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THE TURKISH-KURDISH CONFLICT IN THE MODERN GLOBALIZED WORLD

Abstract

The post-Cold-War era has reshaped the structure of international conflicts and their nature, especially after the breakup of the Soviet Union. In the modern globalised world, several driving mechanisms have had an impact on the nature of conflicts themselves. The 9/11 attacks, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, multinational companies, and even individuals are all main factors in changing conflicts' nature around the world. This paper will shed light on the Turkish-Kurdish conflict. The Kurdish conflict in Turkey has been a prolonged affair. The year 1984 marked a new start for the contemporary emergence of the Kurdish problem on the Turkish political agenda. Since then the conflict has persisted in the form of guerrilla movements and limited warfare between Turkish government forces and the PKK (The Kurdish Workers' Party). Turkish- Kurdish conflict has dominated the world's news landscape. Increasingly, Turkey has turned into an authoritarian state by suppressing critical voices and crushing an elected opposition party. Over time, the political situation of Turkey's Kurds has deteriorated into military confrontations between the Turkish central state and Kurdish nationalist groups.

Keywords: conflict, globalized world, Turkish-Kurdish

1. Introduction

In order to solve a conflict, its causes and history must be fully understood. The conflict between ethnic minorities and nation-states has been subject to one of the most searching debates in the study of ethno-nationalism. The dominant approach among scholars is that ethnic conflicts stem from states' failure to recognize minority rights. Within the framework of this approach, it is assumed that ethnic conflicts occur due to the discriminatory policies on the part of the state. As a reaction to those policies, ethnic groups resist with rebellious elements. The Kurdish question is the main source of political instability in Turkey today and has become the biggest challenge to the existence of the Turkish Republic since its creation in 1923. Politically, the Kurdish question hinders the improvement of democracy and human rights, and it helps to strengthen the perception of hard security issues in Turkish politics. Moreover, the more hardliners pursue a military solution, the more Kurdish elements in Turkish society become alienated. The position of the government has been that the preservation of the unity and the territorial integrity of the country cannot be jeopardized. The PKK's declared aims, on the other hand, range from cultural and political rights as an identity group to federalism and separate statehood. the purpose of this paper is to explore the mechanism leading to clashes in a modern globalized world through a case study of the Kurdish-Turkish conflict.

2. Review of Literature

In an attempt to consolidate the choice of the topic and show its Importance, it is more than necessary to state a literature review by considering some of the major scholarly works that have dealt with this particular subject of mechanisms of conflicts in the new world order and taking the Turkish-Kurdish clash as an example. In fact, numerous scholars, and politicians have made efforts to highlight the impact of mechanisms and reasons that may lead to conflicts in the world. Most notable among political studies are Celik (2008) and Dayton

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(2013) studies of the Turkish-Kurdish conflict. Adem Uzun (2014) analyzed the evolution of the Kurdish conflict in Turkey and the efforts to resolve it. The Kurdish question is the main source of political instability in Turkey today and has become the biggest challenge to the existence of the Turkish republic since its creation in 1923. The Kurdish question affects practically all of Turkey's domestic and foreign policies. (Ozcelik, 2006).

Ferhad Ibrahim and Gulistan Gurbey presented in their book *The Kurdish Conflict in Turkey: Obstacles and Chances for Peace and Democracy* the Turkish conspiracy against Kurds and the struggle of the latter to preserve their identity. Michael Rubin explained in his article "Are Kurds a Pariah Minority?" how the Kurds are the fourth-largest ethnic group in the Middle East (after Arabs, Persians, and Turks) and how they remain destined to be a minority spread among nations. When Abdullah Ocalan, the leader of outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), was captured in 1999, the Kurdish movement underwent radical ideological and political transformations (Çiçek, 2013). Mustafa Gürbüz (2016) admitted in "Rival Kurdish Movements in Turkey" that Kurds were denied all kinds of political involvement in the Turkish domestic and foreign policy. Liza Mügge (2010) expressed in her book *Kurdish Diaspora Politics* how Kurds had been prominent in Marxist groups in the 1970s and how they were engaged in street fighting with extreme right youths.

