

The Kurdish National Movement in Turkey: From the PKK to the KCK

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ABSTRACT:

This thesis examines the transformation of the Kurdish national struggle in Turkey from a political movement to a social movement. The Thesis will argue that the Kurdish national struggle during the Twentieth Century in Turkey was largely a failure, and that the emergence of the Unions of Communities in Kurdistan (KCK) has been a direct and concrete response to this failure. The thesis will track how the KCK has transformed a one-dimensional political nationalist struggle into a multi-dimensional one, including politics, culture and society for the Kurds living in Turkey. The focus here will be on the period from March 2005, when the KCK was established, until July 2011 when the KCK announced its Democratic Autonomy project.

In order to explain how and why the KCK has emerged, the Thesis takes an approach based on social movement theories to analyse the KCK as a social and cultural nationalist movement that deploys various approaches and techniques. The KCK is shown to take this new and more popular and successful tact through a comparison of the discourse surrounding the Kurdish national struggle before and after the establishment of the KCK. The 'new discourse' of multi-dimensional struggle is, in particular, compared with the old unadulterated discourse of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which was a straight reaction to the Turkish state policy towards the Kurds and their struggle. The analysis of this process is accomplished through an examination of numerous contemporary resources such as the PKK and the KCK policies and literatures, government intelligence reports, books, journals, and through conducting tens of qualitative interviews alongside comprehensive observation during my fieldwork for this thesis.

Ultimately, the Thesis will argue that the transformation of discourse for the KCK from the PKK is evident in its "Democratic Autonomy model". The KCK proposes this model as an alternative to the nation state model in Turkey.

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**TO My Mother; the woman that I never forget,
To all Kurds and all depressed people in the world;
This thesis is dedicated.**

ABBREVIATIONS

AKP: Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi (Justice and Development party)

BDP: Baris ve Demokrasi Partisi (Peace and Democracy Party)

CHP: Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (People Republic Party)

CUP: Etihad ve Terakihi Cemiyeti, (Committee of Union and Progress)

DBP: Demokratik Bolgeler Partisi, (Democratic Regions Party)

DTK: Demokratik Topluluk Kongresi (Democratic Society Congress)

DTP: Demokratik Toplum Partisi (Democratic Society Party)

DEP: Demokratik Partisi (Democratic Party)

DEHAP: Demokratik Halk Partisi (Democratic people Party)

DOKH: Demokratik Ozgurluk Kadin Hereketi (Democratic Freedom Woman Movement)

HAK-PAR: Hak ve Ozgurluk Partisi (Rights and Freedom Party)

HDK: Halkin Demokratik Kongresi (Democratic People congress)

HDP: Halkin Demokratik Partisi (Democratic People Party)

HEP: Halk Emek Partisi (People Labour Party)

ICP: Iraqi Communist Party

IHD: Insan Haklere Dernegi (Human Rights Association)

KADEP: Katilimci Demokratik Party (Democratic Participatory Party)

KCK: Koma Civaken Kurdistan (Unions of Communities in Kurdistan)

KDP: Party Demokraty Kurdistan (Kurdistan Democrat Party)

KDPI: Party Demokraty Kurdistan Eran (Kurdistan Democrat party-Iran)

KKK: Koma Komelen Kurdistan (Union of Kurdistan Organisations).

KURDI-DER: Komeleya Lêkolîn û Pêşvexistina Zimanê Kurd (Kurdish Language Development Association)

MEZLUM-DER: İnsan Hakları ve Mazlumlar İçin Dayanışma Derneği" (Organization of Human Rights and Solidarity for Oppressed People)

MHP: Milliyet Hereket Partisi (National Movement Party)

PDW: Partiya Welatparezen Demokratik (Democratic patriot Party)

PKK: Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan (Kurdistan Workers Party)

PUK: Yeketi Nistimani Kurdistan (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan)

PYD: Partiya Yeketiya Demokratik (Union Democratic Party)

TBMM: Turkiye Buyuk Millet Meclisi (Turkish Grand National Assembly)

YPG: Yekineyen Parastina Gel (People Defence Units)

YPJ: Yekineyen Parastina Jinan (Women Defence Units)

INTRODUCTION

The main and only question of this thesis is; why has the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) transformed into the Unions of Communities in Kurdistan (KCK)? The thesis is ultimately trying to understand the transformation of the organization that is leading the Kurdish national struggle in Northern Kurdistan/South-Eastern Turkey. The thesis will document and explain this transformation from a one dimensional struggle to a multi-dimensional struggle. My contention is that there has been a transformation of the Kurdish national struggle from a political, one-dimensional to a cultural, social, multi-dimensional movement. The thesis will argue that the transformation brought about a new model which is the notion of democratic autonomy as an alternative to the nation state model in Turkey. Therefore, this thesis will investigate why this transformation happened.

As ever, simple questions are the most challenging. To get at a proper answer to the main question, this thesis requires many subsequent and dependent questions such as: How have political and historical factors, in terms of the 'Kurdish question' or Kurdish national struggle of the Kurds affected the process of transformation? Does the institutional transformation from the PKK to the KCK represent something deeper within the Kurdish national struggle itself: from a popular understanding of this issue as simply a matter of politics to one which encompasses cultural and social dimensions as well? Has the Kurdish national struggle inside of Turkey really changed from a purely political movement of armed struggle to seek a Kurdish state to a social movement promoting ethno-national autonomy? Is this transformation still ongoing? Or are Kurds still struggling with the same tools and mentality as they dealt with in the last century? Why has the KCK changed the course in which social and cultural activism became a prominent point rather than political activism as such?

The thesis will evidently suggest that the answer to these questions is that the PKK failed in achieving its objectives through a purely political struggle. In the wake of this failure, the Kurdish national struggle transformed into the KCK, because the KCK, unlike the PKK, delivered on social and cultural development and strategies in that promoted Kurdish nation building in the context of the Turkish state rather than armed struggle as the only response to establish an autonomous and sovereign Kurdish nation state. In order to better understand the sequence of the whole process of transformation of the Kurdish national struggle; the thesis will examine how this change came about, considering a variety of factors, such as the emergence of alternatives – in places like the KRG in Northern Iraq, and in terms of changes of the politics of Turkishness and Kurdishness in contemporary region. In this way, it will be argued that the KCK reflected fundamental changes in the meaning and practice of the Kurdish national struggle in 21st century Turkey.

The scope of this thesis is narrow and specific. The transformation of the Kurdish national struggle and its effect on the PKK and the KCK are only considered in Turkey, and only once Kurdish social and political entities and actors have started to turn to legal and civil activities in addition to the armed struggle. The thesis essentially focuses on the KCK as a main actor of the Kurdish national struggle only within the borders of Turkey. The time period for the focus of this thesis is from March 2005, when the KCK was established, to July 2011 when the KCK announced the project of Democratic Autonomy. In this respect, the main focus will be on the pro-Kurdish social and political characters in Turkey and the direct or indirect power and hegemony in making decisions by the KCK over the whole process of the social movements in the northern part of Kurdistan, and Turkey in a broader context.

What Kinds of Issues Need Further Examination?

To answer these questions, I first consulted work written on the Kurds and Kurdish question including Jwaideh (1961), Olson (1989), Van-Bruinessen (1992), Natalie (2005), Ozcan (2006), Romano (2006), Houston (2008), Watts (2010), McDowell (2010), Gunes (2012) and Bozarslan (2012). These works helped to give me some understanding of the framework used to analyse the Kurdish question. It can be argued that this literature has covered a good range of the Kurdish concern in relation to the political and historical aspects. Yet, there remain several key aspects of the Kurdish struggle which need analysis and elaboration.

Nevertheless, state perspectives on the Kurdish question dominate the literature, with the four surrounding states claiming sovereignty and international legitimacy to deal with the Kurds as their own 'internal issue'. For instance, the process of mass killing of the Kurds in Turkey from 1925 up to 1938 in the city of Dersim, and the Iraqi regime's mass killing campaigns that were known as 'Al-Anfal' through chemical attacks on the Kurdish city of Halabja in 1988, were all treated as Turkish and Iraqi internal security issues.

The reflection of this statist view on the Kurdish question was not only on politics and diplomacy. In fact, it was reflected in academic studies as well. The majority of academic works on the Kurds examined the question through the window and the legal framework of the states. Therefore, the majority of these works have focused on the Kurdish struggle as a matter of security and terrorism. With regards to the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) as a new and relevantly different movement that started its struggle in Turkey since

the 1970s, almost all the academic works refer to the movement through the view of the states and with the notion of security and terrorism. However, the study of the Kurdish national struggle in Turkey has its different aspects and elements. It cannot be examined only through the state security perspectives. Moreover, the matter of transformation of the Kurdish national struggle in its various phases has been always viewed through the theories and perspectives that focused on the issue of terror. Therefore, the problem of the rights of the Kurdish nation was seen only through the statist perspectives.

Contextualising Transformation in a Social Movement

The concepts of transformation alongside social and cultural concepts are based on aspects of social movement theories, as establishing the KCK can be seen as “a moment or set of events that bring together a self-aware group to react with a sense of agency and urgency to perceived injustice”, (Githens-Mazer, 2006: xiv). These concepts are also based on the approach of changing and reproducing values as the main characteristics of social movement, (Castells, 2012). It is important to suggest that the theoretical engagement of this thesis can be set forth from investigating the notion of promotion of a democratic nation building through social movement rather than building the nation state through political movement. For that, the dynamic of cultural nationalism out of the framework of the state will be focused on and examined in this thesis.

Therefore, this work represents a different academic perspective on the KCK and its role in the process of transformation of the Kurdish national struggle in Turkey through the notion of a democratic nation and out of the nation state framework. While there are several other works on the Kurdish national struggle in Turkey,

none of those works has been conducted on the KCK and its way of transforming the Kurdish national struggle. Moreover, this thesis is an original academic work that has analysed in detail the KCK and its cultural and social struggle for the Kurds through examining the new project of Democratic Autonomy by the KCK as an alternative model for the nation state model of the Turkish state.

Methods and Chapter Breakdown

The methods utilised to support these hypotheses are limited to applying historical case study for the previous manner of the Kurdish national struggle through several revolts and movements. The thesis examines the Kurdish national struggle across areas in four countries in the twentieth century. It focuses especially on the discourse of the PKK movement in the northern part of Kurdistan (south east Turkey) through the KCK as a wider social movement for the Kurdish national struggle in Turkey. For that, several qualitative interviews with the key players of the movement within and outside Turkey have been conducted. Likewise, the progress of the policy and practice of the movement during a year of fieldwork for this thesis has closely been observed. Moreover, several governmental documents and policies on the south east of Turkey that are directly related to this thesis have been investigated. Therefore, it is arguable that through analysing the discourse of the KCK based on the theories of social movement alongside a set of collected data and documents, the thesis can examine the notion of transformation of the main actor of the Kurdish national struggle since the establishment of the KCK and the reason(s) behind that transformation.

In order to accomplish this, the entire thesis has been broken down into seven chapters. The first chapter will elaborate a general overview alongside the key

concepts that are used frequently in this work. The chapter will also elaborate on the methodology and methods of research that have been used across the whole thesis. The second chapter will focus on the two points. 1) It will present a literature review of the academic works that have been undertaken prior to this thesis. 2) It will also investigate theoretical underpinnings of the phenomenon of cultural and social transformation, analysing strengths and limitations of the main actor of the movement whilst in the period of transformation.

The third chapter will critically present the historical background of Kurdish nationalism. It will show especially, the reasons for and aspects of the failure of the Kurdish national struggle throughout the twentieth century in almost all parts of Kurdistan. It will place a particular emphasis on the northern part of Kurdistan and particularly the notion of the Turkish state and the reflection of the Kurdish nation and nationalism due to the Turkish nation state building process. It will engage with examination of the notion of Kurdish nationalism in the context of Turkey and as a reaction to Turkish nationalism

The fourth chapter will narrow down the thesis to highlight the main actor of the Kurdish national struggle in Turkey. For that, it will critically present the history of the PKK as a main actor of the Kurdish national struggle in the northern part of Kurdistan from the 1970s until recent years. It will also particularly scrutinize the newly established KCK as a multi-dimensional entity that has become a new and different representative for the Kurdish national struggle in Turkey and explain 'the Ideology of the PKK' as a leading social movement for the Kurds in Turkey. The fifth chapter will look at the KCK's civil and legal activisms in Turkey and the political activities that have been pursued in a different way since the KCK has been established. In order to do that, the Kurdish political

and legal activism in Turkey and the steps of the shift of discourse of the PKK ideology will be examined. It will also examine the process of de-Turkification as a response to the process of Turkification due to the new way of Kurdish activism since the KCK has been established. To end with, this chapter will highlight cultural and social activities of the KCK through managing municipalities and civil society activisms.

The sixth chapter of this thesis will critically discuss the main projects of the KCK. Particularly, based on the theories of social movement, the chapter will critically present the 'Road Map' project that has been presented by the KCK leader Abdullah Ocalan, for the peace and the solution of the Kurdish question in the Middle East. It will also critically discuss the main proclaimed project of the KCK, the project of 'Democratic Autonomy' that has been recently suggested as an alternative to the previous notion of the Kurdish national struggle for establishing a Kurdish nation state. This project moreover, was suggested as an alternative to the current nation state model in Turkey.

The seventh chapter will examine an outcome of the new Kurdish national struggle by the KCK. The aspects of transformation of the KCK, its policy and practice and its new approach for political, cultural, social and societal activisms will be evaluated. It will consider the KCK under the examination of social movement theories in order to elaborate the extent of social movement elements within the KCK. In this chapter, the main question in this thesis will be fully answered as the KCK has become the main actor of social movement that has made transformation in the Kurdish national struggle in Turkey. To conclude, the thesis will present the summary of the thesis and critically examine the findings. It will suggest the examined reasons behind the transition from the PKK to the KCK. It will also briefly discuss and analyse the impacts of

the KCK on the communities and societies of Turkey and Kurdistan in general, and particularly on Kurdish society in Turkey. Moreover, the thesis will recommend some further scholarly works on the KCK and the Kurdish national struggle that this thesis doesn't have a room for investigating them.

CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL OVERVIEW, KEY CONCEPTS AND METHODOLOGY

General Overview

The following chapter will elaborate a general overview alongside the key concepts that are used in this thesis. It will also explain the methodological approaches that have been used across the whole thesis. This chapter will provide a summary background for the 'Kurdish question', and provide some detail of the evolution and emergence of the PKK and the KCK movements alongside the key concepts and terminologies that are important for the whole thesis. Moreover, methodology in this chapter will allow the reader to see how this thesis will develop its process of the research via collecting and analysing data. This chapter is a good base for understanding the forthcoming chapters of the thesis since it will elaborate important main concepts of the thesis and examining methodology that is used across the whole process of the research.

Definitions of the Key Concepts

In the next section of this chapter, there will be an elaboration for the four key concepts that are frequently used in this thesis. Yet, before that, it is necessary to explain three special terms that are very crucial and much frequently seen across the whole thesis. These three terms are defined based on the interviews with founders of the PKK and the current KCK. The terms are as follows:

1- **The PKK** 'Kurdistan Workers Party': This was a Kurdish political party with a Marxist Leninist ideological approach that was established in the 1970s in Turkey. Whenever in this thesis, the PKK is mentioned, what is meant by that is a Kurdish political movement. Mistakenly, in most academic literatures, the new reshaped entity that is the KCK is referred as the PKK. However, at the current time the PKK is only a small part of the KCK.

2- The KCK: This is a social, cultural, political and communal entity that was established by the former leader of the PKK 'Abdullah Ocalan' in 2005. It is a main actor of the Kurdish national movement that has multi-dimensional activism in all parts of Kurdistan. The main focus, activism and power of the KCK situated in the northern part of Kurdistan. Currently, the PKK is an ideological part of the KCK and it is called 'the Ideology of the PKK'.

3- The Ideology of the PKK: This is a new ideological school within the KCK that is used as a name of ideological division within the committee of ideology of the KCK. Whenever this concept is mentioned in this thesis, the meaning of it is the ideological branch of the KCK.

Beside the three terms above, before proceeding to the discussion of the subjects, it is necessary to make some clarifying remarks on several concepts that are crucial to this thesis. Through the course of this thesis, there are some key concepts and terminologies that are often used. It is necessary to have clear definitions for each of these concepts. At any point, it is essential for the reader to bear in mind that these concepts might have particular meanings in this thesis. Therefore, despite the definitions based on social theories, the particular meaning of these concepts within this thesis might need to be explained. However, the following considerations do not represent a general theoretical framework that will be examined in the second chapter. The concepts are:

1. Nationalism and Nation

Nationalism can be defined as "an ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of self-government and independence on behalf of a group, some of whose members conceive it to constitute an actual or potential 'nation' like others", (Smith, 1971: 17). Smith (1971) has given a great deal of attention to

the concept of nationalism. As a doctrine, nationalism is a language and symbolism on behalf of the nation, a socio-political movement, and an ideology of the nation (Smith 2008: 6). As it can be noted from Smith's definition of nationalism, he treats it as an ideology. The definition of nationalism as an ideology is largely at odds with the common sense understanding of the notion, which portrays nationalism as lacking any form of ideology or philosophical foundation (Smith, 2008: 21). However, the crucial and the most controversial question here – one which will have wider implications for understanding of the two phenomena (nationalism and nation) – is exactly which comes first, nationalism or the nation? Reading through Smith's works, the reader can easily recognise the fact that he has been working hard to counter-argue the prevailing proposition within the modernist approach of nationalism and nations which consider that nations are just products and creations of nationalism and nationalist ideology.

This view has been expressed explicitly by the well-known modernist scholar of nationalism, Ernest Gellner (1969). Gellner suggests that "Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist – but it does need some pre-existing differentiating marks to work on, even if, as indicated, they are purely negative", (Gellner, 1969: 168). While Gellner assigns a secondary value to them, for Smith it is these pre-existing elements that matter most in the nation-formation process, a position, which modernists have ardently dismissed.

On the other hand, according to Smith, myths, symbols and memories make fundamental components of ethnic communities, nationalism and nations as an ideology, also that, cultural and political traits coexist in the nation and the ideology which claims to represent the nation, namely nationalism. Therefore,

for Smith (1996a), nationalism is a culture and identity as well as a political quest, hence, ruling out the presumed divided lines between 'political' and 'cultural' nationalism (Smith, 1996a: 448). This argument of Smith (1996a) follows his critical position to the state-centric account which treats nationalism as an overwhelmingly political doctrine with a fatalist relation with the modern state. At the same time, despite appreciating the vital role played by culture, especially ethnic and nationalist culture, in nation formation and nationalist ideologies, he seems to be refraining from subscribing to a purely cultural approach to nationalism (Smith, 1996a: 447-448).

Following these lines of argument, the 'subjective-objective' binary seems to have gone out of the way in Smith's theoretical formulation. To elaborate more on this point "the concepts employed by ethno-symbolism", Smith argues "are simultaneously 'objective' and 'subjective'". To illustrate this proposition, he goes on by saying "for ethno-symbolism it is culture --and culture in relation to politics—that is central, not subjective attitudes or feelings", (Smith, 2009: 26).

What is so crucial for this thesis is elaborating both political and cultural types of nationalism. Hutchinson (1994) argues that in practice, it is often difficult to distinguish between political and cultural nationalists, (Hutchinson, 1994:41). Elie Kedourie in Hutchinson (1994) provides an essential definition of nationalism. He argues that it is a doctrine formulated by new secular intellectuals, hostile to the traditional dynastic and religious order, (Hutchinson, 1994: 42). Political nationalism focuses on the state as the main and highest aim of the nation. In contrast, "for cultural nationalists the state is, at best, accidental, and is frequently regarded with suspicion as a product of an over-rationalist ethos that seeks to impose a mechanical uniformity on living cultures, (Hutchinson, 1994: 44). Moreover, cultural nationalists are suspicious of such a

centralist politics. As Hutchinson (1994) argues, cultural nationalism is aiming at “moral regeneration of the ‘way of life’ of a unique historical community”, (Hutchinson, 1994:46).

This conceptualisation of political and cultural nationalism is very essential for this thesis as the process of transformation from the PKK to the KCK is exactly the process of overcoming political nationalism that was in the case of the PKK to the era of cultural nationalism as it is in the case of the KCK. As an outcome of the argument about both political and cultural nationalism, it can be suggested that the dynamic of social movement is cultural nationalism and the dynamic of political movement is political nationalism. In other words, social movement is a cultural type of nationalist movement and political movement is political type of national movement. The concepts of political movement and social movement will be illustrated in this part of the chapter below.

2. Kurdish Nationalism

In the case of Kurdish nationalism, it is obvious that the process is different from what has been illustrated by scholars about nationalism elsewhere. From the point of Smith (1996b), collective memories play a decisive role in nation formation according to his ethnic-symbolism theory. The process of nation building that Smith (1996a) argues is quite different from that of state-making'. For, states may be established without recourse to memory and remembering, but nations require shared memories to give their often heterogeneous citizenry a common habitat, a source of pride and dignity, and a common destiny' (Smith, 1996b: 384). In weighting this out against the Kurdish case in question, through a close historical investigation of the Kurdish nationalist movement, one might be able to argue that the failure to maintain a shared memory among the Kurds

is one of the characteristic features of nationalist project among the Kurds. Perhaps, the Kurdish history up to the collapse of the Kurdish republic of Mahabad (1946), with perceived accomplishments and upheavals, is shared by majority of the Kurds. In addition, the elements of the universal shared Kurdish history or memory is best articulated in Edmond's depiction of Kurdish nationalist thinking. In early 1970s, Edmonds presented what he then called 'the historical bases of Kurdish nationalist thinking' as follows:

"The Kurds constitute a single nation which has occupied its present habitat for at least three thousand years. They have outlived the rise and fall of many imperial races: Assyrian, Persian, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Mongols, and Turks. They have their own history, language and culture. Their country has been unjustly portioned. But they are the original owners, not strangers to be tolerated as minorities with limited concessions granted at the whim of the usurpers", (Edmonds, 1971: 88)

In fact the above statement contains most of the constituting elements of the kind of 'nation' framed in ethno-symbolism. The elements of ethnic ties (mythic or real), symbols, culture, territory, and above all, a political claim to 'the right of self-rule' which for Kedourie, and Gellner considered one of the pillars of nationalist conviction Gellner, (1969), Kedourie, (2000). The above statement might apply to the Kurdish nationalist conviction since its early inception at the end of nineteenth century, represented predominantly by young and educated Ottoman Kurds and certainly is evident in the language of the first Kurdish printed newspaper (Kurdistan) published in 1898 in Cairo, (Strohmeier, 2003: 21-26). However, it is arguable that the modern history of the Kurds, especially after 1946, seems to make a dividing gap in Kurdish historical memory especially among the Kurds in Iraq. The factors that make such difference could

partly be traced back to efforts of individual central states in which Kurds make part of their population, and partly to the nature of the modern Kurdish political parties emerged just after the collapse of the republic of Mahabad in 1946. This argument may find more empirical evidence in the particular case of Iraqi Kurdistan and in the enduring internal divisions within the Kurdish nationalist movement in Iraq starting among leaders of the KDP back in 1960 and continued throughout 1970s and 1980s. Furthermore, 1946 is the year which coincides with the establishment of the first and the only self-proclaimed independent Kurdish state in the twentieth century. The same year also witnessed the foundation of the most popular Kurdish nationalist party at the time, which was the Kurdistan Democratic Party-Iraq. Apparently, the party carried genesis of fragmentation from its foundation back on 16th August 1947. The division was not only derived from the divided social background of the early leaders as that between tribal Mustafa Barzani and urban left-oriented Ibrahim Ahmed and his colleagues, in fact, the divide was also fuelled by the uneasy alliance which proved the lack of chemistry in their respective visions to the Kurdish question in Iraq. The division which since 1990s has taken up a different shape and more deeply touched the Kurdish society, and which undoubtedly left its own mark on the identity of the Kurds in Iraq in particular (Anderson & Stansfield, 2004, pp. 155-184).

However, this claim as regards the Kurdish case should be a matter of empirical deliberation rather than as something to be taken for granted. The dominant conviction within Kurdish nationalist historiography, as Vali (2003) observes, is one that is characterised by being both 'primordialist' and 'ethnicist'. For average Kurdish nationalist, as Vali (2003) argues, "the Kurdish nation is a primordial entity, a natural formation rooted in the nature of every Kurd, defining

the identity of people and community through history.’ (Vali, 2003: 59). As for the ethnic side of the discourse, Vali (2003) suggests that the “notions of Kurdish community and identity are both premised on the common national origin, defined in terms of a uniform Kurdish ethnicity”, (Vali, 2003: 60-61). However, it can be argued at this point that, as much as concerns the northern part of Kurdistan in Turkey, close examination of the discourse of identity since the mid-1990s compels one to consider the dramatic transformations which have taken place post that date. The Kurdish national movement in Turkey has gone through a socio-economic and political transformations so has the identity of the political community. While the Kurdish identity previously was characterised by largely ethnic traits, in the recent years the ethno nationalist discourse of Kurdish identity has been seeing a great develop in Turkey, especially since 2005 as the KCK was established. Since 2005 notions such as ‘civil rights’ democracy, nationalisation and coexistence’ have come to discussion parallel to the popular ethnic nationalist terms as ‘Kurdish-ness’, in Kurdish (Kurdeti) in Turkish, (Kurtculuk). Nevertheless, while the emerging identity shares fundamental components with the dominant ethno nationalist one, the former promises to depart to a great extent from the latter by incorporating newer elements that would inform the transformations which have taken place after 2005 when the KCK came on the scene.

3. Social Movement and political Movement

Smelser (1962) defines a social movement as a collective behaviour. He suggests that there is no social movement which is not a collective behaviour. Thus, he defines collective behaviour as “mobilization on the basis of belief which redefines social action”, (Smelser, 1962: 8). However, some collective

behaviour is not institutionalized as in the case of social movements. Therefore, all social movements are collective behaviours, but not vice versa. In addition to Smelser (1962)'s definition, Touraine (1981) sees social movements from the point of class actors and the struggle. He suggests that "social movements are the organized collective behaviour of a class actor struggling against his class adversary for the social control of historicity in a concrete community", (Tourane, 1981: 77).

On the other hand, Zald and McCarthy (1987) have suggested that "a social movement is a set of opinions and beliefs in a population representing preference for changing some elements of the social structure or reward distribution, or both, of a society", (Zald and McCarthy, 1987: 20). In other words, they suggest that a social movement can be described as a "purposive and collective attempt of a number of people to change individual and societal institutions and structures", (Zald and McCarthy, 1987: 122). The main point in this definition is the substance of the change. In the words of Zald and McCarthy (1987), it is about changing individuals and societal institutions and structures. This point is very essential for this thesis as any time the concept of social movement used, the reader must think of the change in social values. In other words, social movement is essentially about changes in the values of society.

Castells (2012) suggested that "social movements, throughout history, are the producers of new values and goals around which the institutions of society are transformed to represent these values by creating new norms to organize social life", (Castells, 2012: 9). He argues that there is in theory, an essential difference between political movement and social movement. In practice they mix every time, but theoretically the difference is very essential as regards as

the value of society and the transformation of values and norms. Political movements nonetheless, are aiming at the state. They are aiming at changing power of the state. Not the destruction of the state as in the case of revolution, but the way of running the state and institutions within the state can be the main aim of a political movement. On the other hand, Castells (2012) suggested that social movements are collective actions that are aiming at transforming the values of society affecting the way that people think, behave and speak. Social movements are about affecting the way people produce or reproduce several new terms and concepts or at least redefining the concepts and giving them different values.

4. The Struggle

This is a Marxist concept. It has been rooted from the notion of class struggle, (Touraine 1981). In case of Kurdish struggle: the concept is widely used by the Kurdish nationalists as 'Xebat' or 'Bexodan', in Turkish 'Mucadele', in Arabic, 'Nidhal'. In this thesis, the term 'struggle' is used in the sense of "Pierre Bourdieu's conception of social life as a struggle over representations of reality", (Schmitz and Wiater, 2011: 21). This means that the struggle is confronting daily social, cultural and political difficulties by people. Touraine (1981), classifies three types of 'positive' struggles and three types of 'critical' ones. Positive and critical struggles can occur at the levels of historicity, institution, and organisation. Positive struggles happen in a "totality" of reform or revolution, and critical ones are against a "totality". Touraine (1981) argues that positive struggle at the level of historicity is called social movement, at the institutional level is called "institutional" or "political pressure" and at the organisational level is called "claims" and "protests".

For Touraine (1981), critical struggle at the historicity level is “revolutionary action”, at the institutional level is “pressure against obstacles”, and at the organisational level is “crisis behaviour” (Touraine, 1981: 84-90). In this classification, there are two struggles that can be regarded as social movements: positive struggle at the historicity level and critical struggle at the same level. Touraine (1981) restricts them as “social movements” and “revolutionary action” correspondingly. Thus, the term of struggle in this thesis was used to refer to the attempts by the Kurdish national movement actors to maintain social, cultural and political rights. This means that the struggle is a social movement itself.

A Summary of the Kurdish National Struggle in Turkey

The Kurds, especially Kurds in Southern Turkey, have been struggling to gain cultural, social, and political rights, self-governance and sovereignty for almost a century. During the course of the twentieth century, the Kurdish national struggle has been through several difficulties and Kurds have paid high prices. In the aftermath of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Kurds were promised to have their own state alongside the other nations in the region, (McDowall 1992). Yet, due to several internal and external reasons and the rapid changes of the politics and interests of the main powers in the region, very quickly that dream became impossible. Without respect for the identity of people who lived in the region, without consent, the land of the Kurds has been divided into four parts and been given to the newly established states in the region. As Yildiz and Muller, (2008) argue, “following the first world war, state borders in the region were artificially imposed by the great powers with little or no respect for Kurdish linguistic, cultural or familial continuity”, (Yildiz and Muller, 2008: 126).

For that, the Kurds have started their struggle to fight for their social and political rights, having riots and revolutions against those powers. However, almost all of the Kurdish revolutions and riots in Turkey have been suppressed and the activists jailed, hanged, or killed; or they have spent the rest of their lives in exile. Interestingly, the Kurdish national movement in Turkey has seen a different stage and reasonably successful methods have been examined since the PKK started a moderately wider nationalistic revolution in the late 1970s in East Turkey.

On the other hand, despite several obstacles in front of the Kurds by the Turkish political system; in the last twenty years in Turkey, Kurdish politics and social movements have been managed in accordance with the system of the Turkish state. In other words, since the Kurds have never been successful in establishing their own sovereign state in Turkey, in the last two decades, the Kurds have had to start to learn how to play the game in order for them to gain their cultural, political and social rights gradually. As Watts, (2010) argues, Kurdish politics have been formed within the Turkish system since 1990, when for the first time a pro-Kurdish political party, People Labour Party, 'the HEP' managed to send some deputies to the Turkish national assembly (TBMM) as representatives of a somewhat pro-Kurdish ideology. Since then, the main actor of the Kurdish national movements has developed gradually and steadily, learning about how to cope with a capricious system and play the game. Therefore, establishing 'the HEP' was the first legal and parliamentary collective action of the Kurds. It must be argued that prior to the 1990s; the Kurdish activists in Turkey had several legal and political attempts. Wining Diyarbakir municipality by the Kurdish politician 'Mahdi Zana' in 1978 is the best example. Nevertheless, these actions were not collective and organised as it was seen from the moment of establishing the 'HEP'. Moreover,

from the 1990s, the majority of the Kurdish legal activists were inspired and blessed by the PKK as it was the main mobilizer of the Kurdish national struggle.

The Emergence of the KCK

It can be argued that the KCK has been established on the ashes of the PKK. As a matter of fact, the PKKIt could mobilize the Kurdish people in the northern part of Kurdistan for the last three decades, Ozcan (2006), Yildiz and Muller (2008), Olson (2009), (Yildiz and Breau (2010) and McDowall (2010)). However, putting the PKK in the list of terror by the EU, US and Turkey put the movement into a difficult situation. According to Ocalan, (2011), putting the PKK in the list of terrorist organisations served a purpose. During an interview with his lawyers in prison, Ocalan argued that, the matter of labelling terror on the PKK has been a result of London- Washington agreement to put any organisation that has negatively affected their interests across the world into that list. However, this attempt did not prevent the PKK developing peace and extended cease-fire, though most of the European countries followed this path and put the PKK into that terror list, Ocalan (2011).

Nevertheless, this can be regarded as an important reason for changing the strategy of the PKK's struggle and thinking of new ways for their path. For that, the PKK started to change its name to KADEK and the name of its army ERGK to HPG and then created a wider entity that was called the KKK which finally became the KCK. To some extent, that was in order to clear itself from terror labels. Moreover, they announced unilateral cease-fire several times and stopped all attacks on the Turkish economy in the tourist areas in the west of Turkey, (Yildiz and Breau 2010). However, the label has continually

been attached to them and the name “PKK” has still continued as the main name for them to be recognized under. Ever since, they have focused on the civil and legal activities within the cities and started to concentrate on the legal way to participate in organising Kurdish people in the predominantly Kurdish cities and towns in the south east of Turkey and Kurdish inhabitants in the Turkish metropolis cities such as Istanbul, Izmir and Ankara to go to the voting stations during the local and general elections in Turkey and asking people to vote for pro-Kurdish parties such as the Democratic Society Party, the DTP and Peace and Democracy Party, the BDP. Despite all these changes, the label has still remained on them; even legal activists from pro-Kurdish parties were faced with several charges as they were accused of making propaganda for the terrorist organisation.

In the March 2009 local elections, the DTP, as a main Kurdish representative party in Turkey, doubled the number of municipalities under its control in the predominantly Kurdish areas. As a reaction to this, the government started an operation under the name of the “KCK operation” to arrest and jail Kurdish activists. Another very important point in this respect can be the shift of the PKK in terms of their goals and the range of their struggle. “The Ideology of PKK” has started to compromise its demands for liberation of all Kurdistan and establishment of a Kurdish state. Instead of that, it has started to criticize nation states and think of brotherhood between the Kurds and all other nations and ethnicities around the Kurds in the Middle East. It was calling for autonomy for the Kurds inside the borders of the republic of Turkey as long as that republic is democratic and respects the notion of freedom and celebrating diversity and recognising minorities’ cultural, political and social needs.

By the 2011 General Election in Turkey, the Kurds in Turkey sent thirty six “clear” Kurdish or pro-Kurdish active MPs to the Turkish national assembly. This means that the political expression of Kurdishness and the notion of a collective action were evident during this election. Moreover, in the same year the project of “Democratic Autonomy” in Kurdistan was suggested by the KCK. This step made the main actors of the Kurdish national movements very active in the process of mobilizing Kurdish people through the policy of the KCK. Since the KCK with its diverse range of activism came on the scene, the notion of Kurdish awareness in Turkey has been raised to a large extent. Obstacles are challenged and a significant amount of the Kurdish people has been mobilized to hold the responsibility of struggle for the Kurdish cultural and social rights in Turkey.

However, there were several dilemmas for the movement. The dilemmas were internal, such as the ideological problems amongst activists within the movement. They were also external, such as the issue of terror and the international community’s sensitivity about the legitimacy of this movement and gaining support from the western communities such as European Union powers and other notable powers in the world. Thus, whole parts of this study will try to explore the nature and the reasons of the birth of this new wave of social movement of the Kurds in Turkey and its struggle during the last twenty years, focusing on the way of transformation and the stages of its struggle according to the ideology of the KCK movement and the demands of the new era of struggle in the new context of Turkish and international politics and the social arena.

Methodology

In instruction to accomplish the research necessary for this thesis, it is crucial to follow an appropriate methodological order. Therefore, it is necessary for this thesis to utilise a qualitative approach to collect and analyse relevant data.

It is argued that qualitative approach to social science research is an important way of gathering and analysing data. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) and Creswell (1998) have defined qualitative research; he argues that “qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them”, (Creswell, 1998:15). Thus, qualitative research is more practical and is involved with the deep concerns of the researched society. “Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of imperial materials – case studies, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts- that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals’ lives”, (Creswell, 1998: 15).

The definition mainly emphasises on the two points that both are important for this study. The first one is the way and method of collecting data, through various methods within the qualitative approach. The second is the way of analysing the data through an interpretive process within the qualitative approach. The reason for adapting qualitative approaches is because of an important point that needs to be highlighted, which is the issue of validity or credibility. As Brady and Collier (2010) suggest, the research should “maximize the validity of measurements”, (Brady and Collier, 2010: 133),

meaning that, “it should use reliable data-collection procedures that, if applied again, would yield the same data”, (Brady and Collier, 2010: 133).By using a qualitative approach, valid data and the gathering of adequate essential information which is necessary for the research subject, can be gained.

