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Kurdish Identity and The Revolutionary Left in Turkey:

From The Eastern Question to The Kurdish Question

(1960-1990)

Master's Thesis

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Hereby I declare that I worked out this thesis independently, using only the listed resources and literature, and I did not present it to obtain another academic degree.

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Abstract

This study is based on the relationship between the Kurds and the Left in Turkey between 1960s and 1990 in Turkey. The question of identity is discussed in terms of the continuities and ruptures in the discourse(s) of the Left in Turkey on the 'eastern question' and 'Kurdish (national) question' in this period. The main question of the research is how the Kurdish identity was constructed in the discourses of *Yön*, TKSP (Türkiye Kürdistanı Sosyalist Partisi – Turkish Kurdistan Socialist Party), and the PKK (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê – Kurdistan Workers' Party). Three sample publications/organizations representative of the leftist discourse in the period were selected to show the Left's treatment of the Kurdish question by using periodical publications, memoirs, clandestine organizational documents and through discourse analysis.

Abstrakt

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá vztahem mezi Kurdy a levicí v Turecku v období od 60. do 90. let 20. století. Otázka identity je zkoumána z hlediska souvislostí a zlomů v diskurzu(ech) turecké levice v tomto období, týkajících se 'východní otázky' a 'kurdské (národní) otázky'. Hlavním předmětem zkoumání je, jak byla kurdská identita vytvářena v diskurzech *Yön*, TKSP (Türkiye Kürdistanı Sosyalist Partisi – Socialistické strany tureckého Kurdistanu), a PKK (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê – Strana kurdských pracujících). Na základě tří vzorků, reprezentujících publikace/organizace levicového zaměření v dané době, je za použití periodických publikací, pamětí, utajovaných organizačních dokumentů a pomocí analýzy diskurzu ukázáno, jak se levice vypořádala s kurdskou otázkou.

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Introduction

Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings.¹

Said put it very well in the section 'Overlapping Territories, Intertwined Histories' of his book titled *Culture and Imperialism* that struggle for the place is a conglomeration of images, imaginings, ideas, and identities, as well as contingent violence. This struggle may well be provoked by a contest over urban spaces as was in the case of Gezi Parki in the summer of 2013 in Turkey which claimed eight lives and incited millions to take to the streets all around the country, despite the brutal suppression of the Police, against an urban project to demolish a park in Istanbul. Or, it may well be fuelled by nationalist feelings contesting the *status quo* over a geography and identity. What makes the struggle over geography interesting is that in the course of this process ideas are adopted, reformulated, new images are created, a new *reality* is imagined, and identities are constructed and reconstructed.

The word struggle more often than not connotes involvement of at least two parties over a specific phenomenon, which brings us to the dichotomy *us* against *them*, conceptualized as identity. I will elaborate below on this concept. This study is about Kurdish identity, and the reader may have noticed that I emphasised the close relation between identity and geography above. This is because Kurdish identity is intertwined with geography since the term Kurd or Kurdistan was coined and employed with various objectives to denote a fluid geography and identities associated with it. Just as I will show that identity is not fixed and is constantly in flux and never complete; likewise, the geography in the Kurdish case was not fixed and was fluid.

Territory is a particularly important part of national identity. However, in the case of Kurds, the borders of Kurdistan as well as *who* the Kurds have changed over time. The linguistic and religious diversity of the Kurds manifesting itself in various distinct dialects and

¹ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (Berkshire: Vintage, 1994), 6.

conflicting sects further augmented the dependence of Kurdish identity on the geography. The disputes on the origin of the Kurds, albeit their different perspectives, have one thing in common: They "all tend to be autochthonistic (territorially based) in nature"; Thus, the essentialist theories on the origins of Kurds all attempt at establishing a link, usually an etymological one, between the present-day Kurds and the earlier inhabitants of this region with fluid borders called Kurdistan since around the twelfth century². It is also important to note that for a long period of time it was used as a term to denote an administrative unit. Some authors acknowledge that defining *who* is a Kurd is a much more demanding task than defining the borders of Kurdistan by claiming that there were surprisingly more efforts to define Kurdistan than to define the Kurds, even in the twentieth century³. In this study however, I will concentrate on the discourse and ideas which were employed to define or construct a Kurdish identity in a particular mind-set: Marxist-Leninism.

True, we are limited by and exist in geography; however, is it not the only limitation, so to speak, in the manner of existence. The language, or to put it more scientifically discourse, limits us as well. Geography, soldiers, cannons, and struggle in the citation from Said without much effort brings to mind 'occupation'. Since I will mention ideas and other phenomena that helps to create new ways of seeing and new ways of being more than occupation associated with soldiers and cannons, it would be apposite to talk about Koselleck's views on occupation and concepts. Niels Andersen, in his survey on Koselleck, holds that "the constitution of society can [...] be examined as a semantic battle about the political and social; a battle about the definition, defence and occupation of conceptually composed positions"⁴. Andersen defines Koselleck's 'concept' as fundamentally ambiguous and as "an undecided abundance of meaning, a concentration of meaning"⁵. If we are to appropriate the concept of identity in Koselleck's terms, I think, it would fit very well in this study as well as the nature of identity as a battleground of meanings and definitions between different actors. Identity too is never complete or definite, but is constantly changing, in flux. The Kurdish question with its changing definition according to the actors and periods can then also be taken as a concept. To illustrate the power of words and their usage

² Hakan Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State: Evolving Identities, Competing Loyalties, and Shifting Boundaries*, SUNY Series in Middle Eastern Studies (New York: State University of New York Press, 2004), 17,25.

³ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁴ Niels Akerstrom Andersen, *Discursive Analytical Strategies: Understanding Foucault, Koselleck, Laclau, Luhmann* (Bristol: The Policy Press, 2003), 34.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 37.

Koselleck points out that "*Begriffsgeschichte* reminds us—even when it becomes involved with ideologies—that in politics, words and their usages are more important than any other weapon"⁶.

We shall now turn to the concept of revolution as put by Koselleck. Citing Hauréau, Koselleck holds that in Latin, revolution denoted "a return, a rotation of movement back to a point of departure," which was in ancient times understood mainly "as the circulation of constitutions taught by Aristotle, Ploybius, and their successors"⁷. It was anticipated in the ancient doctrine that these limited number of constitutional forms dissolve and replace each other without coinciding. In this way, Hauréau cites Louis LeRoy, postulating that the first natural form of rule was monarchy followed by aristocracy which was the predecessor of tyranny. In this schema, oligarchy follows aristocracy, and then comes democracy which at the end degenerates into ochlocracy, i.e. mass rule. In the Enlightenment, Koselleck continues, optimism of the catch-words of the time 'change' and 'upheaval' were expressed in revolution which had become *à la mode*. The Glorious Revolution of 1688 which had shown that a loathsome ruling house could be brought down without a bloodbath, and a parliamentary government based on the division of powers could be established furthered this fervent optimism. With the Glorious Revolution of 1688, Koselleck postulates, "civil war" assumed the significance of a "senseless circling upon itself", and Revolution endeavoured to open a new horizon. It was not until the French Revolution, though, that the term revolution adopted "the kind of ambivalent and ubiquitous semantic potential" that makes it possible to differentiate between political, social, technological, and industrial revolutions⁸.

Following this endeavour to explain the historical route of the term revolution, Koselleck provides eight points to explain the features of the conceptual field of the term since 1789. Suffice it for our study to point out five points: Firstly, becoming a meta-historical concept, Revolution came to denote all individual revolutions, uniting them in the singular. Secondly, Robespierre's call for acceleration of the revolution, Koselleck contends, ruled out the religious eschatological expectation and resulted in secularisation. Thirdly, to the extent that the prospect of the future uninterruptedly changed, likewise the view of the past altered. Fourthly, the formulation that served to define "social and industrial occurrences in

⁶ Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On The Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 57.

⁷ B. Hauréau, "Revolution," in *Dictionnaire Politique* (1868), 846

⁸ Koselleck, *Futures Past: On The Semantics of Historical Time*, 43–49.

terms of a self-accelerating process", presenting Revolution as a meta-historical category, came to include "duty of activism" according to the progressive law of Revolution. Last but not the least, Revolution legitimated itself with the existence of a "counter-revolution" or "reaction". Koselleck points out that although both proponents and opponents of it participated in the initiation of a revolution, once it legitimated itself, it needed to reproduce its enemies to maintain its existence⁹.

After a brief look into the conceptual history of the term "revolution", we shall now turn to the mutual sustainment of the Kurdish question and the state discourse. When the Kurdish question in Turkey is concerned, the state discourse has to be taken into consideration. Some authors indicate the close relationship between the Kurdish question and Turkey's two-hundred-year old modernization endeavour informed by centralization, nationalism, and secularization. It is further argued that researchers working on this topic should consider that the dramatic ruptures in the modernization process of Turkey overlaps with the historical development of the Kurdish question and its periodization¹⁰. Noting this intertwined relationship between Turkish modernization and the emergence and development of the Kurdish question, this study posits that the link between the Turkish revolutionary movement and the Kurds informed a period of more than half-a-century of construction and re-construction of Kurdish identity based on the ideas on Kurdish question.

We shall now look into the meaning of *devrim* (revolution) and its usage in Turkish. The official dictionary defines *devrim* as "a rapid, radical, and quality change in a field," as the first meaning; and the second meaning is given as "*ihtilal*, e.g. French Revolution". *Ihtilal* translates as "a mass people's movement to change the political, social, and economic structure and regime of a country illegally and through coercion". Another meaning of *devrim* borrowed from English, as is indicated, translates "Changing or restructuring of the established social order; as opposed to the slow development, evolution, a sudden, radical, fundamental change in the social life and political conditions"¹¹. *Inkılâp* is also given as the third meaning of *devrim* in the old (Ottoman) Turkish. The overthrow of the government on 27 May 1960 by the military was called *ihtilal* by the junta and the proponents of this pull-down. However, it was called *coup d'état* by the opponents of this military intervention. In this study, I used the self-subscription of the people or organizations or publications with

⁹ Ibid., 49–57.

¹⁰ Mesut Yeğen, *Devlet Söyleminde Kürt Sorunu*, Third (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2006), 15–16.

¹¹ <http://tdk.gov.tr>

the term 'revolutionary' as equivalent of '*devrimci*'. However, the term does not necessarily denote the same signified in every case. For *Yön*, for example, revolution meant overthrowing the government in alliance with the military and establish a Third-Worldist government. The TKSP, on the other hand, adopted the gradual, two-phase revolution, firstly a national democratic revolution, and then a socialist revolution, ultimately leading to communism. The PKK pretty much laid out a similar goal in the beginning. What the latter two differed in was that while the former aspired for a revolution in the North Kurdistan (within Turkey) in alliance with the Turkish revolutionaries, The PKK favoured a revolution encompassing the whole of Kurdistan in alliance with Turks, Kurds, and Arabs who were in accord with their cause.

1. Methodology

Kurdish diversity and the lack of institutionalization that can establish a hegemony on Kurdish identity poses several hardships for the researcher to understand the process whereby Kurdish identities are constructed and reconstructed. For one thing, there is an ongoing battle over this concept between the state(s), Kurds, Turks, Arabs, and Iranians. This manner of identity construction involving multiple parties can, above all, be attributed to the absence of a legitimate producer of discourse on Kurdish identity which can produce a hegemonic discourse on the Kurdish identity. Secondly, Kurds speak various dialects in different regions inside the boundaries of four sovereign states: Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. This institutional allegiance of Kurds to different states as well as the shortcoming of a standardized Kurdish conjures up more problems for the researcher. Thirdly, Kurds are also divided by religion. For instance in Turkey, there are some Alawite Kurds, and Yezidis, alongside a majority of Sunni Kurds.

Acknowledging this problematic situation, within the scope of this study, I will focus on the Kurds living in Turkey¹². However, if need be, I will refer to the movements in other parts, particularly Iraqi (South) Kurdistan, as well. I would also like to note that this study is based on primary sources in Turkish. The lack of publications and a standardized written Kurdish until the 1960s in North (Turkey) Kurdistan did not leave any other option for the Kurdish intellectuals but to communicate in Turkish. Also, even if there later existed attempts at devising a standardized Kurdish written language (since 1930s with Latin alphabet as opposed to the written Kurdish in Arabic script in Iraqi Kurdistan), there was no formal education to teach it. The first In the *Manifesto* of the PKK, for instance, Öcalan recommends that the Turkish language should be seen as a medium to transmit the cultural richness around the world to the Kurds rather than it be despised as the language of the coloniser¹³. Keeping this in mind, it can be said that the Kurdish language was used more to promote Kurdish culture and language, while the Turkish language was the medium of political communication. Interestingly, in the 1970s, the Kurds began to publish texts both in Kurdish and Turkish in their periodicals to promote the Kurdish language and probably to contribute to the standardization attempts.

¹² From the 1920s onwards, some Kurds were resettled in the western part of Turkey. From 1950s onwards, with the mechanization in agriculture, more Kurds had to emigrate to the industrial cities of Istanbul, Izmir, and Bursa in the west, and Ankara in the centre.

¹³ Abdullah Öcalan, *Kürdistan Devriminin Yolu - Manifesto*, 6th ed. (Köln: Weşanen Serxwebun, 1993), 104.

The left and the Kurdish groups particularly in the 1970s proliferated to the extent that it is beyond the scope of this study to cover many of them. Rather, due to the time restrictions, I was forced to select one publication/group for each period that I believe is representative. Thus, *Yön*, as the first and the most enduring left-wing publication of the 1960s which received considerable attention from the intellectuals, became a platform where the Kurdish question as well as other issues were discussed. It is also important that *Yön* was the first nation-wide publication where Kurdish intellectuals communicate their ideas on the Kurdish question with their Turkish counterparts.

The other left-wing currents of thought in the 1960s were *Milli Demokratik Devrim* (MDD - National Democratic Revolution) movement, and the Labour Party of Turkey (LPT). The MDD saw the feudal remnants as the most important problem before progress and the first step of the revolution was considered to be a national democratic revolution. This was to be achieved with an alliance of the army and the civilians, that is, the intellectuals, and the youth¹⁴. The LPT, which Ahmad sees in parallel with the French Communist Party in that it was against violence and accepted the electoral road to power¹⁵, was the only socialist party that could be represented in the parliament in the history of the Republic. It also received substantial attention from the Kurdish socialists who formed the "*Doğulular Grubu*" (Group of Easterners) in the party. It was closed down following the military intervention of 12 March 1971 on the grounds of spreading communist propaganda and Kurdism. LPT was also the first legal political party in Turkey to recognize the Kurdish existence and identity in its fourth congress on 29-31 October 1970. Since the MDD does not provide much material about the Kurdish question, and the relation between the LPT and Kurdish identity has already been studied¹⁶, I selected *Yön* as the subject of analysis representative of the attitude of the left towards the Kurdish question in the 1960s.

Ideas precede, mould and kindle actions and movements. It is also obvious that ideas change and develop in motion, with the conflicts and challenges they face. In the 1970s, the Kurds had already begun to show the symptoms of a separate organisation from the 'Turkish' left. The *Devrim Doğu Kültür Ocakları* (DDKO - Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths), founded in 1969, constitute the first of such attempt. It became popular with the

¹⁴ Hasan Bülent Kahraman, "Türk Solunun Çıkmaz Sokağı: Kemalizm (Ordu) İlişkisi," *Doğu Batı* 4, no. 59 (December 2011): 58–59.

¹⁵ Ahmad, Feroz, *The Making of Modern Turkey* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 156.

¹⁶ Ahmet Alis, "The Process of the Politicization of the Kurdish Identity in Turkey: The Kurds and the Turkish Labour Party (1961-1971)" (M.A., Bogazici University, 2009), <http://www.kurdlib.org/rwdx/sitepdf/B1474.pdf>.

Kurdish youth, revolutionary or not, to claim the political, civil, and economic rights of the people living in eastern Turkey, i.e. Kurds. The DDKO accentuated legal organisation as an important aspect, that is why they avoided the word "Kurd" and used "Eastern" instead. They were closed down and many of DDKO leaders were arrested, charged with Kurdism¹⁷. The trials, on the other hand, were the harbinger of a new tradition of political pleas in the Kurdish movement. The convicts defended the existence of a distinct Kurdish language and the Kurdish people in Turkey with quasi-scientific arguments as opposed to the prosecutor's denial of Kurdish language and Kurds being different from Turks¹⁸. In this environment, a new idea or formulation to describe the relations between the state and the Kurds was devised: Kurdistan-as-a-colony thesis.

Throughout 1970s, the discussion on the colony thesis which postulated that Kurdistan was a colony of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria occupied the minds of the Kurdish intellectuals and youth. It was first formulated in compliance with the Marxist-Leninist teachings by Kemal Burkay. His book titled *Türkiye Şartlarında Kürt Halkının Kurtuluş Mücadelesi* (Kurds' Struggle for Freedom in Today's Turkey) published, with a pseudonym Hıdır Murat, in Germany in 1973 aroused further questions about the status of Kurdistan and Kurds. The Türkiye Kürdistanı Sosyalist Partisi (TKSP - Turkish Kurdistan Socialist Party) was founded as a clandestine organisation with the monthly publication *Özgrülük Yolu* by Kemal Burkay in 1975. The periodical served as the legal medium of the party to emanate its ideas. Thus, to represent the left-wing ideas on the Kurdish question during the 1970s, I will look into these publications.

Founded 'officially' in 1978, the PKK (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan (in Kurdish) - Kurdistan Workers' Party) initiated the 29th revolt of in 1984. With the military coup of 12 September 1980, the left was crushed, but the PKK could survive since its establishment and the "sun of Kurds" Abdullah Öcalan could flee to Syria. The "low-intensity war", as the chief-of-staff of Turkey called it, claimed 40,000 lives. Not much evidence, thus, is needed to justify the incorporation of the PKK in a study on the Kurdish identity in Turkey. However, I shall denote some restrictions. First of all, concerning the primary sources, only the *Manifesto* which was written in 1978 is used. I justify this with the premise that the *Manifesto* remained as the most significant theoretical-political document of the party until

¹⁷ Gunter, Michael M., *Historical Dictionary of the Kurds*, Historical Dictionaries of Peoples and Cultures, 1. The Kurds (Oxford: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2004), 41.

¹⁸ *Sen Faşist Savcı İyi Dinle!: Dünyada Kürt Vardır* (Uppsala: Bahoz Yayınları, 1973).

most probably the 1990s¹⁹. Here, I will try to show how similar or different an identity was constructed in this document in relation to the eastern question of the 1960s and the Kurdish question of the 1970s.

In this way, the transition from the *Eastern Question* to *Kurdish Question* in the discourse of the left in Turkey, I believe, marks a historical discontinuity which involves a complex relationship between the great portion of the left and the Kurds concerning the legitimacy of their organizing separately and the priority of the *Kurdish National Question* in the revolutionary movement in Turkey. The transition, in this way, not only indicates the evolution of different and competing trajectories to a contingent socialist revolution in Turkey, but also heralds the Kurds' assertion of their ethnic/political identity. The *Eastern Question* implies that the nature of the problem is developmental, and therefore needs to be treated with an economic approach. Accordingly, the regional development has to be achieved by building better roads, hospitals, inviting investors to start businesses, building schools and so on. The *Kurdish Question*, on the other hand, puts the emphasis on the ethnic identity of the Kurdish people, and in 1970s adopted an anti-colonial discourse. The Kurdish question became 'Kurdish national question', and Kurdistan was perceived as a separate country from Turkey. The point to be underlined here is, what methods and discourses the actors employed and which ideas they adopted and developed to legitimize their interpretation of the socialist literature/practices are of prime importance.

I will not dedicate a separate subchapter for literature review; however, literature related to each period and subject of inquiry will be discussed in the pertinent chapters. Since this study posits, state discourse on the Kurdish question was of prime importance, sufficient care will be taken to provide a good understanding of the state discourse. A brief historical background related to the development of the Kurdish question and the left will also be included.

This can be conceived as a study on the Kurdish question as it was understood by the aforementioned actors to provide an insightful analysis of the discourse on Kurdish identity. Research questions will be mentioned following the discussion on the concepts that will be employed analytically.

¹⁹ Ergun Aydınoğlu, *Fis Köyünden Kobane'ye Kürt Özgürlük Hareketi* (İstanbul: Versus Kitap, 2014), 29.

1.2 Conceptual Framework

To work on the Kurdish question is a demanding task. An ample amount of literature has been devoted to the topic in several languages and from various theoretical perspectives notably nationalism studies, conflict resolution, and the concept of identity. The concepts employed include (ethnic) identity, nation/nationalism, nation-building, ethnic conflict and so on. However, some scholars do not even feel the urge to define the concepts such as "identity" which has become a ubiquitous term with a growing equivocal meaning. Therefore, below the concept of identity will be discussed in different scales that I consider to be apposite to provide an analytical presentation of the issue at hand.

1.2.1 Defining Identity

Cooper and Brubaker offer a distinction between the category of practice and the category of analysis in a collective work they produced on the concept of "identity". The "practical" use of the term "identity" refers to the deployment of the concept by the ordinary people in everyday-talk to define themselves, their activities, and allegiances. Political entrepreneurs, they argue, also use this practical category of the concept to persuade people that they are "identical" with each other (for a certain cause) and oppose others, so that a legitimate ground can be found to organize for a collection action²⁰.

Just as one can analyse "nation-talk" and nationalist politics without positing the existence of nations, or "race-talk" and race-oriented politics without positing the existence of races, so one can analyse "identity-talk" and identity politics without, as analysts, positing the existence of identities.²¹

What is emphasised by Cooper and Brubaker is that reification of putative identities such as race, nation and ethnicity is realized through a social process and intellectual practice. While "avoid[ing] unintentionally *reproducing or reinforcing* such reification by uncritically adopting categories of practice as categories of analysis", analysts should try to explain the process through which these categories start to be understood as denoting

20 Cooper, Frederick and Brubaker, Rogers, «Identity», in *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (London: University of California Press, 2005), 62.

21 *Ibid.*, 63.

existing the reality²² (the emphasis is not mine). Therefore, throughout this work, I will devote sufficient care to adhere to the views of these authors to be bound by the analytical category of the concept of identity.

Turkey is one of the peculiar countries that fought a national independence war without nationalism. The military elite had reasonable incentives in denying any sort of national discourse prior to the ratification of the Treaty of Lausanne with the Allied Powers in 1923 after the success of the national independence war. Instead, a discourse consisting of a mix of religious fraternity, regional terms such as *Vatan* (Homeland) to define the territory fought for and the notion of *Millet* (means nation, as an heir of the Ottoman state structure, it meant religious communities e.g. Christian *Millet*, Jewish *Millet*) were exhaustively adopted. The remnants of the Ottoman Empire were predominantly the Muslim population in Anatolia and eastern Thrace, Turks and Kurds. To be able to mobilize as many people as possible and to avoid any claim of territory in the south-eastern Anatolia by the Kurds, the military elite paid lip service to the idea of Muslim brotherhood. Following the proclamation of the republic, nevertheless, Turkish nationalism started to gain pace to build the nation. The Kurdish people were deemed as a backward, tribal people who were originally Turkish but had forgotten their Turkishness due to their closed community while living on the mountains in isolation. Kurdish language was banned and Atatürk's (The Father of Turks, the leader of the republican modernization project, a former officer in the Ottoman army) saying "How Happy is the One Who Says I am a Turk! (Ne Mutlu Türk'üm Diyene!) was inscribed in public places such as the squares in the cities²³.

With that in mind, let us now try to appropriate the analysis of Jenkins on ethnic groups for our case. According to Jenkins, ethnic groups are a product of external and internal forces. That is to say, ascription is equally important as subscription, if we are to use Jenkin's terms, categories and groups, respectively²⁴. In other words, groups are internally formed around a common language, homeland, and political interest; categories, however, are imposed on the people from above by an authority. The categories include any kind of classification of the population conducted by an authority for a purpose such as lists of tax

22 Ibid.

23 Özcan, Ali Kemal, *Turkey's Kurds: A Theoretical Analysis of the PKK and Abdullah Öcalan* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 61–72.

24 Jenkins, Richard, "Rethinking Ethnicity: Identity, Categorization and Power," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 17, no. 2 (April 2, 1994): 203.

payers or occupational categories. The categories imposed by an external authority, in the end, might give rise to the formation of groups, for instance reification of neighbourhood identities. Jenkins describes social identity as follows:

[W]hether it be ethnic or whatever, is both nominal, i.e., a name, and a virtual, a meaning or an experience, a contrast that is implicit in the distinction between boundaries and their contents, and approximately analogous to the well-worn distinction between 'status' and 'role'. [...] [A]lthough categorization may not necessarily change the name or boundary of an identity, it may have considerable potential to define what it means to bear it, the experience of 'being an X'²⁵.

Özoğlu, in his work, provides three distinct processes which may overlap and can be hard to distinguish in the creation of identity. The monological process is defined as:

[...] it seems that at its earlier stage, we see indications of monological process. The monological process suggests that the role of the 'other' is greater in the process of 'imagining' a group than that the group itself. At this stage, it is essential to state, the outsider imagines a group not only as 'other' to itself, but also as 'homogenous,' thereby often ignoring the fragmentation within this imagined society. In turn, a very heterogeneous group inherits the idea of being a unified and distinct social entity and begins to shape and reshape its own identity²⁶.

The aim of the republic was to homogenise the population to "reach the level of modern civilizations"²⁷. As a secular state and taking her Western European counterparts, especially France, as a model, Turkey had to be a nation-state. Of the two most populous ethnic categories, the Turkish were dominant not only as the core of the former Ottoman state but also because Turks outnumbered the Kurds. Thus, Kurds were categorized as Turks. For the sake of consistency with what we have said, let us make one point clear: when we say Kurds, it means Kurdish-speaking people. Because the categorization according to language

25 Jenkins, Richard, «Rethinking Ethnicity: Identity, Categorization and Power», *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 17, no 2 (02 April 1994): 202.

²⁶ Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State: Evolving Identities, Competing Loyalties, and Shifting Boundaries*, 8.

²⁷ A saying of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk ("Muasır medeniyetler seviyesine ulaşacağız.") which was the motto of the modernization project of the republic.

was the policy adopted by the state to categorize population as was obvious from the "Citizen Speak Turkish!" campaigns²⁸.

Foster, likewise, underlines the importance of language for ethnic minorities pointing out its function not merely as a means of communication but also a significant part of ethnic identity. Ethnicity, according to Foster, "is a cultural phenomenon based on biological and social heritage; but it includes elements of class and territory as well"²⁹. The connection with territory and language appears especially important in Kurdish question. As we will mention below, when necessity occurred, Kurds preferred adopting the signifiers related to their allegiance to their homeland among the vocabulary invented by the state to denote Kurds. Foster argues that ethnicity becomes politically important when it displays its particularity in public space.

Once an ethnic identity gains such wide or intense support that it rivals that of the dominant social order and thus challenges the legitimacy of the central leadership, the stage of potential political conflict has been reached.³⁰

Foster further specifies "political socialization" as a necessary theme for analyzing the dynamics of ethnic movements³¹.

When they could build a common ground where they could socialize with like-minded fellow compatriots, Kurds showed their resistance to the categories imposed on them explicitly.

[T]here are the oppressed who do resist, who reject imposed boundaries and/or their content(s). However, the very act of defying categorization, of striving for an autonomy of self-identification, is, of course, an effect of being categorized in the first place. The rejected external definition *is* internalized, but paradoxically, as the focus of denial³² (the emphasis is not mine.).

28 On January 13, 1928, with the initiative of the students of law faculties around the country, state-sponsored *Vatandaş Türkçe Konuş!* (Citizen, Speak Turkish!) campaign was launched. The campaign did not lose its momentum through 1930's.

²⁹ Foster, Charles R., "Political Culture and Regional Ethnic Minorities," *The Journal of Politics* 44, no. 2 (May 1982): 563.

³⁰ Foster, Charles R., «Political Culture and Regional Ethnic Minorities», *The journal of Politics* 44, no 2 (May 1982): 564.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 568.

³² Jenkins, Richard, «Rethinking Ethnicity: Identity, Categorization and Power», 217.