3. Mechanisms Driving Conflicts in the Modern Globalized World

Conventional wisdom once held that the severity of ethnic disputes would gradually decline with the spread of globalization, but fatalities still remain high (Olzak, 2011. p 3). In the world today there are a number of globalization "discourses", and there may, in fact, be several different "globalizations". Many view globalization as a source of, or contributing factor to, conflict. Globalization, understood broadly, is an accelerator of social change, and as such, may act as a catalyst for conflict, aggravating the tensions in any given society and even creating new ones (Tidwell & Lerche, 2004, p. 47). Globalization refers loosely to an increasingly interdependent pattern of relations in which political treaties, media and information flows, negotiations, and economic and trade exchanges and agreements link regions and states.

According to Miller & Yetiv (2001, p. 56), the new world order is a concept that emerged prominently three times in the twentieth century. Woodrow Wilson sought to create a new world order after World War I only to find that the world, as well as the U. S. Senate, was not ready for his brand of idealism. During World War II, Franklin D. Roosevelt envisioned a new world order that would ensure greater stability and peace through the creation of an international body of United Nations (UN), although he saw it as a body that would be based on great power cooperation. Later in the century, during the Persian Gulf crisis (1990-1991), the administration of George Bush revisited this abstract concept in line with the effort to reverse Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990.

Tidwell and Lerche (2004, p. 47) state that existent mechanisms to mediate modern clashes have proved incapable of understanding their nature. The development of a cosmopolitan policy is needed to efficiently address these conflicts. The existent interdependence in the contemporary World Order has spread to the new disagreements. Other problem in solving quarrels is that the parts in dispute have more to gain while engaging in a war. To solve a conflict, it is necessary first to control the violence. The assistance process must be decentralized to encourage integration. The reconstructions, the application of cosmopolitan laws, the international and humanitarian law are fundamental mechanisms to deal with modern clashes.

4. 9/11 Events

No single figure since the Second World War has made so profound an impact on world events as the 9/11 events in America. In North America, the meaning and significance of the 9/11 terrorist attacks is closely linked to a terrorism and security discourse. The Bush

administration's 'war on terror' (WOT) policy presented the attacks as unprovoked acts of terrorism and tantamount to war against the USA, justifying pre-emptive attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq. This is the dominant 'story' about 9/11, which has been elevated to the level of a sacred national myth in American public discourse by linking it to patriotism and the protection of American ideals of freedom and democracy abroad (Jamil & Rousseau, 2011, p. 245).

Rasmussen (2002) admits that little research exists on how the conception of world order in terms of globalization defines security policy. The way the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, DC, on 11 September 2001 were understood highlights how globalization defines threats, and the policies adopted to deal with them, in the post-Cold War international order. This article utilizes three elements of the globalization discourse (globality, globalization and globalism) identified by Ulrich Beck in analyzing the Western reaction to the events of 11 September 2001. It is argued that the attacks reflected a new 'strategic globality' in which the new civilian infrastructure of globalization enabled Third World groups to intervene in the West. In terms of globalization, the events of 11 September were seen as the realization of scenarios for post-Cold War insecurity that dominated the late 1990s.

In addition, several new paradigms have been offered, some more exaggerated than others. Robert Samuelson (2002) saw that the illusion of U. S. invulnerability to external threats could no longer be maintained, and that the change in attitudes and assumptions would have a profound effect on U. S. politics and foreign policy, as well as on the nation's identity. U. S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld declared that "we are entering a dangerous new period in American history, one in which the United States' historical invulnerability has been replaced by a new era of vulnerability; one in which new enemies strike our cities and our people in novel and surprising ways. . ." (2002).

5. Nongovernmental Organizations

Some optimistic observers see this era as a coming-of-age of global civil society; "public opinion has become the second superpower" (Barnes 2005, p. 13). Where revolutionary spirit was once insulated, contemporary communication technology facilitates transnational networks of like-minded radicals. Progressive, people-centered activism has increasingly demanded structural change, and slowly, institutions are beginning to listen. NGOs have acquired an increasingly prominent role, both 'at the table' and 'on the ground', in service-delivery, advocacy, and information sharing. Through intergovernmental organizations, like the United Nations, thousands of NGOs have consultative status, attend conferences and advise on treaties (Bodgan, 1996, p. 36).

