Yusuf Kanli wrote in *The Daily Turkish News:* "the February 21, 2008-land operation may entail the long stay of the Turkish troops in the northern Iraq region as long as the conditions dictate this. In an attempt to establish the old 'buffer zone' card with the Baghdad government the troops are probably geared to permanently occupy a 10 to 30 kilometer deep zone inside Iraq along the Turkish border. Among the risks of this initiative are the possible clashes with the Peshmerga of Barzani and the backlashes and violent demonstrations in Turkish cities carried out by supporters of the PKK; we have entered a new and challenging period in the war on separatist terrorism." February 23, 2008.
(http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/article.php?enewsid=97170).

related to Kurdish nationalism that had been presumably diffused after Ocalan's capture. Öktem (2006) asserts that the media representing both nationalists and leftists (*Ortadogu*, a newspaper close to Nationalist Action Party, and *Cumhuriyet*, close to the secular leftist) started to voice similar suspicions towards Kurdish nationalism.

"In 2003, it was right around the time that Turkey was winning peace with its Kurdish citizens. Trade and investment had started to increase, tourism started to increase, with buses of western Turks traveling to Mardin, Urfa, Van and other places. And it was precisely the wrong time when the United States decided to invade Iraq because it complicated our own problems with our citizens of Kurdish background" (Kiniklioglu, 2007). The PKK attacks since October 2007 have instigated a general public anger with many Turkish citizens blaming the Americans for the resurgence of the PKK violence launched from northern Iraq. Henceforth, the JDP encountered an impasse[65] as the political opposition pushed for military action, with trust in the US at a low in Turkish society, rendering it difficult for the government to show confidence in any prospective American action (Dyer, 2007). Moreover, the military foresaw the incident as an apt opportunity to regain the upper hand over Prime Minister Erdogan. Such development has been a serious blow for efforts to accommodate this minority issue within a framework of human and cultural rights, as well as to dissipate polarization among this minority between militancy and moderation and to avoid its further alienation.

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[65] The Turkish government blamed PKK fighters based in Iraq for attacks that killed some 30 soldiers and civilians in the first two weeks of October 2007 and it responded by shelling areas near the Iraqi border to try to prevent the attackers from reaching their bases there, following the parliamentary approval for possible military raids into that country.

D. Connotations of Turkish rapprochement with Syria

Traditionally, Turkey has been an ally of the US, and their relationship was termed a 'strategic partnership' in the 1990s. The fact that Turkey has enhanced its relation with Syria-whom it previously had a hostile and problematic relation with-at a time when the US is pursuing a tough policy on that country is underscored by Altunisik &Tür (2006: 244). They argue that both Turkey and Syria[66] share the common fear related to the implications of an independent Kurdish entity in Iraq. In addition the US unwillingness, or inability, to act against the PKK bases in Iraqi territory prompted the Turkish government to tackle the matter unilaterally (Altunisik &Tür, 2006: 230; Marcus, 2007; Aybet, 2006: 539).

The Syrian regime was the primary supporter of the PKK albeit using Ocalan as a card against Ankara in relation to territorial and water disputes (Barkey &Fuller, 1998:32). Syria has probably perceived its support to the PKK in the same framework that Turkey perceived its relation with Iraqi Kurdish groups. Syria viewed it as an opportunity to repress any possible aspirations of its own Kurdish population (Aybet, 2006: 539).

During the 1960s, use of the waters of the rivers 'Euphrates' and 'Tigris' emerged as a bone of contention between the two countries. Syria provided sanctuary to the PKK, the Armenian Secret Army and the Turkish radical left as a pressure against Turkey.[67] However, until Turkey mobilized troops on the Syrian border, the latter stepped back and expelled Ocalan (Altunisik &Tür, 2006: 232-238).

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[66] For Syria, this concern mainly stems from its own Kurdish population (1.7 million, 9% of the population), especially that the riots in March 2005 in its Kurdish-populated region was an alarming sign that has further fed into such fears.

