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THE KURDS IN TURKEY: CONTEXT AND CURRENT STATUS

SUMMARY

The paper proposes to examine two variables in connection with the Kurdish presence in Turkey: 1) the intensity of expression of Kurdish nationalism, and 2) repercussions of the Kurdish question on Turkey. Three components pertaining to the Kurdish case in Turkey were constructed from the literature: distinct cultural identity, political demands and socio-economic development. The paper concludes that despite radical shifts on both sides, it is still questionable whether a solution to the enduring conflict could be reached in the near future.

KEY WORDS: Kurds, nationalism, Turkey, political demands, socio-economic development, cultural rights, repression

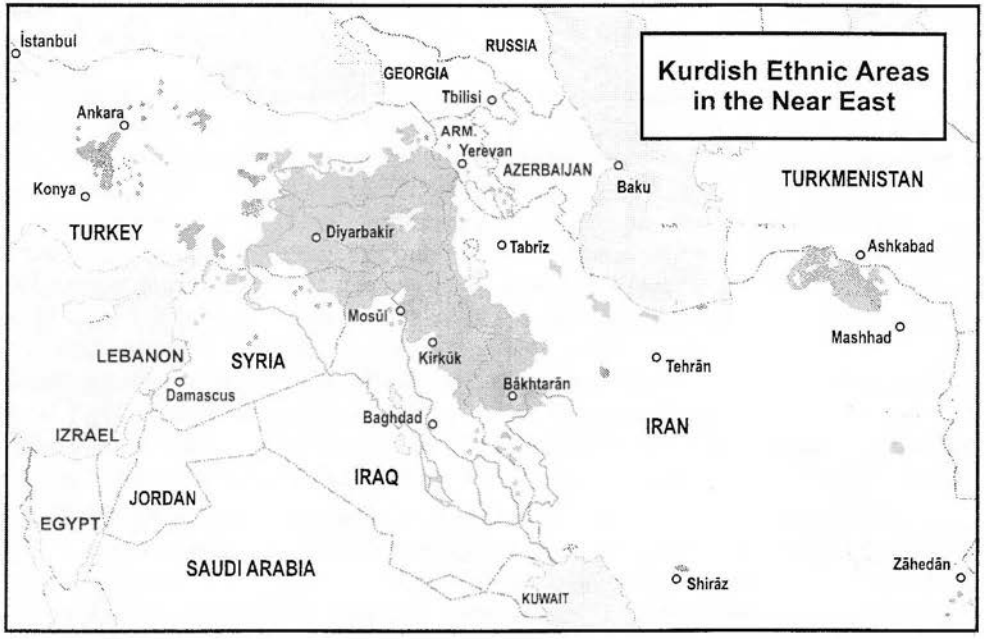
1. Introduction

Estimated at a population of 25 million, the Kurds are the largest nation in the world without its own state. They are an ancient and ethnically distinct people who have developed a common identity over the past 2,000 years. Bulloch and Morris (1992) consider that the ethnic composition of the Kurds is the result of mixing with both Indo-European and pre-Iranian tribes. The Muslim conquest of Kurdistan in the 7th century introduced Islam among the Kurds and emphasized their political role. They have lived for thousands of years in an area, referred to on maps for centuries as Kurdistan, and which straddles the borders of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria and the former Soviet Union. Though none of the above-mentioned states has welcomed the prospect of an independent state for the Kurds, none has tried harder than Turkey to eliminate Kurdish identity. The history of the sizable Kurdish community in Turkey, where they comprise over 20 percent of the Turkish population (Dunn, 1995: 74), is an ancient chronicle of tragedies, massacres and atrocities.

The founder of modern Turkey, Kemal Atatürk, after exploiting the Kurds for years to fight and defend the Republic against external enemies, enacted a constitution 70 years ago, which denied the existence of distinct cultural sub-groups in Turkey. All religious or ethnic identities other than the Turkish were seen as a chal-

lenge to the state. As a result, the Kurds were referred to as "Mountain Turks" and the area known Kurdistan became known as southern Anatolia. The Treaty of Sèvres (1920), which had anticipated a Kurdish independent state, was never ratified. Until the Gulf War in 1991, the situation of the Kurds remained unchanged. Twelve million Kurds live in Turkey today, but Kurdish cultural and political expression is officially banned. As an unwanted minority, the Kurds have been ignored, discriminated against, deported and persecuted by Turkish authorities. The history of the Kurds in Turkey is a history of war, repression, a history of small victories and great losses. The world paid little attention to the Kurdish catastrophe in Turkey, to the hopelessness and to the spectacular struggle of a people for basic rights and autonomy.

