Neglected Kurdish Political Identity
within the Realm of Turkish Politics and Kemalism

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Abstract

Kurdish political identity, their quest for recognition has been an everlasting issue in the Turkish politics since the establishment of Turkish Republic (1923). When the Republic was building by the Republican elite during the single-party regime, the Turkish identity and Mustafa Kemal’s principles became constituent elements of Republican agenda which was ideologically aimed to be a modern nation-state that showed no tolerance to those who stayed out of its scope (i.e Kurds). The frames of Turkish identity were firstly secularism, and secondly nationalism which required one language, one identity and territorial integrity. These frames which were copied from Jacobin French nationalism regulated the Turkification process and shaped the assimilationist policies towards non-Turkish ethnic groups. This paper examines the outlines of both Turkish politics and Kurdish resistance. While providing political consequences of reluctant policies toward Kurds and the Turkish perspective of Kurds as threats towards mainstream Turkish identity, the study also touches upon the ideological transition of Kurdish movement that appeared within the Justice and Development Party (AKP) reign. The evolution of Kurdish politics eventually utilized Kurds to emancipate from being a perception of threat to Turkish nationalism and finally offers a possible solution to the conflict.
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AKP</td>
<td>Justice and Development Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>AP</td>
<td>Justice Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARGK</td>
<td>National Liberation Army of Kurdistan</td>
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<tr>
<td>BDP</td>
<td>Peace and Democracy Party</td>
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<td>CHP</td>
<td>Republican People’s Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>DBP</td>
<td>Democratic Regions Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>DDKO</td>
<td>Revolutionary Cultural Society of the East</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEHAP</td>
<td>Democratic People’s Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>DP</td>
<td>Democrat Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>DTK</td>
<td>Congress of Democratic Society</td>
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<td>DTP</td>
<td>Democratic Society Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>ERNK</td>
<td>National Liberation Front of Kurdistan</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>HADEP</td>
<td>People’s Democracy Party</td>
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<td>HDP</td>
<td>Democratic People’s Party</td>
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<td>HEP</td>
<td>People’s Labor Party</td>
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<td>IS</td>
<td>Islamic State</td>
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<td>KCK</td>
<td>Union of Kurdistan Communities</td>
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<td>MHP</td>
<td>National Movement Party</td>
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<td>MSP</td>
<td>National Salvation Party</td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
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<tr>
<td>OHAL</td>
<td>State of Emergency</td>
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<td>OZDEP</td>
<td>Liberty and Democracy Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>PKK</td>
<td>Kurdish Labor Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>PYD</td>
<td>Democratic Unity Party of Kurdistan</td>
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<td>RP</td>
<td>Welfare Party</td>
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<td>SHP</td>
<td>Social Democratic People’s Party</td>
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<td>WWI</td>
<td>First World War</td>
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CHAPTER ONE

1. Introduction

In February 1999, Ahmet Kaya, a popular Kurdish singer in Turkey, was nominated for “the best singer of the year” in a national music award ceremony. In his speech on the stage while getting his award, he said “This year, I’m planning to release a new album. In this album there will be a Kurdish song for the first time that I want to broadcast it with a video. I know there are brave producers who would broadcast the video. However if not, I don’t know how they would explain the situation to the people of Turkey”. In response some of audiences reacted violently and threw objects to him. Due to his speech, Ahmet Kaya was exiled to Paris. Although his albums broke sales records in Turkey, his songs were perceived as “undesirable” and “ill-advised” by state authorities. He was accused by being associated with PKK. His albums were withdrawn from the market. For a long time he was not allowed to give concerts nor make albums until the bans were lifted. “He was always longing the land where he was born. He earnestly desired peace, serenity and brotherhood for people in Turkey” told his wife Gülten Kaya. Most of his interviews’ topic was the hardness of speaking Turkish when he was young and its effects in social life. In his songs, he touches upon the difficulties of losing loved ones due to the interwar (Turkish – Kurdish conflict), inequalities in language and unjustly sentenced people to prison who defended independency and brotherhood for people of Turkey by criticizing the state’s power practice in all spheres in life. A year later after his exile, he had a sudden heart stroke and was died in November 2000. He was buried in the largest cemetery of Paris, Pere Lachaise Cemetery. After 10 years later of his death, with the discourse of “Peace Process and Solution of Kurdish Question” it was started to be discussed in media and government whether Kaya’s burial could be brought to Turkey as an apology. His grave is still in Paris.

Firstly, labeling Kaya’s songs and forbidding his albums signify the very fact that he was regarded as a perception of threat towards the Turkish state; secondly art was never free of state politics. From this unfortunate event, as a conclusion state politics give pressure and constraint social life in Turkey, especially when the matter is Kurds. In this direction, this study tries to go deep to the formation of Turkish Republic and intends to reveal the reasons behind the domineering politics regarding Kurds. Moreover the study argues that there is an “ingrained fear” that generated since the establishment of Turkish Republic and still apparent through the
years that effects today’s policies regarding Kurds and perceptions that directed to Kurds in general.

Mustafa Kemal, the founder of Turkey, established Republic of Turkey in 1923 with the motivation of creating a nation-state and a national identity toward modernity and contemporary civilization (Berkes, 2018) after the WWI. Behind his motivation, there is French Revolution and its repercussions lay down the ground for Kemalist principles that based on Jacobin ideology (Loubère, 1959, Webb, 2008, Aslan, Kayacı, 2016). This new Turkish Republic is not inclined to consider non-Turkish ethnic groups and their cultural identities in the state institutions. The central policy of national identity or as referring Benedict Anderson (1983) emphasis on the Turkish “imagined community” is to assimilate all cultural and ethnic diversity of the country in the concept of Turkishness which is constructed on the principle slogan of “one language, one identity, and integrity of nation”. In such a political climate there is the first Kurdish revolt in 1925 which can be to certain extend as a reaction to the new constitution. After the first Kurdish revolt the denial of Kurdish identity begun to increase as Turkish state implemented assimilation policies (i.e East Reconstructing Plan - Şark Islahat Planı, known as Resettlement Law) which intended to transform Kurds into Dağlı Türkler “Mountain Turks”. As a result there have been more than 15 revolts between 1925 and 1940 (Birand, 2008).

1.1 Research Aim and Motivation

Political claims for recognition of Kurdish identity in the context of legal institutional frameworks of Turkish politics have been and still a problematic issue which has been in relation with Turkish nationalism since the establishment of Turkish Republic. Although Kurdish identity diverse in itself and has roots in both Ottoman Empire and Persian Empire, this thesis will deal with the appearance of Kurdish political identity within the context of Turkish politics. Political claims for recognition of Kurds in Turkey have changed its ideological form and its intensity regarding armed campaign periodically depending on the politics of different governments during the last 50 years. In the beginning of country’s republican regime Kurds in Turkey has faced with language ban that has been continued for more than 60 years, strict assimilation policies, forced displacement and countless false imprisonment and abolitions of parties between 1925 and 1999. However, this thesis will explain the reasons on the background of the denial of Kurdish political recognition.
Accordingly, this research requires answering these following questions:

- What are the historical, political and cultural outlines of the modern Turkish nationalism?
- Why the Kurdish struggle for political and cultural rights in Turkey is perceived as threats towards the Turkish nation?
- What political consequences does such a reluctance policy imply for the Kurds?

The issue of identity conflict in Turkey will be addressed by relating to the historical, political and cultural outlines of the modern Turkish Nationalism and the political struggle of the Kurds for reshaping the political and cultural disposition of the Turkish State.

It is important to signify that whatever occurred in relation to Kurds in the last 50 years were absolute results from what have been done a century ago. Be it a “foreign fear” that has been brought until now that foreign powers would divide the country. My intention is not degrading what Mustafa Kemal Ataturk has done when implementing political, cultural, educational and religious reforms while creating a nation-state. My intention is to highlight the consequences of historical events which led to an identity crisis within a country and bring light on the both political and societal factors that intensified the violent conflict and thereby compelled to a repression of one’s cultural and political rights.

1.2 Limits of the Study

The main themes of this work are the Kurdish political identity in which claims for recognition was pursued by Kurds in the context of Turkish politics. Moreover, what shapes Kurdish political identity and its limitations? The interpretation of the reasons of reluctant attitude from Turkish state towards Kurdish cultural and political rights in terms of policies and the limitations in the formation of Turkish state for the sake of contemporary civilization will be presented. While providing similarities between French and Turkish revolutions, a deep analysis of Kemalist principles and historical events that shaped the policies hence caused the discourse shift for both Kurdish parties and Turkish state will be given in order to understand the issue extensively.
This study will not touch upon the other ethnic groups or non-Muslim minorities in Turkey however it will provide why Kurds distinguished from them in terms of their cultural and political rights and demand for recognition.

1.3 Previous Research

There is variety of academic studies regarding Kurdish issue in the context of Turkish politics. However the number of studies that challenge both Kemalist values and the reforms of republicans hence the repercussions of the establishment of Turkey on the Kurdish nationalism and their political identity is limited. İsmail Beşikçi’s work “Republican People Party’s Directory 1927 and Kurdish Question” (Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası Tüzüğü (1927) ve Kürt Sorunu) which this research makes use of as empirical material is one of the prominent ones. He does not only scrutinize the directory but also shares, interprets and, of a sort, ridicules many of other Turkish scholars who advocates the directory by explaining the limitedness of acquiring scientific knowledge in the republicans’ single-party regime. Beşikçi argues that Mustafa Kemal used “nation’s power”, the sovereign power indirectly for his benefit, directly and allegedly for Turkey’s benefit. After the establishment of republican regime in Turkey the new 1924 Constitution indicates that deputies of Grand Assembly and the members of parties should be chosen by public in local elections, however 1927 directory of CHP overrides the Constitution and eventually gives privilege Mustafa Kemal to act on his own. Besides, “Turkish scholars who worked in Turkish universities” overtly hesitates to mention this hidden fact because Turkish education system overwhelmed by pragmatist Kemalist ideology (Beşikçi, 1978).

Other previous researches that mainly focus on two main subjects that concerns the Kurdish identity and Kurdish nationalism. For instance, Turkey’s evolving discourse on Kurdish nationalism (Timmester, 2013), the Kurdish movement in Turkey (O’Connor, 2017), construction of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey (Yavuz, 2007), Kurdish politics in Turkey (Güneş, 2009), self-determination of the Kurdish people (Vezbergaite, 2015), partition, democracy and Turkey’s Kurdish minority (Gürses, 2010), racialization of Kurdish identity in Turkey (Ergin, 2014) and secondly the effects of the establishment of Republic of Turkey, such as; the establishment of Kemalist autocracy and its reform policies in Turkey (Doğan, 2016), Islam, secularism and nationalism in modern Turkey ( Çağaptay, 2006), Kemalism in the era of totalitarianism (Maatescu, 2006), modernism and nationalism (Conversi, 2012), property, state
and geopolitics: re-interpreting the Turkish road to modernity (Düzgün, 2016). There are some other scholars that touched upon the role of media regarding the issue, such as interrupted social peace: hate speech and in Turkish media (Arcan, 2013) and representation of terror and ethnic conflict in the Turkish press: an analysis of the peace process in Turkey (Yüksel-Pecen, 2018). Also, it was focused on the media discourse i.e critical discourse analysis on the news about terrorism: an analytical study on Turkish media (Töngür, Kara, 2016) showing that media is not free from biases and presenting the ruling ideology and political view that affects news and newspapers when presenting terror and Kurds. Another issue was the security matter in Turkish politics in regard to Kurds and terror. In this aspect, scholars mainly targeted how Turkish security policy deals with Kurdish conflict in the frames of its foreign policy and in relation with Middle East region. Such academic articles; Turkish security discourses and policies: the Kurdish question (Todorova, 2015), Turkey’s security dilemma in the foundation of the early republic: the independence tribunals (Kaynar and Ak, 2017) and Turkey’s security dilemma on the border with Syria: situation assessment and perspectives of the intervention (Dapkuş, 2015) pointed out that there multiple actors (not only Kurds and Turkish state) involved in the conflict which intensifies the complex situation in the region. And also the distinctiveness of Kurds inside Turkey threatened the border especially in the early years of republic which caused an increase in conflict during the years because of lack of political solution. Both of Kurdish political identity and nationalism and the concept of Turkish Republic are indispensably interrelated in terms of consequences of the second would veto the other’s existence by “imagining” and claiming everyone is a Turk, hence first one becomes a threat in time. Eventually conflict begins and climbs up.
CHAPTER TWO

2. Theoretical Approaches

This chapter is assigned for theoretical groundings that will put light on the matter. It is prioritized to posit this study out of the frames of classical theories of social science which accepts given entities (i.e. given nation-state’s entities). In this direction, the focus firstly is on the Benedict Anderson’s Imagined Community to reflect the causes of how the concept of nation-state developed and how it is imagined and limited at the same time and how it created a communal identity. As firstly appears Anderson’s emphasis on imaginary and creation of a community, secondly comes the social constructivist paradigm which demonstrates identities, nation-states and their actions and positions are constructed by human ideas, beliefs, norms and attitudes wherein reflects the nation-state’s behaviors toward one another. Finally the focus will be on the theories of ethnicity, modernity and nationalism. Explanations on how and why ethnic groups are in conflict with each other and through what process some ethnic groups are in advantage compared to others will be given.

2.1 Imagined Community

Benedict Anderson (1983) argues within the social constructivist paradigm that “nation-ness”, as well as nationalism is “cultural artifacts of a particular kind” (Anderson, 1983, p.48). Once these artifacts created they became indispensably popular and “modular” and combined with degrees of individuals’ self-conscious as well as with “political and ideological constellations” (Anderson, 1983, p.48). He further makes a diagnosis and claims that “nationalism is the pathology of modern developmental history, as inescapable as neurosis in the individual”. However his anthropological emphasis on nationalism is an “imagined” political community as given the title of his book. Even though members of a group would neither know nor meet with each other, the presumption that everyone would follow or think the same as others surpasses and creates the “imagined community” (Anderson, 1983, p.49). Gellner who is quoted in Anderson’s book that summarizes this situation “nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist” (Anderson, 1983, p.49). “It is imagined as inherently limited and sovereign” adds Anderson. It should be “limited” because none of societies (empires, states etc.) imagined comprising all of people in the world under their
governance (except Christendom) and “sovereign” because the concept arose in the Age of Enlightenment and Revolution in which destroyed the dynasty of religion where nations had accept pluralism, where nations claimed territory and where nations demanded being free regardless of under God. The symbol of this freedom would be the sovereign state (Anderson, 1983, p.50). And it is imagined as “community” because it is designed to feed the cultural roots of the related community. Anderson emphasizes fraternity and comradeship that connects imaginable community together and even kill and die for it for the past centuries (Anderson, 1983, p.50). Then one could ask, what was meant by cultural roots that needed to be fed. According to Anderson, it is the “immemorial past” that shined out as an outcome of rationalist secularism, as the decline of religious belief transforming into continuity of national salvation. If nation-states wanted to last long then they had to “give political expression” to immemorial past to fill society with pride so that nationalism would become destiny (Anderson, 1983, p.51).

On the other hand, Anderson highlights the development of vernacular languages, print-capitalism and the erosion of religious authority as a result of latter were constituent elements of the rising “imagined communities” and the development of nationalism (Anderson, 1983). What made possible for communities to imagine other communities “was the system of production and production of relations, a technology of communications” and the impossibility of unification of human language. Therefore self-awareness of their limited community and the imagined ‘others’ proliferated. Anderson explains it this way:

“In the process, they [people] gradually became aware of hundreds of thousands, even millions, of people in their particular language-field, and at the same time that only those hundreds of thousands, or millions, so belonged. These fellow-readers, to whom they were connected through print, formed, in their secular, particular, visible invisibility, the embryo of the nationally imagined community.” (Anderson, 1983, p.57)

It shows that from the beginning the concept of nation-state was designed around the language (and maintenance of culture) and “one could be invited into the imagined community” thus regardless of how difficult they may make it, “naturalization” is accepted and legit in each nation (Anderson, 1983, p.145). These “naturalization” processes is present in many country’s education systems and administrative regulations. Moreover, there is overt nationalist enthusiasm that installs nationalist ideology (Anderson, 1983, 163).
Regarding the continuation of this nation-state concept, Anderson points out “creating an identity” which engenders a narrator of identity (Anderson, 1983, p.295). A great narrator, a leader perhaps (i.e most of the leader of nations) could write the history and put historically important values inside and promotes for its imagined community. This mostly happens in form of ideological implications, impositions as well as oppression of another identity in the same community.