For the data collection, there are mainly four types of information to be collected. The four are observations, interviewing, documents and audio visual materials, (Creswell, 1998: 16). First of all, observations can be participant or non-participant. For this study, both participant and non-participant observations are used. I have been within the Kurdish activists during their activities in order for me to understand their motives and feelings. For instance, in 2011-2012, I was in Turkey and Iraq to observe activism of the KCK as the main movement that this thesis is about to investigate. Particularly, in 2011, I was in Diyarbakir observing ‘Newroz’ celebration and announcing the project of the KCK “Democratic Autonomy”.

The second type is interviews in qualitative data collection, which must be semi- structured and open-ended. For this study also, there are semi-structured interviews with more than thirty different people from Turkish members of parliament, politicians in Turkey, Iraq and other politicians from Iran and Syria in Europe, and to several academics and first hand activists that are dealing with the matter that this study concerns. There are almost eighty hours of interviews conducted during one year of fieldwork for this study. Interviews were conducted only in Turkey, Iraq and Europe. Interviewees all showed their consent for participation in this research and some were more than happy to mention their names within this research.

However, due to the sensitivity of the research, I have decided not to mention the names of my interviewees and contributors of this thesis. Therefore, I have made some codes for the interviewees. All interviews that have been conducted within Turkey or with any politician from Turkey originally; were coded as (A). Interviews with politicians who are from Iran originally were coded as (B). Interviews within Iraq or with Iraqi politicians were coded as (C). Finally, interviews with individuals from Syria were coded as (D).

The third type of data collection is gathering and analysing documents. Documents can be private and public. For this study, there are several important published and unpublished texts and documents analysed. The fourth method which is audio visual material can be photos, video tapes and record, compact disks and maps, (Creswell, 1998:120). For this one also there are several maps, photos and some voice records used. Moreover, all interviews are voice recorded, transcribed and translated when needed. All interviews were saved securely and confidentially. All the uses of documents were referenced properly.

Discourse analysis was one of the key techniques used in this thesis to analyse the data that had been collected. Defining the meaning and use of discourse analysis is important to make sense of this technique. Sewell (1980) in Klandermans and Staggenborg (2002) argues that discourse analysis refers to analysing the sum total of the “manifestos, records of debates at meetings, action of political demonstrations, newspaper articles, slogans, speeches, posters, satirical prints, statutes of associations, pamphlets, and so on of a time, a place and a people”, (Klandermans and Staggenborg,2002: 67). This can give this study a view that collecting such

kinds of data is necessary in order to have a clear and appropriate frame for the research and to analyse these discourses.

Bryman and Burgess (1994) argue that, "There are at least four types of works that have commonly been described in this way", (Bryman and Burgess, 1994: 47). The first one is mainly influenced by speech act theory; this has been directed in a systematic account of the organisation that has conversational exchange as a main discourse, (Bryman and Burgess, 1994). The second one has a psychological aspect, mainly concentrating on what is termed as discourse process, (Bryman and Burgess, 1994). The third type has been mainly developed by sociologists, especially sociology of scientific knowledge theorists; as (Bryman and Burgess, 1994) argue, "Partly as a response to methodological difficulties with other ways of studying science", (Bryman and Burgess, 1994: 47). The last type is the most important part for this study. It is an approach that has been advanced by a very different tradition of continental social philosophy and cultural analysis, (Bryman and Burgess, 1994).

The use of analysis in this thesis is important as this study is applying an analysis to a social movement, through documents and interviews of some key previous and current personnel within the movements. Klandermans and Staggenborg (2002) argue that "for the social movement researcher, common data sources are organisational documents and newspaper articles", (Klandermans and Staggenborg, 2002: 67). Moreover, analysing the public speech, the events and even slogans of the social movement activist are essential.

The challenges of this study as a social movement research can be posed in the two sets of challenges, as Klandermans and (2002) suggested. The first challenge "relates to definitions conceptualizations. Ideational concepts are

inherently imprecise, and distinctions between frames, ideologies, and discourses are frequently blurred”, (Klandermans and Staggenborg, 2002: 63). The second challenge regards the issue of verification and proof of discourse analysis. Klandermans and Staggenborg (2002) argue that “discourse analyses confront the difficult tasks of describing and presenting evidence for concepts that reside in the black box of mental life”, (Klandermans and Staggenborg, 2002: 63).

On the other hand, with regards to social movement research, there are three levels of discourse. The first level is related to the Trans-National movements. Klandermans and Staggenborg, (2002) describe that as “world historical discourse ‘or mentalities’ of reformation, enlightenment, Islamism, and so on, and then the more circumscribed discursive fields of specific movements such as gay rights, liberation theology and ecology”, (Klandermans and Staggenborg, 2002: 68). Moreover, political science researchers have recently drawn attention to social movements on this trans-national level through the theories of international relations.

The second level of discourse analysis is on the level of organisational. This is when the social movement has been structured based on several different social movement organisations. In this case, as Klandermans and Staggenborg, (2002) argue “their textual production forms part of the polyphonic voice of a movement’s discourse”, (Klandermans and Staggenborg, 2002: 68). Rochon (1998), in Klandermans and Staggenborg (2002), has suggested that “this level is often reflective of discursive elements that resonate among the larger populace, akin to processes of frame alignment and frame bridging”, (Klandermans and Staggenborg, 2002: 68). This level of discourse is so important especially during the controversial

moments of social movements' transformation of strategies and goals.

The third level of discourse according to (Klandermans and Staggenborg (2002), is "individual production of text and speech by participants and activists", (Klandermans and Staggenborg, 2002: 69). This is also a very important level of discourse analysis especially for the concern of this study, as there are several documents, interviews and speeches by key individuals within the social movements' organisations that this study must explore. However, there is a difficulty in terms of analysing speech from spoken language and there is a difference between analysing speech and texts from written documents. Moreover, there is an overlap or relationship between the individual level of discourse analysis and the "more general levels because texts are usually produced by individuals", (Klandermans and Staggenborg, 2002: 69).

The first method of collecting data in this thesis is the interview. There are several semi-structured, open ended interviews with several important personnel within the social movements' organisations. It is beneficial to ask a simple question about the nature of the interview. Someone may say what is the interview? Very simply, Silverman (2004) suggested that "interviewing provides a way of generating empirical data about the social world by asking people to talk about their lives. In this respect, interviews are special forms of conversation", (Silverman, 2004: 140).

On the other hand, Flick, et al. (2004), believe that there are a huge number of "different types and procedures of qualitative interviews", (Flick, et al. 2004: 204). This thesis is focusing on the interview, especially semi-structured interview as a very important method of collecting data. Very specifically face-to-face interview is taken into account in this thesis. This is due to the nature of the study as it is very crucial to the interviewees to be observed while they are

answering the questions. Thus, there is a combination of the process of interview and observation at the same time. Briggs (1986) in Silverman (2004) has argued that “the social circumstances of interview are more than obstacles to respondents’ articulation of their particular truths”, (Silverman, 2004:141).

This means that, the researcher must carefully take the social and political circumstances into account while undertaking interviews and analysing their speeches. In other words, face-to-face interviews give the researcher good opportunity to gain some information and notice important points during the reaction of interviewees while they are responding to the questions. Moreover, during face-to-face interview, it is more likely that both interviewer and interviewee are mutually active, much more involved in the subject and react with discussing points that concern the research. Borrowing the words from Silverman (2004), face-to-face interviews predominantly are “collaborative accomplishments, involving participants in meaning-making work in the process”, (Silverman, 2004:142). However, the process of interview sometimes is facing with the issue of honesty and frankness. Often interviewees obliged to avoid some crucial points in order not to be in social and political difficulties. During my fieldwork for this thesis, often I saw some people who want to talk to me; but as soon as I demand them to let me record their speech, they would show their disagreement.

From this point of view, face-to-face interviews can be the producer of knowledge and meaning on the one hand, and can be an active tool of data collection on the other hand. In other words, this kind of interview contributes to “understanding how the meaning –making process unfolds in the interview is as critical as apprehending what is substantively asked and conveyed”, (Silverman, 2004:142). Thus, it can be achieved during undertaking semi-structured

interviews. On the other hand, as Silverman (2004) argues, regardless of the types of interview, “there is always a model of the research subject lurking behind persons placed in interview roles”, (Silverman, 2004:144).

The second method of the collecting data for this thesis is observational techniques. There are two different ways of observation, participatory and non-participatory. For this study in particular, I have used both types of observation during my fieldwork. I have participated in cultural, social and political gathering and observing experts and key individuals of the movement during my stay in Turkey and Iraq. I have seen several key community leaders and politicians who are able to explain the complexity of Kurdish national movements in Turkey. The task of this observation was to make those experts to analyse the situation and produce a discussion about the discourse of political parties that are playing the main game with regards to the Kurdish question in Turkey. In more specific words, I have observed groups of members of Turkish parliament when they were gathering and addressing to people to express their views about the subject. I have participated in the gathering of several academicians, politicians and several political commentators outside the arena of the Turkish system who have discussion about the same subject. In addition to all this, it is necessary to say that observation and participation with observation gave this study an enormous magnitude of knowledge and very useful insights in terms of the familiarity with the actual society that the study concerns.

The essential contribution of the methodology in this thesis will be very clear in the forthcoming chapters, especially during the presentation of the discourse of the current Kurdish national movement and showing the hand of the participants and interviewees in the fieldwork across the whole study.

The main contribution of methodology to go through the better way to get answer of the main question of the thesis is that the essential data has come from my fieldwork that is directly constructed based on methodology. Moreover, analysing all data has been perused based on research method alike. In the next stage of this work, the combination of the view of participants and researcher will be presented, especially in each of the fourth, fifth and the seventh chapters.

In the next chapter, another two important points will be investigated. The first one will be the literature review for the academic works by previous scholars. It will critically look at the scholarship literature around the Kurdish movements and the struggle of the Kurds, especially on the Kurds in the northern part of Kurdistan. The second point will be presenting theoretical approach to the subject through examining social theories; especially theories of social movements. The importance of the next chapter is that the the whole framework of the thesis will be clarified during the demonstration of the literature reviews and theoretical examination for the Kurdish national struggle in Turkey.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORIES OF SOCIAL MOVEMENT

Introduction

Having previously set out the concepts of a social movement and defined the Kurdish national struggle, particularly for the Kurds who live in Turkey, this chapter will consider how other scholars have analysed the Kurdish national struggle in Turkey and Kurdistan in general. This is in order to better understand the notion of the transformation of the KCK in this context. These considerations will help to situate the changing strategy and goals of the KCK, as the main actor of the Kurdish national movement in Turkey and in the northern part of Kurdistan (South East of Turkey). The second part of this chapter will be engaged with social movement theories and looking for the way of analysing the Kurdish national struggle and set out a theoretical framework for the main actor of the Kurdish national movement which is the KCK.

Literature review

In reviewing some relevant previous academic works in relation to this study, there will be two different types of literature. After discussing the part of the literature review, it will be looking at the work of several social and political theorists with regards to their assessment and explanation of social movements and showing examples of some other social movements and the way of transferring and changing their agendas in terms of their ideologies and political frameworks. This theoretical framework will also investigate the matter of practical transformation and changing movement's activities such as, transformation from violence and armed struggle to the civil and legal one. Moreover, this work will show the reasons for those changes and transformations during the struggles. The study will also focus on the negative and positive outcomes of the movement's changes for its organisations and for

the current position and future of the Kurdish nation that they have struggled for.

There are two different types of literature to consider here. Firstly, those works which focus on the recent history of Kurdish nationalism. Secondly, those works which especially focus on the PKK written by scholars based in Western universities and to some extent in Turkey. The reason of focusing mainly on the Western academic literature is due to the lack or limitation of free and unbiased studies in Turkish, Iranian and even at universities in Arabic countries with regards to the Kurdish question. Moreover, it is not possible to find a wide range of academic studies and study centres about the Kurds and the Kurdish question in comparison to any other important issue in the Middle East. For instance, there are huge literatures about Arab- Israel conflicts and several institutes, and academic centres have drawn a great attention to the Middle East issues at various universities across the whole world. In contrast to this, until very recently, there were very few attempts to focus on the issue of the Kurds and the conflicts between Kurds and those nations that are surrounding them and the states that Kurds are situated in.

Until very recent years the academic study of the Kurds and Kurdishness in Turkey was missing. That was due to the Turkish denial of existence of the Kurds and a regarding of them as Turks, (McDowall, 1992), (Ozcan, 2006). This means the literature review for this study faces real difficulties in terms of stating it within existing theorisation and theoretical approaches. It also faces difficulties with regards to impartiality in the academic literature about the Kurdish national struggle question. Academic works written about the Kurdish national struggle usually focus on the historical narratives of Kurdish revolutions and nationalism. Here, there are several academic books and articles that concern the Kurdish national movement in all parts of Kurdistan and predominantly about the part that is situated in Turkey.

Jwaideh (1961) is the one of the first authors that has observed the history of the Kurdish struggle or national movement. Jwaideh highlights the Sheikh Said rebellion in (1925) for northern Kurdistan. Jwaideh (1961) touches on the Kurdish culture and roots with prominence on the Kurdish national movement in this region. Despite the time of this work that was conducted in the middle of last century, there is some direct relevance to the question of transformation of the struggle of social movement in Kurdish areas of Turkey. It is a wide-ranging research on several aspects of Kurdish society such as: language, culture, social life, economic, politics and geography of Kurdistan. There is a focus on the causes and the results of the rebellions of 'Muhammad Pasha of Rawnduz' and 'Sheikh Ubaydullah of Nehri' in the nineteenth century. Also there is an emphasis on explaining the revolt of 'Sheikh Mahmud Barzanji' and the rise and the fall of that revolution in the southern part of Kurdistan in the first half of the twentieth century. Moreover, reference is made to 'Sheikh Abdul Salam Barzani's' rebellion in the south in the nineteen thirties and the struggle of Kurds in Iran and establishing the Republic of Kurdistan in Mahabad by 'Qazi Mohammed' in 1946. Jwaideh (1961) is very interesting and has an historical importance in terms of the political history of the Kurdish national movements in all parts of Kurdistan in the last century. Nonetheless, the work has a lack of addressing the question that this thesis is trying to deal with which is the issue of transformation of Kurdish struggle from one dimensional to multi-dimensional activism and through social and civil means as well as political aspect at the present time.

Another important work is conducted by Robert Olson (1989). This work is of relevance to the current study as there is a real concern about social movement in the northern part of Kurdistan focusing on two points. Firstly, the work looks

at the policy of Great Britain with regards to the Ottoman Empire and the Kurdish issue in the wake of the collapse of the empire, since the power of Great Britain had a direct but negative effect on the future of the Kurds at that time. Olson (1989) also focuses on the international implications of the revolt of 'Sheikh Said' in (1925). The second point is that; Olson (1989) raised a question about the revolt of 'Sheikh Said' as he asked whether it was religious or nationalist. In other words; the revolt of Sheikh Said was somehow a Kurdish struggle and aimed at making a home or autonomy for the Kurdish people in the northern part of Kurdistan. However, the apparatus of that revolt "such as propaganda, mobilization and symbols of the revolt" were religious. Olson (1989), states that the violence, tribal feuds, and individual disputes were noticeable causal factors in the rebellion. Therefore, the revolt from the beginning gave the impression that it would be a failure. Mainly rural Kurds were supporting 'Sheikh Said' and the Kurds of the cities did not support the rebels.

In addition to that, Olson (1989) suggested that the religious character of the rebellion was of use to 'Mustafa Kemal Ataturk' in his ambition to secularism. Whether or not the revolt was a nationalist one, it is clear that the newly established Turkish state treated it as a religious revolt in order to justify actions against the traditional place of Islam in government and society. Olson (1989) also points out the continuity of the Kurdish national movement over the last century besides the limitations within the movement that continue to decay the struggle. Furthermore, he shows the histories of the growth of international backing for the idea of the independence of Kurdistan. That was the matter that had been mentioned in the Treaty of Sevres (1920) and by the 'League of Nations'. Yet, the Treaty of Lausanne in (1923) depressed that dream. The work

of Olson (1989) has a great importance with regards to issues of Kurdish national movements and its struggle. Yet, as mentioned earlier, still there is a gap that the current study attempts to fill which is investigating the discourse of the movement in relation to the process of transformation of Kurdish national movement from armed struggle to a civil and legal one in the recent and current time in the northern part of Kurdistan.

Van Bruinessen (1992) is another important work in this field. This work underlines the issues of the form and nature of the Kurdish national struggle and the class awareness in the Kurdish society. Van Bruinessen (1992) highlighted an important point in terms of Kurdish perspectives and struggle. He argued that in the southern part of Kurdistan, during the sixties and seventies of the last century; the revolution by 'Mustafa Barzani' was a different movement compared to the revolutions elsewhere. In the case of Chinese, Vietnamese, Mexican, Cuban and even Algerian revolutions, all the way through the twentieth century; Barzani's revolution was different. Van Bruinessen (1992) argued that those revolutions were progressive (justice-seeking, anti-exploitation and anti-imperialist). Nevertheless, the Kurdish movement in Iraqi Kurdistan was conservative and even backward-looking in appearance, in spite of the justness of its demands. It is astonishingly shocking for some commentators that despite the fact that Barzani remained for at least twelve years in Moscow after his fleeing from Kurdistan due to the collapse of Mahabad republic in 1947 when he came back and started leading the revolution in Iraqi Kurdistan; he was much more conservative and with tribal tendencies than before his escape.

Bruinessen (1992) is looking for the reasons for this condition in the Kurdish national struggle. He suggested that, conservatism is due to the persistence of

"primordial loyalties" which are those to family, tribe, tribal chief and landlord, and religious figures such as the Sheikhs or the leaders of Mystics. Questionably, Bruinessen (1992) tried to touch an important subject of the history of the Kurdish revolts that has lately been highlighted in the twentieth century. Throughout the whole history of the Kurds in the twentieth century, Kurdish movements have always tried to solve their problems with the same mentality as the mentality of their enemies who created the problems for them. Kurds always fought to solve the problem with less or the same level of thinking that has created the problem. Moreover, Kurds always asked for the same type of rights as others had and others deprived the Kurds from. As a matter of fact, Kurdish people have struggled for gaining a nation state in the same way as Turks, Arabs and Persians have. Yet, so far it can't be achieved.

Another important point in Bruinessen's (1992) work that to a certain degree has a relevance to this study is raising a question about the revolt of 'Sheikh Said' in 1925 in the northern part of Kurdistan. Bruinessen (1992) highlighted a question whether the revolt of 'Sheikh Said' was religious or nationalist. He argues that the revolt was a mixed action between both. The limitation of this work can be addressed through his overview to the class struggle within the context of the Kurdish national movement. The work can be seen as a great academic work about Kurdish social and political structure. Yet, he undervalued the importance of the social and political outcome of the revolt of 'Sheikh Said'. The revolt of 'Sheikh Said' has internally had a significant influence on the Kurdish-Turkish relations throughout the twentieth century in Turkey and externally the revolt had an impact on the policy of great powers such as Great Britain's foreign policy with regards to the Middle Eastern powers and newly established states. Another point that is worth mentioning is that the author has

visited most of places of Kurdistan for his fieldwork and he had a close observation.

Another prominent work in relation to the social and political movement in Kurdistan is the work of Denise Natalie (2005). In her study, she focuses on the Kurdish national movement through emphasising Kurdish ethnicity as a central point of the movement. Natalie (2005) argues that due to the political status of the Kurds within the states of Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey, and complex relationships between the Kurds and these states made the notion of ethnicity a noticeable theme in the Kurdish movements. The notion of nationality and ethnicity among the Kurds are almost the same since the governments of the four countries are calling for nationality and citizenship on the one hand. Yet, Kurdish movements always wanted to call for Kurdishness as a notion of ethnicity and then as a notion of nationality on the other hand. This means that the issue of highlighting Kurdishness has become a priority as distinctiveness to confront others around them. Thus, the work of Natalie (2005) tries to deal with the question of how this complex relationship in the four different contexts has affected Kurdishness and Kurdish national movements. Natalie (2005) links this issue with the political space as she argues that the Kurdish national struggle has become a struggle for highlighting the Kurdishness as an ethnically distinctive. This is dependent upon the incentives that have been offered by the governments of these four states and the reaction of Kurdish national movements to those incentives structures. In other words, what it means to be a Kurd consequently must be considered in relation to what it means to be a citizen of one of these four countries.

Natalie (2005) argues that political space regardless of the actual situation of the Kurds was relatively larger. Nevertheless, in the case of Turkey, the status

of the Kurds and political space for the Kurds is almost absent. Moreover, on the status of the Kurds of Iran, Natalie (2005) argues that political space was more accommodating to the Kurds, as compared with Turkey and Iraq. According to Natalie (2005), political space is not subjected to continuity across the places and times. Yet, variations have created differences in terms of expression of the Kurdish struggle in different settings over the period of the last century. Particularly after the 1990s the notion of Kurdishness and ethnicity has become significant across the whole of Kurdistan, regardless of the notion of political space inside any state that the Kurds live in.

Another relevant work to the study of the Kurdish national struggle is that of David Romano (2006). Romano examines Kurdish nationalist movements via analysing their discourse as social movements. Romano does this by looking at the different Kurdish nationalist movements and comparing three Kurdish political parties, the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). Romano (2006) compares the structures, policy and leadership of those three Kurdish parties. Romano's work focuses especially on the Kurdish national movement in Turkey, especially the revolt of the PKK. Yet, it does not fully unpack the issue of recent transformations in the Kurdish national struggle in the northern part of Kurdistan. Moreover, there is not any explanation of the new Kurdish national movements that have developed in recent years through the focus on the civil, cultural, social and political struggle rather than armed struggle and using violence. In addition to that, there is no mention of some social and political phenomenon and concepts that are new aspects of the cultural, social and political agendas such as the project of 'Democratic Autonomy' and establishing a system that is called the 'KCK' as an umbrella for the Kurdish national movement in Turkey.

The work of Houston (2008) investigates the process of nation building and the Kurdish struggle in the Middle East. Houston (2008) examines the foundational practices of the process of nation building and the process of establishing nation states in the Middle East in the wake of the First World War. Houston (2008) illustrates the status of the Kurds as a nation with regards to the process of building states and marginalizing or disregarding Kurds during the process by the newly established states of Iraq and Turkey. Another important point in the work of Houston (2008) is looking at the impact and the role of Kemalism in Turkey and Khomeinism in Iran and showing similarities and differences between both. Houston (2008) mainly looks at the status of the Kurds in Turkey and the impact of Kemalism on the Kurdish question. He tries to examine the nature of Kurdish ethnicity as an interpersonal and creative act. Houston (2008) tries to show the importance of similarities and differences between Kemalism and Khomeinism and their effects on the process of building national identity and with regards to the Kurds. Thus the focus of the work is on the imagining and producing of Turkish, Arab and Persian national identities rather than a Kurdish one. Thus, according to Houston (2008), the Kurdish nationalism is the reaction of the other nationalism projects in the region. Houston (2008) believes that Kemalism is a negative phenomenon of the Middle East and has had a negative impact on the process of building the state. Thus, Houston (2008) suggested that it must be thought of a process of de-kemalisation of the state and society in Turkey. This is an important point and can be elaborated in detail in deferent academic works in future. This point is important for this thesis as the Kurdish national struggle in Turkey is reaction to the Turkish nationalism and under the hegemony of Kemalism. The PKK especially was a reaction of Kemalism and the process of Turkification. Although Houston (2008) does not

concern the issue of legal and civil struggle of the Kurds in Turkey; yet the work of Houston is important in two aspects for this study. First, there is a lot of analysis of the status of the Kurds in Turkey in terms of nation building. Second, there is a great explanation for the birth, rise and impact of Kemalism on the whole processes of the Kurdish struggle in the twentieth century. In other words, Houston (2008) suggests that there is a notable impact of Kemalism on the discourse of the current social movements in the Kurdish part of Turkey.

More Recent Assessments of the Kurdish National Struggle

It is undoubtedly useful to draw attention to the past and have an historical view for the Kurdish revolutions and movements in order to make the recent and current Kurdish struggle to be understood better. However, the focus this study is on the current situation of the Kurdish national struggle and transformation of the strategies of that struggle. This includes the recent changes from using the violence and guerrilla warfare that have narrow sights and limited achievements through the civil and modern ways of social movement activities that have strategic and long term goals and wider achievements. There is an interesting point which is whether the Kurds in Turkey are about to get on with the change and have started to transform their struggle from using violence to playing civil, cultural, social and political games in the arena. For that, two of the academic works that are worthy to be mentioned in this study are the works by Robert Olson (2009) and Nicole Watts (2010).

Olson (2009) shows the parliamentary activities by the closed DTP party and the current BDP party as a political wing and legal representative of the PKK. Watts (2010) likewise, examines the main focus of this party as the main and only active Kurdish party which can mobilize and politicise the Kurdish people

and raise their awareness with regards to their cultural, social and political rights. It is, however, important to recognise that there are several small and marginalized Kurdish or pro-Kurdish, legal and illegal parties in Turkey such as the Kurdistan Socialist Party, in Kurdish Partiya Sosyalista Kurdistan (PSK) and legal parties such as the Rights and Freedom Party, in Kurdish Paritya Maf u Azadi (Hak-Par) and the Participatory Democratic Party, in Kurdish Partiya Demokrata Besdar (KADEP). However, comparing to the peace and Democratic Party (BDP) and organisations that are under the range of the “Ideology of PKK”, these parties are very small and ineffective parties on the Kurdish social and political arena in Turkey.

Watts (2010) also focuses on the Kurdish activists in the municipalities and governmental offices as a new and to some extent legal way of struggle within the Kurdish national movements in the last decade of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty first century. Watts (2010) shows a big difference of struggle by legal pro-Kurdish social and cultural activists ‘Ciger Xwin’, Dicle-Firat, and ‘Aram Tigran’ houses as well as political activists in Turkey such as previous People Labour Party (HEP), Democratic Party (DP), People Democratic Party (HADEP), Democratic People Party (DEHAP), Democratic Society Party (DTP) and currently the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) and Democratic Society Congress DTK. Beside these parties, there are several civil and academic activities which can be regarded as a new wave of Kurdish national movements, (Watts, 2010).

Nonetheless, Olson, (2009) and Watts, (2010), did not focus on the way and the nature of the transformation of the strategies and actual reasons for and elements of that change. They both have no focus on the issue of labelling the PKK as a terrorist organisation and the capture of its leader Abdulla Ocalan as

a turning point of thinking of that change and searching for other methods of struggle. The ranges of the both works were not about investigation of the reasons behind the ideological shifting that made the PKK reshape itself and create the KCK system. In other words, they both ignored focusing on the newly and uniquely established body that is called the KCK system as a main character for the Kurdish national movement in the current time.

Gunes (2012) is another new and important work in this field. This book engages with discourse of the Kurdish national movements from the 1960s of the twentieth century. Gunes (2012) mainly focuses on how the Kurdish identity has been discursively produced? He is highlighting the major shift of the discourse until the emergence of the PKK in the 1970s. Gunes (2012) is mainly referring to Laclau and Mouffe's theoretical engagement with regards to the discourse of the Kurdish identity. The relevant point in the work of Gunes (2012) is the analysis of the shift of the PKK's discourse from separatism to democratic solution within Turkey. The work of Gunes is relevant to this thesis in the way that the issue of transformation is somewhat about that shift. However, the point that Gunes (2012) does not touch upon is the whole frame of the newly established social and cultural system of the KCK as a wider and multi-dimensional movement rather than only the PKK and political engagement with the shift of Kurdish nation statehood to democratic solution within Turkey. The work of Gunes (2012) has its importance also in terms of investigating the narration of establishing the PKK since the early 1970s until very recent pro-Kurdish parties in Turkey. Yet, most of the recent academic works including Gunes (2012) have ignored the wider analysis for the cultural, social and societal activism of the KCK. Therefore, analysing the KCK activism and referring directly to the KCK make this current thesis authentic in this field.

There are also journal articles that have been written on this subject; such as Gambetti (2005), Tezcur (2010), Grojean (2012), Jongerden and Akkaya (2012), and Casier and Jongerden (2012). Certainly, all of these articles are important and relevant to this work. These articles highlight issues such as the issue of terror and the placing of the PKK into the list of terrorist groups by Turkey, the EU and the USA. These are the fundamental issues that have, in fact pushed the PKK to review its own ideologies and policies. The point was one of the reasons that have become a turning point for establishing an alternative entity that can cover almost all Kurdish activism in the wider sense. Meaning that, the process of transformation from the PKK to the KCK was partially a product of this point.

The importance of this thesis comparing to the previous works that have been mentioned above could be seen in the forthcoming chapters. It can be briefly argued that this thesis will show a different face of the Kurdish national movement by focusing on political, cultural, social and societal aspects of the struggle through the newly establish system that is called the KCK. For that, the task of this thesis is to focus on the main point of this study which is investigating the reasons behind the shift of the PKK to the KCK. In order to accomplish that, theories of social movement and nationalism can contribute this thesis to analyse its main question. This first part of this chapter has set out a brief survey on relevant works on Kurdish nationalism, and what the thesis will later describe as the Kurdish national struggle. The point here has been while there is much relevant and worthwhile work, much of it lacks the focus on issues not only of this struggle for Kurds who live in Southern Turkey, but more fundamentally, those movements which represent and/or reflect their interests. In the next

part of this chapter, there will be an engagement with social movement theories and looking for the approach of examining the Kurdish national struggle and set out a theoretical framework for the main actor of the Kurdish national movement which is the KCK.

Social Movements and the Kurdish National Struggle: Social Movements and the Analytical Lens

What is a social movement? What is the benefit of a social movement theory approach for my thesis? Despite the fact that defining a social movement is a complicated, yet worthwhile; the benefit of this theoretical lens for this thesis is to help structure the engagement with the research material, and indeed to help provide a further anchor for the research structure deployed here. In this thesis, the constant which is compared before and after transformation is the institutions of that demand political rights, recognition, and autonomy for the Kurds living in Southern Turkey. The rationale behind utilising social movement theories is that the KCK as the main character of the Kurdish national struggle is regarded as a social movement in this thesis. It is suggested that the main task of social movements is about changing values of society, Castells (2012). The thesis argues that the KCK has worked on transformation on the values of the Kurdish national struggle from political one-dimensional struggle to societal, social, cultural, and political struggle that can be seen as multi-dimensional struggle. Therefore, despite utilisation of theoretical understanding of nationalism; this thesis suggests that it is crucial to utilise theories of social movement in order to better examine the notion of transformation of the Kurdish national struggle in Turkey. Some scholars may call the Kurdish movement nationalist movement, but in this thesis, it will be referred to as a social

movement that comprises the Kurdish national struggle. This is a specific term, inspired by the work of French sociologist Alain Touraine (1981). Touraine argues that social movements are inherently about struggle. Therefore, the KCK as a main actor of the Kurdish national struggle is considered as a social movement in this thesis and theories of social movements are so crucial for understanding the Kurdish national struggle.

Touraine (1981) categorizes three types of 'positive' struggles and three types of 'critical' ones. Positive and critical struggles can occur at the levels of historicity, institution, and organisation. Positive struggles happen in a "totality" of reform or revolution, and critical ones are against a "totality". Touraine argues that positive struggle at the level of historicity is called social movement, at the institutional level is called "institutional" or "political pressure" and at the organisational level is called "claims" and "protests". For Touraine critical struggle at the historicity level is "revolutionary action", at the institutional level is "pressure against obstacles", and at the organisational level is "crisis behaviour" (Touraine, 1981: 84-90). In this classification, there are two struggles that can be regarded as social movements: positive struggle at the historicity level and critical struggle at the same level. Touraine (1981) restricts them as "social movements" and "revolutionary action" correspondingly.

Such arguments stand in direct contrast to the work of scholars like Smelser, who only define the idea of social movement in light of collective behaviour. Smelser (1962) defines collective behaviour as "mobilization on the basis of belief which redefines social action", (Smelser, 1962: 8). According to Smelser (1962), there are two types of social movements; norm-oriented movements and value-oriented movements. He argues that, "norm-oriented movements are struggles to restore, protect, modify, or create norms in the name of a

generalised belief", (Smelser, 1962: 270). However, value-oriented movements are collective struggle to "restore, protect, modify, or create values in the name of a generalised belief", (Smelser, 1962: 313). By referring to Robertson (1988) and Giddens (1984), it can be said that norm-oriented movements cover social reform movements, and value-oriented movements cover revolutionary movements. For Smelser (1962), political and religious revolutions, the formation of sects, nationalist, nativists, messianic, millenarian, utopian, charismatic, and many other movements all can be regarded as value-oriented movements, (Smelser, 1962: 313).

According to a structural-functionalist view in sociology, the division of social movements by Smelser (1962) is a general and complete one. The point is; to what extent can one divide values from norms? It is a practical question that this stream of thought may struggle to answer, but the result, which is division between reformist and revolutionary movements, is generally accepted in the field. Smelser (1962) detailed explanations about value-oriented movements; however, it may bring hesitation to mind that some of these could be reforms as well. Interestingly, classification of social movements by Touraine (1981) is broadly the same as Smelser (1962), but derives from a critical sociology point of view. The main distinction is that Touraine (1981) regards cultural struggles as social movements, whilst Smelser (1962) considers some of the institutional and organisational struggles, by borrowing the terminology of Touraine (1981), to be norm-oriented social movements as well. The typology of Touraine (1981) is more practical, as it shows the location of social movements in the social structure, in contrast to the more abstract classification of Smelser (1962). It can be argued that the classification of Touraine (1981) as a matter of definition

identifies as social movements only those that are at the cultural level.

It is important to indicate here that the social movements during the frame process face at least six strategic hurdles if they are to become a force for social change, McAdam, et al (1996). Social movements must: (A), be able to recruit new members, meaning that, they can have attractive ideological, social, political and economic agendas to persuade new recruits to join the movement. (B), they have to show their will to continue the morale and commitment of current adherents. (C), they have to be able to generate media coverage of a favourable sort. (D), social movements must be able to mobilize support from various people out of their range of members, “bystander public”. (E), another important point is constraining the social control option of their opponents. (F), the last and a very important point is shaping public policy and state action, (McAdam, et al 1996: 340-341).

The first and second points can be seen as internal actions to maintain the movements’ internal strengths through recruitments and sustainability. Yet the other four points are external actions that lead the movements to grow up and move towards power and maintaining social change. Moreover, the existing conception of collective action frames and framing process can be disloyal to an almost exclusive concern with ideas and their formal expression by the social movements’ performers. Thus, empirical research on the topic tends to focus on the speeches, writings, statements, or other formal ideological pronouncements by social movements performers.

Nevertheless, some collective behaviour is not predictable as in the case of social movements. Therefore, it can be argued that all social movements are collective behaviours, but not all collective behaviours are social movements. Touraine (1981) sees social movements as a function of class and class struggle. He

suggests that “social movements are the organized collective behaviour of a class actor struggling against his class adversary for the social control of historicity in a concrete community”, (Tourane, 1981: 77). Tilly (1978) argues that “collective action consists of people’s acting together in pursuit of common interests. Collective action results from changing combinations of interests, organization, mobilization and opportunity”, (Tilly, 1978:7). Zald and McCarthy (1987) have suggested that “a social movement is a set of opinions and beliefs in a population representing preference for changing some elements of the social structure or reward distribution, or both, of a society”, (Zald and McCarthy, 1987: 20). In other words, they suggest that a social movement can be described as a “purposive and collective attempt of a number of people to change individual and societal institutions and structures”, (Zald and McCarthy, 1987: 122). Therefore, the main task of a social movement is to change the perspective of individuals and values of society, Zald and McCarthy (1987),

The specific focus in this thesis is to analyse the Kurdish national struggle, or more specifically, institutional evolution and transformation (as a social movement) in the specific context of Northern Kurdistan/Southern Turkey over the past 10 years and examine it through organisations. More importantly, Castells (2012) suggested that “social movements, throughout history, are the producers of new values and goals around which the institutions of society are transformed to represent these values by creating new norms to organize social life”, (Castells, 2012: 9). He argues that there is in theory, an essential difference between political movements and social movements. Political movements are aiming at the state. They are aiming at changing power of the state. Not the destruction of the state as in the case of revolution, but the way of running the state and institutions within the state can be the main aim of a political movement.

Castells (2012) argues that the best and most recent example in this respect can be the Obama Campaign in 2008. In the case of Obama, the values and norms, the basic elements of society, social and political products are still there, but the political power and some parts of political structure will be changed. More specifically, it is only partially that the political power can be changed by changing Republicans for Democrats or vice versa. Otherwise, the 'Wall Street' and capitalist economic system stay. On the other hand, Castells (2012) suggested that social movements are collective actions that are aiming at transforming the values of society affecting the way that people think, behave and speak. Social movements are about affecting the way people produce or reproduce several new terms and concepts or at least redefining the concepts and giving them different values. Therefore, the main point and the salient element of social movements are transformation of the social values and perceptions of society. Based on explanation of Castells (2012), it can be argued that there is a dialectical relationship between social movement and transformation. There is no social movement if the process of transformation of the stage and changing, then reshaping values has not taken place. Also societal transformation cannot happen without broad and collective activities that are shaped in the colourful cloths of a social movement.