Kurds were resistant to the state's categorization of them as Turks. To avoid the word Kurd, the state, paradoxically, categorized them in relation to the region they live in, namely the south-eastern part of Turkey which Kurdish people identified themselves with as their homeland. During the second half of the 1960's, when the leftist movement was popular, Kurdish intellectuals and trade unions leaders had an important share in the administration of the Socialist Labour Party of Turkey (LPT), and they called their group in the party not "Kurdish" but "Easterners" which was a state-wise acceptable word to denote the Kurds; otherwise, the party might have been closed down on the grounds that it was involved in Kurdist, separatist politics. Therefore, Kurds, pragmatically, selected among the vocabulary of the official discourse to denote themselves, by internalizing some and rejecting others. Their focus of denial was the Turkishness that was being imposed on them by the state; however, they accepted the nominal signifier related to their homeland, "the east". Meanwhile the state referring to the east implied backwardness, tribalism, feudalism, insurgency, poverty, illiteracy, namely Kurdishness³³. That is to say, the new category, easterner, was not neutral either.

1.2.2 National Identity

While working on the Kurdish question in Turkey, it would be unwise not to refer to the concept of nation and the scholarly works produced in the field of nationalism studies. Nation as a modern phenomenon has, in the last century, attracted considerable scholarly attention. In this way, plenty of explanations and trajectories have been proposed by historians, sociologists, anthropologists, and philosophers to shed light onto the questions concerning the reason behind the emergence of the nations and the processes through which this phenomenon gave rise to a new world order, that is, the world of nations. However, it must be admitted that the explanations vary almost as much as do the trajectories about the creation of the nation.

Different ideas concerning the starting point of nationalism has been put forward by scholars: "Partitions of Poland (Lord Acton), during the American Revolution (Benedict Anderson), the English Revolution (Hans Kohn), or even Fichte's 1807 Addresses to the

³³ Yeğen, *Devlet Söyleminde Kürt Sorunu*, 22–23.

German Nation (Kedourie)"³⁴. Some scholars went further to establish an analogy between religion and nationalism and claim "An understanding of nationalism and its implications for modern history and for our time appears as fundamental today as understanding religion would have been for thirteenth-century Christendom"³⁵. If so, can we say that so much is the importance of nationalism to the modern man that it almost serves as a quasi-religion in our times?

Before the secularist movements in Europe, it was religion which gathered people under a monarch. The monarchs sought to legitimize their rule over people by claiming 'divine chosenness' confirmed by the Church. The legitimacy of the rulers were sometimes questioned and led to unpleasant results for the monarchs. Louis XVI of France was not the first king in Europe to suffer from dethronement and regicide. However, the French Revolution did not only do away with his rule but also 'chose' the people to rule. Since then, with *tiers état's* claim to power, people have started to take their part in the stage as suggested by the motto of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*. And, as Anderson says in his introduction to *Imagined Communities* "nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time"³⁶. That's why to understand nation and nationalism is crucial to our time.

Renan's speech *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* which was delivered at Sorbonne in 1882 has to be reminded as one of the classical texts on the phenomenon of nation. While suggesting a definition to the concept of a nation, Renan puts the emphasis on the will of people to live together more than anything else, even language:

La langue invite à se réunir ; elle n'y force pas. Les États-Unis et l'Angleterre, l'Amérique espagnole et l'Espagne parlent la même langue et ne forment pas une seule nation. Au contraire, la Suisse, si bien faite, puisqu'elle a été faite par l'assentiment de ses différentes parties, compte trois ou quatre langues. Il y a dans l'homme quelque chose de supérieur à la langue : c'est la volonté. La volonté de la Suisse d'être unie,

³⁴ Smith, Anthony D., *National Identity* (England: Penguin Books, 1991), 85.

³⁵ Kohn, Hans, *Nationalism: Its Meaning and History* (Florida: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, INC., 1965), 4.

³⁶ Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 3.

malgré la variété de ces idiomes, est un fait bien plus important qu'une similitude souvent obtenue par des vexations³⁷.

This paragraph represents Renan's view on the concept of nation concisely. While he completely negates any role of race in the formation of nation³⁸, with a reservation, he recognizes the part of language in the formation of a unity. Another point to be mentioned about Renan's explanation is the unifying impact of the common suffering more than the happiness enjoyed together, which is the manifestation of the importance he attributes to the past. Renan calls the nation a spirit constituting two parts, one in the past and one in the present³⁹. "L'existence d'une nation", he holds "est (pardonnez-moi cette métaphore) un plébiscite de tous les jours, comme l'existence de l'individu est une affirmation perpétuelle de vie"⁴⁰. Each member of the nation is tacitly taking his/her part, according to him, everyday, whether or not to participate in the nation. He underlines the modernity of the nation by saying "[C]ela est moins métaphysique que le droit divin, moins brutal que le droit prétendu historique"⁴¹. To form this spirit, however, he admits that forgetting to the extent of distortion of historical facts constitutes a crucial part of the process⁴².

A more recent and influential work on nationalism is Anderson's *Imagined Communities* where the explanation of the title is contended as: "It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion"⁴³. The analogy between religion and nationalism is also taken up by Anderson. But Anderson makes use of this analogy to base his views on nationalism. "The century of Enlightenment, of rationalist secularism, brought with it its own modern darkness"⁴⁴. Prior to that, religion was quite sufficient to explain the arbitrariness of the fate, the losses, the rich, the wars and so on. But with secular thought, no other concept than nationalism, according to Anderson, could serve

³⁷Renan, Ernest, «Qu'est-ce qu'une nation? Conférence prononcée le 11 mars 1882 à la Sorbonne», in *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* (Québec: a Bibliothèque Paul-Émile-Boulet de l'Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, 1882), 45, http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/renan_ernest/qu_est_ce_une_nation/renan_quest_ce_une_nation.pdf.

³⁸Ibid., 42.

39 Ibid., 50.

40 Ibid., 51.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid., 37.

43 Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

44 Ibid., 11.

for the same function as religion did⁴⁵. Martin Luther's initiation of the Reform movement in Germany found its repercussions all around the Europe, shaking the prestige of the Catholic Church. Reform gave rise to the foundation of local churches and vernacular languages started to replace Latin both in worship, philosophy, and science⁴⁶. With the spread of printing technologies, specific dialects of each European language, began to be the standard, i.e. print languages.

What must be noted here is that Anderson underlines a link between capitalism and printing, which he calls "print-capitalism". Latin's hegemony as the language of theology, science, and philosophy caused a saturation in the printing business before the Reformation as Anderson points out statistics referring to Febvre and Martin⁴⁷. With the introduction of the vernacular languages, a new market for printing businesses was created. Print-capitalism, therefore, became a locomotive of spreading the vernacular languages and an instrument of standardization of the European languages.

"Newspapers", Anderson argues by referring to Hegel, "serve modern man as a substitute for morning prayers"⁴⁸. Although reading the newspaper, at any time of the day, is an individual activity:

Yet each individual communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion⁴⁹.

In this way, Anderson legitimises his title, the "imagined community" is built with the help of the print-capitalism in the modern day. From what Anderson argues, it can be inferred that the ubiquity of God in the period preceding Reformation and Enlightenment is replaced, if not wholly, partly, by the instruments that were aimed at or happened to be creating this "imagined community".

Similarly, Hobsbawm in his article *Mass Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914* contends that a "civic religion" had to be built to keep the society and the state intact after

45 ibid., 10.

46 ibid., 18.

47 Febvre, Lucien ve Martin, Henri-Jean, *The Coming of the Book. The Impact of Printing, 1450-1800*, Translation of L'apparition du Livre. Paris: Albin Michel. 1958 (London: New Left Books, 1976), 248–49 cited in Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities*, 18.

48 Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities*, 35.

49 ibid.

the secularisation movements⁵⁰. Likewise, he compares the primary education with the church, as its secular equivalent⁵¹. As the title suggests, Hobsbawm's objective is to show how the radical change in the relations between the state and its subjects and/or citizens forced monarchs or ruling elites of the time to create a continuity with the past to legitimize their rule. Hobsbawm explains this as follows:

After the French Revolution every monarch had, sooner or later, to learn to change from the national equivalent of 'King of France' to 'King of the French', that is, to establish a direct relation to the collectivity of his or her subjects⁵².

To achieve this, a set of new ceremonies or manners were 'invented' or dormant values were highlighted, which he calls the 'invented traditions':

'Invented tradition' is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past⁵³.

Resorting to the examples of 'invented traditions' in some European countries such as the national anthem or flag, other countries tried to legitimize their relations with their citizens. He argues that in his attempt to unify Prussia and Germany, Bismarck, among other things, made use of the 'invented traditions' to provide historical legitimacy⁵⁴.

What is the most strikingly pointed out by Hobsbawm, in terms of national identity, is the definition of identities with reference to the 'traditions'. As I have already mentioned, Renan underlines the importance of 'forgetting' to the extent of making historical errors in the building of a nation. If we appropriate his idea to Hobsbawm's 'invented traditions', 'forgetting' or highlighting some parts of history is conducted with the 'invented traditions'. As an example, Hobsbawm claims that "like many other liberated 'people', 'Germany' was more easily defined by what it was against than in any other way"⁵⁵.

50 Hobsbawm, Eric, «Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914», içinde *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge University Press, 1983), 269.

51 Ibid., 271.

52 Ibid., 282.

53 Hobsbawm, Eric, «Introduction: Inventing Traditions», içinde *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1.

54 Hobsbawm, Eric, «Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914», 274.

55 Ibid., 278.

As a result of the politics in the nineteenth century, Hobsbawm contends, "state, nation and society converged"⁵⁶. This new political atmosphere brought about a challenge to the legitimacy of the state and the bonds between the state and its subjects and/or citizens, which were taken for granted before. Therefore, "[...] the importance of 'irrational' elements in the maintenance of the social fabric and the social order" were recognized and strategies as to how to manipulate the masses to the will of the upper classes or the ruling elite were 'invented' and put into use⁵⁷.

As is obvious from what I have said, nationalism and national identity is a multi-faceted notion which varies in almost every context and emerges with a new aspect even when we feel sure of the definition we suggested. What we have covered so far was to give an idea of the concept of the nation as an entity gathering individuals around itself by referring to the suggestions of some influential scholars as to the formation of the nation and nationalism. We now know that the putative nation is a modern phenomenon which emanated from the relations informed by the modern societies emerging first in Western Europe. The answer to the question why this phenomenon that first developed in the Western Europe became so widespread is suggested by Anthony D. Smith:

As the burgeoning great powers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, these states were seen as models for imitation by those less fortunate, and their national format was increasingly regarded as a key to their success⁵⁸.

Smith is a renowned professor of nationalism studies who put forward the idea of 'ethno-symbolism' to explain the formation of nations. According to his approach, nations, being a modern phenomenon, are built on an ethnic-core. With an emphasis on the cultural artefacts, symbolism and language, Smith's definition puts the time-scale to earlier times. According to Smith "nations and nationalism are not more 'invented' than other kinds of culture, social organization, or ideology"⁵⁹. His attempt to explain the nationalism in a typology where nation is formed on the basis of *lateral* and *vertical ethnie* deserves attention⁶⁰. According to Smith, *vertical* or demotic *ethnie* refers to the ethnic-core which is shared by a large part of the community or a dominant *ethnie* and constitutes:

56 Ibid., 265.

57 Ibid., 268.

58 Smith, Anthony D., *National Identity*, 59.

59 Ibid., 71.

60 Ibid., 53–68.

1. a movement from passive subordination of the community to its active political assertion
2. a movement to place the community in its homeland, a secure and recognized compact territory
3. a movement to endow the territorial community with economic unity
4. a movement to place the people at the centre of concern and to celebrate the masses by re-educating them in national values, memories and myths
5. a movement to turn ethnic members into legal 'citizens' by conferring civil and political rights on them⁶¹.

Smith highlights the role of the intellectuals in this attempt to re-define the community, which might be challenged by the imperial or colonial powers, or the "guardians of the tradition"⁶². He refers to the *lateral ethnies*'s nationalism as "state-sponsored"⁶³, because of the extensive use of the bureaucracy and military to incorporate the "outlying regions and their *ethnies* and middle and lower classes [...] into the dominant lateral ethnic culture"⁶⁴.

Smith defines the nation as a "*named population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members*"⁶⁵ (italics are not mine). Realizing the thin line between *ethnie* and nation, he points out that the main distinction between nation and *ethnie* lies on the definition of the relation between the putative community and the territory it refers to while defining itself. The *ethnie*'s relation to the territory might be only "historical and symbolic", while the nation has a "physical and actual "*possession* of the territory"⁶⁶ (emphasis is mine). In addition, he states that ethnic communities do not necessarily reside "in 'their' territorial homeland"⁶⁷ (emphasis is not mine). Furthermore, common culture, division of labour or economic unity and common rights and duties binding all members might not be present in the ethnic communities⁶⁸. Ethno-symbolism is different from the constructionist approach to nationalism in that the former posits the existence of an ethnic-core.

61 Ibid., 64–65.

62 Ibid., 65.

63 Ibid., 68.

64 Ibid., 61.

65 Ibid., 43.

66 Ibid., 40.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid.

All this being said about nationalism and nation, there is one point on which almost every constructionist scholar in the field, i.e. perceiving the nation as a modern construct, agree: the protean nature of nationalism. Nationalism, it means, comes in very different forms and guises. When we look at the Marxist literature, we see at least two categories of nationalism: one progressive and one regressive or reactionary, the former being the nationalism of the oppressed nations, which is usually seen as the 'healthy', and the latter being the nationalism of the oppressing nations, which is conceived as the 'degenerate' or 'morbid' type. Tom Nairn's renowned essay on these two faces of nationalism "The Modern Janus", nevertheless, gives a blow to this view. Referring to nationalism as the greatest historical failure of Marxism, Nairn contends that there are no pure healthy or morbid nationalisms. He points out that in the "countryside of the world", that is the periphery where nationalism was required and seen as a means of modernization to industrialize or to become a member of the world of nations in equal terms, the nationalists had nothing but to look inward to exploit the sources of irrational folk myths and heroes which were to be re-imagined to succeed in soul-searching in the absence of other means present in the modern world such as an education system, bureaucracy and so on. That means "both progress and regress are inscribed in its genetic code from the start"⁶⁹. To denote this intrinsic ambiguity of nationalism Nairn establishes the renowned allegory:

[T]he substance of *nationalism* as such is always morally, politically, humanly ambiguous. This is why moralizing perspectives on the phenomenon always fail, whether they praise or berate it. They simply seize upon one face or another of the creature, and will not admit that there is a common head conjoining them. But nationalism can in this sense be pictured as like the old Roman god, Janus, who stood above gateways with one face looking forward and one backwards. Thus does nationalism stand over the passage to modernity, for human society. As human kind is forced through its strait doorway, it must look desperately back into the past, to gather strength wherever it can be found for the ordeal of 'development'⁷⁰.

69 Tom Nairn, "The Modern Janus," *New Left Review* 1/94 (December 1975): 17.

70 *Ibid.*, 18.

1.2.3. Ethnic Identity

In the first encounter with a person in Turkey, "where are you from?" would be one of the first questions to start a conversation. Although this question as to the birthplace of the person might sound quite innocent, its tacit aim is to learn about the person's ethnic background. I have already mentioned how the state preferred the word "east" to signify the Kurds. This relation of ethnicity with territory, even if it is invisible in the accent of the person, emanates from the desire to learn about the person's ethnic background and religious community membership. If, for example, the person is from Tunceli, a province located in the eastern part of Turkey, then an inference that s/he is Alawite and/or Kurdish is established automatically. Similarly, if the person is from, for instance, Hakkari, a province located in the eastern border with Iran and Iraw, and s/he speaks Turkish without any accent, then the following question might be about the job of the person's parents. Because of the prejudice that "easterners" 'cannot' speak Turkish without accent, thus, a ready-made conclusion that least one of our correspondent's parents must be teacher or any public officer migrated to the eastern part of the country because of their job would follow.

The scenario provided assumes that ethnicity is a given and is closely connected to the individual's birthplace. However, I have already mentioned Cooper and Brubaker's analytical and practical categories, which underline that an analysis of the concepts such as identity, nation, ethnicity should not be treated as a given⁷¹. Now, let us look into the putative concept of ethnicity to understand the case at hand.

Where does ethnicity reside? The scenario of an encounter I have mentioned underlines that it is closely related to territory, which is confirmed by Smith, as shown above⁷². However, here the role of the state should not be overlooked. Alongside the territorial claim of the ethnicity, as mentioned, Kurds were categorized according to the territory they live in, "the east". What is more, we shall refer to Barth to explain other aspects of ethnicity other than its territorial claim. Although it includes elements overlapping with culture, Barth "regard[s] ethnic identity as a feature of social organization, rather than nebulous expression of culture"⁷³. Defined as "a manner of social organization of culture difference"⁷⁴, ethnicity becomes even more apparent when this distinctive organization adopts political aspirations.

⁷¹ Cooper, Frederick and Brubaker, Rogers, "Identity," in *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (London: University of California Press, 2005), 63.

⁷² Smith, Anthony D., *National Identity*, 64–65.

⁷³ Barth, Frederick, «Enduring and Emerging Issues in the Analysis of Ethnicity», içinde *The Anthropology of Ethnicity: Beyond «Ethnic Groups and Boundaries»* (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 1994), 12.

Ethnicity's existence as a political unit emanates from its claim to a distinctiveness. This distinctiveness as mentioned referring to Barth comes from the peculiar "social organization" putatively unique to a community. This premise bears a silent conclusion in itself, which is, a comparison has to be present to claim distinctiveness. That is to say, it is not possible to think of an ethnic group without any contact with other ethnic groups. "To speak of an ethnic group in isolation is as absurd as to speak of the sound from one hand clapping"⁷⁵. Ethnic groups are articulated by the very contact points they touch other groups with the same claim to uniqueness. "Groups identities must always be defined in relation to what they are not, in other words, in relation to non-members of the group"⁷⁶. There are even more radical views of ethnicity which do deny its being an inherent quality of the group but merely a type of relations between groups, that is to say, "ethnicity is essentially an aspect of a relationship, not a property of a group"⁷⁷.

As seen from what we have said about ethnicity, it has inherent political properties. The relations between the Kurds and Turks was shaped by the state's treatment of the Kurds. Turks who admitted the mistreatment of the Kurds by the state were at risk of being denounced as 'traitors'. Excommunication was/is as easy as criticising the state's policies in the eastern part of the country⁷⁸. Therefore, un-Turkishness was built upon a favourable view of the Kurdish identity. Criticizing the violation of the Kurds' rights as citizens of Turkey or defending the linguistic and cultural rights of the Kurds was categorized as being a non-member of the community which was placed under the umbrella of the state⁷⁹. Therefore, the relations between the state and the Kurds was a determinative factor in the relations between the Turkish and Kurdish ethnic communities.

Bearing in mind the political and relational aspect of ethnicity, we shall now turn to another important component of ethnic identity. Power relations between communities claiming distinctiveness is part of the ethnic identity, however in the mobilization of the members of

74 Ibid.

75 Bateson, Gregory, "Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity" (Glasgow: Fontana, 1979), 78. cited in Eriksen, Thomas Hylland, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*, Third Edition (New York: Pluto Books, 2010), 14.

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid., 16.

⁷⁸ İsmail Beşikçi, a Turkish sociologist who has been publishing works on Kurds in Turkey since 1967 served in the prison for seventeen years. See. Barış Ünlü, "İsmail Beşikçi As a Discomforting Intellectual," *Borderlands* 11, no. 2 (2012): 1–21.

79 Hobsbawm, Eric, «Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914», 280. "At all events, it provided an internal enemy against whom the good American could assert his/her Americanism".

the ethnic community, political leaders and entrepreneurs might turn to the history and symbolic values.

Cultivating poetic spaces also signified a process of turning natural features of the homeland into historical ones, and naturalizing historical monuments. Rivers like the Danube and Rhine, mountains like Zion and Olympus, lakes like the Vierwaldstättersee and lake Peipius, have become humanized and historicized by their associations with communal myth and endeavour⁸⁰.

What Smith means with "poetic spaces" is the sacralisation of a territory as a place where the ancestors' spirits can be traced back to. By naturalizing the geographical elements of a territory, ethno-political movements claim a "homeland".

Smith's approach to national and ethnic identity is different in that he sees the history and the symbols, and the language as a stock that can be used for the political ambitions of the political leaders and/or the returning intelligentsia. To legitimize their view of their people, the political entrepreneurs, therefore, resort to the use of the symbols from the inventory of the "history" of the ethnic community. "Symbols in particular, and culture in general, are partially sui generis phenomena; they are dynamic and perpetual and have life of their own and it is exactly because they have such autonomy that they are open to political instrumentalization"⁸¹.

1.3 Defining the Questions

What we need here after reviewing the concepts that can be useful to understand what we mean by nation and ethnicity is a working definition of the concept that will be employed throughout this study. I suggest making a distinction between national identity and ethnic identity by drawing a line between them characterized by a project to build a nation(-state). In other words, ethnic identity denotes a level of awareness of a distinct identity in the intra-group and intergroup relations. National identity, on the other hand, refers to a group fuelled by the national project, that is, to build a state. National identity, in this sense, is equal to a political and cultural project to institutionalise the distinct identity of a group *vis-a-vis* (an)other(s) in the form of organisational autonomy.

80 Smith, Anthony D., *National Identity*, 127.

81 Malešević, Siniša, *Sociology of Ethnicity* (London: Sage Publications, 2004), 125.

Keeping that in mind, I also suggest a timeline for the formation of ethnic identity and national identity of the Kurds. It has been suggested that 'Kurd' as a term to denote a group of people was first coined by outsiders as early as circa 500 A.D. and was later appropriated by the group by the sixteenth century.

The term 'Kurd' was in circulation centuries before Şerefhan. [...] In other words, the term 'Kurd' was in circulation as a group identity 900 years before prior to Şerefhan. But we have no evidence prior to the sixteenth century that Kurds saw themselves as a distinct group above the tribal level. This lack of evidence allows me to suggest that a group identity was first imagined and then imposed on them by outsiders. [...] In this time, this perception was adopted by those who were labelled as such⁸².

It was not until the Kurdish notables in Istanbul reached a consensus regarding the unpromising future of the Ottoman Empire that a national project emerged. Recent scholarship shows that *Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti* (Society for the Advancement of Kurdistan, in Turkish - KTC) founded in Istanbul on 30 December 1918, was the first such organisation to advocate the national rights of the Kurds, as well as the right to self-determination⁸³. Therefore, throughout this study, Kurdish identity denotes an awareness characterized by distinction from other groups, and a political and intellectual project to institutionalise this distinct identity, when used to refer to the period before KTC and after KTC, respectively. From this point of view, as I will show below, then it is hard to say, for example, that Sait Kırmızıtoprak who advocated the linguistic and cultural rights of the Kurds on the pages of *Yön* was a nationalist at the time. However, he later radicalised and in 1970 led a nationalist armed group called T-KDP (Türkiye-Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi, Turkey-Kurdistan Democrat Party)⁸⁴.

As for the Kurdistan-as-a-colony thesis, there are some scholarly works which investigate the relation between the Kurds and the state in similar terms. Zeydanlıoğlu's "The White Turkish Man's Burden": Orientalism, Kemalism and the Kurds in Turkey"⁸⁵, obvious from its title, deals with the issue by questioning the modernization project of the

82 Hakan Özoğlu, "Does Kurdish Nationalism Have a Navel?," in *Symbiotic Antagonisms: Competing Nationalisms in Turkey*, ed. Ayşe Kadioğlu and E. Fuat Keyman, Utah Series in Turkish and Islamic Studies (Michigan: University of Utah Press, 2011), 206.

83 Ibid., 217.

84 Hamit Bozarslan, *Conflit Kurde: Le brasier oublié de Moyen-Orient*, Mondes et Nations (Paris: Autrement, 2009), 53.

85 Welat Zeydanlıoğlu, «"The White Turkish Man's Burden": Orientalism, Kemalism and the Kurds in Turkey'», *Neo-colonial mentalities in contemporary Europe*, 2008, 155–74.

Ottoman/Turkish military elite and the role of the Kurds as "the other", backward, people who need to be modernized. Looking through the lenses of colonialism, Zeydanlıoğlu, argues that Kemalists wanted to westernize everything, and a "civilizing mission" was self-assigned by the ruling elite. Bayır, on the other hand, in her essay "Representation of the Kurd by the Turkish Judiciary"⁸⁶, provides an insightful reading of the lawsuits where Kurdish identity was tried and denied. She demonstrates how the judiciary, as *sine qua non* of the separation of powers, re-produced the official discourse in its encounters with the Kurds.

Now that we have emphasised the significance of the state discourse to understand the process whereby Kurdish identity was constructed, it would be useful to refer to Mesut Yeğen's *Devlet Söyleminde Kürt Sorunu* (Kurdish Question in the State Discourse). Originally a PhD dissertation at Essex University, Yeğen's work provides a Foucauldian analysis of the state discourse on the Kurdish question since late Ottoman period. Yeğen investigates the "archaeology" of the state discourse to unearth the discontinuities. Unfortunately, since I could not acquire the original version in English, I use the Turkish translation of the dissertation published in Turkey.

Yeğen points out that the state's perception of the Kurdish question as an 'unexpected surprise' following the proclamation of the Republic overlaps with its self-description, that is, the rupture with the Ottoman Empire. Interestingly, Kurdish dissidents accordingly state their criticisms reifying such a rupture in their discourse as well⁸⁷. Yeğen also provides the discursive elements at the disposal of the state to denote the Kurdish question, if need be.:

Without recognizing its Kurdishness [ethnic aspect], while talking about the Kurdish question, the state employed a set of concepts consisting of "reactionism" as a yearning for the sultanate and caliphate [of the *ancien regime*], "tribal resistance" and "banditry" as the remnants of pre-modern [elements] in modern times, "foreign provocation" as a plot of other states, and "regional underdevelopment" as a matter of economic integration. Kurdish question in the state discourse was not a social problem with an ethnic aspect, but a social problem in relation with "reactionism", "resistance of the

⁸⁶ Derya Bayır, «Representation of the Kurds by the Turkish Judiciary», *Human Rights Quarterly* 35, no 1 (2013): 116–42.

⁸⁷ Yeğen, *Devlet Söyleminde Kürt Sorunu*, 40.

tribes and bandits against the modern and central power of the state", "provocation of other states," or "regional underdevelopment"⁸⁸.

Modernization, centralization, nationalism, and authoritarianism, according to Yeğen, constitute the main discursive elements in the contemporary state discourse on Kurdish question⁸⁹. The state invented the above mentioned set of concepts to talk about the Kurdish question without using the term "Kurd". The state discourse was reproduced with the available terms in different periods. The discourse of "provocation of other states" to denote the Kurdish question persisted through 1920s to 1990s. It was constructed as "imperialist plot" until 1950s; nevertheless, in the following period "communist plot" would become more significant a discursive element for the state to talk about the Kurdish question⁹⁰. Finally, the state discourse, as a text narrating the destruction of the Kurdish identity, is more of a language and narrative of this destruction than an ideological narrative concealing it⁹¹.

As for the discursive strategies employed by the Kurds, Kurdistan-as-a-colony thesis stands out as one of the most significant counter-discourses. The formation of the Kurdish identity in a dialectical manner involving the internal self-subscription and external categorization lies in the core of this research. Kurds' relation to the revolutionary movement in Turkey and the 'Kurdistan-as-a-colony' thesis developed and adopted by the Kurdish intellectuals, and revolutionaries gives hints as to the mapping of Kurds' locus *vis-à-vis* the state. While setting out my fundamental questions are:

How was the Kurdistan-as-a-colony thesis employed to construct a Kurdish identity establishing a dialectical relation with the state?

What did characterize the discontinuities in the Kurdish discourse between 1960 and 1990?

It should be noted that Kurdistan-as-a-colony thesis here is treated merely as a discursive element employed by the Kurdish revolutionaries rather than as a scientific premise. In other words, what is under scrutiny in this study is not the validity of this formulation but the ways in which this formulation was employed for different political purposes by different actors.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 20.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 109.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 152–153.