2.2 Identity as a Social Construction

Constructivist model examines identities and explains the way they constructed and how they shape the actors’ perceptions of interest. Though social constructivist argument fails to explain why an ethnic group would disregard another group, and how actors can escalate the conflict accordingly their interests or triggers alternative identity constructions (Sommer, 2005, p. 110-111). Several cases of ethnic violence in the light of constructivist theory offer that ethnic violence is an outcome of ethnic construction. Gerard Prunier who is an independent consultant on Eastern and Central African affairs explains that the conflict between “Tutsi” and “Hutu” in Rwanda reveals the fact that the conflict was based on economic reasons rather than ethnic. When Europeans conquered the land, they oppressed the peasant society and transmitted the political power to “local political entrepreneurs seeking job and power” (Fearon and Laitin, 2000, p.858-859). Similarly Susan L. Woodward who is a political scientist specialized on Balkan studies argues that “Muslim”, “Serb” and “Croat” distinctions in Balkans in 1990 was a result of economic collapse. In the light of these cases Bruce Kapferer who is Australian anthropologist, an expert in cultural studies, suggests that ethnic conflict becomes highly intense under the conditions of post-colonialism paired with economic struggle. The source of conflict based not on the cultural differences as biased understandings suggest. Instead, in the context of nation-state, the identity conflict occurs when marginalized groups “rebel against intolerable oppression by dominant group” (Fearon and Laitin, 2000, p.858-859).

Ultimately, the explanation lies in the power relation. All kind of power relations represent kind of identity and culture behind it. There is no neutral power, in other words, any power is cultural, national, religious and a matter of a specific identity. In Turkey, the power of the state / nation is built around the notion of Turkishness wherein Kurdish identity would neither politically nor culturally exist.
The interpretation of social constructivism within international relations (as a matter of political science) needed to be explained in order to achieve a widen aspect of the issue theoretically. International relations is important because it gives an outlook to states behaviors and how states evolve in relation to other states globally, and take actions that has consequences for other states and their people. More importantly it gives an insight to the constructed ideas and beliefs that has shaped the present world affairs (Jackson, Sorensen, 2006, p.162). Social constructivism concerns on human awareness or consciousness and its place in world affairs. Instead of focusing on materialist ideas and powers such as, military forces, economic capabilities that signifies the distribution of power between states and clarifies the behavior of states, social constructivists also includes the social aspects of international relations. “International system exists only as an inter-subjective awareness among people; in that sense the system is constituted by ideas not by material forces” (Jackson, Sorensen, 2006, p.162). It’s an ideational kind that absolutely human creation. “It is a set of ideas, body of thought, a system of norms, which has been arranged by certain people at a particular time and place” (Jackson, Sorensen, 2006, p.162). Social world represents human consciousness; ideas, beliefs, norms, thoughts and concepts, languages and discourses of human beings, especially group of human beings (i.e states). Social world too is an inter-subjective realm. Whoever has built it would enjoy because it is home to them (Jackson, Sorensen, 2006, p.165).

Thus, in the light of international relation following with social constructionist view of the related issue would be beneficial when evaluating the roots, reasons and consequences of Kurdish conflict in Turkey. If social world and state behaviors are constructed, identities are socially constructed too.

2.2.1 What does identity is socially constructed mean?

It is important to distinguish between individual and group / collective identity in the context of Kurds in Turkey. Kurdish collective political identity is maintained and sustained by the mutual, long time experienced history of oppression. In despite of their common language, cultural customs and even the autonomously governed land where they have lived many centuries under the Ottoman rule is now shared by Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. Kurdish political motivation is grounded on the colonization past that generates “statelessness” henceforth claiming Kurdistan and a status from United Nations.
Identity is a social category such as student, American, worker, homosexual, Muslim etc. In particular, an individual takes “a special pride” in or views it as fixed social attribute. It is a labeling process that has two characters: (1) rules and norms of the membership that decides who is included and who is not and (2) content of the category; beliefs, desires, moral commitments, physical attributes that would be typical or expected behaviors of that belonging to that category. Social valuation of one category compared to another one would also be included to content (Fearon and Laitin, 2000, p.848). Ethnic identities too, characterized by some rules of membership and content commonly consisted of cultural attributes, language, religious and mutual historical past. Thus, their rules, content and valuation is human made through time. It is the human speech and human action which means they can change over time, thus it is not hard to acknowledge that identities are socially constructed. However, there is a tendency to believe – as it was terrifyingly believed before by determinists and positivists- that these attributes and categories are “implications of biology” (Fearon and Laitin, 2000, p.848). Social identity would have a response to this phenomenon that firstly asks; “What explains popular ethnic antipathies?”, “Why or under what conditions should this incident ‘construct’ the group in a more antagonistic manner, increasing support for the leader and disposing the group toward yet more violence?” (Fearon and Laitin, 2000, p. 853-4) The argument emphasizes that “innate or learned psychological bias” misleads the members of an ethnic group so that members simply do not see or ignore their leaders’ reprehensible acts. (Fearon and Laitin, 2000, p.854). Paul Brass, professor of political science and a constructivist would argue that it is such “machinations” controlled by elites that produce ethnic violence to support, maintain or build political power. Elites would manipulate public and change their perspective. This process eventually produces “construction of more antagonistic identities”. (Fearon and Laitin, 2000, p.853-854). Similarly, it can be observed that leaders would manipulate their own followers by spreading asymmetric information. Therefore it could result in ways that legitimize aggressive actions from one group towards another (Fearon and Laitin, 2000, p.854). When leaders claim that public is in security threat and decide to use institutional power ethnic violence may be provoked by simply to legitimize a coup d’état.

As a result, animosities and fears among the public would be fed by either their own leaders’ discourses or elitist political mechanisms eventually would end up with huge popular involvement to ethnic conflict. This situation would also be nurtured by several hate speeches.
According to the constructivist paradigm, a strategic action “on the ground” would mirror a correlation, a link that based on cause and effect relation. The production and reproduction of social identities appear through daily-basis actions of ordinary individuals that is “on the ground” by accepting, sustaining and promoting these identities as they identify themselves with a particular category. Thus, consequently the marginalized members of the other category may either tacitly undermine or rigorously resist against presumptions about categories. Their resistance may turn into new or altered identities or even may take the form of violence. (Fearon and Laitin, 2000, p.855-856).

2.3 Ethnicity and Nationalism

Ethnicity and nationalism are both theoretically and practically interlinked to each other in the course of Kurdish Question in relation to Turkey’s politics. Jan Nederveen Pieterse claims that “ethnic identity formation must be addressed in relation to existing cultural hierarchies, the state, and modernization” (Pieterse, 1993, p.2). In the same direction Paul Brass emphasizes on “the elite model of ethnicization” which Kurds in Turkey could be included theoretically because it refers to “a neglect of subaltern agency”. According to Brass “social and economic changes or new encroachments by the center may precipitate new center-locality conflicts in which issues of language and religion come into play again and provide bases for ethnic and political mobilization” (Pieterse, 1993, p.3). Here, it can be added to the theoretical aspect that the Republican People’s Party (CHP) regime in 1931 Congress adopted and legitimized an agenda that was against non-Turks and non-Turkish speakers. It stated that “those Turkish citizens, who have not been in opposition to the national liberation movement, who have been speaking Turkish and who have accepted the Turkish culture and the Party principles” (Çağaptay, 2006, p.45) were eligible for membership. This meant an ethnicity requirement as a precondition (Çağaptay, 2006, p.45).

In the same direction, some theorists argued that nationalism in Europe was ingrained in an ethnic resurgence, “an ideological movement for identity” and self-government in the late 18th century. However, others indicated that European industrialization failed to change “the structures of intra-ethnic modes of interaction with intra-class modes”. Instead, “existing political divisions within classes were translated into economic ones” (Göçek, 1995, p.511). Consequently, a cultural division of labor becomes a product of the unequally distributed power
in which some groups regulating and managing the state administration and its resources and some other groups being outside of the scope (Göçek, 1995, p.511). This intersection of class and ethnicity eventually expose the history and the context behind the concept of ethnicity and ethnic groups. Fatma Müge Göçek who is a professor of sociology and gender studies at University of Michigan reconsiders ethnicity as ethnic segmentation. In her analysis ethnic segmentation depicts when and in which circumstances ethnic groups construct (and reconstruct) their identities in order to achieve resources from existing structure of class and ideology. These groups highlight their specific character when confronted with “forces of industrialization and nationalism” and identify themselves different than those benefited by industrialization and nationalism (Göçek, 1995, p.512).

Ethnicity is usually associated with an origin of a place and claims to mutual ancestry. However cultural markers can differ and generally are much more than a place or a common ancestry. The visibility of cultural markers changes over time. According to Brass the choice of the leading symbol of differentiation depends upon the interest of the elite group (Pieterse, 1993, p.7). It is highly applicable in the context of Kurds in Turkey since the choice of the leading symbols was nationalism and secularism which meant to be contemporary civilized. This civilization continued with reforms that Mustafa Kemal established between 1923 and 1937. For him, they were necessary requirements that needed to be achieved “in order to compete with imperial powers” (Berkes, 2018). Mustafa Kemal believed that none of other Eastern nations who followed traditional monarchic regimes that coexisted with imperialism did not have enough power to declare independence, if did could not sustain it. He says “eastern nations who are not able to be contemporary civilized are obliged to be under the control of imperialism” (Berkes, 2018). “Turkishness” (which is republican, secular and virtues citizen) therefore used to assimilate Kurds who were seen as a threat (by having a different language, culture and customs) towards the nation-building process in the beginning of republican years. Accordingly, ethno-nationalism grew among Kurds in Turkey and “it illustrates an instrument for applying pressure in the political market and it is a response to needs for personal and collective identity” (Pieterse, 1993, p.8).

Ella Shohat is quoted in Peiterse’s article that “the marginalization of ethnicity reflects the imaginary of the dominant group which envisions itself as the ‘universal’, ‘essential’ or the
‘ideal’ as in the cases of American (Pieterse, 1993) and French nation (Loubere, 1969) and thus somehow ‘beyond’ or ‘above’ ethnicity” (Peiterse, 1993, p.9). It can be thought that Shohat refers Anderson when she mentions “imaginary of the dominant group”. In regard to making “Turkish superior”, in 1931 Mustafa Kemal established two Committees for the Study of Turkish History and Language where he ordered academics to research on Turkish history and the language to prove that Turks has been always the most prominent civilized society in Anatolia (Çağaptay, 2006, p.50). This was called the Turkish Thesis which is more widely explained in the Analysis chapter. Ella Shohat continues, “the very word, ethnic, reflects a peripheralizing strategy premised on an implicit contrast between ‘norm’ and ‘other’” (Peiterse, 1993, p.9). Thus it is not hard to acknowledge that a coded relationship to power inscribed in the terminology of ethnicity. In this respect, ethnicity is often imposed and that proceeds as of process of “othering on the part of dominant group” (Peiterse, 1993, p.9). As a result “ethnic” character of the dominant group appears as the canon and accordingly ethnic identity drives not from roots but from politics of domination and exclusion imposed through labeling and legislation from above and internalized which is called ethnic strategies of domination” (Peiterse, 1993, p. 9).

Micheal Hechter is quoted in Peiterse’s article regarding ethnic mobilization in relation to modernization, arguing that “the spatially uneven wave of modernization over state territory creates relatively advanced and less advanced groups” (Peiterse, 1993, p.13). Thus, the superior group would seek to preserve its advantageous position by legitimizing / institutionalizing the existing system, “in the form of a cultural division of labor which contributes to ethnic identification” and solidarities among groups (Peiterse, 1993, p.13). In the case of Kurds in Turkey and the laws and sanctions that they have faced in the 1930s testifies what Micheal Hecher mentions regarding securing ones advantageous position. This will be also explained in the Analysis chapter of this study.
CHAPTER THREE

3. Methodology

The methodological means of this study will be provided in this chapter. The reason of and the relatedness of the issue with the chosen methodological approach will be beneficial to understand the analysis part. Qualitative method as the general outline and the content analysis as the specific outline of the study will be given in order to grasp the reasons behind the chosen material and its categorization is made.

3.1 Qualitative Method as the General Outline

Qualitative method is a research method that has been used to identify, understand and interpret the concepts, meanings, symbols, referring and descriptions. It is usually compared with quantitative research method (Kohlbacher, 2006). In distinguishing two methods, it is argued that quantitative method gives answers for numerical studies that macro-sociology’s concerns (i.e. social surveys) (Bryman, 2004) whereas qualitative accounts for non-numerical, micro-sociological fields, “local productions” through participant observation and unstructured, in-depth interviewing (Bryman, 2004, p.1). However there are also other approaches such as ethnographic research method, historical study (Prill-Brett) and content analysis which this study makes use of.

The main benchmarks of qualitative research, Bryman argues that “depend on whether findings are grounded in empirical material or whether the methods are appropriately selected and applied, as well as the relevance of findings and the reflexivity of proceedings” (Bryman, 2009, p.15). As it is usually used for through participant observation or in interviews, the main characteristics of qualitative research occur to be “Seeing through the eyes of..” as viewing events, behaviors, activities, patterns and values from the perspective of those who are being studied. Though, this could generate a problem when analyzing the study through only one perspective (Bryman, 2004, p.61).

This study is using this method, firstly because theoretically speaking, according to social constructivist paradigm there are multiple realities constructed by different actors in a specific time and place where specific referring and meanings were produced. Therefore qualitative
method will benefit this study by identifying the symbols, and meanings. Secondly the initial research questions are exploratory and interpretive and available literature is relatively long and its focus requires in-depth analysis.

3.2 Content Analysis as the Specific Outline

According to many of scholars, content analysis is one of the most prominent and the longest traditionally established method of text analysis among the empirical methods of social researches (Kohlbacher, 2006). Content analysis is a research tool that helps researcher to regulate certain key words or concepts within a given text(s) (CSU Writing Guide). In other words, content analysis method is used portraying and characterizing a phenomenon through a systematic and objective means (Elo, Kyngäs, 2007). The aim of content analysis is that building a model to illustrate the “phenomenon in a conceptual form” (Elo, Kyngäs, 2007, p.107). It is agreed that content analysis is process of coding and conceptualizing the founding of empirical data then analyzing it through categories of related research (Elo, Kyngäs, 2007, CSU, Kohlbacher, 2006). The major reason behind coding process is to come with judgments about meaning under specific categories (Kolhbacher, 2006). Namely, “any text is coded, or broken down into manageable categories on a variety of levels –word, word sense, phrase, sentence, or theme- and then examined using one of analysis of content analysis; conceptual or relational analysis” (CSU Writing Guide).

Content analysis traditionally was used mostly in mass media and international politics and its significance increased in 21st century (Kohlbacher, 2006). It was also used in various fields in communication forms (i.e interviews) including, marketing, social media, health, ethnographic, social and cultural studies however it was widely used for analyzing literature and rhetoric, too (CSU Writing Guide). Even before that, it is revealed that content analysis was used to analyze old newspapers, bible interpretations as well as Freudian dream analysis (Kolhbacher, 2006).