[67] While the Turkish side demanded that Syria stop supporting and sheltering the PKK, Syrians demanded a treaty that would lead to the 'sharing' of the waters of the Euphrates. However, the 1987 Protocol between the two countries sanctioned the release of 500 cubic meters of water per second to Syria. In addition to a Security Protocol signed by both

Against this background, a military approach proved to be inadequate in the longer term for both sides: it has fallen short from obtaining a clear-cut defeat of the PKK and did not realize victory to Turkey. It is a fact that the JDP is well aware of and appear to fear that Turkey would be sucked into an Iraqi quagmire of its own. The PKK's fight nonetheless put the Kurdish issue on the forefront of Turkish politics and accentuated its international dimension despite its relative military weakness (Kirisci & Winrow, 1997: 183; Bandow, 2003).

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countries encompassing the prevention of activities against each other and which enables the extradition of individuals suspected of involvement in 'insurgent actions'. Hence, water and security issues – mainly the question of the PKK- were linked together in the two countries' relations. Yet, despite the protocol, PKK attacks from the Syrian side continued. At the same time, Syria increasingly began to bring the water issue into a pan-Arab agenda (Altunisik &Tür, 2006: 232-233).

CONCLUSION

This study has argued that even if Turkey had declared victory upon Ocalan's capture and had left the situation as it was then, this ineffective trajectory has essentially formed a lost opportunity in as much as it had dire repercussions. In retrospect, this should not be too surprising. As the act of refraining from grasping the political initiative- instead opting to pursue incoherent and unresponsive strategy -had entailed significant regional and socio-economic consequences. The escalation of nationalism that occurred in tandem with his arrest, further accelerating since the beginning of Turkey's accession process to the European Union in 2005, is perceived as detrimental to an accommodation trajectory on this issue.

Nonetheless, Turkey has found it ever more difficult to ignore its Kurdish minority's sociopolitical rights, due to external and internal factors. The exposure to European political values and the inevitable and irreversible democratization process, which has allowed political Islam to crystallize into a mainstream modernizing entity, are salient in this context. Citizenship, rights and freedoms are now anchored beyond the nation-state as globalization is facilitating, for both individuals and groups, the ability to connect with institutional remedies abroad (Rumford, 2003: 388); thus rendering it extremely difficult for any state to continue oppressive policies.

The study's hypothesis that Turkey is increasingly becoming incapable of reconciling its realist approach to the Kurdish minority issue related to a large extent to the security dimension, with its liberal institutionalism approach related to cooperating with and eventually joining the EU has been demonstrated. Since 2000, successive Turkish governments have maintained the crucial reform process that has actually benefited the Kurdish minority on various levels. The incoherent relevant

trajectory of the JDP is the prism through which this study viewed this hypothesis. In spite of the party's ongoing commitment to pursue policies compatible with EU accession requirements in an attempt to consolidate pluralism that would in turn further legitimate Islamist representation, it has approached the Kurdish issue with reluctance. The confrontational, head-on military stance, which has proved to be costly on human and financial levels, fell short from achieving the objective of counteracting the militant aspect of the Kurdish minority issue. Gurr (1993: 295) asserts that despite the high political and material costs of fighting this conflict, which have probably exceeded the symbolic and material value of maintaining state boundaries, the conflict has lasted for more than quarter a century.

The variables that the study perceived as factors contributing to the Turkish confrontational stance were analyzed from a political-economy perspective to explain and determine their constraining effects and restrictive implications on the successive Turkish governments' attempts to manage the Kurdish ethnic conflict. Notwithstanding the reluctance of the Turkish state, since its inception, to remedy the inept method of tackling the issue throughout its modern history, regardless of the restrictive factors, the evolution of an autonomous Kurdistan in northern Iraq triggered Turkey's worst fears of imminent spillover. In consequence, this variable is perceived as a primary catalyst that has further bolstered the unaccommodating official trajectory.