This paper intends to investigate two primary variables, which are believed to influence the situation of the Kurds in Turkey. These concern: 1) the intensity of expression of Kurdish nationalism, 2) repercussions of the Kurdish question on Turkey. I intend to trace the evolution of Kurdish nationalism and to examine whether it was capable of making cultural, political and socio-economic demands. Correspondingly, has the strong Turkish nationalism prevented Kurds from attaining their demands? Furthurmore, have recent political developments in Turkey improved the status of the Kurds in Turkey? True, international pressure to promote Kurdish rights and Turkey's desire to join the European Community have played a part in softening Turkish repression of the Kurds. Yet, as this paper concludes, the likelihood of a solution to the crisis is still remote, as the demands of both sides seem mutually exclusive.



2. The emergence of Kurdish nationalism

The first expression of Kurdish nationalism occurred during the 19th century when the Ottoman Empire was undergoing a process of centralization. Until then, the Kurdish Emirates had enjoyed virtual autonomy. The Kurds fell under Ottoman rule as early as the 16th century, but due to a special arrangement they were organized into Emirates (principalities) enjoying a remarkable degree of autonomy, although subordinated to Istanbul (Yegen, 1996: 217). Attempts by the Ottomans to tighten their grip on the Kurdish Emirates provoked intermittent Kurdish uprisings (1808–1839), all of which were unsuccessful: they lacked the support of the majority of the population (i.e. unlike European nationalism) and especially the participation of a strong administrative and political bourgeois class. In addition, Kurdish leaders were drawn into internal power struggles instead of being committed to the establishment of an independent Kurdish state.

By the end of the 19th century, the primary result of Ottoman modernization was the erosion of decentralised aspects of Ottoman politics and hence the abolishment of the Emirates, which had constituted a communal and organizational bond uniting Kurdish tribes. This development resulted in tribal confrontations that the central authorities failed to regulate (Yegen, 1996: 219). The situation provided for the appearance of new actors in Kurdish politics: the sheikhs. These tribal leaders played a central role in Kurdish rebellions, namely sheikh Ubeidullah's revolt in the 1870's, which aimed at establishing an independent Kurdish entity, is referred to as the first national uprising of the Kurds (Hazen, 1997: 56). The rebellion was ultimately crushed with the aid of regional and international powers (Randal, 1997: 156).

In the second half of the 19th century the Kurds, just as other nationalities in the Ottoman Empire, were affected by nationalist sentiment. Kurdish intellectuals began to form secret societies aiming either at some form of decentralized administration of the Kurdish provinces, or full independence from the Ottoman Empire (Sluglett and Farouk-Sluglett, 1991: 55). However, in a basically tribal and rural society such activities were bound to fail without the backing of powerful tribes and strong leaders who could organize sufficient manpower in order to generate political change. The Young Turks' revolt in 1908 had first pledged to preserve equal rights for all ethnic groups residing within the Empire, but ended by banning all non-Turkish forms of cultural and political expression (Jamil, 1993).

The Ottoman Empire's engagement in World War I had adverse repercussions on the Kurds. Officially the war was waged against external enemies, but in practical terms it was also directed against local enemies, i.e. the non-Turkish speaking peoples in the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans exploited the Kurds' religious feeling by describing the war as a holy war. They encouraged them to contribute and defend the empire against non-believers, hence provoking some Kurdish tribes to participate in the massacre of more than one million Armenians in the period 1915–1916. Kurdish losses were also not negligible – 7000 were killed in that war (Michalowski, 1991).

After WWI, the Kurds were presented with an opportunity to form their own nation-state. Yet their efforts were fruitless. Neither the Treaty of Sèvres (1920) nor the Lausanne Conference (1923) succeeded in securing an independent Kurdish state. After the establishment of the New Republic in 1923, the Kurds were continuously subjected to oppression by Atatürk and his successors.

3. The Kurds in Turkey: a problematic existence

The history of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey is really the history of the war between two nationalisms: Kurdish and Kemalist. Ever since the founding of modern Turkey in 1923, Kurds in Turkish Kurdistan were systematically repressed, persecuted and fought against. The aggressive Turkish nationalism launched by Atatürk, the "father of the Turks", and maintained by successive rulers, was until today the basis of Ankara's policy towards the Kurds. Atatürk adopted a policy of assimilation or turkification, with the principal aim to abolish the Kurdish language and replace it by the Turkish. This objective is still today imaged as a "cultural mission", since Turkey considers Kurdish nationalism a challenge to the Kemalist vision.

3.1 The Atatürk regime

With the birth of the modern Republic of Turkey, the Caliphate was abolished, religious orders were abolished, history was written to suit the needs of the new state, the "Arabic alphabet" was discarded in favour of a Western one and a new dress code was adopted. After jettisoning the multi-ethnic character of the Ottoman Empire, the Turkish government embarked on a radical nationalist programme that intended to redefine the Turk, the new citizen of the nation, and to help in the turkicization of non-Turkish minorities. The new nationalist ideology was unlike the Ottoman Empire's, that had relied upon a more encompassing Islamic theme. According to Caglar Keyder (1997: 42), it was "defensive in nature where the nation was supposed to express homogeneity deriving from ethnic unity, and this unity would be expressed in a single voice".