The very essence of content analysis is to identify substantive statements that hint or imply a meaning from the data (Kohlbacher, 2006). Another way of explanation is provided by Satu Elo and Helvi Kyngäs explain that “through content analysis, it is possible to distil words into fewer content-related categories. It is assumed that when classified into the same categories,
words, phrases, and the like share the same meaning” (Elo, Kyngäs, 2007, p.108). In order to describe the phenomenon through analyzing the concepts or categories which helps researcher to form a model, conceptual map or system, it is needed to have precise and broad description of the phenomenon (Elo, Kyngäs, 2007, p.108). When reducing the data into categories, it should be focused on the specific words or patterns that indicators of research question (CSU Writing Guide). After this process, depending on the approaches (inductive or deductive) the process of establishing a model, the categorization of the material starts. In relation to the process, Bryman is quoted in Kohlbacher’s article that signifies:

“An approach to documents that emphasizes the role of the investigator in the construction of the meaning of and in texts. There is an emphasis on allowing categories to emerge out of data and on recognizing the significance for understanding the meaning of the context in which an item being analyzed (and the categories drive from it) appeared” (Kohlbacher, 2006).

Accordingly, in this research, qualitative content analysis will be used in order to demonstrate links between the metarials and results. In other words, the aim is developing an understanding in the connection between the Republic of Turkey (1923) and Kemalist ideology which consequently affects the Kurdish quest for recognition. With this aim, and with content analysis, defining the meanings, intentions, consequences and the context of empirical material, accordingly building a model of category / content scheme and then analyze the related data will be pursued. Finally this study’s methodological disposition shapes this three main themes:

- The historical, political and cultural outlines of the modern Turkish nationalism and its exclusionary boundaries
- The Kurdish resistance against the “imposed imagined community”
- The political consequences of such an identity conflict for the Kurds

3.3 Empirical Material

In order to understand historical, political, and cultural outlines of the modern Turkish nationalism and its exclusionary boundaries, Niyazi Berkes’ “Modernization in Turkey” approaches how modernization process took place in Anatolia from Ottoman Era 18th century to Republic of Turkey 20th century, simply the evolution of Turkey which adds crucial importance
to the study from the Turkish historical political and cultural perspective. It is also useful in terms of comprehending the principles of Kemalism as well as the “Turkish state’s solidarity” against the enemy during the process of making a republican state. On the one hand Seyfettin Aslan and Muslum Kayaci provide a comparison between French Revolution and Kemalist principles by “The Historical Backgorund and Principles of Kemalism” discusses that Mustafa Kemal was highly influenced by French Revolution in terms of the principles of nationalism and secularism which are crucial components of Turkish state ideology and Turkishness while Ed Webb, on his article “Rousseauist Civil Religions in the Middle East and Beyond” examines the practices of state managements and creating a sense of religion that has similarities with Rousseauist sense of religion which stimulates “body of politic, socially useful virtues and loyalty to the state” both in cases of Turkey and Tunisia. On the other hand, an interpretation of Jacobin French Revolution “The Intellectual Origins of French Jacobin Socialism” by Leo A. Loubère objectively contributes to the study in a contrasting manner for the reason that having an extensive understanding of Kemalist ideology from which Mustafa Kemal’s construction of Turkish state and Turkish identity flourished.

Further, to comprehend the Kurdish resistance against the “imposed imagined community” (Anderson, 1983), İsmail Beşikçi’s interpretation of “Republican People’s Party’s (CHP) 1927 Directory and Kurdish Question” gives the Kurdish perspective of the issue, arguing that the Directory shaped and often overlapped with the constitution mainly in the single-party regime during 1920s and 1930s to secure and strengthen the Kemalist governance. İsmail Beşikçi was imprisoned in Turkey more than 15 years after 1971 coup and his books and studies are illegal in Turkey. However Martin van Bruinessen’s works were fruitful in understanding of İsmail Beşikçi. Martin van Buinessen presents early rebels such as “Sheikh Said rebellion” and “Dersim rebellion” during the single-party regime of republicans as they were considered initials of Kurdish reactions. To have wider aspect of the Kurdish reaction to the exclusionary violent measures of Turkish state, the study makes use of Mesut Yeğen’s article “The Turkish State Discourse and the Exclusion of Kurdish Identity” together with Hakan Yavuz’s “Five Stages of the Construction of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey”. These two articles together with Francis O’Connor’s “The Kurdish Movement in Turkey –between political differentiation and violent confrontation” draw general frames of Kurdish political movement mainly from 1960s up to present.
Additionally Soner Çağaptay’s book “Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey Who is a Turk?” draws objectively a large variety of data on the process of shaping the republic’s boundaries, indicators of citizenship, promotion of Turkish language, establishments of committees for raising and popularize Turkish nationalism as well as political and cultural consequences of such processes for not only Kurds but also for non-Turkish and non-Muslim minorities in Turkey by providing enormous bibliography and references including articles from the constitution, amendments and laws, governments reports and statistics. Finally, Fatma Müge Göçek’s article “Ethnic Segmentation, Western Education and Political Outcomes: 19th century Ottoman Empire” brings the historical and cultural aspects together and concludes them with political results. She embraces the process of modernity from a different perspective than Niyazi Berkes. As her emphasis is on education and socio-cultural consequences of modernity in Ottoman Empire whereas Niyazi Berkes touches upon frequently on historical and political outlines while less on the culture.

The given resources provided the most benefit certainly with the given theoretical groundings, and there are also many other fruitful references that this study made use of. However it was challenging to interpret the given empirical data objectively and to avoid repetitive information in terms of knowledge production as most of the contexts was dealing the same issue with different aspects. When deciding on which data should be used, the previous critiques about the diversity of empirical data were considered. Also another difficulty that came across while dealing with finding some scholars’ such as İsmail Beşikçi’s researches were not available in Turkey therefore Martin van Burinessen’s interpretation of İsmail Beşikçi’s researches were used.

3.4 Categorization of the Material

In this research the aforementioned documents has been predominantly used to cover and describe the main frames of the study. Although these documents and books are considered as secondary data, this study found them adequate since they provide tremendous amount of data regarding historical, political and cultural developments in Anatolia from Kurdish, Turkish and “other” perspectives. The “other perspective” refers to the data that tried to be objective however still inclined to either side hence named as “other” rather than “objective”.

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Given the main empirical materials and the disposition of the methodology, categorization of the material follows a chronicle line of development of the analysis while involving with main themes; historical, political and cultural meanings and symbols. Such concepts of nationalism, nation-state, secularism, Kemalism, republic, populism, sovereignty, the Constitution, laws, reform, regime, modernization, and identity were the political findings from Niyazi Berkes’s book “Modernization in Turkey” which is considered as a relevant source from the Turkish perspective by this study. In the meantime, “Modernization of Turkey” provided also the historical and cultural aspects of the developments in Turkey.

Proceeding with “historical” category, such concepts including; contemporary civilization, Ottoman era, Westernization, secularism, traditional regimes, Eastern regimes, caliphate, new regime, national independence struggle, tribes, and imperialism are the findings from Turkish perspective. From the historical point of view Kurdish perspective is comprised of three rebels, the directory (1927) of Republican party (how it overrides the Constitution), assimilationist policies and exclusion of Kurdish identity while from the other perspective contains Fatma Müge Göcek’s article and Soner Çağaptay’s book.

The “cultural” category involves mainly language, identity and religious matters, particularly with the concepts of Turkish language, Kurdish language, Turkishness, minority, Muslims and non-Muslims, identity, race, secularism, stateism, nationalism, Islam, the West, the East, education, ethno-linguistic, ethno-nationalism, ethno-religious, and culture itself were the findings from related articles and books that were considered as the most relevant secondary data by this research. Some books and articles are interpreted two or more times in order to define the perspectives. This is unavoidable because the study generally deals with long-drawn out data and complex historical processes and facts that interpreted differently depending on their related perspective. The table 1 below is designed appropriately to the methodological disposition.
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| **Turkish**      | - Niyazi Berkes “Turkiye’dede Çağdaşlaşma”                                | - Niyazi Berkes “Turkiye’dede Çağdaşlaşma”  
- Seyfettin Aslan & Müslü Kayacı “Historical Background and Principles of Kemalism”                                                                 | - Niyazi Berkes “Turkiye’dede Çağdaşlaşma”                                                    |
| **perspective**  |                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                               |
| **Kurdish**      | - İsmail Beşikçi “Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası Tüzüğü (1927) ve Kürt Sorunu”    | - İsmail Beşikçi “Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası Tüzüğü (1927) ve Kürt Sorunu”  
- Francis O’Connor “The Kurdish Movement in Turkey-between political differentiation and violent confrontation”  
- Martin van Bruinessen “The Supression of Dersim Rebellion in Turkey” and “İsmail Beşikçi: Turkish Sociologist, Critic of Kemalism and kurdologist”  
- Hakan Yavuz “Five Stages of the Construction of Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey”  
- Mesut Yeğen “The Kurdish State Discourse and the Exclusion of Kurdish” | - Martin van Bruinessen “The Supression of Dersim Rebellion in Turkey” and “İsmail Beşikçi: Turkish Sociologist, Critic of Kemalism and kurdologist” |
| **perspective**  | - İsmail Beşikçi “Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası Tüzüğü (1927) ve Kürt Sorunu”    |                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                               |
|                  |                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                               |

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| Other perspective | - Fatma Müge Göcek “Ethnic Segmentation, Western Education and Political Outcomes: 19th century Ottoman Society”  
- Soner Çağaptay “Islam, Secularism and Nationalism in Modern Turkey Who is a Turk?”  
- Ed Webb “Rousseauist Civil Religious in the Middle East and Beyond” | - Leo A. Loubère “The Intellectual Origins of French Jacobin Socialism”  
- Soner Çağaptay “Islam, Secularism and Nationalism in Modern Turkey Who is a Turk?”  
- Fatma Müge Göcek “Ethnic Segmentation, Western Education and Political Outcomes: 19th century Ottoman Society” | - Soner Çağaptay “Islam, Secularism and Nationalism in Modern Turkey Who is a Turk?”  
- Fatma Müge Göcek “Ethnic Segmentation, Western Education and Political Outcomes: 19th century Ottoman Society” |
CHAPTER FOUR

4. Analysis Part I: Ottoman Empire and Minorities

In this chapter the study promises to analyze the matter mainly with using the empirical material in addition with other resources. It holds on to its methodology therefore follows a chronicle path to explain the issue. The first part of the analysis will begin with the Ottoman era because ethnic segmentation (Göçek, 1993) (as an outcome of certain historical events) rooted since Ottoman Era until now. An insight into the decline of Ottoman Empire, according to what reasons one group did become minorities and what kind of exclusionary social boundaries implemented towards minorities will be given in this part.

4.1 Position of Ethnic Groups with Modernization in Ottoman Empire

About the Kurdish Question, the primary reason as a pushing factor arose in the mid-18th century in Ottoman Empire. A scrutinizing view of Ottoman societal structure has been guided by Fatma Müge Göçek whose research focuses on the comparative analysis of history, politics and gender in the first and third worlds. She distinguishes and redefines ethnic groups and minorities. Göçek argues that ethnic segmentation that resulted as a polarization between minorities and Ottoman Muslims led to two different political outcomes as social transformation. As the empire collapsed, two political outcomes were (1) independence of non-Muslim territories and (2) the rise of Republic of Turkey (Göçek, 1993, p.508). How is it possible that an integrated Ottoman society which welcomed every religion and ethnicity were in social transformation which had two disparate political outcomes? Göçek in her article explains that different interpretations of Western education by different groups (non-Muslim vs Muslims) within the society and the juridical amendments regarding non-Muslims have led such different ideological outcomes.

During the “magnificent” years of Ottoman Empire, there was a proliferation of social stratification between the sultan’s administration and the rest of the society. The installation of sultan’s authority was the main reason for stratification and this situation eventually followed by another condition which was religion. Islam religion had an important role and had extended rights (i.e it was fixed requirement for entry to the ranks of rulers – administrative occupations; military, juridical, education). Religion separated ethnic groups and construed them as religious communities. Religion as a divider factor also produced different communities of Christians
(subgroups of Catholics and Orthodox). Göçek states; “the identification of Ottoman religious communities as minority groups preceded their identification as ethnic groups; the Ottoman state had to define the position of such groups in Ottoman society as early as the 15th and 16th centuries” (Göçek, 1993, p.514). It occurred in the 19th century that the transformation of these religious communities into ethnic groups had potentiality to transform the existing system. According to Göçek there were two factors combined: “(1) the reproduction of already-exist Ottoman societal structural and cultural divisions and (2) increasing Ottoman contact with the West” (Göçek, 1993, p.514).

This separation of these religious communities eventually translated itself into social practices as these communities were tolerated and endured within the Ottoman society. In this situation, an eventual cognitive sense of self-awareness, a perception of being different than Muslims emerged as minority groups. Minority groups were subject to minority rules which made them separate and distinguishable from the rest of the society. By law, minorities were socially excluded. To add Göçek’s emphasis;

“Sumptuary laws visually distinguished these minorities from the Muslims by specifying in detail range of acceptable clothing for minorities, from the shape of their headgear to the color of their footwear…minorities were required to pay special poll taxes for the right to live as non-Muslims in a Muslim society… their moral standards were assumed to be lower… respect to family law; while a non-Muslim male could not marry a Muslim female, a Muslim male could marry a non-Muslim woman… legal restrictions extended to spatial ones: minorities living in urban centers were forbidden to build or occupy houses near Muslim place of worship, their houses had to be under a specified height (less than those of Muslims)” (Göçek, 1993, p.515).

Since minorities had all the differences, Ottoman state gave them administrative autonomy in the matters of spiritual, judicial and certain administrative matters. This internal government shaped and fed the structural and cultural divisions in Ottoman society as legal restrictions increased such as; forbiddance to enter mosques, coffeehouses, bathhouses, allowance to shops, market places and inns thus limiting them to interact only with other minority groups or with their “Western coreligionists” (Göçek, 1993, p.515).

Ottoman minorities lacked social resources rather than economic resources. Göçek emphasizes that the reason for the destruction of Ottoman society’s fabric was its social
exclusion policy towards minorities. Although Ottoman minorities were dominant on the trade and finance in the cities, they had very little (5%) representatives in the Ottoman administration (Göçek, 1993, p.516) despite the existence of devshirme (which refers to non-Muslim who were assimilated into Ottoman when they were very young for future administrative positions). In 1850s Ottoman rulers sensed this societal segmentation and made “positive” amendments which made each individual equal before law and borrowed Western ideas, so to say; Ottoman Empire opened its doors to Western (Tanzimat Era). Following these developments, many European schools opened in Ottoman cities and towns and many educators and commanders for army and schools were brought from Europe. These Western schools had different curriculum than Ottoman state schools and terms such as liberty, equality, and fraternity were taught to Muslims in Western schools. Their interpretation of these terms was naturally different than their non-Muslim colleagues. There was no loyalty to an authoritarian figure in Europe, thus some meanings were contradictory to Ottoman notions (Göçek, 1993, p.519).

However, not only westernization of Ottoman Muslim society and the exclusionary policies towards minorities but also WWI led eventually to the collapse of the empire with two absolutely different political outcomes: (1) between 1820 and 1918 the independence of Balkans and the North African states from Ottoman territory, and (2) 1923; the rise of Republic of Turkey.

4.2 Kurds in Ottoman Empire

The Kurds were in the grip of Ottoman Empire as the 16th century. They were Sunni-Muslims that separated themselves from the Shii-Iranian Empire and sought to be a part of Sunni Ottoman Empire because of Kurds’ choice of common ancestry. In doing so, they gained a remarkable autonomous territory; the “Kurdish Emirates” (principalities) were subordinated to Istanbul (back then capital of Ottoman Empire). Kurdish families who were entrusted with the ranks of Ottoman administration and army were in charge of these principalities. As autonomous entities and political organizations, Kurdish emirates developed “individual sub-systems within the general system of the Ottoman Empire” (Yeğen, 1996, p.218). In fact, Ottoman Empire was the ascendant combination of these sub-systems within a broader system, without eradicating the autonomous existence of the former. The autonomy wherein Kurds lived enjoyed by these both sub-systems and the very condition of the general system of the empire. It is not hard to conclude
that the political, economic and cultural aspects of the relationship between the Ottoman and Kurds almost fully characterized by the relationship between the sub-systems (Kurdish emirates) and the general system (Ottoman Empire). Therefore one can suggest that the emirates “with their autonomous existence constituted and defined political-social space where Kurdishness was constituted” (Yeğen, 1996, p.218).