⁹¹ Ibid., 24.

2. Who Errs in the Eastern Question - The Enthusiasm of the 1960s

The social upheavals and economic recession in the final years of the 1950s were harbinger of a political turmoil in Turkey. Menderes's Democrat Party had strained its hold on the social life and the economy whilst at the same time it did not fare well in the last half decade when foreign aid and credits had become harder to receive in comparison with the first half of the 1950s. The press and the universities alike were under close monitoring of the government. The papers were either silenced or made to praise the government, and the universities were far from being autonomous. The broadcast of the state radio had provoked disgust to the extent that some people declared the foundation of their 'Association of The People Who Do Not Listen To Partisan Radio Broadcast' in December 1958⁹².

The multi-party system until the end of 1950s had become the 'normal' state of affairs. The obsolete election system on the other hand was far from contenting the urban population since the party with the majority of the votes received disproportionately more seats at the parliament than the other parties. The electorate base of the DP was in the rural areas which counted for more of the votes. In the big cities on the one hand the economy which had lagged well behind the election propaganda of Menderes in which he promised to create “one millionaire from each neighbourhood”; on the other hand, the suppression of the press as well as universities were definitely felt in the big cities such as İzmir, Ankara and İstanbul. It has also been argued that the inspiration of the students protesting against the DP by chanting “Menderes Resign!” came from Korea where the Syngman Rhee regime had recently collapsed following long-lasting aggressive student protests⁹³. Another factor, the most important indeed, was that there was discontent among the middle and low-ranking officers with the inflation under which their salary melted away. Menderes was cautious to keep the high-ranking officers content, though, which became evident when the extra-hierarchical junta tried to find a high-ranking officer to lead the coup of 27 May 1960⁹⁴.

The military coup can be said to be a result of urban discontent with the DP government. For one thing, the information related to the plot inside the military was not disclosed to any other military units than the ones located in Istanbul, Izmir, and Ankara; they were not even

92 “Partizan Radyo Neşriyatı Dinlemeyenler Derneği,” *Hürriyet*, December 2, 1958.

93 Meltem Ahiska and et al., eds., “27 Mayıs 1960,” *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1988), 1973.

94 Ahmad, Feroz, *The Making of Modern Turkey* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 125.

aware why the military coup had taken place⁹⁵; furthermore, contrary to the public joy it was greeted with in Ankara and Istanbul particularly by the students and intellectuals, the coup had not provoked any reaction from the provinces⁹⁶. This would later become evident in the long-lasting success of the Justice Party which claimed itself the heir of the DP in the first free elections held in 25 October 1961 and turned out to be a significant political actor in the following twenty years⁹⁷.

The second republic would claim several lives to legitimate itself. The trauma of the execution of the Prime Minister Adnan Menderes (1889-17 September 1961) and the ministers Fatin Rüştü Zorlu (20 April 1910-16 September 1961) and Hasan Polatkan (1915-16 September 1961) following the notorious trials would continue to haunt the political life. The charges brought against Menderes and his entourage led to reaction from the society and the international circles alike. Alongside other charges related to corruption and the breaching of the constitution, whereas Menderes, for instance, was charged with the alleged homicide of his baby born from an extramarital relationship and keeping a woman's underwear in his case in the Prime Ministry; the President Celal Bayar was charged with corruptly selling a dog to a zoo that was given to him as a gift by a foreign statesman⁹⁸. These secondary charges which were apparently brought against the leading figures of the party to degrade them cast doubts on the impartiality and lawfulness of the trials.

The unlawfulness of the trials as well as the military coup was apparent⁹⁹. Nevertheless, this setback was circumvented firstly with the assent that the military had always been de facto prominent in politics since the Young Turk Revolution of 1908; and secondly with the benevolence of the law professors. The National Unity Committee founded by the junta consisted of officers who had not given much thought to the aftermath of the coup. The commission which was formed of law professors under the chairmanship of Professor Sıddık Sami Onar, the rector of the Istanbul University, did not only legitimate the coup only a day later, but also gave the coup the character of an institutional revolution¹⁰⁰. One of the most important impacts of this educated touch would be the inauguration of the epoch of military coups in Turkey. The chair of the National Unity Committee and the leader of the

95 Nuray Karaca Ererem, "27 Mayıs, Kemalizmin Restorasyonu Mu?," in *Kemalizm*, ed. Ahmet İnel, 6th ed., Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce 2 (Istanbul: 2009, n.d.), 564.

96 Zürcher, Jan Erik, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 241.

97 Meltem Ahiska and et al., "27 Mayıs 1960," 1986.

98 Ibid.

99 Zürcher, Jan Erik, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 248.

100 Ahmad, Feroz, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, 127.

junta, General Cemal Gürsel asked Professor Onar and his commission to prepare the new constitution in a way that would legitimate possible military coups in the future if need be¹⁰¹. Accordingly, the Article 35 of the Internal Service Code of the Armed Forces would provide this legal guise to the military interventions of 1971 and 1980¹⁰².

The constitution of 1961 was drafted under the auspices of this commission of law professors who had different opinions as to the content and function of the new constitution. While those who did not have much faith in the civilian politicians and propounded an elaborately written constitution that would not leave much space for the politicians sided with Onar, two professors who advocated a constitution that would provide politicians with a greater possibility to develop the system were Tarık Zafer Tunaya and İsmet Giritli, and the latter two were removed from the commission¹⁰³. To this end, the Constitutional Court was introduced to monitor the legislative power as well as to investigate the compatibility of the laws enacted by the Parliament. The Constitutional Court, also functioning as the Supreme Court, was vested with the power to try the President, Ministers. The new Constitution also declared that the sovereignty resided not with the *nation* but the Turkish nation¹⁰⁴ (italic in the original). Confirming its impact on the political life, it has been argued that the political spectrum in the 1960s in Turkey was determined according to the political parties' stance towards the constitution of 1961 rather than a classical left-wing versus right-wing dichotomy¹⁰⁵.

The university youth who did not express its opposition in class-based vocabulary during the period of 27 May, did not question the competency of the bureaucracy and the state in general to represent the society as a whole or the 'people' as it was then called. However, both the legal framework of the 1961 Constitution which reflected the project of the industrial bourgeoisie to create a modern labour force, and the polarization of the society in the axis of labour and capital as a result of this project prepared the ground for the youth to polarize in a short period more radically. [...] 27

101 Ererem, "27 Mayıs, Kemalizmin Restorasyonu Mu?," 564.

102 The Article 35 of the Internal Service Code of the Army: "The duty of the Armed Forces is to protect and safeguard the Turkish homeland and the Turkish Republic as stipulated by the Constitution" "POLITICS - Turkish Parliament OKs Change on Coup Pretext Article," accessed June 1, 2015, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-parliament-oks-change-on-coup-pretext-article.aspx?pageID=238&nID=50706&NewsCatID=338>.

103 Zürcher, Jan Erik, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 244.

¹⁰⁴ Yeğen, *Devlet Söyleminde Kürt Sorunu*, 122.

105 Meltem Ahiska and et al., "27 Mayıs 1960," 1979.

May would be the last encounter of the army and the youth, and the masses in general on the same side¹⁰⁶.

The opposition had gathered around the RPP before the military coup. Its leader, the Milli Şef (National Leader) İsmet İnönü, was a former general who had fought in the western front during the Independence War. His background as well as the RPP's being the only strong and organised opposition against the DP had helped the students and intellectuals to forget about the rigid rule of the single-party period between 1923 and 1946. The economic grievances of the officers were coupled with their deteriorating social status which had broken the widely-accepted opinion of the period before the mid-1950s that the military should always be the vanguard in the politics¹⁰⁷. When the soldiers pulled down the DP, they did not have a well-structured plan for the next phase. Thus, it is postulated that the RPP's *İlk Hedefler Beyannamesi* (Declaration of Primary Objectives) which had been in progress since 1957 constitutes the core of the 1961 constitution¹⁰⁸.

As for the Kurdish question, one of the first moves of the junta was to expel 55 landlords from the east to the western part of Turkey. This was articulated as one of the first steps towards land and agriculture reform, conforming to the 'pro-development' and 'pro-industrialisation' discourse of the state. Yeğen claims that there was a rupture in the state's discourse from the 1950s onwards concerning the Kurdish question. While the state interpreted the Kurdish question as a reminiscent of the *ancien regime* that needs to be annihilated during 1920s and 1930s, with a concern of integration of the national market, Kurdish question in the 1950s began to be seen as an problem of regional underdevelopment. This was also because the last Kurdish uprising had been suppressed with every means of modern warfare including aircrafts in 1938 and since then Kurdish opposition had been silenced. The state, then, was reassured that the military and national integration was complete and national market was to be established in the country¹⁰⁹.

When it comes to the 55 landlords that were expelled from their homes, it later became clear that only a few of them owned vast lands, the others were only public servants or students or landless peasants. However, they had one common trait: they were all Kurds¹¹⁰. *Yön* was

106 Ibid., 1968.

107 Nuray Karaca Ererem, "27 Mayıs, Kemalizmin Restorasyonu Mu?," in *Kemalizm*, ed. Ahmet İnel, 6th ed., Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce 2 (İstanbul: 2009, n.d.), 557.

108 Bülent Tanör, *İki Anayasa 1961 ve 1982*, 2nd ed. (İstanbul: Beta Basım Yayım Dağıtım, 1991), 16.

109 Yeğen, *Devlet Söyleminde Kürt Sorunu*, 159–161.

110 "Ağaları Tanıyor Musunuz?," *Yön*, no. 4 (January 10, 1962): 12–13.

the first socialist publication in the period to appear regularly on a weekly basis and formulate new ideas on the Kurdish question. It should be noted that *Yön* addressed the intellectuals based mostly in the western part of Turkey and introduced the Kurds to them. Furthermore, it was not until *Yön* that the Kurdish intellectuals could express their opinions concerning the Kurdish question to a wider public consisting mainly of intellectuals and youth¹¹¹.

This period was characterized by the increasing involvement of Kurds more and more in the politics in Turkey particularly in the left. The Labour Party was one of the important 'laboratories' for Kurds as well as Turks as an experience of organized leftist movement. The nature of the Kurdish question as well as the actors involved underwent a radical change in the 1960s. For one thing, in this period, it was not sheikhs or tribal notables that were the vanguard of the Kurdish movement, but it was intellectuals and the youth:

Alors que nombre de chefs de tribus, de cheikhs de confréries ou de dignitaires urbains s'accommodent d'être autant les clients que les relais des deux grands partis du pays, le Parti de justice de Süleyman Demirel et le Parti républicain du peuple d'Ismet İnönü, la jeunesse kurde passe massivement à gauche dans les années 1960 et contribue à la formation des premiers bataillons d'une contestation qui secoue la Turquie durant les deux décennies suivantes¹¹².

Secondly, the Kurdish movement in other parts of the Kurdistan, particularly in the South Kurdistan in Iraq, had a clear impact on the Kurdish politics in Turkey:

À partir de 1958, cependant, la question kurde fait de nouveau surface en Turquie. En 1958, le retour du mythique dirigeant kurde Mustafa Barzani en Irak de son exil soviétique commencé en 1946, puis la révolte qui porte son nom, lancée en 1961, réactivent l'espace kurde à l'échelle du Moyen-Orient et provoquent la naissance d'une nouvelle génération de "kurdistes" en Turquie même. La mouvance de gauche qui se renforce dans les années 1960, sert également de déclencheur à une contestation kurde qui s'autonomise graduellement¹¹³.

¹¹¹ Aydınoglu, *Fis Köyünden Kobane'ye Kürt Özgürlük Hareketi*, 19.

¹¹² Bozarlan, *Conflit Kurde: Le brasier oublié de Moyen-Orient*, 52.

¹¹³ Hamit Bozarlan, *Histoire de La Turquie: De L'empire À Nos Jours* (Paris: Tallandier, 2013), 449.

2.1 Yön¹¹⁴ Movement and the Kurdish question

"Our Eastern Question"¹¹⁵ was what the readers of the political weekly *Yön* saw on the front page on 18 December, 1964. In this part of the study we will scrutinize who is this *us* in this context, and how it is positioned in relation to an *other*. This, definitely, requires a further look into the description of the *Eastern Question* in *Yön*'s terms. To do this I have analysed, among others, all the articles (sixty-one¹¹⁶) which appeared on the pages of the weekly throughout the time it was active, related directly to the topic of this dissertation, i.e. Kurds in/Eastern Turkey ranging in content from 100 to 4500 words. Firstly, I will contextualize the weekly with an emphasis on its significance during the period it was active, and the ideas it advocated. Later, I will discuss its relation to Kurds in the light of the articles published in the weekly.

Yön was published weekly as 16-24 pages, 222 issues between 20 December 1961 and 30 June 1967, with an interval between 5 June 1963 and 25 September 1964 due to a charge by the military commission of being involved in an unsuccessful putsch attempt¹¹⁷. It deserves special attention when the interest it received from the educated public and its continuity are taken into consideration¹¹⁸. Considering that 1042 people from all walks of life signed the *Yön Manifesto*, which was published in its first issue, it would not be an exaggeration to denote its prominence¹¹⁹. Its largest edition sold 30 thousand, and the fewest number of issues sold was 10 thousand copies according to its editor-in-chief¹²⁰. It would be useful to analyse the *Manifesto* to grasp a better idea about the weekly's discourse. Later, we will continue with the articles published on Kurds and Eastern Turkey.

114 When used without italics, it denotes the political movement with the weekly in its centre, other components being the Society of Socialist Culture, an unsuccessful political party, i.e. Party of the Employed (Çalışanlar Partisi), and the successor of *Yön*, *Devrim* which was founded 21 October 1969 and closed down following the military intervention of 12 March 1971. *Devrim* was the embodiment of a strategy for power, i.e. with a military intervention under the auspices of the revolutionary wing of the officers.

115 'Sosyolog Gözüyle Doğu Meselemiz', 18 December 1964.

116 The sixty-one articles were specified by Özdemir in his work including an index of authors and topics of *Yön* under the title 'Kurdism and the Eastern Question'. Hikmet Özdemir, *Yön'ün Yazar ve Konu Dizini* (Ankara: Replication, 1984).

117 Mustafa Şener, *Türkiye Solunda Üç Tarz-I Siyaset: YÖN, MDD ve TİP* (İstanbul: Yordam Kitap, 2010), 79.

118 Şener points out that no publication of the Labour Party of Turkey was as effective and regular as *Yön*. Mustafa Şener, *Türkiye Solunda Üç Tarz-I Siyaset: YÖN, MDD ve TİP* (İstanbul: Yordam Kitap, n.d.), 79.

119 Hikmet Özdemir, *Kalkınmada Bir Strateji Arayışı: Yön Hareketi* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1986), 53.

120 Ibid., 54.

The masthead of the weekly included the names Cemal Reşit Eyüboğlu, Mümtaz Sosyal, and Doğan Avcıoğlu as the founders of the 'intellectual and artistic weekly', although there were three other founders, according to Atılğan, i.e. İlhami Soysal, İlhan Selçuk, and Hamdi Avcıoğlu. The latter three were not included in the masthead of *Yön* because, as Atılğan points out, Soysal and Selçuk were working for other newspapers as well, and Doğan Avcıoğlu's older brother Hamdi Avcıoğlu was not included because he was only responsible for technical part¹²¹. It goes without saying that Doğan Avcıoğlu was the proprietor of the weekly. Cemal Reşit Eyüboğlu who was a member of the Parliament in the seats of the RPP (Republican People's Party) is alleged by Özdemir to have made the first investment into the weekly, which was followed by the investments of the Avcıoğlus¹²². Eyüboğlu is alleged by Landau to also have 'possibly' financed some publications of the Turkish Communist Party¹²³. Some authors claim that *Yön* even became a profitable enterprise with its revenues from sales and advertisements¹²⁴.

The case of *Yön* has been studied extensively and the reader might enquire the novelty of this very analysis at hand. The works that covered the other organisations such as Society of Socialist Culture and the Party of the Employed (Çalışanlar Partisi) in organic relations with the weekly which in the end constituted the *Yön* movement with Doğan Avcıoğlu in the centre include the works of Atılğan¹²⁵ and Lipovsky¹²⁶. The former attempts at writing an intellectual history of the movement by comparing it with previous movements of similar sort in Turkey, while the latter's aim is more of a political analysis of the socialist movement in Turkey between 1960 and 1980. Özdemir prepared an exhaustive index¹²⁷ of authors and topics that appeared on the pages of the weekly, and his other work¹²⁸ which made use of the interviews with Doğan Avcıoğlu is of great value to the researcher interested in *Yön*. Landau's analysis, although very much improved by Özdemir more than a

121 Gökhan Atılğan, *Kemalizm ile Marksizm Arasında Geleneksel Aydınlar: Yön-Devrim Hareketi* (Istanbul: Yordam Kitap, 2008), 240–41.

122 Özdemir, *Kalkınmada Bir Strateji Arayışı: Yön Hareketi*, 53–54.

123 Jacob M. Landau, *Radical Politics in Modern Turkey* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), 83. refers to Metin Toker, *Solda ve Sağda Vuruşanlar: Türkiye'deki İki Yönlü İhtilal Ortamının Anatomisi* (Ankara: Akis Yayınları, n.d.), 35–36.

124 Gökhan Atılğan, *Kemalizm ile Marksizm Arasında Geleneksel Aydınlar: Yön-Devrim Hareketi* (Istanbul: Yordam Kitap, 2008), 241.

125 Gökhan Atılğan, *Kemalizm ile Marksizm Arasında Geleneksel Aydınlar: Yön-Devrim Hareketi* (Istanbul: TUSTAV, Türkiye Sosyal Tarih Araştırma Vakfı, 2002).

126 Igor Lipovsky, *The Socialist Movement in Turkey 1960-1980* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992).

127 Hikmet Özdemir, *Yön'ün Yazar ve Konu Dizini* (Ankara: Replication, 1984).

128 Hikmet Özdemir, *Kalkınmada Bir Strateji Arayışı: Yön Hareketi* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1986).

decade later, reflects the zeitgeist of the seventies with its taken-for-granted as the earliest available scholarly work on the weekly as part of an analysis of the political atmosphere of the period. It should not be surprising then that only Atılgan mentions the weekly's stance towards the Eastern Question and Kurds, albeit very shortly, as one of the taboos broken by *Yön* when his work exclusively dealing with *Yön* movement was published almost two decades after the Kurdish movement radicalized and initiated the armed struggle in 1984¹²⁹. With its comparative approach where three different views on the revolutionary leftist movement in the sixties, i.e. *Yön*, Labour Party of Turkey (LPT), and National Democratic Revolution are juxtaposed, Şener's work¹³⁰ is a recent political analysis of the period. All of these works, on the other hand, do not exclusively deal with *Yön*'s treatment of the Eastern Question or Kurds. All this being said, the novelty of the analysis at hand lies in the fact that it exhaustively scrutinizes the discursive elements whereby the Kurdish question or the eastern question was handled on the pages of this prominent publication of the 1960's.

2.1.1 Intellectuals in Search of a Direction¹³¹

Yön, with its successor *Devrim*, was once described as a political party without registration¹³². It was a self-proclaimed socialist weekly which sought to serve as a platform for the intellectuals and intelligentsia to formulate a solution, to guide the direction of the country to reach its ideals. Özdemir points out that its widespread circles of readership among the intellectuals, university students, and bureaucrats might be because of the fact that it did not come up with a strict program, and rather developed it every week with the contributions of writers who usually had a socialist tendency¹³³. From the beginning to the end, socialism was the ideal but the strategy to attain this goal, and the collaborations it sought to establish this developed with time. Atılgan argues that *Yön* constitutes a rupture in terms of the intellectuals' analysis of the problems and their strategy of treating these

¹²⁹ Atılgan, *Kemalizm ile Marksizm Arasında Geleneksel Aydınlar: Yön-Devrim Hareketi*, 2008, 258–59.

¹³⁰ Mustafa Şener, *Türkiye Solunda Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset: YÖN, MDD ve TİP* (İstanbul: Yordam Kitap, 2010).

¹³¹ *Yön* means direction

¹³² Yahya Kanbolat, *Olduğu Gibi: Eski Türkiye İşçi Partisi Üzerine Anılar* (Hatay: Bayır, 1979). cited in Gökhan Atılgan, *Kemalizm ile Marksizm Arasında Geleneksel Aydınlar: Yön-Devrim Hareketi* (İstanbul: TUSTAV, Türkiye Sosyal Tarih Araştırma Vakfı, 2002), 24.

¹³³ Özdemir, *Kalkınmada Bir Strateji Arayışı: Yön Hareketi*, p. 16.

problems¹³⁴. Since the rule of the Ottoman Sultan Mahmud II (on the throne between 28 July, 1808 and 1 July, 1839), the intellectuals and the intelligentsia alike opted for the idea that progress would be achieved by means of education of the masses and ratification of laws. During the Republican period in the 1920s and 1930s, in this vein, the civil law was imitated from that of Switzerland's and the penal code from Italy¹³⁵. Education became of prime importance alongside the People's Houses¹³⁶ which served as a place for the education of the adults and to spread of the ideas of the republic. In the *Manifesto, Yön*, on the other hand, argued that the problems of the country were economic in nature¹³⁷. Therefore, intellectuals' stance which saw ignorance and the juridical system as the cause of all maladies since the nineteenth-century came to an abrupt change with *Yön* which analysed the problems in economic terms and offered solutions that were economic in nature. Atılğan points out the difference of the founders of *Yön* as follows:

What explicitly distinguished them [Doğan Avcıoğlu and Mümtaz Soysal] from the other actors in the political spectrum was their tendency to reinterpret the Kemalist Principles using the Marxist terminology. In this way, they would both be able to complement the "shortcomings" of Kemalism, and reach socialism from Kemalism as their departure point.¹³⁸¹³⁹

Doğan Avcıoğlu, the editor-in-chief, had studied economics and political sciences in Paris, and later learnt English in London. When his role in the movement and the political discussions of the 1960s are taken into consideration, Avcıoğlu deserves a few more words to describe him. His father was a teacher and his mother was from a wealthy family. As an intellectual, who was educated in economics and political sciences in Paris, in a world where 'development' was the catchword, Avcıoğlu also had the symptoms of the 'saving the

¹³⁴ Gökhan Atılğan, *Kemalizm ile Marksizm Arasında Geleneksel Aydınlar: Yön-Devrim Hareketi* (Istanbul: TUSTAV, Türkiye Sosyal Tarih Araştırma Vakfı, 2002), 74.

¹³⁵ The Swiss civil law which was adapted to the Turkish case entered into force 4 October 1926, and only recently, in 2002, was revised and the new civil law entered into force in 1 January 2002. When it comes to the penal code, it was based on Zanardelli Code and entered into force in 1926 in Turkey. The latest version, with ample amendments, entered into force 1 June 2005.

¹³⁶ For a discussion in detail See. Harpat, Kemal H., 'The People's Houses in Turkey: Establishment and Growth', *Middle East Journal*, 17 (1963), 55–67.

¹³⁷ Atılğan, *Kemalizm ile Marksizm Arasında Geleneksel Aydınlar: Yön-Devrim Hareketi*, 2002, 74.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹³⁹ Kemalist Principles: Nationalism, Populism, Revolutionarism/Reformism, Etatism, Laicism, Republicanism were adopted into the Constitution in 1937.

homeland/state' obsession that traditional Ottoman-Turkish intellectuals and intelligentsia had suffered from for more than a century¹⁴⁰.

Avcioğlu was not the only dissident of the Democrat Party (1950-1960) government. There were bureaucrats, officers, students, and intellectuals who were upset by the government's economic policies but also by its iron hand to silence the critiques. In this environment, the opposition formed a front, officers in the vanguard and the intellectuals providing the political legitimacy and ideology. On the other hand, in the aftermath of the military coup of 27 May 1960, which overthrew the government, the differences started to become evident.

Yön analysed the social, political and economic bottleneck Turkey suffered in economical terms. Their main critique to Kemalist cadres of the early republican period (1923-1950) was also in this vein. While Kemalism had opted to 'reach the values of the modern civilisation via the liberal thought system of the West, *Yön* was of the opinion that socialist system was best fitting to the needs of the country¹⁴¹. Atılğan argues that, in this way, *Yön* is distinguished not only from Kemalism but also the intellectual movements preceding it since the westernisation attempts started in the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century:

Participants of the *Yön* movement, putting the age-old premise formulated by the preceding intellectual movement that 'we are backward because we are ignorant, if we deal with this problem, we can progress' upside down as 'we are ignorant because we are backward, if we change the economical structure, we can overcome ignorance'¹⁴².

'Saving the homeland/state' was again the motto of this intellectual movement. But the means of the solution offered and the analysis differed from previous intellectual movements when the ideology behind it is taken into consideration. Westernisation had been (and is still) the question for more than a century. How to achieve it? What path to follow? What to westernise and what to keep? Westernisation had been seen as a solution to the military supremacy of the West *vis-à-vis* the Ottoman Empire. Until Atatürk's death in 1938, on the other hand, westernisation did not only mean military competency but a means to achieve the great ideal: to keep up with the modern civilisation. More than a century of attempts during the Ottoman era, and following that, almost four decades of reforms and

¹⁴⁰ According to Mutman, the idea of 'saving the state' as a reaction of the Turkish intelligentsia and intellectuals was first systematically analyzed by Çağlar Leyder. Mutman further continues to define this idea as the reaction of *İttihak ve Terakki* (Union and Progress, in power between 1908-1918) made up mostly of officers educated in Western-style schools to save the state in the absence of a bourgeoisie. Mahmut Mutman, "Uzaklaşan ve Yakınlaşan Sol Üzerine Düşünceler," *Doğu Batı* 59, no. 4 (December 2011): 86.

141 Atılğan, *Kemalizm ile Marksizm Arasında Geleneksel Aydınlar: Yön-Devrim Hareketi*, 2002, 40.

142 Ibid., 75.

revolutions had not been enough to achieve this ideal. *Yön* reformulated the ideal: socialism; the means to achieve it: changing the economic relations in the society.

2.1.2. The Manifesto¹⁴³

In the first issue, Doğan Avcıoğlu, the editor-in-chief specifying the inequalities in the distribution of wealth proposes that "[I]n the second half of the twentieth century, socialism stands out as the only feasible way for the underdeveloped countries"¹⁴⁴. The definition of socialism needs further explanation in the light of the *Manifesto* and later issues of the weekly. Landau notes the similarities between the *Yön* movement and "the ideas of the Western socialist groups, chiefly those of the British labour Party":

social advantages rather than profits in production, nationalization of key industries, a fair division of national wealth, a parliamentary democracy with weighty representation for workers, and protection for workers against their employers¹⁴⁵.

Economic backwardness, not only in terms of figures but also in terms of relations is seen as the main reason for social problems of any sort. It is also highlighted that achieving a better exports rate or receiving more tourists would only change the figures on paper, and this would only strengthen the status of a 'few happy'. Therefore, it would only be possible to solve the problems as specified and would be described in depth in the following issues by scrutinizing the economical problems closely.

The official ideal of keeping up with the modern civilisation and the shortcomings of the state apparatus to achieve democracy in its 'true' sense were also linked to production rate and explained in economic terms. Westernisation, as pointed out in the *Manifesto*, could not be achieved by imitating the laws, values, institutions of the West but by keeping up with its production rate. An increase in production, on the other hand, was not preached as the complete solution but constituted only a part of it. Without securing equality in the distribution of wealth, it would only aggravate the problems. What *Yön* saw as the most important component to achieve this was a clear "development philosophy".

An economic philosophy that benefited from the modern thinkers' contributions to this science and the historical experiences of the humankind was seen as a must. A "completely

143 Unless stated otherwise, this is a summary of the *Manifesto* pertinent to the scope of this study. see. 'Bildiri', *Yön* (Istanbul, 20 December 1961), pp. 12–13.