There are several social movements which have utopian or radical ideologies in the beginning of their struggle. However, they are compelled to change their policy to a reform or even reverse from their ideologies because of some new circumstances in their ways. The best example in this respect can be the movement which is the main subject of this study. The PKK which was the main actor of the Kurdish national movement in Turkey can be an example of this type of ideological and strategic shifts. In the beginning of the struggle of new

Kurdish movement in the northern part of Kurdistan, the PKK was calling for independence of the greater socialist Kurdistan state. However, over time and in accordance with the new wave of social and political atmosphere in the region, the PKK has changed its aims and policies to autonomy for the Kurdish people within the democratic Turkish republic.

The useful point to be mentioned here is that there are several different classifications for the types of social movements. However, the main task for this study in this respect would be the focus on the Kurdish national movement in Turkey and to discover whether any of these types of social movements and theoretical explorations can be useful to understand the nature of this social movement and its organisations, and elaborating elements of differences and similarities according to the theories of social movements. In order to get close to our theoretical explanation with regards to the social movement in the Kurdish part of Turkey, it is necessary to draw attention to and narrow down the focus on the main concept of this study which is the concept of transformation within social movement organisations.

Structural Factors and Organisational Change in Movements of the Kurdish National Struggle

Social movements might go through several stages during their periods and activities. It can be described as growth or decay or, in the most cases, changes and renovating themselves. In other words, social movements rise and fall; retreat and revive “according to the political conditions of the movement”, (McAdam, et al 1996: 53). Zald and Ash (1966) argue that social movements manifest themselves through their organisations. These organisations are often subjected to a wide range of internal or external, perhaps both internal and

external pressures that affect their power, viability, effectiveness, structure and policy, goal attainment and eventually, sustainability, (Zald and McCarthy 1987). As a result of these kinds of pressures, often organisations have to think of changes in their policies and practices, their strategies and agendas.

This can be described as organisational transformation. As Zald and McCarthy (1987) discuss, the model of organisational transformation stems from Max Weber. There are three types of changes that are involved in the process of social movement organisations. They are: goal transformation, organisational maintenance, and oligarchisation, (Zald and McCarthy, 1987).

Goal transformation might take several forms of changes in strategy and agenda. It also takes changes in tactics and programmes. The example of goal transformation could be the diffusion of goals from difficult and unattainable goals to easier and attainable ones. Zald and McCarthy (1987) suggested that this can happen often by pragmatic leaders and for the sake of sustainability, “so the organisation can pursue a broader range of targets”, (Zald and McCarthy, 1987:121). The example of this type of organisation is the main concern of this study and the way of changing and transformation of the goals of the PKK and the Kurdish struggle by the leadership of the PKK, especially after the capture of its charismatic leader Abdulla Ocalan in 1999.

Organisational maintenance is the second type of organisational change; it is basically a special form or practice of goal transformation, meaning that, “the primary activity of the organisation becomes the maintenance of membership, funds, and other requirement of the organisational existence”, (Zald and McCarthy, 1987:121). This kind of maintenance represents the practical ways in which movements maintain resonance and salience in the face of structural alteration – the way that such movements stay relevant in a constantly changing

world. Take example for organisational maintenance can be seen in the way that the main actor of the Kurdish national movements has started to reorganize its structure through the change of the senior members of the management of the PKK and replace its old policy by focusing on civil and legal activities through pro-Kurdish Turkish parties such as, the DEP, HADEP, DEHAP, DTP and very currently the BDP inside Turkey. Organizational maintenance also implemented through developing several Kurdish and pro -Kurdish civil and media institutions in Europe such as, the Kurdish National Congress (KNK) in Europe, the Kurdish Human Rights Project in London and several TV stations during the last fifteen years such as, MED_TV, Media-TV, Newroz-TV, Roj-TV and currently, Med Nuce TV and Sterk TV in Belgium. All these activism have been developed within the process of reorganizing the movement in the 2000s.

The third type of organisational change in a Weberian sense can be seen as the process of bureaucratisation, Weber (1977). Zald and McCarthy (1987) have called it as oligarchization. It has been described as the concentration of power in the hand of few members of the organisation who are on the top of the organisational hierarchy, (Zald and McCarthy, 1987:122). Apart from the issue of transformation, there are other concepts that have a great impact on this study and in order to be able to explain the nature of Kurdish national movement. One of the concepts can be resource mobilization.

Resource Mobilisation and Kurdish National Struggle Movements

So far, this chapter has established that both a given context (i.e. the structural operating constraints of what a movement is trying to achieve) as well as the nature and aims of the social movement will influence organisational forms and management structures. There is, however, another key factor: the tools that a

social movement has at its disposal to try to achieve these aims in a given context are important in shaping the movement and the consequences of the movement's outcome. On the other hand, it is argued that different tasks demand different sorts of organizational structures. For instance, "centralized structures can be more effective for institutional change, but have more difficulty in promoting grass-roots participation. Decentralized structures can obtain more membership involvement, greater satisfaction and group maintenance, but will tend to score low in strategic-goal attainment", (Zald and Ash, 1966: 329).

There is also a fundamental question as to how enduring a movement, and more specifically its aims and ambitions, are in terms of its strategies and activities to achieve success. Instrumental movements that are seeking to achieve short-term goals will tend to develop centralized, hierarchical organizations possessing a clear division of labour and roles. In this case, as Zald and McCarthy (1987) argued, organizational survival will not be a concern, beyond obtaining the movement's goals, and all resources will be invested in goal-attainment. However, expressive movements that are seeking attitudinal and value transformations and the re-creation of collective identities will generally tend to have long-term goals and emphasize organizational survival. In this case, the social movement will be developed decentralized, segmented and reticulate organizational structures with a vaguely defined division of labour and roles (Zald and McCarthy: 1987).

Resource mobilization theorists tell that the aims, strategies and activities of social movement organisations are not always those of the social movement as a whole, McAdam, et al (1996), Zald and McCarthy, (1987). When considering these issues at the granular level, it is important to realise that movements are not inherently monolithic, but rather complicated and dynamic sums of their

multiple parts. Studies regularly find differences between the beliefs and motivations of leaders and rank and file members of these organisations. Commentators warn that because social movement organisations enjoy relative autonomy from the movement's membership, therefore, "the merging between the organisation's program and membership interests in most cases can be assumed to be problematic", (Jenkins, 1983: 528). Moreover, social movements are hardly unified affairs because they are combined by various organisations pursuing different goals and engaging different tactics. Possibly these organisations can "occasionally engage in all-out war against each other" since they are in competition for limited resources and support", (Zald and McCarthy, 1987: 161).

It is argued that internal factors cannot be justified for the growth of social movements. Resource mobilization theorists also measure the role of outside factors, or third parties, in the development of social movements. McCarthy and Zald (1977) argue that 'conscience constituents' (individuals and groups who share the movement's goals and donate resources, but who do not stand to benefit directly from goal-attainment) play a central role (McCarthy and Zald, 1977b: 1221). The flows of resources from these sectors to social movements' organisations are of central position in the process of mobilization, especially in cases where the distressed group comes from the subordinate end of the social ladder, (Oberschall, 1973: 159). Often social movement commentators are focusing on the other concept which is political opportunity structure with the issue of resource mobilization; that concept is also important for explaining the whole picture of social movements' growth and decay or even rebirth.

Political Opportunity Structures and the Kurdish National Struggle

The idea of political opportunity structure as being important to social movements was first introduced by Eisner (1973), but afterwards, the concept was elaborated and defined by Tarrow (1983). According to Jenkins and Klandermans (1995), political opportunity structure for any social movement has three elements in terms of the political system. Those elements are “its formal institutional structure, its informal procedures and prevailing strategies with regards to the challengers, and the configuration of power relevant for the confrontation with the challengers”, (Jenkins and Klandermans, 1995: 168). Political opportunity, with reference to social movements, here means, “the degree of openness or closeness of formal political access, the degree of stability or instability of political alignments, and the availability and strategic posture of potential alliance partners”, (Jenkins and Klandermans, 1995: 167). Tarrow (1989b) has suggested another fourth dimension: political conflicts within and among elites.

This concept and its dimensions need to be explained more in order to see the function of social movements with regards to structures and political processes. Political structures are interdependent on the dynamic of authority between challengers and the states in terms of the actions of the state and the action of social movements. This means that both formal and informal procedures are actively affecting the structure and the strategy of authority and challengers of the state and social movements. In other words, the process of interaction between authority and challengers within the political context has been running according to a specific logic that any social movement has, Jenkins and Klandermans (1995). On the other hand, the configuration of power within the political opportunity structure; it depends on the political and social system of

the movements. For instance, in the party system, the configuration of power “refers to the distribution of power among the various parties as well as to the relations that exist between them”, (Jenkins and Klandermans, 1995: 180).

Another important point is the characterisation of the structure and functioning of the system. Jenkins and Klandermans (1995) argue that the nature of political systems will affect the structure and function of social movements. For example, in “a corporatist system” union structures and functions are highly comprehensive. In a “pluralistic system” by contrast, union structures and functions are highly fragmented, (Jenkins and Klandermans, 1995: 190). On the other hand, McCarthy, et al (1996) classified the typology of opportunity structure into two different types: proximate opportunity structure and state-centered opportunity structure, McCarthy, et al (1996). The notion of the first type which is proximate opportunity focuses on the signals that groups of social movements receive from their immediate policy environment or from changes in their resources or capacities.

Qasimlu, (2006) argues that those movements that are small and not very effective and not famous mainly have bigger demands and claims. Nonetheless, those movements or political parties that are famous and have large public support mainly have demands and aims that are smaller. Qasimlu, (2006) tries to explain this puzzle through the theory of changing the strategy and the aim of social movements. He argues that due to the lack of support and little responsibility of the movements, such small movements are living in a utopia and looking at the big and not real aims. However, by getting some experience and gaining a good amount of support from their people, they will realize that these kinds of utopian aims are hard to achieve. Qasimlu, (2006) gives a vital example in his life during his struggle as a Kurdish leader in the eastern part of

Kurdistan and in his role as secretary general of the KDPI. He suggested that his party as the biggest Kurdish party in the eastern part of Kurdistan is demanding autonomy for Kurdistan within the democratic republic of Iran. Yet, the smallest Kurdish party in Kurdistan is demanding a greater independent Kurdistan and never compromise on any centimetre of the Kurdish land in all four parts of Kurdistan. Thus, changing the aims and goals of social and political movements can often be under the influence of social and political situations.

In this sense, there are two subtypes of proximate opportunity structure; one of them is policy-specific opportunities. It means that the focus of social movements would be on policy and the way of addressing policy to mobilize collective actions around particular issues and looking at the consequences, (McCarthy, et al, 1996: 42). In contrast to this subtype of proximate opportunity; the second one which is group-specific opportunities focuses on the opportunity structure of specific groups and their changes over time, (McCarthy, et al, 1996: 43).

The second type of opportunity structure according to McCarthy et al (1996) is the state-centered opportunity structure. This type focuses on the state and its function with regards to social movements. This one also can be classified in to two subtypes; cross-sectional statist and dynamic statist. The notion of cross-sectional statist is some sort of reaction against the first type which was proximate approach. In this type, the state can be regarded as the crossroads of the parallelogram of group forces, which means that the state can be seen as a whole entity which is an autonomous and irreducible set of institutions, McCarthy et al (1996). The function of the state here is shaping political conflicts in the interest of "its survival and aggrandizement", (McCarthy et al, 1996:44).

On the other hand, the second subtype of state-centred opportunity structure is the dynamic statist. This is about the way of states' changes and how these

changes can be a reason to produce or reduce political opportunities. Charles Tilly can be seen as a main scholar in this respect, Tilly (1992) in McCarthy et al (1996) argues that the process of making state does not end just by emerging the stately institutions. He argues that the process of state building is a dynamic one and addresses both state vis-à-vis the social movements institutions and to “continually remake the state itself”, (McCarthy et al, 1996:44). The notion of this dynamic process is very important for this study. It is important for reading the process of transformation of social movements and changing the strategy of the movements. The dynamic process theory is most beneficial for this study in terms of political opportunity structure theories that have been mentioned above.

Commentators argue that the “entire political systems undergo changes which modify the environment of social actors sufficiently to influence the initiation, forms and outcomes of collective actions”, (McCarthy et al, 1996:44). While the cross-sectional statist type helps us to understand the link between social movements and political opportunity structure to a national grid of institutional regulations, the dynamic statist helps us to specify political opportunity for different actors and sectors. However, in order for us to understand the process of political opportunity structure, we need to be familiar with the cultural framings of the social movements that we are about to highlight in the next section of this thesis.

Cultural Framing and the Kurdish National Struggles

For any social movement or collective action, culture is important that needs to be taken into account. Cultural Framing here refers to all “shared beliefs and understandings, mediated by and constituted by symbols and language, of a

group or society”, (McAdam, et al, 1996: 262). On the other hand, we have another important concept in this respect which is ideology. For this concept, it is useful at this point to examine the meaning of ideology and its position. The term ideology was first used by De Tracy as “the objective and impartial gathering of ideas gained through experience” (George and Wilding 1994, 2). Karl Marx’s explanation of ideology is more social and practical. He argues that “ideology has a social and material function not only logical and intellectual” (Harrington 2005, 43). De Tracy defined ideology “as a study of ideas about the world. Now, ideology is once again a representation of the world”, (Leonardo, 2003: 211). Karl Mannheim is one of the major figures in this respect. He argues that “dominant ideologies are always distortions of reality for the benefit of the ruling groups and to the disadvantage of other groups in society”, (George and Wilding, 1994: 4).

The best definition of ideology might be the one that has been provided by Talcott Parsons, who defines it as a “system of beliefs held in common by members of a collectivity...a system of ideas which is oriented to the evaluative interaction of the collectivity”, (George and Wilding 1994, 5). Focusing on both culture and ideology in this work can have a very crucial impact, as the current Kurdish national movement in Turkey is going through a set of ideological frames which is affecting the frame of culture to a large extent. By and large, these conscious ideational expressions are, of course, important components of the whole efforts of given social movements, (McAdam, et al 1996). Movement framing and the issue of opportunity can be seen as two interdependent variables, meaning that, a social movement framing process concentrates on the volatile end of political opportunity. On the other hand, as McAdam, et al (1996) argue, social movements can be seen as a field of actors not a unified

entity. Social movements “often have a range of actors pursuing numerous strategies in both institutional and extra institutional venues”, (McAdam, et al 1996: 283). For example, sometimes an organisation within a social movement combines institutional ways of pressure such as lobbying or electoral politics, while using extra institutional strategies to affect the situation such as boycotts and demonstrations.

Frame propagation is another issue that can be regarded as crucial for social movement tactics and strategies. Tilly (1978) in McAdam, et al (1996) argues that “broad political and social structures influence the range of tactics available to movement actors”, (McAdam, et al., 1996: 301). Social movement tactics can be seen as those actions that directly raise the costs to the powers and public; for instance; strikes or boycotts and the use of physical coercion. On the other hand, it can be in the form of dissemination of diagnostic and prognostic frames. It is obvious that every social movement is using several tactics and strategies to influence and change the agendas of their opponent powers.

The Kurdish National Struggle: A New Social Movement?

Based on the new social movement theories, the main noticeable feature of social movements is that they are focusing on cultural and social aspects. In other words, social movements are multi-dimensional in terms of the social and cultural framing process. However, the political aspect still remains as an important feature of social movements. In the Weberian expression, Buechler, (1995) argues that new social movement theories are rooted in continental European traditions of political philosophy and social theory.

In previous academic iterations, social movements have been predominantly seen from the classical Marxism approach which presumed that all political and

social actions are driven from economic logic of the conflict between the capitalists and working class people. Moreover, as Canel (1992) in Buechler (1995) argue, “Marxism’s class reductionism presumed that the most significant social actors will be defined by class relationships rooted in the process of production and that all other social identities are secondary at best in constituting collective actors”, (Buechler, 1995:442).

These ideas made Marxist theorists ignore any other forms of social actions and concentrate only on the proletarian revolutions. In contrast to that, the notion of new social movements theories have focused on the various arrays of collective actions that can be regarded as an alternative for the previous academic iterations of social movements according to classical Marxism. In Buechler's (1995)’s words, new social movements theorists “have looked to other logics of action based in politics, ideology, and culture as the root of much collective action, and they have looked to other sources of identity such as ethnicity, gender and sexuality as the definers of collective identity”, (Buechler, 1995: 442).

From the view point of Laclau and Mouffe, the social movements are “products of co-modification of social life which destroyed previous social relations, replacing them with commodity relations”, (Bertram, 1995:89). Laclau and Mouffe’s attempts are to give explanation to social movements out of the circle of classical Marxism. In other words, “their entire philosophy is predicated on an optimistic view and emerging democratic consumer culture”, (Bertram, 1995: 89).

Touraine (1988) has anticipated several faces of the major debates in relation to the social movement and he can be seen as a leading theorist in this respect. He argues that social movements have two dimensions. As Buechler (1995)

elaborated, the first coming from Marx's approach which reiterates Marx's idea that "there is one central conflict in every type of society", (Buechler, 1995:444). For Marx, obviously this is the struggle between labour and capital in industrial society. Nevertheless, Tourane (1988) suggested that in post-industrial society, the conflict between labour and capital subsides. Instead of that, "other social cleavages become more salient and generate new identities, and the exercise of power is less in the realm of work and more in the setting of a way of life, forms of behaviour, and needs", (Edelman, 2001: 288).

Another dimension is from a Weberian approach which is the concept of 'the actor'. According to Touraine (1988), in post-industrial society, "diverse collectives have a growing capacity to act on themselves and to struggle for historicity ... the set of cultural, cognitive, economic, and ethical models", (Edelman, 2001: 288). This is very interesting point that makes this study to consider that despite the difficulties of seeing any gap between old and new social movements theories. Yet, the social movements have their own distinctiveness and dimensions. On the other hand, it can be argued that there is a bridge and a strong link in between both types of social movements. In other words, new social movements are extensions of the old social movements theories.

The main argument about new social movement theory related to this thesis is that since the PKK was mainly political collective action; it can be understood through the previous academic iterations of social movement. However, the KCK as a multi-dimensional movement that is mainly focusing on cultural and social aspects; it is better understood through the new social movement approach. This is a clear indication that the theories of social movements are useful and necessary for understanding the Kurdish national struggle in Turkey.

In all cases, there are various theories about social movements that are very important for this study and some of them are less important. In the next chapters, the importance of most of these theories will be seen during analysing the main subject of this thesis which is social movement in the Kurdish part of Turkey.

Conclusion

The main concern of this chapter was on the two important points that can be the main base for the vision and the sight of investigating the main subject of this thesis. The chapter has reviewed literature and academic works of previous scholars that have been written about Kurdish national struggle and Kurdish national movement in Turkey. This chapter has set out some of the key elements of social movement theories in a way that will help to analyse and explain how the PKK came into being, and more recently has evolved into the KCK. The point here has not been to argue that there is a single deciding factor in this transition – that it was not solely resource mobilisation, cultural framing, or indeed structural factors in state behaviour towards the demands of social movements, but rather all of these factors in combination which will help to explain and illustrate this phenomenon. Through the prism of this chapter, theoretical contexts of Kurdish national movement will be better framed and understood.

In the next chapter, there will be a discussion about Kurdish national struggle in all parts of Kurdistan in the twentieth century. The main focus will be on Turkey and the northern part of Kurdistan as it is the main area of this thesis. The chapter will also explain the notion of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey as a reaction for the notion of Turkish nationalism and the impact of the Turkish nation state on the Kurds and performance of the Kurdish national struggle.

CHAPTER THREE: THE HISTORY OF KURDISH NATIONALISM

Honestly it is difficult to believe that there is a nation that is not free across the centuries. The nation that is ready to give everything to gain freedom.

Jawahir Laal Nahro- 1935, about the Kurds (Deschner, 2011: 8)

Introduction

In the two previous chapters, the thesis has set out some of the current emphases in the literature on Kurdish nationalism, and a theoretical framework through the prism of social movement theories that will help to explain the activities of the PKK and subsequently the KCK. This chapter will critically present the historical background of the Kurdish national struggle in Kurdistan. It will show especially, the reasons for and aspects of the failure of the Kurdish struggle throughout the twentieth century in all parts of Kurdistan. The emphasis will mainly be on the northern part of Kurdistan and particularly the notion of Kurdish nationalism under the hegemony of and as a reaction against Turkish nationalism in Turkey.

This chapter focuses on the historical pattern and behaviours evident in Kurdish activism for freedom and independence since the beginning of the twentieth century until recent years. One can ask whether the Kurds have ever been constructing any national movement on their land. In other words, has the Kurdish national struggle finally reached a level where they could be regarded as a national movement according to the theories of social movements, Tilly, (1987), or do their actions mainly have tribal, local or regional features? It is worth focusing on this point through the design of the elements, types and levels of social movements, Touraine (1981), Castells (2012). This chapter can help the thesis to get closer from answering the main question which is investigating the reasons behind changing the struggle of the main actor of the Kurdish national movement in Turkey to investigate transformation from the PKK to the KCK.

Who are the Kurds? The history of the Kurds:

Kurds are believed to number around 30 to 40 million people. They are the largest ethnic group of stateless people in the world, (Yildiz and Muller, 2008). Geographically, Kurds live in the area called Kurdistan (the land of the Kurds). Going back to the early history, according to the great French encyclopedia; “Kurds are an asian nation, situated in the west of Iran and the highlands around the Tigris and the Euphrates. Kurdistan continues from the Loristan region in Iran until Kharpoot (a current city in Turkey called Elazig), which is a point where both branches of the Euphrates connect. This is about 900Km long from north-west to south-west and 100km to 200km wide on the parallel lines 34 to 39 longitude and the parallel lines 37 to 46 latitude in the east. The main valleys of Kurdistan are the valley of the Bitlis river, both valleys of Adham and Sherwan, and the highlands of Zagra. The lake of Wan and its citadel is the capital of this Asian and brave fighting nation”, (Abdullah, 2010: 22). The cities of (Diyarbakir) in Turkey, (Erbil) in Iraq, (Qamishlo) in Syria and (Sanandaj) in Iran are the four major cities that the Kurds see them as regional capitals of each part within the four countries. Today, according to the new map of the world, agreed by the international community, there is no Kurdistan. Thus, the map of Kurdistan (below) is only a wish or a claim by the Kurds themselves. The land of the Kurds is situated in the north of Iraq, the south east of Turkey, the north of Syria and the west of Iran. Moreover, there are several millions of the Kurds living in metropolises, such as Istanbul, Tehran, Damascus and Baghdad.



The map of Kurdistan (<http://www.ardalan.org/about.html>)

No-one has ever claimed that those metropolises are Kurdish areas, however, the vast number of the Kurds living in those cities; make them very important for the Kurdish struggle and the social and political movements of the Kurds. For instance, Istanbul is sometimes considered as the biggest Kurdish city rather than Diyarbakir or Erbil, since there are around three to five million Kurds living in Istanbul, according to some informal information from Kurdish political parties. Moreover, there are large Kurdish communities living in countries of the former Soviet Union, such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and several other countries. Also there are more than two million Kurds in Europe and the USA, and more than a million in Germany alone, (interview with A7 on 05/08/2011).

According to several historians and archaeologists, “Kurds are the products of years of evolution stemming from tribes such as Guti, Kurti, Mede, Mard,

Carduchi, Gordyene, Adianbene, Zila and Khaldi, and the migration of Indo-European tribes to the Zagros mountain some 4,000 years ago”, (Yildiz and Muller, 2008: 4). The Kurdish way of life was mainly nomadic or semi-nomadic and traditionally organised along tribal lines. Furthermore, “the Kurds have a clan history, and have traditionally been organized into tribes and inhabited rural districts herding sheep or goats, with some adherence to a nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle. It is estimated that there are over 800 tribes in the Kurdish regions”, (Yildiz and Muller, 2008: 4). Greeks used the word “Kurds” for ethnic groups. Herodotus considered the Kurds to be brave and good fighters. He thought that the Kurds were ancestors of “Carduques” who fought with Xenophon and his ten thousand soldiers in 400 BC, (Badirxan, 2010). On the other hand, the Kurds used to call themselves “Gutus”, which can be translated as “fighters”, (Badirxan, 2010: 39).

Interestingly, the majority of the Kurds and the biggest part of Kurdistan are situated in present day Turkey. Estimates indicate that the Kurds constitute thirteen to sixteen per cent of all the Turkish population which is about seventy three million, Dixson and Ergin (2010). This means that Kurdish people in Turkey number about ten to twelve million. Debatably, this is far less than the actual number of the Kurds in Turkey. Due to economic, social and political reasons, significant amounts of the Kurds in Turkey’s western metropolises do not want to or cannot express their Kurdishness. Many have also been assimilated for decades so that they no longer think of themselves as Kurds.

Heper (2007) stated that, public opinion surveys conducted in May 2006 indicated that ‘those who spoke with their parents in Kurdish [both Kurmanji and Zazaki dialects] constituted 13.2 per cent of the whole population of Turkey, (Heper, 2007:1). Moreover, “another public opinion survey carried out in March

2007 by one of the leading national newspapers 'Milliyet' found that the 'Kurds; comprise 15.6 per cent of the population, or 11.5 million people', (Heper, 2007: 1). Kurdish political parties and Kurdish intellectuals argue that the Kurds currently number around forty million and about 55 per cent of them are living in Turkey. On the other hand, Kurds are the largest ethnic minority in Turkey out of several different minority ethnic groups such as Albanian, Arabs, Armenian, Greek, Cerkes, Laz and others. In addition to that, unlike other Turkic ethnic groups; "the Kurds have not been an immigrant group; they have lived in what today is Turkey and adjacent territories for long centuries", (Heper, 2007:1).

Toprak (2009) argues that "there are 49 identifiable ethnic groups in Turkey, the Kurds are the most abundant and are located mostly in the south eastern and metropolitan areas in Turkey", (Toprak, 2009: 1388). Yet, on the land that is present-day Turkey there are three old and indigenous ethnics groups; Kurds, Armenians and Greeks, (Abdullah, 2009). Despite the difference in religion and culture between Kurds and Armenians, according to a Kurdish Prince "Suraiyya Badrkhan" and the head of first Kurdish nationalist organisation in the beginning of the twentieth century, Kurds and Armenians have been living together, next to each other and in peace and harmony and with good relations on the land that they both claim it as their mother land for about three thousand years.

In spite of having had the same religion for at least the last fifteen hundred years, Badrkhan (2010) argues that "it can be noticed within the myths, folk lore, songs and stories of Kurdish people, that there are several points or expressions of conflicts with Arabs, Persians and especially with Turks. Yet, the same cannot be noticed against the Armenians", (Badirxan, 2010: 70). However, there were some periods where relations were negative between the Armenians and the Kurds under the Ottoman Empire and during the rule of the

young Turks some of the Kurdish fighters were used to fight and kill the Armenians as part of the Turkish attempts to genocide to the Armenian people as they were an obstacle to the Turkish dream of establishing a pure Muslim-Turkish state in the region.

Yet despite these nationalistic arguments for the antiquity and authenticity of Kurdish identity, it is important to recognise that it is neither a unified or monolithic phenomenon. During the course of last century of Kurdistan, there is a set of partition and fragmentation impact on culture, education, society and politics for the Kurdish people. Moreover, in contrary to the languages of the three main nations in the region “Arab, Fars and Turk”; Kurdish language has never become a united and standardised language. Furthermore, the Kurdish language has several different dialects and sub-dialects which make it difficult for the Kurdish people from different parts of Kurdistan to understand each other. After a hundred years of this fragmentation, only well-educated Kurds with an interest in learning other dialects are able to understand those from different parts of Kurdistan. For instance, if you are from the Turkish part of Kurdistan, you need to speak Turkish or Persian with another Kurdish person from the Iranian part of Kurdistan or you need to have an interpreter.

In terms of Kurdish writing scripts, there are also differences. The main two different alphabets for the Kurdish language are the Arabic or Aramaic script and the Latin one. In the countries of the former Soviet Union, there is also a third script for writing Kurdish; some Kurds use the Cyrillic alphabet there, McDowall (2010). Furthermore, despite having a positive impact as well, having several religions and religious sects among the Kurds has also led to several conflicts and disunity. More than all of these factors however, the nature of tribal structure of the Kurds has created smaller entities and clans which have

become an obstacle to undertake wider activities and think of a united national entity, Van Bruinessen (1992). These points about Kurdish culture and history motivate this study to draw attention in this chapter to the history of the Kurds; to make better understanding of the nature of Kurdish national movement.

In order to understand the Kurdish mosaic and the effects that different states, through policies of political control and repression, have that inflicted on the Kurds; this chapter will now examine the experiences of Kurds in four different states countries in more detail over the course of the twentieth century.

The Kurds in Iraq (Southern Part of Kurdistan):

In the wake of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the province of Mosel was included into the newly established country of Iraq. Since that time, one part of Kurdistan, without consent of the people, without any respect to the identity and culture of its people, has been placed within the borders of this new country which was created under the British mandate, McDowall (2010). According to the international commission of enquiry set up by the 'League of Nations', in this new state that became independent in 1932, the Kurds had to have the rights to establish their own autonomous local administrations, judiciary and education systems as well as the rights to having Kurdish as their own official language. However, due to the promotion of Arab nationalism in the region and the thinking of creating a united Arab entity rather than a diverse society including other ethnic and religious minorities, the newly established Arab majority kingdom of Iraq never fulfilled those promises, McDowall (2010).

Despite forming a noticeable minority and strong struggle of the Kurds as well as having crucial roles within this new state, the Kurds have been treated as second citizens during the course of different Iraqi governments. Throughout

the 1930s and 1940s, there were few groups and intellectuals that promoted Kurdish nationalism and national struggle towards the Kurdish independent political entity or at least some cultural, social and political rights for the Kurds. Some leftist figures gathered under the name of the “Hiwa” group. ‘Refiq Hilmi’, the leader of the group who was a prominent figure during the revolt and the control of ‘Sheikh Mahmud Barzanji’ had some good experience with British policy and the nature of the Kurdish and Iraqi society. Hilmi tried to exploit ‘Mustafa Barzani’s’ rebellions and turn it into a nationalist movement. Nonetheless, due to some tensions between two waves within the ‘Hiwa’ group, the attempt was not successful. As McDowall (2010) argues, the rebellion “remained intrinsically tribal, its outcome settled more by tribesmen than by regular groups, let alone by nationalist volunteers”, (McDowall, 2010: 294).

Another attempt that is worth mentioning was a Kurdish group that was first created within the Iraqi communist Party ‘ICP’ and came out actively. It soon had its own journal called ‘Shurish’ “Revolution” and established a party that was called ‘Rizgari Kurd’ “Kurdish Liberation” in 1945. This party was calling for the freedom and unification of Kurdistan. Its interim objectives “included administrative independence inside Iraq and the establishment of co-ordinated co-operation with Kurdish parties outside Iraq”, (McDowall, 2010: 294). Nonetheless, soon Rizgari Kurd came under pressure, “dozens were arrested and an attempt was made to stifle Kurdish publications. Even ‘Gilawej’, ‘Ibrahim Ahemd’s’ literary journal was suspended”, (McDowall, 2010: 294).

By August 1946 both ‘Rizgari’ and ‘Shurish’ had decided to dissolve themselves, “less the result of governmental pressure than a new dilemma created by Mullah Mustafa in Iran”, (McDowall, 2010: 295). In 1946, the KDP which has had a key role in this part of Kurdistan since; was established by

Mullah Mustafa Barzani, Yildiz and Muller (2008). Certainly, the birth of the KDP is grounded in some controversies. On the one hand, the KDP has been a cause of re-emphasising the lines of the power of the sheikhs and chieftains over those that were considered as progressive and somewhat secular leftists. Moreover, establishing the KDP in Iraq and separating it from the main KDP by 'Qazi Muhammad' in 'Mahabad' "has contributed in endorsing the legitimacy of Iraq-Iran border and using the concepts of Iraqi Kurdistan", (McDowall, 2010: 296). On the other hand, the KDP became the main and only Kurdish national party at least in the southern part of Kurdistan. Thus, all other Kurdish attempts within the ICP or other smaller groups were essentially rendered irrelevant in the Kurdish struggle under the name of Kurdishness. In 1956, the KDP re-joined with the group of 'Hamza Abdulla' and his "coterie known as KDP-Progressive Front. Many of the Kurdish section of the ICP also joined the KDP in 1957 and for a while, to indicate these amalgamations, the KDP was known as the 'United Kurdistan Democratic Party", (McDowall, 2010: 300). After the coup of 'Abdul Karim Qasim' and the termination of the role of the Iraqi Monarchy in 1958 and establishing the Republic of Iraq; the Kurds once again had hopes to gain their rights. Yet, those hopes were frustrated and the conflict in Iraq between Ba'athists, Communists and 'Abdul Karim Qasim' suppressed the demands of the Kurds iterated by the KDP leadership. Thus, in September 1961, the movement restarted its guerrilla campaign against the central government due to the failure of fulfilling the promise that had been given to the Kurds.

On 11 March 1970, the Kurdish struggle reached to a point where it forced the Baathist central government to give some sort of autonomy to the Kurds. Within the agreement, there were fifteen points that fully recognized the social, political

and cultural rights of the Kurds within Iraqi Kurdistan, McDowall (2010). From 1970 to 1974, the Kurds enjoyed a period of great freedom and self-rule. Yet, the central government backed away from the agreement, mainly due to the tensions regarding the city of Kirkuk which the Kurds claimed belongs to Kurdistan. Therefore, once again the central government started to deprive Kurdish people of their rights.

In March 1975 the Iran- Iraq agreement became a main reason for the Kurdish authority to be toppled. Iran no longer supported Iraqi Kurds in favour of demarcation of the “Shatt ul Arab” according to the Constantinople protocol in 1913, (McDowall, 2010: 338). Within a few hours of this agreement, Iran stopped all supplies to the KDP and two weeks were given to all fighters and their families to go to Iran or surrender to the Iraqi authority. That was known by the Kurds as ‘Ash Batall’ collapse. The majority of the KDP fighters chose exile lives and most of Barzani’s family members were settled in Iran. They announced the termination of the revolution.

Despite the fact that after a few years, the KDP restarted the struggle under the name of ‘Gulan Revolution’. Yet again, due to that collapse, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, ‘PUK’ was established and started its so called different way of struggle under the name of “the new revolution of Kurdistan”. Soon, the PUK became a main political party and the instructor of Kurdish revolution, and they started to go back to the mountains and start guerrilla warfare again. Since then, there were several on and off guerrilla warfare incidents and attacks on the government’s offices and army bases. Nonetheless, the struggle never took place in a systematic and effective manner. Thanks to the Iran-Iraq war some credits were made to the Kurdish parties in gaining some support from Iranian state.

As a matter of fact, all the KDP, PUK and other smaller parties were very much easily used by Iran in its war against Iraq. They were used for Iran's interest against Iranian Kurdish political parties such as the Kurdistan Democratic Party-Iran 'KDPI' and Kurdistan Revolutionary Group 'KOMALA' rather than supporting the Kurds and the struggle to gain their rights. It is arguable that this point has been continued until today's date in the case of the Kurdistan Regional Government 'KRG' under the management of the KDP and the PUK. Debatably, the poor performance in the Kurdish parties' relations with Iran, Turkey and other regional states is due to the same reason. The hardest moment of the Kurds was the moment that these states supported them mainly for using them against each other. Thus, the civil war (bra kuji) between Kurdish parties in Iraq had a long history.

The campaigns of genocide (Al-Anfal) that have killed hundreds of thousands of the civil Kurds and attacking of the Kurdish city of 'Halabja' by chemical weapons took place in the decade of eighties of the twentieth century. After 1991, and as an aftermath of the first Gulf War, Kurds once again had a chance to get some sort of freedom and with the support of western powers, especially the UK and the USA, Kurds established an autonomy government and for the first time in the history of the Kurds; in 1992 there was a limited democratic election for the national assembly of Iraqi Kurdistan. There were about ten Kurdish and Kurdistan political parties that participated in that election, Stansfield (2005). Since then, despite several internal conflicts and civil war between Kurdish political parties, the KRG has been running majority of the Kurdish areas within the borders of Iraq.