The Turkish Republic of Atatürk was not only a secular state, it also claimed to establish a civic nationhood based on all the inhabitants of the country. This civic concept of nationhood was never truly implemented and acceptance in the new state could only be achieved by assimilation which meant transforming the Kurds not only legally and politically into Turks, but also forcing them to become culturally and socially integrated.

3.1.1 Cultural status

Atatürk forcefully suppressed Kurdish cultural demands out of fear that they would contradict the homogenous qualities of the nation. By 1924, all public vesti-

ges of a separate Kurdish cultural identity, such as schools, associations, publications and religious teaching foundations, were banned in Turkey (Dunn, 1995: 78). Any public expression of Kurdish culture became punishable under sedition laws that could carry a death sentence, for it constituted a threat to national integration; it served to emphasize a people's distinct way of thinking. Ironically, communication in Kurdish was banned at a time when only three or four percent of the Kurds were able to speak Turkish. The Kurds had to accept the historical thesis that both Turks and Kurds descended from the same race (Kaplan, 1987: 40) and that Kurds had forgotten their mother tongue due to isolation in the mountains of Anatolia. In an attempt to justify the state's discrimination of the Kurdish language, communication was restricted to Latin script. In schools, teachers and students were allowed only to communicate in Turkish. Classes and education in Kurdish were forbidden; more than 90 percent of the names of Kurdish villages were converted to Turkish, and Kurdish dress and folklore were banned (Entessar, 1992).

3.1.2 Political status

The Kemalist model of a secular republic and a unitary nation and state meant continuous denial of Kurdish rights. Kurdish national awareness was perceived as a mortal threat to the territorial integrity and unity of the state (Gunter, 1988: 403). The government of Turkey was committed to eradicating anything that suggested a separate Kurdish identity in the country: "Those who are not of pure Turkish origin do not have any rights but one in this country, that of being slaves" (Jamil, 1993: 12).

The Kurds could not read the meaning of the Turkish resolve to eliminate secessionist movements. In pursuit of a doomed opportunity, many Kurdish nationalist uprisings against the Turkish authorities occurred between 1925 and 1937, but were all brutally crushed. The revolts resulted from social discontent: "Our Kurdish schools are closed, the use of the Kurdish language is banned, the words 'Kurds' and 'Kurdistan' are not allowed and barbarian methods are practiced against us" (Jamil, 1993: 8).

Summed up, the Turkish state sought only to repress Kurdish political demands: "Only the Turkish people have the right to demand ethnic and racial privileges ... this land is for the Turks" (Aziz, 1992: 181).

3.1.3 Socio-economic status

In order to alleviate pressure and prevent rebellions, Ankara decided to denude the area of Kurdistan of its Kurdish population and to relocate it especially to Western parts of Turkey: "Cigogners, non-Turkish and nomads who hold Turkish citizenship will be settled in small groups in regions where the Turkish culture is strongly manifest. Whenever they threaten the security of Turkey they will be ejected out of Turkey" (Aziz, 1992: 188). Consequently, the government evacuated the less accessible parts of "Kurdistan" for material, cultural, political, strategic and public order reasons (Hazen, 1979: 52). Kurdish history, language and culture were ignored, and Kurdish identity was destroyed through deportation and dispersion.

3.2 Kurdish nationalism vs. Turkish nationalism (1938–1984)

Atatürk's repressive measures destroyed Kurdish tribal and clan ties and power structures. Thus, Kurdish nationalists were silenced for the next 30 years or at least left on the defensive. On the other hand, Kurdish political movements became associated with the political left because Turkish authorities cooperated with feudal lords and tribal leaders to suppress nationalist activities (Fuller, 1993: 111). During the 1940's there were many indicators that Kurds in Turkey seemed to accept assimilation. This period was characterized by the absence of Kurdish handwork, culture, commerce, the absence of all aspects of civilization in Kurdish areas, the absence of Kurdish schools and health care (McDowall, 1992: 38). Slight developments occurred in the 1950's, since the Kurds benefited politically from the institution of a multi-party democracy. They worked closely with Adnan Menderes who replaced the Kemalist leadership. Kurds became members of parliament and even ministers under the rule of the Democratic Party. The area of Kurdistan benefited economically as schools, hospitals and roads were constructed in Kurdistan. However, the Kurdish language was tolerated only in private conversation because there were limits to the Democratic Party's liberalization policy (Gunter, 1990b: 59).

In the 1960's, a progressive tendency – a neo-Kemalist ideology – appeared in Turkey. The situation of the Kurdish minority further improved under the new constitution, which granted the Kurds more civil liberties but prohibited the formation of any ethnic association "that impairs Turkey's unity". Only Kurds who claimed Turkish identity were permitted to participate in political life through Turkish organizations, since Kurdish parties were not legalized. Kurdish politicians benefited from Turkey's multi-party system by bargaining their support for the party that promised to consider their problems in East Anatolia (Aziz, 1992: 188).