The Kemalist concept of nationalism that had been vehemently bolstered through media, education and the constitution, and staunchly protected by the military, especially in relation to secularism and Turkishness, has nonetheless started to wane due to the internal democratization process and the external globalization. The "prima facie" reason, according to Gurr (1993: 299-300) for the Turkish state's

rejection of expressions of Kurdishness is because it contradicts the long standing ideological and political commitments to assimilation of minority peoples and building a unitary nation-state. Nonetheless, "the Turkish government's decision late in 1990 to acknowledge the Kurdish language and aspirations seems to reflect a calculation that the state's interests are best served by moving slightly toward pluralism." Additionally, the reforms that followed Ocalan's capture were "grudgingly made to placate the EU, but the state's fundamental approach did not change: each limited reform was hedged with obstacles to slow implementation" (Marcus, 2007).[68]

The JDP's relevant perspective envisions the possibility and attainability of adjusting the Kemalist/official notion of Turkish citizenship in an Islamist milieu that encompasses the minority's ethnic-nationalism rather than emphasizes its peculiarity. The governing party was counting on EU membership process to help in the course of the solution of the Kurdish issue- in an attempt to avoid the wrath of the statist/secularist/Kemalist /military entities. Nonetheless, as the accession has so far failed to materialize, such an approach may face an increasingly tough path. Additionally, by abstaining from substantially and systemically addressing the issue, the JDP has also undermined its credibility among its electorate base, which in turn may trigger "societal polarization along ethnic lines." Empirical evidence has demonstrated that an alternative to a political path has already geared the incumbent government towards violent confrontation, which is entailing staggering financial[69]

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[68] Kurdish language classes were allowed only in after-school private classes, and then only for pupils over the age of 18 (Marcus, 2007).

[69] According to ICG/Europe report (2007) there is growing speculation by financial analysts that Turkey's total debts, which now exceed its gross national product, may create serious problems in servicing and repayment. When assessing the performance of an economy and the issue of foreign assistance, perhaps the amount of foreign investment flowing into a country is more important than the amount of direct aid it receives. In this respect, Turkey does not have a promising picture. According to a recent report prepared by the UN Conference on Trade and Development, between 1998 and 2000 Turkey ranked 122nd among

and human costs, damaging the tourist image of Turkey, and has bolstered the militancy of several segments of the Kurdish minority, especially the PKK. The ICG/Europe report (2007) asserts that the JDP is largely conceptualized as the pro-economic prosperity and pro-stability entity; hence it becomes imperative for the government to take bold and substantial steps to further expand Kurdish minority rights- reinforced by an effective implementation process-as the only way to come to terms with, and eventually end the conflict.

However, the implementation of the "reform process is still suffering from serious problems and faces a strong institutional resistance, particularly in the areas of human rights and the judiciary;" and despite several essential changes that were introduced in the National Security Council- the military-stronghold (Keyman & Duzgit, 2007: 71-77), it cannot be argued that civil governments are totally free to engage in a conciliatory strategy vis-à-vis the Kurdish minority ethnic issue.

Several academicians and analysts nonetheless envisage a conciliatory strategy to be attainable by taking advantage of the presence of ethnic Kurdish politicians in the parliament representing various sides. These MPs can be reliably involved to initiate new Kurdish rights' policies compatible with the European norms and conditionality. This means that the key ingredient here is cooperation with moderate civil politicians representing a considerable percentage of the Kurdish minority. This has the potential to be hampered by a prevalent rigid mindset however, which the study demonstrated its evolution and persistence. Therefore, to undo the structural distortions of the Kurdish minority image, which was frequently depicted in contexts of deliberately false perceptions, in Turkish media coverage and within the

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137 countries in terms of foreign capital inflow. The reasons why foreign investors did not prefer Turkey were mainly due to its macroeconomic instability, widespread corruption and the complex nature of the transactions that needed to be fulfilled.

educational curricula seems rather difficult and warrants a long-term perspective. The Turkish public's anti- EU and anti–US sentiments, which largely link Kurdish rights concessions to the EU conditionality and the US-created Kurdistan in northern Iraq, have further restrained the incumbent government's efforts.

The study considered that PKK's strategic shift from armed conflict, which was met with only limited success, to non-confrontational approach, whereby constitutional socio-political changes were demanded within the framework of the state, to fulfill the Kurdish identity, as another lost opportunity for reconciliation. The study perceived it as an attempt by the PKK to utilize emerging political opportunities engendered by increasing pluralization, which was boosted by the exposure to the EU's set of values and which brought political Islam to governance. Disentangling the PKK problem from the Kurdish minority question is another important dimension of approaching the issue. In this regard, the amendment of the criminal code (particularly the Article 301) contributes positively to separating the Kurdish minority's peaceful demands from the PKK's propaganda. Hence, the Kurdish population may very well become a part of the solution rather than of the 'problem.'