The main and important point of this presentation about the Kurds in this part of Kurdistan is the focus on the way of ideological motivation behind the struggle

of the Kurds in Iraq. As van Bruinessen (1992) argued, in the south part of Kurdistan, during the 1960 and 1970s, the revolution by Mustafa Barzani was a different movement compared to the revolutions elsewhere. He argues that, the Kurdish movement in Iraqi Kurdistan was conservative and even backward-looking in appearance, in spite of the justness of its demands. Bruinessen (1992) has suggested correctly, in terms of comparison between Kurdish revolution in the south part of Kurdistan and other revolutions in other places.

However, the pathway that the Kurdish revolution took in the 1960s and 1970s can be seen as a continuation of what has happened in almost all other attempts of the Kurdish revolts in the history of the Kurdish national struggle for gaining some limited rights. Moreover, it has continued until today's date, even after the two decades of having a Kurdish status quo 'the KRG' in the southern part of Kurdistan. This ideology has been developed and reached to the point that became a main strategy of communication between Kurdish political parties in the southern part of Kurdistan. It is obvious that at the current time, within the KRG government and main political parties even after twenty years, this point is a king maker for gaining support among Kurdish people. One may say that the PUK came as an opponent of the KDP to rectify this tribal and backward notion and make a new wave of progress under the ideology of socialism.

It can be argued that the PUK was a semi front party that was made from a few different representations or waves of the struggle. The main and most effective one was the group of Marxist Leninist of Kurdistan that was known as KOMALA most recently. They started with some sort of revolutionary ideas, inspired by Marxist-Leninist ideologies. Yet, soon after the assassination of their leader "Aram", they turned out to be under the influence of the mainstream ideology of the style of Kurdish political struggle. Thus, the PUK did not and could not touch

that point and continued playing the same or a similar role on the same pathway as the KDP. This argument can be true until today's date as it is so obvious that there is no any essential ideology and thinking that make differences between the KDP and the PUK. Consequently, soon after its establishment, in 1975, the PUK has started to follow same path but under a different name. Interestingly, the difference between the KDP and the PUK on the one hand and the PKK on the other can be seen in this point essentially. I will investigate this matter in detail in the forthcoming chapters of this thesis.

Due to the first Gulf war in 1991 and the decision of 'Saddam Hussein' by invading 'Kuwait'; an opportunity has come to the Kurdish people and the Kurdish movement in the southern part of Kurdistan that is inside the borders of Iraq to gain some sort of autonomy. Despite the way and the methodology of the struggle and due to external supports and opportunities, the Kurdistan Regional Government 'KRG' has been established. In relation to this research, it is important to elaborate the difference between the pathway and the style of struggle in the southern part compared to the northern part of Kurdistan. It can be somehow clear that how this entity 'KRG' has survived and the obstacles or support for KRG by the Kurdish social and political struggle is in the northern part as the biggest and most influential part of Kurdistan.

The Kurds in Iran (Eastern Part of Kurdistan)

The Kurds in Iran are living a different life and have been treated rather quietly for a long time. Their cultural and social rights to a small extent were celebrated, due to the similarities and having a similar destiny with other ethnic groups in Iran. The land that the Kurds now claim was called Kurdistan since the time of Seljuk. The region was "governed and administrated under the name of

Kurdistan”, (Ocalan, 2011: 82). Yet, the notion of diversity could not bring about some sort of democratic rule in Iran across the centuries. For instance, education in Kurdish language and political activities are forbidden for the Kurds. Since 1514 when the border between the Ottoman and Persian realms was allocated as a result of the battle of ‘Chalderan’, Kurdish land has been divided into two parts between Turkish Ottoman and Persian Safavids power. As Sayfaddin, (2009) argues, “loosing Safavids in the war of Chalderan caused the Kurds to have the majority of their lands under the Ottomans”, (Sayfaddin, 2009: 123).

Since then, the rest of the Kurdish land and Kurdish people have had a lower treatment and level of life in Iran. For a long time, the Kurds were living within the land that was called Iran and the origin of the Kurds is related to the Iranians throughout history. However, the notion of Kurdishness in one way or another has always been kept and manifested. In Iran, the Kurdish struggle has always been managed via tribal, feudal characters. This notion has been extended until today’s date, especially under the management of the traditional political parties such as the KDPI and KOMALA in the eastern part of Kurdistan.

In the second decade of the twentieth century, there was a rebellion of the Kurds by Ismail Aga of Shikak, known as “Simko” in western Iran (Qendil, 2006: 59). Nevertheless, due to the lack of wider support from other Kurdish tribes, soon this revolt was depressed by the central government of the King ‘Shah’ from Tehran. Interestingly, in 1946, the Kurds could form a short-lived Kurdish entity called “Kurdistan Republic” in the north western Iran in the city of “Mahabad”. Despite the short period and having a weak and novice cadres of this entity, there was a good example of the self-ruling power of the Kurds at that time. Ocalan (1996) argues that the republic of Mahabad was a great

model of governing and democratic authority in the history of the Kurds.

According to Ocalan (1996), the model of Kurdistan Republic in Mahabad can be developed and used as a case of self-ruling Kurdish model, as a first confederation model and the model that he calls, "Democratic Autonomy". He argues that the steps of the democratic autonomy model of governing started from the Mahabad Republic. This notion currently in the northern part of Kurdistan is getting stronger. It gives room to be a culture and a model of ruling people by themselves. It shows the start of an era that the model of nation state is no longer applicable and acceptable in this land, (in the speech of anniversary of Mahabad Republic, 1996).

It is worth mentioning that this Kurdish entity, alongside another local republic that is called Azerbaijani Republic in the north west of Iran had support from the USSR. Yet, the red army was persuaded "to withdraw a year later from the Mahabad Republic after signing an agreement allowing for soviet participation in the exploitation of oil in northern Iran", (Yildiz and Muller, 2008:10). Thus, in the end of 1946, the Shah's troops occupied the areas that were under the rule of Mahabad again and soon started to kill Kurdish leaders and ban all educational, cultural, social and political Kurdish activities. Moreover, the Iranian authority hanged the leader of the Republic of Mahabad "Qazi Mohammed", Yildiz and Muller (2008).

After Qazi Mohammed, until today's date, there are two traditional political parties that are representing the Kurdish cause in the eastern part of Kurdistan; the KDPI and KOMALA. Both parties were going through a serious of dismantlement and civil wars. Yet, any smaller part within both two main parties still wanted to keep the name and the history of the party as their belongings. Despite having an educated Kurdish leader in Iranian Kurdistan who was "Dr

Abdurrahman Qasimlo”, the Kurdish movement remained weak and could not have any essential effect on the Kurdish social, cultural and political spheres in Iran.

In 2002, another Kurdish party started its struggle with different methodology and discourse. PJAK derived from the PKK and became an Iranian branch of the Kurdish movement within a broader system that is currently called ‘Unions of Communities in Kurdistan’, in Kurdish, ‘Koma Civaken Kurdistan’, the “KCK”. In the next chapters, the KCK will be elaborated in detail. According to a senior member of the PJAK management, their model of struggle is different from the KDPI and KOMALA, since they are focusing on the power of their people rather than external and international powers to help them. The PJAK claims that they are rather a social and cultural movement than a political party. A senior member of the PJAK argues that, “in order for Islamic Republic of Iran or any other authority in Iran recognize the Kurdish cultural, social and political rights, we need to start from educating our people before expecting anyone to recognize our rights”, (interview with B1 on 21/09/2012).

In the 1990s the Iranian government announced that the Kurdish struggle against the state had totally ended and the Kurds accepted their fate. The Iranian state claimed that the Kurds accepted the fact that they are only Iranian people with limited cultural and no political rights. Iran is a land for all Iranians including the Kurds and other minority ethnic groups. That has been a discourse of the Iranian authority for a long time. Yet, once again having the PJAK as another Kurdish party that are carrying out armed struggle in Iran has slightly changed the reality of that Kurdish defeat for decades, (interview with B2 on 24/10/2011).

Despite that little revival, at the current time, the Kurdish situation in Iran has been experiencing its most awful moments ever. There are daily detentions and execution of the Kurdish and anti-Iranian regime activists. Yet, due to the weakness of Kurdish social, cultural and political struggle, the Kurdish national struggle and opposition movements in Iran have been enjoying the most silent and inactive period of their lives.

The Kurds in Syria (Western Part of Kurdistan):

In Syria, the Kurds have a different situation. Not only limited cultural, social and political rights were forbidden, but the existence of the Kurds as people has been denied, let alone the land and the concept of Kurdishness and Kurdistan. After the rule of Ottomans, the land that is now called Syria was under the French mandate. As a land, “the Kurdish populations placed under French mandate occupy three narrow zones, isolated from one another, all along the Turkish frontier: Jazira, Jarablus, and Kurd Dagh”, (Tejel, 2009:9). Just as Arabs and Assyrians live among the Kurdish areas, they are living among an Arab majority in Syria. According to Ocalan (2011), the Kurds in Syria mostly migrated from other parts of Kurdistan due to the tribal conflicts and other sorts of injustice across the centuries. Interestingly, Ocalan (2011) suggests; “such migrations contributed substantially to intercultural transformation processes”, (Ocalan; 2011: 89).

On the other hand, due to their special conditions under the Syrian regimes and their geopolitical conditions alongside their small populations in comparison to the other parts of Kurdistan, until very recently, the Kurds in Syria were very much connected to the revolutions and the Kurdish political parties in the different parts of Kurdistan. For a long time, the KDP in Iraq had a direct

influence on the Kurds in Syria. Afterwards, the PKK became a main player within the Kurds in Syria until today's date. This means that they did not have some independent aims and frames of their own, let alone the influence of the Syrian regimes and the process of denial, assimilations through an Arabization process and the state discriminations against them.

Nonetheless, the Kurds in Syria still had a potential to become an active character in the process of democratisation and respectful diversity. Thus, existence of the Kurds can be positive point in bringing about the immense diversity in Syria. This also can be a positive and fertile land for bringing about great democratic compromises and tolerance in Syria. However, in the ground of reality across the twentieth century until today's date, there were tyranny and dictatorship atrocities on the people and especially on the Kurds in Syria. The hardest time for the Kurds in Syria came after the establishment of the United Arab Republic. Due to the idea of unification between Egypt and Syria in 1958, all supports for the Kurds have been stopped and the notion of Arabization has been fully implemented.

Since then, the Kurds have been regarded as Arabs and they are forced to be Arabs, Deschner, (2011). Under the rule of the Al-bath party, the situation is getting worse and worse. Thus, the Kurds in Syria have been prohibited from their basic cultural, social and political rights until very recent times. Despite having some sort of political parties and struggle of the Kurds in Syria, as mentioned earlier, mostly Kurdish political and social struggle are under the influence of the main parties in other parts of Kurdistan, especially under the influence of the PKK from the north and the KDP and PUK from the southern part of Kurdistan. This means that, in contrary to other parts of Kurdistan, Kurdish national movement in Syria was under the influence of one of the three

main Kurdish political parties. Nevertheless, since the Kurdish national struggle in the north has been transferred from a political party 'the PKK' to a multi dimension movement 'the KCK' as a main character within Kurdish national movement, Kurds in Syria have turned to be organized under the "Ideology of PKK" and started to build their own social, political and cultural entities. Understanding this point will only become clearer when the 'KCK' and its activities will be investigated in the forthcoming chapter.

Recently, and due to the sequences of so called the Arab Spring in the region, Syria has become a very sensitive area for the Kurds. It is for the first time in their history "the Kurds are fighting for themselves", (interview with D1 on 20/06/2012). They are about to build their own home through their cultural, social, political and self-defence plan in the Kurdish areas in Syria. The Union Democratic Party, "PYD" as a main party for the Kurds in Syria and the Units of People Defence, "YPG" and the Units of Kurdish women defence "YPJ" as the only Kurdish armed forces in Syria are actively struggling to draw some clear lines between both main powers in Syria. All the PYD, the YPG and the YPJ are under the hegemony and umbrella of the KCK.

The Kurdish pathway can be regarded as the third way in between the power of the state and the power of the opposition groups such as Islamic state in Iraq and Al-Sham (ISIS)¹, the front of Al-Nasrah and the Free Syrian Army' and their Councils. The PYD and another nine small Kurdish Parties have created a 'High Committee of the Kurds' to show people that the PYD is not controlling all powers under its hands. However, in reality all other parties including those who

¹ ISIS is a terrorist organisation and active Islamist militant group in Syria and Iraq. In their ideology, they are calling for Islamic Caliphate, it claims Islamic Law over all Muslims and aspires to bring much of the Muslim regions of the world under its direct control of its so called state. They recently changed the name of the group to Islamic State (IS).

are supported by the KDP in the southern Kurdistan region are currently very small and, without the PYD, none of them has power. Recently, the Kurds have established three autonomous local governments in the predominantly Kurdish areas of the northern Syria. As a matter of fact, despite their denial of having connections with the KCK, they are not denying their connection with the Ideology of 'Abdullah Ocalan'. The reason for the mass support of the PYD, YPJ and YPG from the Kurdish people comes back to the impact of "the Ideology of PKK" and the policy of the KCK on the Kurds in Syria. This point will be clearer in chapter five of this thesis.

To be concise, the current situation of the Kurds in Syria is very much connected to the Kurdish situation in the northern part of Kurdistan. Also the social and political status of the Kurds in Syria and establishing self-ruling administrations has started to become reality. This means that the Kurds have become an active and positive character in the process of democratization of the region.

The Kurds in Turkey (Northern Part of Kurdistan)

The main and most complicated part of Kurdistan is situated in Turkey. The Kurdish national struggle in Turkey has an effect on the other parts of Kurdistan as well as on the whole Turkey. In the wake of the establishment of the secular Turkish state, the Kurds were deprived from rights and freedoms of expressing of their identity. Soon they were asked to forget about their Kurdish culture, language, clothing, singing, their way of practising their religious ceremonies and worship; even their way of thinking and dreaming had to be changed and they had to start being Turks and do all those activities as a Turkish people.

The Turkish state had an intensive and harsh plan of Turkification² over non-Turkic ethnic groups in Turkey. Turkification over the other people was a rather easy and quick process. However, in the case of the Kurds, it was hard or almost impossible. Therefore, the answer to that process was uprising and fighting against the state. The cause of this conflict was over a million people who were killed, detained or displaced, Badirxan (2010), Koivunen (2013).

From 1925 when the uprising of 'Sheikh Said Piran' started, until 1938 when the massacre of "Dersim" a Kurdish city in Turkey took place, there were at least 28 Kurdish local, regional or national uprisings and revolutions against the Turkish state and Turkish governments, Akcura ,(2010). The 29th revolution started so late, which was in 1984 when guerrilla units of the PKK attacked the towns of Eruh (Siirt Provence) and Semdinli (Hakkari Provence) in the south east Turkey, (Casier and Jongerden, 2011: 131). The Turkish state thought that it would be easy as before. They thought that since they could depress 28 revolts in the past, they could easily depress the 29th one too. Yet, the reality was different and the PKK has grown up and become a significantly dangerous case for Turkey and consequently became the main and only strong cultural, social, and political party that the Kurds rely on and give their support to.

Between 1938 and 1984, there were several little Kurdish attempts of revolt and resistance whether by some Kurdish intellectuals or some little groups which published some newspapers. Yet, there was not any serious action to make the Turkish state seriously think of dealing with it. Bozarlan (2012) named this period as the silent period. On the other hand, most of the Kurdish activists were among the leftists and socialist wave of political activities and there was not any clear Kurdish struggle literally. Moreover, between 1938 and 1984,

² Assimilation and Turkification: these two terminologies were used by several academics such as Yelidz and Muller (2008), McDowall (2010), Akcura (2010).

there were three times in Turkey when military coups have been taken place and abolished the governments and a state of emergency was enforced for several years, Bozarlan, (2012). In addition to that, the processes of assimilation and Turkification were widely and harshly implemented during this period, (Yildiz and Muller, 2008: 14). The result of that was making millions of the Kurds become Turks and forcing millions of them not to talk about their Kurdishness anymore.

The PKK and the Kurdish National Struggle in Turkey

All these reasons made the Turkish government believe that the Kurdish question is no longer in the agenda and does not need to be talked about any more. Astonishingly, Kurdistan Workers party 'the PKK' has started its struggle from six young university students and it has rapidly become one of the most special and active organisations in the world, Ozcan (2006). Of course there are several reasons behind this fast growing of the PKK; such as the situation of the Kurds in Turkey after the 1980 coup by military junta or the situation of Kurdish society and their potential inclination for this hard struggle. In other words, as social movement commentators argue the political opportunities, Zald and Ash (1966) made the PKK to grow up quickly.

The PKK as a movement began in a different way to other social and political movements and especially to how the start of such movements is theorised by scholars. The PKK leadership were not only ignoring the notion of rational choice and political opportunity, McCarthy and Zald, (1977), McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, (1996), Tilly, (1978); in contrary to that, they started with some activities that were absolutely contradictory to rational choice and political opportunities. The first action the leadership of the PKK undertook

was to attack a chieftain who was a governor in the south east province of Urfa. However, for the sake of gaining support among Kurdish people, it was very rational to persuade chieftains to support the PKK. Yet, they were thinking of gaining support from the illiterate, poor peasants and workers. The reason behind this action is the ideological commitments that the PKK members had engaged to it from the first day of beginning their struggle.

As a matter of fact, in contrast to all other Kurdish political parties especially in the parts of Kurdistan within the Iraqi and Iranian borders such as the KDPI, KDP and PUK they called for autonomy for the Kurds within those states. The PKK has claimed for liberation of greater Kurdistan and not recognizing the borders that 'imperialism and tyrant states' made in Kurdistan. This point was a very attractive one that Kurds were dreaming about. In this sense, the point could be seen as a rational choice, (McCarthy and Zald, 1977), (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, 1996), that the PKK thought of. Therefore, the PKK was apolitical movement that was aiming at establishing the state and changing authority.

As mentioned earlier in the case of the Kurds in the southern and eastern parts of Kurdistan, Bruinessen (1992) argued that in the south part of Kurdistan the struggle of the Kurds was different compared to the struggles elsewhere in the world. The Kurdish national movement in Iraqi Kurdistan was conservative and even backward-looking in appearance, in spite of the justness of its demands. Bruinessen (1992) looked for the reasons for this situation in the Kurdish revolutions. He suggested that conservatism is due to the persistence of "primordial loyalties" which are those to family, tribe, tribal chiefs and landlords, and religious figures such as the Sheikhs or the leaders of Mystics.

In contrast to that, the revolution of the PKK is not following the Kurdish

pathway. Nonetheless, the PKK criticised the long history of Kurdish tribalism and conservative ideologies among the Kurdish political figures and the Sheikhs or the leaders of Mystics. That was through adapting Marxist- Leninist or Socialist ideology. On the other hand, rather than rational choice, the PKK was always following the ideology commitments, regardless of the consequences. The PKK always wanted to follow its ideology and sacrificed its members or cadres for it, regardless of obstacles and putting the regional or international political and social situation into account. Yet, other Kurdish political parties such as the KDP or PUK were looking at the political and social situation within the interests of the state and amending their ideology according to that.

It is arguable that the discourse of 'ideological commitment' of the PKK and its practice is true until today's date or at least until 1993 when the PKK retreated from the demand of liberating all Kurdistan and started to recognize international borders that have divided Kurdistan. Thus, the PKK suggested the idea of democratic con-federalism for the Kurds within those states that have Kurdish people and Kurdish lands in the Middle East. This was happened due to the change of perspective and ideology of the movement and as a result of looking for a solution for the Kurdish question through adopting reality rather than ideological commitment as such. Analysing the shift that has happened in 1993 will be elaborated and criticised much more widely in the next chapters. Yet, it is argued that whatever and however the shift has happened, as Akkaya (2011) suggested, by all means, "over the last 30 years, the Turkish state has faced an insurgency instigated by the PKK which is one of the most important secular insurgent political movements in Kurdistan and the Middle East", (Akkaya, 2011: 2).

The PKK started its first armed struggle in 1984 after a few years of ideological and political preparations during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Akkaya (2011) argues that “by 1990 the ‘liberation of Kurdistan’ had become not at all unthinkable” (Akkaya, 2011: 2). According to Ocalan (2013), by starting the struggle of the PKK, the dream of the Turkish state of totally melting the Kurds down through the process of assimilation and Turkification has almost clogged up. This means that, “the Kurds are not ended due to cultural genocide and mass killing any longer”, (Ocalan, 2013: 291). There is a heavy cost of this war in Turkey, especially in the south east of Turkey that the PKK until recently was calling for the liberation of, as an independent northern part of greater Kurdistan.

According to some official figures from the state and from the PKK, so far the cost of that war is the lives of more than forty thousand people. The vast majority of the victims were of Kurdish descent, whether by direct conflict between guerrilla and the Turkish army or because of the unique phenomenon of ‘unknown killing’ or atrocities during the army operation in the Kurdish areas in Turkey. As a matter of fact, the war has been considered as “the biggest challenge to the Turkish state in the 20th century”, (Olson, 1996, p.2).

With regards to the issue of equality and minority rights, in Turkey, there is a long history of inequalities between Turks and other ethnic groups, especially the Kurds. “Due to the previous data limitation, scholars have only begun to analyse contemporary inequalities between the Turks and the Kurds”, (Dixson and Ergin, 2010:1329). A senior Kurdish politician living in exile argues that without the Kurds and Kurdish great knights and fighters, the Ottoman Empire could not go until Vienne. Without the Kurds, they would not have been able to occupy the land of Africa. Nonetheless, after all this sharing of history, the Turks

have deprived the Kurds of all their rights and they became powerless and landless, (interview with A1 on 22/09/2012).

An interesting question here is whether the Turkish state and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk have recognized Kurdish rights in the wake of establishing the new Turkish state and Great Turkish National Assembly (TBMM), Bozarslan (2012). This question can help this debate to understand the trends of Kemalism ideology with regards to the building of a Turkish nation state and the way of treating minorities within that state. On the first of May 1920, in the first gathering of the new Turkish parliament, while about 72 Kurdish deputies were representing Kurdish areas in Turkey, Atatürk made his address as follows: “dears, for preventing the problems, I would like to suggest two points, those deputies who are members of our great national council and those who made the state of Turkey are not Turks only, not Cherkas, not Kurds and no Laz only. But they are a Muslim unity which includes all of them”, (Akcura, 2010: 51).

According to Olson (1989), this is referring to some kind of autonomy for the Kurds in Turkey. Since Atatürk was mentioning both Kurds and Turks in his speech several times, it can be said that he had a good will of making a shared new state for both Kurds and Turks and other smaller ethnic minorities. However, his response to a question from the editor of the time ‘Vakit’ newspaper ‘Ahmet Amin’ on the 16th of December 1923 clearly denied any right for the Kurds in Turkey. Atatürk stated: “from the view point of our interest as Turks, the Kurdish question can never be a subject to talk about. You know that the Kurds in Turkey are living in areas that compared to the Turks are very small minorities and they are going to be disappeared over time among the Turks. Thus, we cannot talk about any border of place for the Kurds within Turkey as it will be a cause of abolishing Turkey”, (Akcura, 2010: 53).

The Turkish state via Ataturk had a plan to assimilate the Kurds through the process of Turkification. On the one hand Ataturk clearly mentioned the necessity of promoting equal rights of both Kurds and Turks within the border of Turkey. On the other hand, he refused to suggest any geographical solution for the Kurdish issue in within Turkey. He continued his arguments by making an assumption. He argues: “let us say we make a border from Erzurum and Elegeze, to the east of the country and call it Kurdistan, how about those Kurds who live in Konya or other areas? Can we forget about them? Thus we don’t have to think of geographical rights for the Kurds. What we can do is only give autonomy to them in their own areas. Therefore, from now on, when we talk about the Turks, we must talk about the Kurds and their rights too. If we don’t do that, it means we create a problem that can be called Kurdish problem in future”, (Akcura, 2010:53).

Nevertheless, very soon the arguments about Kurdish rights and any cultural, social and political recognition had been forgotten and became forbidden to even be talked about. The process of Turkification was suggested and started long time before the plan of a new Turkish state. For that, in his book, “political memories”, ‘Sultan Abdul Hamid the second’ has said: “to strengthen the Turkish nation, we need to Turkify all the Kurds everywhere. This is a basic and main point of strengthening of the Turkish nation”, (Akcura, 2010: 54). In the time of ‘Unity and Progress Committee’, (Etihad ve Terakihi Cemiyeti), the process of Turkification was continued. At that time, they issued the law of spreading (Tehcir Kanunu). Article twelve of this law clearly says that “the Kurds must be divided into small groups, they must be disarmed and be transferred to places far from their home places and register them in those places while they have to be less than 5% of the population of those places. By no means, can Kurdish refugees go back to their own places”, (Akcura, 2010: 54).

This law was rapidly and actively implemented. According to the written document from the general office of the immigration issues in Istanbul, during 1915 and the following year, about 700,000 Kurds were transferred to western Anatolia which is the metropolis in the west of Turkey, (Badirxan, 2010: 47). For that time, that amount of people was bigger percentage of all Kurds than the number of the more recent displacement process in the 1990s. As a matter of fact, during the time of the governments of 'Suleiman Demirel' and 'Tansu Ciller' in 1993 to 1998, about three million people 'mainly Kurds' have been transferred to the western metropolis during a big plan of the government and the destroying of about three thousand to four thousand villages. As Yildiz and Muller (2008) argue, "by 1999 it was estimated that 3,500 villages had been evacuated and around three million people, mainly Kurds, were displaced", (Yildiz and Muller, 2008: 17).

It is arguable that these points that have been presented in this part of this chapter will help this study to investigate the current Kurdish national movement in Turkey and the way of transforming its struggle to the civil and legal in recent years. By understanding this history, we can understand the reasons and motivations behind the 29th revolts of the Kurds in Turkey. Thus, it is better to draw attention to social movement in the Kurdish part of Turkey in the last few decades that directly connects to the main question of this study.

What has been presented so far mainly regards Kurdish social and political waves and movements in the different parts of Kurdistan. Yet, it can be argued that the national movement on the wider and higher level rather than the local, tribal, religious or at the best, regional level has never taken place in Kurdistan. This is the answer to the question that I have raised in the very first paragraph of this chapter. However, this is a difficult hypothesis and needs to be

elaborated according to theories of social movements and with viable methods in order to have a clearer image of the current stage of the Kurdish national struggle.

The next section of this chapter will attempt to explore the process of Turkish state and its nationalism as well as its impacts on the Kurds and Kurdish nationalism. For understanding the importance and sensitivity of the current stage and progress of the Kurdish question in Turkey, it is better to draw attention to the current issues of the Kurdish national struggle in the northern part of Kurdistan. Yet, for understanding the frame and the picture of social movement in this part of Kurdistan, it is necessary to briefly elaborate the notion of the Turkish state and Kurdish national struggle in the aftermath of the establishment of the Turkish state.

The Turkish State and Kurdish Nation

During and after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the war of independence in Anatolia, the Turkish state was established by the members of the group that was called the young Turks, later on officially called the Committee of Union and Progress, (Etihad ve Terakihî Cemiyeti), “the CUP”. At the early morning of the attempt, there was a notion of establishing that state, “based on the brotherhood and the yields of the hard work of the Turks and the Kurds together”, (Bozarslan, 2012: 24). At the first assembly of the Turkish Parliament, there were 72 Kurdish deputies who represented Kurdish areas and they were called Kurdistan people deputies, in Turkish ‘Kurdistan Millet Vekillere’. Moreover, the founder of the new Turkish Republic, ‘Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’ clearly declared that in this country, there were not only Turks. Those who worked hard to free this land were not only Turks. So there was some kind

of promise for the Kurds to have autonomy and self-ruling of their lands, within the national territory and under the central power of Ankara, Badirxan, (2010).

Yet, this promise was short-lived and soon the notion of unity and making 'one nation, one language, one flag and one country' became the main notion into the agenda of the state. This shift made Kurds feel that they were no longer partners and real citizens as Turks were and no longer belonged to this state. This led them to think of revolt and uprising against the state and establishing their own entity. It is worth pointing out here again that in Turkey there are 'forty nine' different identifiable ethnic and religious minorities, Toprak (2009). Not only the Turks; all minority ethnic and religious groups in Turkey, in the way or another, willingly or unwillingly have accepted the state policy and adopted the state ideology of unification and Turkification, Bozarlsan, (2012).

The Kurds nevertheless, have rejected the policy and started to revolt and challenge the state. As has been mentioned in the previous chapter, until the massacre of the city of Dersim by the new Turkish state in 1938, there were at least 28 different local, regional and national revolts by the Kurds against the state, (interview with A3 on 25/03/2012). Thus, the processes of assimilation and Turkification have been in the agenda in a systematic way and with a huge amount of resources for implementing that process. The Kurds were the only group that sustained its challenges and revolts until today's date. There is an appropriate quotation by Mango (1999) in this respect as he argues that, "In terms of ethnicity and culture, Turkey is varied, complex and intermixed. Yet the myth which Ataturk bequeathed to his fellow-countrymen insists that there is a single ethnic group, the Turks. Nowadays the effects of this myth can be brutal; it can never, in the long

run, be successful. While Turkey gives no legal recognition to its large Kurdish minority, the problem that dissident Kurds pose for the Turkish state cannot be solved”, (Mango, 1999: 1).

Mango was right, the Kurdish people have been depressed, but they were not fully assimilated into the Turkish state sponsored and promoted identity. The Kurdish question could not be solved by the Turkish state through the process of forced assimilation, Turkification and repression. It is interesting here to highlight the entity of Turkish state. One may just ask, what is the Turkish State? How has it made its own pillars? It is obvious that the Kurdish nation has started the revolt against the state and government political steps and has always recognized a line between the Turks as people and the Turkish state. Therefore the struggle of the Kurds is not against Turkish people and society. Accordingly, the notion of Kurdish nationalism can be a reflection against the Turkish state.

The Turkish State and Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey

From a Kurdish perspective, their nationalism can be regarded as a suppressed reaction to the success of other nationalisms around the Middle East. In Turkey especially, the Kurds started their struggle for their Kurdishness only after what they saw from the Turkish state that they want to unify them and melt them down within Turkish Nationalism.

Thus, the notion of the state and especially the Turkish state is very sensitive among the Kurds. There is a proverb amongst the Kurds that says: if the state is a donkey, don't trust it and don't be on it. This is because they never felt that the state and the governments might be belonging to them. Therefore, the Kurds were always looking negatively towards the state and powerful members

of the governments. However, the Kurds always thought that the reason of their depression is due to the lack of a Kurdish state. Therefore, they always had a dream to have a Kurdish nation state one day. A prominent Kurdish poet, the writer of 'Mem u Zin' epic has mentioned this dream long ago. He suggested that if the Kurds have their own state, they could be equal to Arabs and Ajams, even they could make others to be their servants. Khani (2009) says: "had we been in agreement, and gathered under one leader. Rumes, Arabs and Persian as a whole would have been at our service", (Khani, 2009: 43).

Interestingly, the elements of the Turkish nation state are very unique and exploring those elements is very useful to understand the reaction of the Kurdish nationalism against it. The Turkish nation state has been built based on an identity of the special notion of Turkishness, which includes six principles. If one wants to be fully accepted by this state, she or he must be 1) a Turkish Nationalist, 2) a Muslim, 3) a Sunni, 4) a Hanafi, 5) a Secular and finally 6) a Kemalist. This is an identity of any person who wants to be happy and lucky in Turkey. As two members of (TBMM) stated, "ev dibe ku nasnameye Turken rastin be", (interview with A5&A6 on 27/8/2011). This means that this is an identity for the true Turkish person. On the other hand, the famous quote by Kemal Ataturk that says: how happy the one who says I am a Turk!! 'Ne Mutlu Turkum Diyene', is the expression of this notion of Turkishness. In addition to the notion of Turkish nationalism, one must be a Muslim, Sunni, Hanafi, Secular and Kemalist as well.

Arguably, this is very fundamental and a unique design in a country where the mosaic of population is very diverse. Moreover, the vast majority of people are illiterate and never understood secularism and Islamic ideas and schools of thoughts. However, a leader like Ataturk comes and makes these harsh

principles to build a new nationalist state on. It is not easy to implement that policy in the country like Turkey. No-one can associate Islamism with secularism, nationalism with Sunnism; Kemalism with Hanfiat. Nevertheless, a harsh military and strong power from the state has helped to establish such a strange state after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

Implementing the process of state building in Turkey started via all channels that the state had in its hands. Education and the school's curriculum were changed. The history of the Turkish people and the notion of Turkishness were presented in a different way, Bozarslan, (2012). Religious and other ethnic activisms were all totally banned unless through the new law and according to 'Ataturk's', so-called secularist standards. Wearing cloths even, in offices and in public had to be in a way that the state preferred. Ataturk called for chopping the heads of those that would not accept that new order, Bozarslan (2012).

Ataturk even threatened deputies of the Turkish National Assembly in order that not try to confront such principles. In the meeting of the national assembly, as a speaker and the leader of the country, he clearly told all deputies that "in case of confrontation of such principles, some heads must be chopped", (Bozarslan, 2012: 50). Consequently, in order for people to be able to accept the notion of new Turkish, Muslim, Sunny, Hanafi, Secular and Kemalist Identity, they must have been put through the process that was named as the progress of society, (Ilerleme Projesi). This could arguably be seen as the seventh principle of the Identity; the principle of progressed citizen. Moreover, based on these principles, this state wanted to implement the notion of 'Unity' that is manifested in the notion of 'one nation, one language, one flag and one religion'. Based on these principles, anyone within the borders of what is called Turkey today, must be a Turk, must be a Muslim, must be a secular person,

must speak Turkish language only and must respect the Flag and the leader Ataturk, the founder of the new secular Turkish state. This notion has given legitimacy to confront anyone who cannot become pure Turk. The Aleves and the Kurds were first victims of such policy.

From this point of view, as a reflection against this unique shape of Turkish nationalism and the Turkish state, the Kurds have started to confront such principles and think of creating their own nationalism as well, in order to establish their own entity. However, due to the lack of power, having fragmentations and disunity of the Kurdish people, also due to the strong tribal and local rather than national affiliations and several other reasons, the process of state building and strong nationalism among the Kurds has never been fully implemented. As Vali (2003) suggested, among the Kurds, there are individuals that are nationalists or ultra-nationalists; yet again, there is not a notion of proper nationalism among them, meaning that there is not a collective national mind for the Kurds similar to the nations around the Kurds. This suggestion of Vali (2003) is true for the Kurds in Turkey during the establishment of the Turkish state. It is interesting to mention that there were some notions and attempts for the Kurds to highlight the issue of Sunnism as a parallel to Shiites of Fars in Iran and the notion of the Shafiiat school of thought within the Sunni Islam as a parallel to Hanfiat for the Turks in Turkey. However, the notion of unified identity has never been seen amongst the Kurds. Yet, such attempts were limited and never become a base for establishing a strong Kurdish nationalism.

Interestingly, the struggle that was started by the PKK in the 1970s has slightly changed the perspective of the Kurdish national movement towards the issue of Kurdish nationalism and building the nation state. The line between nation

building and nation state building has become slightly clearer throughout the struggle of the PKK. In 1999 the Idea of nation state was criticized by the PKK “Currently the KCK” leader, Abdullah Ocalan. In his new review for the concept of the nation and the state, Ocalan (2013) argues that societies have been a victim of the state and its various types of authorities since the ‘Sumer empire’ time. Always the state could be a cause of restraining the freedom of people and become an obstacle in front of having normal, natural and societal prosperity. Nevertheless, since the Kurds never had their own state, they were always dreaming about having their own nation state like other nations around them.

Since then, the discourse of the building of the nation state has been replaced by promotion of building the Kurdish democratic nation. Yet, the process of nation building can be developed without going through the process of the nation state. In other words Ocalan (2013) argues that democratic nation can be built without going through the channels of the state and for the building of the state. This new idea of the Kurdish national struggle has been suggested through a series of discussions and analysis of democratic models through the concepts of ‘Democratic Republic’, ‘Democratic Confederalism’ and currently the discourse of the ‘Democratic Autonomy’ in the agenda of the Kurdish activists within social movement in Turkey. In the forthcoming chapter, this notion will be elaborated in detail.

Conclusion

This chapter has critically presented the historical background of the Kurdish struggle in all parts of Kurdistan under the rule of the four different nation states. It has shown especially, the reasons and aspects of the Kurdish national

struggle failure across the twentieth century in all parts of Kurdistan. The focus was mainly on the northern part of Kurdistan and particularly the notion of Turkish nationalism and its impact on the Kurds and Kurdish nationalism in Turkey. Throughout the history of the twentieth century, it has been examined that the Kurdish national struggle was always circling around the same question and the same method of solution. That was the main dilemma of the Kurds and their revolts across the centuries. Finally, the notion of the new method of the struggle in the Turkish part under the PKK was partially shown. Through this chapter, the whole framework of the Kurdish national movements across the four parts of Kurdistan was examined. Thus, the notion of transformation of the Kurdish national struggle in the northern part could be better understood in the next chapter of this thesis.