By the 19th century, as a result of WWI and both modernizing efforts and decentralization of the Ottoman Empire the autonomous of Kurdish emirates started to shake. Decentralization refers to the decrease of authority that resulted with the abolition of the Kurdish principalities. This situation led to the appearance of sheikhs which were religious leaders of the tribes. Sheikhs were significant in terms of organizing the revolts and uprising the Kurdish nationalism. In 1870, the first attempt to establish an independent Kurdish entity was done by sheikh Ubeidullah (Haddad, 2001, p.89). In the second half of the 19th century, just as the other nationalities in the Empire, Kurds were also affected by the nationalist tendencies which spread from Europe. Kurdish intellectuals started to form secret communities where they intend to establish an independent territory from Ottoman Empire. Though, this attempt was very hard to actualize since considerable manpower was absent to generate such political change in a rural society (Haddad, 2001, p.89).
CHAPTER FIVE

5. Analysis Part II: Conceptual Frameworks of the Turkish Modern Republic

The following part will examine the ideological resemblances between Jacobin-style made French Revolution and Republican Revolution in Turkey that based on Kemalist principles. Both revolutions were aiming to construct a nation and an identity with the priority to protect the noble / bourgeois segment of the society. Secularism and nationalism were significant elements of both revolutions. The emancipation of the state from church in the French case corresponds to the abolition of the caliphate in the Ottoman case. In the making of the cultural and ideological way to modernism and virtuous citizen in which nationalism was promoted via strong ties to state engendered as the fundamental similarities between 1789 and 1923 Revolutions (Loubère, 1959, Webb, 2008, Aslan, Kayacı, 2016).

5.1 Link between Jacobin French Nationalism and the Ideological Frameworks of the Turkish Modern Republic

Following the collapse of Ottoman Empire, Republic of Turkey came into existence with a drastic transformation within its societal and political spheres in Anatolia. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was the founder of this radical shift from Islamic-based Ottoman administration towards Westernized hence “modernized” single-party republican regime. He was the commander-in-chief during the independence struggle and an absolute and a lone leader of the reformist republican movement. His ideology “Kemalism” and its principles shaped the mainstream Turkish identity – Turkishness after 1920 until present time. Though it is now highly debated how Turkishness evolved in nearly 100 years. Discussions about (excluding ethnic definition) Turkishness represents to be laik (secular) and being “modernist, westernized, civilized” Muslim which would generate “the citizen” that attached pragmatically with a strong tie to the state where state is instrumentalized and therefore has superiority and privilege. (Loubère, 1959, Webb, 2008, Aslan, Kayacı, 2016).

In the process of nation-making during the 1920s, Mustafa Kemal not only borrowed the ideals from Jacobin made Revolutionary French, also implemented them into the legislature of the newly formed republic. Obviously, such an action could not be thought without consequences. However, what is more fascinating is that the way Mustafa Kemal performed and
imposed principles from-top-to-bottom style regardless of opposition coming from his friends; Kazım Karabekir, Rauf Okbay, Ali Fuat Cebesoy (whose were members of Progress and Order Party – İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti in which Mustafa Kemal encouraged them to enact) (Aslan, Kayacı, 2013, p.18). The discrepancies regarding the political regime after the independence struggle was predominantly between “New-Ottomans” whose directions and developments were towards keeping the values of Ottoman, hence Sultan’s priority, improving the empire towards a moderate Islamic state and “New-Turks” on the other hand, whose values were based on “bourgeois” liberty, reformist and whose guidance en route West and keen on creating a notion of modern, secular, republican regime which was affected from Jacobin model of French Revolution, more precisely, Rousseau and Robespierre.

5.2 The Intellectual Origins of French Jacobin Socialism

The aim here is giving an explanation of Jacobin philosophy of socialism because Mustafa Kemal Ataturk seemed to borrow, interpret and apply the same ideals to Turkish society when he was laying the foundations of Turkish Republic during and after the Independence struggle. There were two main distinct and at the same time similar outcomes from French Revolution. The first was Jacobin democracy; ideologically it was socialism in general terms, however there are different views and interpretations of “democracy” by the representatives of “general will” that launched out from the revolution; Jacobins, Babouvians, Blanquists, Bonapartists claimed to be true representatives of “general will” and did not hesitated executing when opposed each other (Loubère, 1959, p.415-416). And the second one was co-operative socialism. While first one outlined “from the principle of popular sovereignty”, co-operative socialism was consisted of “two contrasting theories of landed property”. Radicalist theory was assuring the land “by parceling it among elites as individual properties” and the socialist theory was making land available for all men as collective owners (Loubère, 1959, p.415-416). It is more apprehensible for France (as being a strong colonial state) to follow the world’s consensus on capitalist economy rather than co-operative socialism.

First condition to reach liberty was to ensure equality among all men. Problem occurred when they (representatives of general will) started to argue about possession and property rights. Discussion was whether property of land is a law determined by society or a natural right. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, one of Jacobin radicalist, an individualistic liberal, a moralist at the same time
defended that no one would possess property in excess. He was “the man of moderate property, the simple man, who promised to be the virtuous citizen” (Loubère, 1959, p.416). Jacobin belief was that political equality is only possible when it is based on economic justice however, “their proposal were designed to limit individual acquisition of wealth, not to collectivize it” (Loubère, 1959, p.418). The proclamation was that society ensures individuals the right to work and assist when incapacitated (Loubère, 1959, p.418).

Interventionism emerged when such discrepancies occurred within the left wing. Louis Blanc, a socialist reformist, who invented cooperatives as an assurance in labor for urban poor wrote that “certain Jacobins, with the Incorruptible in the head, recognized the need of fraternal aid among men, and of the intervention of an active power to protect the weak” (Loubère, 1959, p.418). Interventionism therefore integrated into Jacobin left and consequently social problems regarding political matters required a strong state. The idea of strong state and its implications was always an important foundation for nation-state-building process as an outcome of French Revolution.

“Conspiracy of Equals” was appeared as a political expedient to bring two Jacobin trends together (Loubère, 1959, p.419) which Kemalist ideology laid its foundations for socially and economically classless society. This conspiracy was mainly influenced by Rousseau following Robespierre’s The Declaration of Rights of Men. “Robespierre’s and his followers’ declaration served as the ideological basis of the new society. They also laid plans for a new committee of public safety, composed of virtuous elite, to guide the people toward the ‘universal association’” (Loubère, 1959, p.422). This effort was required principles to be constituted within the society and state: “Popular sovereignty, eligibility for public office, the election of representatives, of magistrates and officers of the National Guard, an indemnity for representatives, obligatory primary education and disestablishment” (Loubère, 1959, p.421). In accord with disestablishment religion must be separated from the state. These aims evolved in “a type of revolution that one concerns less with rural problems than those of urban workers” (Loubère, 1959, p.422). This shift was inevitable because of growing economy back then. The leaders of the Jacobins were therefore urban bourgeois who were “laboring class, unhappy with plight” hence more active to change the dominance towards the state rather than church (Loubère, 1959, p.422).
What developed from Jacobin socialism (in line with Kemalism) were the equality, liberty and interpretation of virtue. The revolution was dedicated to all people of society, little people, bourgeois and urban and rural laborers. It suited humanitarianism of the wealthy even though it was the lower class’ conscious, “the virtuous poor” where the social morality spread from. Therefore ‘virtue’ gained an important role in which social justice and benefit for all men, an enthusiasm for doing good, having good deeds, hence complete absence of skepticism (Loubère, 1959, p.428) towards state must be achieved through constitution and institutions which could be evaluated as creation of an identity. In relation to the process of modernization in Turkey, Niyazi Berkes, Turkish sociologist whose study on Republican reforms and modernization process in Turkish history argues that when creating a civilized nation and an identity there must be absolute trust towards state from individual. The constitution and the institutions must confirm that any attempt to prevent civilization would not go unpunished (i.e intolerance to religious communities and usage of a non-Turkish language) (Berkes, 2018).

Mustafa Kemal Ataturk was very much influenced by Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s ideas and French Revolution itself. The idea of “making good for public” as the main aim of state and the individual was proliferated. In Kemalist ideology it was translated and later based on the foundations of revolutionism, nationalism and populism.

5.3 Kemalist Ideology and Principles

Jacobin French nationalism is ideologically similar with Kemalist project of Republic of Turkey. Republic of Turkey has seen a huge transformation in its early years of establishment as a result of WWI and particularly its victorious Independence War against central powers; British, French, Italian, Armenian and Greek forces.

Mustafa Kemal and his fellow elites did not have much choice about the foundations of constitutional regime when they came in power after the independence struggle. Building a nation would be possible only with the domination of the public. In accordance with domination of public, some Ottoman elites were opposed Mustafa Kemal’s desire to perform a political power alone “in a Jacobin style” (Aslan, Kayaci, 2013, p.17). This could only be explained with his positivist desire to be “Westernized”. According to Niyazi Berkes, Mustafa Kemal was a visionary man that he foresaw the only exit way from the chaotic situation of Ottoman Empire.
was the unavoidable transition from emperorship, sultan’s dynasty to a modern nation-state. The only way to realize this transition was to perform revolution in social, cultural, economic and political aspects of life that would lead society towards the contemporary civilization level. The sovereignty must change hands from sultanate to the nation (Berkes, 2018).

The principles that promulgated during his single party regime were inspired by French Revolution and positivist philosophy and thereby caused exclusion of identities within the society and limitation to create any opposition against him and his party, Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriye Halk Partisi - CHP). After 1930s CHP and the governance of Turkey (Grand Assembly) made closer contact and CHP legitimized Kemalist principles; Republicanism, Nationalism and Populism. It was imagined that these principles would be beneficial in creating a “classless” society. Kemalism became a political system as an alternative to Moscow’s communism and Western democracy in Third World (Beşikçi, 1978). Kemalism’s success is about being neither doctrinal nor ideological but rather realist and pragmatic. Kemalist reforms were toward contemporary civilization but contradictory to communism and capitalism therefore has sui generis character (Beşikçi, 1978). The Kemalist project is a consolidation of solidarism and individualism. Its aim was to generate people’s will that protect the reforms and would organize from-bottom-to-top, though the doctrine itself was an imposition from-top-to-bottom (Beşikçi, 1978).

In Kemalism the subjects are constituted by the state that is considered to be a sovereign homogenous nation. The notion of sovereignty attaches itself via the People’s Assembly (Grand Assembly) to the state; individual citizens are called to experience themselves primarily as part of this nation with this affiliation superseding all other group ties (Webb, 2008, p.17). The embodiment of Mustafa Kemal within the state represents the embodiment of the authority within the nation. Therefore state becomes the only and Mustafa Kemal himself becomes the only legitimate source of authority. The relation of the individual to the collective is explained in the civic book that Mustafa Kemal authored:

“When we say state and individual these words do not have a single meaning; we mean the sole reality that is the “social being”, individuals living in society. This social being has two kinds of interests. One part of these interests is personal, the other part is collective. These collective interests are the ones that maintain the life of society. Properly considered, these two kinds of interests are equal. Because the social
being needs both interests to the same degree for his or her life...The state appears as the form produced by individuals’ national society [or collectively]” (Webb, 2008 p.17)

The Kemalist elite understood itself as part of contemporary international (i.e. Western) civilization, and “beholden to the past only insofar as it could reinvent its culture to serve the modernizing national project” (Webb, 2008 p.17). The goal of this project was to “make peasants into Turks” (Webb, 2008, p.17), citizens of a modern civilization. The main instruments used to implement this identity engineering project, in other words institutions that would foster a strong nation-state were the constitution, army, the Ministry of National Education, the Institute of Turkish Language and History and the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Berkes, 2018). Another landmark in the quote is that the emphasis of “The state appears as the form produced by individuals’ national society” which meant to create and promote the collective national identity. State is comprised of nations’ sovereignty. State must protect the idea of “sovereignty rests unconditionally with the nation” (Egemenlik kayıtsız şartsız millettindir). This quote is from Mustafa Kemal and is the fundamental ground for Grand Assembly that represents national sovereignty belongs to national society.

CHP’s single-party regime was the period of structuring Kemalist doctrine. CHP did not spread this doctrine; rather it played a crucial role on necessitating public to accept Kemalist reforms by its own “will”. In this way, CHP decided to open “Independence Tribunals” (Istiklal Mahkemeleri) that would judge dissents. It would be firstly Kurds that would react to subordination of Kurds under Turks. Kemalists, having forgotten their promises to Kurds, in collaboration with Britons and Frenchmen, played a crucial role in dismantling of “Kurdistan” and enabling subordination of Kurds. They started to colonize Kurdistan and dispel national qualities of Kurds (Beşikçi, 1978, p.92). Secondly, other dissent would be the religious unionists. Beşikçi was insistent on emphasizing the CHP’s directory was far influential than the 1924 Constitution. 1924 Constitution was never applied. Its essential provisions which are “sovereignty unconditionally rests with nation” and “independence of courts” were not applied at all. In this case CHP’s directory, totalitarian single-party regime preceded the constitution (Beşikçi, 1978, p.133). Mustafa Kemal’s authority in the Grand Assembly was obvious in a sense that no decision can be taken without his will. That is the foundations of Beşikçi’s critique that knowledge and producing knowledge was not objective in Turkey and depended on CHP’s
directory which was ignored and disregarded by Turkish scholars when studying and examining that period.

There are six main principles of Kemalism which are symbolized by six arrows on the CHP’s flag. All of the principles were included to the second article in the constitution in 1937 (Aslan, Kayaci, 2013). Particularly, nationalism, republicanism and secularism influenced from French Revolution while populism, statism and revolutionism affected from socialism (Aslan, Kayaci, 2013, p.17).

5.4 Republicanism

In the constitution, the principle of republicanism states that “Party is a form of state that definitely represents and executes the national sovereignty ideal of the Republic in the most suitable and reliable way. According to this steady point, party defends the Republic against dangers by any means” (Aslan, Kayaci, 2013, p.23).

French Revolution influenced the way that regime came into existence in terms of its concern for public rather than monarchy and autocracy. In this aspect, sovereignty is based on public’s will (nation) and the governors should come to power by election. Republicanism represents a new age after the independence struggle that dismantle the old Ottoman regime. “Sovereignty rests unconditionally with the nation” means that the power of sultanate must be handed over to the nation itself. Mustafa Kemal interpreted republican regime as the only way to prevail against imperialism and compete with other imperialist nations. He wanted to surpass old, traditional, “Eastern” regimes because at all costs “Eastern” regimes were doomed to be under the imperialist powers even if they declared independence; imperialism remained in their country’s domestic affairs (Berkes, 2018).

Kemalism viewed public participation negatively because public at that time was considered to be incapable in rational thinking. Therefore, to avoid contradiction within the emphasis on national sovereignty, republicanism is made to represent the necessary unitary government and its borders. It was grounded on the basis of modernizing state that encourages indivisibility. The unity of power, at the end, concluded with modernizing state with single-party that excluded the participation of individuals (Aslan, Kayaci, 2013, p.24). CHP’s single-party regime imposed on the “two-degree” of elections which meant deputies were not chosen by
citizens. Citizens were choosing firstly representatives to choose the deputies afterwards (Beşikçi, 1978). CHP’s regime between 1923 and 1950 is self-evident when considering the time to implement such reforms and open up institutions accordingly to the republican agenda. It took time to transform society into contemporary civilization properly and there have been many uprisings from both religious and ethnic groups during that time. Comprehending the party’s vision was the supreme power to reach “national peace and correctness” (Beşikçi, 1978).