144 Doğan Avcıoğlu, 'Kemer Sıkalım, Ama Önce Sosyal Adalet', *Yön* (Istanbul, 20 December 1961), p. 3.

145 Jacob M. Landau, *Radical Politics in Modern Turkey* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), 56.

planned" economical system which prioritised state investments was proposed. It was seen as the responsibility of the state to regulate and occupy the largest share of the investments as per the development plans drafted by technocrats. In this way, the political authority would be freed from the tutelage of the economic affairs dominated by the private capital, which, in the end, would improve the masses' appreciation of democracy.

A "New Etatism" was seen as the solution with the examples indicating the failure/shortcomings of the liberal economy in the West. This was defined as conscious state intervention to the economy in a democratic and planned way. The aim of New Etatism was to establish the "real democracy" where quality education could be provided to everybody by the state. The unreliability of the politicians and the dysfunction of the bourgeoisie was a common point of departure alongside the discontent of the educated elite during and after the Democrat Party (1950-1960) period.

When the Constitution of the Second Republic (1960-1980) is taken into consideration, it is not difficult to see the avoidance of the (civilian) politicians as being unreliable. *Yön*, in this sense, takes the initiative to theorise this view. Regional inequalities also found its place in *Yön's Manifesto*. This can be seen as the weekly's determination to analyse the Eastern question, and later the Kurdish question more in depth.

2.1.3 Yön in Figures

Table 1 indicates the appearance frequency percentage of some of the concepts including "Kurdism and Eastern Question", which would make it easier to see the importance of this topic for the weekly. As can be seen in the table, socialism was of prime importance to the weekly. Articles related to Kurds and the eastern question ranked fourth in this table of frequency, i.e. prioritisation. (New) Etatism that the weekly tried to theorise to achieve social and economic development as underlined in the *Manifesto* ranks seventh in the frequency of appearance, which, when considered in relation with the ranking of the 'Kurdism and the eastern question', means that the weekly was serious about this topic.

As opposed to socialism, liberalism, as seen, was the least treated subject. The percentage of parliamentary system is a good indicator showing the movement's level of trust to the (civilian) politicians. The articles which appeared on the parliamentary system can be understood usually as criticisms of the weekly. Juxtaposing the data from the Table 1 to the Kemalist Principles (above footnote 26), the weekly's critique and stance towards the

official discourse can be seen more clearly; because while Kurds were (are) absent from the official discourse—unless they were (are) rebels—which justified itself usually with an interpretation of Kemalist Principles, *Yön* highlighted the acuteness of the Eastern Question

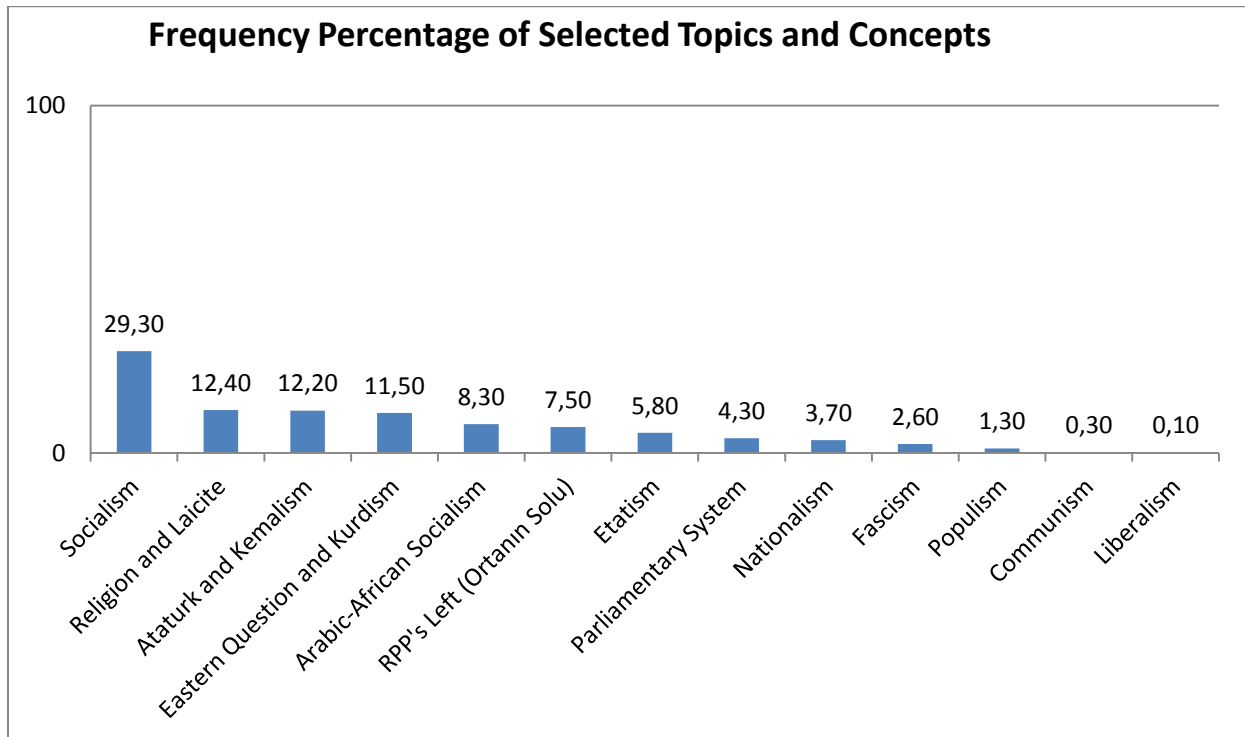


Table 1 Frequency of the Selected Topics and Political Concepts¹⁴⁶

and the Kurdish question as an important topic in its list of priorities.

Table 2 indicates the frequency of selected topics in years. Independence and democracy follows an opposite pattern starting from the year 1964, which might be attributed to the impact of 'Johnson's letter'¹⁴⁷. Following this international crisis, not only *Yön* but already anti-imperialist, i.e anti-Western, the United States singling out as the clearest antagonist, left put more emphasis on 'real independence'. The views on democracy suffered from the same crisis, due to a diminishing trust to the politicians to save the dignity of the country.

After 1966, we can see an abrupt decrease in the treatment of socialism in the weekly, which can be attributed to its affiliation with the National Democratic Revolution

146 The table is drawn by myself by using the data on Özdemir, *Kalkınmada Bir Strateji Arayışı: Yön Hareketi*, p. 63. Since the fractions were rounded up by Özdemir, the total is not 100,00 but 99,3 when all the figures are added up.

147 'Johnson's letter' has been treated as a turning point in the foreign affairs of modern Turkey. A letter in a tactless tone, dated 5 June 1964 from the President of the USA Lyndon B. Johnson was sent to Ankara in order to prevent Turkey's intervention to Cyprus. It was received as a blow to the Turkish-American affairs and changed the Turkish understanding of foreign affairs. The Prime Minister, İsmet İnönü, following this incident, commented "A new world would be established and Turkey would find her place in it." and initiated the official contacts with the USSR.

Movement. Under the leadership of the ex-Communist-Party-member Mihri Belli, this movement analysed the socio-economic conditions in Turkey as immature for a socialist revolution due to the low consciousness level, and the proportion of the working class to the whole population, small as it was; and thus, advocated that a national-democratic revolution was the step before a socialist revolution¹⁴⁸. Likewise, some authors point out the adoption of the ideas of 'gradual transition to socialism' and establishment of a 'national front' by *Yön* as the reason of the closer relations with the ex-Communist-Party members such as Mihri Belli. Thus the pages of *Yön* became the lieu where National-Democratic Revolution movement started to shape following the parliamentary elections of 10 October 1965 when LPT, as the representative of the revolutionary left, was disappointed by the election results¹⁴⁹. While expecting a much better result, the Labour Party could secure only fourteen seats in the parliament, which ended up *Yön's* and other revolutionary leftists' resentment of the parliamentary system as a means of achieving revolution¹⁵⁰.

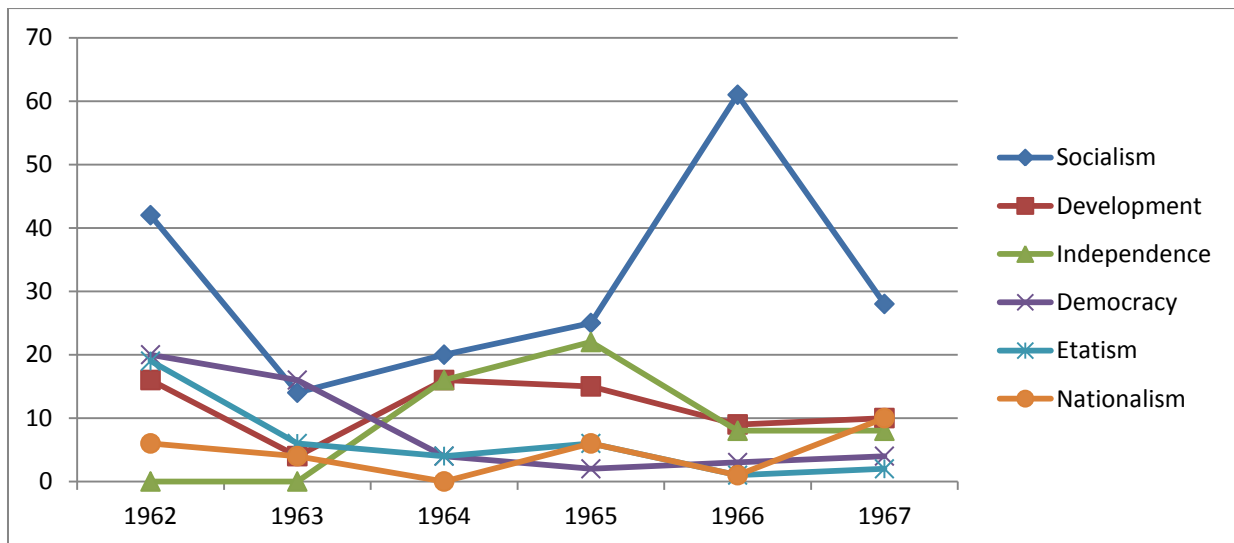


Table 2 Treatment of the Selected Topics in Years¹⁵¹

148 National-Democratic Revolution (NDR) movement, similar to *Yön*, did not see the working class as the vanguard of a revolution. Since, with its ramifications, NDR is beyond the scope of this dissertation, unless needed, it will not be studied at length in this dissertation. Mihri Belli's book named after the movement itself offers a comprehensive source as to the ideology and strategy of the movement see. Mihri Belli, *Milli Demokratik Devrim*, (Istanbul: Aydınlık Yayınları, 1970).

149 Şener, *Türkiye Solunda Üç Tarz-I Siyaset: YÖN, MDD ve TİP*, 124.

150 For a thorough analysis of the strategies for power adopted by the weekly see. Gökhan Atılğan, *Kemalizm ve Marksizm arasında Geleneksel Aydınlar: Yön-Devrim Hareketi* (Istanbul: Yordam Kitap, 2008).

151 Özdemir, *Kalkınmada Bir Strateji Arayışı: Yön Hareketi*, p. 67.

2.1.4 On Kurds (sometimes by Kurds) in *Yön*

For this part of the study, I have used the index of the authors and topics prepared by Hikmet Özdemir¹⁵². He indexed all the articles with/without authors that appeared on the pages of the weekly throughout the time it was active. It was fortunate to find "Kurdism and Eastern Question" which includes all the articles related to the topic of this study in the index. The number of the articles related to Kurds and Eastern Question are specified as sixty-one under the title 'Kurdism and Eastern Question'.

In the modern society, access to the means that can be used to influence the minds of the members of the society is an important manifestation of social power. With this power, privileged groups establish a discourse to legitimize their status. From this point of view, it can easily be assumed that not everyone has a right to be the producer of discourses while all members of the society are in theory users or consumers of discourse. Accordingly, Van Dijk points out this close relationship between access to discourse and power:

An analysis of the various modes of discourse access reveals a rather surprising parallelism between social power and discourse access: the more discourse genres, contexts, participants, audience, scope and text characteristics they (may) actively control or influence, the more powerful social groups, institutions or elites are¹⁵³.

From this point of view, contribution of Kurds to a publication which was widely appreciated by the society is important. Of the 61 articles published in *Yön*, at least eight were written by Kurds. Following van Dijk's quotation, *Yön's giving voice* to Kurds on its pages was an important development; the number of articles written by Kurdish contributors should not go unnoticed, though.

With a flavour of nationalism not in terms of the right-wing connotation of the term but of economy, the socialist discourse of *Yön* repercussions on the articles of the Kurds explicitly. Enjoying the status that his profession as a physician bestows, Sait Kırmızıtoprak (Dr. Şivan) was a prominent of these Kurdish contributors with four articles in *Yön*. He was one of the convicts of an earlier charge on the grounds of separatist Kurdism, which led to his being deprived of all civil rights. Interestingly contrasting with what he consistently highlighted in his writings as I will touch upon below, he founded Türkiye'de Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi (T-KDP, Kurdistan Democrat Party in Turkey) in 1970 as an attempt to

152 Özdemir, *Yön'ün Yazar ve Konu Dizini*.

153 Teun A. van Dijk, 'Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis', *Discourse and Society*, 4(2) (1993), 249–83 (p. 256) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0957926593004002006>>.

defend rights of the Kurds separately from the Turkish left. In his writings in *Yön*, Kırmızıtoprak explicitly defended the cultural rights of Kurds. In all his articles published in the weekly, there can be seen an emphasis on being a citizen of Turkey and not a separatist. The other articles, usually collective, followed the same pattern.

The articles that appeared in *Yön* related to Kurds and the eastern question can be classified into three categories according to their content and style: a) quasi-anthropological/travel writings; b) Kurds in the neighbouring countries; c) Kurds in Turkey and the eastern question. These categories are, definitely, not watertight and applied only to make the analysis easier. The table below (Table 3) shows the appearance of the topic of Kurdish/Eastern Question in *Yön* throughout years.

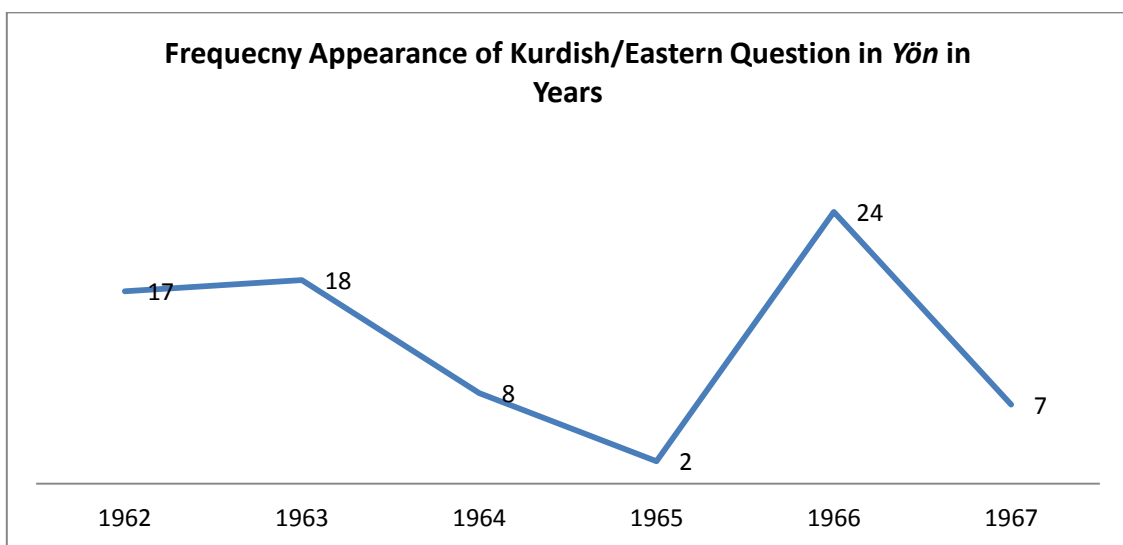


Table 3 Treatment of Kurds/Eastern Question in *Yön* Throughout Years¹⁵⁴

2.1.4.1 quasi-anthropological travel writings

It was not until the fifties when the mechanisation started to take over the manpower in agriculture and the landless peasants, in turn, had to migrate to the cities that Turks started to get to know more Kurds as neighbours, workers, students, etc. When the discourse of the official history which teaches students that Kurds are rebellious and backward people under the rule of religious leaders is taken into consideration, it would not be an exaggeration to argue that the two people, or maybe Turks more, did not know each other. They could get to

¹⁵⁴ The data is taken from Özdemir, *Yön'ün Yazar ve Konu Dizini*. But the table was drawn by myself. Since the weekly started publication a week before the end of the year 1961, the year mentioned is omitted. Also, the weekly was closed in the second half of the year 1963, and kept inactive until the third quarter of the year 1964. So, the data for these years were multiplied with 2 and 4, respectively.

know each other in the military service or with other limited means. It was prohibited, indeed, for foreigners to enter the eastern part of Turkey, and the citizens of Turkey from other parts of the country were subject to the consent of the authorities to access the region¹⁵⁵. From this point of view, *Yön* criticizes that "although the sources providing information about this part of the country are very limited, there are documents in German or in English containing very detailed information about the region"¹⁵⁶. To fill this gap as much as it can *Yön* welcomed articles from people who visited the eastern part of Turkey.

Muzaffer İlhan Erdost's series of 18 articles titled "Şemdinli Röportajı (Interviews in Semdinli)" was published between 15 July-11 November 1966 every week. Erdost was doing his compulsory military service in Şemdinli as a veterinary reserve officer. Şemdinli, which lies on the south-eastern tip of Turkey, intersecting the borders of Iran and Iraq, is one of the four towns of the province of Hakkari in eastern Turkey. Erdost conducted informal interviews with common people in the town on the topics ranging from history to religion, and from their relations with the state to the economy. These interviews give the sense of a conversation rather than a structured interview with a scientific concern. The photos depicting one man and one woman in their working dresses are very interesting. These two among others Erdost published alongside his interviews, gives the impression of an anthropologist trying to explore and introduce a people from far away.

Picture 1 below shows the traditional outfit of the villagers in Şemdinli. The photos were taken by Erdost himself, and were published on the 185th issue of the weekly¹⁵⁷. While the photos are interesting enough with an eagerness to introduce the 'people of the east', the footnote under the illustrations are also illuminating in that some of the words used to denote the clothing are Kurdish such as *şelişepik* and *puşi*. According to the renowned etymologist of Turkish language Sevan Nişanyan, *şelişepik* is a traditional Kurdish garment¹⁵⁸. When it comes to *puşi*, The Institution of Turkish Language (TDK), which is the official linguistic reference of Turkish language defines it as "a sort of regional headgear [Diyarbakır]"¹⁵⁹. Similarly, *kofî* is defined as a sort of headgear peculiar to Diyarbakır and

155 'Doğu Meselemiz'.

156 'Doğu Meselemiz'.

157 Muzaffer İlhan Erdost, 'Şemdinli Röportajı: 13 Yönetici Kadro ve Halk', *Yön*, no. 185 (14 October 1966): 12–13.

158 Sevan Nişanyan, 'Şelişepik', accessed 15 March 2015, <http://www.nisanyansozluk.com/?k=%C5%9Feli%C5%9Fepik&lnk=1>.

159 Saadettin Özçelik and Erdoğan Boz, 'TÜRK DİL KURUMU', Official, *Türkiye Dil Kurumu*, accessed 15 March 2015, http://tdk.gov.tr/index.php?option=com_ttas&view=ttas&kategori1=derlay&kelime1=pu%C5%9Fi.

its villages¹⁶⁰. What this highlights is that not only the illustrations but also the words used to depict these clothing was foreign to the average reader of the weekly.



Picture 1 People living in the town of Şemdinli, Hakkari. On the left: a villager woman with her working outfit, with a puşi (a sort of headgear), a dress under a waistcoat and a belly band, and rubber shoes and woollen socks. On the right: a villager man with working outfit, with puşi (keffiyeh) on the head, and şelişepik (a traditional Kurdish dress) and belly band on the body, with woollen socks and rubber shoes on the feet¹⁶¹.

Articles of this sort were ultimately written for a non-Kurdish audience, describing the geography, climate, and people in the eastern part of the country. Şemdinli, as mentioned above, is important in the way that it lies in the south-eastern corner of the country. A

160 Anonymous, 'TÜRK DİL KURUMU', Official, accessed 16 March 2015, http://tdk.gov.tr/index.php?option=com_ttas&view=ttas&kategori=acikla2&kod=134870.

161 Erdost, 'Şemdinli Röportajı: 13 Yönetici Kadro ve Halk'.

renowned researcher, Tanıl Bora points out to the ambiguity of Turkish nationalism concerning a homeland because of its ignorance of the geography of the country but rather appreciation of it on the map¹⁶². *Yön* can be said to appropriate this vulnerable corner of the country. Vulnerable because surrounded by Iran and Iraq, as well as, being unprotected against manipulation of the 'enemies', Şemdinli was explored and re-imagined as part of the homeland in the minds of the people living in the western part of the country. Because the target audience, consumers of this discourse about a far-away town where people live in poverty and speak a different language was the *Others* of these people, they were usually silent or responding to questions *inappropriately*¹⁶³.

Another traveller-contributor of *Yön*, with a physician friend of hers set off to this 'unknown country' enthusiastically. The geography and the people of the east could be imagined more vividly but usually with negative connotations. Poverty was the main theme. The clothes and the homes of the people were usually depicted in grotesque images. The people in this part of the country had more children than those in the western part. Because "they ha[d] no job, no entertainment, no literacy. What c[ould] they do to entertain themselves? They c[ould] only have children" responds the driver who accompanied Celile Cem and her friend during their travel through Suruç, Urfa in south-eastern Turkey¹⁶⁴. This is an image of the Kurds that had persisted for decades in Turkey. This follows irrationality: "why to have so many children while you do not have the means". Also, there are criticisms to the state and the civil servants around the region. The state did not, first of all, conduct the Land Reform; the civil servants tend to misuse their power and accept bribe. These accusations, on the other hand, continue with possible solutions, thus do not necessarily blame any entity other than individual officers or public servants. The image of the Kurds was very vividly drawn as a far-away backward, irrational people, which might have strengthened the stereotypes about Kurds.

162 Tanıl Bora, 'Türk Milliyetçiliğinin İnşasında Vatan İmgesi: Harita ve "Somut" Ülke. Milliyetçiliğin Vatani Neresi?', *Birikim*, 2007 <<http://www.birikimdergisi.com//sayi/213/turk-milliyetciliginin-insasinda-vatan-imesi-harita-ve-somut-ulke-milliyetciligin-vatani>> [accessed 16 February 2015].

163 As will be mentioned below, a child did not know what the Republic of Turkey is when enquired by Erdost. Muzaffer İlhan Erdost, 'Şemdinli Röportajı: 8 Bir Aşiretin Anatomisi', *Yön* (Istanbul, 2 September 1966), 179 edition, pp. 12–13

164 Celile Cem, 'Doğu'da Turistik Bir Gezi: Boz Yolculuk 1', *Yön*, no. 194 (16 December 1966): 11–12.

2.1.4.2 Kurds in the neighbouring countries

Yön treated the topic of Kurds in the neighbouring countries with interest by providing translations from international newspapers such as *Le Monde*, *The New York Times*, and *Journal de Geneve*. When the official discourse which avoided the spread of the news of the claims to autonomy in Northern Iraq and Kurdish struggle in the southern Kurdistan is taken into consideration, this can be seen as a bold treatment of the topic at the time. The official discourse concerning Kurdish question was usually contested inside quotation marks in translations from international journals (according to the article on *Yön*, the original was translated from *Journal de Geneve* published on 9 April 1963):

Of the 5 million Kurds living around the Great Kurdistan, 2 millions live in Turkey, 1 million in Iraq, 1 million in Iran, and 60 thousands in Russia. Kurds who have been living in this region for more than 4 thousand years accepted Islam in VII century. Although they have Arab and Turkish blood in their veins [to some extent], they could preserve the purity of their race.¹⁶⁵

These publications particularly on the Kurdish movements in the neighbouring countries can be seen as a warning not only to the state but also to the intellectuals to revise their discourse and ideas on the Kurdish issue. *Yön* compares the demands of the Kurds in Northern Iraq from Arif's government in 1965 with the solution it proposes for Cyprus¹⁶⁶. Another translation of an article translated from *Le Monde* shows *Yön*'s attempt to show the importance of the issue:

In February 1945, *Azadî*, the publication of the Communist Party [In Northern Iraq] in Kurdish published an article supporting the self-determination right of the Kurdish nation which was divided between Iraq, Iran, and Turkey.¹⁶⁷

This was a conspicuously contesting statement against the official discourse where existence of Kurds was still debatable. Even though it was a translation, it underlined the transnational nature of the issue at hand. It, on the other hand, gives the impression that what concerns most of the *Yön* contributors was a possible manipulation of the masses in the eastern part of the country via radio and other means especially from Northern Iraq.

165 'Hükümet Tehlikeli Cereyanlar İle Mücadele Edecek', *Yön* (Istanbul, 24 April 1963), 71 edition, pp. 4–5.

166 'Irak: Kürt Meselesi', *Yön* (Istanbul, 30 April 1965), 66 edition, p. 13.

167 Eric Rouleau, 'Barzani'nin Rakibi (Translated from *Le Monde* 15 April 1963)', *Yön* (Istanbul, 1 May 1963), 72 edition, p. 13.

Erdost in one of his articles (Şemdinli Interviews), asks a young boy "what the Republic of Turkey is?", he does not receive more than an "I don't know" as an answer; But when he inquires about Molla Mustafa (Barzani), the boys answers very wittingly "He's now in Rewanduz..."¹⁶⁸. The writers of *Yön* usually resented this clear impact of the radio broadcasts from other countries lest they should be malicious to the integrity of the country. At the same, some authors highlight the ignorance of the Turks about Kurds:

Go to a village club and take a seat [in the eastern part of the country]. [You will see that] They know the timetable of the Kurdish broadcasts of radio stations in Iraq, Iran, Yerevan. [...] Try to learn Kurdish a bit, and after they are sure that you are not a possible spy, listen to them, how they talk about Sheikh Said, and Barzani.¹⁶⁹

The transnational aspect of the eastern question was provided in quotation marks, and the difference of the people living in the eastern part of the country was expressed explicitly, in terms of language, culture, as well as opportunities they had or did not have. Regarding the language and interaction, manipulation indeed, constitutes the uneasiness of most of the *Yön* writers concerning the Kurdish people dispersed in other countries.

2.1.4.3 Kurds in Turkey and the eastern question

One of the taboos that *Yön* broke in Turkey was, for sure, Kurdish question. At a time when the ethnic aspect of the issue was denied by authorities¹⁷⁰, and some publications saw Kurds as second-class citizens¹⁷¹, *Yön* acknowledged this ethnic aspect with its economic repercussions. Land Reform was seen as one of the most important components of the solution which would change the economical relations inside the society and destroy the remaining feudal relations. The government was pointed as the responsible body for the aggravation of this problem and the Kurds' becoming more liable to manipulation from cross-border malicious impacts. Similarly, the politicians were criticised severely for its

168 Muzaffer İlhan Erdost, 'Şemdinli Röportajı: 8 Bir Aşiretin Anatomisi', *Yön* (Istanbul, 2 September 1966), 179 edition, pp. 12–13.

169 Mehmet N. Güntekin, 'Kürt Meselesi Üstüne', *Yön* (Istanbul, 24 February 1967), 204 edition, p. 2.

170 'İnönü ve Barzani', *Yön* (Istanbul, September 1962), 40 edition, p. 4. In this article, the Prime Minister's diagnosis of the eastern question is criticised because he does not acknowledge the ethnic aspect of the issue but sees it only as a problem of public order the core reason of which is economical.

171 Sait Kırmızıtoprak, 'Doğu'yu Sosyalizm Kurtarır', *Yön* (Istanbul, 14 November 1962), 48 edition, p. 17. In this article, Kırmızıtoprak, a Kurd himself later to be named Dr. Şivan (Dr. Shepherd) points out that in the pages of another journal, *Milli Yol* (National Path), it was proposed that Turkey should bring Kyrgyz and Kazakh Turks with their guns, only they can deal with the Easterners. He also highlights that 'the fascists' see the Turkish citizens of Kurdish origin in the Eastern part of the country as if they were Jews or Blacks.

relations with the feudal land owners and religious leaders in the region. *Yön* observed that the politicians depended on such reactionary components of the age-old society to retain their electorate. From this point of departure, *Yön* took it back to the early Republican era and creation of a national bourgeoisie which had always depended on the state for favours. That's why *Yön* reinterpreted the Kemalist Principles in Marxist terms.