In the next chapter, the main focus will be narrowed down on the Kurdish national struggle in Turkey, investigating the main characters of the Kurdish national movement and the detail about the PKK as a controversial political party that became the main actor of the Kurdish national struggle in Turkey until the early 2000s. It will also particularly highlight the detail of the KCK system, and its multi-dimensional activism through its wide cultural and social branches. The other section of that chapter will be a focus on 'the ideology of PKK' as a new term within the Kurdish national struggle.

CHAPTER FOUR: DOWN TO TURKEY: OVERVIEW OF THE PKK AND THE KCK

The Kurdish people simultaneously exist and do not exist.

The Kurds are human being and yet they are not.

There are more paradoxes of this kind”, (Ocalan, 2011:126).

Introduction

The PKK was a product of the Turkish state denial of the Kurdish existence and its identity. It was a reaction to the state policy towards the Kurds. Therefore, it was a political party that was struggling to build a nation state for the Kurds. However, the KCK is a multi-dimensional project that can challenge the post-PKK era as the new social, cultural and political struggle to build the democratic nation rather than the nation state. The 'ideology of PKK' is an ideological school within the KCK system that can direct the whole movement and challenge the new era of the Kurdish national struggle in Turkey.

In this chapter, the focus will be on three main points. 1) Presenting the PKK as a king maker in the Kurdish national struggle in Turkey. It will investigate the PKK as a controversial political party that became the main actor of the Kurdish national struggle in Turkey until the early 2000s. 2) It will focus on 'the ideology of PKK' as a new ideological school that is frequently referred to within the Kurdish national struggle activism. 3) The last section of this chapter will draw attention to and highlight the detail of the KCK system, and its multi-dimensional activism through its wide cultural and social branches. Since the PKK and the KCK will be thoroughly examined in this chapter; therefore, understanding the entire process of the reasons behind transformation from the PKK to the KCK will be more tangible in the forthcoming chapters of the thesis.

What is the PKK?

Despite mentioning and discussing the PKK several times earlier in this thesis, it is however, necessary to present and analyse this organisation in detail. The benefit of this elaboration mainly is the fact that the PKK is an organization that has had a main and exclusive impact on the current Kurdish national movement

in Turkey and actually across the whole parts of Kurdistan. Therefore, the phenomenon of the PKK must be elaborated and investigated in order for this thesis to have a clear sight in analysing social movement in the Kurdish part of Turkey and especially the main current actor of the movement which is the KCK. Similar to the question above 'what is the PKK?' we will see in the forthcoming section the question; 'what is the KCK?'

The best method for examination of the PKK can be focusing on the speech and analytical viewpoints of those who are active members or founders of the organisation such as 'Abdullah Ocalan' and his senior comrades on the one hand. On the other hand, we need to look at those who are against the PKK and wrote not in favour of Ocalan and his senior comrades. To make the task easier and better, on the one hand we will analyse the discourse of the PKK and the KCK narratives by focusing on Cemil Bayik and Ocalan through their speeches and analysis, especially focusing on Ocalan and his evaluation and criticism of the PKK. Debatably, this is the first time in the history of the Kurds that a leader of a movement can bravely and outspokenly criticise his own movement and show so many insufficient and negative points. On the other hand, we can focus on the arguments of some academicians and writers who are critically viewing the PKK and the Kurdish national struggle in Turkey. We can look at the Yeldiz and Muller (2008), Marcus (2009), Bozarslan (2012) as academic authors and journalists who had a long method of observing the PKK. Sometimes those authors have a very negative view on Ocalan and his PKK also. Thus, we can see both sides of the coin.

Historically, the PKK was established on the 28th of November 1978 in a village just outside Diyarbakir, known as 'Fis'. This was a meeting of about 22 or 23 members (two of them female) of the group that called themselves 'Apoists'

refereeing to their leader Apo 'Abdullah Ocalan', Marcus (2009). However, the party and especially Ocalan himself had started their activities in the early 1970s. Ocalan tries to refer back to his early years of childhood when he had to walk about a few kilometres from his village to another in order to study at his primary school. He argued that he had to walk a long way to forget his mother tongue 'Kurdish' and compulsorily learn another language 'Turkish', (Ocalan, 2013: 11). Bozarslan, in Kasaba (2008) suggests that at the time, the power in Turkey was an ultra-Turkish nationalist and so called 'Secular State'. It was harshly against the two notions: the "Kurdish question and the religious reaction", (Kasaba, 2008: 333).

Ocalan argues that he was trying to challenge the state through highlighting those two notions since his childhood. He argues that he was gathering his classmates for leading collective prayers on one hand and the struggle of not forgetting his Kurdish language due to his school and learning Turkish on the other. He argues that as a reaction to the notion of showing the Kurds and Kurdishness as best, he had to be the first and best student in the class, Ocalan (2013). Consequently, as a founder and charismatic leader of the PKK, Ocalan had reactions against the system and the state from very early times of his life. Nonetheless, the era of 1970s uniquely affected his perspectives, thinking, and his actions towards the Kurdish question and struggle for his people.

In the 1970s, the conflict between both socialists and capitalist blocs reached very high levels. In Turkey, that conflict had affected all social, ideological and political activities. Ocalan was one of those young and active individuals who were in front of two opposite paths. He had a tendency towards religious right wing groups on the one hand but also had a feeling that leftist and socialist groups are those who could bring freedom and dignity to him and to his

forgotten nation on the other hand. He claimed that between Islam and Marxism, there was a conflict within his mind and that he was lost in between both. He argued that after reading a solid amount of both ideologies, he got to understand that in the fight inside his head, Mohammed will lose and Marx will win, (Ocalan, 2013). This means that Ocalan and his PKK from the first day did not have a clear vision and perspective. Therefore, the practice of the PKK was not predictable afterwards.

Ocalan once said, “people think that our first bullet has been shot on the head of our enemy, the Turkish state soldiers. But I say, we have shot our first bullet on the head of the Kurds”, (interview with C3 on 16/09/2012). This means that the PKK wanted to wake the Kurds up from the long term sleep of being alienated. The PKK has argued that after a long time of the process of assimilation, the Kurds no longer recognised themselves. Nevertheless, the PKK has started its struggle with strange steps that cannot be harmonized with theories of social movement’s organisations, (Jenkins and Klandermans, 1995: 167). It is interesting that the PKK has been created after the total triumph of the Turkish state and burying the dead body of Kurdishness and any sort of struggle and resistance of the Kurds. Moreover, the only little hope of the Kurds of the northern part of Kurdistan for the revolution of Mustafa Barzani in the south was also lost. In 1975, the Kurdish revolution collapsed and Barzani suggested that his job is done and every one must go home. The majority of the Kurdish fighters ‘Peshmarga’ came down from mountains and surrendered themselves to the Iraqi government as a result of the agreement of ‘Algeria’ between Iran and Iraq and as a result of the announcement of Barzani to end his struggle and leave to go to America, (McDowall, 2010).

Thus, there was no any hope for the Kurds in the northern part of Kurdistan.

There was no any light or torch on the dark road of Kurdishness and struggle for freedom. Ocalan at this very moment stated that the “Kurds are neither humans nor animals. They could be a third type of existence in between those two”, (Ocalan, 2013: 428). In essence, thus meant that the PKK and under Ocalan’s leadership came to criticise the reality of the Kurds. They came and started from the point that no one could see it as the rational way. The step that the PKK had started was harsh and unfriendly with Kurdish people. They told people that they were no longer humans. They had no honours and dignities. They were degrading people to follow them rather than establishing a positive and friendly relationship with them. These were the bullets that were shot on the head of the Kurds. Telling the Kurds that they have to be human again, they must struggle to have their own dignity, honour and independent country ‘Kurdistan’. At that time, talking about Kurdistan was practically impossible. It was not easy to persuade anyone that such a place even exists. Ocalan has come with two sentences. There is Kurdistan, and it is a colony. What has been done by the PKK is what can be called as anti-rational choice.

Despite both the PKK and Ocalan’s criticisms of Marxist Leninist ideology, they still thought that it was the most effective vehicle for attaining their goals. During his study in Istanbul and Ankara, Ocalan has participated in several demonstrations; he met several leftists and saw several events that affected his belief to join the leftist groups. Nevertheless, he always had his Kurdishness as a main point to struggle for. He was looking for a channel to express his ideas and develop his plan towards a solution for the Kurdish cause. As a matter of fact, the notion of the crises of both modern waves - socialism and capitalism - has had an impact in shaping the PKK.

Bozarlsan, in Kasaba (2008) argues that the three main concepts of both

modern waves 'Capitalism, Nation State and Industrialism' made all parties focus on the nation state as the only way to rescue the nation from its problems. Therefore, all parties and movements, including leftists, communists and socialists in Turkey only focused on the notion of Turkishness and could not see the Kurdish question as a legitimate right for the Kurds whatsoever. All what they said with regards to the Kurdish question was recognizing the rights and freedom of everyone in the country under the umbrella of the greater Turkish nation state, Bozarlan, in Kasaba (2008). This notion made the PKK get out from the mainstream left and socialist wave and think of establishing a group that can work for the Kurds similar to Turks. Especially the notion of the nation state as the best and only solution for nations to get independence and sovereignty, has led the PKK to suggest an 'independent free socialist greater Kurdistan' as a highest aim during its struggle, (Cudi, 2008: 335). Therefore, the matter of Kurdishness of the PKK was not accepted by the Turkish leftist movements.

In the first few years of the seventies, Ocalan and several friends of him including 'Haki Karar, Kemal Pir, Duran Kalkan, Cemil Bayik, Mustafa Karasu', and Sakine Cansiz were joining Turkish leftist groups. Ocalan himself had joined Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths 'DDKO' and Revolutionary Youth 'DEV-GENC). Yet again, due to his thirst for the revolution and uprising; due to his feelings for his Kurdishness; he could not be persuaded that such organisations could mobilise the Kurds and make them be aware of their reality and the threads around their social and cultural existence. Thus, he had to think of bringing about a different group that could be an answer for the thirst. Therefore, with his few friends, mainly students in Ankara University, they started to reschedule and revise their leftist ideology towards some sort of Kurdishness.

Ocalan was referring to a point that was indicated several times during the discussion with his comrades. He argued that Kurdistan is a centre for their revolution. Thus, he wanted to leave Ankara and come to the mountains of Kurdistan to continue revolutionary struggle. Therefore, moving to Kurdistan was a first step towards making a party. After several years of ideological mix and match activities, Ocalan and his comrades made themselves slightly clearer and came to Kurdistan 'East Turkey' and established the Kurdistan Workers Party, in Kurdish 'Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan-PKK'.

Ocalan (2013) argues that at the time of starting their struggle, they were very much under the influence of the 'Constructed Socialism', (Ocalan, 2013: 294). That was the terminology which he used so often, referring to the Soviet copy of socialism. He claims that at the current time, they have put this notion of socialism aside and the nature of their struggle is beyond that classic and undemocratic dictatorial proletariat notion of socialism.³ The outcome of the perspective of the PKK at that time was only promoting the notion of nation state building. Therefore, the PKK had seen the notion of a Kurdish nation state as the only way of bringing back the dignity and survival for the Kurdish nation that was in the deep holes of cultural and social genocides.

Another point that the PKK has focused on was preparing for guerrilla warfare against the state. They were not only struggling through the politics and raising awareness among the Kurds. In contrary to that, they were focusing on the illiterate and disadvantaged peasants and workers in the Kurdish villages and the cities. Thus, the step from Ankara to Diyarbakir did not only change the group to the party, but made them a party that has guerrillas and in their own

³ The matter of democratisation within the PKK or even the current KCK is different from the matter of creating an opportunities for democratic notion within the Kurdish society due to the PKK and currently the KCK's new steps. We will discuss this matter in the fifth chapter.

words is 'the fighters of free Kurdistan'. Marcus (2009) argues that at the time, the PKK was the only group which could fight against the state and landowners who were under the rule of the state. In July 1979, the PKK tried to kill a Kurdish member of parliament who was a landowner from a famous tribe near the city of Urfa. That attempt took place only several months after the foundation of the PKK. Nonetheless, implementing that assassination failed. However, as a former PKK militant argued, "the assassination attempt received wide notice leaflets laying out their goals which were scattered through the region", (Marcus, 2009: 46). Hence, the PKK attempts were to make people know that a new and different group has been established.

Therefore, the first step of the PKK from theory to practice, from thinking to action, had successfully been taken. The PKK also had a chance to protect and rescue most of its senior members including Ocalan himself by getting out of the country before a military coup in September 1980. Moving to the Middle East, mainly Syria and Lebanon had a positive impact on the PKK in two ways. The first one was that Ocalan became the only and charismatic leader so that his words were the first and last words in any decision of the party. This meant that, Ocalan had become a leader whose comrades could no longer challenge him and take his position. It is true that this impression can be seen as moving the party to a dictatorial one; especially making Ocalan himself as a harsh dictator, Ozcan (2006). Nevertheless, it was a strong point to prevent the party from dismantlement and partition.

The problem that all Kurdish movements and parties in the history of twentieth century have suffered from was partition and dismantlement. The harsh style of Ocalan's leadership has prevented dismantlement within the PKK to a very big extent. The second benefit was that the PKK had access to some military,

diplomacy and financial support from some movements and governments in the Middle East, especially from the Palestinian liberation movement and Syrian government. Therefore, the PKK started to educate and train its guerrillas and prepare them for the guerrilla warfare inside Turkey.

On August 15th 1984, the PKK launched an attack on the military barracks in both Eruh and Semdinli towns in the south-east. According to a former commander of the attacks 'Sari Baran', "the goal was not to kill soldiers, but instead to break the link between the soldiers and the people and to read the announcement [announcing the founding of HRK armed units]", (Marcus, 2009: 81). Baran continues by saying: "we wanted to make an attack that would give people the trust in us", (Marcus, 2009:81). Therefore, the PKK became a party. It became a party with its distinctiveness to other revolutionary parties. It had the Kurdistan Liberation Units 'Hezen Rizgariya Kurdistan HRK', and later, became Kurdistan people Liberation Army 'Artesa Rizgariya Gele Kurdistan ARGK'. It also had several dedicated members in the cities and towns to recruit guerrillas and mobilize sympathisers. It had a strong and hard core ideology, a combination of Marxist Leninist Stalinist socialism alongside the notion of Kurdishness and the fight for a free independent greater Kurdistan. This means that the PKK has slightly become an entity that can survive and continue its struggle.

All these points allowed the PKK to be a main and later on, only party that can give a limited hope to the Kurdish and depressed people in the region. Nevertheless, within the PKK, there were a huge amount of agents of the state and collaborators that were aiming at pacification of the PKK and looking for their own tribal, personal interests. This is one of the points that Ocalan illustrated and called it a 'Kurdish Dilemma'. According to Ocalan (2010), the

history of the Kurds and those people who lived in the land that is currently called Kurdistan, from 5000 years to the current time, is full of collaborations with external enemies. He refers to the 'Epic poetry of Gilgamesh' and arresting the rebel leader 'Humbaba' who was from the mountain, through the help of 'Enkidu' who was from the same race as 'Humbaba'.

To Ocalan, the story of Enkidu is the story of the first collaboration in the history of the Kurds and its continuation among them until today's date. In the myth, "symbolizing the concept of the system of power in the character of Gilgamesh against the concept of barbarism through the character of Humbaba can be seen", (Ocalan, 2010: 170). He tries to analyse the concept of collaboration during the course of the whole history of the Kurds. He argues that this is a Kurdish dilemma. The main task of him and his PKK was to tackle this dilemma among the Kurds. Ocalan (2010) suggested that without tackling this issue, the process of cultural and social genocide against the Kurds cannot be stopped. However, Ocalan is exaggerating when he puts all blame on the shoulders of collaborators. The notion of collaboration is not only specific to the Kurds. The PKK itself was a party that was a product of the reality of the 1970s in Turkey. Therefore, the failure was not only due to the collaboration.

It was true that among the PKK senior militants, there were many collaborators and traitors. However, as Marcus (2009) tries to suggest, all the leaders and the PKK cadres who wanted to say anything against Ocalan or even have any different or suspicious ideas were accused as collaborators and traitors. In that case, their lives were at risk. Arguably, Ocalan himself is obsessed by the theory of conspiracy. He sees every political step around him and against the Kurds through the spectacles of conspiracy theory.

Surprisingly, in contrary to all the history of the PKK and all current and

previous leaders of the PKK and current KCK leaders, Ocalan himself believes that the attack of 15th of August 1984 was weak. Due to the existence of this 'Kurdish dilemma', the attack was insufficient and smaller than their aims and the struggle that their militants had. Ocalan (2013) argues that they lost great, honest, loyal and sparkling guerrillas in most of the wars only due to the greed and personal interests of the actual leaders of the operations. However, since there was no any other similar or even weaker resistance whatsoever at that time, the PKK soon became a source of hope among some Kurdish people from villages and towns in the Kurdish areas. It can be argued that the main and only task for the PKK was the point that it had to stop the process of denial of the Kurds and Kurdistan. It can be true that the PKK slightly brought back the notion of Kurdistan and the struggle for it. However, Ocalan and the PKK failed in bringing back the Kurdishness. The PKK never had a serious concern about Kurdish language, culture and Kurdish social life as such. This was because of the strong tendency for the leftist ideology within the PKK rather than clear Kurdish perception.

Nonetheless, at the time of the harsh process of cultural, social and political denial of the Kurds and Kurdistan, the PKK has started its struggle and brought back a hope to the depressed Kurdish people by challenging the Turkish state and the Kurdish landowners who have lost their own self-esteem and dignity due to the harsh cultural genocide process by the state. I argue that since the main task of the PKK is to stop the process of cultural and social genocide of the Kurds, then the reason for the existence of the PKK still valid. However, the apparatus and the methods of the PKK are no longer appropriate for facing the reality and approaching the Kurdish

question. That was the point that the PKK and Ocalan himself understood. Therefore, they have tried to change the methods and tools of their struggle. This is a main point of this work that I try to investigate and present it as transformations. In the forthcoming chapters, this point will be investigated in detail.

From 1985, the PKK entered another stage of its struggle. The notion of collaboration which was a main obstacle in front of the PKK's struggle had been limited due to the decisions that were taken in the third PKK congress. Ocalan had made it clear to the PKK members that without him; no one could or should do anything. According to Cemil Bayik and some other senior leaders of the KCK, due to the third congress, the attempts of collaborators or traitors were drastically limited. 'Kesire Yildirim'⁴ (former wife of Ocalan) and some other senior military and political members of the PKK were working against Ocalan and his line. Based on social theories, this action by the PKK can be called as organizational maintenance, (Zald and McCarthy, 1987:121).

After that congress, the influences of those members of the PKK were eliminated. Therefore, from the third conference onwards, the best PKK cadre had to be the most loyal to the line of Ocalan. Another idea that has been implemented was creating an army for the PKK. Previously, there was a small group of guerrillas that was called 'HRK'. It was only a few small units and mainly used for propaganda among Kurdish people. But after the third congress, the ARGK was established, which has become a huge army. On the name of a legend of the PKK commander 'Mahsun Korkmaz' known as "Agid", the ARGK was established. It is worth mentioning that the death of 'Kemal Pir', a well-known founder of the group

⁴ The mystery story of 'Kesire Yildirim' and her influence on the party and Ocalan himself is a controversial matter. It needs to be elaborated in a different work. Yet, the purpose of this work is not such elaboration.

and close friend of Ocalan, has become an inspiration for the announcements of the PKK in 1978. The “death of ‘Agid’ has also become an inspiration for establishing the ARGK”, (Cudi, 2008: 372). This means that the PKK has started and grown up while it was inspired by the blood and martyrdom.

Interestingly, the PKK came across with strange ideas. The decision was made that the PKK must adopt compulsory military service for the Kurdish young people. This means that the PKK started to take young people from the villages and use them as Kurdish soldiers or ‘guerrillas’. Cemil Bayik, the current co-chair of the KCK claimed that at the time, Kurdish people in the ‘Botan region’ proposed the plan of compulsory recruitment of the guerrillas. The PKK at that time believed that revolutionary legitimacy allowed them to take young Kurdish people and use them as guerrillas.

At that time, the PKK argued that since the Turkish state was recruiting soldiers compulsorily, why should the PKK not also have the right to do so. On the other hand, the PKK has committed a series of horrible criminal activism in the villages and towns. The reputation of the PKK was under the risk due to the tyranny and misbehaving militants and commanders of the PKK in the Kurdish regions. Ocalan (2013) clearly confesses such crimes and despotisms. Yet again, he always put the blames on comrades who were under the influence of the concept of collaborationists and traitors. Therefore, establishing the ARGK had a negative impact too. As Ozcan (2006) argues, due to the internal power conflict, the concept of banditry developed within the PKK.

The first few years of 1990s can be seen as a slight move towards change and transformation of the PKK in several aspects. Ideologically, the PKK has instigated a series of changes. The notion of nation state has been under scrutiny. Ocalan himself was looking for an exit door. The aftermath of the

Soviet Union collapse and creating a small entity for the Kurds in the south part of Kurdistan 'KRG', affected the ideological approach of the PKK. Ocalan (2011) argues that he thought that "the need for a new understanding of the concepts of the state and revolution is the heart of all the problems socialism has experienced", (Ocalan, 2011:56). Thus, the movement decided to develop a new approach in terms of nation state and national struggle on the one hand. On the other hand, the movement attempted to develop the notion of revolution. The concept of revolution was slightly reviewed and expanded to a 'total' revolution, rather than focusing only on guerrilla warfare. As a result of that review, on the one hand the PKK tried to persuade the state to start negotiation. As a matter of fact, some sort of indirect negotiation has started with the state. It has been pursued by President 'Turgut Ozal' through the secretary general of the PUK 'Jalal Talabani'. Yet, the negotiation has been provoked due to some unwelcome activism by some PKK commanders by killing thirty three off duty soldiers in an eastern province of Bingol. On the other hand, the PKK developed political activities and legal struggle as has been seen through the HEP and other legal pro-Kurdish parties. The step of entering a political activism has been a very important turning point in the Kurdish national struggle in Turkey.

The idea of focusing on the political and civil struggle has been seen as a required topic since 1993 within the PKK. Yet, the actual implementation of this notion was delayed until the middle of 2000s. The imprisonment of Ocalan in February 1999 made the PKK retreat its army out of the Turkish borders, announcing unilateral ceasefire and to start thinking of reorganizing itself. Thus, there are several years where the Turkish state has triumphed and announced its victory over the terrorism issue in the country. Suddenly, in 2004, the PKK

started its guerrilla warfare again. Nonetheless, the political wing has actively continued its struggle in the Kurdish areas. Therefore, it can be argued that the PKK has started its shift since 1993. However, it cannot be regarded as a clear and active transformation until the creation of the KCK system.

Since the nature of this thesis is not an historical presentation, there are several important events within the Kurdish national struggle that cannot be presented and investigated here. Therefore, in the current chapter, only those points are presented that can help this thesis to be able in the forthcoming chapters to elaborate the issue of transformation of the main actor of the Kurdish national movement in the northern part of Kurdistan. The next sections of this chapter will examine 'the ideology of PKK' as an ideological pathway. Likewise, the main current Kurdish national struggle actor 'the KCK' will be under examination.

The “Ideology of PKK”:

An explanation of the terminology of the “Ideology of PKK” is necessary for this thesis. In the current Turkish political and even academic works so often mistakenly the name of the KCK is used through its old name, the 'PKK'. Currently and since 2005, the PKK as a practical political organisation has been melted down within a wider organisational formulate. Since then the PKK no longer exists. It has been through a series of a renaming and reshaping process. Firstly, it has been reshaped and renamed as Freedom and Democracy Congress of Kurdistan “KADEK”, and later on as Kurdistan Union of Organisations “KKK” and currently there is a formal name for it, which is Unions of Communities in Kurdistan, the 'KCK'. Yet, the terminology of the “Ideology of PKK” still remained as an ideological wing of the movement. Thus, the PKK is a

small, but important part of the KCK at the current time, (interview with A4 on 14/09/2012). Nonetheless, the PKK is used as a former political party that slightly merged into the KCK. In other words, the PKK renamed and reshaped itself and currently the KCK is the main entity that is the subject of this thesis.

With its ideology and the harsh manner of its struggle in Turkey, the PKK soon became the main and only political power among the Kurds in Turkey. Despite having several other Kurdish or pro-Kurdish movements and individuals during the 1960s and the 1970s, the PKK has rapidly gained its protagonist state among the Kurds. As mentioned earlier, the PKK was taking the wrong pathway according to social theories. It did not look at the political opportunity and rational choice with regards to mobilization of the Kurdish people in Turkey, Zald and McCarthy, (1987).

Rather than having a positive approach to the Kurdish chieftains and landowners, the PKK declared a war against them before starting any war against the state and Turkish nationalist powers. Rationally, if they had a good approach to the land owners and if they respected Kurdish tribe leaders and gained their support, it could provide a great human and financial support for the revolution. Yet, the “ideology of PKK” pushed the struggle beyond tribal and religious influence. As Icduygu, et al (1999) argue, “the PKK, has for the first time politicized and united Kurds on a much more ethnic nationalist basis than on a tribal or religious one, (Icduygu, et al, 1999: 994). Thus, their approach was against that step and they wanted to make politics in a different way to the other traditional Kurdish movements such as the KDPI in the eastern part of Kurdistan since the Kurdistan Republic of Mahabad, or the KDP and the PUK in the southern part of Kurdistan, or former revolts in the northern part of Kurdistan such as the revolts of ‘Sheikh Said Piran’ in 1925 and ‘Saied Reza of Dersim’ in 1937.

In contrary to the tradition of previous revolts, the first action that the PKK took was an attempt to assassinate the chieftain in the south eastern province of Urfa and the killing of a man who killed his wife due to her being badly-behaved with regards to the matter of honour. Those two activities were taken as symbolical attempts to show respect to the freedom of peasants and workers on the one hand, and the freedom of women on the other, (interview with A9 on 07/08/2011). Surprisingly, in contrary to rational action and the theory of rational choice, the PKK has maintained a positive result.

On the one hand, the PKK was losing supports of religious figures and landowners or chieftains that were irrational choice at that time. Yet again, it has gained support of workers and peasants on the one hand and gained support of women on the other. In addition to that, the PKK did not want to take consequences into account. It was not important for the PKK what would happen as a result of its harsh struggle. Alternatively, the notion of 'ideological commitment' was taken into account. This means that the PKK wanted to follow its Ideology no matter what the price would be. Despite the reality of the Kurdish society structure, the PKK has walked a different path.

It is obvious that most of the Kurdish inhabited areas in Turkey are in the less developed regions and people until recently were living in rural areas. As Bozarslan, in Kasaba (2008) argues, "until the end of 1970, most of the Kurdish-inhabited provinces had an overwhelmingly rural population with strong tribal affiliations and weak economic integration with the rest of the country", (Kasaba, 2008: 335). For that, in contrary to the few previous attempts that have focused on the Kurdish notables and the middle class, educated people in Turkey, the PKK had to organize itself among such illiterate Kurdish people. As the PKK has claimed, the main aim of starting this struggle was bringing about

freedom and dignity for these enslaved and marginalized people. However, the founders of the PKK were a few students that had studied in Ankara and who were influenced by new waves of socialists and communist ideologies.

Moreover, most of them were from non-Kurdish ethnic backgrounds. It is interesting that on the one hand, the founders of the Turkish nationalism are not originally from Turkish ethnics, they were mainly Kurds and other ethnic minorities. For example, Ziya Gokalp who he considered as a father for Turkish nationalism was from a Kurdish background and he was from Diyarbakir. On the other hand, those students who founded the PKK with Ocalan were mainly not Kurdish. For instance, two of the very prominent friends and founders of the PKK, 'Hakki Karer' and 'Kemal Pir' were originally Laz and Cerkes or formally Turks and from the north part of Turkey close to the Black Sea. Ocalan's friends came to the Kurdish areas and started this movement while they had no familiarity with the language, culture and the custom of people in Kurdistan. This is another irrational step of the start of the PKK.

Thus, for the comrades of Ocalan, it was an enormous and hard task to work among the Kurds. How can such ideology be implemented among people who are affiliated with rural traditions and religion to a certain degree and very much affiliated to tribalism and mysticism? So how could the PKK amend its Marxist-Leninist ideology to such an environment? The answer for this question is easy somehow. It can be argued that the PKK never amended this ideology according to the social, political and cultural environment. Nonetheless, it harshly tried to amend the society according to its ideology. That is the point that made the PKK different from all previous social and political movements across the whole parts of Kurdistan.

Despite following the principles of the rational choice theory and coping with the society that it struggled for, the PKK took its steps against the rational choice and political opportunity. Nonetheless, the PKK had rapid growth and soon became an organisation that could by no means be ignored anymore. On the other hand, the time of emergence of the PKK was not a good time; during the very harsh military coup and after a long time of silencing all voices that could mention the Kurdish question and Kurdishness, let alone mentioning the word of Kurdistan. There was not any rationality and wisdom behind starting such an active and extraordinary organisation that harshly called for Kurdish rights and establishing a greater independent socialist Kurdistan state. That was excessively considerable for that time. Borrowing the words of a senior member of the KCK, “nobody could believe that this organisation would be sustained for more than a few months”, (interview with A8 on 06/08/2011).

An important question here is; how the PKK survived? There might be some extraordinary power behind the PKK that was making it sustainable. Perhaps, some other elements or helpful points existed that provided an inspiration to the movement to be sustained. There were some rumours among commentators that the PKK had been aided by the Turkish state itself to start this game. However, no-one can be sure about this. How could be logic for a state to grow an enemy such as the PKK after deleting and denying even the existence of the Kurds for several decades? After a long time of depressing any voice that comes out in Kurdish and for the Kurds, why would the state itself want to create a voice and make such a significant problem for itself? However, some anti and even pro PKK commentators say that at a stage, some individuals from the Turkish state funded the group of ‘Apoists’ and wanted them to develop.

Some anti PKK individuals and parties argue that the reason for that was to limit

the power of chieftains and landowners in the Kurdish areas and to silence other Kurdish or pro-Kurdish organisations that already had some limited activities, (interviews with A10&A11 on 02 & 04/09/2011). Yet, once again this was not rational and was politically incorrect for a state that had been harshly depressing the voices of the Kurds since 1925. Social theories can help to make this point understood. It is argued that during the movements against the state, the wave of the activities and the direction of the progress very often would be in the interest of the state. In other words, the state will always be a breadwinner. In other words, the function of the state here is shaping political conflicts in the interest of “its survival and aggrandizement”, (McCarthy et al, 1996:44).

For instance, at the beginning of the Turkish republic in 1925, the state made a new political party to show the notion of a multi-party system in the country. Nevertheless, after one year, it was banned as the role of that party was not genuine, but it was made for temporary political tactics, (Bozarslan, 2012: 52). Therefore, it could be possible for the Turkish state to give the PKK a little support, hoping to do a little good work for the state and any time they were no longer needed, the support for and the existence of the PKK both could be ended. Perhaps, the Turkish state had this notion in helping the PKK. It is argued that Ocalan himself once said that the state had given them some financial support through a man that did not want to be named. As senior member of the previous PKK stated: “but we realized that he came from some official figures”, (interview with A13 on 17/04/2012).

If this argument is correct, then the question is why the state helped the PKK? Was it for stopping and limiting other revolutionary forces? If so, why did the state want to stop other parties by creating an opportunity for activating a more

radical and influential party? There is not a clear answer to that. However, it will become clearer in the next chapter when there will be more discussion about the KCK especially after 2009 and the operation of the state to limit Kurdish activities that are under the “Ideology of PKK” through the campaign against Kurdish activists that were called the ‘KCK operations’ by the Turkish government. What is important here is to continue discussing the point regarding how the PKK became the main and almost only party in Turkey that is struggling against the state and functioning for the Kurdish question.

In other words, as Bozarslan in Kasaba (2008) argues, the PKK’s place as the primary Kurdish supporter of independence and nationalist actor both inside and outside Turkey appears to be intact. The answer for this issue can be found through a few different arguments according to several Kurdish political activists within the KCK and through the explanation by academic commentators. First of all, by ignoring chieftains and landowners interests and declaring a fight against them, Kurdish peasants and workers were given hope for a better tomorrow and freedom. That made them support the PKK and see hope from it. Secondly, the struggle and the patience of the PKK members in prisons and some extraordinary suicidal acts, gave the courage to Kurdish people to join the group and fight for their rights. After the military coup in 1980, hundreds of Kurdish intellectuals and activists were arrested and tortured, and a widespread repression targeted all kinds of manifestations of Kurdishness. Thousands of Kurdish and leftist politicians and activists were killed or taken to the jails.

According to several senior Kurdish politicians and Members of Turkish Assembly, other Kurdish or pro-Kurdish parties were not that patient and brave to challenge such a harsh policy of military force at that time, (interviews with A5, A6, A9 & A11 on 28/07, 07/08 and 04/09/2011). Yet, the PKK members

were challenging the phase and confronting the state inside prisons. Despite risking their lives, the PKK members in jails did not accept what the state asked for. They were killed in the most brutal ways; especially in the main prison of Diyarbakir, (interview with A14 on 26/07/2011). The famous story of a senior member of the PKK 'Mezlum Dogan' who celebrated Kurdish New Year festivities 'Newroz' by self-immolation in March 1982 has become a symbolic and heroic story. Such stories gave much hope to the Kurdish people and became a reason for guerrilla recruitment at that time. Thus, it gave hope to the people that the PKK could be a different way for their struggle (interview with A5&A6 on 28/07/2011). This argument mainly comes from pro-PKK people that only want to see and say the best of it.

However, these are reasonable points, in view of the fact that at the time of the disappointment of the Kurdish people in having any power to make any step or move towards freedom; the PKK became hope and started its struggle in a harsh and active manner for the Kurdish people. On the other hand, according to some experts, there were other points that made the PKK develop and survive in that harsh era. Bozarslan in Kasaba (2008) argues that, due to the long term Turkish- Syrian conflicts, the PKK had a chance to get support from Syria and organize itself. It especially had an impact on the position of Ocalan as the first and only leader to have total power over any plan and decision.

It is argued that "Ocalan's success derived from the tremendous changes that his party had gone through during its short period in exile. Before 1980, Ocalan was still a *primus inter pares* in the PKK. During the Syrian and Lebanese years, however, and along the lines of Ataturk in Turkey, and those of other Middle Eastern 'leaders', he remodeled the PKK into a party dominated by a single man", (Kasaba, 2008: 351). This can be understandable to a certain

degree as Ocalan became number one and the only man who was beyond question and criticism within the party. In addition to that, in contrary to the Kurdish political movements in other parts of Kurdistan, which always had and currently have internal conflicts and dismantlement, the harsh and tight policy of Ocalan and his party gave a very small room and chance for organisational internal conflicts and dismantlement.

Thus, it became the only party in the northern part of Kurdistan that could be regarded as an owner or representative of the Kurdish question. Therefore, the nature and the norms of this movement were predominantly, against the mainstream policy of this era of political and social vision. In the words of the previous PKK senior member and leader of the KCK, "Cemil Bayik", "this movement can be seen as a river that has always been making new waves and going through different valleys. Its philosophy and ideology come from a source that cannot be understood according to the mainstream and common logic. Since the PKK has not been established based on common logic it is therefore out of the common and mainstream system of thinking and performance. Accordingly, the common system of thinking cannot understand the KCK", (Cudi, 2008: 476). This means that the movement always manifests its struggle through activities that are not going parallel to the mainstream policy of the common and new world system. Therefore, this thesis needs to examine the KCK as a unique and different entity that has difficulties with social theories and mainstream examinations.

What is the KCK?

The question of the shift and transformation of the struggle in the structure and policy of the main actor of the Kurdish national movement discourse has very

strong ties with the phenomenon of the 'Unions of Communities in Kurdistan', in Kurdish; 'Koma Civaken Kurdistan', or "KCK", in Turkish, 'Kurdistan Topluluklar Birliđi'. First of all, there is a huge ambiguity around this new organisational body. This ambiguity is not only from the state and Turkish politicians, neither only in Turkey, nor from academics or social nor political commentators, but from the 'KCK' activists themselves as well. This is due to the uncertainty and confusion of the leader of the KCK, 'Abdullah Ocalan' himself while he was in jail and his party went through a serious of huge difficulties in all different aspects.