5.5 Populism

One of the most important meanwhile most contradictive elements of Kemalism is the principle of populism. At the same time, populism was the main aim even though the effort for modernizing was activated during the Ottoman Empire. Some privileges were made accessible for the substratum of the society in Tanzimat era in Ottoman Empire. Tanzimat era refers to first endeavors for modernization (Westernization) including individual property rights, “education for girls” (Doğan, 2016, p.251), modernizing economic, military, political, societal and educational areas. These reforms were organized by military and political bureaucrats accordingly they represent from-top-to-bottom implication (Doğan, 2016, p.25). The significant idiom of populism rose as follows: “Populism is for the public, in spite of public” (Halk için, halka rağmen, halkıçılık). This quote makes interventionism (which was adopted from Jacobinism) legitimate when governors decides what is ‘good’ and ‘bad’ for public. State becomes the only power to change the regime if necessary by force (i.e 1960, 1971, 1980 military coups).

Similar to Jacobinism’s Conspiracy of Equals that refers allegedly classless society was built on the assumptions that it would unite all segments of society under the umbrella of “nation” which is “unprivileged, classless and cohesive public” with moral virtues. Populism was used to prevent class struggle in Kemalist ideology. By removing the social differences from economic and political spheres, CHP would be the only mechanism to allow public participation “in the political life and management and dominance of The Grand National Assembly as the concrete expression of the nation’s moral existence” (Aslan, Kayaci, 2013). In this respect the legitimation of single-party regime realized. The Populism was included into the second article of the constitution and stated;
“The source of will and dominance is the nation…We consider the individuals who accept an absolute equality before the law and grant no privilege for any individual, family, class or community, as populists” (Aslan, Kayaci, 2013).

It was cynical saying that “dominance is the nation” where public had no means to conduct any dominance to change the state.

5.6 Secularism

Secularism has been argued by various scholars that the emancipation of state, of political sphere from religious life and its affairs which indicate a political liberty as in French Revolution:

“…we consider that the implementation of freedom of conscious consists first in putting the State, the public powers outside and above all the dogmas and practices of the different religious confessions, putting France as much beyond the reach of encroachments of the priesthood as of empire. There is the start and the end of civil liberty, which engenders political liberty” (Webb, 2008)

The State must be liberated from religion in order to achieve wider identity in which the heritage of revolution and the country’s place in the world as a model of civilization included. Therefore, the state and its members (citizens) must be secular (Webb, 2008, p.8).

In the Kemalist project as well, secularism is an important element of Turkishness together with nationalism, “they become the prime identity marker for the republican system” (Mateescu, 2006, p.232). Kemalist secularism requires the state control over religious institutions and ensures them to produce discourse on official ideology. In the meantime it tends to adopt “Sunni Muslim” identity as a sub-identity to be aligned with its Islamic heritage so that Kemalists would not reject the whole society’s past religious consciousness. By doing that, the conversion of traditional, religious values to rational, moral and scientific values was a necessity in the way of Western-style civilized Turkish identity. For Niyazi Berkes, secularism was the first necessary condition for reaching the level of contemporary civilization (Berkes, 2018). “The Islamic cultural component was to be eliminated by the Kemalists naturally by virtue of their decided option for secularism” (Mateescu, 2006, p.235).

The principle of secularism included variety of reforms during first years of republic. In other words, secularism must be achieved in order to be modernized. Such reforms concluded as
follows; the abolition of the caliphate and shaykh al-islam (şeyhülislam - the title / position that responsible for religious affairs), adaption of the Swiss Civil Code and the Latin alphabet. Religious was promoted as an individual choice and never encouraged as an instrument for politics, thus state should be responsible for providing the means for religion as a public service for those practicing religious (Aslan, Kayacı, 2013 p.26). Mustafa Kemal wanted Islam religion to be rational and tried to conceptualize Qur’an, so to say, he wanted Islam to be Turkish and ordered for translation into Turkish. This attempt got many negative responses from the Grand Assembly (Berkes, 2018). These innovations in law had later effect on many ethno-religious rebels during 1920s and 1930s. The desire for Kemalists to implement secularism in societal sphere stemmed from the essential requirements of Mustafa Kemal’s modernizing model in which transformation of society was acquired as so was in the Revolutionary French.

Considering the roots of Ottoman decline; modernist policies followed by loss of lands both in northern Africa and Balkans and defeat in WWI, gave way to an inevitably totalitarian reforms under the influence of positivist paradigm. This paradigm was also used for preventing reactions during the single party period.

5.7 Nationalism

In the formation of Turkish identity, together with secularism, nationalism too played a crucial role. In order to dispose the Islamist Ottoman identity, Kemalists developed Turkishness which contains both modernist and Muslim affiliations. The reason behind keeping the Muslim heritage was because of Ottoman Empire’s Millet system which indicates different ethno-religious states, provinces and autonomies wherein ethno-Muslim and non-Muslim communities would exist within the boundaries of the Empire (Sayarı, 2006). This stream was named Turkism (Türkçülük) founded by Ziya Gökalp who was an influential Turkish historian and sociologist, connected with right wing. His ideas’ tendency would necessitate the protection of cultural heritage of Turks during the Meşrutiyet Era (1908-1914) where different streams (i.e New Ottomans, Jeune Turks) existed and debated around which direction should the empire evolve when entering a new world order (Berkes, 2018).

Thus it could not have been thought nationalism without religious linkage in the case of Turkey and this can only be achieved with ‘modernist nationalism’ as Ayhan Akman who is an
independent researcher and faculty member of Arts and Science in Sabancı University claims it. Turkish national identity was a project that directed to a modernizing cultural transformation. The reasons behind this project was firstly the absence of a colonial rule imposed on Ottoman Empire and secondly the fear of extinction of the empire (Akman, 2004, p.33). Akman explains why Kemalist nationalism was inherently developed into modernist nationalism rather than ethnic or civil nationalism. He argues that under certain conditions, when an imposition of a colonial rule exist, a dilemma occurs between choosing modernism (which to be an attribute of non-European nations) and authenticity. When the dilemma does not exist, then the emerging non-European nations tended to be modernist rather than ethnic in character. Modernity can be accepted not only instrumentally and pragmatically but also ideologically, with saying that it would become a goal, a primary self-definition of a nation, as it is the case in Turkey (Akman, 2004, p.31).

The concept of “modernist nationalism” discerns itself from civil and ethnic nationalism in terms of its subjects and implications in relation to Turkey’s case. While civil nationalism involves with unifying people around a common “idea”, criteria of “shared ideas” and participation of each segment of society in common polity which are motivated with liberty, solidarity and national identity, ethnic nationalism’s motives are more homogeneity of the society based on purity and mutual ancestry of the nation. However modernist nationalism is far distinct than other two; its source of national identity is a process of modernity that requires “civilizational conversation” within segments of society while its form of national identity is modern and secular which was imported from Western culture and imposed upon society (Akman, 2004, p.25).

Other characteristic of the modernist nationalism is the intentional negligence of political participation of periphery. Modernist nationalists find this suspicious and risky because opponents might threaten the process of modernizing and civilization. In the case of Turkey, nation-building process during the single-party regime under the Republicans manifests the concept of modernist nationalism (Akman, 2004, p.25-26).

In relation to Kemalist positivism, Daniele Conversi who is a researcher in socio-political theory, comparative democratization and theory of nationalism emphasizes, too on “modernist nationalism” in which process of “Westernization” has to be achieved through “sum of
ideological discourses, artistic expressions and political practices gravitating around the ‘need to be modern’” (Conversi, 2012, p.13). Highlighting more on the importance of nationalism, secularism should be understood comprehensively. Secularism is the first constituent and necessary condition for political Turkishness. Nationalism based on secular identity of Turkish individual, of the “Turk”, because the main aim here is to create a competitive contemporary citizen which needs to be firstly secular. In the constitution, the principle of nationalism was added into the second article and expressed as follows:

“The party predicates on being harmony and parallel with all modern nations in the way of progress, development, as well as international contacts and intercourses and protecting the special characters and independent identity of the Turkish social life” (Aslan, Kayaci, 2013)

Nationalism could be understood as a “major axis” (together with secularism) of the nation and identity-building process during the transition from Islamist Ottoman to civilized Turkish state. Another statement from the constitution regarding nationalism is that; “those who are committed to the Turkish State with citizenship bond are Turk” and without touching upon ethnicity, it considered “those who felt like a Turk is Turk” illustrates a unity of nation and solidarity where the main objective becomes building nationalist state for coming republican generations (Aslan, Kayaci, 2013, p.27).

5.8 Statism

Although statism was inspired by socialism from French Revolution, it does not correspond completely to socialism. Statism requires “an integrated political world, where all kinds of dynamics in society are implemented under the state supervision” (Aslan, Kayaci, 2013, p.28). The state has the superior control over the individuals that any social phenomenon (i.e. rebels or participation) would seem suspicious. State must protect itself from any conflict as well as provide the means for a functional society. Each social development would be in assistance with the interest of the state. This principle added in the second article as follows;

“Grounding on individual labor and activity, it is among our important principals to efficaciously engage the state in affairs that require the common and high benefits of the nation, especially in the economic area in order to make the nation and the motherland prosper as soon as possible” (Aslan, Kayaci, 2013).
The reason for statism came into existence was to deliver progress to economic developments and industrialization. However it resulted in failure, partially because of there was no capital to do so and it was explained vaguely and passed through the institutions unclearly (Aslan, Kayacı, 2013, p.29). Though, credits should be given to some efforts such as the Village Institutes (Köy Enstitüleri). Since agricultural production was the only source of income / living in Turkey and majority of society was consisted of farmers, İsmet İnönü (then-Prime minister) opened up the Village Institutes which was Mustafa Kemal’s project (however his life was not enough to make it happen) first in 1940. İnönü, Mustafa Kemal’s comrade in arms, established these institutes where individuals could go and learn and engage in agriculture. Institutes were also training teachers and experts in specific agriculture production (Kömürçü, 2018). The aim was to educate society at the same time advance the economy. These institutions were closed down and banned by the allegations of “being a communist invention hence manipulating minds” in 1954 by Democratic Party (Gazalcı, 2018).

5.9 Reformism / Revolutionism

“The party requires loyalty to and protection of principles, which are originated from revolutions that were made by our nation with a great devotion and which enable development” (Aslan, Kayacı, 2013)

Emphasis regarding the principle of reformism stated in the constitution as above. It has similarities with Revolutionary French. As statism would require a total subordination of the individual to state, reformism would represent a legit militarist intervention in case of any reaction against state. As populism indicates “public needs to be managed for the public and despite of public” any intervention in the name of “making good for public” would be legitimate under the principle of reformism. The Turkish nation was built by reforms, and therefore “Reformism” becomes an important element of Kemalist ideology (Aslan, Kayacı, 2013, p.24-25). Two main emphases; firstly it requires protection of reforms that has been so far made by CHP (led by Mustafa Kemal) and secondly the loyalty that each individual were expected to show to those reforms, particularly feeling obliged to what state would impose.

Ultimately Kemalism is fundamental element of the Turkish identity. In other words, it is what was offered to all citizens as the mainstream Turkish imagined community, wherein anti-imperialist view, secularity, contemporary and therefore feeling pride in Turkishness was
dominant. However it was not realized that some non-Turks might not confirm with the same ideals.
CHAPTER SIX

6. Analysis Part III: The Modern Turkish Republic and the Position of Kurds

As the Ottoman Empire defeated in the WWI, the Republic of Turkey established as an only solution for Anatolian people. This third part of the analysis will give the main frames of Turkish Republic’s structure and its boundaries where Kurdish identity was restricted. The restriction began with assimilationist policies in the single-party regime of CHP when Mustafa Kemal was creating the formation of “Turk”. Accordingly three significant rebels occurred in the Kurdish populated areas and resulted in brutal interference by military forces. Turkish politics switched to multiparty regime in 1950 and CHP could not continue its government. People voted for Democratic Party (DP) which was religious grounded party that reflected actual background of Anatolia. Afterwards three successive military coups 1960, 1971 and 1980 happened to ensure that governments would follow Kemalist principles.

6.1 The Modern Turkish Republic of 1923 and its Assimilationist Boundaries

As being one of the most prominent sociologists in Turkey, Niyazi Berkes’ work in “Modernization in Turkey” (Türkiye’de Çağdaşlaşma) provides in-depth analysis of Turkey’s transformation from Ottoman Empire into a republican nation-state while giving promising details on Mustafa Kemal’s steps toward the level of contemporary civilization. His main emphasis starts with the eventual historical progress (which is a result of European contact) towards contemporary world has political repercussions in Ottoman Empire. For instance in 1908 revolution when Progress and Order Party (İttihat ve Terraki Partisi) who were known as “Jeune Turks” opposed to Sultan II.AbdulHamit in Mesrutiyet Era (Berkes, 2018). Mesrutiyet Era is known as the time period between 1908 and 1920 wherein political parties and their ideologies were in conflict both each other and against the emperor. The period when political parties (with disparate and desperate strategies in mind on how Ottoman Empire can be saved or on which direction should it be evolved) were officially disempowering the sultan because of his desire to remain caliphate, keeping his sultanate in return to make benefits (giving lands) for imperial powers after the loss of WWI (Berkes, 2018). This era ended when Mustafa Kemal formally established the Grand Assembly in Ankara (1920). A year before Mustafa Kemal declared his authority he ignited the fire of independence movement against Istanbul and
imperial powers (1919). During that time most of the political leaders joined his mobilization to save Anatolia (Berkes, 2018). In these independence struggle years Mustafa Kemal gained trust from opposition (mostly religious communities) for his effort to regain territories that divided by the Sevres Treaty after the WWI (1920). Lastly, with the Lousanne Treaty (1923) the Republic of Turkey was officially recognized by Western powers and Mustafa Kemal was announced as the founder of the Republic by the Grand Assembly.

After 1923, this era can be considered as “progress and order in action” when looking through the lens of Kemalist ideology pursuing the “modern” civilization. Such reforms consist of adoption of Latin alphabet, writing and education reforms, closure of madrasahs (religious universities), abolishment of caliphate, sultanate and shariah law and adoption of civil code. As well as hat and dress reforms and adoption of international measures and numbers. In the making of a nation and identity wherein contemporary civilized world was desired, these reforms must be accepted by society regardless of its religious and diverse background. In this respect credits should also be given to Niyazi Berkes when he interpreted the whole modernization process in Anatolia from 17th century to 20th century. Berkes emphasizes that, for Mustafa Kemal all that matters was the achievement of contemporary civilization and competing with imperialist nations. Actualizing this, some sanctions (cultural and political transformation) and some necessary requirements (reforms) should be accepted and accomplished by public (Berkes, 2018). Soner Çağaptay, a political scientist and the director of the Turkish Research Program at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, highlights that governments’ main policy and mission was nationalism and maintenance of order as its central concepts. CHP’s government announced that “developing and securing a republican and populist national way of life and maintaining order, was needed for political, national and economic progress” ( Çağaptay, 2006, p.43). It was just a beginning of “Kemalism par excellence” under Mustafa Kemal (Çağaptay’s emphasis).

1920s kept CHP and Mustafa Kemal busy with mostly recovering and restructuring Turkey from hard-won Independence War (1919-1922) and also with designing secularism and actualizing reforms. Today’s agenda against Kurdish political movement was shaped by then-CHP’s politics and Kemalist ideology during the single party regime of CHP (1923-1950) (Beşikçi, 1978). According to Beşikçi, this argument was distorted and restrained by many
Kemalist scholars that promoted Kemalist ideals and CHP, because Kemalism and CHP’s policies prevented to get any objective and scientific knowledge. This “tabu” was consolidated by laws and punishments. Beşikçi argues that it was impossible to reach scientific knowledge by accepting the norms of the official ideology (Beşikçi, 1978).