The acknowledgement of the ethnic aspect of the issue alongside inequality of development between the regions was an important development in the understanding of the Kurdish question by the intellectuals. It should also be noted that there was a warning about the importance of the borders of the Misak-ı Milli (National Oath)¹⁷². The editor-in-chief of the weekly, Avcıoğlu, writes about it under the title "Kurdish question" as follows:

There is no confusion about it: We are one single nation and we will not give up even one inch of our land. If there are any who have ambitions to separate, secede the lands of Turkey, they had better reconsider it and they should know that for one inch of land [of Turkey], it would be the socialists in the vanguard of the fight.

Although Marxist analysis was conducted, *Yön* movement did not see the workers as the vanguard of a contingent socialist revolution. The vanguard had to be the educated civilians and progressive military officers. As can be expected, the military in terms of the treatment of the ethnic aspect of the issue was sceptical. Thus *Yön* was very careful on the Kurdish question since it sought an alliance with the army in a possible project of revolution. *Yön*'s motive behind its attention on the Kurdish question was highlighted several times in terms of patriotism and ignorance of Turkey on the issue in contrast to the international community:

While the world is talking about the Kurdish question, we believe that, it is the duty of the patriot not to turn a blind eye to this issue. As people who are ready to die for an inch of the soil of Turkey, we should be able to reflect on the topic boldly¹⁷³.

Supporting the previous excerpt and also my hypothesis, *Yön* was interested in Kurdish question especially because it was an international issue with numerous stakeholders. Accordingly, the biggest concern of *Yön* was manipulation of the Kurds in Turkey. The

172 The title of six-article manifesto of the Turkish Independence War specifying the borders of the country, 28 January 1920.

173 'Kürt Meselesi'nde Son Gelişmeler', *Yön*, no. 158 (8 April 1966): 8.

politicians were criticised especially for their indifference on this aspect of the issue and for their blind nationalism and populism.

It was earlier in 1966 in *Yeni Akış* that the "Kurdish question" first appeared on the political journals. In its fourth and last issue before it was closed down by the authorities, Kemal Burkay postulates, *Yeni Akış* used a clearer terminology including "Kurdish People"¹⁷⁴. In *Yön*, on the other hand, it was not until December 1966 that "Kurdish question" was discussed openly. In his article titled "Kurdish question", Avcıoğlu admits that "[He] does not feel strong enough to do anything more than noting the actuality of the issue and stating that there has not been any realistic means of solution offered by now."¹⁷⁵. At the end of the article, Avcıoğlu quotes an Eastern socialist (Sait Kırmızıtoprak) about to the linguistic and cultural rights of Kurds. Avcıoğlu was either too cautious or confused about the topic. Therefore, he preferred giving the floor to Kurds themselves especially concerning cultural and linguistic rights rather than discussing such issues above his name.

2.1.5 Who Errs in Eastern Question?176: A Polemic

Alongside having some 'red lines', *Yön* also served as a forum for the intellectuals to present their opinions and debate. An important polemic of this sort concerning the Kurdish question took place between Sait Kırmızıtoprak and Hayrettin Uysal, who was a member of the RPP and served as a MP for four terms and as the Minister of Social Security for a month in 1977. It appears that the debate had started verbally, and then continued on the *Yön* pages. The debate was on the linguistic rights of Kurds. As a devout supporter of Kurds' cultural rights, Kırmızıtoprak condemned Uysal's idea that "[Turkish] teaching campaign" would solve the linguistic problem. Kırmızıtoprak went on by asking "whether it would be easier to teach them to write and read in a totally new language or to address them in the language they understand, [while] 90% of the population in the east is already illiterate?".

When it comes to the teaching and the use of Kurdish seen as contrastive to the Kemalist Principles Kırmızıtoprak argued that observing such a contrast in this topic is misunderstanding the very Principles mentioned. He went on that "Ataturk and his view of

174 Kemal Burkay, *Anılar Belgeler 1* (Istanbul: Deng Yayınları, n.d.), 184.

175 Doğan Avcıoğlu, 'Kürt Meselesi', *Yön*, no. 194 (16 December 1966): 3.

176 The following two articles were used for this part of the analysis: Sait Kırmızıtoprak, 'Doğu Meselesinde Yanılmalar', *Yön*, no. 63 (28 February 1963): 12–13. Hayrettin Uysal, 'Doğu Meselesinde Yanılan Kim', *Yön*, no. 67 (27 March 1963): 12–13.

the world [ideology] is not in the possession of anyone.". Here, Kırmızıtoprak pays lip-service to the commitment to the Kemalist Principles by highlighting the necessity of explaining, spreading Atatürk's ideas to every people of Turkey and people around the world, regardless of the means. He literally says "And if [the language, no matter which] serves to communicate the ideas and the Principles of Atatürk to a community, it sees a wonderful service."

On the other hand, Uysal's tone was uncompromising. He pointed out that "35% of the population in the 18 south-eastern provinces d[id] not speak Turkish, but Kurdish and Arabic, which mean[t] that 65% of the population in these provinces sp[o]k[e] Turkish". Accordingly, Uysal argued that when considered from this point of view, these provinces should have developed much more than they had. So, according to Uysal, language could not be an indicator or tool of development. Uysal, also, denounced Kurdish as a "compilation [language] (*dil yığılı*)" whose linguistic existence on its own was open to debate, "[B]ecause many linguists from the West and the East claim[ed] that it [was] a compilation [language] from various languages.". Finally, he claimed that linguistic independence would cause "social disintegration" by referring to the reigns of Selim I (on throne 26 May 1512 - 22 September 1520) and Abdulhamid II (26 September 1842 - 10 February 1918) when Kurmanci (a dialect of Kurdish) was the official language of the region, and it only served to better exploitation of the people by destroying the integrity of the very people.

Concluding Remarks

Yön was an important step in the spread and legitimacy not only of the leftist movement but also a new and bold analysis of the Kurdish question. It did, on the other hand, retain some of the symptoms of previous intellectual movements suffered from such as 'intellectual as the savior of the people and above people'. A critique of the Kemalist values were introduced by not deconstructing them but by modifying and renaming them with the adjectives 'real' or 'new'. There was still time for the left in Turkey to question Kemalism, especially about Kurdish question. *Yön*, highlighting that it was complementing what Kemalism left unfinished, positioned itself as a reformed Kemalism with a blend of socialism in the pursuit of a(nother) revolution from top-down to become more independent. The people between the east and the west had known about each other only through press or compulsory state service such as military service or appointment of civil servants such as

teachers to the eastern part of the country not long before *Yön* came out. In that sense, the attempts of *Yön* to describe the contrast in terms of economy and difference in ethnic and societal terms via quasi-anthropological travel writings are invaluable. These writings, while strengthening the view on Kurds as backward, uneducated people might have posed questions as to the capability of the state. It is interesting that most of the articles of such kind were not written by Kurds but by Turkish contributors visiting or working in the region. From this point of view, these writings were descriptions of the eastern region by the educated Turkish travellers or civil servants for the intellectuals. It is also to be noted that *Yön* brought geography under the analysis while before it was mainly history which had the largest currency not only in the revolutionary movement but also in the official discourse. Considering the regional aspect of the Kurdish question, I will try to show how this geographical aspect continued in the analyses of the revolutionary Kurdish movements of the following period.

When the identity politics on the pages of the newspaper is scrutinized in terms of the Kurdish question, it is not hard to see that 'national security discourse' is at work. This is not very hard to understand, though, at a time when the Cold War continues while Turkey as an American ally is a neighbour to USSR, and the Cyprus crisis aggravates in 1964. The peace inside would definitely make Turkey a more powerful actor in the Middle East. The sense of anti-Americanism and a country surrounded by enemies was very clearly expressed. Inside, the enemies were the collaborators of the international 'colonialist' companies, feudal remains in the society, religious leaders and corrupt politicians. Kurds praise Atatürk and has a Turkish patriotic leaning were the dearest. Although the pages of *Yön* were open to Kurds, and they even could advocate linguistic and cultural rights of Kurds, they, apparently, paid lip-service to the core values of the establishment. Finally, Avcıoğlu did not want to be on the stage especially concerning a topic such as cultural and linguistic rights of Kurds.

As mentioned earlier, this movement had the symptoms of earlier intellectual movements 'to save the homeland/state'. The state apparatus was quasi-sacred and it should be used for the goals of the movement following a contingent socialist revolution. In that sense, it was not the state but the people who operated this apparatus that was criticised.

3. The End of Aesopian Tale - The Tumult of the 1970s

The end of 1960s witnessed mobilisation in the grass roots in eastern Turkey. The most important manifestation of this was the *Doğu Mitingleri* (Eastern Rallies) organized by the Labour Party. Beşikçi holds that the regional inequality in detriment of the eastern part of the country constituted the main theme of these rallies. This inequality, by the organisers of these rallies, was seen as a result of the fact that the eastern part of the country was inhabited predominantly by Kurds¹⁷⁷. These rallies were held in the year 1967, on 8 August in Silvan, on 3 September in Diyarbakır, on 24 September in Siverek, on 8 October in Batman, on 15 October in Tunceli, on 22 October in Ağrı, and on 18 November in Ankara. The rallies continued in 1969; on 27 February in Hilvan, on 2 August in Varto and Siverek, on 24 August in Lice¹⁷⁸. Beşikçi also provides some of the slogans on the banners such as "Easterner, work diligently for your legal rights. Claiming your rights does not destroy unity," "[We are] not separatist, but we want equality," "Factories and roads to the west, commandos and military guard posts in the east"¹⁷⁹.

In his book İsmail Cem (1940-2007), a journalist at the time but also served as the Minister of Foreign Affairs between 30 June 1997 and 11 July 2002, wrote in 1970 that the Kurdish peasants had began to mention of law and legality which had surprised the gendarmeries¹⁸⁰. Kurds, thus, were becoming more and more conscious about their rights as citizens as a reaction to the military repression. This can be attributed to the Kurds continual exposure to military repression during the 1960s and 1970s notoriously called "Commando Operations"¹⁸¹. Such operations based on the decree of the Cabinet of Ministries with the date 18 August 1969 which aimed at preventing banditry and collecting the arms in seven eastern provinces. However, these became notorious among the Kurds due to the abuse of power by the military to the extent that the villagers were made to run naked and beaten arbitrarily¹⁸². Yeğen points out that these Commando Operations can be an example of the

¹⁷⁷ İsmail Beşikçi, "Doğu Mitingleri'nin Analizi," in *Kürdistan Sosyalist Solu Kitabı*, ed. Emir Ali Türkmen and Abdurrahim Özmen (Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları, 2013), 103–104.

¹⁷⁸ *DDKO'nun Savunması*, 182.

¹⁷⁹ Beşikçi, "Doğu Mitingleri'nin Analizi," 106.

¹⁸⁰ İsmail Cem, *Türkiye Üzerine Araştırmalar* (İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1970), 15.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 17–20.

construction of the state discourse in the 1960s and 1970s which enabled the state to perceive some of its citizens as "enemies"¹⁸³.

The 1970s came with a military memorandum. On 12 March 1971, the government led by the Justice Party was the subject of this intervention. It was because of the violence in the streets, unrest in the university campuses, and the stalemate the government suffered to the extent that no laws could be passed in the parliament. The memorandum envisaged the establishment of a strong and credible government which would be able to eliminate the 'anarchy' and carry out reforms 'in a Kemalist spirit'. Unless necessary measures were taken, the army was ready to 'exercise its constitutional duty' and take the power in its hands¹⁸⁴. What was understood by restoration of law and order was in fact repression of any group thought to be leftist¹⁸⁵.

It was paradoxically greeted with enthusiasm in the left. It was first thought that the memorandum was a 1960-type coup against a right wing government. They had some reasons to think in this way; however, they had backed the wrong horse. Another plot to carry out a coup on 9 March 1971 by radical leftist generals, it is argued, was purged by the pro-establishment generals and the memorandum was a pretext to decommission the actors of this unsuccessful coup attempt. Thus, most of the left which propounded the idea of "revolutionary army" was disillusioned with the 12 March 1971 thinking that it was "their" generals who conducted the coup¹⁸⁶. As I will also mention below, the kidnapping and murder of the Israeli consul to Istanbul, Ephraim Elrom on 22 May 1971 by the THKP/C (People's Liberation Party of Turkey/Front) even aggravated the persecution on the left¹⁸⁷. A new super-party government was appointed and made the required reforms. Forty-four articles were amended. The autonomy of the universities as well as that of radio and television came to an end. Freedom of the press under the decree of the constitutional court was limited¹⁸⁸. Thus, the constitution of 1961 which had permitted popular participation in politics was trimmed and the amendments were carried out in a way to cover every institution of the state¹⁸⁹.

¹⁸³ Yeğen, *Devlet Söyleminde Kürt Sorunu*, 157.

¹⁸⁴ Zürcher, Jan Erik, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 258.

¹⁸⁵ Ahmad, Feroz, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, 148.

¹⁸⁶ Kahraman, "Türk Solunun Çıkmaz Sokağı: Kemalizm (Ordu) İlişkisi," 52.

¹⁸⁷ Zürcher, Jan Erik, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 259.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 260.

¹⁸⁹ Ahmad, Feroz, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, 152.

The Labour Party of Turkey was closed down on 20 July 1971 on the grounds of communist and Kurdist propaganda, following its recognition of Kurdish existence in its fourth congress. The dissolution of the LPT left a vacuum in the left, and the Republican People's Party tried to fill it with its new policy of 'left-of-centre.' And the youth became more open to recruitment by the more radical factions of the splintering and illegalising left. Ahmad points out that the LPT was eliminated not because it was revolutionary "but because it refused to join the political consensus which discussed the country's problems only within the discourse of nationalism and avoided the issues of the class"¹⁹⁰.

When it comes to the army, foundation of *Ordu Yardımlaşma Kurumu* (OYAK - Army Mutual Assistance Association) following the 1960 coup to improve the economic conditions of the officers had become one of the biggest companies in the 1970s. In this way, Bozarslan holds, the officers constituted a quasi-"class" which was nourished by public and private income¹⁹¹. The memorandum can be said to have caused several important changes: the left or revolutionary *Kemalism* with which *Yön* was usually associated was definitely rejected by the army; the alliance between the intellectuals and the army which had persisted since 1905 was broken; the left, seeing the impossibility of a "revolution" with the help of the army, radicalised to the maximum¹⁹².

This change of perception in the left certainly had an impact on the Kurds. Cengiz Güneş points out that one can name a number of reasons for the popularity of socialist ideas among the Kurds in the 1970s:

First of all, due to their participation in the Turkish socialist movement, Kurdish activists were already informed about Marxism which was embraced for the Kurdish national question. Secondly, following the defeat of the KDP [Kurdistan Democrat Part] against the Baatist regime in Iraq in 1975, many Kurdish activists were convinced that the 'conservative' current of Kurdish nationalism was unreliable and that depending on the support of 'imperialist' powers was not promising. [...] Thirdly, the popularity of socialist movements around the world, and especially the success of the anti-imperialist movements in Africa and Asia was seen as an evidence for the implementability and validity of Marxist-Leninism in favour of oppressed nations. [...] Finally, the fact that

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 156.

¹⁹¹ Bozarslan, *Histoire de La Turquie: De L'empire À Nos Jours*, 362.

¹⁹² Kahraman, "Türk Solunun Çıkmaz Sokağı: Kemalizm (Ordu) İlişkisi," 52–53.

the demands of the most crowded strata of the Kurdish society—that is, the landless peasants who were unfavourably affected by the capitalist development and mechanization in agriculture—could be constructed as part of the socialist discourse enriched the appositeness of the national liberation discourse¹⁹³.

In addition to these, Bozarslan points out that “emergence of a Kurdish diaspora in Europe which became a producer as well as a consumer of intellectual resources, in a dialogue between Europe and Turkey” made “a Kurdish renewal in Turkey possible”¹⁹⁴.

193 Cengiz Güneş, *Türkiye’de Kürt Ulusal Hareketi: Direnişin Söylemi*, trans. Yıldırım Eflâ and Yıldırım Barış (Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları, 2013), 145–146.

194 Hamit Bozarslan, “Some Remarks on the Kurdish Historiographical Discourse in Turkey (1919-1980),” in *Essays on the Origins of Kurdish Nationalism*, ed. Abbas Vali, Kurdish Studies 4 (California: Mazda Publishers, 2003), 34–35.

3.1 Özgürlük Yolu Movement- TKSP

Özgürlük Yolu (Path to Freedom, in Turkish) movement was identified with the political monthly with the same title which was the legal medium used to spread the ideas of Türkiye Kürdistanı Sosyalist Partisi (Turkish Kurdistan Socialist Party - TKSP). The party was founded on new year's eve in 1974 in Ankara. In its statute, nevertheless, its name was written 'Iraqi' Kurdistan Socialist Party in order to prevent a possible prosecution. As "a Marxist-Leninist party of the Kurdish working class and the poor peasantry whose goals were firstly national liberation, and later socialism", TKSP was an illegal, clandestine political organisation founded by seven Kurds including the future mayor of Diyarbakır Mehdi Zana (b. 1940) and led by Kemal Burkay¹⁹⁵. Publication was the main activity of the party, with *Roja Welat* (Sun of Homeland, in Kurdish), which was published in 12 issues and *Özgürlük Yolu* which had 44 issues. These were followed by *Riya Azadi* (Path to Freedom, in Kurdish) in 1979 after the closure of the former two under martial law. Kemal Burkay, who served as the secretary general of the party for 29 years until 2003, wrote that TKSP was distinguished from other Kurdish political organisations and movements, as TKSP were not just against colonialism, but TKSP also aimed for a struggle for democracy. He contends that even groups in the left spectrum such as Rızgari, KİP, and certainly the Kurdish nationalist groups, disagreed with TKSP's collaboration with Turkish democratic forces¹⁹⁶.

In this part devoted to TKSP, namely Özgürlük Yolu movement, and to the Kurdistan-as-a-colony thesis, I will firstly introduce Kemal Burkay, his background, and political views by referring to his memoirs. Burkay's two-volume memoir, the second one published in Turkey in 2010—two more volumes, according to his foreword to the second volume, yet to come—counting more than a thousand pages in total with some relevant documents provides invaluable insight into the Kurdish movement in Turkey. Also by referring to his theoretical works, I show his contribution to the development of a new discourse in the Kurdish movement, i.e. Kurdistan-as-a-colony thesis. Later, I describe the TKSP, i.e. the Özgürlük Yolu movement, its analysis, its goals and methods to reach those goals. Its analysis of Turkey and the Kurdish question, and the Kurdistan-as-a-colony thesis will constitute the main body of this part.

195 Kemal Burkay, *Anılar Belgeler 2* (Istanbul: Deng Yayınları, 2010), 11.

196 Ibid., 15–16.

The movement, the party, and its leader Kemal Burkay, albeit far from being obscure, can be studied more in detail with the colony thesis in focus. Hamit Bozarslan refers to Kemal Burkay's book published in 1973 *Türkiye Şartlarında Kürt Halkının Kurtuluş Mücadelesi* (Kurds' Struggle for Freedom in Today's Turkey) as the first attempt to theorize the Kurdistan-as-a-colony thesis¹⁹⁷. Cengiz Güneş refers to TKSP and *Özgürlük Yolu* to compare it with other Kurdish publications at the time¹⁹⁸. However, neither of these two works, albeit provide a comparative approach and periodize the ideational continuity of the Kurdish movement, actually explains Kurdistan-as-a-colony thesis, what it actually meant for Burkay. By establishing a continuity with the views of the PKK in the following chapter, I will show how the colony discourse was constructed in these organisations.

3.1.1 Kemal Burkay

Burkay was born in 1937 to a humble family in Tunceli, an eastern province in Turkey known for its Alevi and Kurdish majority. Burkay studied in a *Köy Enstitüsü* (Village Institute), which were notorious at the time for allegedly indoctrinating their students with Communist propaganda. According to Burkay's account this was definitely not the case.

What makes Burkay an interesting figure in the Kurdish movement, alongside his prominent role, is his relationship with the state and his people. Being a member of the community and at the same time an outsider, he started teaching at the age of 18 in a primary school in eastern Turkey which was not the favourite of fresh graduates. Only from the second year of his teaching career onwards, did he allow his pupils to speak Kurdish in the classroom "as a teacher who was trained in the Kemalist tradition and in the assimilative spirit of the Turkish state"¹⁹⁹. It was, therefore, before his twenties that he began to emancipate himself from the idea which was then prevalent among Kurds by formulating a different answer to the question that "What is the difference between Turks and Kurds? There is no oppression on us"²⁰⁰.

¹⁹⁷ Bozarslan, Hamit, "Türkiye'de Kürt Sol Hareketi," in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce Sol*, vol. 8, 9 vols. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2008).

¹⁹⁸ Cengiz Güneş, *Türkiye'de Kürt Ulusal Hareketi: Direnişin Söylemi*, trans. Yıldırım Eflâ and Yıldırım Barış (Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları, 2013).

¹⁹⁹ Kemal Burkay, *Anılar Belgeler 1* (İstanbul: Deng Yayınları, 2002), 84.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 90.

His early political activity coincides with the urbanisation of the Kurdish movement. One of the milestones of his life was when he enrolled in the Ankara Law Faculty at the age of 19. His preference would actually have been for literature or physics, but in order to be able to work at the same time, he chose the law faculty where attendance was not obligatory²⁰¹. Studying law, on the other hand, helped him to become more conscious about the oppression and inequality Kurds suffered from, as well as the economic and social inequality in the society²⁰².

Thanks to his education, Burkay could achieve considerable social mobility and gained an important status in the society, later as a lawyer as well. In the late 1950s, when he was still a law student, "the society in general was ignorant about the Kurds and usually intolerant. Talking about Kurds was even a topic for humiliation"²⁰³. The Iraqi revolution of 14 July 1958, and the inclusion of Kurds as one of the nations alongside Arabs in Iraq in the new constitution certainly had an impact on the Kurdish intellectuals in Turkey²⁰⁴. In the 1960s, as I have shown, the left began to gain more and more ground in the aftermath of the military coup and promised more space for the Kurds:

Even the most politicised youth were unaware of the concept of imperialism. The barriers could only be demolished in the new [political] environment in the aftermath of 27 May [1960 military coup], following the establishment of LPT, Socialist Cultural Association and appearance of the leftist journals such as *Yön* and *Ant*, and the Turkey [Turkish] public, in other words, discovered the world.²⁰⁵

It certainly did not happen overnight. The Left was yet to come to the fore, and the Kurdish question was not a topic that could be discussed openly. Burkay, in this environment, was becoming more and more absorbed into the leftist movement only to become a usual suspect in the eyes of the regime as a Kurdish, Alevi-origin Marxist-Leninist.

The duality of Burkay's identity as an intellectual was not only between his people and the state. Although, according to his account, the state had a rigorous elimination process in filling the governmental and administrative posts and had reservations against Kurds, he could become a caimacam when he was 25. It was a time when there were not many among 'his circles' that could be appointed to a post like that. Burkay points out to two reasons:

201 Ibid., 91.

202 Ibid., 100.

203 Ibid., 108.

204 Ibid., 109.

205 Burkay, *Anılar Belgeler 1*, 113.

firstly, the number of people from eastern Turkey who (could) study, few as it was; and secondly, the state's policy against Kurds²⁰⁶. Those few who could graduate from a university to become, for instance, physicians, lawyers, or engineers usually came from rich and well-known agha, or notable families. Accordingly, it was not only the social status of a public servant such as doctor, or a caimacam, but also his probable membership to a notable family that deserved respect in the eyes of Kurds. In this way, the nature of the Kurdish urban elite, as confirmed by Hamit Bozarslan, changed from the 1940s onwards, and education of their children became an expression of prestige²⁰⁷. Therefore, alongside the contradiction between the state discourse and the social reality, it was the socio-economic classes in the Kurdish society that shaped Burkay's political views.

Legal or illegal, socialist groups and organisations as well as publications started to become more commonplace beginning from the early 1960s. Burkay, after a long period of pursuit for organised political activity in the left, launched his long political career in 1965 by founding the provincial organisation of LPT in Elazığ, in eastern Turkey. LPT at the time attracted socialist Kurds not only because of its left-wing politics but also because of its not nationalist but class-based approach to the Kurdish question, differently from other political parties. Being an LPT member was not easy due firstly to police oppression, and secondly due to the accusations of communism. And "communism", according to Burkay's account, as is usually still valid, "was represented as atheism, non-ethical relations and a limitless sexual freedom."²⁰⁸

In December 1966, Burkay was prosecuted and sentenced to four and half months imprisonment on the grounds that his article titled "Her Şey Açıkça" (Everything Openly) which had been published in the political journal *Yeni Akış*²⁰⁹ (New Current) had degraded national feelings. This, on the other hand, would not be the last time he would have to serve in prison for his political activities. When the Israeli ambassador to Turkey was kidnapped by the Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi/Cephesi (Peoples' Liberation Party of Turkey/Front - THKP/C), an armed radical leftist group, on 17 May, 1971, Burkay's name was in the list of suspects who were mostly renowned leftist and progressive scientists, writers, politicians,

206 Ibid., 117.

207 Bozarslan, *Conflit Kurde: Le brasier oublié de Moyen-Orient*, 45.

208 Burkay, *Anılar Belgeler 1*, 159.

209 *Yeni Akış* started to be published in August 1966, and its fourth issue was its last issue before it was closed down by the court. Its owner and manager, Mehmet Ali Aslan, a LPT member; its director at the time, Abbas İzol; and Kemal Burkay were arrested in December 1966. Burkay describes its appearance as one of the important events of the period for the Kurdish national movement. *Yeni Akış*, according to Burkay, was discussing the Kurdish question with a socialist point of view. Ibid., 184.

including Doğan Avcıoğlu, the editor-in-chief of the weekly *Yön*; the senior LPT executives, Behice Boran and Sadun Aren; and the famous Kurdish-origin novelist and LPT member Yaşar Kemal. Around fifty people, in this way, were taken hostages by the police in exchange for the ambassador²¹⁰. This example is also illustrative of the state discourse regarding the left. The left was seen all the same and malignant. After the military coup of 1971, LPT was closed down on the grounds of being a communist organisation. Burkay was prosecuted for making "communist and Kurdist propaganda" in his speech in the fourth congress of the LPT²¹¹. Following a relatively shorter period of confinement, he was released pending a trial in the LPT prosecution. Shortly after, Burkay was again arrested as a defendant of the DDKO (Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları - Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Associations) prosecution although he was not even a member. He was acquitted from this charge after around four months of imprisonment. In June 1972, sensing that he might be imprisoned for a longer period as a result of the decision of the court in the LPT prosecution, he fled to Europe through Syria and Lebanon. His fortunes, on the other hand, had not improved in the meantime, and he was imprisoned in Damascus as well for around two weeks.

After fleeing to Europe in 1971, and spending three years in exile, Burkay returned to Turkey in 1974 following an amnesty entering into force. During his three-year exile, Burkay deepened both his Marxist-Leninist scholarship and network in Europe. He, in 1973, published the book titled *Türkiye Şartlarında Kürt Halkının Kurtuluş Mücadelesi*²¹² (Kurds' Struggle for Freedom in Today's Turkey) in Germany with the pseudonym Hıdır Murat. The book was an attempt to theorize the colony thesis which had been a hot topic among the Kurds since the organisational cleavage with the Turkish left. As a staunch adherent of scientific socialism, Burkay valued theoretical/ideological justification more than fervently national sentimentality²¹³. It should be noted that Kurdistan's had already been defined as a colony by different people in different situations, however it had not been theorized and

210 Ibid., 290.

211 Ibid., 309.

212 Burkay points out that his book was duplicated with typewriters, which might have contributed to its circulation to a great degree. Considering that the copy I used in this analysis which is the courtesy of the Kurdish Library in Sweden, is also a typewritten copy, its readership might have been much larger. Also, it might have been used as a teaching material in the Kurdish groups' and organisations' internal ideological education, which also adds up to the number of its readership.