Moreover, the hegemony of his long-term socialist and nationalist ideology could not be shifted that easily. Ocalan himself has confessed that after the collapse of the socialist bloc, he was in a situation of ideological chaos. He knew that in order for his movement to be sustained; he must develop another discourse, but he was not sure how and what discourse must be developed, (interview with A14 on 26/07/2011). Principally, Ocalan had to think of developing a critical discourse regarding the issue of criticising the notion of the nation state, and the struggle for achieving the goal of an independent state for the Kurds. In other words, he had to revise his ideology with regards to the long-term dream of establishing the independent socialist greater Kurdistan.

In fact, the movement was in a great need of change. Therefore, Ocalan had to think of opening this deadlocked road in front of his struggle. Thus, the idea of establishing the KCK was not systematic, nor based on clear theoretical enhancement. Therefore, some people describe the KCK as a synonym for the PKK. Others say that it is a system that has been created by former PKK leader 'Abdullah Ocalan' as an alternative model to the current Turkish state. The point which is of important concern here is that, in all cases, the KCK has a crucial

role in the mobilization and managing of social movement in Kurdistan. Ocalan himself describes the KCK as a wide and diverse system that can be an alternative for the state. The project of the KCK for managing society is not based on the pillars of the nation state that is a top-down project. Nonetheless, it is based on 'Democratic Confederalism' through a "Democratic Autonomy" that could be bottom-up project. In other words, he suggests an alternative model under the name of 'Democratic Confederalism' with a project of 'Democratic Autonomy'

Ocalan argues:

"The Democratic Confederalism of Kurdistan is not a state system; it is the democratic system of a people without a state... It takes its power from the people and adopts to reach self-sufficiency in every field including economy. The Democratic Confederalism is the movement of the Kurdish people to found their own democracy and organize their own social system... The Democratic Confederalism is the expression of the democratic union of the Kurdish people that have been split into four parts and have spread all over the world... It develops the notion of a democratic nation instead of the nationalist-statist nation based on strict borders", (DTF, 2012).

Through the new approach of Ocalan and his KCK, the 'nation state is naturally dictatorial as it takes its power from some illusion or at least some ideology that is holy and blessed by heaven. In other words, according to Ocalan (2009), nation state has a notion of transcendental inspiration that makes the leaders of the nation regard themselves as God or the deputy of God on earth. Therefore, the notion of 'Democratic Autonomy' has been developed by Ocalan as an alternative for the nation state model in the Middle East. The notion of 'Nation State' verses the 'Democratic Autonomy' need to be elaborated in much more detail, from the point of scholars on the

one hand and from the view-point of “the Ideology of PKK” on the other hand. Yet, this can be postponed for the next chapters when the concept of Democratic Autonomy and the policy of the ‘KCK’ and implementing it will be investigated.

According to a senior member of the ‘KCK’ who does not want to be named; it is a system that is managing all aspects of Kurdistan society and produced as an alternative for the state model. This means that, the KCK can be seen as an umbrella for all active political, cultural, social, and societal organisations within the areas in which Kurds live. On the other hand, the notion of this umbrella is to refuse the model of the nation state. Thus, it is not only about the Kurds, it is about all ethnicities and religions; cultures that exist on the land that is called Kurdistan across all four countries (interview with A14 on 26/07/2011). In other words, it is about nations not states. Nevertheless, there is a contradiction about this suggestion of presenting the KCK from Ocalan. On the one hand, Ocalan has given up the notion of nation state or even democratic state and is focusing on the democratic confederacies, celebrating the notion of diversity and a multi-coloured society. On the other hand, the notion of Kurdishness and the struggle for free Kurdistan, makes one think that there is no such clear vision about overcoming the notion of the nation state.

Due to his imprisonment in ‘Imrali Island’ for more than a decade, Ocalan’s absence in the political arena has affected his organisation. Yet again, his character as a political leader has flourished and he became social movement leader that can be wider than merely the leadership of his former political party the “PKK”. Currently, Ocalan is seen not only by his followers as the Kurdish people's leader ‘Seroke Gele Kurd’ or ‘Kurt Halk Onderi’, but, also by a significant amount of the Kurdish people and Pro-Kurdish activists in Turkey

and in the other parts of Kurdistan. Therefore, there is a position on the top of the body of the KCK that is called the leadership. The word leadership in the context of the KCK means 'Abdullah Ocalan' himself, meaning that, his followers - who have become more than several millions - see him as a leader. Moreover, the management of the KCK has regarded him as an institution that is called leadership rather than a person only. It is better to postpone criticizing the KCK in this stage of the thesis and simply present the details about it just for now.

The KCK was established in 2005 after the confusion and ideological retreat that happened in the PKK's struggle and while Ocalan was in jail for six years. In 1999, when Ocalan was captured, similar to his recent call on the 21st of March 2013, he ordered the PKK guerrillas to retreat from Turkish territory and have unilateral ceasefire. Despite huge loyalty for Ocalan even when he was in jail, the inner conflict was more visible due to his absence. Thus, the PKK was dismantled by some of its actual leaders and Ocalan was not very much aware of the new situation of the PKK. Hence, the organization was diminished and it was just about to be another example of the Kurdish failure similar to that in which happened to all other Kurdish political parties in the history of the Kurdish national movement in the twentieth century across the whole parts of Kurdistan.

The issue of fragmentation and dismantlement has become an inevitable reality in the history of the Kurdish struggle. That was a point that Ocalan wanted to make distinct about his movement from other previous Kurdish movements. However, suddenly a group of members under the management of his younger brother 'Osman Ocalan' declared another party that was called the 'Patriotic Democratic Party', in Kurdish, 'Partiya Walatpareziya Demokratik' "PWD". Nevertheless, due to the distinctiveness of the struggle of the PKK and

extraordinary loyalty for Abdullah Ocalan within the movement, the dismantlement did not affect the struggle and the PKK has continued intact and as the only party that can claim of representation of the Kurdish cause in Turkey.

On the other hand, due to the Turkish pressure on the EU and the US administrations to label the PKK as a terrorist organisation and put it into the list of terror, the PKK tried to change its name to Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress "KADEK". As a result of this shift, there was an ideological gap within the organisation. Therefore, day by day, the KADEK was getting closer and closer from being diminished and decayed. Following this, the party went through a stage of "shock and retreat", (Akkaya and Jongerden, 2012); it was in front of a huge challenge to move up and get out of the stage of deadlock or reconstruct its organisation once again. Therefore, in 2005 the PKK was re-established again but this time in a different position and for a different purpose.

It can be suggested that the real notion of transformation of Kurdish national movement can be recorded from the process of rebuilding the movement and the transfer from the PKK to the KCK. The PKK was a political party with a different and much more progressed policy and practice compared to other Kurdish political parties prior to the PKK in all parts of Kurdistan. However, the KCK is a social movement that has worked on the 'changing of the values', of the Kurdish society, Castells (2012). Thus, the event of creating the KCK, (named as KKK at the beginning) is intended as the first step of transformation from political movement to social movement. It is about affecting the way that people think, behave and speak; the way people produce or reproduce several new terms and concepts or at least redefining the concepts and giving them

different values. That was what the KCK did and has been doing since 2005 until now.

Historically the PKK has been a common and familiar name. However, the PKK is a small part of the KCK at the present time. The PKK has only ideological tasks of the body that is called the KCK system as an umbrella for all cultural, social and political aspects of the movement. This means that the KCK is the main actor and character of social movement in Kurdistan since it is covering all aspects of activities. If this argument is not very much applicable for all parts of Kurdistan, it is clearly applicable in Turkey and in the northern part of Kurdistan and to the Kurdish areas and people in Syria. It is obvious how well organised the Kurdish people who are acting under the Kurdish party in Syria which is the Democratic Union Party 'PYD', Democratic Movement 'TEV-DEM' and the Kurdish army of People Defence Units 'YPG' and women wing of the Kurdish army YPJ in contemporary Syrian revolution against the Syrian state and so called Islamic state of ISIS. The example of implementing the KCK system is very visible in the Kurdish areas in both Turkish and Syrian parts of Kurdistan. Moreover, establishing a self-ruling entity in the Kurdish areas in Syria by the KCK actors based on the project of Democratic Autonomy is another point of effectiveness of the KCK in the region at the current time. Discussion about that implementation will be postponed for the next chapters of this thesis. Once again it must be argued that despite all vagueness and contradictions in the policy of the KCK as well as the matter of its illegality in Turkey; the movement is effective and has a huge impact on the peoples' lives and on the state policy. The main point to be presented here is examining the detail of the 'KCK'. During an interview with a senior Kurdish politician who considers himself as a citizen of the KCK; he suggested that the KCK has hundreds of small,

medium and big organisations across all parts of Kurdistan, in the Turkish large metropolises and in diaspora, (interview with A9 on 07/08/2011). Therefore, at the current time, the KCK is the main and widest entity that has covered all activities of the Kurdish and Kurdistan people. The terminology of the PKK is used only for a section that is responsible for ideological education within the committee of ideology under the management council and under the leadership of the KCK.

The goals of the KCK are defined by its leader and theoretical designer as such:

“To create a society in Kurdistan based on the principles of radical democracy, that lives according to the essential elements of democratic societal co-federalism, and which is organized democratically, based on equality of the sexes and ecological awareness. To fight against every kind of backwardness in Kurdish society, and to both create and advance individual and societal spiritual and financial development. To see that every faction of society is able to create its own democratic organization, to create regional people’s parliaments based on the policy of ‘equal KCK citizens.’ To bring about a transition from an economy based on profit to a communal economy based on user value and sharing. To fight against any attacks on the leadership of the Democratic Confederation”, (İSTEGÜN 2011).

When we look at this statement of Ocalan, we can easily see the notions of social movement in the objectives and procedures that are presented. In other words, there is a timely discourse for creating an umbrella for the social movement that is already out there. There is a sense of injustice, or a sense of “moral indignation”, (Githens-Mazer, 2006:16). There is a sense of collective identity and a sense of having an agency or there is some “belief that the individual can, in so far as they participate in sustained collective

action, alter conditions and politics through the mechanisms, institutions and actions of social movement”, (Githens-Mazer, 2006:16).

Looking at the hierarchy of the body of it, on the top of the KCK there is a council that is called leadership. Actually there is not any committee or council as such. It is only Ocalan himself but they call him leadership rather than a leader. Most likely after his death, this leadership body will be changed or totally erased as it is only a symbolic body. However, Ocalan has a crucial role in making any decision despite his condition as a prisoner for the last 15 years. Thus, hypothetically the position of leadership is the main and highest policy maker for the KCK.

Under the leadership, there is another assembly that can be similar to a parliament. It is a legislative branch of the KCK that is called the ‘Kurdistan People Congress’ in Kurdish ‘KGK’ or “Kongra Gel”. All the policies are made and decisions are taken by this assembly. Thus, Kongra Gel can be regarded as the main policy makers and decision takers too. “In compliance with the KCK contract, -which can be regarded as a constitution of the KCK- Kongra Gel consists of three hundred members. These members are elected bi-yearly by the KCK’s citizens”, (Sandikli, 2011). Members are from all parts of Kurdistan and from all different ethnic and religious minorities that reside in Kurdistan and from Kurdish people in diaspora. The place of this council is unknown or it is not in a particular place but mainly it is in the Kurdistan Mountains. A member of this assembly has stated that “every two years an election is held for Kongra Gel’s members and it is held in one of the mountains of Kurdistan”, (interview with A1 on 22/09/2012). The management system of this assembly is based on co-chair leadership; a man and a woman have fifty-fifty power as co-presidents of ‘Kongra Gel’.

Within the “Kongra Gel” or it can be said beside it, there is another council that is called the management council or ‘Executive Council’, in Kurdish “Konseya Reveberî”. From the members of Kongra Gel that are three hundred members, thirty members of them will be elected for the executive council. All executive tasks are on the shoulders of this council. Within the thirty members of the executive council, there is a team that consists of six members of the council that are managers of the executive council; two co-presidents and four assistants.

In addition to the legislative and executive councils, there is a ‘Judiciary Council’ on the same level as the other two. Thus, the judiciary council of the KCK is “made up of three different courts which report to one superior court under the name of the Court of Administrative Justice. These three separate courts are namely the Courts of People’s Liberation, the Superior Military Courts and the Administrative Courts”, (Sandikli, 2011). The members of the judiciary council are also elected by the legislative council. Thus, the members of both executive and judiciary councils are elected within and through the members of “Kongra Gel” which is the highest authority of the KCK.

As a matter of fact, all of the KCK leadership system is based on co-leadership for the institutions and organizations within the KCK. However, some parts of the system have very recently changed the one leader system. For example, the president of Kongra Gel was ‘Ramzi Kartal’ and the president of the executive council was ‘Murat Karaylan’. However, even before the change, in terms of practice, both bodies were run through a co-leadership management system. In July 2013, in the ninth conference of the Kongra Gel which was held in ‘Qendil Mountains’, the co-leader system for both ‘Kongra Gel’ and ‘Executive Council’ were announced. Both ‘Ramzi Kartal (male)’ and Hager Zagros

(female) became Kongra Gel co-leaders and both 'Cemil Bayik' (male) and 'Base Hozat' (female) became executive council co-leaders. It can be argued that this step of the KCK can be regarded as organisational transformation and maintenance, (Zald and McCarthy, 1987).

As mentioned earlier, the executive council has thirty members. Each few members are the head of a committee. There are six main committees that are responsible for all policies and decisions that Kongra Gel provides them, (interview with A14 on 26/07/2011). The committees are as follows:

1- **Political Committee 'Komiteya Siyasi'**: this committee is responsible for political activities across all parts of Kurdistan. The main and most prominent political parties that are currently active on the scene are the BDP and the HDP in Turkey or in the north part of Kurdistan, the PJAK and in Iran or in the east of Kurdistan, the PCDK in Iraq or in the south of Kurdistan, and the PYD in Syria or in the west of Kurdistan. Moreover, there are plenty of other political activities through individuals within other political and social organisations that have direct or indirect connections with this committee.

2- **Ideological Committee "Komiteya Ideolojik"**: this committee is responsible for preparing cadres, social activists and politicians and educating citizens of the KCK with the ideology of the system. It is also managing academic camps in and outside the territories of Kurdistan. The main body within this committee is the 'PKK'. As mentioned earlier, the PKK is no longer a main body of the movement. This means that it is not the PKK that 'Abdullah Ocalan' and his friends established from the 1970s. This 'PKK' which is inside the body of the KCK, is a part of a committee within six committees under the executive council of the KCK. Thus, the PKK is responsible for all ideological progress and preparing active members only from the ideological perspectives. Also there is an education and enlightening

organisation within this committee. In addition to that, this committee is managing media activities of the KCK in terms of ideological discourse and agenda.

Thus, the PKK is responsible for preparing lectures and programs for the whole movement. In other words, the PKK is nothing but an ideological school and a method of thinking and mobilizing the system of the 'KCK'. In this case, the terminology of the 'PKK' no longer means Kurdistan Workers Party as it was until 2005. It is only a symbol of an ideological wing of the KCK. Yet, the PKK is a label and much more usable by the state, media and by Kurdish people themselves as well.

It is just worth mentioning some of the lectures and topics that are delivered by this committee to the 'KCK' cadres. There are subjects within the curriculum of the PKK academic schools such as philosophy, history in general and the Middle East and Mesopotamia history, and ideological schools of thoughts; Marxism and socialism especially; analytically, criticizing the role and impact of religions, positivism and capitalism, focusing on feminism and gender studies. More importantly, teaching the history of Kurdish national movement especially over the last 40 years, ecology, self-defense and finally some special lectures about the leadership and the personality of the KCK leader 'Abdullah Ocalan'. The final one is delivered only by a senior member of the 'KCK' who spent most of his life with Ocalan, (interview with A14 on 26/07/2011). This means that, life and personality of Ocalan within the KCK became symbolic and every cadre of the movement has to be fully loyal to him. This is one of the extreme points that the KCK could not be free from it easily.

Anyone who is considered as a cadre must have at least six months study in the academia, regardless of their residence of living, age or education levels.

After six months, they can be a citizen of the KCK and they should promise the committee that they are cadres. In this case, there is a commitment that makes cadres put all their personal freedom and destinies in the hands of their movement. By having an 'oath' as a cadre, personal freedom such as getting married or living in a town or city, staying in town or going to mountains, and all other important things will be out of the hands of cadres. This means that personal freedom must be given up by the cadres.

3- **Security committee "Komiteya Parastine"**: this committee is responsible for all security and warfare activities. Preparing and training of guerrillas is implemented through this committee. The main and most prominent organisation within this committee is the Forces of Protecting People "HPG", in Kurdish; 'Hezen Parastnen Gel'. This is an army that has equipment and recruitment. Guerrillas are belonging to this organisation under the committee of security. Also "YJA STAR", the female wing of the HPG has the same or similar equipment and recruitment for female guerrillas.

There is a link between other armed wings of the groups that are under the KCK umbrella; such as the PJAK and the PYD that both have an army and are under the committee of security of the KCK. There are education and training courses that are provided by the HPG for most of the other Kurdish groups that have an army and guerrilla activities. However, there is some kind of semi-autonomy in the working and acting of other organisations in all parts of Kurdistan. It depends on necessity and opportunity, the nature and context of the struggle of each party, (interview with A4 on 14/9/2012).

4- **Ecology Committee "Komiteya Ekolojik"**: this committee is responsible for activities with regards to ecological issues; there are several civil organisations that are struggling for a clear and clean environment in Kurdistan. As mentioned

earlier, within the committee of ideology, there is an important subject that is delivered in the academic lectures which is ecological concerns. Also the literatures of the KCK and Abdullah Ocalan himself have exposed a great awareness to ecology and the environment. On the other hand, most of the societal organisations that are connected to the committee of society are actively contributing to the ecological concerns. According to the agreement of the KCK citizenship, citizens must protect the environment and have a clear concern about ecology, (interview with A2 on 23/09/2012). Before the KCK, majority of Kurdish people never understood how important ecology is. Even when Ocalan had mentioned this concern in his speech, very few people understood why this man was making this matter so important while Kurdish rights and identity were still under a huge risk. However, as a senior member of the KCK argues; to their movement, “ax u xoza qasi mirov u chand gingin”, (interview with A6 on 28/07/2011). This means that the land and nature are as important as the human and culture. This can be regarded as a turning point of the movement in terms of ecology and respecting the nature.

5- Economy Committee “Komiteya Abory”: this one is responsible for economic issues such as taxation, incomes and expenditures of the system. Managing the financial aspect of the system comes from this committee. Within the KCK there is a tight economic system that looks to the socialist economic system for the movement, (interview with A9 on 07/08/2011). What is very interesting here is the power of the KCK to manage its financial needs. It is not clear how and from which way the KCK is fulfilling financial resources. In the KCK agreement -or can be called constitution-, there is some kind of taxation system that has been mentioned. Yet, this is not a complete answer for this important aspect of economic issues. Since the KCK is an outlawed body, no

one can very certainly get to the answer of how the source of funds for it has been fixed. Therefore, several different presumptions are presented in this regard. Yet, none of them are certain and all of them can be somehow true.

6- **Society Committee “Komiteya Civaki”**: this committee is very important for the KCK, there are tens or, one can say hundreds, of organisations under this committee. Since the KCK can be regarded as the main actor of social movement in Kurdish part of Turkey, therefore, cultural and societal activisms are very wide within this system. In Turkey, the main and most prominent organisation that is under this committee is the Democratic Society Congress, in Turkish, Demokratik Toplum Kongresi “DTK”. This is a societal committee that is responsible for all social and cultural activities. Some of these organisations are legal and have members who are not citizens of the KCK; they are only legal citizens of the country in which they live. Yet, the policy of the most of these organisations cannot be delivered without the hegemony and power of the KCK.

An example of those organisations that are influenced by the “Ideology of PKK” is the Human Rights Association, in Turkish; İnsan Haklari Dernegi “IHD”. This organisation has members across all Turkey, yet in the cities where the KCK has hegemony, most of the members are working for the benefits of the ideology and policy of the KCK but the works are all run according to the Turkish legal boundaries. Other examples are, “Kurd-Der” and “Mezlum Der” in Turkey. The two latter organisations are legal according to the constitution of Turkey. However, the policy and program is under the control of the KCK. The state does not have evidence that such institutions are belong to the KCK. However, similar to plenty of other organisations, there are legal boundaries that protect them from closure, (interview with A4 on 14/09/2012).

Apart from these six main committees, there are plenty of sub branches and bodies within the KCK. As mentioned earlier, since the KCK is illegal in Turkey, it has an invisible feature but powerful and visible affection. The point that needs to be cleared here is that the KCK framework cannot be totally drawn. The figure (1) below has made the KCK structure clearer.

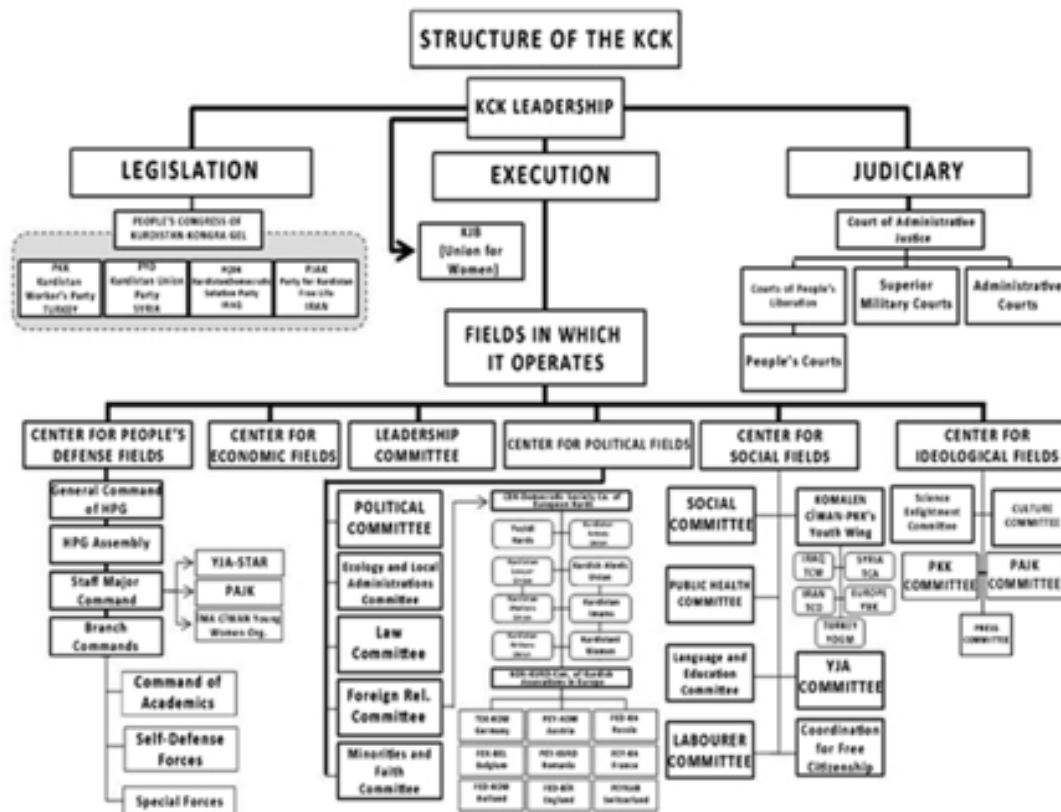


Figure (1): the KCK Structure, Sandikli, (2011)

It is worth mentioning a fact that within the KCK, the role and presence of women is very active and obvious. Any position and decision within any organ of the KCK has to be regarded and taken by the power, presence and participation of women. Almost all the high positions on the level of national, regional and local are divided equally between men and women. For example, the leadership of the DTK is held by two leaders, “currently Mr Ahmet Turk and Miss. Aysel Togluk” and for the BDP it was both “Mr

Selahattin Demirtaş and Mrs. Gultan Kisanak”, (A2). At the current time, for the HDP as a largest pro-Kurdish Party under the KCK, the co-chairs are Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ. This model is very new for Turkey and almost for Europe. Only a few political and social movements in Europe are following the co-chair system and no Turkish social and political movement has followed this model.

On the other hand, for the leadership of any organ within the KCK, at the different levels and on the different aspects, there is a management team of the committees and councils that is made from three members. The first one of the three has to characterize general people, so the member could be a man or a woman; the second one is representing women so the member has to be woman by herself. Finally, the third one is representing the youth within the committee. No matter if the member is male or female they have to be young. So it sometimes happened that the female members of the management committees and councils are in the majority. A senior member of the KCK argues that more than %65 of the managers of the KCK positions are female and more than %80 of their decision makers are young members, (interview with C2 on 07/10/2011). This means that the KCK has a notion of regeneration within its body. Yet, the hegemony and full commitment for the Ideology of the PKK is crucial for the members still.

By observing the diverse activities of the KCK within and outside Turkey and Kurdistan, it can be easily noticed how actively women are representing the social and political activities. Thus, the pillars of the patriarchy system have been shaken at least relatively since the “Ideology of PKK” has started to have the hegemony on Kurdistan society. Therefore, this could be another face of transformation within the Kurdish national movement.

There is another point that is worth mentioning here which could be the issue of personal and individual interests. Conflict within the members due to personal and individual interests rarely can be seen. It just seems to be that the system has made the cadres not to think of themselves any more. In other words, no-one can raise any personal issues and fight for their own individual rights and interests. It is a very tiny scope for individual interests for the cadres who are working within such organisations that the KCK has ideological hegemony on. Somehow, it must be collective struggle and only collective aims are in the agenda of the institutions. The evidence for what is mentioned is very clear and obvious. It can be seen simply through observing the leaders and main activists of these social and political organisations with the KCK.

These activists are deprived from almost all or most of their individual interests, their welfare and well-being. During one year of close observation of the main activists and high members of those organisations that consider themselves as loyal to the KCK, this point has been remarked so obviously. During an interview with the KCK senior members that are on the very top of the pyramid of the KCK, It was remarked that there is no any different between them and any simple member who has no power and responsibility. It was remarked that the hard work of the senior member and the tea server, who is working in the kitchen of the office, are rewarded equally. Thus, there is no any difference between members at least in terms of life-style, clothing and eating and in terms of their place of sleeping and having any special treatment. This means that the KCK is managed by mentality and policy that is not familiar with nowadays organisational management. This is the point that argues that the KCK cannot be understood by mainstream policy and mentality.

All what has been seen above about the shape of the KCK in a broader context, can be seen in a smaller picture on the levels of all parts of Kurdistan. This means that within the borders of Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey, there are legal and illegal institutions which are belong to the KCK. They have assemblies and councils, they have committees and organisations. They have social, cultural, economic and political institutions that are working under the “Ideology of PKK” or the policy and practice of the KCK system. Meanwhile, it is obvious that there are some sorts of independence and autonomy according to social and political situations and opportunities, (interview with D2 on 03/06/2012).

Since the struggle of the PKK historically has mainly focused on the Turkish part of Kurdistan and the majority of the Kurds live there, the main and most powerful part of the KCK’s struggle has been working there. In Turkish Kurdistan, there are organised bodies for all the committees and councils under the name of Assembly of Turkey, “Meclisa Turkiye”, (interviews with A1, A2 on 22&23/09/2012 & with A14 on 03/06/2011). At the top of the power of any assembly of Turkey, there is an assembly that is similar to the “Kongra Gel” but on the level of Turkey only. It is called the Democratic Society Congress, in Kurdish, Kongra Civaken Demokratik “KCD” or “DTK”, (interview with A13 on 17/04/2012). This assembly is somehow controversial. On the one hand, it is a legal body that has permission in Turkey according to the legislation and under the name of a cultural activities organisation. On the other hand, it is illegal since it is the main and most powerful body of the KCK in Turkey. In the next chapter, there will be a deep interpretation of the DTK and its role in the social, cultural and political arena in Turkey and in Kurdistan especially.

What is interesting in this respect is that the DTK in Turkey is the main body of the KCK in practice and reality. However, it is legally called the DTK in its Turkish name and it is a non-political entity. It is a cultural association according to the legal sphere in Turkey that is involved with cultural events only. This is very common in the political arena in Turkey and among the Kurds too. This means that there are several names on the scene that do not have real powers. Nonetheless, there are some hidden actors that have essential invisible powers. For instance, in the case of Turkish political movements, there is a movement of well-known Muslim cleric 'Fethulla Gulen' that has a huge invisible political power through its social, cultural, educational and religious activities under the name of social and religious services 'Hizmet'. However, there is no any visible power in the hand of this Cleric and his movement, Olson (2011).

This argument even goes further to touch the main point in the Turkish political arena that has been elaborated under the concept of the state and deep state agenda in Turkey. Thus, there is an undercover power that is protecting the ideology and interest of the political entity of the state. In the case of the KCK, there are several characters and deep characters that are engaged with the struggle within the national movement of the Kurds. Yet, their names and faces cannot be seen easily. On behalf of them, there are other names and faces.

In addition to the KCK that is active on the land of Kurdistan, Kurds in diasporas have their own institutions under different names; those who are living and struggling according to the "Ideology of PKK" or at least are under the hegemony of that ideology; working within an institution that is under the KCK somehow. This association is called the "Democratic Society of the Kurds" outside Kurdistan or in diaspora; in Kurdish, Civaken Demokratika Kurd

“CDK”, (interview with A1 on 22/09/2012). This is only an approach to protect the KCK activities and adapted its legacy according to the EU and other countries’ legal systems. Therefore, the leaders of the KCK who are in Europe are mainly active members of this entity that is called “CDK”.

Moreover, there is another assembly that is gathering occasionally in Europe, which has an annual general congress and election for the leader and members. It is called the Kurdistan National Congress, in Kurdish, Kongra Netewiya Kurdistan ‘KNK’. It has its main headquarters in Brussels. This congress has Kurdish and Kurdistani members across the world and from all parts of Kurdistan. Once again, this is under the KCK umbrella and working under the “Ideology of PKK” as well. The KNK is the successor of another assembly that was called Kurdistan Parliament in Exile; in Kurdish, Paliamentoya Kurdistan Derve Welat, ‘PKDW’, (interview with A2 on 23/09/2012). This assembly was formed as a body to represent the legal form of the Kurdish struggle outside Kurdistan. Yet, due to the rapid changes in the Kurdish political party’s agendas and lack of unity and national scheme rather than regional or local agenda, it could not be an umbrella for all Kurdish social activists and political parties. Currently, the KNK can gather several Kurdistani political parties across all parts of Kurdistan. Yet, those parties that accept the KNK are only those that are directly or indirectly under the hegemony and control of the “Ideology of PKK”.

As mentioned earlier, the “Ideology of PKK” has affected the Kurdish national movement across all parts of Kurdistan, with some difference from one part to another. However, the main and most effective impact that this ideology has had, can be seen in the northern part of Kurdistan. As mentioned earlier, the main and most powerful body of the Turkish council of the KCK is Democratic Society Congress, in Turkish, “Demokratik Toplum Kongresi” ‘DTK’. Also politically, there

is a Peace and Progress Party; in Kurdish, Partya Asityi w Demokrasi, 'PAD', in Turkish, "Baris ve Demokrasi Partisi" 'BDP'. We should refer to those two main organizations in their Turkish acronyms, as 'DTK' and 'BDP', since they are known mainly by these acronyms in the public and in the social and political arenas. In the next chapters this thesis tries to investigate the nature of these two institutions in detail and the manifestation of the KCK's policy and the "Ideology of PKK" through both the 'DTK' and the 'BDP'.

Conclusion

This chapter was very important for the entire thesis since it has provided a enormous amount of presentation and critical discussion about three main intertwined elements of the Kurdish national struggle and social movement in the Kurdish part of Turkey. It has focused on the PKK with all its controversies, the ideology of PKK with all its limitations and complications as well as the KCK system with all its vague manifestations and wide range of presence. The PKK became a base for the Kurdish revival and ending the era of Kurdish denial in Turkey. It was discussed that the ideology of PKK as a new and reshaped school of the KCK system has made promises to follow the new pathway of the Kurdish national struggle in Turkey. Moreover, the KCK was critically presented in detail. Theoretically, the KCK was regarded as a new and multi-dimensional movement that has started its wide range of activism in Kurdistan and in Turkey. In the next chapter, the practical and visible faces of the KCK will be under analysis. That would be through social and cultural activism of the KCK as the main actor of the Kurdish national struggle in Turkey. Through this analysis, the reasons behind the process of transformation from the PKK to the KCK will be better examined.

**CHAPTER FIVE: THE KCK: THE BEGINNINGS OF THE
TRANSFORMATION**

Introduction

This chapter will investigate the reasons for the first steps of the main actor of the Kurdish national movement towards change and transformation of the struggle. It will look at the Kurdish civil and legal activism in Turkey and the political activities that have been pursued in a different way since the KCK has been established. For that, it will particularly examine activism of the newly established KCK as a multi-dimensional entity that has provided new and different characters for the Kurdish national struggle in Turkey. Through the focus on the cultural and social activism of the KCK within the Kurdish part of Turkey, the policy of the movement from political to social, from nation state to democratic nation building will be investigated.

In order to make the picture of Kurdish national movement flawless, there must be an attempt to envisage the whole framework of the movement. The character and functions of the main game players of the movement need to be illustrated. For that, the changes of the political and social contexts in Turkey and in the broader regional states can be widely seen on the one hand, alongside the transformations of the main actor of the Kurdish national movement from a one-dimensional 'struggle' to a broader and multi-dimensional 'struggle' on the other hand, (Touraine, 1981). Nonetheless, the types of struggle and demands have been changed from Kurdish ultra nationalist and political demands to more societal, democratic and multi-ethnic and multi-cultural demands.

It is attention grabbing that on the one hand, within the Kurdish national struggle and social movement in the Kurdish areas in Turkey, diverse and multiple ethnic, religious and cultural characters can be seen. However, mainly the struggle and the control of the whole frame of the movement is under the hands

of Kurdish powers and circling around the issue of Kurdishness through cultural, social and political rights for the Kurds and other minorities. It is not an easy task for the Kurds and their institutions to manage civil and legal activities within the Turkish borders and according to the Turkish constitution boundaries. However, in recent years, Kurds and other minority groups who are living in the Kurdish areas in Turkey or have ties with the Kurdish national movement have actively established several institutions and groups to proceed with the struggle and fight for their rights and agendas. These institutions are diverse from social to political, from cultural to ecological, from human rights to language and craft learning activities.

In Turkey, all such institutions and groups that are working in favour of the Kurds and the notion of Kurdishness are mainly managed by an ideological agenda that comes from the policy making and decision taking of the 'KCK'. Under the umbrella of the KCK, there are hundreds of organisations from small to medium and large in size, (interview with A3 on 25/03/2012). This thesis argues that all Kurdish and pro-Kurdish political parties such as the BDP, HDP, Hak-Par, and KADEP are working directly or indirectly, compulsorily or voluntarily under the control of the KCK. In terms of social activities, there is the same or a similar case for social and cultural organisations such as the Human Rights Association 'IHD', the Kurdish Democratic Culture and progress Association 'Kurd-Der', and the Human Rights and Depressed people Association 'Mezlum-Der'. Moreover, for the administrations and municipalities, there are about one hundred municipalities which are directly or indirectly under the hegemony or the control of the ideological committee of the 'KCK'; in other words, all municipalities that are in the Kurdish areas and have been elected by some Kurdish votes to be in the office "are run by the commission of regional

management within the committee of the 'Ideology of PKK' which is the main ideological part of the KCK", (interview with A4 on 14/09/2012).

Moreover, the strategy and tactics of the Kurdish national movement all are under the control of the KCK. Since 2005, a series of discussions has been seen. The discussions were to develop and argue about 'Democratic Republic', 'Democratic Confederalism' and recently the project of 'Democratic Autonomy' that were suggested by the KCK. All these discussions were held through the KCK's main umbrella organisation within Turkey that is called the Democratic Society Congress 'DTK'. These projects have been put into the agenda and presented through Kurdish activists, mainly by the Kurdish political parties such as the DTP and later by the BDP and the HDP. The projects could be regarded as an ideological transformation of the Kurdish national movement towards societal democratization through the development of the concept of 'Radical Democracy', (Akkaya and Jongerden 2012). As a matter of fact, all such ideas came from the KCK policy makers and especially its leader 'Abdullah Ocalan'.

For that, it is necessary to dedicate this chapter to focus on the KCK and its organisations, as it is important to present the range, power and limitation of this entity as it has successively become the main actor that is managing the Kurdish national movement. Without understanding this umbrella organisation, it is not easy to understand the source and power of all such activities in Turkey by the Kurds and their institutions. Here this chapter begins with showing the reasons and examining the shift of the Kurdish movement's discourse.