Certain movements have been particularly successful, capturing international imagination and changing global policy. The International Campaign to Ban Landmines was a game changer through the 1990s, resulting in an international treaty to ban land mines, and a 1997 Nobel Peace Prize recognizing the feat of global organizing. NGOs saw similar success in campaigns for a UN Climate Convention, the International Criminal Court, HIV / AIDS awareness, and debt reduction in developing countries (Barnes 2005).

NGOs are also active in a wide range of other specialized roles such as democracy building, conflict resolution, human rights work, cultural preservation, environmental activism, policy analysis, research, and information provision. This chapter mainly confines itself to a discussion of NGOs in the international development context, but much of its argument also applies to NGOs more widely. The world of NGOs contains a bewildering variety of labels. While the term 'NGO' is widely used, there are also many other overlapping terms used such as 'nonprofit,' 'voluntary,' and 'civil society' organizations. In many cases, the use of different terms does not reflect descriptive or analytical rigor, but is instead a consequence of the different cultures and histories in which thinking about NGOs has emerged (Lewis, 2009).

6. International Organization

Chervinka (2013, p. 141) argued that International organizations use different mechanisms in ethno-political conflicts settlement. For example, negotiations are used at different stages of conflict confrontation: preventively, in order to eliminate potential sources of future conflict; to address urgent issues and find compromise solutions; to overcome the consequences of the conflict and prevent its renewing. In general, numerous examples of using negotiations as a mechanism of conflict resolution can be seen in the activities of international organizations in various regions of the world. It is an integral part of the resolution of any conflict. For example, the UN effectively uses negotiations in combination with peacekeeping operations.

In this context, Sterian (2013, p. 310) admits that two very important features make the difference between international organizations and other type of organizations: centralizations of power and decision making autonomy. Both have political effects beyond the simple effectiveness of the already taken decisions, because they resemble so much with governments or private companies. International organizations carry out actions that enjoy a sort of legitimacy and affect the legitimacy of the state activity. Even centralization may alter the perceptions of the states in the context of complex interactions between them.

7. Multinational Companies

Bennett (2002, p. 395) asserts that some prominent corporations have been accused of fueling wars and violence through their business operations in conflict-ridden areas. A number of companies have been sued under laws, such as the Alien Tort Claims Act, a US statute that allows aliens to sue in US courts for torts inflicted outside US borders, including those resulting from human rights abuses.

As poverty and social injustice can be root causes of conflict, greater understanding is needed of the ways in which global economic forces increase the risk of conflict. Ways to diminish those risks also need more attention. Many people believe that the global economy exploits them and that global business and its symbols, such as the World Trade Center, are legitimate targets of violence.

Oetzel et al, (2007, p. 344) claim there are a number of direct, independent actions firms might take in response to violent conflict. Some approaches are reflective of historical tactics and methods found in traditional international relations. Military or security activities and negotiation directly engage a single firm in the conflict as a participant. While firms do not engage in offensive military action, many firms do employ private military services that offer defence against violence or may act as a deterrent. Negotiation may be the most appropriate response for a firm that has directly experienced violence (i. e., employee kidnapping or sabotage). According to Human Rights Watch (2005), other direct options include withholding payments that might support violence, public condemnation of violent acts, and providing services to government peacekeeping missions.

8. Historical Background of the Kurds

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. 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 (Haddad. 2001, p. 87).

McDowall (2004, p. 4) recognizes that today there are probably in the order of 24-27 million Kurds living in the Middle East. About half of these, at least 13 million, live in Turkey. They constituted an estimated 19 per cent of the population. But their reproductive rate is almost double that of Turks and it is reasonable to suppose that during the past 20 years they have increased as a proportion of the republic to possibly about 23 per cent. They live also in Iraq and Iran. More than 2 million Kurds live elsewhere: there are just over one million in Syria, mainly in the Jazira and along the Turkish frontier; most crossed the frontier to escape Turkish repression in the 1920s.