213 "TSIP 1. Kongresi," *Özgürlük Yolu*, no. 12 (May 1, 1976): 47.

justified²¹⁴. I will now attempt at showing how Burkey formulated this thesis by looking at several aspects of his argumentation. However, firstly, it would be useful to take a closer look into the party.

3.1.2 Türkiye Kürdistanı Sosyalist Partisi - TKSP (Turkish Kurdistan Socialist Party)

Returning Turkey from Europe, Burkey began to seek like-minded people to establish a "separate" organisation. The party was founded as aforementioned on new year's eve of 1974 in Ankara lest the police suspect a gathering. Iraqi and Arab replaced the words Turkish and Turk in the statute to deceive the police and prevent a possible prosecution. Although it recognized that "Kurdistan is a country divided by feudalism, imperialist and local racist states (Turkey, Iraq and Iran)", its target was the Kurdish workers and peasants in eastern Turkey as is also clearly stated in its name (Article 3). It was an avowedly Marxist-Leninist party with an ultimate aim of "establishing a socialist society by eliminating any sort of oppression in the Turkish Kurdistan" (Article 1). The objective of the party was anticipated as two-stage revolution in Turkish Kurdistan: firstly, a national-democratic revolution, and then a socialist one (Article 3). External oppression and the feudal structure of the Kurdish society were diagnosed as the obstacles before the Kurdish nation and democracy (Article 3). The program of the party involved a part titled "the conditions that oblige [us] to organise separately". The most obvious reason is shown as the reluctance or ignorance of the organisations representing the working-class movement in Turkey to adopt a Leninist attitude towards the Kurdish national question²¹⁵.

The method of the national liberation is seen possible in two ways: firstly, without waiting for the success of a general contingent revolutionary movement in Turkey, Kurdish people might initiate a national liberation war depending on its own forces; secondly, the working class of Kurdistan in alliance with the working class of Turkey might organise a common revolutionary movement against the reactionary bourgeoisie and land-owners to establish a democratic people's government, and then the self-determination right of the Kurds can be recognized. Although the party should be open to both possibilities, the program

214 Bozarslan points out to the difficulty of tracing the Kurdistan-as-a-colony thesis to its source. "To the best of my knowledge," he says "Zinar Silopi (Kadri Cemil Paşa) uses the term in his memoirs published in 1969 See. Zinar Silopi (Kadri Cemil Paşa), *Doza Kurdistan*, 17". According to Bozarslan, Kemal Burkey with the pseudonym Hıdır Murat is the first one to develop this thesis theoretically, and later it was developed by the journal *Rızgari*. Bozarslan, Hamit, "Türkiye'de Kürt Sol Hareketi," n. 56.

215 Kemal Burkey, *Anılar Belgeler 2* (Istanbul: Deng Yayınları, 2010), 511.

conspicuously favours the establishment of an "Anti-Imperialist and Democratic Front" in alliance with the working class in Turkey generally²¹⁶.

TKSP with its legal publication *Özgürlük Yolu* was one of the first Kurdish organisations to attract a considerable amount of sympathisers and supporters. Their legal publication had an important share of this success²¹⁷. As I will show in the footnote below, the TKSP had an elaborate process of recruiting new members, and thus it was not known to many; however *Özgürlük Yolu* had publicized the ideas of the party. The success of Mehdi Zana, who was one of the founding members of the TKSP, in the local elections in 1977 attests to the popular support the *Özgürlük Yolu* movement could receive from the people. Zana was elected the mayor of Diyarbakır, one of the biggest cities in south-eastern Turkey. This was an important victory not only for Kurdish politics, but also for the *Özgürlük Yolu* movement, not to mention Zana himself. "Unlike most prior mayors of Diyarbakır, Zana did not come from a prominent family of local notables but was a working-class tailor with a middle-school education. He was one of the only two independent candidates who won electoral contests in Turkey's sixty-seven big-city races"²¹⁸.

TKSP posited that Kurdistan was a colony. This, according to Burkay's account, was accepted by each member of the founding committee except one²¹⁹. Veysel Çamlıbel rejected this view, and this later caused his severance of ties with the party. This view, on the other hand, would become more and more popular among Kurdish organisations, on the left or not.

The groups situating themselves on the left-wing of the political spectrum distinguished themselves in their analysis of society. Personal disagreements of the groups' founders, though, had some part in their persisting inability to reach a consensus. Apart from that, the socialist practice and theory around the world naturally had an impact on the groupings. Mounting Soviet-Chinese hostility, and later Chinese-Albanian antagonism added up to the left's inability to create a minimum consensus on the analysis of society. When it comes to the Kurdish left, another question came up: whether Turkey should be included in the

²¹⁶ Ibid., 513.

²¹⁷ Cemil Gündoğan, *Kawa Savunması ve Kürtlerde Siyasi Savunma Geleneği* (Istanbul: Vate Yayınevi, 2007), 23.

²¹⁸ Gilles Dorronsoro and Nicole F. Watts, "Toward Kurdish Distinctiveness in Electoral Politics: The 1977 Local Elections in Diyarbakır," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41, no. 3 (August 2009): 457.

²¹⁹ Burkay, *Anılar Belgeler* 2, 17.

analysis, and whether other parts of Kurdistan (Iraqi, Iranian and Syrian) should be included in the analysis.

The stance of TKSP was clear in terms of the choices available. Turkey was definitely to be included in the analysis of TKSP since it envisaged two possible solutions to the national question: a federation with Turkey or independence in its programme²²⁰. TKSP denounced the view that Turkey was a feudal or semi-feudal country. In *Özgürlük Yolu*, Kemal Burkay with the pseudonym C. Aladağ stated that "it would be wrong to see Turkey as a semi-feudal country by looking at the feudal structure of the society in the East."²²¹. A collaboration of the feudal and religious elements in the eastern part of Turkey with the politicians is noted as one of the important obstacles before the development of national consciousness and a socialist society. In the same article, a distribution of power in which the religious and feudal elites provide the established political parties with electorate support and the government, in turn, helps them protect their feudal privileges is denounced. In other words, although the republic, the author argues, had downgraded the influence of the landed and religious feudalism, the politicians abuse the power of these elements over the electorate. To serve the sheikhs, article continues, for example to build their houses, was seen as a good deed which now included the electoral support for the sheikhs' sake. In turn, when the peasants attempted at usurping the land of the feudal notables, and revolt against oppression, the police helped the feudal notables maintain the *status quo*.

3.1.3 *Özgürlük Yolu*

The mission of the monthly as aforementioned was to disseminate the political views of the clandestine Turkish Kurdistan Socialist Party - TKSP. The *Özgürlük Yolu* movement, i.e. the network of the readership of *Özgürlük Yolu*, thus, served as a straw organisation of the party. On the other hand, the members of the party and the journal did not overlap since the party was not announced to the public and the party was organised in the cells of three

220 Burkay points out that in the second congress of the party held in 1985, the order and organisation of the articles were modified in a way that favours independence of Turkish Kurdistan although the federation option was still kept. Burkay, *Anılar Belgeler* 2, 17.

221 C. Aladağ, "Doğu'da Feodalite ve Aşiret," *Özgürlük Yolu*, no. 2 (July 1975): 21.

people (Article 20)²²². Burkay points out that from the 21st issue of the monthly onwards, they had started to use the terminology proper with the terms Kurd and Kurdistan. This was, he states, the "end of the Aesopian language"²²³.

The significance of the monthly lies in the fact that it was the first periodically published and quite comprehensive political journal after a decade of silence in the Kurdish left, and was well-received by the Kurdish leftists and 'patriots'²²⁴. Its coverage focused on the Kurdish question and the socialist movement, notably the national liberation movements, around the world. The monthly was published in 44 issues, each including not less than 84 pages between June 1975 and January 1979. The funding for the publication costs came from Kurdish leftists and patriots. The starting budget of the monthly was 55-60 thousand Liras²²⁵. Its name was initially decided as 'Özgürlük' (Freedom), symbolising the Kurdish struggle for freedom. As per the Law on Press, it was not required to have permission to publish a journal but to register with the Police. Since Özgürlük had already been registered, *Özgürlük Yolu* (The Path to Freedom) became the title of the monthly²²⁶. In the masthead, the owner was indicated as Faruk Aras. And Kemal Burkay, alongside producing most of the articles for publication, also served as the editor of the monthly²²⁷.

I sought to conduct a short survey with Kemal Burkay through internet in order to grasp a better understanding of *Özgürlük Yolu*. He has a Facebook account which he uses frequently to publish his articles. I sent a message to this account to which he kindly replied. My questions were basically concerning the circulation of the monthly and its financial sources:

In its first issue *Özgürlük Yolu* was published in 5,000 copies, this figure increased as the time passed by, and reached 10,000. Some issues were even published 12,000

222 Article 20: Membership: In the organisation of the party vertical cell structure shall be established. All members shall conceal his membership to the party vis-a-vis everyone except for the people in his own cell. In the case that a member realizes the inclination of a person with whom he has had a relation in revolutionary projects and whom he is very well acquainted, the member then shall inform his friends in his cell. In this case, the members of the cell shall conduct a research about the candidate's past, and shall investigate his commitments and observe his lifestyle for a long time. If the candidate is deemed suitable, he is contacted by the member of the cell nominating him in the first place, and party membership shall be offered, in the case of the candidate's acceptance, he shall become a member of the party. The member who in this way establishes a relation of party membership with two persons shall establish an independent cell with them. The founder of the cell shall also be the head of the cell. The member must qualify for the following: a) over 17, b) Committed to socialism, c) Acceptance of the principles of the party, d) Brave and devoted, e) shall be discreet and able to keep secret, f) honesty, g) shall not demonstrate bad behaviour such as alcohol addiction or gambling. Burkay, *Anılar Belgeler 2*, 503-504.

²²³ Burkay, *Anılar Belgeler 2*, 61.

224 Burkay, *Anılar Belgeler 2*, 13.

225 Ibid., 11.

226 Ibid., 12.

227 Ibid., 16.

copies. Publication expenses for each issue was 8-10 thousand Liras. In the beginning, we collected some donations from our circles, and later the expenses were covered by the sales of the monthly. Each copy was sold for 10 Liras. Since there was a huge police oppression, we could not sell it through distribution companies. Book stores and kiosks could not risk selling it, threatened by the police if they sold *Özgürlük Yolu*, their kiosk would be demolished. Many times, the parcels we sent via postal service got lost and were not delivered to their destination. We delivered it through our network of sympathisers and especially through Devrimci Halk Kültür Dernekleri²²⁸ (Revolutionary People Cultural Associations). In some eastern provinces, it was sold in the book stores owned by our friends²²⁹.

It should be noted here that *Özgürlük Yolu* which had a considerably smaller potential readership when compared to, for instance, *Yön*, whose number of issues published oscillated between 30,000 and 10,000 copies, was well-received by the public. There was conspicuously considerable obstacles on the part of the authorities to prevent the circulation of the monthly, which was also mentioned in the sixth issue. From the eighteenth issue onwards, the public prosecutor(s) opened investigations concerning almost each issue of the monthly²³⁰. The editor-in-chief of the journal, as a result, complains about the inefficiency of the distribution companies and calls for solidarity and support from its readers and sympathisers²³¹.

3.2 Kurdistan-as-a-Colony Thesis

The Kurdish left had already began to organise itself separately since the end of 1960s. By the mid-1970s, this had translated into a programmatic and theoretical distinction. Strengthened by a separate political argumentation and historicity than other leftist groups in Turkey, the Kurdish movement could attract more and more sympathisers among the Kurds. Applying the Marxist-Leninist teaching to the societal structure of Turkish Kurdistan and Turkey as a whole, the *Özgürlük Yolu* movement elaborated the Kurdistan-as-a-colony thesis. It was again Burkay who, for the first time, formulated the Kurdistan-as-a-colony thesis in his book *Türkiye Şartlarında Kürt Halkının Kurtuluş Mücadelesi* (Kurds' Struggle

228 These associations were founded in 1976 firstly in Ankara and Istanbul. Later, they grew in number in various provinces and towns in Kurdistan as well as such metropolises as Izmir and Adana. The DHKDs spontaneously began to follow the TKSP. They were instrumental in the public relations of the TKSP and were predominantly consisting of university students. Ibid., 62.

229 Correspondence with Kemal Burkay on 10 March 2015 through Facebook Instant Messaging Service.

230 Burkay, *Anılar Belgeler* 2, 61.

231 *Özgürlük Yolu*, issue 6, November 1975.

for Freedom in Today's Turkey). This book laid down the theoretical principles of the TKSP²³².

Questions as to the circulation of this book might be raised to situate its importance and the diffusion of the ideas outlined in it. Recent scholarship on the Kurdish question acknowledges its importance in the period in terms of its theoretical and comprehensive structure²³³. The ideas Burkay theorised in this book prepared the first meeting of two of the prominent figures in Kurdish movement in 1975 when Burkay's acquaintance Seyfi Cengiz and Abdullah Öcalan visited him in his office. Apparently, there was a disagreement between the later-PKK-leader Öcalan and Cengiz on the status of Kurdistan. Cengiz enquires Burkay whether Kurdistan is a colony or not, and says that he and Öcalan could not settle the question. Öcalan supported the idea that Kurdistan was a colony and his opponent the opposite. Cengiz, in this way, asked for arbitration of Burkay for the settlement of the disagreement on the suggestion of Öcalan. Burkay, as the author of the work on the matter with the most elaborated theoretical argumentation at the time, naturally decided in favour of Öcalan. Since he had written the book with a pseudonym, apparently, people were not necessarily aware that Burkay himself was the author. However, Burkay speculates that Öcalan might have known that he was the author and that is why he might have suggested Burkay to be the arbitrator. Sometime later, Burkay learns that Öcalan formed a group and distributed Burkay's book among his followers by duplication²³⁴.

3.2.1 Historiography

Official Turkish history overlooks the distinction and existence of Kurds. The 1970s witnessed the struggle of Kurds to prove their being a different people than Turks scientifically. There were reasons for this: First of all, “from the inception of the Turkish nation-state in 1923, modernity and security have constituted intertwined processes that had to be carried out through the ideology of nationalism”²³⁵, that is, since the nineteenth century, the elite had been preoccupied with the technical and scientific superiority of the West. To secure the state (firstly the Ottoman Empire and later the Republic of Turkey),

²³² Kemal Burkay, *Anılar Belgeler 1* (Istanbul: Deng Yayınları, 2002), 378.

²³³ Bozarlan, Hamit, “Türkiye’de Kürt Sol Hareketi,” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce Sol*, vol. 8 (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2008), 1178.

²³⁴ Burkay, *Anılar Belgeler 2*, 65.

²³⁵ E. Fuat Keyman, “Nationalism in Turkey: Modernity, State, and Identity,” in *Symbiotic Antagonisms: Competing Nationalisms in Turkey*, ed. Ayşe Kadioğlu and E. Fuat Keyman, Utah Series in Turkish and Islamic Studies (Michigan: University of Utah Press, 2011), 20.

acquisition of the Western science was seen as important²³⁶. Secondly, the Kurdish question in the state discourse was non-existent and constructed as an problem reminiscent of the diversity and irrationality of the Ottoman period, which was manifested in the Kurdish rebellions for more than a decade since 1925 usually under the leadership of traditional authorities such as tribal chiefs or sheikhs; the republic, on the other hand, praised the rationality of the West and homogeneity of the ideal of a nation-state. The Kurdish question was conceived with the contrasts between 'the past' and 'the present' , 'tradition' and 'modernity', 'centre' and 'provinces'²³⁷. Thirdly, while socialism and the national question were politically instrumental in universalising the locality of the Kurdish cause, the objectivity of science was an important counter-discourse against the state discourse²³⁸.

With this mindset, Kurdish cause was interpreted with the theories of scientific socialism. Accordingly, nationalism theories of Marxist-Leninist literature were referred to frequently to base their arguments. Burkay, begins his book by referring to Stalin:

According to the modern scientific theory of nationalism, a nation consists of four main elements: territorial unity, language, mental embodiment and cultural unity, economical unity (Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question*)²³⁹.

The premise related to the existence of a Kurdish nation as different from Turkish was supported with a historiography that explained the reasons for the Kurds' failure to build a unified nation alongside the cultural and linguistic distinctiveness. “The borders that divide the Kurdish people are not economical and cultural but are characterized by coercive barbed wire and mine fields”²⁴⁰. By referring to İsmet Cerfi Vanly's *Survey of the national question of Turkish Kurdistan with historical background*, Burkay purports that the linguistic and ethnic roots of Kurdish nationalism dates back to the sixteenth century as manifested in the

236 It is one of the sayings of Atatürk which is usually inscribed in the schools and in the school text books “The most genuine guide in the world is science and natural sciences.”

237 Yeğen, *Devlet Söyleminde Kürt Sorunu*, 171.

238 The sociologist İsmail Beşikçi was the most important figure in the scientific argument in favour of Kurdish cause during the 1970s. In his book titled *The Scientific Method* provides the process of scientific research and argumentation: “The most important quality of science is its objectivity and phenomenal. Subjective phenomena, which depend on the individual, cannot be the subject of science. The premises which are regarded as true or which are desired to be true cannot be the subject of science. For instance, let us take a premise like this 'There is no people called Kurds, Kurds are Turks'. This view was put forward by the state in Turkey. This view, which was put forward in 1922-1923, and was embraced more and more fervently, was imposed on various institutions in different ways. Universities, courts, political parties, labour unions, associations, public institutions has since then embraced this view and this premise as factual. They have believed that this view represents 'the one and only truth'. İsmail Beşikçi, *Bilgi Yöntemi* (Istanbul: Komal, 1976), 36–37.

239 Hıdır Murat, *Türkiye Şartlarında Kürt Halkının Kurtuluş Mücadelesi*, 2nd ed. (Germany: Ronahi Yayınları, 1977), 3.

240 Ibid., 4.

works of poets such as Şeref Han, Hani, and Hacı Kadir Koyi. The author, on the other hand, warns the reader not to misinterpret this as to claim that Kurds have been a nation since then. He contends that the process of Kurds'becoming a nation' coincides with that of Arabs and Turks. He, however, underlines that the roots of Kurdish nationalism dates back further than the other two²⁴¹. [According to the constructionist theory of nationalism I have mentioned in the conceptual part that Kurdish nationalism dates no earlier than 1918 marked²⁴²].

The lack of centrality and unity in Kurdistan is seen as the cause of all problems. Kurdistan, Burkay points out, has been a battlefield because of the occupations of the Macedonians, Romans, Arabs, Mongols, and Turks, among others; and although these occupations has not been able to eliminate the Kurdish existence and language in the territory, they definitely inhibited the attempts at the establishment of political centrality. Ahmed Hani's (1651-1707) renowned poem *Mem û Zîn* (Mem and Zin) is cited to emphasise the significance of this age-old problem of the Kurds²⁴³. Since the nineteenth century, Burkay claims, the Kurdish insurgent movements had a nationalist core to achieve political centrality. A conspicuous contest to the official discourse can be seen here. The official discourse denies the nationalist aspect of such insurgencies and interprets them as merely religious and reactionary. Burkay, on the other hand, points out that regardless of whom the leader of these rebellions were, be it a sheikh or a feudal lord, they had a national aim. Had these movements been successful, he continues, it would have contributed to the centrality, thus

241 Ibid., 36.

242 Hakan Özoğlu, “Does Kurdish Nationalism Have a Navel?,” in *Symbiotic Antagonisms: Competing Nationalisms in Turkey*, ed. Ayşe Kadioğlu and E. Fuat Keyman, Utah Series in Turkish and Islamic Studies (Michigan: University of Utah Press, 2011), 217–218.

<p>243 “Will the time favour us to find prosperity, and will our ill-fate come to an end? Or will this misfortune of us persist for centuries Who knows, our unfortunate fate might lead to peripetia Our star of fortune might glow And it happens that We might have a sultan of ours our sword shines our pen becomes valuable Then a remedy is found to all our grievances, and our wisdom progresses.</p>	<p>Turks and Persians became victorious Alas, the shame! Alas if we were unified, Alas if we had solidarity If we had a sultan of our own He would smile at the orphans And save us from vulgar hands Turks on the throne Owls in our ruins Would not be able to reign Half barbarian and obliged, We would not be the captives of the Turks and Persians.” Ibid., 39-40</p>
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solidarity of Kurds²⁴⁴. This would later in the twentieth century become more and more impossible when Kurdistan was divided among four countries.

The fall of the Ottoman Empire kindled the hopes for a unified, politically centralised Kurdistan in the territory extending from the south-eastern part of Turkey to present day northern Iraq. Kurdistan had not had a central authority since the time of Ayyubite Sultanate (1171-1260). Centuries had passed without a central authority and the past was marked with anarchism manifested in feudal rulers of differing sizes. To Burkay, this was the main reason for Kurds' failure to establish a representative and a national unification in the period when the Turkish Independence War was initiated²⁴⁵.

During the [Turkish] Independence War, Mustafa Kemal and his friends followed a policy with two aspects: One the one hand, caliphate institution and the Armenian issue were used to persuade the Kurds to cooperate with the Turks; and hence, Kurdish provinces were transformed into a strong platform for the preparation and initiation of the Independence War; on the other hand, the establishment of a [Kurdish] national organisation which might then or later lead to Kurds' independence was inhibited very systematically²⁴⁶.

Kurdish national organisations were weak and led either by the intelligentsia based in Istanbul or by sheikhs and feudal notables in the first quarter of the twentieth century. The shortcoming of the former was that there was not much connection between the laymen and the intelligentsia. The latter, on the other hand, was acting without any coordination and the competition between the feudal lords contributed to the failure of establishing an organised all-encompassing national movement. What is more, the religious sensitivity of Kurds led them to a cooperation with Turks in the Independence War. Saving the caliphate against the infidels was an important aspect of the propaganda especially in the eastern provinces during the preparation for and in the actual period of war. To make things more complicated, the establishment of an Armenian state in the eastern part of Turkey as per the Treaty of Sevres (1920) was another reason for Kurds' collaboration in the Turkish Independence War. Hence, initially, it was not a 'Turkish' Independence War:

The speech Ataturk delivered on 1 November in the Great National Assembly is a different one in every aspect. In this speech, he mentioned 100 million Turks on earth, that Turks had founded many states in Central Asia, and he announced that the newly-

244 Murat, *Türkiye Şartlarında Kürt Halkının Kurtuluş Mücadelesi*, 42–43.

245 Ibid., 50.

246 Ibid., 17.

founded state was a 'Turkish State'. [...] Kemalists, the representatives of the young Turkish bourgeoisie could not build the foundations of a democratic administration for the peoples; they did not allow the fraternity established during the war between the Turkish and Kurdish peoples to continue in the times of peace²⁴⁷.

Imperialists were Kemalists' culprit in disappointing the Kurds following the Independence War. The Lausanne Peace Conference (November 1922-24 July 1923) was the most important opportunity for the Kurds to have their national rights. Burkay writes:

In the Lausanne Conference, the imperialists brought up the status of Kurds, not because they like and protect the Kurdish people but because their plan was to use the Kurds as trump in order to gain concessions from Turks on the negotiation table. The biggest discussions were on the status of Mosul. English imperialists' plan was to annex Mosul, rich in oil resources, to Iraq which was under their mandate. Turkish representative Ismet Pasha (Inönü), on the other hand, proposed that this region should be annexed to the newly-founded Republic of Turkey on the grounds that majority of the inhabitants of Mousul were Kurds. And Mustafa Kemal said 'The borders of Turkey will be the borders of Turks and Kurds'. The English representative Lord Curzon was insistent that Ismet Pasha did not represent Kurds. Thereupon, some aghas and beghs who were the so-called Kurdistan MPs were required to send a telegram confirming that Ismet Pasha was also the representative of Kurds! In Lausanne, Ismet Pasha said 'Turks and Kurds are two brother nations; When it comes to minority rights, Kurds are not a minority, so it's out of question. They are, just like Turks, a primary element of this country'²⁴⁸.

Burkay writes that Turkey gave up its claims to Mosul later in exchange for the silence of the British related to the Kurdish question²⁴⁹. History as treated in Burkay's account, on the other hand, is not limited to deceptions and failures. He mentions the Mahabad Republic, founded in western Iran with the support of USSR in 1946. The state did not survive the year and after the retreat of the Soviets, it was crushed by Iran. Another point worth mentioning is the struggle of Barzanis in Iraqi Kurdistan since the first quarter of the twentieth century. After a decisive victory of Mustafa Barzani in 1943 against the Iraqi government, some concessions related to autonomy of Iraqi Kurdistan were agreed upon. The Iraqi government's reluctance to implement the decisions of the treaty, however, sparked another conflict in 1945. Barzani had to flee firstly to Mahabad and then to the

247 Ibid., 20.

248 Ibid., 21–22.

249 Ibid., 73.

USSR in exile for more than a decade. Another revolution took place in Iraq in 1958 which did not live up to the expectations of the Kurds and led to another nine-year war in 1961. Although the Iraqi government accepted the autonomy of Iraqi Kurdistan on 11 March, 1970, Burkay concludes, required the course of action was not taken by the government in three years²⁵⁰.

What we have at hand is a narrative aimed at constructing a counter-narrative to the state's discursive hegemony. The state, on the other hand, endowed with the institutionalized knowledge-producing mechanisms was definitely advantaged *vis-a-vis* such contests. The book, *Doğu İlleri ve Varto Tarihi* (Eastern Provinces and The History of Varto) which avowedly denies the existence of a distinct Kurdish people and argue that they are in reality Turks was republished by the Ministry of Education in 1961. What is interesting is that that the chief-of-staff Cemal Gürsel who became the head of the National Union Committee which was formed in the aftermath of the military coup of 1960 and was elected President on 10 October 1961 wrote an introduction to the book:

This work proves one more time that our citizens who live in the Eastern Anatolia and conceive themselves as distinct from Turks, and whom we also thought as distinct from Turks because of our ignorance are absolutely Turks. And this a proof supported by *undeniable scientific evidence*²⁵¹ (the emphasis is mine).

3.2.2 Feudalism and Tribalism

The socio-economic condition of eastern Turkey was one of the recurrent themes since the 1960s on which the left could not easily reach a consensus. While some argued that Turkish Kurdistan was still a feudal society during the period, some objected to this idea on the grounds that capitalism had already penetrated into the society and the feudal structure of the society was withering. Burkay's TKSP was also of the opinion that Turkish Kurdistan was a semi-feudal society. The structure of the society in the eastern part of Turkey according to this view, on the other hand, was more complicated than the feudal society of the pre-modern Europe. Tribalism was also an important societal feature of the east. Burkay speculates that the birth of feudal structure in the east should be very early by referring to

250 Ibid., 59–60.

251 M. Şerif Fırat, *Doğu İlleri ve Varto Tarihi*, 2nd ed. (Ankara: Ministry of Education, 1961), 3.

the Persian poet Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* (c. 977 and 1010 AD)²⁵². Perpetuation of feudal traits in the society, according to Burkay, is closely linked to the state's policy not to establish any industry in the eastern part of the country. Burkay points out that “There is not one single industrial business in most of the provinces of Kurdistan such as Agri, Mus, Bingol, Tunceli, Hakkari”²⁵³. These feudal elements, aghas, beys and sheikhs were the representatives of the dominant classes, approving of the racist oppression on the peasants in the East²⁵⁴.

Co-existence of feudalism with tribalism posed an intriguing question for the Marxist-Leninist theorists of the period. On the one hand, tribalism depends very much on the blood-relations inside the tribe. Feudalism, on the other hand, creates sharp class differences between the peasants and the feudal notables. Objecting the Turkish sociologist İsmail Beşikçi's analysis, Burkay points out:

Dr. İsmail Beşikçi who conducted valuable research on the Eastern Anatolia, i.e. the Turkish Kurdistan regarded the tribe as a superstructural institution of feudalism. A tribe, on the other hand, cannot be regarded as a 'political institution of feudalism'. Their co-existence does not confirm this premise. After all, tribal structure cannot be observed in every feudal society. For example, in the European feudal period, either tribal structure cannot be observed; or, as in the the case of Germans, it is observed as a continuity or remnant of the pre-feudal society. [...] As is known, the land which is the main means of production is the property of the feudal lords, and the peasants who cultivate in the soil are in the status of land-slaves. There is no blood-relation between the feudal lords and the serfs, at the same time, there is a sharp distinction between these two classes²⁵⁵.