Counter arguments nonetheless maintain that such a possibility is unlikely due to the increasing military assertiveness of the PKK and the divergence between the Kurdish and the Turkish perspectives related to the definition and interpretation of the issue. This had led some moderate Turkish analysts to sound their fears that the present inertia may escalate into new ethnic violence- recalling the early 70s.

Kayaoglu (2007) asserts that "fighting the PKK requires more than guns and bullets," and its denial- in context of its separatist potential-would further push the PKK to capitalize on Kurdish economic, social, and political troubles.

In this sense, many debates discuss whether or not the primacy of an economic diagnosis can cater for the issue's accommodation; this point remains unclear. Yet, the economic aspect of this conflict is crucial. In comparison to the rest of Turkey, the southeast region is still the most economically underdeveloped in the country with noticeably low income levels. Aydinli (2002: 225) underscores reasons contributing to the failure of the numerous plans in that region, of which the lack of serious input from the government and the lack of foreign direct investments (FDIs) are among the important factors.[70] Several recommendations suggest that continuing to encourage the private sector to invest in the region and increasing school-building efforts[71] may decrease the grievances' threshold that PKK uses as a launching pad (Somer, 2005: 120; Barkey &Fuller, 1998: 180).

However, a solution that addresses the ethnic character of the problem is more pertinent. Barkey and Fuller (1998: 180) conceive that "the onus of responsibility for a solution lies with the Turkish state rather than with the Kurds as people." Thus, there is a need for a mechanism by which the Kurdish minority can discuss with state officials their grievances and goals, concurrent with legitimate means by which the state will permit this minority to attain its goals. The most notable means should be the accommodation of the Kurdish political parties within a restructured election law that overcome the 10 percent threshold barrier.

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[70] The CEO of 'East Holding' (created for the GAP eleventh plan) resigned in early 2001, claiming that the plan lacked the full backing of the state and private sectors (Radikal, 6 January 2001).

[71] Eastern Turkey still has the least percentage of school attendance in the country (Öktem, 2006).

In the meantime, the PKK would still take up arms and act violently in tandem with a non-violent approach and rhetoric, albeit directed toward the European public (Cagaptay, 2007); Aydinli (2002: 216) further argues that the Turkish government considers the group "an armed wing being used by the political leadership in order to force their terms," a sort of bargaining strategy. In this background of reciprocal mistrust the management of the issue encounters further hurdles rendering it in a grave standstill stance notwithstanding the recurrent Turkish military incursions in pursuit of PKK's guerillas in northern Iraq. Moreover, the interplay of rising Turkish nationalism, the JDP's inability to set the tone of the debate and a comeback of the military to the sphere of politics is reigniting the Sèvres syndrome, which is manipulated as a pretext for the suspension of human rights and individual liberties in the name of the fight against Kurdish separatism (Öktem, 2006).

Indeed, many Turkish analysts argue that economic reforms, further democratization and human rights issues warrant major emphasis rather than national sovereignty and security problems in an increasingly globalized world, which Turkey has willingly joined. Yet relevant experience so far imply that Turkey's priorities list is far from being clearly set. In this sense, Aydin & Keyman (2004:10) contend that if the Kurdish minority's demands for socio-political rights and claims to their ethnic identity jeopardize the Turkish democracy then it is essential "to problematize unifying and exclusive notions of identity and to historically investigate how it is established in relation to difference." Therefore they infer that only valid democratic process can significantly articulate essentialist-Kurdish-claims to identity, while bolstering the "state and civil society, identity and difference, and the self and the other in Turkey."

Nonetheless, efforts to transform the prevailing mindset of Turkish general public and officials require more energy and more time rendering it imperative to introduce comprehensive measures that decisively affect the public's perspective of the military's role in Turkish politics. As the military is largely considered to be the most trusted institution, the government is significantly challenged with means to gauge the deep-seated belief among many Turkish citizens view the army to "know what is good for the country and (to) take the required measures when necessary" (Aydin & Keyman, 2004 : 46-47).[72]

The reform process that started in the late nineties and picked up with the advent of the JDP to governance, in the context of EU integration, are considered to be relatively impressive but, at the same time, it is perceived that these reforms will take some time before they bear fruit (Somer, 2005: 120), because only their consistent implementation would ensure their credibility and verify the government's promises in relation to human rights. Crucial issues, such as the abolition of the village guards system have not yet been tackled and which is considered vital for establishing trust between the state and the region's displaced residents. Additionally, to facilitate the return of these people to their villages the disbursement of financial compensations is a key element to support returnees' move and to compensate for the destruction of their dwellings (Natali, 2005:185). It is noteworthy that the EU has often recommended per se in many of its reports on Turkey.