1930s considered to be era of maintenance of nationalism in Turkey. The consolidation and maintenance of Turkish language was the very first target of state (Çağaptay, 2006, p.43). Up from 1930, after secular identity firmly shaped, the time was to determine governments’ ideology. In a public speech in 1931, Mustafa Kemal announced that republicanism, nationalism, populism, statism, secularism and reformism as the main principles of Kemalism (Çağaptay, 2006, p.43). Throughout 1930s these principles were approved and sanctioned as the state’s main doctrines. In 1931 CHP’s Congress the concept of nation (millet) defined as a “social and political community of citizens connected through one another through language, culture and ideals” (Çağaptay, 2006,p.44). This definition indicated that being Turkish was firstly “cultural-linguistic” and secondly voluntary. This meant an individual can become a Turk only in so far as s/he knows Turkish and adopts Turkish culture. The plan was to make national language Turkish and teach ancient Turkish history. Education system was a crucial component and quickly adopted this doctrine as it would breed citizens who would serve the Turkish nation (Çağaptay, 2006, p.44). So as the concept of homeland (vatan) defined as the territory: “within our contemporary political boundaries, which nurtures the ancient and the exalted history of the Turkish nation and which hosts the nation and its relics, deep in its bosom”. This emphasizes strongly the prescription of Turkish history, Turkish land rather than Islam or Ottoman Empire.

Mustafa Kemal gave society another mission: to boost the Turkish language and nation. Accordingly few committees constructed that consisted of “Turkish Hearts’ Committee for Study of Turkish History” (1930), “Committee for Study of Turkish History” (1931), “Committee for Study of Turkish Language” all of which conferred Turkish Thesis. All these committees aimed to build a sense of nationalism through the education system by teaching “the history of civilization, anthropological characteristics of Turkish race, and Turkish language and literature” (Çağaptay, 2006, p.51). According to narrative of the Turkish Thesis there were three implications that designed to shape the thinking of Turkish nationalism. First emphasis was on race; “Turks were ancestors of all brachycephalic people, including Indo-Europeans, whose
origin went back to Central Asia”. Secondly, “the Turkish race had created the civilizations in all the lands to which the Turks had migrated” thus Turks would be the inheritors of powerful ancient empires such as Sumerians, Egyptians and Greeks. They were the architect of civilization in Anatolia. And thirdly, since Turks were the original inhabitants of the region Anatolia was Turks’ homeland (Çağaptay, 2006, p.51). In the first history congress, Turkish Thesis was affirmed and Turkishness was officially demonstrated that (1) “race, ethnicity, and a long glorious history were the tripods of Turkishness” (2) “only people who spoke Turkish would be eligible for membership to the nation” and (3) religion was seen insignificant. Ismail Arar (1921-1993) who was a Turkish history researcher and politician stated that:

“One of the significant characteristics of the nation is language. One, who regards himself as a member of the Turkish nation, should before everything and in any case, speak Turkish. If someone who does not speak Turkish, claim membership to Turkish culture and community, it would not be right to believe in this” (Çağaptay, 2006, p.52).

These emphases created “ethnicity-through-language and race” as the main identifiers of Turkishness (Çağaptay, 2006, p.52). By the confirmation of Turkish Thesis it was asserted that the “Turkish history was not confined to Ottoman history” (Çağaptay, 2006, p.53). By enabling a direct lineage between modern Turks and ancient Turks in Central Asia, Turks became the ones who have been always civilized across China, Mesopotamia, the Nile Valley, Anatolia and Aegean. And under the favor of ancient Turkish civilization in Anatolia, the Thesis rebut the post-WWI claims by Greeks, Armenians and Kurds to Turkish territory (Çağaptay, 2006, p.53).

Between 1931 and 1938 Kemalist ideology created an ethno-racial definition of the Turkish nation, it claimed that “all of Turkey’s past and present inhabitants were ethnically and racially Turkish (Çağaptay, 2006, p.57). In the 1930s Kemalists used ethnicity “as the underlying factor of Turkishness” and race attributed not to a biological community rather served to national purposes.

The 1930s, the era of “Kemalism par excellence” demonstrates the characteristics of an authoritarian nation state which nation dominated several minorities through radicalization of nationalism. Here, the state used census to politically enumerate its citizens. Citizenship was viewed as a privilege by the state and nationality as a criterion to decide on this. It monitored its
citizens, “citizens-to-be” as well as it denaturalized those unsuitable and naturalized those desirable. By doing that, Kemalist state legitimized various acts and measures to determine ranks of citizenry ( Çağaptay, 2006, p.65). In this regard, Soner Çağaptay gives enormous data on how many ethnicities were in Turkey, how many of them Muslims and non-Muslims, among Muslims how many ethnicities were exist and among them how many of them did speak Turkish and how many languages were existed etc. The interesting point is that Kemalist government wondered ethnically diverse population and put special attention to data on non-Turkish speakers among the Muslims. Kurds were the most distinguished groups among Muslims whose language was not Turkish and Mustafa Kemal demanded their numbers and villages in each province in Turkey. Frames of citizenship were constructed with positive exceptions and privileges given to Turks and excluding non-Turks by denaturalization laws ( Çağaptay, 2006, p.69), exposing non-Turks to judgmental discourse by expatriating an Armenian or a French person assuming that s/he was on the enemy-side during the Independence War. At the same naturalization was applied selectively to East-Central Europeans, Hellenic Greek, and White Russians as well as immigrant Muslims ( Çağaptay, 2006, p.75-78). It would be appropriate to say that Kemalists structured citizenship around the notion of ethnicity. Ethnicity was used as a measure of deciding whether inclusionary or exclusionary policies. The data on census in general was used to favor ethnic Turks by prioritizing them and giving citizenship while gathering data on minorities, especially non-Turkish ethnic groups to take further actions.

Resettlement policies introduced in order to maintain “Turkification” by Kemalists. It was namely “relocation of nomadic tribes and others around suitable center” (Çagaptay, 2006, p.86). The word “nomad” was unofficially referred to Kurds in “republican jargon”. Consequently this policy granted CHP government to displace Kurds from their homelands and make them settle elsewhere. Thus this policy would presumably function for the continuity of assimilation ( Çağaptay, 2006, p.86). This therefore led to involuntary dislocation of many Kurdish families from East to West and North in condition with no-turning-back. The details of the 1934 resettlement policy are worth mentioning. The government designated three zones; Zone 1 was “for populations who share the Turkish culture”, Zone 2 “relocation and resettlement of populations which are to adopt the Turkish culture” and Zone 3 was closed to resettlement due to sanitary, economic, cultural, political, military, and security reasons” ( Çağaptay, 2006, p.88). Accordingly, people who live in Zone 1 were not being resettled, or resettled only in Zone 1 (i.e
if they do not speak Turkish but willing to share or already sharing Turkish culture). Tribes, and nomadic people (Kurds) were not allowed to settle in Zone 1, even if they native in Zone 1. In this case they were only be resettled on Zone 2 because it was thought that Kurds would be assimilated easily between other Muslim Turks as they share the same religion (Çağaptay, 2006, p.88-90). It was particularly a colonization practice (Beşikçi 1978, Çağaptay 2006) that resettlement law dictated as one ethnic group (Kurds) being banned from another territory (Zone 1), and as practice of Turkification, resettling of immigrant Turks to East especially where Kurds were excluded was the aim of Kemalist state (Çağaptay, 2006, p.89). In case of failures of these policies, the resettlement law stated that:

“Ministry of Interior is empowered to take necessary cultural, political, social, and security measures against those, who share the Turkish culture but speak a language other than Turkish, or against those who don’t share the Turkish culture. These measures, not to be applied collectively, are resettlement and denaturalization” (Çağaptay, 2006, p.90).

An important anecdote from Beşikçi’s work on CHP’s directory reveals that some Kurds were highly influential on the programs of Kurds’ assimilation. Beşikçi touches upon the persistent existence of Kurdish sheikhs, landowners and clan leaders in the parliament. Mustafa Kemal was “close” alliance with these people and encouraged their privileged statuses because these sheikhs and leaders were closer to the authority rather than their own (Kurdish) nation. These privileged Kurds were not promoting the propaganda of “There are no Kurds and Kurdish language” instead they were advocating; “It is not important to be Turk, or Kurd or Arab or Persian, it is important to live under the Muslim brotherhood” and by doing that they were rewarded by Kemalists and CHP members (Beşikçi, 1978, p. 259). The only reason for reinforcing this propaganda was to dissolve the Kurdish nationalism under Islamist integration. In other words, the brotherhood of Islam was tried to override the development of Kurdish nationalism by these sheikhs. Also these sheikhs were financially supported by government. Since they continued developing in agriculture, expanding their lands and having control over manufacture and businesses, their influence on Kurdish society increased (Beşikçi, 1978, p.276). It was obvious that Kemalist ideology required to capitalize sheikhs at the same time stimulated them to keep their traditional relationships with Kurdish society so that Kurdish “peasants” would not develop and demand democratic rights (Beşikçi, 1978, p.277).
A radical nationalist program aimed to redefine the Turk, the new citizen of the nation and promoted the turkicization of non-Turkish minorities. Assimilation became necessary policy in the acceptance and achievement of the concept of nationhood “which meant transforming the Kurds not only legally and politically into Turks, but also forcing them to become culturally and socially integrated” (Haddad, 2001, p.90).

Murat Ergin, one of the scholars in ethnicity and racial studies specialized in Kurdish identity in Turkey argues that Kurdish conflict is enmeshed in the history of modernization and nationalism especially during the early republican Turkey. Minority issues were perceived suspicious among Turks because of Sevres Syndrome, referring that the West intends to divide the country (Ergin, 2014, p.324). In Sevres Treaty, an idea of a Kurdistan was implemented by Western powers together with their given territories within Anatolia, however it replaced by Lausanne Treaty where Turkish Republic was recognized. Minorities and their rights were acknowledged and given to non-Muslim population in the country.

Before moving on to the next part, it is important to mention and explain why Kurds were the biggest challenge to Kemalism. Given the existing assimilationist policies, as ethnic-based nationalism was rising under Kemalist state, the government expected that all Anatolian Muslims would merge into Turkish nation (Çağaptay, 2006, p.102) because it viewed all inhabitants in Anatolia as Turk. The Kurds, in this case, become a real challenge for Turkish state, because they were different in many ways than other non-Turkish Muslim groups (Çağaptay, 2006, p.102). They were the only sizable non-Turkish Muslim group in Turkey, amounted to 10 per cent of the country’s population and majorly inhabitants of the Eastern and Southeastern Turkey. Kurds were detached from the rest of the country mainly because of the geographical characteristics of the region where is mountainous and harsh terrain (Çağaptay, 2006, p.102).

6.2 The 1925 Sheikh Said Revolt, the Ağrı Rebellion and the “Dersim Massacre”

Although Islam religion was influential between Kurds, they have seen more assimilative pressure than non-Muslim minorities. In the formative years of the republic “Islam signaled cultural belonging” however secular policies required being “Sunni Muslim” therefore Kurdish tension was subordinated under Islamic fundamentalism (Ergin, 2014, p.325). Accordingly, several rebels occurred both religiously and ethnically. The most well-known was the Sheikh
Said rebellion in 1925 in Diyarbakir, though 18 more rebellions arose until 1940s. In all these rebels, tribes and chieftains were organized by and under the control of sheikhs. Religious leaders had an important role in uprisings of Kurds. Sheikh Said rebellion contributed to the denial of Kurdish identity because right after the suppression of the rebellion, the law on Maintenance of Order and an assimilation plan called Şark Islahat Planı (Resettlement Program) established and implemented in most of the cities and villages in the eastern Turkey by CHP’s order (Ergin, 2014, p.325). Resettlement Law included involuntary dislocation of people mostly Kurds from east to west, a penalty fee for Kurdish speakers for each word they speak in Kurdish and improvements in education and schooling and military support implemented in the region (Hür 2012, Çiçek 2016). Şark Islahat Planı was the foremost of the upcoming assimilationist policies. One of the effects of such policies was “Citizen, Speak Turkish” Vatandaş, Türkçe konuş campaign, controlled by police patrols (Fırat, 2008). Right after the Sheikh Said rebellion, then-prime minister İsmet İnönü publicly stated that:

“We are openly nationalist. Nationalism is the only cause that keeps us together. Besides the Turkish majority, none of other (ethnic) elements shall have any impact. We shall, at any price, turkicize those who live in our country, and destroy those who rise up against the Turks and Turkdom” (Bruinessen, 1994, p.9).

This simply indicates that any attempt to consolidate Kurdish nationalism would be eliminated and/or outlawed by the constitution.

In the light of these assimilationist policies and since the republican elite, with the hard-won-victory in mind, was concerned with threats to territorial unity, an effort to turkification despite of Mustafa Kemal’s suggestion for an autonomy for Kurds in the Kurdish populated area (later he broke his promise) (Doğan 2016, Bruinessen 1994, p.10), law on resettlement was announced and targeted Kurds that stated:

“That those whose mother tongue is not Turkish will not be allowed to establish as a group new villages or wards, workers’ or artisans associations, nor will such persons be allowed to reserve an existing village, ward, enterprise or workshop for members of the same race” (Bruinessen, 1994, p.10)

As Turkish Republic was founded on the basis of the identity of non-Arab Muslims (which are Turks and Kurds) who resided on the former Ottoman land, the republic was called
Turkey wherein Turkish identity was designed and Turkish would be the one and only language hence “indicated that some citizens were going to be more equal than others” (Bruinessen, 1994, p.8).

In the light of these events, in 1929, Turkish state was aware that Armenians and Kurdish forces were in alliance against the government in Ağrı (Ararat) region and along the Syrian border. The political organization of Hoybun which was an Iranian-Kurdish rooted, aimed to organize the Kurdish liberation movement in Turkey (Bölme, 2015, p.40) and seemingly got support by the Armenians in the region. Hoybun started an armed campaign, an uprising together with Armenian forces led by Ihsan Nuri Pasha who was a successful former Ottoman military officer in Ağrı province. In that time, Kurdish nationalist propaganda was in need of a support from external powers / foreign world in order to make their propaganda visible and audible. That is the reason for Armenian (Tashnak Party) support to Kurdish mobilization in Turkey (Bölme, 2015, p.48). At the same time the Armenian help was not coincidental considering the results of exile of many Armenians from their villages in 1915 by Ottoman forces. Ihsan Nuri Pasha installed a telephone line to the region and brought a printing press for spreading and propagating the uprising by publishing brochures and manifestations in regional magazines (Bölme, 2015, p.48). The uprising was so advanced in a way that guerillas was wearing a uniform with Hoybun badge, a Kurdish flag was placed on the Ararat Mountain and even Ağrı was declared a province of “Independent Kurdistan” by Hoybun (Bölme, 2015, p.48-50).

Certainly, Turkish state’s reaction was harsh, Interior Minister told the British Ambassador that “the effective suppression of this rebellion will extinguish all embers of discontent in other districts” (Çağaptay, 2006, p.38). Accordingly, Ankara used several airplanes and transported 15,000 troops in Ağrı to suppress the uprising. For the Iraqi and Syrian border, it assigned another 5,000 troops to fight with the unrest. Despite the challenge, Turkish military pushed down the unrest (Çağaptay, 2006, p.38). The guerilla members who were managed to survive, went to Iran, those who could not either executed or exiled. In accord with resettlement law and law for Maintenance of Order, state started to exercise its assimilationist policies by implementing Inspectorates and Independence (İstiklal Mahkemeleri) to have more surveillance over the Eastern region (Bölme 2015, Cagaptay 2006)
With this direction, the Dersim massacre that İsmail Beşikçi deals within his book happened in the district of Dersim (now called Tunceli) in the course of Turkey’s pacification of rebellious Kurds. Bruinessen reveals that it also represents one of the darkest pages in Turkish history. He argues that this incident “gracefully passed over in silence or deliberately misrepresented by most foreign and Turkish historians” (Bruinessen, 1994, p.1).