The social structure of the Kurdish society, naturally, was not progressive enough to achieve a socialist revolution. This was conspicuously stated in the program of the party. Neither the tribal traits nor feudalism could be eliminated. Tribal traits of the society hampered development of a class conscious society; and feudal society, naturally, was even more backward than capitalist society. Beşikçi's misunderstanding according to Burkay might be due to the fact that powerful tribal leaders who acquired lands of the tribe with coercion and started a feudal tradition inside Kurdish society were not excluded from the tribal hierarchy, and usually even furthered their influence. This co-existence of tribal and feudal structure,

252 Murat, *Türkiye Şartlarında Kürt Halkının Kurtuluş Mücadelesi*, 96.

253 Ibid., 89.

254 Kadir Özgür, “Faşizmi Yenme Yolunda: Kitleli Hareketler,” *Özgürlük Yolu*, no. 12 (May 1, 1976): 19.

255 Murat, *Türkiye Şartlarında Kürt Halkının Kurtuluş Mücadelesi*, 93.

according to Burkey, manifests to an undeveloped feudal structure; because a developed feudalism would eliminate all the tribal structures and replace them with its own establishment²⁵⁶.

The interwoven relationships between the established Turkish political system and the tribal-feudal society was apparent. Burkey gives an illustrative example by referring to a by-election held in Diyarbakır in 1968 to fill a vacant seat in the parliament:

The candidates of the Justice Party (JP) and the Nation Party (NP) in this election were both influential sheikhs. JP and NP had 55 thousand and 49 thousand votes, respectively. The candidates of the main opposition party RPP could collect only 5 thousand votes. The situation can be understood better especially when it is considered that NP was one of the weakest parties and it had no power in Diyarbakır at all as a party.²⁵⁷

Obvious impact of this tacit agreement between the feudal elements in the Kurdish society and the established political system was manifested in the guise of democracy. The political parties were using these reactionary remnants of feudalism in the society to inhibit the Kurdish national movement and Turkish socialist movement. The progressive forces and the Kurdish national movement, thus, had a common opponent, that is, the reactionary feudal elements and the bourgeoisie:

In the solution of the national contradiction—as in the solution of other contradictions—the relationship between the unit at hand and its relation to other units—in a way, the relationship between 'the component and the whole'—should be considered. [...] For example, in Turkey, bourgeois governments, until today, protected the landed and prevented the struggle of the villagers for the land. It means that, the villagers have to struggle not only with the landed aghas but also with the bourgeois government. [...] The struggle against the (big) capital dictatorship also involves the struggle against imperialism as a must. [...] Likewise, in the solution of the national contradiction, it should not be isolated, and its inevitable relation with other contradictions in the society should be considered. The national contradiction, in summary, would be solved when the oppressed nation determines its future with its free will. [...] That is, the solution of the contradictions usually are interwoven to the degree that the forces of the oppressed nation, similar to the villagers, cannot reject the general

256 Ibid., 96.

257 Ibid., 125.

struggle against imperialism, fascism and for a democratic people's government, they cannot isolate themselves in 'their narrow-minded national towers'²⁵⁸.

The corpus of *Özgürlük Yolu* is consistent about this alliance with the progressive forces of the oppressing nation. These progressive forces include the working class, peasants, intellectuals, students and petty-bourgeois. With the above construction of the Kurdish national question and a democratic progress in Turkey as a whole, the main contradiction is accentuated without trivialising the national question. A mutual benefit strategy is drawn out both for the Kurdish peasants, petty-bourgeois and even for some feudal elements who acknowledge the democratic program of the party; and the Turkish workers, peasants, students, and intellectuals. One of these two projects'—the Kurdish national question and the Turkish democratic and socialist revolution—taking precedence is clearly condemned since they are intertwined. On the other hand, Kurds' organising separately from the Turkish left and having a program of their own is clearly stated as a necessity.

Turkish Kurdistan, according to this analysis is a semi-feudal society contrary to the widely-accepted belief. Burkay points out the freedom of the peasants to leave the land if they wished to do so. And the animals and the plough, he contends, usually belongs to the peasants²⁵⁹.

In the analysis of TKSP, therefore, tribalism and the existence of religious orders led by sheikhs were interpreted as reactionary and backward. Some researchers, on the other hand, point out to the importance of sheikhs as well as tribes in the Kurdish society after the abolishment of Kurdish principalities in eastern Anatolia in the first half of the nineteenth century in the Ottoman Empire's attempt to achieve a centralised administrative structure by eliminating the political and economic autonomy of the *taşra* [provinces]. Deprived of these institutions which had served to build a collective existence among the Kurdish tribes in their sphere of influence, tribal belonging among the Kurds, Yeğen in his research argues, became more visible and led to the individualisation of the tribes.²⁶⁰ Following this, sheikhs became more significant as a figure in the Kurdish society transcending the tribes and developed into a symbol of resistance against the centralising and later assimilative policies of the Ottoman Empire and The Republic of Turkey. The nineteenth-century symbol of the sheikh in the Kurdish society, Yeğen maintains, had the ability to make a compromise

258 C. Aladağ, "Ulusal Harekette Sapma," *Özgürlük Yolu*, no. 7 (December 1975): 30–32.

259 Murat, *Türkiye Şartlarında Kürt Halkının Kurtuluş Mücadelesi*, 122.

260 Yeğen, *Devlet Söyleminde Kürt Sorunu*, 232–233.

between Islam, the tribe and Kurdish nationalism, which made it the founding figure of Kurdish nationalism.²⁶¹ As to the tribe, it became the social milieu where Kurdishness was constructed and resisted against the centralising and later from the 1870's on assimilating policies of the Ottoman Empire and Republican Turkey.²⁶² However, seeing the tribes and sheikhs as the representatives of a reactionary social structure was prevalent in the Kurdish left, including the TKSP but not limited to it, at the time. Although Burkay implies the nationalist cause of it, DDKO members, for instance, who were tried for their part in a socialist-oriented national movement in 1971 disapproved of Sheikh Said Rebellion (1925) as reactionary and feudal movement lacking any national content in their defences in the court, similar to the state discourse and the Turkish left.²⁶³

Therefore, the function of the sheikhs and tribal notables might have changed since the period when the tribe signified the social milieu where Kurdishness was produced and reproduced and when sheikhs became the symbols of synthesising national identity out of uncompromising Islam, tribalism and nationalism. However, the Kurdish leftists more often than not were oblivious to the role of the tribes and the sheikhs in the past in their analyses²⁶⁴.

3.2.3 Cultural and Economical Aspect

Cultural oppression of the Kurds had been observed clearly in the banishment of Kurdish language from the social milieu. Contrary to the Lausanne Treaty, the newly-founded state had become more and more *Turkish* in national and ethnic terms. Kurdish publications were prohibited. The state, until recently, was determined not to hear this “unintelligible language”²⁶⁵, or when it was exposed to it, it would say “There is uncertainty”²⁶⁶. Until

261 Ibid., 236–237.

262 Ibid., 244.

263 Ibid., 256.

264 Noting the similarity between the state discourse and the discourse of such Kurdish leftist organisations on the tribes and sheikhs, Yegen points out to the resemblance of this to what Edward Said wrote in his *Orientalism* (1985) “Looking at one's own history through the eyes of the master...”. Ibid., 256.

265 Saffet Korkmaz, “Kürtçe ‘Anlaşılmayan’ Dil,” *Hurriyet*, February 24, 2006, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/index/ArsivNews.aspx?id=3981610>.

266 “Türkiye Büyük Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi (Minutes Magazine of The Grand National Assembly of Turkey),” *Parliamentary Minutes* (Ankara: The Grand National Assembly of Turkey, February 23, 2006), <https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/TUTANAK/TBMM/d22/c112/tbmm22112067.pdf>.

recently the state discourse had reservations against the use of Kurdish in political campaigns²⁶⁷. As can be imagined, the situation was not any better in 1970s. Burkay writes:

The Turkish government has established radio stations in many provinces of Kurdistan. Obviously, the aim is not to entertain Kurds. This is to prevent Kurdish people from listening to the Yerevan radio station of the Armenian People's Republic, Kermanshah of Iran, and Baghdad radio of Iraq all of which broadcast in Kurdish. It means that Turkey cannot think about establishing a radio station for its Kurdish population of 8 millions and the fascist Turkish government which sees this as disintegration of the homeland and treason prevents Kurdish peoples' listening to radio broadcasts in their own language in different ways. Because the radio stations founded in these provinces broadcast on the [same] frequency and wavelength of the radio stations broadcasting in Kurdish; hence they serve as jammers. [...] Names of all the villages and towns were changed in the Turkish Kurdistan; the names in Kurdish or other languages were prohibited²⁶⁸.

A possible influence of the radios broadcast in Kurdish and located in the neighbouring countries was the concern of *Yön* in the 1960's as I have shown in the previous chapter. In the 1970's the state found the solution to prevent the 'malice' spread from these radio stations by installing radio stations in the eastern provinces with a jamming effect. The state, contrary to *Yön*, was not even questioning the possibility of installing radio stations in Kurdish and in line with the policies of the state. Because it was an 'unintelligible' or 'unknown' language. It was not only a linguistic restriction, though. This “sensitive region” had been closed to foreigners including tourists since 1925; although the restriction was abolished with some exceptions in 1964, there were still “prohibited zones” adjacent to Hakkari, in the eastern border with Iran and Iraq²⁶⁹. Burkay writes about how this degradation of cultural richness of the region was embodied:

In the autumn of 1972, Turkish newspapers wrote that up to 100 Urartian artefacts were unearthed during the excavations around Van and were installed in Adana museum. [...] These [artefacts] were not installed in any one of the museums in the eastern provinces.

267 “POLITICS - Campaigning in Kurdish Not Crime, Turkey’s Top Court Rules,” accessed May 13, 2015, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/campaigning-in-kurdish-not-crime-turkeys-top-court-rules-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=82378&NewsCatID=338>.

268 Murat, *Türkiye Şartlarında Kürt Halkının Kurtuluş Mücadelesi*, 164.

269 “Hakkari Olayları - Zulüm Halkımızın Uyanışını Engellemez,” no. 6 (November 1975): 3.

Deprived of the artefacts found in their region and a possible income from tourism as well as more recognition around the world, Kurds also suffered from unemployment due to an increase in the mechanisation in agriculture. This caused an outflow of labour force in the region to the west which here means both the western capitalist countries and western Turkey. Coupled with the rapid increase in population in the region, mechanisation in agriculture had led to Kurdsitan's becoming a source of cheap labour force for the capitalists in the western Turkey and western countries²⁷⁰. What is more, there was a constant efflux of capital and raw material from Kurdistan to western Turkey.

The petroleum taken out from the petroleum wells in and around Batman are transported from here. Even the asphalt produced from this petroleum is very rarely used in the roads in the East. The copper, chrome, coal from the mines and the iron produced in the Divriği iron facilities are transported away. Not one single dam has been built in Kurdish provinces. The electricity produced in the Keban Dam, which is being built at the expense of flooding hundreds of villages, vast and fertile land, and many historical artefacts will be used in the industrial workshops in the west. Kurds, on the other hand, can at most find a job as a worker in these premises and take part in the exploitation of *their* country's wealth.²⁷¹ (emphasis is mine)

The capital was following the same path from the eastern provinces to the western provinces where loans from banks and subsidies were available. This was contributing to the feudal elements' becoming more and more detached from the Kurdish society and their embourgeoisement. Credits received from foreign financial establishments were also not serving for the good of the Kurdish people. All such foreign credits were used for the investments in the western Turkey and Kurds were becoming debtors for credits which were not for their good but on the contrary to their detriment.²⁷² The borders of the nation-state also inhibited the economic relationship of Kurds with the traditional commercial centres in the regions, namely, Aleppo, Damascus and Baghdad, which translated the 'normal' economical activities of Kurds with these centres into a criminal activity, i.e., smuggling²⁷³.

270 Murat, *Türkiye Şartlarında Kürt Halkının Kurtuluş Mücadelesi*, 92.

271 Ibid., 104–105.

272 Ibid., 111–112.

273 Yeğen, *Devlet Söyleminde Kürt Sorunu*, 247.

Concluding Remarks

The beginning of this period is characterised by a rupture in the discourse on Kurdish identity. Kurds' separate organisation gave rise to a distinct political programme related to the Kurdish question in the left. The separate program and organisation was justified with 'scientific' argumentation that Kurdistan was a colony of Turkey as well Iran, Iraq, and Syria. Historicity as well linguistics became important battle grounds for the Kurds to contest the state discourse. Rationality and science had been instrumental for the state not only to describe itself *vis-a-vis* the irrational organisation and reactionary structure of the *ancien regime*, but also to legitimise its homogeneity. Scientific contest of Kurds, on the other hand, could not succeed because the objectivity of science or the 'official truth' was produced and reproduced in the institutions which were actually legitimising each other and the state discourse.

However, the formulation of the Kurdistan-as-a-colony thesis as an attempt to understand the relations between the state and Kurds, rather than as a slogan provided a new way of thinking and seeing to the Özgürlük Yolu movement. Burkay's attempt to construct a semantically loaded discourse where existed an intrinsic *us* and *them* was of prime importance in creating a more definitive Kurdish identity. Described in economic, cultural, geographical, and historical terms, colony thesis posited a different type of relation between the state and Kurds with clear demarcations in geography and history as well as culture. Particularly the economic relations descriptions in relation to the geography might have been instrumental in imagining a geography as homeland. It should be borne in mind class relations constituted the core of the colony thesis. This radical turn in Kurdish discourse was a new way of understanding the maltreatment of the military and the public servants.

Burkay's use of particularly was not more than an attempt to write a distinct history of Kurds. However, neither a 'founding myth', nor a 'golden age' was offered. In the following chapter, nevertheless, I will show that how the PKK fabricated a 'founding myth', and 'golden age' blended with the colony thesis to describe the 'virtues' of the 'real' Kurds.

4. Revolution With the Tongue

The PKK (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê* – Workers' Party of Kurdistan), the initiator of the 29th rebellion, was founded as a Marxist-Leninist organization in 1978 in Ankara, and has been on the top of the agenda in Turkey for more than three decades. The 'low-intensity war' between the Turkish Army and the PKK since 1984 has claimed 30,000 lives.

Not only the Turkish public opinion but also the language was affected by it to the extent that the way its acronym is spelt matters. In the official discourse it is spelt as [peka:ka:], while those who are in opposition to the official discourse spell it as [pekeke]²⁷⁴. Similarly, the word *örgüt* (organisation) has been absent from other discourses except for the official discourse to denote the PKK, this usage, on the other hand, might have preceded the PKK. Also, while the founder of the PKK Abdullah Öcalan (b. 4 April 1949) is called the "sun of Kurds" by the Kurds, he is usually called the "baby-killer" in the media.

In this chapter, I will try to show how the The PKK (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê* – Workers' Party of Kurdistan) treated the Kurdish question in its discourse by looking at its *Manifesto*. The reader may enquire why I am treating the PKK as a representative of the period during the 1980s while Öcalan had begun to seek for like-minded prospective comrades in the late 1972. True, the idea of a 'Kurdish organisation' had occurred to Öcalan before the 1980s subsequent to his release from the prison in November 1972 following a seven-month imprisonment due to a charge for delivering call-for-protest flyers to protest the Kızıldere massacre²⁷⁵; however, Öcalan's activities were more spontaneous and aimed at theorizing and 'finding friends' by 1978. The writings of Lenin on the nations' right to self-determination which he encountered in 1970 in the Ankara University Faculty of Political Sciences as well as the '(political) party school' (the prison in the leftist jargon) had an

274 In an interview with Murat Karayılan and other members of the administrative committee of the Kongra-Gel, one of the journalists say[peka:ka:] and is frowned upon by the party members. "Pekeke Dedin-Demedin - EZGİ BAŞARAN," *Radikal*, accessed May 24, 2015, http://www.radikal.com.tr/yazarlar/ezgi_basaran/pekeke_dedin_demedin-1131696.

275 This was a protest against the massacre of the prominent leader of the armed leftist group THKO-C (Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu-Cephe, People's Liberation Party-Front of Turkey), Mahir Çayan, and his friends on 30 March 1972. To save the prominent founder of the THKO (Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Cephesi, People's Liberation Front of Turkey), Deniz Gezmiş and his friends from capital punishment, Çayan and his friends kidnapped three foreign technicians, two British and one Canadian, on 26 March. The army received the intelligence as to the place they hide: Kızıldere village in the northern Turkey. The tragic end of Çayan and his friends on 30 March preceded that of Gezmiş and his friends except for Kürkçü, who is still an MP and member of the party HDP (Halkların Demokratik Partisi, The Democratic Party of the People), was the only one to survive the attack of the army in Kızıldere village. Vehbi Ersan, *1970'lerde Türkiye Solu*, 3rd ed. (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2014), 51–52.

important impact on his political 'education'²⁷⁶. His first encounter with the leftist ideas, on the other hand, was earlier with the *ABC of Socialism*, which was followed by Huberman's *Scientific Socialism* and his eventual involvement with the 'Turkish' left, which would receive Öcalan's charges of "chauvinism" after his release from the prison²⁷⁷. Some accounts, on the other hand, put more emphasis on the tragedy of Kızıldereli in Öcalan's decision to organise a 'Kurdish' leftist group, citing Öcalan's following remarks:

If the 'Defeat of 71' had not occurred in the form of Kızıldereli, I would have remained a good sympathizer or member of the DHKP-C at the very most; I could not have ventured on structuring a new theory... The emergence of myself would have been impossible if Kızıldereli had not happened²⁷⁸.

It was either Öcalan's encounter with Lenin's writings on the nations' right to self-determination, or his grievance about the state's merciless destruction of a group of revolutionaries in Kızıldereli who were trying to save another revolutionary from the scaffold, or his experience in the 'party school', or all of these that seeded the idea of 'separate organisation', but one thing we know for certain is that it was in the beginning of 1970s. The gathering of Çubuk in Ankara in 1973 manifests Öcalan's determination to organise a group around the idea of separate organisation, which, nevertheless, did not come true until 1975. The gathering of 1973 in Çubuk, however, played an important role in the formation of the 'research group' made up of the three would-be *Apocus*²⁷⁹ (Apoists), namely, Haki Karer, a Turkish revolutionary who was killed in Gaziantep in a clash with another Kurdish revolutionary group called *Tekoşin* on 18 May 1977, and Kemal Pir, who was also a Turkish revolutionary, who died in a hunger strike in 1982 in Diyarbakır prison²⁸⁰, and Cemal Bayık, who still serves as the 'Second Man'²⁸¹. All this being said, it

276 İsmet G. İmset, *PKK: Ayrılıkçı Şiddetin Yirmi Yılı (1973-1992)*, 7th ed. (Ankara: Turkish Daily News Yayinlari, 1993), 24.

277 Ibid.

278 Yüce, C., *Doğu'da Yükselen Güneş* (Köln: Weşanên Serxwebun, 1997), Vol.1, 188 cited in Özcan, Ali Kemal, *Turkey's Kurds: A Theoretical Analysis of the PKK and Abdullah Öcalan* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 78.

279 According to Özcan, this was a derogatory term used by opposition circles, but was later appropriated and used with pride by the group. Ibid., 241.

280 This aspect of the PKK which incorporated Turkish and Kurdish revolutionaries, Özcan claims, is indicated in the well-known slogan of the PKK publications "The Revolution of Turkey has to pass through Kurdistan". Özcan, Ali Kemal, *Turkey's Kurds: A Theoretical Analysis of the PKK and Abdullah Öcalan*, 79.

281 Özcan points out that, although Cemil Bayık is usually regarded as the 'second man' of the movement/organisation, "it is categorically denied". Ibid., 147.

should be noted that there is not much consensus concerning the inception date of the would-be PKK²⁸².

Another controversial feature of the PKK or the Apoists is its means of organisation. As I have demonstrated, the revolutionary left organised and identified itself with a periodical publication at the period. This was important for the organisations to spread their views, recruit new members and engage in polemics with other revolutionary groups/publications. The PKK, on the other hand, organised and identified itself with Öcalan²⁸³. Although this introvert feature can be interpreted as a disadvantage for the success and popularization of the group, it might have helped to build a feeling of belonging and speciality for its members. Hence, it was Öcalan who theorized and at the same time emanated the views of the group. This leads us to another controversial feature of the PKK: the charisma *institution* of Öcalan²⁸⁴. Although there are some researchers who oppose the view that Öcalan's charisma in Weberian terms did not exist until as late as 1981²⁸⁵, it can easily be inferred from the groups' being called *Apocular* that Öcalan was the leader figure from the beginning. “What is unique to Kurdish societal praxis, and its interaction with Turkey's Kurdish policy, is that the routinization of Öcalan's charisma has been reified before the institutionalization of the party”²⁸⁶. With the initiation of the guerrilla warfare in 1984, in this way, Öcalan became an *institution*²⁸⁷.

Besides, there a consensus about the importance of Öcalan's part in building the group and later the movement. During the period until 1984, it can be inferred that the group grew in size mostly through personal relations built between the members and prospective members. In the beginning of the formation of the group Öcalan had a two-word key to initiate the national struggle: 'Kurdistan', and 'colony'.

282 For about five years following 1973, Öcalan's group was called “Kürdistan Devrimcileri (Revolutionaries of Kurdistan). Ergun Aydınoglu, *Fis Köyünden Kobane'ye Kürt Özgürlük Hareketi* (İstanbul: Versus Kitap, 2014), 28.

283 İmset, *PKK: Ayırlıkçı Şiddetin Yirmi Yılı (1973-1992)*, 17.

284 For theoretical analysis of Öcalan's charisma see. Özcan, Ali Kemal, *Turkey's Kurds: A Theoretical Analysis of the PKK and Abdullah Öcalan*, 157–166.

285 Aydınoglu, *Fis Köyünden Kobane'ye Kürt Özgürlük Hareketi*, 51.

286 Özcan, Ali Kemal, *Turkey's Kurds: A Theoretical Analysis of the PKK and Abdullah Öcalan*, 163.

287 Özcan from his experience during an interview with Öcalan writes that he was warned when he called Öcalan siz (you in plural) as when addressing a person by a member of the management committee of the PKK school in Bekaa Valley. Ibid., 245. Özcan also quotes Öcalan “Leadership is an institution. I am not an individual but an institution. There are peculiarities in this institution. If it walks [works] then it will do the work, and the PKK has done some work. Öcalan, Abdullah, *Halk Savaşında Militan Kişilik* (Cologne: Weşanen Serxwebun, 1994), 457.

The idea of colonialism was emerging at that time. The Kurdish question is a colonial matter, I said. Nobody had thought of such a diagnosis [about Kurdistan] if you remember. But the terms 'Kurdistan', and 'colony' came to my mind... ' These terms were what Öcalan always refers to when he says: 'I began with *two words*', which he regards as the 'key words' for initiating the struggle for national liberation²⁸⁸.

However, it is evident that Öcalan did not stop with *two words*. Partly because as Bozarslan suggests these two words had come together as late as 1969²⁸⁹ and had spurred a discussion among the Kurdish leftists. It can, thus, easily be argued that what was important was not only to put these *two words* together but put them in a way that complies with the dialectic materialism. Likewise, what started with *two words* was followed by long discussions usually in a mode of monologue by Öcalan. As the number sympathisers and followers of the party grew, Öcalan's lectures became more and more available to the many people who could not be present during his lectures. Özcan, who conducted interviews in the PKK facilities in Bekaa Valley for his PhD dissertation, draws attention to the importance of such material for the recruitment and motivation of people at the grass-roots level. He also underlines the fact that every speech of that Öcalan made was recorded and transcribed. The published titles available to Özcan's reach counts up to 16,501 pages, and he speculates that if Öcalan's each and every speech was recorded and transcribed and published only for intra-party education, then it roughly makes 144,000 pages in 20 years²⁹⁰. That is indeed why Öcalan says he “execute[s] the revolution with his tongue”²⁹¹.

The PKK has established its counter-discourse on the Kurdish discourse vis-a-vis the state since the second half of the 1980s. As can be expected, it received considerable attention from the academic circles. On the other hand, the majority of the works about the PKK are nothing but a reification of the state discourse. There are only a handful of scholars who are proficient in the field and have published works that are useful to illuminate the issue at hand. Ali Kemal Özcan's *Turkey's Kurds: A Theoretical Analysis of the PKK and Abdullah Öcalan* is one of these. Originally his PhD dissertation, Özcan's work stands out among others with the sources that he used. He got to know about the PKK first as a voluntary

288 Abdullah Öcalan, *Diriliş Tamamlandı Sıra Kurtuluşta (Selected Interviews)*, vol. 2 (Köln: Weşanen Serxwebun, 1995), 44 cited in Özcan, Ali Kemal, *Turkey's Kurds: A Theoretical Analysis of the PKK and Abdullah Öcalan*, 80.

289 Bozarslan, Hamit, “Türkiye’de Kürt Sol Hareketi,” n. 56.

290 Özcan, Ali Kemal, *Turkey's Kurds: A Theoretical Analysis of the PKK and Abdullah Öcalan*, 151–152.

291 Ibid., 145.

interpreter for the refugees in London. He got familiar with the organizational recruitment process and political education in the 'party houses' in Europe. Above all, he went to the headquarters of the PKK in Bekaa Valley and interviewed Öcalan in 1996. It is an important source to understand the organizational structure, the recruitment and educational processes of the PKK and Öcalan's *institutionalized* personality in the party.

Another prominent work on the Kurdish question in Turkey with a focus on the PKK is Cengiz Güneş's *Türkiye'de Kürt Ulusal Kurtuluş Hareketi: Direnişin Söylemi* (Kurdish National Liberation Movement in Turkey: The Discourse of the Resistance). Originally also a PhD thesis, in this work, Güneş provides an overview of the Kurdish movement from 1960 to 2013 by using not only publications of Kurdish groups during this period, but also in his attempt to show how culture and history were employed in the discourse of the PKK. Myth-making and the use of the media such as TV channels, and the radio to create a 'community' through songs glorifying the martyrs are emphasised in the discourse of the PKK. He also draws attention to the 'invented traditions' such as celebration days and remembrance days. All in all, Güneş's work is fundamental to understand the PKK and the Kurdish question in a wider spectrum.

Hamit Bozarslan, the son of Mehmed Emin Bozarslan, the author of the Kurdish teaching book *Alfâbe* published in 1958 in Turkey, is an eminent scholar with several books and many articles on the history and sociology of the Middle East, notably the Kurdish question. The copious material hence poses an important problem for the researcher. In this part of my research, due to limitations of time and space, I will restrict the material I use in this part of the study to the *Manifesto*²⁹² which was first published in 1978. My decision is justified by the fact that the *Manifesto* “probably remained as the most important theoretical-political document of the PKK until the early 1990s”²⁹³ .

292 Abdullah Öcalan, *Kürdistan Devriminin Yolu - Manifesto*, 6th ed. (Köln: Weşanen Serxwebun, 1993).

293 Aydınoğlu, *Fis Köyünden Kobane'ye Kürt Özgürlük Hareketi*, 29.

4.1 The Manifesto: The Path of the Revolution in Kurdistan

It was first published with the first issue of *Serxwebun*²⁹⁴ (Independence) which was published irregularly in North Kurdistan in Turkey between 1978-1980. Since it was an illegal publication, the first edition did not include the name of the author, and the second and third editions indicated the PKK as the author. From the fourth edition onwards, however, the name of the author was indicated as Abdullah Öcalan²⁹⁵. The preface mentions the summer of 1978 as the time when the *Manifesto* was written. It should be noted that throughout the text there is no mention of the PKK but a vague statement of *Kürdistan Devrimcileri* (Revolutionaries of Kurdistan). The objective of the movement was laid out in the slogan "Independent, United, and Democratic Kurdistan"²⁹⁶ that was to be followed by a socialist revolution²⁹⁷.