Several politicians and analysts conceive that reconciliation of the Kurdish conflict would be possible through democratic and administrative reforms, albeit it requires "long-term efforts to induce interactive changes in private beliefs, through

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[72]"The military has also been the most egalitarian, non-politicized and professional public institution compared with a political class that was often unstable, corrupt and unreliable" (Aydin & Keyman, 2004:21).

educational reforms and reinforced civil society, in addition to domestic political will and the EU anchor" (Somer, 2005a: 619-620). The internal political confrontation between the military and the civil/Islamist government may steer to a different track of which the prolonging of the Turkish-Kurdish conflict is the most salient outcome. Moreover, the process of democratization is still incomplete due to the electoral law and the recurrent interference of the judiciary in politics under the pretext of guarding the secularism of the country. It has been frequently suggested to adopt the German system of 5 percent threshold which grants representation to any party winning three direct seats. Thus, a better representation for the Kurdish minority would be attainable. But then again the successive Turkish governments appeared to be either constrained by the hardliner's perspectives, or unwilling to change the law in an attempt to foster an advantageous status-quo.

Somer (2005: 120) boldly underscores a major drawback of Turkey's management of the issue, which is the recurrent failure to create opportunities for the emergence of moderate political movements that represent the Kurdish ethnicity. Instead, the regime tended to lump moderate political actors along with hard-line Kurdish nationalists. Pro-Kurdish parties today are still viewed as synonymous to political violence and harassed accordingly (Yildiz, 2005: 59).

In this context, Somer (2005: 124) contends that Kurdish statehood is unlikely, because the two concerned regional countries Iran and Syria, on which Iraqi Kurds are dependent, strongly oppose it. Moreover, no international organization or state is pressing Turkey to allow the Kurdish minority to secede (Kirisci & Winrow, 1997:187). Therefore, this fear that has brought Turkey and these countries closer to each other has no substantial grounds rendering it imperative for Turkey to overcome its security concerns, whether real or imagined, and follow a course of

accommodating the Kurdish minority needs and rights. In so far as this is true, Turkey's disposition to EU accession has offered the Kurdish minority an unprecedented discursive space, which challenged the taboos created by Kemalist dominant frame of mind (Rumford, 2003: 389).

Gurr (1993: 313) argues that for policies of accommodation to be effective they must be pursued cautiously but persistently over the long term. A strategy of sustained violence usually alienates groups that would be more helpful as allies and hardens positions so that accommodation and settlements are very difficult to achieve. "It is a well-established principle that a protracted conflict is very resistant to settlement," and solutions are likely to occur only when warring parties become "caught in a hurting stalemate." Current events are demonstrating the tendency towards protraction and the alienation of larger sections of the Kurdish minority, who would otherwise have been opted towards reconciliation rather being inclined towards the PKK's militarism. It is also observed that both the PKK and the JDP are in reality caught in Gurr's hurting stalemate, despite the contradicted and controversial information related to number of causalities and military scorings that both sides aptly use to propagate its stance. Bozan (2007:7) contends that critical voices in Turkey are louder and clearer now, especially in their disapproval that Turkey's stance is much too focused on the PKK.

The wholesale methods used by the Turkish military and the historical negation of the Kurdish minority as an ethnic entity that had been denied cultural and political rights have generated a deep sense of injustice among large sectors of this minority. It further rendered the minority a "fertile source of recruits for radical armed" groups (ICG/ ME report, 2007). The PKK has also provided the military with both an identifiable nationalist cause, rightful context for the vilification of the

Kurdish nationalists and a pretext for its allegation that the government is weak vis-à-vis the assertiveness of the Kurdish identity and the violence of the PKK.