Dersim located in the middle part of eastern Anatolia. It is surrounded by mountains and logistically a hard-to-reach geography. It has a diverse Kurdish population comprise of Sunni and Alevis. Among them there are also different ethnic groups; Kurdish and Zaza. Thus Dersim has unique characteristics in terms of Kurdishness (Bruinesse, 1994, p.2). It has never been effectively under a rule of government except their traditional tribal law. Kurdish inhabitants in Dersim were strongly attached with their tribal chieftains. They were not opposed government in so far as it did not interfere their internal affairs. Many chieftains usually benefited from military and police officials that appointed by the government to the region (Bruinessen, 1994, p.2). While there were unceasing conflicts between the rival tribes accusing one another of conspiring about state, there was also Kurdish nationalist inclination in the region. In 1936 Dersim was put under the martial law with the aim of “civilizing” it. The tribes’ response of this civilization which consisted of new road, bridges, and police stations was skeptical. Some of them found jobs, others disliked it as they interpret differently, as in contrast to Kurdish movement (Bruinessen, 1994, 3). By early 1937 it was believed by the military forces that a severe rebel which was against the civilization program was about to start, initiated by the Kurdish nationalist. The military responded to this minor incident aggressively as if they have been waiting for a reason to show such immense power to repress tribes. Seyyit Rıza was the leader of the rebels, allegedly a religious leader. Military started its intervention in March 1937, continued its armed campaign until Seyyit Rıza and his fellows surrendered in summer of 1937. Military kept its domination in the region and next spring the operations were resumed with a greater force (Bruinessen, 1994, p.3).

A memory book was written by Nuri Dersimi who was a victim of Dersim incident, wrote his book when he was in exile in Syria in which he miserably reports:

“When the Turkish troops began hunting down the rebellious tribes, the men gave battle, while the women and children hid in deep caves. Thousands of these women and children perished, because the
army bricked up the entrances of the caves. These caves are marked with numbers on the military maps of the area. At the entrances of other caves, the military lit fires to cause those inside to suffocate. Those who tried to escape from the caves were finished off with bayonets. A large proportion of the women and girls of the Kureyshan and Bakhtiyar [two rebel tribes] threw themselves from high cliffs into the Munzur and Parchik ravines, in order not to fall into the 'Turks' hands… Most of the tribes were destroyed; their chieftains were tortured and killed. The men were shot on the spot, the women and children were locked into heysheds that were set fire” (Bruinessen, 1994).

In the spring of 1938 the violence continued while it was more escalated by military forces towards all the Kurdish tribes even the tribes that known as closer to state. Military did not make any exceptions (Bruinessen, 1994, p.4). Martin van Bruinessen gives all the tribes names, where and how they were shot and killed.

Although it was not obvious from official resources that “Dersim campaign” was directed to Kurds because at that time the regime was denying the existence of Kurds. The campaign was presented “as a determined struggle against backwardness and the oppression of the people by feudal lords, tribal chieftains and reactionary religious leaders” (Bruinessen, 1994, p.6-7). Bruinessen explains that the events occurred in Dersim in fact were an “ethnocide”, ensued as holocaust (Bruinessen, 1994, p.6). An intended campaign was organized by army to extinguish Kurdish ethnic identity in the Tunceli / Dersim province between March 1937 and December 1938.

In this regard most of the Kurdish named villages replaced with Turkish names and Kurdish language, dress, folklore, even the word “Kurd” was banned. Resettlement Law and the inspectorates that established in the region can be considered as a colonization process as İsmail Beşikçi argues that imposing and maintaining the dominant ethnicity (Turkishness) over another one by delegitimizing and annihilating it (Kurdishness) and euphemistically overriding the situation (Beşikçi, 1978).

6.3 The Military Coup d’état of 1960, 1971 and 1980

After the radical reforms in the early years of republican regime in Turkey, and after Mustafa Kemal’s death (1938), it was believed that Turkey was ready to move on to multi-party regime. İsmet Inonu also a republican (second president of Turkish state) could not resist the persistence
coming from Grand Assembly and made a significant decision. The Democrat Party (DP) which has more religious and nationalistic view of politics has won the elections in 1950 with 53% of the popular vote and 83% of the Grand Assembly while Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s Republicans Party (CHP) gained 39% of the popular vote and 14% from the Grand Assembly. DP continued to rule until the coup d’etat in 1960 which happened because of Adnan Menderes’ (party’s leader) despotic and neurotic manners as well as a considerable privilege given to his supporters that paved the way for Kemalist young soldiers to act and emancipate the country from corruption (Arslan, 2005, p.135). It was believed that Adnan Menderes misused his authority and gave considerable benefit to USA when USA helped Turkey financially. Also DP’s economic policies resulted in high inflation and foreign debt as the first debt from International Monetary Fund was taken. It is revealed that 1960 coup happened because military and CHP (Kemalists) perceived that the basis of Republic (secularism and other principles) was under threat coming from religious based DP (Arslan, 2005, p.135).

After the 1960 coup, a new, more democratic –in a sense that higher level of freedom-constitution was established. Universities were given greater autonomy, students were able to have associations and workers were given more comprehensive rights. It was said that Turkey enjoyed its most political freedom so far and ever in the 60s. Political ideologies were not forbidden hence far-right and far-left parties proliferated during 60s (Arslan, 2005, p.135).

The 1960s and 1970s secularization and transformation of Kurdish political identity occurred within the leftist movements in Turkey. This is because socialist ideologies appeared freely in socio-political sphere as a result of 1961 Constitution. Instead of religious tribe leaders, new modern intellectuals took place as representatives of Kurdish political identity (Yavuz, 2007, p.9).

First bilingual magazine from Kurds was the Deng magazine published and it touched upon the regional economic inequalities hence proposed a socialist solution. Labor Party was the first party in which “there is Kurdish people in the east” was mentioned, using ethnic leverage to promote socialism (Yavuz, 2007, p.9). In 1969 Revolutionary Cultural Society of the East (Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları - DDKO) was established as the first organization which promotes and raises awareness of Kurdish political identity by signaling the unequal economic status of the Eastern people (Yavuz, 2007, p.10). This was a sensitive issue because the decisions
and programs “against” Kurdish cultural and political identity, language, and customs where Republicans have taken in 1925 were still valid. Military and state was responsible to sustain the reforms.

During 60s, Musa Anter, a Kurdish leftist, intellectual author and one of the founder-members of DDKO writes a Kurdish poem in a local newspaper in the East. Republican authors in the west heighten and dramatize the situation by saying “How is it possible to have something in Kurdish in our national local newspapers?” Anter goes on the trial and judge asks “Why do you write in Kurdish?” Anter answers “There are Jews and Armenians writing in their language. Moreover there are French and English newspapers in the west of this country. Why is it a problem when I write in Kurdish?” Judge replies “They are minorities” Anter gives this particular response “What a country! Minorities have more rights than majority, what should I do with such majority! Please Judge make a decision and count me on as minority” Minority rights are still the main issue regarding Kurds in Turkey. Within the 1971 coup the Labor Party and DDKO was outlawed by threatening the integrity of the country.

Sociologist, whose book (Tunceli Law and Dersim Genocide – Tunceli Kanunu Dersim Jenosidi) was immediately banned and whose academic work was announced expurgatory therefore spent more than 10 years in jail, İsmail Beşikçi, was first and for a long time only Turkish intellectual that critical of Turkey’s ideology and policies regarding Kurds (Bruinessen, 1994, p.1). His study on socioeconomic conditions of eastern Turkey in 1969 was fully regarded as a threat towards Turkish nationalism and identity. His study stated that “the problems of East” which is the backwardness, the existence of feudality and regional inequalities should be acknowledged as a consequence of Kemalist state (Bruinessen, p.4). When studying the underdevelopment of the East, ethnicity was not considered as a relevant component until Beşikçi argued that it is crucial to emphasize on the assimilationist policies towards Kurds in regard to socioeconomic status of the East part of Turkey (Bruinessen, p.5).

1970s was more restrictive compared to previous decade. Restrictions toward leftist movements were not limited with political parties. Such modifications were apparent in all institutions such as, universities, student-led associations, labor unions, the press and newspaper whereas right-wing continued to make its propaganda. In the meantime, Kurds faced with more assimilationist policies due to the absence of minority rights. Thousands of leftists including
union leaders, party members, authors, scientists and socialist intellectuals were subjected and imprisoned under the regime of Nihat Erim who was former chief of the army, then-Prime Minister after 1971 coup (Arslan, 2005, p.136). The revolts in the early 1970s was started against imperialism, capitalism and western influences coming from leftist movements however it turned quite different in the late 70s. Far-right wing movements, ultranationalist “Grey-Wolves” (Bozkurtlar) intensified the violence and created chaos by aiming to prevent electoral potential of republicans (Arslan, 2005, p.136). Bulent Ecevit the leader of Republican Party (CHP) and Suleyman Demirel the leader of Justice Party (Adalet Partisi - AP) made a coalition in 1977 election. Even though republicans gained more vote than AP, they did not get the confidential vote in the Assembly. The coalition was not enough to defuse the tension of the conflict between left and right. Eventually on the 12th of September in 1980 Turkish military staged the third and the last real coup d’etat.
CHAPTER SEVEN

7. Analysis Part IV: Kurdish Question: After the Emergence of PKK and Reign of AKP

This chapter deals with the dimensions of PKK, its discourse and Turkish state’s response to it. Its evolvement as a terrorist organization during 1980s and 1990s and Turkish state’s reaction to it can be considered as the beginning of a bloody conflict. However, after the capture of Abdullah Öcalan and Turkey-EU deals signaled that a new phase was started between two polls. First steps toward recognition were taken by the AKP government, however political parties continued to be outlawed. The connection between Kurdish political parties and PKK was damaging Kurdish movement. Eventually a peace process started to shape the process within political frames rather than armed campaign.

7.1 The Outlines of Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey and the Emergence of PKK

The Junta which consisted of the chiefs of all kind of armed forces (army, air force, navy and gendarmerie) set up the National Security Council under the leadership of Kenan Evren who was former chief of defense ruled Turkey between 1980 and 1983. During that time arrests and trials which ended up with many deaths from both left and right wings became the features of daily life. According to the official records 650,000 people were arrested, more than one and half million people were blacklisted, 171 people died because of aggressive tortures and interrogations and 49 people were hung (Birgun, 2015). The suspension of the Constitution, dissolution of the parliament, all parties and the trade unions and detention of their leaders were practiced by the Junta between 1980 and 1983 (Arslan, 2005, p.137). Obviously making any sort of propaganda of Kurdish identity seemed very risky however secularization of Kurds was admittedly apparent. PKK, Kurdish Labor Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê) emerged drastically in 1983-84. Although it was established in 1978 by Abdullah Öcalan who studied political science in prestigious Political Science department in Ankara University, tough he did not graduate due to his time in prison because of his foundation of a Marxist group in the university that contained Kurdish and Turkish militants which aimed a socialist revolution in Turkey. PKK has not remained as a political party rather it has sustained its activity as a terrorist group, though from a counter perspective it can be accepted as a resistance movement. Its agenda
was violence and their motivational belief was that the only way towards Kurdish emancipation from state’s oppression would only be possible through violence after all years (Yavuz, 2007, p.11). The PKK led by Öcalan is responsible many deaths of Kurds and Turks. It did not tolerate assimilated moderate Kurds who did not want to be a part of the political movement. It targeted especially state institutions, schools and hospitals because they were the instruments of Ankara’s assimilation policies. Its members assassinated many persons with state-affiliations as well. PKK’s main goal was to establish a pan-Kurdish state. Although it raised political consciousness among Kurds, it did not achieve enough political support. PKK, led by Öcalan, forced families who reside in the peripheral of southeast of Turkey to dedicate their children to join the group (Yavuz, 2007, p.12).

It can be argued that PKK viewed state policies as a practice of colonization (as Beşikçi argued) as Turkish state intended to annihilate the Kurdish culture and language and replace them with that of Turkish nations’. PKK, therefore legitimated its violent actions as Sartre puts in words referring emancipation from oppressive colonizers: “…it is man recreating himself…no gentleness can efface the marks of violence; only violence itself can destroy them…to shoot down a European (colonizer) is to kill two birds with one stone, to destroy an oppressor and the man he oppresses at the same time: there remain a dead man and a free man” (Fanon, 1963, p.21).

One of the important goals of the 1980 coup was to eliminate and to capture the control of the peripheral organizations and/or formations of Kurdish and religious movements. Kurdish organizations were destroyed by the oppressive measures of the 1980 coup. Many intellectual Kurds have fled to Europe where they further formulated the bases of Kurdish activism. The oppression of the 1980 coup had an opposite effect by “politicizing the Kurdish sense of identity which has been used by PKK” (Yavuz, 2007, p.10). The policies of Turkish military together with the regional developments in Iran and Iraq further enabled to raise a Kurdish separatism led by PKK (Yavuz, 2007, p.10).

The PKK had a critical role in promoting and continuing political consciousness of Kurds, providing networks in and outside of Turkey to recruit militants, secularizing the religio-tribal structure of the region within Kurdish youth and middle class while unintentionally disseminating Turkish nationalism in Turkey. One of the most unexpected results of PKK was
“the deepening politicization of the Turkish nationalism” (Yavuz, 2007, p.11) though Turkish nationalism in Turkey had two main grassroots since 1970s namely Necmettin Erbakan’s National Salvation Party (Milli Selamet Partisi-MSP) which had Islamic and fundamentalist view of nationalist politics and Alparslan Türkeş’s National Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Parti-MHP) which emphasized “protofascist program of domestic corporatism and pan-Turkic irredentism” in which a unified youth organization called “Grey-Wolves” (Bozkurtlar) formed (Gunter, 1989, p.64). As a result of PKK resistance against all structural form of Turkish daily life, Turkish nationalism has been inevitably articulated. In order to foster and further legitimize Kurdish separatism, PKK encouraged Kurds to criticize Turkish nationalism as a construct rather than the government in Ankara (Yavuz, 2007, p.11). This shift from criticizing government to criticizing Turkish nationalism can be considered a milestone where Turkish left movements differentiated from Kurdish nationalism.

By 1986, the PKK structure has expanded its limits as it was reconfigured within the ARGK (People’s Liberation Army of Kurdistan - Arteshen Rizgariya Gelli Kurdistan) and conjointly merged with ERNK (National Liberation Front of Kurdistan - Eniye Rizgariye Navata Kurdistan). ARGK mainly formed PKK’s armed campaign while ERNK was responsible to organize the peasantry, youth, workers, women, people who are abroad, the mosque and other organizations that have different national and religious persuasion than what the state was imposing them. PKK became a huge movement through ERNK which has consolidated a massive contributory constituency that supported armed crusade, provided recruitments and equipped it with political legitimacy (O’Connor, 2017, p.6).

In 1990s, there were several attempts from both religious and Kurdish sides to open up parties which immediately have been eliminated by the Constitution Court by accusing the parties either threatening the secularity or integrity of the country. Erbakan’s Welfare Party (Refah Partisi-RP) would be an example wherein religious agenda existed. However Kurdish parties have been “disproportionately” outlawed (O’Connor, 2017, p.9).

Turkish state sought various remedies and applied policies to prevent and/or repress the conflict caused by PKK. One of the major policies was the OHAL (Olağanüstü Hal) which refers to ‘state of emergency’ that was declared for approximately 20 years in the densely Kurdish populated cities in the East. The societal order in the OHAL region of Turkey was
outside of the jurisdictional sphere. The army and gendarmerie forces were responsible for daily life of individuals and society. Moreover, many villages and towns were emptied, people were dislocated and schools were closed down due to the insecurity and instability of the region (Yavuz, 2007, p.13).

Another preventive state method was creating an ideological counter-terror group in the region to deal with PKK terror and wait until they wipe off themselves. “Hizbullah” was an urban, Kurdish, fundamentalist religious organization which aimed to establish an Islamic Republic of Kurdistan that killed many PKK members in the region in the mid-1990s. Salih Salman, the governor of Batman was functional in the construction of Hizbullah and armory import for the organization. “The Turkish state was involved in a no-holds-barred war against the PKK militants and remained deaf to allegations that its security services were working together with Hizbullah assassins” (Yavuz, 2007, p.14). In the past, PKK tried to overcome Kurdish identity’s religious, tribal and linguistic divisions by representing an image of a homogeneous Kurdish nation by fostering a common ancestry and a myth of an origin. However these divisions set aside as PKK’s challenge to Turkish state generated the “politicized Kurdish identity” (Gunes, 2009, p.261). To put it in other words, when one says Kurds, the first thing comes to mind is their threatening political identity rather than their culture and diversity.