In the beginning of the text, a distinction is introduced to distinguish between *artı değer* (surplus value) and *artık değer* which can also be translated as surplus value. The former is defined as the exploitation of individual labour as in Marx's writings, whilst the latter is defined as the exploitation of the communal labour as in of a people or ethnic group:

The history of class society is the struggle between the dominant classes which try to realize and develop these two types of exploitation and the classes and peoples which try to set themselves free from these two types of exploitations. As compliant with the types of exploitation, while the first one [*artı değer*, surplus value] manifests itself only as a class struggle, the second one [*artık değer*] manifests itself as struggle of the peoples for independence. [...] In the last analysis, they are both denote class struggle²⁹⁸.

An analogy is drawn here between the exploitation of the individual and the community. A new term is introduced probably to make it more understandable with the existing term which denotes a contrast between the classes and this was extended to include a greater entity. This does not only make it easier to understand, but also clearly states that the liberation of peoples is inextricable from class struggle and vice versa.

294 Serxwebun is still the active organ of the PKK/KCK www.serxwebun.org.

295 Öcalan, *Kürdistan Devriminin Yolu - Manifesto*, 5.

²⁹⁶ Öcalan, *Kürdistan Devriminin Yolu - Manifesto*, 127.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 121.

298 Ibid., 17.

Furthermore, it would be apposite to draw attention to another rhetorical strategy on the word-level. As aforementioned, *millet* (nation) denotes a religious affiliation in the Ottoman context. Following the foundation of the republic in 1923, it began to mean nation in the modern sense; however, another word was later coined *ulus* to denote nation. In the text, a distinction seems to be made between the two words: *milliyet* (noun), *milli* (adjective) and *ulus* (noun), *ulusal* (adjective). A footnote appears to elucidate a phrase *milli geçmiş* which can literally be translated as national past: “What is meant with the word *milli* is that the mentioned institutions and values are peculiar to Kurds”²⁹⁹. Another example further provides evidence to my claim that a distinction is made between these two terms which are usually treated as synonyms in Turkish. “A territory which was dominated by a people's language and culture—*milliyet sınırı* (national boundary)—constituted a basis for the *ulusal siyasi sınırlar* (national political boundaries) which would be formed later”³⁰⁰. Attention should be paid to these two most illustrative examples in the text, one of which includes both and provides a basis for comparison. When taken in this way, *milliyet* and *milli* can be understood as ethnic; and *ulus* and *ulusal* as nation and national. On the other hand, the interchangeable usage of *ulusal kurtuluş hareketleri* and *milli kurtuluş hareketleri* (both mean national liberation movements) might lead to the conclusion that the distinction might be arbitrary.

4.1.1 Question of Origins

As for the strategies employed on the sentence level, it would be apposite to draw attention to the direct relation established with the purported ancestors of Kurds, the Medes. Although the author hedges in his claim by writing “The lineage between the Kurds and the Medes—when the geographical expansion, language and history [of the both] are compared—is *almost* certain”³⁰¹, he does not refrain from establishing an overt relationship between the Medes and the Kurds (emphasise is mine).

299 Ibid., 24.

300 Ibid., 38.

301 Ibid., 21.

As opposed to the Medes, who were attempted to be exterminated before entering the class society; today the Kurds are facing the danger of being exterminated before the end of the class society³⁰².

The relation is further enhanced by claiming a direct lineage between the Kurds and the Medes:

The root of the Kurds goes back to the one of the Indo-European clans who with the development of the civilization influx towards firstly toward Central Europe, from the Indian subcontinent further towards the plateaus of Anatolia and Iran, are the Medes who lived as nomads in the barbaric period in Northern Europe, and settled in the region between Lake Van Lake and Lake Urmia circa 1000 BC³⁰³.

The question of origins of nations and nationalism has been a problem to solve not only for nationalists but also for the scholars. Designating a time as far back as possible is the general rule for nationalism, because it bestows nationalists with at least two advantages against counter-narratives: firstly, it provides legitimacy to the claims of a nation that has existed since a time unknown; secondly, as Renan states, “l'oubli, et je dirai même l'erreur historique, sont un facteur essentiel de la création d'une nation”³⁰⁴. In the case of the origins, it is not the memory but the imagination of the nationalist entrepreneurs, the memory of the origins is not retrievable in the collective memory of the people, which entails that the narrative can be distorted, and indeed self-contradicting. However, for it to be immune to external counter-narratives, the main condition is that it has to be accepted as true, only then does it “becomes a part of wider political actions, i.e. when it is a discursive element in political mobilizations or social practices”³⁰⁵. When the nationalist historiography establishes its discursive hegemony, its errors serve more as an advantage than a disadvantage. In the examples related to the relation established between the Medes and Kurds, it is not only the language and geography that are claimed to be the evidence of lineage, but also the sufferings and struggles of both, which I think is more important in this case, which is confirmed by Smith:

302 Ibid., 29.

303 Ibid., 65.

304 Renan, Ernest, “Qu'est-ce qu'une nation? Conférence prononcée le 11 mars 1882 à la Sorbonne,” in *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* (Québec: a Bibliothèque Paul-Émile-Boulet de l'Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, 1882), 37, http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/renan_ernest/qu_est_ce_une_nation/renan_quest_ce_une_nation.pdf.

305 Bozarslan, “Some Remarks on the Kurdish Historiographical Discourse in Turkey (1919-1980),” 16.

The aim is to recreate the heroic spirit (and the heroes) that animated 'our ancestors' in some past golden age; and descent is traced not through family pedigrees, but through the persistence of certain kinds of 'virtue' or other distinctive cultural qualities, be it of language, customs, religion, institutions, or more general personal attributes³⁰⁶.

There are several 'virtues' that are referred to explain the lineage, one of which is tribalism as the common manner of organization both of Kurds and Medes indicated in the text. This 'virtue' explaining the dichotomy with the 'other' is also used to explain the contemporary state of affairs:

Subsequent to a brief period of independent development, the Persians occupied the country of the Medes, Media through coercion, fraud, and conspiracy. The years between 550-330 B.C. was the period when the famous Persian Empire ruled. [...] Although their linguistic and cultural development was not inhibited under Persian rule, political development of the Medes were hampered in favour of the Persians. A lack of political development, on the other hand, strengthened the tribal and clan organizations. [...] However, the reversal to the tribes and clan [as a way of organization] bore the risks which we today suffer from. The Medes had succeeded against the Assyria by creating organizations in the form of tribal confederations with a political aspect instead of primitive tribal and clan organizations. As a matter of fact, the early elements of Kurds in this period could not succeed in forming a political organization, and thus in the struggle against occupation, annexation, and foreign rule. As a natural effect of this, they turned to an understanding and struggle of independence which was attained by re-developing the tribal organization and by retreating to and settling in mountainous areas, the hollowness and weakness of which is revealed as the civilization developed. Even today, this hollow understanding of family, clan, and tribe and the conflicts and disputes fed with this understanding is one of the most formidable obstacles before the Kurdistan Liberation Movement³⁰⁷.

Here it is not only the language or other cultural traits or the geography that runs in parallel with the claim that the Kurds are related to the Medes. The manner of organization, i.e. tribalism, is also conceived as the result of this lineage. Therefore, The Kurds have a common age-old goal with the Medes: establishing political unity and creating a central power to combat the belligerent outsiders. Tribalism is shown to be the distinctive feature and at the same time the Achilles's heel of the Kurds and the Medes alike.

306 Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 58.

307 Öcalan, *Kürdistan Devriminin Yolu - Manifesto*, 22–23.

4.1.2 *Newroz* as the Founding Myth

It should be noted that Öcalan was not the first one to build a bridge between the Kurds and the Medes. The idea that Kurds descended from the Medes, Güneş argues, had initially been employed in the Kurdish nationalist discourse in the beginning of the twentieth century or even earlier. Nevertheless, this lineage was rejected for example by Burkay's TKSP which led to the failure of the TKSP to construct a myth of resistance and origin and to build a Kurdish identity. The PKK's consistent use of the myth of *Newroz*, Güneş further continues, not as a strategy to claim the distinctiveness of Kurdish identity by looking inward, but as a way to create harmony between the nations in the Middle East and to emphasise the commonalities reactivated the myth of *Newroz*³⁰⁸. Thus, *Newroz* (The New Year) has become an important manifestation of Kurdish resistance against the state which is celebrated on 21 March by making bonfires and singing to symbolize the liberation of the Medes from the Assyrian king Dehak under the leadership of the Kawa the Blacksmith and of the bonfires the Medes made on the mountains to show their resistance³⁰⁹.

The practice of making bonfires in the memory of the resistance of the Medes under the leadership of Kawa the Blacksmith is further improved to include other Middle Eastern nations who still continue to celebrate *Newroz*:

... we do not have any other option but to develop a new *Mede movement*. [...] The Medes decided to resist against this enemy [The Assyrians] who had become the nightmare of all the Middle Eastern peoples by declaring themselves 'aryan' (of fire origin) people. [...] The Medes, who like the iron under the hammer of Kawa became like steel during the 300-hundred-year war against Assyria to be able to exist as people and to make a homeland, defeated the Assyrians and succeeded in preparing the foundations of the Kurdish people. The Medes, who were the saviour of all the peoples of the Middle Eastern as well as themselves, celebrated these days of liberation by making bonfires every year, that is, 'the *Newroz*'. The peoples of the Middle East still

308 Güneş, *Türkiye'de Kürt Ulusal Hareketi: Direnişin Söylemi*, 180–181.

309 For a further discussion of the use of myths in the construction of Kurdish identity see. Handan Çağlayan, "From Kawa the Blacksmith to Ishtar the Goddess: Gender Constructions in Ideological-Political Discourses of the Kurdish Movement in Post-1980 Turkey. Possibilities and Limits," *European Journal of Turkish Studies. Social Sciences on Contemporary Turkey*, no. 14 (2013), <http://ejts.revues.org/4657>.

remember the memory of this day of liberation and still celebrate it with bonfires³¹⁰.

(emphasis in the original)

The Newroz is represented as the symbol of the Medes, Kurds' ancestors, struggle not only for themselves but also for the other peoples of the Middle East. The peoples of the Middle East still, in this narrative, celebrate the Medes. Kurds, on the other hand, have to *remember* their ancestors, their *true* self which was contaminated by the oppression of the outsiders. Thus, Kurds should look outward to see their inward character in the Newroz bonfires made by the peoples of the Middle East. In fact, the Kurds, particularly the PKK's re-activation of Newroz in the 1980s as an important social event for Kurds to claim their identity should be noted. Yanık shows that the security forces in Turkey throughout the 1980s were on alert on 21 March to prevent any such celebrations and bonfires. However, in 1991, the Ministry of Culture inaugurated the long-forgotten 'Nevruz'³¹¹ which had not been officially celebrated in Turkey since 1923. Yanık postulates this as a counter-'invented tradition', to borrow Hobsbawm's term, for two aims: firstly to build closer relations with the newly independent Turkic states in Central Asia after the collapse of the USSR; and secondly, to show that the Turkish state does not prevent Kurdish culture *vis-a-vis* the European Union³¹². This baptised version of 21 March with different meanings attached to it throughout the Middle East and Central Asia was thus an official contest against the Kurdish hegemony on this holiday. Güneş, on the other hand, holds that in the beginning of the 1990s, the state's emphasis on the Newroz as a symbol of solidarity and peace between the Kurds and the Turks was aimed to alleviate the polarization due to the increasing conflict³¹³.

The Kurdish challenge against the state discourse was not limited to the appropriation or invention of 'important days'. November 27 as the day of establishment of the PKK and 15 August as the day when the 'leap forward' was initiated, for instance, were/are celebrated as holidays and were reified and symbolised with the 'music of the resistance'³¹⁴. Not only 'inventing' its own holidays or memorial days of the martyrs, Kurds in the 1980s and 1990s contested the state discourse as well as its institutions by Kurdifying them:

310 Öcalan, *Kürdistan Devriminin Yolu - Manifesto*, 29.

311 Turkish alphabet does not include the letter 'W'.

312 Lerna K. Yanık, "'Nevruz' or 'Newroz'? Deconstructing the 'Invention' of a Contested Tradition in Contemporary Turkey," *Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no. 2 (March 2006): 285–288.

313 Güneş, *Türkiye'de Kürt Ulusal Hareketi: Direnişin Söylemi*, 227.

314 *Ibid.*, 222.

L'inconscient de la culture politique turque qui a érigé le kémalisme en un culte sacré avec tous les attributs qui lui sont propres, un livre (le *Discours* de 1927), en temple (le mausolée d'Atatürk) ou encore une narration eschatologique indiquant le chemin de la délivrance, joue un grand rôle également dans la formation de l'univers symbolique du PKK des décennies 1980 et 1990. Le parti "kurdifié" en effet les principaux thèmes de ce culte transmis par le système éducatif et le marquage de l'espace de visibilité en Turquie, pour doter les Kurdes des valeurs combattives et d'un récit eschatologique égaux à ceux de l'"ennemi". La Mésopotamie, lieu de la préhistoire kurde, remplace l'Ergenekon, terre mythique du nationalisme turc; Kawa le Forgeron répond au Loup gris du nationalisme turc comme guide sur le chemin de l'émancipation. Le "peuple s'armant" du PKK lance un défi à la "nation-armée" du kémalisme, et enfin le "soleil" kurde dote les Kurdes d'un leader aussi "éternel" qu'Atatürk, le "père des Turcs". En rendant possible, à son insu, la "traduction" de ses éléments fondateurs en kurde, le nationalisme kémaliste devient l'une des sources nourricières de celui du PKK³¹⁵.

The PKK fomented the Kurdish society not only by mimicking the institutions and discourse of the republic and by relying on a past unknown, but also by creating a modern myth. The time of the tortures that the convicts of Kurdism suffered in the dungeon of Diyarbakir subsequent to the military coup of 1980 was construed as a modern resistance myth³¹⁶. The Diyarbakir prison became one of the essential spaces of the resistance and political activism where the PKK founders and executives (Kemal Pir, Mehmet Hayri Durmuş, Akif Yılmaz, Ali Çiçek) as well as activists perished by setting themselves on fire (Eşref Anyık, Ferhat Kutay, Necmi Öner, Mahmut Zengin)³¹⁷.

Cemil Gündoğan who was also one of the convicts as a member of another Kurdish group called *Kawa* holds that the main lawsuit against the PKK involved one of the longest list of defendants in the post-1980 coup trials. Although Gündoğan points out many more ruptures that the PKK gave rise to in Kurds' stance towards the state in the court rooms, three of them would suffice within the scope of this study: First of all, although the convicts suffered from both physical and psychological torture in the prison, they were determined to show resistance against the state by ignoring any reference to the state institutions and advocating the manifesto of the party; secondly, the PKK was labelled by other Kurdish groups as the

³¹⁵ Bozarşlan, *Conflit Kurde: Le brasier oublié de Moyen-Orient*, 72–73.

³¹⁶ Güneş, *Türkiye'de Kürt Ulusal Hareketi: Direnişin Söylemi*, 185.

³¹⁷ Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı, *File of Torture: Deaths in Detention Places or Prisons (12 Eylül 1980-12 Eylül 1994)*, (Ankara: TİVH Yayınları, 1994), 41-51 cited in Güneş, *Türkiye'de Kürt Ulusal Hareketi: Direnişin Söylemi*, 183–184.

baldırıçiplaklar (vagrants), and yet these people who had no connections with the establishment and not enough education could for the first time in Kurdish encounters with the state build an intellectual background to advocate their cause through a radical language; and thirdly, the PKK convicts did not respond to the questions of the judges with the concern of a historian, sociologist trying to prove the 'truth' scientifically, but as activists³¹⁸.

4.1.3 In the Pursuit of the *Real* Kurds

The *Manifesto* draws a long line of darkness and impurity between the time of the Medes and the present. The impact of the oppressors as well as the contaminated character is criticised harshly. There is a very vague description of who is a *real* Kurd. The text includes some concepts that will later appear frequently in the documents of the PKK and would be elaborated by Öcalan. One of such terms is *düşürülmüş*, which literally means debased. The excerpt below illustrates this seminal and vague concept:

The Turks, who could easily dominate the Kurds in terms of culture as well since the Kurds were very weakened in political and economic terms, created a Kurdish character that does not know of political, economic, and ideological independence, and is on the threshold of being an animal, alienated to his labour and his [*ulus*] nation; they [the Turks] later labelled this character of their own craft as "savage Kurd" and threw him to the wind. The *real* Kurdish man, who came into existence in the history in a rich culture of humanity through a relentless struggle against the nature and occupiers, should not have been *debased* this much³¹⁹ (emphases are mine).

It is not only material values that are mentioned but the character and personality of a people, which was in fact seen to be more important and degraded. It may be useful to refer to Özcan's definition of the concept 'debased':

The Turkish word '*düşürülmüş*' literally means 'debased'. The leadership of the PKK, in fact Öcalan, employs this term to denote the 'intrinsic' state of the Kurdish people which manifests itself in two main 'unique' traits: imitating oppressors and being

³¹⁸ Cemil Gündoğan, *Kawa Savunması ve Kürtlerde Siyasi Savunma Geleneği* (Istanbul: Vate Yayınevi, 2007), 250–279.

³¹⁹ Öcalan, *Kürdistan Devriminin Yolu - Manifesto*, 103.

limitlessly brave and cruel in fighting each other. This appears to be the most distinct aspect of the party's approach to its own people³²⁰.

The PKK's discourse on its people is condemning to the extent that it cannot be observed in the discourse of TKSP. The PKK's objective is to resurrect the *real* Kurd from the mists of the myth of Medes, inspired by the Medes' struggle against the Assyrians for liberation. The Kurds who do not cooperate in the struggle are called animal, and non-Kurd; however, the ones who take their part in the lines of the struggle are in a vague situation and definitely not *real* Kurds. Just as the roots of the Kurds are found thousands of years preceding the present, the *real* Kurds are to be found at a time imprecise in the future. Some authors note that Fanonian psychoanalytical ideas on the identity of the colonised are embedded in this and other publications of the PKK³²¹. However, the PKK's vague description of the *real* Kurd, Bozarslan argues, left the sympathisers and guerrillas with the feelings of permanent insecurity, fear, treason, or at least with a feeling of impotence since they did not know how to attain the goal. Long, vague party publications written with an extremely limited vocabulary and provoking both the feelings of fear and hope aggravated such feelings of the sympathisers and guerrillas. It did not suffice to be ready to die or love "the sun of Kurds" Öcalan. Bozarslan further contends that a the Kurdistan-as-a-colony thesis which constituted the most important determining factor apart from Kemalism could not lead to a theoretical development since it could not go beyond a Fanonian or materialist/economist approach and the debates of the 1960s and 1970s³²².

Concluding Remarks

Armed struggle, its ideological components, and its success in fomenting the Kurdish society including but not limited to Turkey but also Iran, Iraq, and Syria as well as Europe draws an extremely complex picture of the PKK. Whether it is a nationalist movement or not has occupied the minds of many. The easiest conclusion that can be drawn from the *Manifesto* is the conspicuous presence of such elements as the description of a 'golden age',

³²⁰ Özcan, Ali Kemal, *Turkey's Kurds: A Theoretical Analysis of the PKK and Abdullah Öcalan* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 244.

³²¹ Jondergen, Joost and Akkaya, Ahmet Hamdi, "Born from the Left: The Making of the PKK," in *Nationalism and Politics in Turkey: Political Islam, Kemalism and the Kurdish question*, Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern Politics (Routledge, 2011), 123–42; Hamit Bozarslan, "Önsöz: Türkiye'de Kürt Sol Hareketi," in *Kürdistan Sosyalist Solu Kitabı*, ed. Emir Ali Türkmen and Abdurrahim Özmen (Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları, 2013), 55.

³²² Bozarslan, "Önsöz: Türkiye'de Kürt Sol Hareketi," 52, 55.

an ancient people as the 'origin' from which virtues of the Kurds sprang, if not the Kurds themselves, a 'founding myth', and the 'real Kurds'. Thus, it can be said that the discursive elements of nationalism were employed in the *Manifesto* of the PKK. It is indeed declared in the Manifesto that what is awaiting Kurdistan is a 'national democratic revolution'. Also, the discourse on the character of Kurds, i.e. *real* Kurds, is reminiscent of the discursive elements associated with building a nation.

The PKK, as I have shown, was clearly distinguishable from the TKSP in several aspects. First of all, the objectives of the PKK were clearly more radical from the TKSP; such as uniting the whole of Kurdistan, and the demarcation of Kurdistan from Turkey. Secondly, the TKSP was more open to a federative solution in alliance with Turkish revolutionaries. Thirdly, the armed struggle stirred the public opinion in Turkey which led the authorities to label almost every Kurd as a possible a criminal. In this way, Kurds had to make a choice between the state and the PKK. Fourthly, while the PKK put a lot of emphasis on the 'question of origins' as well as 'identity politics', the TKSP voiced almost only the grievances caused by the 'colonial rule'. Last but not the least, the TKSP was not very clear what would happen in the case of a contingent revolution; on the other hand, the PKK already had an 'eternal leader' by the late 1980s and an example of state building. The example of the Republic of Turkey provided a good example to follow. Also, the method had become obvious in 1984, with the initiation of the armed struggle.

"Kurds were the 'chosen people' to save the peoples of the Middle East from the oppressive and colonial rules". In this way, a new discourse on Kurdish identity was constructed as opposed to the state discourse which had by then defined Kurds as 'the remnants of the ancien regime', 'bandits', 'backward, uneducated', 'mountain Turks'. However, the *real* Kurd was vaguely described. A hedging assumption that Kurds are possibly the descendants of the Medes is made. Nevertheless, what is more important is that the Kurds were seen as the heirs of the 'virtues' of the Medes.

The use of the past in the case of the PKK is striking. *Newroz* constructed as a founding myth helped the socialization of Kurdishness. Also, the pleas of the PKK convicts in the court in Diyarbakır provided a 'modern myth' and example of dedicated Kurds who advocated the principles of the party. The 'invention' of holidays, remembrance days, mourning days helped the institutionalization of the movement. In conclusion, alongside such political and cultural constructions, their spread through TV channels located in

Europe, publications as well as 'music of the resistance' contributed to the PKK's ability to reaching to a wider publicity.

5. CONCLUSION

Kurdish question as I have shown is closely related to the state discourse. Here, the state means not only the Republic of Turkey but also the Ottoman state. Kurdish question, thus, was not a surprise that popped out following the proclamation of the republic but its roots can be dated back to the centralization and modernization attempts during the Ottoman period from the 19th century onwards. It should be noted that while the state did not deny the physical existence of Kurds, it avoided the term 'Kurd' while denoting the problem. A set of discursive tools therefore were invented to denote this problem at the disposal of the state. This set of discursive tools allowed imagining the Kurdish question in many different ways other than ethnic.

It is obvious that the history of Kurdish question involves a lot of violence; soldiers, cannons, uprisings, military operations, armed guerrillas, and so on. However, it seems that the actual battleground is the language where there exists a continuous struggle. In this study, I have analysed discourses of various actors on the Kurdish question in contest to the state discourse. Each of them employing different strategies also for different objectives had one opponent: the state discourse.

Yön was an elitist movement consisting mostly of intellectuals, academics, university students. In parallel to this, its target audience was bureaucrats, officers, and politicians. Its objective was to have an impact on the policies of the state as well as seeking alliance with the radical leftist officers in the army. Its treatment of the "eastern question" should be understood in this way. Serving as a platform not only for socialist ideas but also possible solutions to the Kurdish question, *Yön* was ultimately concerned about the future of the state and the unreliability of the politicians. The intellectuals had to be alerted about the graveness this international problem whilst the politicians were merely concerned about their success in the ballot box.

Yön was aware of the ignorance of not only the state but also the intellectuals about the Kurdish question. Particularly, the articles translated from *Le Monde*, *New York Times* and other international newspapers, and published in *Yön* was an attempt to show the worldwide interest on the topic. *Yön* was also aware of the shortcoming of the state-sponsored nationalism which did/does not take interest in geography but rather in the map of the homeland. Remembering that the republic was founded by a cadre of military elite, this feature of Turkish nationalism can be understood. This militarist view on the geography of

the homeland as well as its people would later label some of its citizens as 'enemies'³²³. In order to incorporate the geography with its people in the image of the homeland *Yön* published a series of articles by people who went to the 'east' for a travel or a job. Interestingly, these articles depicted the people, geography, language, culture of the east with an anthropological concern. The geography was so far from the readers of *Yön*, and so was strange the people, language, and society.

Yön also gave voice to the Kurds to express their opinions on the Kurdish question. This was very important for two reasons: first of all, the Kurdish intellectuals could find the opportunity to show their understanding of the problem; secondly, the intellectuals could see what the Kurdish intellectuals think about the problem. Finally, it can be said that *Yön* interest in the Kurdish question was above all incited by possible security issues in the Middle East. *Yön* wanted to help the solution of the problem by opening space for the intellectuals.

The 1970s came with the attempts of the Kurdish revolutionaries to organize separately. This was coupled with a separate political program. This period also marks the illegalisation of the Kurdish movement with the formation of clandestine organizations and groups. A formulation, Kurdistan-as-a-colony thesis, that had occupied the minds of the Kurds from the end of the 1960s was theorized by Kemal Burkay in 1973 as a new identity which legitimated not only the separate organization of the Kurdish revolutionaries but also a possible use of violence against the state. The TKSP entertained the view of alliance with the 'Turkish' revolutionaries and aimed at liberation of North Kurdistan.

This was a new way of thinking to express the frustration of the Kurds. Burkay's formulation depended mainly on the economic and cultural grievances of the Kurds in the period. Burkay handles the colony thesis mainly in economic and cultural terms. Also, these grievances are expressed in a dull language with the seriousness of a historian, or sociologist. Also in the periodical *Özgürlük Yolu*, the discourse mostly serves to legitimate separate organization from the 'Turkish' left. Burkay's concern in this is obvious, he wanted to organize the Kurdish revolutionaries separately with a separate program, which would provide more political power to the Kurds in case of an alliance with the Turkish revolutionaries to undertake a revolutionary movement. Also, Burkay opted more for a socialist revolution in general in Turkey rather than a national liberation war.

³²³ Yeğen, *Devlet Söyleminde Kürt Sorunu*, 155.

Although other groups, including the TKSP, included armed struggle in the method of reaching their goals, the PKK, was quick to initiate the war. Some authors remark that the radicalism of the PKK might be attributed to its class nature. The leading cadres of the TKSP were lawyers, physicians, teachers and so on, whilst the PKK was mainly made up of younger cadres mostly from lower classes³²⁴. The objective of the PKK also distinguished it from other Kurdish groups: it opted for a "United and Independent Kurdistan". Thus, it was not ultimately seeking alliance with, for instance, the Turkish revolutionaries. Also, it was from the beginning clear about the method.

The use of the colony thesis was also prime importance for the PKK. However, the PKK imagined another colonialism dating back to the Medes. Establishing a connection between the 'sufferings' and 'struggle' and 'virtues' of the Medes and Kurds, the PKK created a 'founding myth.' Reactivation of the Newroz celebrations as a way of expressing Kurdishness contributed to the visibility of the ethnic identity. Although criticizing Kemalism, the PKK imitated it with the "cult of the leader". The state, thus, served as the successful example for the PKK, and the PKK appropriated the discursive elements of it. The 'invention' of 'official' holidays and remembrance days paved the way to institutionalization of the PKK.

All in all, although it would be too reductionist and lacking a lot of insight, I would describe the discourse of the subjects of inquiry in this thesis on the Kurdish question as follows: *Yön* as "security and integrity of the homeland"; the TKSP or Özgürlük Yolu movement as separate organization joint revolution with the Turkish revolutionaries; the PKK as "national liberation".

³²⁴ Gündoğan, *Kawa Savunması ve Kürtlerde Siyasi Savunma Geleneği*, 291–292.

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