As soon as the military took power in 1971, severe anti-Kurdish measures, tolerated by the West (Olson, 1992: 15), contributed to the revival of Kurdish nationalism. In fact the period witnessed the formation of more than 15 Kurdish radical parties and movements in the 1970's advocating Kurdish political, cultural and social demands – either through peaceful means or through armed force. The most important of these groups was the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a clandestine Marxist-Leninist organization that was to recruit socio-economically marginalized people and to seek an independent socialist Kurdish state through armed struggle (McDowall, 1992: 44). The PKK is very much a reflection of the government's denial of the Kurdish identity and its refusal to accommodate Kurdish national aspirations for cultural and political autonomy. This movement played a crucial role in pushing the Kurdish problem to the forefront of Turkish and international politics (Kutshera, 1994).

The military intervened again in 1980 in order to back the regime that had been subjected to severe attacks by Leftists, Islamists and Kurds at the same time. The 1982 constitution, enacted during a period of military rule, was a cultural crackdown on the Kurds of proportions unseen since the founding of the Republic by Atatürk in 1923. A series of new laws banned efforts to divide the nation and

barred Kurds from expressing opinions and thoughts in their native language, because the dissemination of ideas in Kurdish was considered an attack on the unitary state and its territorial integrity.

The constitution also prohibited and sanctioned against publications, printed matter, records, videocassettes or any other production in Kurdish. Accordingly, no Kurdish-speaking schools or learning institutions were allowed to be established. Materials on Kurdish history, culture and ethnic identity were banned. Listening to Kurdish programs and foreign broadcasts was also forbidden (Gunter, 1990b: 44).

Kurdish songs and costume were officially banned even in private occasions and Kurdish names prohibited because they contradicted Turkish national culture. Therefore, names were forcibly changed and parents who resisted were threatened and interrogated.

No one dared to discuss the Kurdish question, especially in universities, political parties or the mass media. The political status of the Kurds was lower than that of a colony. The Kurds were granted rights as long as they admitted to being Turks; the alternative was repression and persecution. Unlike Kurds in neighboring countries – where they are recognized officially as a distinct community – in Turkey there was no room for the expression of Kurdish identity: "the Kurds are true Turks" (McDowall, 1992: 44).

3.3 The 1990's: the Kurdish quest for political, cultural and socio-economic demands

The Kurdish quest, in the 1990's, for recognition as a distinct ethnic group with special rights can be examined from two important dimensions. The first has to do with the material situation of the Turkish Kurds and their standard of living. The second derives from the Kurds' ideological aspiration for cultural and political rights, for freedom, and for a distinct ethnic identity.

3.3.1 Kurdish socio-economic demands

The Turkish government has deliberately withheld developmental funds and resources from the Kurdish regions in South East Anatolia. Turkish Kurdistan is an impoverished and remote area, which receives only 10 percent of state industrial investment and 2 percent of commercial investment. The GNP per capita is 500 $US, while the national average for Turkey is 2,000 $US (Kirici, 1996: 28). Electricity, pipe water and roads are practically inexistent in 50 percent of the villages. Kurdish nationalist feeling was enhanced by a variety of factors: unemployment, distress and the absence of prospects for the future and a sense of grievance against the richer parts of Turkey in addition to political discrimination against the Kurds. For instance, ordinary Kurds living in this area could watch on TV only the modernization and technological developments in Western Turkey (Randal, 1997). Although considerable improvements have taken place in recent years, the gap between Turkish Kurdistan and Western Anatolia has widened. Historically, the pre-

sence of natural resources was one of the major causes that led to the annexation of Turkish Kurdistan, especially richness in minerals, a prosperous agriculture and the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Despite this profusion of resources, the Turkish government did not develop any industry in the area but only extracted from Turkish Kurdistan the natural resources necessary for the development of other parts of the country. Moreover, an important dimension of the Kurdish problem was related to the government's misdistribution of income and wealth. The South-East Anatolian Project (GAP), which had been proposed to economically develop a large part of Turkish Kurdistan by building 22 dams on the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, had turned out to have been for the benefit of non-Kurds (Kinnane-Roelofsma, 1998). The project was supposed to supply Ankara and Western Turkey with much of its energy through 19 hydroelectric power stations. With the exception of the Southeast, Kurdistan, which lacks any industry and the hydroelectric power, consumes less than 5 percent of the electricity of the state (*The Economist*, 1996, no. 7965). In the meantime, expensive irrigation projects trumpeted as the main benefit to the local Kurds, remained illusive. The single largest territory, which will be irrigated by the GAP, is outside Kurdistan in the Arab-inhabited plains of Harran on the Syrian-Turkish border. The project will end by destroying the ancient culture of 10 to 12 million indigenous Kurds that will be drowned by the dam, assimilating Kurdish identity to the utter indifference of the Kurds themselves. In a study of the Kurds' opinions on the GAP project, Carl Nestor found among twelve prominent Kurdish figures and organizations all over the world, only mild concern that the GAP would destroy historical sites and obliterate the Kurdish presence (Nestor, 1996).