Continuing with the performances of Kurdish parties in Turkey and in despite of state’s ban on cultural rights of Kurds, ‘the Kurdish effort’ was remarkable. Kurds gained political recognition with the significant success of People’s Democratic Party (HDP, established in 2012) by entering the parliament in 2015. However considering chronological events that shaped and generated HDP’s electoral success, there were more than 8 parliamentary Kurdish parties since the early 90s in Turkey. Starting with People’s Labor Party (Halkı Emek Partisi-HEP), up until the most noticeable and the latest one HDP, Kurdish struggle faced extraordinary means of oppression, hate speech and discourse through media and “racialization” (Ergin, 2014) in both social and political life and this situation still continues regardless of their gained political recognition.

As being the pioneer, HEP was emerged from Social Democratic People’s Party (Sosyal-demokrat Halk Partisi-SHP) which was a continuation of Kemalist ideology and second biggest party in the parliament after 1987 election. SHP included several Kurdish deputies and was more
moderate than other parties in regard to Kurdish question. However after the attendance of some
Kurdish representatives to a conference about Kurdish liberation in Paris in 1989, the party
expelled them. In reaction, other Kurdish deputies resigned from the party and established HEP.
The party was not established as a Kurdish party however it quickly got involved with Kurdish
issues and many of its Turkish members renounced their status from the party (O’Connor, 2017,
p.9). As from 1990s until early-2000s some of the parliamentary Kurdish Parties were; HADEP
(People’s Democracy Party - Halkın Demokrasi Partisi), DEHAP (Democratic People’s Party -
Demokratik Halk Parti), OZDEP (Liberty and Democracy Party - Özgürlük ve Demokrasi
Partisi), DTP (Democratic Society Party – Demokratik Toplum Partisi), BDP (Peace and
Democracy Party – Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi). These parties have faced with termination and
their leaders have detained by the Constitutional Court on the allegations of supporting self-
determination of Kurds, conducting bureaucratic services in Kurdish, maintaining alleged
connection with PKK hence threatening the integrity of the country.

Another struggle for Kurdish parties was that the threshold for the parliament which is
10%. Even though parties got votes from their cities and regions it was not enough to have seats
in the parliament. The votes of parties which faced the threshold were transferred to the next
biggest party, resulting in seats for the rivals of the Kurdish parties (O’Connor, 2017, p.10). As
for the connection between Kurdish parties and PKK, the terror campaign of PKK was mostly
resulted in damaging the party’s legitimate propaganda. Besides, after Öcalan’s imprisonment
the discourse of PKK shifted from separatism to autonomy and minority rights. Nevertheless it
would be naïve to believe that PKK did not influence parties’ agendas (O’Connor, 2017, p.12).
With the imprisonment of Öcalan (1999) and Turkey-EU agreements, these discourses changed
and influenced further negotiations between Turkish state and Kurdish parties in 2000s and
upward.

7.2 The Kurdish Question during the Reign of AKP

Since the capture of PKK leader Öcalan (February 1999) and the beginning of Turkey-EU deals
in December 1999, Helsinki Treaty (History of Turkey EU Relations, 2017) required Turkey to
end the ethnic conflict in exchange for Turkey’s candidature for being a full member in the
European Union. This situation changed the direction of wind for Kurds in Turkey. In addition,
due to Erdogan’s ruling party (Justice and Development Party – AKP) came into power after 2002 election had many dilemmas for Kurdish struggle.

From 2002 until 2015, AKP pursued a “Peace and Resolution Process” (Baṛş ve çözüm süreci) that aimed to solve the Kurdish Question which was identified as dissolving the guerilla warfare of PKK and required bargaining with Kurdish political parties (Yeğen, 2015). In 2004 the stake at the resolution process between Turkish officials and the PKK seemed to achieve the final disarmament of PKK in return to “implementation of reforms ensuring democratization and recognition of cultural and political rights of Kurds” (Yeğen, 2015, p.5). The reason behind this negotiation was the pro-Kurdish People’s Democracy Party’s (HADEP) electoral success with 6.2% of national votes in the region in 2002 elections (Yeğen, 2015, p.5). In 2005, Erdogan’s speech in Diyarbakir indicated that Turkish governments made a mistake in the past and promised to solve the issue democratically. Negotiations lasted until National Security Council decided to come to the table with PKK leaders, to introduce cultural rights and to discuss new policy implications (Yeğen, 2015, p.5). It was revealed in Oslo talks/meetings between state officials and PKK members that Turkish army agreed upon the recognition of cultural rights. Accordingly, AKP government took the most important step towards recognition. In 2009 removal of ban on Kurdish language actualized, together with establishing a broadcasting channel in Kurdish in official state channel and enabling Kurdish language and literature departments in universities. “These ranked among the most radical gestures on the road to true recognition of Kurdish identity in the history of the Turkish Republic” (Yeğen, 2015, p.5). It is important to mention that in 2007 the Congress of Democratic Society (Demokratik Toplum Kongresi – DTK) was established by parliamentary parties of Kurds mainly predecessors of HDP, Democratic Society Party (Demokratik Toplum Partisi - DTP and Democratic Regions Party (Demokratik Bolgeler Partisi - DBP). DTK’s main goal was firstly being dissimilar then PKK. Secondly to accomplish unification of all Kurdish organizations under one political vision, and thirdly despite of being oppose to the Turkish state in theoretical terms, accepting “to co-exist and overlap with the elements of the state structure” (O’Connor, 2017, p.19) thus demanding democratic autonomy rather than changing the borders. DTK was very beneficial for HDP and DBP in relation to their successful achievements in elections. Its founding declaration announced:
“Democratic autonomy will not change the borders. It will reinforce the brotherhood of peoples and their unity within the borders, which will end conflicts; the Kurdish people and Turkey will reach a new contract and launch a new era in Turkish-Kurdish relations. Our model is democratization model that can be applied to all other parts of Turkey” (O’Connor, 2017, p.19).

Therefore the formation of DTK built trust among state officials and decisions were taken accordingly. In 2009 local elections, Democratic Society Party (DTP) won absolute victory in the southeast region, PKK declared ceasefire and was ready to come to an agreement with state. The minister of Interior Affairs, Beşir Atalay came together with press, intellectuals and members of civil society organizations to resolve the Kurdish question. It was incepted as “Kurdish Opening” (Kürt Açılımı). Both opposition parties Republicans (CHP) and Nationalists (MHP) disapproved this kind of “Opening”. CHP criticized as it would cause ethnic disintegration of Turkish society while MHP stated that “Kurdish Opening” would “endanger Turkey’s identity as a unitary nation-state” (Yegen, 2015, p.6). Between these discussions a political incident happened in the Habur border gate in August 2009. As the part of the agreements between PKK and AKP government 34 former PKK militants came from northern Iraq to Turkey to surrender. Unexpectedly there was nearly a welcoming ceremony with PKK flags and songs organized by Kurdish masses for the yielders (Yegen, 2015, p.6). This unfortunate incident heightened the tension in the Grand Assembly and media intensified the situation. As a result, the agreements which contained ceasefire and disarmament of PKK broke down, and PKK continued its armed campaign. As a reaction, DTP decided to withdraw its deputies from the Grand Assembly, however Öcalan (from the prison) stopped that to happen, though banning of DTP was unavoidable under the Kurdistan Communities Union (Koma Civaken Kurdistan – KCK) investigations. (Yegen, 2015, p.7). KCK refers to “a radical and ideological transformation” of PKK’s agenda. It helped establishing local councils, people’s courts and was responsible for activating civil society communities for more use of Kurdish language. Although its task was to implement DTK’s agenda, its charter in 2010 includes “All Kurds will come together for establishing their own federation and unite for confederation in case of the emergence of a Kurdish structure in Turkey, Iran, Syria and Iraq” (O’Connor,2017, p.17). Importantly KCK did not involve political parties in Turkey but KCK investigations on the members of Kurdish parties continued. Thus, while KCK remains illegal, DTK (formed by parliamentary parties) is legal arm of Kurdish movement in Turkey (O’Connor, 2017).
In 2010, Abdullah Öcalan continued to propose his road map toward a democratic solution for the Kurdish Question. In return state built up commissions for the constitution, for peace, truth and justice. It is reported that both PKK and state would take crucial steps after 2011 elections. Elections resulted positively for Erdogan’s AKP government and Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) with the half of votes in Turkey and half of votes in the region respectively (Yegen, 2015, p.7). However Erdogan’s government stopped the Oslo meetings and refused the sign the protocols that was agreed mutually to be completed after the elections. Consequently PKK continued its terror campaign and 2012 was recorded as the most deathful year after 1999 (Yegen, 2015, p.8). Most of the BDP members and journalists, trade union members were arrested under the KCK investigations. In 2013, the efforts for the peace process continued. AKP government enacted a new law that would approve the freedom of suspects from KCK investigations. The new law was enabling to speak in mother tongue in the state / constitutional courts (Yegen, 2015, p.9) while it was ambiguously meant that KCK was not illegal anymore. The third round of the peace process would follow these terms; the disarmament and withdraw of PKK, democratization and normalization. Although AKP took the first step by forming a commission in the Assembly to discuss the peace process, no concrete decision was taken. Notwithstanding PKK disarmed and pointed out that even though military forces was building up new stations and dams in the region, they continued ceasefire and therefore demanded freedom for all the KCK prisoners by a new law. AKP legislated “Law to End Terror and Strengthen Social Integration”. By the end of 2014 almost all of the KCK arrestees were released (Yegen, 2015, p.9). With this legislation, Abdullah Öcalan’s desire for the “Peace and Resolution Process” reached now on a legal level. In October, 2014 another unfortunate incident happened in Kobani, Syria. Kobani was attacked by IS (Islamic State) forces and consequently peace process was suspended once again. In this period, many Kurds went to Kobani to support Democratic Unity Party (Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat – PYD) in Rojava, Syria (Kurdish populated area) against IS forces. There is two reason for this support; first, Erdogan’s moderate attitude toward IS, and second, Turkey’s moderate position toward the civil war in Syria (Yegen, 2015, p.10). There was many street revolts against the governments’ attitude toward IS and Syria organized by Kurds in Turkey during the Kobani conquer by IS. It was very intense that it could have generated a possibility of a civil war in Turkey until the government and military permitted to logistics of arms from Turkish border to Kobani (Yegen, 2015, p.10).
In December, 2014 the meeting between HDP members and Öcalan indicated that peace process was still ongoing. Ocalan’s proposal was conveyed to AKP representatives by HDP deputies. It was a 10-article draft for peace agreement. AKP’s representatives wanted once again disarmament of PKK however PKK demanded first a consensus (Yegen, 2015, p.10). Right after the parliamentary elections in June 2015, Erdogan declared that “there cannot be an agreement with a political party [HDP] that is being supported by a terrorist organization” (Hurriyet Daily News, 2015, O’Connor, 2017, p.6). Clearly Erdogan was angered by HDP’s parliamentary electoral success, because AKP could not reach the absolute majority in the parliament to change the constitution for presidential regime (O’Connor, 2017, p.6). The ideological transition of PKK under the DTK structure as shifting to more peace-making attitudes and having collaboration with state, additionally HDP’s focus on more human rights and inclusion, having a Turkey-wide agenda rather than only Kurds played crucial role in HDP’s electoral success.

A shift on discourse and agenda was already necessary on the way to peace process. The Congress of Democratic Society necessitated re-conceptualizing democracy as Öcalan enhanced the ideas of seeking liberation through the means of deepening democracy rather than the state-building (Casier, Jongerden, 2012, p.6). PKK (now) in accord with HDP seek to actualize this liberation practically through three interrelated projects which are democratic republic, democratic autonomy and democratic confederalism (Casier, Jongerden, 2012, p.6). Briefly, it is explained by Jongerden that “the democratic republic seeks to redefine the Republic of Turkey, by disassociating democracy from nationalism; democratic autonomy refers to the right of people to decide on their own priorities and policies, to determine their own future; and the project for democratic confederalism is to serve as a model for self-government” (Casier, Jongerden, 2012, p.6).
CHAPTER EIGHT

8. Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter is devoted to make hypothetical assumptions that based on theoretical groundings while allowing the reader to frame his/her own opinions on the regarding matter. Given arguments and aim in the introduction, this chapter’s debates take place in line with the same motivation. This study argues that the reasons behind the oppressive policies towards Kurdish community in Turkey are the results of several historical events that have ideological and cultural implementations which generated a fear that became ingrained since the decline of Ottoman Empire. The Sevres Treaty after the loss of WWI indicated that Anatolia’s land was supposedly divided into parts and shared between imperial powers. This situation engendered a fear that turned into a constituent component in the making of what is called the Turkish identity. When Mustafa Kemal was creating the Turkish nation, he emphasized on (1) “Secularism, which is the rationale for Turkish nationalism” (Cagaptay, 2006) was the new regime’s aim to be a modern nation-state. (2) The Turkish indivisible territory as the base of the nation. Mustafa Kemal emphasizes that “people of Turkey, who have established the Turkish state, are called the Turkish nation” therefore shared past, and interests and desire to live together as the common denominators of the nation and gradually official definition of the nation focused on a voluntaristic formula (Cagaptay, 2006). (3) Accordingly, a “unity in language” was needed. All people spoke Turkish thus Turkish citizenship and the Turkish nation should be the same. This specified the Turkish language and desire to be Turkish as the pre-requirements for being a citizen. While territory, voluntarism and language appeared to be markers of Turkishness which was imposed and imaginary, the question was whether these notions would fit with non-Turkish ethnic groups. In addition to that, after the WWI imperialist nations divided Turkey into parts to share, which was signed under the Treaty of Sevres, however the Independence War led by Mustafa Kemal invalidated it by establishing a new country officially under Lousanne Treaty. Independence struggle was won in hard conditions. Therefore an “ingrained fear” which refers to “Turkey’s integrity and unity, the nation is in danger” generated in the beginning of the Turkish Republic. It appears that it did not go away moreover it passed generations until now.

Considering the absence of Kurds’ political and cultural rights and the aggressive and oppressive policies, it can be argued that Kurds have been perceived as threats towards the
Turkish nationalism since the establishment of Turkish state. The study also emphasized on the concept of nation-state which is an imagined community within the constructivist paradigm. In this aspect, in the light of modernity ethnicity discourses emerged as imaginary and as an imposition from the dominant group towards the “other” to maintain the governance. In this sense Mustafa Kemal’s “Turkish” nation would be “imaginary” since there is not only Turks in Anatolia when the Republic was founded, yet it is “imposed” by the elite group which is Republican People’s Party (CHP) by the reason of creating a nation and identity which was based on one language, one identity and territorial integrity. Therefore any Kurdish attempt for recognition in Turkish politics would give a threatening impression in the perspective of Turkish nationalism. In this regard, the assimilationist policies, the state institutions and the military tradition would be self-evident in the way they were implemented and functioned.

Notwithstanding it is impossible to ignore PKK’s activity in Turkey. Not only Turkish state and society, also Kurdish society suffered a lot from PKK. Many have died from both sides, many innocent have imprisoned, illegalized and exiled. The symbolic boundaries of Kurds seemingly disturbed Turkish nation. However, the agreements between Turkey and EU and capturing Abdullah Öcalan led to a shift in both state’s and PKK’s discourses. Finally this complex situation resulted in PKK’s ceasefire and Kurdish political parties’ disengagement with PKK. Instead Kurdish parties gathered under the objectives of Congress of Democratic Society (DTK) which provides an outline of prototypical self-government that seeks to re-assemble the political through a re-appreciation of identity. By this way, this transition takes an important role in changing the threatening view of Kurds in the eyes of Turkish people.

The Kurdish demand for political and cultural recognition is now a world-wide-known issue since Kurdish movement expanded its margins world-wide through trans-national connections, internet and academy. For further researches, this study suggests that in order to investigate the Kurdish – Turkish conflict in Turkey thoroughly, it would be beneficial to press the issue of “ingrained fear” through the method of discursive psychology by conducting interviews with both state officials and regular citizens whether the fear exists as a habit of mind inside of a regular citizen in Turkey.
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