In this sense, Natali (2005:185) conceives that "institutionalizing Kurdish ethnic identity into the state's legal, political and educational systems... and according Kurds some form of political and cultural autonomy in their region" are key elements in the processes of managing the Kurdish issue. It is further argued that in implementing Kurdish language reforms, advocates of the Turkish language have little to fear, since clearly a continuing knowledge of Turkish will be necessary for anyone of Kurdish ethnic heritage who wants to succeed in the larger Turkish state or the outside world [73] (Gunter, 1997: 133).

However, as long as the PKK is used as a blackmailing element by the Turkish military against the JDP, the governing party's options to tackle the issue would be further restrained. Therefore, without a public predisposition of critical debate concerning the Kurdish minority, which furnishes better relevant understanding, Turkish society will not be hard pressed to solve the fundamental problems of the Kurdish alienation (Romano, 2006: 168). But Aydinli (2002: 215) views that the hardliners appear to have won the struggle within the Turkish state structure. This has rendered Turkey rather unprepared to respond to any type of political representation of Kurdish politics. Mistrust of European intentions is also complicating any formulation of civilian-led strategies on the issue of Kurdish political rights.

While Akyol (2007) cautions from the negative repercussions of the intentional neglect of the social and political problems that lie beneath the Kurdish

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[73] A reason for this might be that the textbooks and civil discourse are replete with references to the merits of political and linguistic unity. However, with respect to learning the language, Kurdish, like Corsican in France or Turkish in Bulgaria, could be taught for a certain number of hours per week (three hours in the case of Corsican in France and ranging from two to three hours in the case of Turkish in Bulgaria) at the primary level in public schools (Somer, 2005a: 619-620).

issue, Watts (2004) asserts that since pro-Kurdish politics are taking more momentum and are being discussed on wider levels, the appeal of Kurdish identity politics seems to be less pertinent to the said voters at present than a decade ago. It is therefore argued that they could be partially replaced by the promise of political and economic reforms from the Turkish government. But then again the incomplete concessions to Kurdish rights can be rightfully manipulated by the PKK to justify its struggle. Additionally, the JDP's lack of "wholeness" in general politics and conflicting, hesitating views on the Kurdish issue have both raised the level of the ruling party's vulnerability and further protracted the Kurdish issue.

This study has shown that it is more constructive to continue to take full advantage of the EU accession requirements to effect applicable changes, which would lead to redressing the situation to peaceful accommodation of the Kurdish minority issue, since violence cannot be eradicated by mere military campaigns. This is not to deny that the PKK will always be able to find sanctuary in the remote mountains in northern Iraq invoking Turkish military incursions that only entails human and financial costs.

This study has also underscored that the Kurdish minority issue has escalated into an ethnic conflict with an international dimension because the Turkish secularist paradigm did not accommodate the cultural uniqueness of the Kurds since the establishment of the Republic. This escalation has been further aggravated by the interplay of outside factors as the conflict was still on-going. In this sense, the need to change the prevalent mindset in Turkey among legislators supervising the implementation of the officially endorsed reforms is extremely vital and crucial for paving the way to a conciliatory approach towards the Kurdish issue, which can create an opportunity to reduce the violence on both sides.

The Islamists in power today appear to approach the ethnic concern of Turkey's Kurdish minority in a manner similar to the Turkish secularists. The variant of Islam expounded by the JDP addresses the Kurdish ethnic concern systemically under the unifying conception of Islam ignoring the ethnic distinctiveness of the Kurds since they are Muslims. Subsequently, the prospects of transforming the Kurdish ethnic conflict in Turkey seem rather limited.

At the time of writing and as a concluding remark, the chief prosecutor of the 'Supreme Court of Appeals' has brought a case to the 'Constitutional Court' for the closure of the JDP and the banning of 71 of its members, including Prime Minister Erdogan, from politics. Their indictment is not related whatsoever to terrorism, violence, or even a hate speech, but on the pretext of many quotes from JDP leaders, and especially Erdogan, which are enough to prove that this party is anti-secular and thus deserves eradication. This assault on democracy in Turkey, even though it may fall short from achieving its goal, is a striking empirical evidence of the great stakes that might be encountered by any government which may endeavor to accommodate the Kurdish ethnicity let alone to reconcile with its militant aspect.

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