Shifting the Discourse of the Movement after Ocalan's Capture

Not only after the capture of the leader of the PKK, (Currently the KCK) Abdullah Ocalan in 1999, but since 1993, this movement wanted to show the

notion of changing their discourse in terms of their policy and their demands. The main point that the PKK had brought into the Kurdish national movement agenda at the beginning of the movement was standing above the notion of tribalism and religious hegemony on the Kurdish movement. As mentioned earlier, other social and political movements prior to the PKK focused on the religious figures and chieftains in the rural Kurdish areas in Kurdistan, Bruinessen (1992). Nonetheless, the PKK came to the arena to show that the freedom of the Kurds must be started from the challenge and struggle for making people free from any sort of slavery and tyranny.

Thus, the PKK has claimed that freedom starts from freeing the Kurds from tribal leaders before making them free from the state and its despotism, (interview with A14 on 26/07/2011). After a long time of depressing Kurdish revolts since 1938, the state used the tribal leaders and chieftains as a tool for depressing any Kurdish revolution or movement. The character and personality of such local notable figures were no longer to be relied on to start the revolt through their support. Thus, the PKK focused on changing the values and perceptions of the Kurds towards themselves first, then towards the state and its occupation of their land.

Moreover, the PKK came with its discourse essentially to bring the freedom of greater Kurdistan into its agenda rather than struggling only for the Kurds in Turkey. Thus the struggle was for the people of Kurdistan rather than the Kurds only, and for the whole of Kurdistan, rather than one part only. That was the discourse at least theoretically, let alone the power and possibility of implementation of this ideology. That was the discourse of the movement, especially under that very restricted situation in the 1970s and the 1980 when the PKK started its struggle.

Yet, the notion of greater Kurdistan and overcoming the limit of focusing on the tribal leaders and chieftains' support for the revolution has become a unique starting point for the struggle. In a very long interview about the History of the PKK, a senior member of the KCK, "Cemil Bayik" explicitly argues that the movement never wanted to see itself as responsible for the struggle only in one part of Kurdistan. They have never stated that they struggle for only one part and do not care about the other areas. For the PKK, the Kurdish question is one question not several questions in the different parts of Kurdistan, Cudi (2008). 'Cemil Bayik' argues: "we always saw Kurdistan as a whole and we struggled for making a national unity among all social and political parties across all Kurdistan", (Cudi, 2008: 346).

Nevertheless, from day one of the struggle, the main figures of the PKK wanted to show some power and base to persuade the state and the government of Turkey to start negotiating with them. Yet, this opportunity never came and the state always wanted to depress the struggle and their activities. The Turkish state was always handling the Kurdish question through both a military and security perspectives. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the hegemony of the new world system under the USA; the PKK had to think of changing its discourse to a rather different approach from the traditional Marxist-Leninist approach. Thus, the change has been made in terms of reviewing the struggle and relations with the regional powers. Before exploring the reasons for shifting the discourse of the "Ideology of PKK", it is necessary to highlight the aims and the discourse of the PKK from the first stage of the struggle.

Having a highlight on the objectives of the PKK could make some of the discussions flawless. Did the PKK have a national aim as Kurdish national liberation? Was that the main agenda of the movement? Or did the PKK start its

struggle to liberate the people of Kurdistan rather than Kurds only? Did it want to struggle for all people in Turkey rather than Kurds within the country and other countries that Kurdistan is situated within? Ozcan, (2006) argues that at the beginning of the struggle of the PKK, the objective was the creation of an independent greater socialist Kurdistan through revolutionary socialism and internally it was organised around the principles of democratic centralism. Members of the party had to involve with total dedication and full-time commitment to the cause; they had to forego their private lives and individual interests and initiatives for the sake of their ideology. Therefore, the PKK was a Kurdistan movement rather than a Kurdish party only. It also combined with the motivation of socialism and revolutionary enthusiasm.

However, as Ozcan (2006) suggests, the PKK has tried to nationalize or 'Kurdicize' the ideology of socialism in order to gain a space for spreading it among Kurdish people. Ozcan (2006) argues that the PKK is a "Kurdicized copy of those customary communist parties that undertake a nation's 'national' liberation as an 'initial stage' of the ultimate socialist revolution. The ideology by which the PKK formulates this initiative's aims and objectives is a Middle-Eastern translation of traditional Marxist socialism", (Ozcan, 2006: 20). Thus, the PKK has become the first Kurdish political movement that has called for a Kurdish independent state in the twentieth century since the massacre of Dersim in 1938.

There is a clear distinction between what Ocalan did and what Mustafa Barzani and Qazi Mohammed did a few decades before Ocalan. Also this is a main difference between the PKK and other main Kurdish political parties in Kurdistan such as the KDP and the PUK in the southern part and KOMALA and the KDPI in the eastern part of Kurdistan. However, in the current time when the

KRG has been established and Kurdish people in the south of their land have a de-facto state and are legally accepted by Iraqi constitution as a federal region within Iraq; due to the tension and conflict with the central power in Baghdad, Kurds are very close to declaring independent and Kurdish political parties; the KDP especially are very much talking about independence and declaring a Kurdish republic in the very small part of the historical motherland of Kurdistan.

Thus, the discourse of the KDP has slightly changed towards state and nation state, while the discourse of the PKK has shifted toward a model behind the state and nation state. Discussion about the KDP issue is outside of the main aim of this thesis. Yet it is necessary to see the reasons for changing the discourse of the PKK and how hard it is for the PKK policy makers and for Kurdish people to accept this new shift and forget about their long-time dream to have an independent state of Kurdistan.

From Independence to Confederation

Not only for Kurdish people, even for the PKK leaders and especially for Ocalan himself, it was a hard decision to come across such an idea and overcome the notion of the nation state. Ocalan (2011), argues that for him coming out from the hegemony of thinking of the nation state was not easy at all. This was due to the fact that for a long time in the history of the Kurds, it was a big dream and all hope and the future were connected to the notion of having a state such as other nations. Despite the reality and the nature of all Kurdish political parties that had no power and agenda to call for a free independent Kurdistan. However, Kurdish people always had this dream and hope. They always sacrificed for this aim and fought for a free independent Kurdistan. In contrary to all previous Kurdish political parties in all different parts of Kurdistan, at the first stage, the PKK came

with an idea of establishing a 'free independent socialist Kurdistan state'.

One of the points that have made the PKK evolve rapidly was focusing on the notion of a greater independent Kurdistan state. Nevertheless, when the PKK came up with the idea of leaving the notion of state and building nation-state alone, once again it was different from other previous parties. The decision of ideological shift and transformation from the independence of Kurdistan as a sovereign and recognized state to the idea of a free and democratic Kurdistan people within the borders of those countries that Kurdistan is situated in; has come from the notion of changing the ideological perceptions and progress of the knowledge of the PKK policy makers. Taking the reality and possibility of achieving their goals into account was a main point in changing this discourse.

The policy and ideology of the PKK mainly comes from the books and lectures of Abdullah Ocalan. During his imprisonment, Ocalan had a good chance to think and reshape the policy and ideology of his movement. Ocalan (2011) has argued that "for the time being", (Ocalan, 2011: 10) the notion of the nation state in the case of Kurds and Kurdistan must be left alone. Thus, I argue that the PKK did not and, the current KCK does not totally reject the notion of state and a greater Kurdistan. By observing the KCK and its activities, one can easily notice that the notion of a free and independent nation and building a sovereign nation for the Kurds is still on the agenda. Yet again, in the current discourse of the KCK through the "Ideology of PKK" that was manifested through the Road Map of the KCK and the projects of Democratic Autonomous Kurdistan, one can notice that the KCK does not want to harm the sovereignty of the states that Kurdistan has been divided into.

Here, the main point is how the notion of the nation state was left alone "at least for the time being" and the discourse of free, autonomous and democratic

nations and societies came on the agenda. As it is argued earlier, the PKK was a product of the era of the denial of the Kurds and its ideology was predominantly under the influence of the traditional Marxist-Leninist ideology. The analysis of the PKK was developed within the framework of scientific constructed socialism. Thus, at that time, there could not be any further progress and interpretation than advancing the discourse through the notion of the nation state. Therefore, it can be argued that the PKK was only “a practical, political movement”, (Ocalan, 2011: 50) within the frame work of the nation state building.

The concept of ‘political movement’ versus ‘social movement’ (Castells, 2012), could be a centre of the argument in this regard. The transformation process from a political movement to a social movement is a main point that can be focused on here. In other words, in terms of the organisational aspect, the transformation can be seen from the PKK as a political movement to a wider entity that named the KCK as a social movement. The notion of changing values of society as a main point of the tasks of social movements (Castells, 2012) could not be achieved through the PKK as a practical political party. In Ocalan's (2011) expression, tackling the cancer of “Kurdish dilemma” needed the establishment of a wider social movement to change the destiny of the people and free them from long term slavery. Nonetheless, the task of the PKK was confronting the crucial reality that was leading Kurdish people to be wiped out under the notion of the unification, Turkification and assimilation policies of the Turkish state in the twentieth century.

It can be argued that the struggle of the PKK was successful and the survival of the notion of Kurdishness and the existence of the Kurds and Kurdistan at least in the northern part of Kurdistan is the result of the struggle of the PKK.

However, the PKK was not successful in bringing about a Kurdish nation state as it was in the objectives. Therefore, the PKK went into cul-de-sac and it had to be changed. In the process of transformation of the Kurdish national movement in the northern part of Kurdistan, it could be said that the transformation from a one-dimensional to a multi-dimensional struggle has been in operation since 1993, and it has been manifested later on by establishing the system of the KCK. This means that the PKK has been abolished and replaced by a much more developed and multi-dimensional entity that is recently known as the KCK. This new entity has put the notion of the nation state aside and developed the notion of confederation and democratic autonomy for the Kurdish people and entire Turkey. The task of the PKK was confronting the process of denial of the Kurdishness through the process of Turkification and assimilation. Perhaps, the process of de-Turkification has slightly been implemented by the PKK.

Turkification and De-Turkification

The process of Turkification started even before establishing the new Turkish state. It goes back to the time of 'Sultan Abdul Hamid II'. The process of Turkification was not implemented only on the Kurdish people. It was on all the people in the region. The process led the state to commit a huge massacre against Armenians and non-Muslim minorities in the region. However, the genocide process on the Kurdish people was not physical per se, as it was in the case of the Armenians. In the case of the Kurds, it was cultural genocide in deed. As mentioned earlier, in his book, 'political memories' 'Sultan Abdul Hamid the second' has suggested that; "to strengthen the Turkish nation, we need to Turkify all the Kurds everywhere. This is a basic and main point of the strengthening of the Turkish nation", (Akcura, 2010: 54).

It is very interesting that the sultan suggested such an idea at that time, when the Ottoman Empire had several problems and had started to lose its influence and power in the most part of its territories. Moreover, the only ethnic group that had full loyalty to the empire was the Kurdish one. The process of Turkification was implemented soon after the Armenian genocide process. According to Akcura, (2010), the 'Young Turks' and the group of Union and progress Committee' (Etihad ve Terekki Cemiyeti) 'CUP', were at the centre of starting the implementation process of the Kurdish cultural and social genocide. The only difference in the genocide of the Armenians compared to the one of the Kurds was that the former had been done through physical massacre while the latter was achieved through the Turkification process.

The culture and the social status of the Kurds were targeted. In the republic era, especially under the command of 'İsmet İnönü' the process of social and cultural genocide of the Kurdish people reached its peak. The process went too far in terms of assimilation of the Kurdish people totally. All the Kurdish names of the cities, towns, and villages were replaced by Turkish names. No Kurdish child could have Kurdish name. Besides, physical mass killing in a Kurdish city of 'Dersim' took place, Akcura (2010). Moreover, in 1993 there were about three million Kurds from the Kurdish areas in the south east of the country forced to leave their villages to the metropolises such as Istanbul, Izmir and Ankara. That happened mainly due to the war against the PKK (war on terror) and the status of emergency in the Kurdish provinces.

Other reasons could be due to the lack of stability, and very poor social, legal and economic conditions; most of the people had no choice but to leave their home towns and villages for the western part of Turkey. That was a very systematic plan of the state to make people leave their own places of origin. By

no means could people go back to their original places, Bozarslan, (2012). This migration could have been an effective method to make the Kurds forget their language, culture and the notion of Kurdishness and their support of the PKK. Until recent years, when the process of De-Turkification was started by the KCK, there were no any symbols, signs or cultural activities that could be referred to as a Kurdish. This means that, to a very high extent, the process of Turkification was successful in the cities. Almost all people were speaking the Turkish language. Everybody was listening to and watching the Turkish media; essentially, there were only Turkish media.

Therefore, the state wanted to complete the process by destroying all the villages. Destroying villages had several benefits for the Turkish state. First of all, the process of Turkification could not be successful in the villages due to the lack of proper education; most rural people in Kurdistan were uneducated. But if they were forced to live in Turkish huge cities, they would have no choice but to adapt to the new conditions. The second benefit was cutting support for the PKK from the people of the villages. It was obvious for the state that the villages were a great source of food and shelter supply for the PKK fighters. Moreover, it was easier for the PKK to recruit guerrillas amongst rural people rather than educated urban people, Cudi (2008).

Nevertheless, the reaction to that severe process of Turkification has always been taking place. The process of de-Turkification started from the day one of the process and has continued until today's date. Yet, the process of Turkification was always stronger and much more effective than the reaction of the Kurds against it. Soon after the state establishment in 1923 the process of Turkification was institutionalized by the state. The education system, social, legal and political sphere were all became Turkish. Though, the struggle of the

Kurds has been much more visible and mature. It can be argued that the revolt of 'Sheikh Said' in 1925 was principally against the process of Turkification. Yet, the process of de-Turkification was very weak and slow. In other words, the resistance in front of the wave of Turkification was weak. Being a Turk in Turkey was giving a person all opportunity to live as equal to other real Turks.

However, resistance against the process would make a person face all sorts of problems and difficulties. A person who did not want to be a Turk, would lose his job, would be taken to jail and even killed in jail or in front of his family and friends. A senior member of the KCK stated that his father was killed in the Diyarbakir prison just because he refused to be a Turk", (interview with A9 on 07/08/2011). Therefore, almost all Kurdish people in the cities had to become at least formally Turks. In order for children not to ruin their future, mothers and fathers did not want them even to know that they were originally Kurds.

Nowadays, after several years and a few generations of that process, the majority of the Kurds do not even realize that they are from Kurdish origin (interview with A4 on 14/09/2012). In an announcement in 1925, 'Ismet Inonu' the prime minister of the republic clearly said: "we are obviously nationalists. Nationalism is a main reason of our unity. Compared to the Turkish majority, other ethnics don't have any importance. By any cost, we want to make all our populations Turks. Whoever stands against Turks and Turkism, we will kill them. The first point for us to recognize any good citizen is Turkishness and Turkism", (Bozarslan, 2012:64).

Due to the process of Turkification, the notion of Kurdishness has become a shameful thing and no-one wanted to be labelled as a Kurd. After four decades of the process under the new state of Turkey, the fourth president of the Turkish republic 'Cemal Gursel' went beyond what 'Ismet Inonu' addressed; he made his

famous speech about the respect of being a Turk and how to react if someone was insulted by being a Kurd. He simply asked for “spitting on the face of whoever describes you as a Kurd”, (Bozarslan, 2012: 97). Therefore, the notion of Turkishness became an unavoidable choice. The Kurds had no choice but accepting that reality. The majority of the Kurds accepted the reality as their fate. Thus, for the majority of them, the struggle to come out from that bitter reality was not even a matter. The state has examined several methods for implementing that process. In the last few decades, one of the methods that successfully worked in the process was making a semi-army from the rural Kurds as village Guards ‘Korucu’. In other words, the state obliged rural people to join an irregular huge army that has been created under the name of village guards from the Kurds themselves against the Kurdish national movement.

The villagers were given a “choice between signing up as ‘Village Guards’ (Korucu) and give up the villages”, (Jongerden, 2007: xxii). Those villagers that did not join the army mainly left their villages to the western metropolis. In many cases, “the only inhabited left were (Korucu) villages”, (Jongerden, 2007: xxii). According to informal sources, there are about 70,000 members of this army, (interview with A4 on 14/09/2012). The number is huge, seven to ten times bigger than the number of the actual guerrillas of the HPG under the KCK⁵. These village guards ‘Korucu’ are familiar with their own people. Therefore, they can attack the actual social and cultural points of Kurdishness better than the Turks that are coming from the other side of Turkey. Thus, the negative impact of collaboration is harsher than the state atrocities through the process of Turkification.

⁵ Recruitment of Kurdish collaborators was not only in Turkey. Iranian and Iraqi regimes were taking this plan as well. As a matter of fact, under the regime of ‘Saddam Hussein’ in Iraq in the 1980s, the numbers of the Kurdish armed collaborators were 200,000 while the numbers of Kurdish freedom fighters ‘Peshmarga’ were only 8,000, (interview with C1 on 27/02/2012).

Since the PKK has started its struggle, the process of de-Turkification has been activated. In the first step, the PKK has announced the war against the notion of collaboration as an effective method of genocide and the state policy of denial through the process of Turkification. Since the state had multiple methods of the process, the movement of the Kurds also had to react against the state through the same multiple methods. However, the PKK made a huge mistake which was the issue of bringing back the language into the public sphere among the Kurds and its guerrillas and cadres. The PKK has mainly focused on rebuilding the Kurdish personality and bringing back dignity and morale to the Kurdish people. That was a hard task to stand against the process of denial at the time. The PKK thought that struggling against the collaboration and local internal enemies of its goals was the first and most important step. Thus, the issue of language and bringing about using the mother tongue was less important for the PKK at the time.

However, since the KCK has been established, the process of de-Turkification has made great steps through various channels. For instance, the KCK has established a Kurdish organization 'Kurd-Der', for the struggle in bringing the Kurdish language back into the public sphere. Despite all the obstacles and series of closures of its offices across Turkey and Kurdish areas, since 2005, 'Kurd-Der' has graduated more than (70,000) Kurdish students so that they can speak, read and write Kurdish again. It also graduated more than (10,000) Kurdish teachers, (interview with A15 on 17/06/2012). The mission of 'Kurd-Der' is reactivating Kurdish culture and bringing the Kurdish language into the public life again.

Therefore, the range of its activism is not only delivering Kurdish language teachings, (interview with A15 on 17/06/2012). Currently, there are several

social, cultural and political activities that are taking place in the Kurdish language. All the language tasks and enquiries from other institutions under the KCK are coming back to the 'Kurd-Der'. For instance, preparing a cultural or political formal speech, or at least correction or proof reading such reports and articles so often are sent to the teachers and cadres of 'Kurd-Der', (interview with A15 on 17/06/2012). Moreover, there is a social and political will to bring the Kurdish language into the formal and legal education system. The Turkish state recently has limitedly allowed the Kurds to use their own mother tongue in their informal daily life. They are about to accept learning the language in the education system only as a chosen subject. This means that, Kurdish children can learn their language (if they want to) in limited sessions only.

Nevertheless, Kurdish social and political will wanted to bring the language into the education system. Thus, Kurdish people could study in Kurdish similar to what is going on in the Turkish state system in the Turkish language. In other words, Kurdish children from primary schools until university should study various subjects in Kurdish. This model has been implemented in the south part of Kurdistan since the 1970s. The Kurdish students can study physics and biology in Kurdish not in Arabic or English. Thus, the Kurdish political will through the KCK wants the Kurds in Turkey to study all subjects in their own mother tongues. In short, the process of de-Turkification has started and been activated since the KCK came into being. Moreover, the notion of Kurdishness and promoting nation building has been continuing through civil, legal, cultural, social and societal activisms.

Kurdish Civil and Legal Activities in Turkey

There is an important point that can be regarded as a transformation or at least the start of the process of transformation in the Kurdish national movement in Turkey. It is the focus of civil and legal activities for the Kurds within the borders of Turkey and under the rule of the Turkish state constitution. Despite all difficulties and almost impossibility of such things under the name or even the notion of Kurdishness, yet again the Kurds started to draw more attention to this aspect of their struggle. Until today's date, by definition and according to the Turkish constitution, all people who live within the Turkish borders are Turks. This has been harshly implemented during the last ninety years of the period of the new Turkish state, (McDowall, 2010). For the Kurds especially, the situation was harsher. Thus, there has not been any activity under the name of Kurds since then, let alone the word Kurdistan, as it was a big crime and it was too dangerous for anyone to refer to the Kurdishness.

As a result, all Kurdish or pro-Kurdish political or social activities under the name of Kurdishness is regarded as a crime and the punishment is rising for the actors. Therefore, until today's date, there is no any legal Kurdish institution under the name of Kurdishness or Kurdistan. They must find names that can be suited to the Turkish constitution. All of the BDP, DTP, DEP, HADEP, DEHAP and HEP are Kurdish or Pro-Kurdish political parties without referring to or mentioning Kurdistan or Kurdishness within their party tabloids. For instance, a Kurdish assembly that is called the Democratic Society Congress, "DTK" is for the Kurds at least regarded as the Kurdish Parliament in the capital city of Kurdistan in Turkey 'Diyarbakir'. However, it is not under the name of Kurdistan or in a clear Kurdish name, Olson (2011).

Despite all that has been mentioned above, Kurds have kept fighting for

advancing the struggle through civil and legal aspects. A Kurdish political base was established for the very first time in 1990 after establishing the HEP. Nonetheless, there were several individual or even collective actions that were aimed at Kurdishness and Kurdish civil and legal activities. Yet again, previous attempts have never been effective and visible actions. Therefore, they have never been able to make any difference in the social and political arena. That is why starting Kurdish or pro-Kurdish civil and legal struggle can be regarded from establishing HEP in 1990. Once again, what is meant by legal and civil activities here are those activities that are legally allowed to be commenced under the roof of Turkish law and constitution. Otherwise, there are several political activities that are not allowed in Turkey and actually are very effective and have a strong tendency of involvement with such outlawed activities. The main purpose of this chapter is to highlight this point and focus on the Kurdish national movement throughout legal and illegal activities alike. In particular, this chapter aims to focus on activities of the KCK as an entity that is outlawed and behind the scenes. Yet, it can be regarded as very active and a main character of Kurdish national movement in Turkey.

Kurdish Social and Cultural Associations

Social and cultural activities by the Kurds in the Kurdish areas and the whole of Turkey are managed under several legally allowed associations on the one hand, and under the management of the DTK as a main umbrella for all KCK activities in Turkey. The DTK has two main tasks; first of all, it has to perform as a legal entity that covers all cultural and social activities. Within this task, the DTK has to organise meetings, events and promote the notion of diversity among the social, cultural, ethnic and religious groups and

associations. The second task is dealing with political difficulties through social and cultural activism, (interview with A3 on 25/03/2012).

As a matter of fact, several groups that are directly or indirectly under the hegemony of “the Ideology of PKK” are connected to the DTK. Thus, similar to the case of the KCK in a broader context, the DTK has a vague identity and blurry borderlines. On the one hand, several organisations from diverse ranges of activities are working through the back-up of the DTK. On the other hand, the DTK itself can be seen as a small and limited entity that is working legally and has legal permission from the government. Elaborating this blurry point can be achieved through the analysis of the KCK as a system. The DTK is a smaller picture; the Turkish picture of the KCK. Thus, the system of the DTK is run via some unknown actors that sometimes cannot be clarified through policies and programs. On the scene, there is a management committee and co-leaders of the DTK. There are several known and long term runners of politicians and notable communities’ characters within the DTK. Yet, there could be another management of the DTK that is behind the scenes. Actually there are different networks and organizing process that are running the policy and mission of the DTK. It is simply similar to the bigger frame of the KCK, (interview with A4 on 14/09/2012). Therefore, Kurdish social and cultural activisms run through autonomous institutions that are legal in Turkey but their policy and ideology come from the KCK. The best Kurdish social and cultural notion can be seen from the activism of the municipalities that are run by the BDP in the Kurdish areas.

Political Activities, Political Parties

In Turkey, there is an opportunity for some political activities under the roof of the Turkish constitution only. Kurds in Turkey have had political activities as always. Nonetheless, very recently the Kurds have started putting their political activities into a frame of legal political parties. Thus, political activities can be legal or sometimes outlawed, based on the rule of law of the states and governments. However, political parties must be legal and recognized by the law and constitution of the state. Until today's date, according to the constitution in Turkey, there is no any chance to make any political activity or establish any political party based on ethnicity and religion. Thus, any political activity that aims at promoting ethnic or religious rights in Turkey must achieve their goals through different ways and names. This was a huge barrier in front of the Kurds to express their demands and work to achieve their goals in Turkey during the last century.

It can be argued that only this reason can give some sort of legitimization to some outlawed political activities in Turkey. For instance, there could be legitimacy for the PKK that was struggling against the state for three decades while it was prohibited from all activities under the name of the Kurds or Kurdishness. Moreover, legitimization sometimes comes from the people supporting in different contexts. It is true that the PKK did not have a legal chance to struggle in Turkey and has been labelled as terrorist group by several states. However, it has gained some sort of legitimization by those people who are supporting the PKK. Therefore, the issue of legal activities or outlawed activities in the context of Turkish politics is in some predicament. It is suggested that, the discourse of terror and terrorism must be reviewed and re-conceptualised with regards to the Turkish political and constitutional arena.

The aim of this point is to verify the fact that in Turkey and according to the “Turkish Constitution”, there is an institution that is illegal and their members must be taken into jail. Since 2009, thousands of Kurdish political activists and members of Pro-Kurdish political Parties such as the HDP, the BDP and former DTP were taken to the prisons as they were accused of having a link with an outlawed terrorist organization that is called the PKK. The operation that started in 2009 against such people is called the ‘KCK operation’, Olson (2011). Thus, we need to know in detail about the situation of this body that is called the ‘KCK’ and see whether their economic, political, social, and cultural activities are illegal as the Turkish constitution stated or whether they have some real and political legitimization among the Kurds in Turkey and other areas. On the other hand, we need to see the situation of some pro-Kurdish political parties that are playing their political games according to the Turkish law and constitution. This can help this research to get closer to the object of investigation of the aspects of transformation in the Kurdish national movement and struggle in Turkey.

Pro-Kurdish Parties and Civil Organisations in Turkey and Europe

Since its first days of activities, the PKK has been trying to regard itself as a pan-Kurdish movement. The PKK has claimed that it is struggling for all the people of Kurdistan in all its different parts regardless of race, religion, sex, language and cultural differences. Therefore, soon after its inception, the PKK became one of the main players of Kurdish national movements across all parts of Kurdistan. However, due to the presence of the KDP and the PUK in the southern part and KOMALA and the KDPI in the Eastern part of Kurdistan, the main impact of the PKK was on the northern and western areas of Kurdistan in Turkey and Syria. In the current time, where the PKK has been replaced by the

KCK, the “Ideology of PKK” has covered almost all aspects of Kurdish national movement in the northern part of Kurdistan. Moreover, there is an obvious impact on every single political movement in all parts of Kurdistan including the PUK and the KDP in the south and their federal Kurdish government within Iraq, “KRG”.

In Turkey and in the northern part of Kurdistan, there are several Kurdish and pro-Kurdish civil organisations and political parties that are covered, or are run by and under the direction of the “Ideology of PKK”. Even those Kurdish or pro-Kurdish political and cultural institutions that are not considered as a part of the KCK, in one way or another are still under the hegemony and directions of the “Ideology of PKK”. Small parties such as the Freedom and Rights Party “Hak-Par” and the Participatory Democratic Party “KADEP” that are two Kurdish parties in Turkey, claim that they are not inside the range of the “Ideology of PKK”. Yet, it can easily be noticed that they never made any steps or could make any effective acts that are against or out of the will of the KCK. In addition to that, these small parties can sometimes be called small political shops or signboard parties, in Turkish “Tabela Partisi”. These small parties remain very small and have never been able to gain one seat in Parliament or even a seat in municipalities’ elections. That is in contrary to the current HDP and DBP and previously the DTP, HADEP, DEHAP, DEP and HEP, that are inspired by the “Ideology of PKK” and gained support from Kurdish people who are sympathisers with the PKK.

According to a senior member of the Democratic Society Congress, DTK, there are hundreds of small, medium and large organisations only within the borders of Turkey, that are working within the range of this ideology, (interview with A9 on 07/08/2011). Also Kurds in diaspora are mainly organized through the

“Ideology of PKK” and are mainly working under the control of the KCK directions. From this viewpoint, it can be argued that the KCK is a social movement by itself, as its managers and founders describe it as an umbrella for all Kurdish struggles and activities. Social theories tell that a social movement cannot be limited in one or two organisations only, (As Zald and McCarthy 1987). The KCK is not limited in one organisation or few only. It has hundreds of social, cultural and political organisations within the range of Kurdish national struggle.

This is not only inside Turkey, not only inside all other parts of Kurdistan even; the KCK has activities in other countries, in Europe and especially in Germany. To a lesser degree than Europe, other continents also have activities. Since there are Kurds everywhere in the world, there are the KCK members and sympathisers everywhere in the world as well. As a matter of argument, the range of the KCK activities are various, including social, political, cultural, media and financial. Despite the fact that there are restrictions on the KCK as it is described in the list of terrorist organisations by the USA, the EU, and Turkey, yet, the KCK is pursuing its struggle under individual names and different cultural, financial and political institutions in Turkey and other countries around the world, (interview with A7 on 05/08/2011).

In terms of politics, it can be simply said that inside Turkey, there are several political parties that are fully or partially under the umbrella of the KCK, for example the DBP and the HDP which is the biggest pro-Kurdish political party in Turkey and is marginally the number one party in the Kurdish areas of Turkey. It is very obvious that the HDP and the DBP are parts of the KCK despite their denial of the fact that they are run by the “Ideology of PKK”. Other pro-Kurdish parties such as Hak-Par and KADEP claim that they are not part of the KCK.

Yet, they could never do anything outside of the agenda of the “Ideology of PKK”, (interview with A9 on 07/08/2011).

In terms of media, there are several newspapers, and radio and TV stations that are connected to the KCK. TV stations such as IMC and newspapers such as “Azadiya Welat” and “Ozgur Gundem” are connected to the KCK. The Human Rights Association “IHD” in Turkey is very much connected to the KCK. Having the “IHD” under the influence of the KCK might have some rationale. It is mainly due to the complexity of the cases of human rights in Turkey that predominantly have connections with the Kurdish national struggle and the cases that are related to ‘Unknown Killings’ and the ‘KCK Operations’. There are also several cultural and social organisations that are connected to the KCK in Turkey. “Dicle-Firat” Cultural Centre and “Ciger Xwin” house in Diyarbakir can be regarded as the two active centres that are very much under the will of the KCK policy. Once again, all such institutions deny connection with the KCK, simply due to political and legal restriction by the Turkish state, (interview with A4 on 14/09/2012).

Outside Turkey and especially in Europe, the KCK has several organizations and media resources. One very explicit and active organisation is the Kurdistan National Congress “KNK”, that is similar to the Democratic Society Congress “DTK” in Turkey. In terms of media resources, there are several TV stations in Germany, Denmark, Belgium and Sweden. The main one is ‘Sterk TV’ in Brussels that is the successor of ‘Roj TV’⁶. It has broadcasted its programs in “Kurdish with all different dialects and in Turkish, Arabic and Persian as the main three languages that are around the Kurds”, (Cudi, 2008: 472). Since then, there has been a series of Kurdish and multi-lingual TV

⁶ For the first time in the history of the Kurds in Turkey, ‘MED TV’ started to broadcast its programs in 1995.

stations such as Media TV, Cudi TV, Mesopotamia TV, and Newroz TV. All those Kurdish TV stations have faced a series of closures and restarts under the new names.

The main point in this struggle is that all of these media resources are somehow under the KCK policy and the hegemony of the “Ideology of PKK”, (interview with A4 on 14/09/2012). Thus, when the issue of transformation is addressed, it can be seen in all different aspects in terms of the social movement struggle. Therefore, having a step like establishing media and broadcast corporations by the Kurdish movement was a great leap compared to the struggle of all other movements in the region. Yet, due to the Turkish state pressure on the EU and finding legal points to shut the Kurdish media down, there are several attempts to limit the chance of broadcasting in and for Kurdish on the one hand; on the other hand there are several preparations by Kurdish activists to re-establish their own institutions and media corporations as a successor for any channel that is faced with shutting down.

In 2012, ‘Roj TV’ was closed down by the Danish high court and both ‘Nuce TV’ and ‘Mesopotamia TV’ have been shut down by French and Belgium authorities. Yet, as soon as the states want to shut a Kurdish organisation in Europe, the Kurds are immediately establishing another similar institution to cover the legal aspect of their activities within the EU. Therefore, the ‘Sterk TV’ started its broadcast soon after the closure of ‘Roj TV’ with ‘Nuce TV’ and ‘Mesopotamia TV’, (interview with A2 on 23/09/2012).

The DTK and the BDP: Their Roles within the Kurdish Struggle

The Democratic Society Congress, in Kurdish Kongra Civaken Democratic ‘KCD’, its Turkish acronym ‘DTK’, is the council or assembly of the Kurdish

national movement in the northern part of Kurdistan. It is the main and highest institution that can be regarded as a parliament of northern part of Kurdistan within the system of the KCK. This cannot be proven or clearly declared by the leaders and members of the 'DTK' itself. This is simply due to legal and security circumstances in Turkey. Yet, the reality of the struggle of the Kurds in Turkey can easily be told during some deep observation and a closer look at the situation. The 'DTK' can be regarded as a smaller picture of the KCK that covers all activities of the system within the Turkish borders. Thus, the same or better to say very similar picture of the KCK can be seen when it comes to the DTK nature and works in Turkey, (interview with A4 on 14/09/2012).

Similar to the KCK, the DTK has co-leadership system, and a council that has eight hundred members across the whole Turkey. In each city, town, and some villages also there is a council. This can be dependent on the size of the area and the number of Kurdish or Kurdistan people that have the commitment to or regard themselves as citizens of the KCK, (interview with A3 on 25/03/2012). Within this assembly there are similar committees to those that are in the KCK to divide the jobs and tasks within Turkey. Thus all the committees are somehow connected to the main assembly. Yet, there is significant scope for independence and autonomy of the plan, policy, initiatives and activities according to the needs of reality, the opportunity for implementation and the condition of the different areas.

On the political level, the KCK in Turkey, and under the umbrella of KCK's Turkish Council 'Meclisa Turkiye', had and has several political parties that were and are legally having a management of political agendas of the KCK, Olson (2011). The connection is always denied by the Kurdish political activists due to the legal obstacles and sensitivity of confessing the link with the KCK. Currently,

the very visible and active political character is the 'BDP'. It was established in 2008 as a spear party to be a successor to the main pro- Kurdish political party that was called the Democratic Society Party 'the DTP'. As mentioned earlier, Turkey has an aggressive reputation of closing down political and social organisations due to the clash with their constitution.

So far, seven Kurdish or pro- Kurdish parties were closed down by the courts, alleged with having connection with outlawed and terrorist organisations. Very recently, in December 2012, another cultural and social organisation was established by Kurdish and Turkish activists based on the fear of closing down the main party of the Kurds, the 'BDP', and in order to widen the struggle to all Turkey not only Kurdish areas. The new organisation was called the Democratic Societies Congress, in Turkish, Halkler Demokratik Kongresi 'HDK' similar to the DTK. Within this organisation, the Democratic People Party 'HDP' similar to the BDP has been established also. Yet, this party was not needed and remained a small and only registered one as a spear for the day when the 'BDP' will close down. The HDP only had a few limited activities and claims that this is a party for all freedom and justice seekers across Turkey.

Moreover, they claim that they are acting as an umbrella for all depressed and minority groups rather than the Kurds only. It is exactly the same claim as the claims of the current BDP and former DTP, HADEP, DEHAP and all other pro-Kurdish political parties. Thus, we could argue that the HDK and HDP are nothing but a spear bodies for the DTK and BDP's successor in case of closure. However, in contrary to expectations, the HDP has been activated for the Turkish areas parallel to the BDP for the Kurdish areas of Turkey. What is

important here for the Kurdish movement activists is that all the BDP⁷ and the HDP are very much under the influence and control of the KCK. Moreover, despite the frequent changes of the forms and the names of characters, the essence and hegemony of the KCK still remain.

Therefore, the project of organizing Kurdish society through the KCK can be regarded as a unique phenomenon in the current Kurdish national movement in Kurdistan generally and in the northern part of Kurdistan and Turkey in particular. Nevertheless, the question that might appear here is whether this entity would be able to implement this plan or project? In other words, to what extent the KCK can be a representative of the Kurds and Kurdistani people who live on the land of Kurdistan? Also, what about those Kurdish and Kurdistani people who do not accept the “Ideology of PKK”? Perhaps, discussing the recent project of the KCK in relation to the alternative system for the Kurdish and Kurdistani society will help the process of elaboration of the range of the KCK’s power in terms of policy and practice of the different values for society. The notion of changing values of the KCK to society is manifested through the project of ‘Democratic Autonomy’ that will be examined in the next chapter. In the next section, there will be a highlight on the municipalities that the KCK uses them as channels for implementing its policy.