Geographically, the land of the Kurds is broadly defined as the area between Mount Ararat and Lake Urmia in the north and east, and the land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers – extending south through the Zagros Mountains to Lower Mesopotamia. The Kurdish language belongs to the Indo-Iranian branch of Indo-European languages. Currently it is spoken between Anatolia, Caucasia, Persia and Arabia. Historically, Kurdish people have been called names that refer to various ethnic groups and languages – ‘Kurtioi’, ‘Kurtie’, ‘Korticaykh’, ‘Korduh’, ‘Kordia’, ‘Bakurda’, ‘Korduene’, ‘Kardu’, ‘Karday’ and ‘Karda’. While at first, these names denoted separate clans, they now refer to an ethnic entity that includes all the clans of Kurdistan (Barnes 2005).

Given their geopolitical and sociocultural circumstances, Mesopotamian people have tended to use institutional unity as a defence against central authority. This has helped them to preserve their identity, with all its riches and contradictions, to this very day. The ethnic entities squeezed between the Hittite Empire and the Babylon–Assyrian Empire developed into powerful tribes (Çiçek, 2013). In 3,000 BC, the Sumerians called the ancestors of the Proto-Kurds who had developed a distinct ethnic awareness, ‘Horrit’ or ‘Hurri’ (people from the mountains). These mountain people also represented the parts of society who resisted being subjugated by central authority. The Hurrians maintained good relations with the Hittites and other ethnic groups in the region, and were the first to transmit the Sumerian, Babylonian and Assyrian cultures to the north and east through trade. ‘Gutians’, ‘Kassites’, ‘Mitannis’, ‘Uartians’ and ‘Medes’ (all descendants of the Hurrians) had strong bonds (Uzun, 2014, p. 11).

Instead of forming distinct entities, these clans preferred to live with their neighbors and still do today. After the demise of the Hurrians, the Mitannis formed a stronger confederation between 1500 BC and 1250 BC. However, their perennial conflicts with the Hittites and Assyrians led to their political extinction under the Assyrian Emperor Salamanassar (Dayton 2013). In one of the fortuitous ironies of history, in 612 BC, the Medes, descendants of the Hurrians, defeated the Assyrian Empire, and then protected themselves from imperialist empires through a system of state governors, unifications and coalitions. Organized into semi-federal tribal entities, the Medes survived the Macedonians, the Roman Empire, and Parthian and Sasanian rule until the invasion of Alexander the Great (Yegen, 1999, p. 560).

9. Origins of the Conflict

The origins of this conflict can be traced back to the fragmentation of Kurdish populations into several states at the breakup of the Ottoman Empire. The Kurdish fragmentation into the states of Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran took its course after the Treaties of Sèvres and Lausanne established new boundaries between Middle Eastern states. However, despite the promises of major colonial powers, no separate nation-state emerged for the Kurds. Kemal Atatürk’s vision of a unitary Turkish national state laid the foundation for the so-called “Kurdish question” which remains one of the most divisive political issues within Turkish politics (Denitch, 1996, p. 30).

The rebirth of the Kurdish identity only occurred at the start of the 1950s with the transition to multiparty rule. Migration to the towns, loosening of traditional ties, and increased opportunities for schooling and higher education led to the growth of a new group

of Kurdish intelligentsia (McDowall. 2004, p. 402). Also, the political and economic liberalization and democratization provided a new phase in the cultural and political realm for the Kurdish movement. First, the Kurdish elites started a revival of Kurdish ethnic identity that encompassed both popular forms of expression and intellectual activity that engaged in new publishing activity in a unified Kurdish language. Second, this new movement allied itself with the leftwing movement in Turkish politics. The new Kurdish leaders joined the Turkish Labor Party (TLP) which became the first party to recognize openly that “there are Kurdish people living in eastern Turkey.” The main emphasis, however, was on the economic identification of the Kurdish question and imperialistic exploitation of “eastern Turkey” in alliance with the collaborating native classes. As Hamit Bozarslan indicated, “the demands were more concerned with integration than separation” (Resch, 2017).