Another area of concern to the Kurds is education, since standards in the Southeast (McDowall, 1992: 55) lag far behind the national standard, meaning that as long as the Kurdish community remains uneducated it will be unable to benefit from the GAP. In other words, economic regeneration of the Southeast remains contingent to political liberalization and encouragement of the Kurdish people to express themselves freely in their own language (Gunter, 1990b). Liberalization in the Turkish situation has not modified official treatment of social and economic conditions.

Since 1985 the Southeast has lost 66.9 percent of its population due to internal migration from the countryside to the cities (*National Catholic Reporter*, 1996). Some people have moved voluntarily in search of work, others have moved as a result of harassment, eviction or destruction of their houses by state security forces.

Out of 12 million Kurds in Turkey, it is estimated that three million have migrated from the Kurdish region to urban centers (more ethnically mixed) in order to escape devastation. The largest Kurdish population lives in Istanbul and other Turkish cities (Dunn, 1995). Although the PKK recruits the majority of its members from harassed villages in the Southeast, heavy repression furthered the growth of national consciousness and urban-based Kurds have been central to the advancement of the movement's political ideology (Kramer, 1999: 34). They were able to notice the disparity of economic standards between western and eastern Turkey. Although many Kurds voluntarily accept integration in Turkish cities, a minority has become increasingly politicized due to uprootedness from their cultural environment.

On the other hand, Turkey's failure to develop its Kurdish regions prompted over a million Kurds to migrate to Western European countries during the period 1950–80 and this flow still continues. Kurdish political activities outside Turkey have contributed to the struggle for basic rights. Political freedoms in these democratic states and encouragement for political expression have inevitably provided a vital impetus to Kurdish political thinking. Kurdish political groups and organizations are active in most countries of the European Community. They have helped to develop political ideologies, which today inspire the various Kurdish parties in eastern Anatolia.

3.3.2 Kurdish cultural and political demands

Since the mid 1980's, internal changes in Turkey have helped bring about new realities concerning the situation of the Kurds. Kurdish existence, grievances and aspirations have become part of the process of democratization in the country. Therefore, it is probably safe to say that the conflict between Turks and Kurds has acquired a new dimension. This section examines both the political and cultural evolution of the Kurdish problem in Turkey, and the transformation in the Turkish political environment. Nevertheless, it should be noted, that the expression of a Kurdish identity, just as is the case with all ethnic identities, is a dynamic process that is subject to change over time due to various internal and external events. Today Kurdish perceptions and aspirations are different from those of the past, and they may be subject to further modification depending on new developments.

3.3.2.1 Kurdish independent or an autonomous state

Repression and force remain the sole response to Kurdish political aspirations, which are not completely separatist, but endanger the national and territorial integrity of Turkey (Michalowski, 1991). In addition to politics, economic considerations play a part in Turkey's position: the Southeast is considered a strategic region, which provides the country with much of its needed petrol and electricity resources and as such it will be difficult to grant Kurds autonomy (*The Economist*, 1996, no. 7969).

3.3.2.2 Kurdish language

In 1991, in an act reflecting a change in state behavior towards the Kurds, known as the "language bill", the Turkish National Assembly lifted some of the restrictions on the Kurdish language. Kurdish language was allowed in private conversations, and forms of Kurdish cultural expression were permitted but officially remained illegal, although the government promised to soften the ban (Smith, 1994). However, practicing it might lead to provocation by the police, as Turkish authorities fear that yielding language rights to Kurds would lead to demands for independence in the future.

3.3.2.3 Kurdish distinct ethnic identity

The Kurds living in Turkey make up close to 50 percent of the total worldwide Kurdish population and close to one fifth of the whole Turkish population.

However, due to political considerations and also assimilation, only Kurds who do not speak Kurdish are officially counted for census purpose, so as to minimize the number (Randal, 1997). The government fears that any reference to citizens of Kurdish origin as a separate entity will lead to "discrimination": placing these peoples who currently enjoy equal rights with the rest of those living in Turkey into a second-class position (Ismet, 1992). This may encourage Turks to distance themselves from Kurds and *vice versa*; eventually the process will lead to confrontation. Consequently, all forms of explicit Kurdishness are heavily repressed.

In fact, Turkish statesmen have shown signs of political flexibility. President Ozal recognized in 1989 that Turkey, in the first years of the republic, committed a mistake regarding the existence of the Kurdish minority (Fuller, 1993) and proposed to discuss Kurdish political demands explicitly. On the other hand, Kurds in Turkey can become MP's, ministers, and civil servants (McKierman, 1999) after they agreed to accept the legitimacy of the political system.