10. The Turkish-Kurdish Relations

In the Middle Ages, especially after the Middle East had been Islamized, the Kurds were subjugated in turn by the Safavids, Umayyads and Abbasids, but continued to exist as autonomous or independent entities. In the 10th and 11th centuries, the Kurds were organized into various states, including the ‘Mervani’ confederacy and ‘Seddadi’ dynasty leaving Central Asia, the Turks moved through Mesopotamia, reaching Anatolia in the 11th century, establishing the first relations with Kurdish tribes, which developed into the first ‘Seljuk’ state (Haddad, 2001, p. 101). The Kurds allied themselves with the Turks and they fought side by side in the Battle of Manzikert in 1071, the Battle of Chaldiran in 1514 (when the Ottomans defeated the Persian Safavids and gained control over eastern Anatolia), and the Battle of Mercidabik in 1516 (McDowall, 309). Until the 19th century and the decline of the Ottoman Empire, Turkish-Kurdish relations were based on alliances and partnerships.

The Armistice of Mudros signed in 1918 between the Ottoman Empire and Great Britain (representing the First World War Allies) put an end to the Ottoman Empire. Kurdish cities were occupied by the various powers who dominated the region Turkey, Great Britain, France and Russia. Earlier that year, US President Woodrow Wilson had announced a point program for world peace, and emphasized the need for self-determination of the various nationalities in the Ottoman Empire. Galvanized by his statement, Kurds rallied in many Kurdish cities, and formed organizations to inform the Western states that the Kurdish question was awaiting a solution. However, neither the US nor any of the European states showed any interest (Ferhad & Gurbey, 2000, p. 10).

In 1919, Mustafa Kemal launched a national liberation movement to prevent Turkey being occupied after the breakup of the Ottoman Empire. He strove to rally the Kurds by invoking Turkish-Kurdish fraternity and holding congresses in the Kurdish cities of Erzurum and Sivas. The Kurds were inspired by Kemal’s claim that “The Kurds and Turks are inseparable brothers and this homeland is the joint homeland of these two constituent peoples” (Rubin. 2013, p. 328). They accepted his invitation and fought with him, believing that once Turkey and Kurdistan were protected from foreign occupation, their Kurdish rights would be acknowledged in one common state. During this period, Kemal stated in many speeches that the Kurdish national and social existence would be accepted and developed.

With the help of the Kurds, the national liberation struggle was won: the Turkish Republic was proclaimed in 1923. However, the new state went on to annul all its promises and agreements with the Kurds and instead massacred Kurdish people. The Kurdish opposition was bloodily suppressed and Kurds were unable to assume their rightful position on the world stage. The Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 divided the Kurdish homeland into four parts that were placed under the sovereignty of other powers, a situation that continues today (Çiçek, 2013, p. 162).

This modern tragedy, which began in 1925 with the first Kurdish uprising led by Sheikh Said (and resulted in the former Ottoman province of Mosul being assigned to the British Mandate of Mesopotamia), was to continue and become increasingly serious. Under Kemal’s

successor, İsmet İnönü, then in the Turkish Republic of the 1950s, Kurdish reality was a taboo subject. The Kurds' national project was ravaged before it could flower. It was not bad enough that Kurdistan was separated into four parts: the anti-Kurdish policies implemented in each of the four new states were worse than in the others (Gürbüz 2016). After 1925, the Kurds' national reality can be characterized as a period of genocide 'colonialism' does not adequately describe the policy of annihilation. Threatened with extinction until the 1970s, the Kurdish nation's first priority was not attaining freedom, but rather surviving. Those long decades of military occupation, assimilation and threatened annihilation must be seen as a concerted effort to deprive Kurds of any national identity (Öcalan, 1999).

Dayton (2013, p. 10) argues that the Republic of Turkey wanted to assure quiet in Kurdistan. To that end, Kurdistan was dotted with gallows, and villages, towns and cities were bombed and burnt. In order to destroy Kurdish identity, Kurdish villagers were exiled to cities in the west of Turkey, and Turks were settled in Kurdish cities and towns. The Plan for Eastern Restoration/Rehabilitation and the Law for the Maintenance of Public Order of 1925 and the Resettlement Law of 1934, made this official. The names of Kurdish towns and villages were 'turkified': Kurdistan ceased to exist on a map. The Kurdish language was outlawed, including the three letters that are not part of the Turkish alphabet. These horrific policies conspired to suppress all mention of the Kurds until the 1970s. The Turkish state did its best to insure total silence, and believed that everything had been sorted out.

11. The Post-Cold War Development of the Kurdish Question in Turkey

In the 1980s, Kurdish nationalism first found expression within the military realm and then moved into cultural and political fields. Four factors contributed to this resurgence of the Kurdish movement. First, the military regime initiated some of its most regressive and repressive policies toward the Kurds, including a broadening of language restrictions. Second, the PKK emerged as a well-organized force that used violence and led to an insurrection. Third, the Iran-Iraq War caused huge numbers of refugees to move toward Turkey (Ozcelik, 2006, p. 137). This attracted media attention and made it difficult to ignore the large Kurdish presence in Turkey.

Moreover, structural change within the international system during the post-Cold War era caused the revival of ethnic identities all over the world. Finally, the creation of a quasi-autonomous Kurdish enclave in northern Iraq is seen in Turkey as a model its own Kurds may want to imitate and a potential threat to Turkey's territorial sovereignty (Barkey & Fuller, 1997, p. 66). The PKK was formed in 1978 although its origins go back to a faction within the Turkish Marxist-Leninist terrorist group, *Dev-Genc* (the Turkish Federation of Revolutionary Youth of Turkey). Its first attack took place in 1984 in the towns of Semdinli and Erüh in southeast Turkey, where most of the country's Kurds live. PKK's ideological platform was based largely on separatist nationalism. The leader of PKK, Öcalan, mostly stressed a federalist solution (Turkish-Kurdish, Arab-Kurdish in Iraq, and Persian-Kurdish in Iran) in the Middle East, which necessitated re-structuring in three major states (Barkey & Fuller, 1998, p. 25).

However, in the last resort Kurdish ethno nationalism aimed to create a unified Kurdistan that includes four Middle Eastern countries. Although nationalism is very much a nineteenth century phenomenon, newly independent countries nationhood often seek retroactively to extend their historical narrative (Rubin. 2013, p. 298). The Kurds are trying to follow suit. Historian David McDowall notes that "[i]t is extremely doubtful that the Kurds form an ethnically coherent whole in the sense that they have a common ancestry" (McDowall. 2000, p. 8).

12. Turkish Strategies to Oppress Kurds

The Kurds are one of the most persecuted minorities of our time. Nowhere is their future more threatened than in Turkey where Kurds are one quarter of the population. Since World War I, Kurds in Turkey have been the victims of persistent assaults on their ethnic, cultural, religious identity and economic and political status by successive Turkish governments (Moisi, 2001, p. 347). Months after the declaration of a Turkish republic, Ankara, under the pretext of creating an "indivisible nation," adopted an ideology aimed at eliminating, both physically and culturally, non-Turkish elements within the Republic. These "elements" were primarily Kurdish and Armenian (Mesut, 2012, p. 417).

A 1924 mandate forbade Kurdish schools, organizations and publications. Even the words "Kurd" and "Kurdistan" were outlawed, making any written or spoken acknowledgement of their existence illegal (Ozcelik, 2006). Gürbüz (2016, p. 32) states that in constructing a chauvinist historiography, the new Republican elite developed the Turkish Historical Thesis "*Türk Tarih Tezi*" and the Sun Language Theory "*Güneş Dil Teorisi*", both taught as objective facts in high schools in the 1930s. The Turkish Historical Thesis suggested that all major civilizations have their roots in Central Asia, the land of Turks. Likewise, the Sun Language Theory proposed that Turkish is the source for all major languages in the world. Although these nationalist theories are no longer in use, their legacy has remarkably shaped both Turkish and Kurdish ethnic identities.

According to Human Rights Watch (2014), between 1925 and 1939, 1.5 million Kurds, a third of the population, were deported and massacred. While Kurdish persecution became more selective during World War II, largely restricted to Kurdish intellectuals, the overall policy in Turkey has remained consistent. Nimet (1997) admits that this stranglehold is reflected in Kurdish literature. In this century only about a dozen works have been produced in Kurdish. The authors have usually received prison sentences.