3.3.2.4 Kurdish cultural demands

In most essential respects, Kurdish cultural demands have been excluded from the process of liberalization. Ideas reflecting broad cultural autonomy are unthinkable because they are unconstitutional and against the Kemalist vision. The authorities still fear that granting the Kurdish minority cultural rights might lead in the future to political demands for independence and secession. President Demirel has even called for purging Kurdish Turks who occupy state positions and who have separatist feeling, because they challenge the government from within (Ismet, 1992).

3.3.2.5 Reference to Kurdish question in the press

Turkey, compared to other countries hosting Kurds, is by far the most democratic, with the greatest degree of freedom of press and public debate on most issues, except the Kurdish issue (Fuller, 1993). The authorities fear that public discussion of the Kurdish question might lead to the disintegration of a country of 26 ethnic groups and might undermine Turkish solidarity and unity. Therefore, severe measures were undertaken to prosecute the media, under the allegation of separatist propaganda, which is not really well defined. Journals and journalists were accused of pro-Kurdish stands and all texts with reference to "the Kurds" were either confiscated or the journals banned, and the journalist imprisoned. Restrictions on the press became worse under Demirel and Ciller. In 1993, 14 journalists were imprisoned for 2 to 5 years and 107 journal employees were sanctioned for alleged support to the PKK. In 1996, Turkey ranked at the top in the list of countries violating the freedom of the press (*New York Times*, 1996).

3.3.3 The transformations inside Turkish society and political circles

Since 1988 the Turkish state, having started a liberalization process, claimed to adhere to democratic practices, and promised to adopt more pragmatic options towards Kurdish demands. Starting with the shocking statement of Turgut Ozal du-

ring a 1988 election campaign stop in Diyarbakir that "in Turkey there is no difference between Turk and Kurd", the state has moved to relax the ban on Kurdishness (Goltz, 1999). In the 1990's the question of Turkey's Kurds became a greater domestic issue, increasingly debated. The Turks became more critical regarding the rightness and efficacy of Turkish official policy towards the Kurds and have even shown greater sympathy for Kurdish political and cultural demands. Internal pressure for a more peaceful approach towards a political solution to the Kurdish problem has grown significantly. In this regard, intellectuals and politicians called for official recognition of the Kurdish minority as a basic human right. For them, recognizing Kurdish cultural autonomy does not contradict Turkish state unity. They think the Kurds would be satisfied with cultural recognition without a separate Kurdish state. Conversely, the refusal to acknowledge a separate Kurdish identity would turn politicized Kurds, from being an element of cultural enrichment for Turkey, to becoming a weapon of radicalization in the process of separation and division. Such intellectuals and politicians believe that the old formula of denial and oppression has been proving itself counter productive.

3. 4 The transformation of Kurdish political and cultural demands

The Kurds in Turkey, as a major ethnic group, have long been aware of their "Kurdishness" or distinctiveness. However, their ethnic and cultural aspirations have been systematically ignored, denied or suppressed within the country. The Kurds have been forced to evolve within Turkey's political culture, system and structure. As long as they claim to be of "Kurdish roots", their social rights will continue to be denied and they will not enjoy the same rights as Turks. In order to guarantee their compliance, Turkish authorities resort to a two folded policy: first, a policy of dispersing the Kurds geographically away from the capital and political centers, and second, a policy of assimilation where the Kurds' first contacts are forcibly with Turks, therefore compelling them to intermingle (Olson, 1992: 13).

Despite all this brutal repression, the Kurdish sense of separate ethnic and cultural identities has remained strong. In addition to the Kurdish language, which is largely spoken in Kurdish villages, the Kurds clandestinely diffuse political writings and literature. These serve to promote, through cultural associations and liberation groups, their desire for autonomy and independence. Folklore songs and other traditions are maintained and expressed verbally because the Kurds are partially denied access to writing.

In Turkey, Kurdish cultural identity is strongly fought: Kurdishness means separatism, and being "Kurd" is equal to belonging to the PKK. After nearly seven decades of ideological rigidity, the Kurds considered "the language bill" an important positive step towards a solution to their problems, but recognizing Kurdish presence in Turkey is not enough unless cultural rights are granted. The Kurds may be willing to cease demands for separation, but they will not abandon their cultural rights. Even the most radical Kurdish elements, such as the PKK, seem to have ceased demanding separation from Turkey, or as the leader Oujalan explains "separating the region

from Turkey immediately is out of question. Our people need Turkey and we can't separate for another 40 years" (Michalowski, 1991: 74). This position was maintained in a survey conducted among Kurdish professionals in 1995 (Randal, 1997).

Oujalan held that his group might opt for a diplomatic moderate solution and offered negotiations and a possible cease fire, breaking with his demands for independence in exchange for just free political and cultural expression for Turkey's Kurds (Gunter, 1990b: 39). Although for Oujalan an independent Kurdish state is ideal, he would consider going into a sort of federation with Turkey, a political, economic and social union: "Kurds can gain independence without changing the borders in the region, because independence is a frame of mind..." (Michalowski, 1991: 75).

4. Prospects

During the 1990's, the situation of the Kurds in Turkey received more attention and international pressure ensued to find a solution to the problem. Recent developments suggest the situation is improving but a solution requires a radical change in mentality. There are serious indicators that the Kurdish problem has badly affected the Turks, but any solution requires time, and whether radical elements on both sides intend to give the government this time is questionable. The restructuring of the system that began in 1992 with a democratization drive in regard to freedoms and human rights, has deepened its roots but has led also to increased terrorism and increased frustration with the administration. As a result, the authorities have labeled all reforms as concessions. A hidden debate is underway between the adherents to the Kemalist vision and those willing to concede to the Kurds because of internal and external pressure.

Internally, Turkish public opinion and members of the government have pressed for a more flexible official policy: the Turks should no longer see Kurdish cultural awareness as a mortal threat to the continuity and integrity of Turkey and should distinguish between political demands for autonomy and cultural demands. In this way members of the Kurdish community would learn to become Turkish citizens. In this regard, the statement of foreign minister Ismail Cem gains importance: "Kurds should have cultural rights" (*The Economist*, 1995, no. 7908).

There has also been some improvement in the situation since Europeans have been talking with Turkey about Kurdish problems. Turkey's demand to join the European Community depends on its willingness to respect human and minority rights internally. That is why the Turkish government is compelled to find an alternative to repression and to accept the Kurdish reality. The Kurdish problem, according to European Community ambassador to the US, Hugo Paem, "is only a reflection of the fact that we don't have the type of government which we would feel comfortable within the EU" (McKierman, 1999). In fact, Olson (1994: 66) predicted that the suppression of Kurdish rights in Turkey would probably prompt the EU to postpone, indefinitely, or even forever, Turkey's application to join the European Community.

The Kurds themselves prefer to live in urbanized Turkey when given some kind of autonomy and liberal treatment. They prefer to be able to achieve their ethnic and cultural aspirations without having to separate from Turkey. An overwhelming majority of Kurds do not want a return to violence but when Turkey fails to implement the necessary cultural and political changes, then separatism will resurface once more.

In 1994, Prime Minister Ciller seemed willing to recognize the Kurdish problem as the main issue increasingly threatening the nation's integrity. Ciller appeared to define the concept of nationhood very different from Atatürk's.

Turkey's Prime Minister conceded that only a political solution would work (*The Economist*, 1995, no. 7908). She seemed to have a more realistic view of things, willing to work for "mutual tolerance in a pluralistic framework". "Pluralistic" is a popular world in Turkey today, in the face of slogans such as "What a joy to be a Turk" still inscribed everywhere in the country. However, other statesmen, such as Prime Minister Ecevit, have shown a more rigid stand: "Turkey does not have a Kurdish issue" (*The Economist*, 1999, no. 8132). Recently, there has been real change when Oujalan, who had been arrested, called on his guerrillas to put down their arms, yet Turkish authorities refused to acknowledge his peace gesture. Supporters of increased pluralism and greater cultural autonomy for the 12 million Kurds who live inside Turkey are not going to win their case easily. The search for a solution to this conflict is sure to be at the forefront of Turkish politics in the 21st century.