Evidence indicates that Kurdish provinces in Turkey are deliberately and consistently underdeveloped. From 1968 to 1975, 10.7 billion lira were invested in East Anatolia and the Southeast, areas densely populated by Kurds. This represents 2.4 percent of national investment compared to 31.1 percent in Marmara, 20.8 percent in the Aegean region and 16.4 percent in the Mediterranean area. National per capita investment was 266 lira in 1970, but only 148 provinces (Mügge, 2010).

13. The Rise of the PKK and its Armed Struggle

The PKK began with a group of young activists in Ankara led by theoretician Abdullah Öcalan who were first known as the 'Apoists' (from 'Apo', or 'uncle', Öcalan's nickname). In March 1973, the group's structure began to be formalized, and by 1975–1976, its influence had spread across Turkish Kurdistan. Its tremendous success in such a short time indicated how much Kurdish society thirsted for freedom: the notion of freedom resonated with people of the region, especially the youth (Mesut 2012). The PKK was officially founded on 27 November 1978, largely because its cadres believed that all legal ways of organizing a national movement had been exhausted, leaving only armed resistance to combat the colonialist powers. They felt that only an all-encompassing revolution could enable the threatened Kurdish identity to flourish. The PKK declared that legal struggle was impossible in a country that thoroughly denied Kurdish identity: only armed struggle could successfully resist its annihilation. The PKK aimed to create a new Kurdish society through a popular uprising (Gürbüz, 2016, p. 33).

The long-standing conflict between Turkey's central government and the PKK has had a significant impact on the nation's political and economic outlook. The conflict is estimated to have caused the deaths of between 30,000 and 40,000 people since the PKK's leader, Abdullah Öcalan, called for violent resistance in 1984. The Kurdish community in Turkey

constitutes around 19 percent of the population and has been heavily repressed during Turkey's modern history (Resch, p. 5, 2017).

13.1. The Turkish State's Approach to the PKK

The Turkish state responded to the international leftist youth movements of 1968 and the PKK-led Kurdistan independence movement by staging a military coup on 12 September 1980. Shortly before the coup, PKK General Secretary Öcalan had fled through Syria to a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon, but most PKK cadres in Turkey were captured and sent to the military prison in Diyarbakir. News of the cadres' torture and persecution and their subsequent struggles, as well as preparations for guerrilla warfare under Öcalan, ensured mass support for the PKK (Öcalan 2004).

The demands of the imprisoned cadres in Diyarbakir led to the PKK's first military operation: on 15 August 1984 guerrilla units infiltrated all the Kurdish provinces in Turkey. Popular support for the PKK grew gradually in northern Kurdistan because of Turkey's denial and annihilation policies against the Kurds. Many people joined the PKK guerrilla, which they considered a legitimate defence force against Turkish repression. At first, the Turkish state did not take these attacks seriously, announcing that the perpetrators would be dealt with quickly. Finally recognizing in 1987 that it was confronted with a struggle that was broadly supported by the Kurds, Turkey declared a state of emergency. All powers were vested in a 'super' regional governor, which meant that the struggle was delegated from the state to the Turkish Armed Forces. With full authority, the governors waged a vicious war, introducing special tactics such as extra-judicial killings and the deployment of paramilitary 'village guards'. Turkey also sought foreign allies for its dirty war, using counter-insurgency methods learnt abroad to fight the Kurds (Uzun, 2014, p. 14).

14. Conclusion

The Kurdish question in Turkey is a highly complex, controversial, and extremely politically sensitive issue. And because of its inter-state nature developments in other neighboring states are also causing additional complications for Turkish decision makers. Moreover, the international community's reaction has been perceived as interference in Turkey's internal affairs. The Kurdish-Turkish conflict can only be resolved if it becomes the mutual aim of the Turkish government and the Kurds. Given the perspectives of the official mainstream Turkish actors, the Kurdish conflict in Turkey is not yet ripe for resolution mainly because the national identity crises which have resulted in the over-domination of a Kemalist nationalist ideology based on mono-cultural understanding of nationhood and the principle of protecting the unity of the existing Turkish state. Kurds' requests and demands are legitimate. As the largest ethnic minority group in Turkey, they want to preserve their language and cultural heritage which seem to be an absolute right. Kurds in Turkey continue to suffer as a pariah minority with little hope for future improvement.

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