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Simon Haddad

KURDI U TURSKOJ: KONTEKST I SADAŠNJI STATUS

SAŽETAK

Kurdi koji žive u Turskoj čine gotovo 50% ukupne populacije Kurda u svijetu i oko jedne petine stanovništva Turske. Ipak, status te poveće kurdske zajednice u Turskoj predstavlja jedan od gorućih problema za turske vlade sve od proglašenja republike 1923. Od svih zemalja domaćina Kurdima nijedna se nije više trudila eliminirati kurdski identitet. Smatrajući ih prijetnjom jedinstvu i integritetu zemlje, sva sredstva za ograničavanje kurdskih kulturnih, ekonomskih i političkih aspiracija bila su službeno opravdana. U radu se predlaže ispitivanje dviju varijabli povezanih s prisutnošću Kurda u Turskoj: 1) intenzitet izražavanja kurdskog nacionalizma i 2) reperkusije na kurdsko pitanje u Turskoj. Na temelju literature konstruirane su tri komponente koje pripadaju slučaju Kurda u Turskoj: osebujan kulturni identitet, politički zahtjevi i društveno-gospodarski razvoj. Usprkos snažnom nacionalnom osjećaju Kurdi nisu uspjeli postići autonomiju i nezavisnost u Osmanskom Carstvu. U članku je prikazano kako je tijekom godina snažan turski nacionalizam svojom kemalističkom vizijom svjetovnog etatizma sprječavao Kurde da ispune svoje vlastite kulturne i političke zahtjeve. Zapravo je službena turska politika tvrdila da Kurda nema i da se kurdski jezik ne govori u Turskoj. Traženje autonomnog statusa smatralo se uvredom za integritet države i sankcioniralo se zatvorom. Što se tiče gospodarstva, turska vlada namjerno je uskraćivala sredstva i izvore, namijenjene razvoju, iz kurdskih krajeva u jugoistočnoj Anatoliji. Kako bi udovoljile Kurdima, turske vlasti pribjegavaju dvostrukoj politici: prva je raspršenje Kurda po cijeloj zemlji, daleko od glavnoga grada i političkih središta, a druga je politika asimilacije: Kurdi su se pod, jakim djelovanjem Turaka, prisiljeni s njima izmiješati. Dok su kulturna traženja Kurda izostavljena iz procesa liberalizacije posljednjih godina, bilo koje rješenje trajnog sukoba zahtijeva vrijeme i ustupke obiju strana. Iako su Kurdi pokazali fleksibilnost i spremnost za kompromis, promjena stava Ankare ostaje upitnom. Međutim, tursko javno mnijenje i članovi vlade traže fleksibilniju službenu politiku: Turci više ne smiju smatrati kurdsku samosvijest smrtnom opasnošću za kontinuitet i integritet Turske i trebaju razlikovati političke zahtjeve za autonomijom od kulturnih traženja. Otkako je Evropa razgovarala s Turskom o problemima Kurda, situacija se donekle poboljšala. Naime, turski zahtjev za pripajanjem Evropskoj uniji zavisi od njezine spremnosti da u zemlji poštuje ljudska prava i prava manjina. Zbog toga je turska vlada prisiljena naći alternativu za represiju i prihvatiti kurdsku realnost.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: Kurdi, nacionalizam, Turska, politički zahtjevi, društveno-ekonomski razvoj, kulturna prava, represija

Симон Хаддад

КУРДЫ В ТУРЦИИ: КОНТЕКСТ И СОВРЕМЕННЫЙ СТАТУС

Резюме

Курды, живущие в Турции, составляют больше половины всех курдов в мире и приблизительно пятую часть населения самой Турции. Тем не менее, со времени провозглашения республики в 1923 г. статус курдов в Турции представляет собой острейшую проблему, стоящую перед всеми турецкими правительствами. Ни одно из государств, в которых живут курды, не старалось уничтожить курдский идентитет в большей мере, чем это делала Турция. Поскольку курды считались угрозой единству и целостности страны, официально оправдывались все средства, ограничивающие курдские культурные, экономические и политические устремления. В данной работе предлагается исследование двух переменных, связанных с присутствием курдов в Турции: 1) интенсивность исследования курдского национализма и 2) последствия, оказываемые на курдский вопрос в Турции. На основании литературы воссоздаются три компонента, связанных со случаем курдов в Турции: своеобразный культурный идентитет, политические требования и социо-экономическое развитие. Несмотря на сильно выраженное национальное чувство, курды не смогли добиться автономии и независимости в Османской Империи. В статье показано, каким образом турецкий национализм, основываясь на кемалистических принципах мирского этатизма, годами препятствовал осуществлению курдских культурных и политических требований. В сущности, официальная турецкая политика утверждала, что курды не существуют и что на курдском языке в Турции не говорят. Требование автономного статуса считалось опасностью для целостности страны и санкционировалось тюрьмой. Что касается хозяйства, турецкое правительство намеренно ограничивало средства из курдских частей юго-восточной Анатолии, предназначенные для развития. С целью удовлетворения курдов, турецкие власти прибегали к двойной политике: во-первых, к рассеиванию курдов по всей стране, в места, отдаленные от столицы и политических центров, и, во-вторых, к политике ассимиляции – курды, под сильным влиянием турков, вынуждены перемешиваться с ними. Культурные требования курдов изъяты из процесса либерализации последних лет, причем для решения этого продолжительного конфликта необходимы время и уступки обеих сторон. Хотя курды показали гибкость и готовность к компромиссу, изменение позиции Анкары остается под знаком вопроса. Однако, турецкое общественное мнение и члены правительства требуют более гибкую официальную политику: турки не должны больше считать курдское самосознание смертельной опасностью для целостности своей страны и должны отличать политические требования автономии от культурных требований. После разговоров о проблемах курдов, которые велись между Европой и Турцией, ситуация частично улучшилась. В частности, осуществление желания Турции присоединиться к Европейскому Союзу зависит от ее готовности обеспечить в своей стране соблюдение прав человека и прав национальных меньшинств. Поэтому турецкое правительство вынуждено найти альтернативу репрессии и принять курдскую реальность.

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА: курды, национализм, Турция, политические требования, социо-экономическое развитие, культурные права, репрессия