⁷ On 11th of July 2014, the BDP had an emergency conference to appoint its new co-chairs and changed its name to Democratic Regions Party, ‘Demokratik Bolgeler Partisi- DBP’. Amina Aiyana and Kamuran Yuksek became this new party co-chairs. As a result of the recent change in the BDP and merging its Parliamentary group into the HDP; the new DBP became a Kurdish regional party and the new HDP became wider political party for all Turkey.

Municipalities

The process of running the office locally has had a complicated nature throughout the history of the Turkish state. On the one hand, local democracy was not taken that important and people's motivation was not respected as it was supposed to be. On the other hand, the Turkish state never let people have full power and elect their local representatives by themselves. Currently, Mayors and members of the municipalities are elected by local people. Yet, power and resources mainly are under the hands of governors that are centrally appointed by the state. As Incioglu, (2002) in Ulas Bayraktar, (2007) has suggested "historically, the Turkish administrative system has had a strong centralist orientation that reflected the relative weakness of local institutions vis-à-vis the state. Burdened with the excessive and financial controls exercised over them by the central resources, municipalities remained weak and dependent on Ankara", (Ulas Bayraktar (2007: 2). This means that, only by running the local elections and having representatives of the people directly, people cannot see big political, social and cultural differences under the state centralist model of the rule in Turkey.

Municipalities have no political tasks according to the constitution. Ulas Bayraktar (2007) argues that " article 15 of the law allocates 76 different duties to the municipalities in areas such as urban infrastructure, basic urban services, town planning and controls, the provision and the control of clean food, health and some religious services, cultural activities, housing and social aid facilities...etc.", (Ulas Bayraktar, 2007: 8). Therefore, the notion of a strict centralist state is not tasked with developing the game of municipalities and local election. This means that the concept of local democracy under the rule of the current government has not been developed. However, from the very

beginning of the establishment of the Turkish state, the founder Ataturk was emphasising the model of bottom up power and respecting individual. Yet, this idea has never been implemented.

Ataturk has mainly focused on the principle of populism rather than state centralism. In his early addresses he suggested that “within our organisation... the national paramount... every individual must become personally concerned with his destiny. A structure that in this way rises from below to the top, from the foundation to the roof, will surely be sturdy... I have been gratified to observe that our national organisation... has reached down to its true point of origin, to the individual, and that from there the real structuring upward has also begun”, (Ulas Bayraktar, 2007: 3). Nonetheless, the central power from Ankara was reluctant to put all such principles into practice.

Interestingly, the project of ‘Democratic Autonomy’ by the KCK focuses on similar or almost the same principles as Ataturk has focused on earlier. Currently, in the south east -and if there is a chance in all Turkey as well - the DTK wants to implement the principles of ‘Democratic Autonomy’ which focuses on democratic, free and societal power as an alternative to the strict centralist state power. In the case of minorities in Turkey - especially Kurdish activists and their political parties that are running for the local elections - it could have some effect on the political process and raising awareness towards democracy, freedom and the notion of Kurdishness against centralists’ model of the state in Turkey. However, the process is not as easy and democratic as it supposed to be, let alone the outcome and effect of such election with regards to the choice and voice of the local people in the Kurdish areas.

In the very recent local election in Turkey, the BDP as the main and only Kurdish representative party won more than one hundred municipalities

including Wan, Mardin and Diyarbakir cities as the three major Kurdish cities in Turkey. As a matter of fact, winning the election by the BDP doesn't come from their better services through municipalities. It mainly comes from the Kurdish people who vote for their identity rather than better services of the other Turkish parties such as AKP. However, the BDP cadres are actively in the municipalities offices. Staying in office for them is rather unique and twice as difficult comparing to other parties. Despite the constitutional condition that gave little power to municipalities, their presence in the office with limited power of providing services; gave them a chance to use this role for their political agenda, doing this via the legal allowance as it has been allocated by the constitution. Moreover, despite their denial of having connections with the KCK, due to the legal and political restrictions, the BDP has been pursuing their agenda as a legal face of the KCK. A senior member of the KCK who was a senior member of the DTP before his escape from Turkey to Europe stated that, "all municipalities that are won by the BDP are run by the commission of regional management within the committee of the Ideology of the KCK", (interview with A9 on 14/09/2012).

The main point to be mentioned here for making elaboration and analysis for the action of municipalities is; that Kurdish cultural, social and political activities through running municipalities can be regarded as one face of several faces of transformation within the Kurdish national movement in Turkey.

Kurdish civil and legal activities are not limited only within the municipalities. The roles of various NGOs that have been created by the KCK are very obvious in the current Kurdish reality. As mentioned earlier, there are hundreds of small 'local', medium 'regional' and large 'national' organizations in Turkey that are working illegally, semi legally or legally. The DTK is a Turkish umbrella for all of

these organizations. A point that is very important here is that the KCK does not rely on personnel and personal interests. Thousands of activists are working voluntarily, without getting salary or any other interests. They are working as unknown soldiers for their cause. Yet, within these huge social and cultural activities; there are some names and characters that are very noticeable. This is due to the necessity of the movement. However, the interest and ideology of the movement is always over the interests of individuals and particular groups, (interview with A3 on 25/03/2012).

It can be argued that the Turkish state does not have full control over the Kurdish areas. The Turkish state has some formal power and through some methods such as military and security operations. Nonetheless, on the social and societal levels, the KCK has power and hegemony on the people, public sphere and institutions. The best example for the power and hegemony of the KCK is organizing demonstrations and cultural events in the Kurdish areas. It is obvious that how in the Kurdish new year's eve of 'Newroz' the KCK with its various flags and symbols shows itself among millions of people in cities such as Diyarbakir 'Amed', Van 'Wan' and several other cities and towns. Recently, the KCK has started to practice a noticeable way of its protest against the state through some activities that they lately called civil disobedience. We try to have a special focus on these sorts of activities here.

Civil Disobedience

The Kurds in Turkey have at least two decades of civil national struggle. Since the establishment of the 'HEP' in 1990, politics have been pursued in line with clear pro-Kurdish interests. Despite the various legal and political obstacles, the Kurds have developed civil and legal activisms. Recently, the KCK called for

civil disobedience against the Turkish state and government policies in Kurdistan. However, what has been called civil disobedience was unclear. No one could be sure about what the protesters wanted. On the one hand, Kurdish people were undertaking some social activities, similar to the normal social activities as before, but under the Kurdish names and with Kurdish flavour. For instance, those Kurdish people who were following the KCK orders boycotted formal mosques during Friday congregations and started having their worships on the streets and in the parks or city centre squares. They called this worship civil Friday congregation, 'Sivil Cuma'. In contrary to the formal way of worship that has to be prepared only in the Turkish language, the KCK Muslim citizens were practicing their worships in Kurdish. To them, that was civil disobedience, (interview with A5 on 28/07/2011).

On the other hand, the KCK politicians in the Turkish prisons rejected to defend themselves in the court sessions in the Turkish language. They stubbornly wanted to answer the judges only in their mother tongue 'Kurdish', (interview with A6 on 28/07/2011). However, these activities never become a central point to change anything in the government policy. It can be argued that the KCK never used these activities as essential strategic steps. Nevertheless, these activisms were only used as some daily tactics to feed people with some political activism. Otherwise, all Kurdish people, who were working as the public sector employees, such as all teachers, doctors, lawyers...etc., were normally continuing their daily jobs under the terms and conditions of the Turkish state.

The KCK leaders claimed that they did as Mahatma Gandhi did in India. Yet, what Gandhi did was a genuine call to all people to boycott the state and British hegemony in a peaceful way. The boycott of the KCK was partial and limited to a few aspects that could not be of any harm to the Turkish system. The reason

for that was looking for a solution within the system of Turkey. The KCK does not want to boycott the Turkish state and all Turkish institutions. It only wants to warn the state to take a step towards the solution of the Kurdish question in Turkey. Thus, civil disobedience was only a political show that started and ended quickly. However, the main point of the activism was focused on the Kurdish language and the struggle of the language to come back to the public sphere. Therefore, the struggle for language has continued in different ways. The notion of education in mother tongue has become the main demand for the Kurdish political will in parliament, for the Kurdish politicians and in the public sphere. Nonetheless, as the KCK always emphasises, they are not waiting for the state to approve any action. The KCK wants Kurdish people to undertake their own initiatives and continue their lives in accordance with the recently suggested project of 'Democratic Autonomy'.

Conclusion

In order to get closer to the main point and having an appropriate answer for the main question on the thesis which is the reasons behind transformation from the PKK to the KCK; this chapter has focused only on the recent time and highlighted the current situation of the Kurdish national struggle in Turkey. It has examined the steps of the change in the ideology and perspective of the main actor of the Kurdish national struggle in the context of Turkey and developing an alternative model for the Kurdish struggle with regards to nation building. It argued that the Kurdish struggle for the last decades was nothing but a reaction to the state policy against the existence of the Kurds through the process of Turkification. For that, the Kurdish political and legal activism in Turkey and the shift of the PKK ideology have been examined. More than that, the legal, social

and cultural activism of the KCK, through the DTK and the BDP have been discussed.

For the next chapter, this thesis will investigate the two main proclaimed projects of the KCK as the solution for the long term Kurdish question and as an alternative for the current nation state model in Turkey. The first project is called the Road Map for peaceful solution for the Kurdish question and the second project is the 'Democratic Autonomy' that has been suggested by the KCK legal characters within Turkey. The philosophy behind the presentation and critical examination of the KCK projects is to highlight the picture of the reasons behind alteration of the PKK to the KCK.

CHAPTER SIX: THE KCK: DEMOCRATIC AUTONOMY AND THE ROAD MAP, THE PROJECTS OF THE TRANSFORMATION

Introduction

The KCK as a multi-dimensional entity that has become the main actor of social movement in the Kurdish part of Turkey has recently become an umbrella entity for all political, cultural, social and societal activities. Therefore, as a main actor of social movement, the KCK has to have plans and projects to widen its range of activisms and keep making people gather around its ideology, (McAdam, et al 1996: 340-341). The main task of this chapter will be examining two projects of the KCK that have become effective on the Turkish state and society on the one hand. The projects have opened civil and democratic ways for the Kurdish national struggle on the other hand.

Both projects have been articulated based on the series of discussions and analyses that have been advanced by the KCK within the frame of the concept of Democratic Confederalism. The first project is the 'Road Map' that has been suggested by Ocalan in 2009 as a solution for the Kurdish question. The other project is the 'Democratic Autonomy' that has been suggested by the DTK and the BDP as legal faces of the KCK in Turkey. The second project has been prepared based on the Road Map for solving the model of the nation state and presenting the model of a democratic nation. Examining these two projects will be so beneficial for understanding the notion of transformation from the PKK as a party that approached the Kurdish national struggle through the nation state perspective to the KCK that is approaching the struggle through the concept of democratic autonomy perspective.

The Road Map of Ocalan to solve Kurdish question in the Middle East

The road map has been presented through a small book that was written by Ocalan during his solitary confinement in Imrali Island. It is part of his legal

defence report that was written to the European Court for Human Rights. Ocalan wrote approximately six thousand pages as a defence reports to the Turkish, Greek and finally European Court. His papers recently became series of books and were translated then printed in several languages. The road map is an independent small book that was written in August 2009. Nevertheless, the Turkish authorities confiscated it and did not hand it over to the judges for more than a year and half. Through reading this part of his defence, the Turkish authorities understood who is Ocalan and started to seriously think about the impact and influence of Ocalan over the Kurdish people and its movement. Therefore, the peace process that has recently been started could be the result of understanding the Turkish power holders of the road map and the importance of the analysis of the struggle for a nonviolent and democratic resolution for the essential problems of Turkey. Ocalan claims that the road map focuses on Turkey's "lack of democracy" and "the Kurdish question", (Ocalan, 2012: 2).

Fundamentally, the road map focuses on ten principles. Theoretically, these principles are confirming the notion of democratic nation, changing the current system in the region and in Turkey especially, creating an opportunity for all colours to be seen and all voices to be heard and respected in the region. Therefore, based on those principles, some solutions are presented in the road map. The solution to the Kurdish question according to the road map is the key of establishing a democratic system in Turkey.

It is useful to very briefly, present the principles here:

1- Democratic Nation Principle: This signifies the nation form of a democratic society that is not based on any particular ethnicity, religion, language, class or state but is multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and does not leave opportunity for the notion of class otherness or state privileges. It is based on unrestricted and

equal entities. Such a democratic nation consists of democratic peoples, groups and is built upon a flexible nation pattern of non-built-up cultural identities, (Ocalan, 2012: 28).

2- **Common Homeland Principle:** It signifies the figure of homelands that are without restrictions and justly shared and where no individual or community is excluded by any other individual or community, (Ocalan, 2012: 28).

3- **Democratic Republic Principle:** It signifies the autonomous of society and individuals to have democratic openness to the state. The association of the government and the democratic association of the people are two different phenomena that are based on respecting each other and have democratic relationship in order for the republic to be a democratic umbrella for all citizens, (Ocalan, 2012: 29).

4- **Democratic Constitution Principle:** This is the constitution prepared through a social contract between people and the state based on protecting the autonomous citizens and communities against the power of the nation-state, (Ocalan, 2012: 29).

5- **Democratic Solution principle:** this principle complies with the idea of coexistence and peaceful relation between citizens and the state. This is through making a democratic constitution to limit the state and allows the peoples and communities to act freely and democratically, (Ocalan, 2012: 30).

6- **Inseparability of the Individual and Collective Rights Principle:** Individual and collective privileges are two different features of the similar people objective. Although the communities are made up from individuals, yet they are still different to the whole of individuals. This is rather related to a medallion not having a particular side and must have mutual rights and tasks. Therefore, it

cannot be any society or individual that has either the individual rights or the communal rights only, (Ocalan, 2012: 31).

7- Ideological Independence and Freedom Principle: Ocalan argues that the democratic nation solution cannot be attained if the positivist sociopolitical domination of capitalist modernity and its liberal slavery remodeled as individualism are not overcome. Self-consciousness about its own social nature is the awareness condition for a democratic nation resolution, (Ocalan, 2012: 31).

8- The Principle of Historicity and Present: Social realities can be seen as historical realities. The realities that were practiced in the past continue to exist at contemporary and within the current progresses with very little change. If the connection between history and now is not determined properly then the selfishness of the capitalist modernity that has been stripped off its history and the identical, immediate and provisional social mentality cannot be overwhelmed. The precise understanding of history and the contemporary is a necessary complaint for the democratic nation solution, (Ocalan, 2012: 32).

9- Morality and Conscience Principle: To reach a comprehensive solution to any specified social problem, there is a necessity to alternative to morality and integrity. The solutions of modernity that exclusively rest on control and law do not yield consequences but suppress and misrepresent the difficulties. Understanding based on morality and principles is vital within the democratic nation solution, (Ocalan, 2012: 33).

10- The Self-Defence Principle of Democracies: There are no society or groups of people, not even living beings without considering some sort of self-defence. Democratic societies are the most advanced existences of nature and they could not show up and endure their existence without self-defence.

Therefore, in democratic nation solutions, the necessities of the self-defence principle must be seen, (Ocalan, 2012: 34).

All these principles are focusing on one point. It is to present an alternative for the current nation state system that is based on unification of every colours and voices in the Turkey. According to this project, the alternative is a democratic system that can recognize all differences of people with their own colours and voices and let them freely and democratically manifest themselves. For that, the road map has presented an action plan for a solution. Ocalan (2012) tries to look at three solutions for the Kurdish question. The first and second ones have been examined by the regional states and international powers. Nonetheless, the result was negative and has been unsatisfactory so far. The third and final solution is the one that Ocalan suggested in his road map. He calls it as the democratic solution plan.

The first solution plan has been examined by the Turkish state for the last ninety years. It is the solution plan of a traditional policy of denial and annihilation. For a long time, these plans have been developed and implemented to attain such solution. Ocalan (2012) argues that, there are groups that came into being as middle-class bourgeoisie and bureaucracy latent upon the capital reached from the state. They have been unprotected and isolated both internally and externally. Yet, they do not pause to enforce their annihilation tactics through insidious and ruthless approaches.

The response of the Kurds, (apart from the traditional 'Kurdish collaborationist' sections), against the implementation of this approach has been to stage the most complete confrontation of their history. It can be suggested that the KCK which is in the management position of the

confrontation, has the capability and the power to systematically implement its own action plans against the state approach. The KCK is in a position to make changes from inactive defence plans to active one and to maximum confrontation plans, (Ocalan 2012: 83). In the forthcoming periods, it may be predictable that the KCK makes the change to the extreme resistance plan because there can be severe blockages to be experienced in the democratic solution in Turkey.

On the other hand, the second solution plan was examined through international powers towards the Kurdish question. It is about creating a small Kurdish entity in a small part of the Kurdish land and excludes the whole Kurdish resistance and freedom seekers. In other words, large powers wanted to create a Greek and Arminian model of Kurdistan. Ocalan (2012) named the second model as the federalist and nationalist solution plan. This plan also has being applied in different areas and dimensions. He argues that it is the old-style colonial nation-states and international hegemonic authorities that are behind this plan that has been applied in the Iraqi Kurdistan (KRG). Although they each have a different goal, there is a general agreement. International powers support this plan because they wish to falsify the revolutionary and autonomous potential of the Kurdish people.

The United States administration is the hegemonic authority that most willingly supports the 'KRG'. Ocalan (2012) argues that the US and its allies know that the KRG plays a strategic role in controlling the countries of the region. Throughout the history of resistance of the Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan, all Turkish, Iranian and Syrian administrations have been supporting the "Small Kurdistan" plan through numerous tactics since the Second World War in the southern part of Kurdistan in order to create a disruption to the

resistance of their own Kurds and to discount their own Kurdistan. Therefore, when the Kurdish people wish to overcome the role that was chosen to them, these forces raise their oppositions all together. Politics and plans based on 'divide and rule' are being mostly applied by the "Small Kurdistan" project. For that, the socialist revolutionaries and Kurdish struggle based on the notion of radical democracy are countered in this way.

In case of Kurdish national movement in Turkey, Ocalan (2012: 102) claims that an important objective of the plan is the isolation of his movement. To him, there is a comprehensive 'Gladio' operation to isolate and eliminate the KCK in return for a protecting the plan of "Small Kurdistan". Moreover, this plan receives wide-spread funding from the arena of international diplomacy. The US, Turkish and Iraqi managements, who have now involved the KRG between them, are for now in agreement with this plan and are trying to draw the KCK away from the armed struggle. But this plan is not sufficiently applied due to the opposing interests of the regional and international countries. It can be argued that their application remains limited. It holds no hope because it is not widely reinforced by the mobilized Kurdish people in Turkey and because it only serves the concentration of a narrow leading sector. Therefore, it is bare and isolated more day by day.

The response of Kurdish national struggle and the KCK to this plan is not to surrender and continue to struggle. Ocalan (2012: 102) argues that many PKK personnel, who were undecided; who were morally and ideologically weak, for a long time in their ranks ran away and took refuge with the holders of such a plan. Despite the wish of the large powers of creating a new 'collaborationist movement', it did not take long before they were uncovered. Kurdish nationalism is traditionally reasonably weak.

Therefore, it does not allow for developing a consistent nation-state plan. It has, so to speak, become their fate to become corrupt and then be eliminated. They have held all their confidence to the breakdown of the KCK's resistance.

The Turkish state also has given all its hopes in much the same way for a long time. It had hoped for help from the Kurdish nationalism based on "Small Kurdistan". Ocalan (2012) argues that the large powers tried to implement a plan similar to the one implemented against the Greeks and Armenians to the Kurds on the basis of "Small Kurdistan". However the difference in the conditions and the position of the new Kurdish movement has left the plan counterproductive. As a result of that, the reactions of Kurdish people and their KCK are becoming even stronger, (Ocalan, 2012: 103).

In point of fact, the first two plans have not specified much confidence and have been very costly on all fronts. Moreover, they have twisted the temper of the republic of Turkey in the direction of democratisation plans. Therefore, the third and new solution plan that has never been examined yet; has been suggested by Ocalan. It is the "Democratic Solution Plan". In fact, contemporary developments also support such advancement. Both internal and external conditions show that this third solution is more appropriate and worth examining.

Ocalan (2012) suggested that the need by the USA and EU and the similar tendency exposed by the broadcasting corporations, civil society, the general public as well as all the Kurdish people increase the viability of the democratic solution plans for the first time ever since, (Ocalan, 2012: 104). In spite of all the counter resistance of the nationalist fascist propensities,

which have lately become negligible, the important organisations of the state also are not in contradiction of the democratic solution projects. In addition to that, they are taking on important parts to prepare the ground work. Such progress might growth the chance to rehearsal the solution plans.

Ocalan (2012) is optimistic about the 'Road Map'. He calls for an agreement amongst the important organisations of the state and the government over the main structures of the recommended democratic solution plan. He also calls for support from the Kurdish people organised with the support of democratic parties and people. Ocalan (2012) believes that Kurdish people will listen to him and support the solution plan. He suggests some stages of implementing the plan. He argues that in the face of this new historical situation a possible action plan between the parties needs to pass through a few phases.

Three stages for implementing this democratic solution plan have been suggested. The first one is asking Kurdish armed struggle to enter a period of inaction. However, during this stage the state and the KCK both should be careful not to be triggered, to have a tighter control over their own forces and endure to make the overall community. For the second stage, and through the management initiative, a "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" should be established, (Ocalan, 2012: 104). This step must obtain authorization and approval through the Grand National Assembly of Turkey 'TBMM'. The commission must prepare suggestions that will contribute in the elimination of legal difficulties. Moreover, consensus will be required amongst all parties in the arrangement of the commission. With regards to the confessions and fortifications presented to the commission, the commission will propose an institution of amnesty to the 'TBMM', (Ocalan, 2012: 104).

Ocalan (2012) suggested that in the case those legal obstacles are as such removed; Kurdish guerrillas will then be able to withdraw their extra-legal structures outside the borders of Turkey under the supervision of a board consisting of authorities from the USA, EU, UN, KRG and Republic of Turkey. By then the KCK will be able to position its forces in different areas and countries. Ocalan (2012) vigorously calls for the release of Kurdish prisoners in the Turkish jails. He argues that the critical point at the second stage is that the “release of those detained and convicted for the KCK activities and the withdrawal of guerrilla armed forces outside the borders are jointly planned. Here, the principle of neither shall be implemented without the other must apply”, (Ocalan, 2012: 104).

At the third stage, Ocalan (2012) has focused on the constitutional and legal steps in order for the system of the republic to be democratic, also calling for creating a chance to start a gradual return home of all the Kurdish activists that have been forced to leave their homeland - especially for those who are actual guerrillas or commanders within the Kurdish freedom movement. The main point is approving the legality of the KCK. In that case, the armed struggle no longer needed within the borders of Turkey. Therefore, Kurdish movement will base itself on all features of legal and democratic political, social, economic and cultural actions.

After three years of Ocalan writing the ‘Road Map’ the Turkish government has come to the point that there is no chance to pursue the Kurdish question through the first and second solution plans. Therefore, the state and government have been persuaded to start negotiations with a man who has suggested the Road Map. The so called peace process that has been recently started is more or less going accordingly based on the Road Map.

There are plenty of points that have been hidden behind the process of negotiations towards the Kurdish question solution. As a result of the Kurdish struggle in recent years the implementation of the long process of unification, Turkification and assimilation were confronted. For now the processes are slightly slowed or have been drastically challenged. At least in the case of the Kurds and Kurdishness, the process is not as active as before. Moreover, the notion of Kurdishness and getting back to self-awareness and self-recognition was started actively. This can be seen through the wide activities of Kurdish civil societies and cultural activities. This means that the notion of transformation is visibly started to be implemented due to the KCK new struggle and its projects. The second project of the KCK is 'Democratic Autonomy'.

Democratic Autonomy

Theoretically, the project of Democratic Autonomy was suggested by the DTK and the BDP as the main two bodies that represent the "ideology of PKK" in Turkey as a whole and in the Kurdish areas in particular. In other words, this project has been suggested by the KCK through its Turkish council activists that legally have opportunities to act within the Turkish borders. It can be argued that the project is the soul of transformation from the PKK to the KCK.

To analyse this project, we have several sources. The best source is the manifesto of the project published by the DTK in 2011. Principally, this project was prepared as an elaboration of Ocalan's anti or post state ideas. The project can be seen as an alternative for the state. In other words, the project manifests the ideology of the KCK since it refuses the notion of the nation state or in the KCK words, of a tyrant state. Nevertheless, the project is presented in a way that cannot directly refuse the state and assures everyone that this project does

not harm the sovereignty of the state and does not want to touch the borders of the countries that the Kurds live in. Therefore, there are some contradictions or limitations in the project theoretically, let alone in the practice or the possibilities of implementation and the consequences of such a model in Turkey or among the diverse ethnic, religion and cultural societies in Kurdistan and Turkey as a whole.

According to the politicians and decision makers of the DTK and the BDP in Turkey, this project is not only for the Kurds or for Kurdish areas in Turkey. They want to generalize it as a project that can be adopted by parliament and become a possible catalyst for the change from an undemocratic constitution to a more open and democratic one, (interviews with A5&A6 on 28/07/2011). However, the project has several limits and contradictions, and yet, it was a positive project to make the movement active once again and give hope to the political activists, despite the pressure of the government and the state on them; especially the pressure through the process of significantly detaining Kurdish and pro-Kurdish activists under the name of the 'KCK operation'. Thus, on the one hand, it can be seen as a serious and strategic project by the KCK through its legal actors within Turkey. On the other hand, it can be seen as tactical and as a part of the daily routine politics that the KCK needs to make people hopeful. The main issue in this respect is the KCK policy makers and decision takers having only a vague vision towards the concept of 'Democratic Autonomy'.

No one can be very sure what the KCK wants and means by 'Democratic Autonomy' or establishing 'Democratic Autonomous Kurdistan'. In addition to this, the Turkish government also does not understand what is happening exactly. So it is a vague condition for the state too. Soon after the

announcement of 'Democratic Autonomous Kurdistan' in Diyarbakir in July 2011, the Turkish government doubled its operations for hunting the KCK members across Turkey. The Turkish government also stopped the undercover negotiations in 'Oslo' with the KCK. The state also stopped all meetings with the leader of the KCK "Abdullah Ocalan" in Imrali prison. Moreover, since July 2011 the weekly meetings with Ocalan by his lawyers and sometimes family members were totally forbidden. All this happened within a month. The so called undercover peace process between the state and the KCK almost went into a cul-de-sac. Most of the Kurdish activists and democratically elected members of municipalities were sent to prisons. The BDP had no choice but to recall for emergency congress of the party to refill the places of its cadres who had been taken to prisons.

On the other hand, military operations on the mountain of Qendil and areas where guerrillas have activities within Turkey were increased. Turkish air strikes bombarded a Kurdish village on the border between Iraq and Turkey and killed 34 Kurdish young civilians in Roboski in the very last days of 2011. The HPG (armed branch of the KCK) promised to take revenge and increase its attacks on Turkish military bases with all its powers and techniques. It can be argued that such escalation somehow came from the government's reaction to the announcement of 'Democratic Autonomy' projects by the KCK in 2011. This can be evidenced through the speech and argument of several Kurdish politicians and members of parliament in Turkey, (interview with A9 on 07/08/2011).

They think that the reflection of this project made the government angry and caused them to take such actions, (A5&A6 on 28/07/2011). The process had never been called a peace process by the state until recently and for the first time was given this name after the assassination of three Kurdish activists in

Paris in January 2013. Therefore, changing the strategy and tactics of the KCK, made the state to rethink and take new actions. Thus, the project of “Democratic Autonomy” at least had an impact on the state’s steps in recent years. It is better to try to highlight the main points and aims of this project after presenting some detail about the project in order to have a proper understanding of it. The thesis in this section will also avoid criticising or analysing the project as the next section of this chapter will be dedicated to the detail of analytical discourse of this project of the KCK as a main actor of Kurdish national movement.

Democratic Autonomy is a project that has been suggested by the DTK. As mentioned earlier, it is the main organisation that acts as an umbrella for all KCK’s activities in Turkey. The aim of the project is to “change the hardened mentality of the nation state that is meeting none of the needs of the people of Turkey and is becoming a burden on Turkish society, and remove this obstacle which prevents the people’s political, social, economic and cultural development, and thus to democratise the republic”, (DTK, 2011: 14). Therefore, according to the KCK, Democratic Autonomy will be a base for the process of democratisation not only in Kurdistan, but in Turkey also. This project tries to suggest a different model as a solution for the problems of the system in Turkey; it has suggested solution through eight dimensions as follows:

1. *Political Dimension*

The project tries to suggest a political model that gets its power from an organized democratic society and the community will get power from citizens through using individual rights together with the use of collective group rights. To the KCK, this can be an alternative for the strict centralist

model of the current state. It also can be a democratic political process that all segments of society will be able to participate in it and become functional within. Therefore, the notion of transparent, open and politically active communities will be the source of power for the change and for the promotion of the process of democratisation, (DTK 2011). This project rather than a top down model of government suggests a bottom up model of contribution of power from small community entities such as villages, towns and then to city councils. They will organise themselves in the form of confederate organisations and will have their democratically elected representatives at the congress of society.

Moreover, it suggests that “the Democratic Congress of Autonomous Kurdistan community will send its representatives to the parliament of the democratic republic of Turkey and take part in the politics of the common homeland”, (DTK,2011: 19). Thus, the project can be an extension of and a source of promotion for an open, democratic and transparent political process in the country. Another point that has been highlighted is the type of autonomy that is requested for the Kurdish people within Turkey. It is not based on geography, ethnic or religious community. It is rather based on democracy and co-existence. It is based on democratic, fair and equal rights for all different ethnic and religious groups and communities in Turkey including Kurdish people with regards to their differences and specialties. Therefore, all cultural, ethnic, gender, and faith communities should be able to be organized “autonomously and authentically”, (DTK, 2011: 20). Communities such as Arabs, Armenians, Assyrian-Chaldeans, Azeries, and Turcomans and faith groups such as Christians, Ezidies and Alevies must be equally and openly given priority to represent themselves within the

Democratic Autonomous Kurdistan and within Turkey. According to the KCK, this is a requirement of moral and political societies, (DTK, 2011).

2. Legal Dimension

This dimension is suggested to show a legal status of the Kurdish people and Kurdistan as a legal entity within Turkey. “The status of Democratic Autonomy should be anticipated in order to end unlawful, inhuman attitudes, the policy of denial and the war of destruction against the Kurds and secure a peaceful, free, democratic union within the borders of the Turkish republic by constitutional change and legal means”, (DTK, 2011: 22). The legal status can be seen as a free will of Kurdish people to enjoy an equal life and voluntary unification with all other ethnicities including Turks, and must be ensured in the constitution and laws of the republic of Turkey. Moreover, in contrary to the current situation of human rights in Turkey and Kurdish areas within Turkey, this project calls for a legal and defined status for Kurdistan as a land. It also calls for several rights that do not exist in the current constitution of Turkey. The DTK (2011) argues that,

“the Democratic Autonomous Kurdistan and the whole of Turkey is based on human rights, the freedom of all since their birth regardless of their class, nation, religion, sex, ethnic group and, without discriminations any of race; their first generation rights concerning freedom of expression, thought and belief, freedom of association, assembly, demonstration, and education in mother tongue; their second generation rights concerning economic and social rights; their third generation rights concerning for freedom of the people to develop their cultural assets, survival and self-administration”, (DTK, 2011: 23).

All these rights must be ensured in the written document and constitution of both ‘Democratic Autonomous Kurdistan’ and the ‘Republic of Turkey’ as a main

and larger entity for all people in Turkey. Another important point that has been mentioned in this project is the issue of morals and ethics on the one hand, and the law and legal procedures on the other. According to the viewpoint of the KCK, the legal system of Democratic Autonomous Kurdistan, “does not believe that the management of society is correct and possible solely by law, and communality should be protected by using both ethics and politics together without falling in to the dilemma of ‘either ethics or law’. Believing that a society which has lost its conscience is a lost society, it sees ethics as the integrity and the heart of society”, (DTK, 2011:23).

3. Self-Defence Dimension

Since this project was prepared for the Turkish people and within the umbrella of the Turkish legal system, the KCK does not want to focus on the army or guerrillas. In contrary to this, the concept of self-defence was described as the matter of protecting and promoting identity and cultural belongings. It is argued that self-defence is a protection policy for the moral and political society. “The self-defence dimension does not only mean military defence of society. In fact it means the protection of identity, politicisation and democratisation. Self-defence is based on the organised community. In other words, organised community is to implement self-defence. Self-defence is the ‘sine qua none’ of all societies to protect their existence”, (DTK, 2011: 24).

The KCK believes that in the whole long history of the Kurds, all their struggles were only self-defence to protect their existence. Thus, there is not any intention for occupation or attacking others in this project. It is also argued that, “with the acceptance of Democratic Autonomy, under the supervision of the democratic organs, the process of self-defence can be established not as military monopoly but for the external and internal needs of

the society.”, (DTK,2011: 25). Thus, for the KCK self-defence is protecting Kurdish and other minorities from assimilation and politicising them and increasing their awareness against fascist and genocidal attacks and could be seen as a resistance against any threat that wants to attack diversity and democracy, Olson (2011).

4. Cultural Dimension

The KCK believes that the notion of unity of the Turkish state as it was manifested in the Turkish principle of ‘one language one people and one flag’; has become an obstacle in front of celebrating diversity and promotion of cultural identities in Turkey. The Kurdish culture and language are two of the very first targets of such rigorous policy within the borders of Turkey. For a long time, speaking Kurdish and other minority languages were banned. Learning the Kurdish language was harshly prohibited in formal and legal arenas and in the public. Within the education system, the Kurdish language was banned by constitution and law even, Olson (2011). Despite a huge contradiction of the UN conventions and the European Union’s democratic norms and all other human rights standards - as prohibiting people’s culture and native language is a crime against humanity and defined as cultural genocide - Kurdish culture was under the threat of extinction through the process of assimilation, through the unification and the Turkification policy of the Turkish government in Kurdistan.

As the DTK (2011) argues, the Turkish state “has aimed to create a society alienated from its native language, and culture, its mind and spirit has been assimilated. It has come to a point where a process of auto-assimilation has begun in Kurdistan”, (DTK, 2011: 26). What the KCK tries to criticise is turning a blind eye by the world - especially the EU countries and human rights institutions towards what is happening in Turkey. The project of Democratic

Autonomy calls for smooth progress using the Kurdish language in public and within the education system. All the barriers for the use of all languages of people in Kurdistan should be removed and those languages should become languages of education from kindergarten to university based on the area and demands of people.

Also all legal and constitutional arrangements should be made in order to prevent cultural breakdown and provide opportunities for mother tongue education for the Kurdish people in the major cities of Turkey out of Kurdistan. In other words, the Democratic Autonomy project wants to make both the Kurdish and Turkish languages formal and official languages of Democratic Autonomous Kurdistan with regards to provide all opportunities to promote other minority languages such as Armenian, Arabic, and Assyrians-Syriac which could be languages of education for their native speakers alongside both official languages. Another important point that the project suggested is returning the original names of villages and towns and making the Kurdish a language for all services in Kurdistan, DTK (2011).

5. Social Dimension

According to the KCK who prepared this project, the aim of the state for the last nine decades, was to assimilate Kurdish society from its social values, culture and history. The state forced Kurdish people to evacuate Kurdistan to the major cities in western Turkey, aiming at deformation of Kurdish social texture and changing demographic structure, and by application of physical and cultural genocide their existence was targeted. Moreover, as the KCK argues, “ as part of the special war policy, women and youth sectors of society were estranged from the social struggle by sport, art, and social events under the name of social activities, and by spreading prostitution and drugs, the moral collapse of society is targeted”, (DTK, 2011: 28).

Ocalan as the leader and founder of the KCK argued that Kurdish women under the special war of the state that sometimes he called state terrorism; are still exposed to state terror and to sexism based mentality. Thus, in this condition, the family is formed as a little state that is run by men and plays an effective role in keeping women in slavery. The KCK suggests that according to the 'Democratic Autonomy' project, "family is not a social institution that can be overcome in this existing social reality, but can be converted. Thus, the laws and the concept of property on children and women which is based on hierarchy must be replaced", (DTK, 2011: 28). Therefore, the project wants to replace this current situation with such mentality to promote a society that is based on free will and the mentality of free women, youth and then free people as a whole. In order to deal with this issue and tackle the problem in an effective way, the KCK wants to start from establishing various civil institutions to organise women and youths based on individual choice and the principles of freedom combined with free collective will and working as integrated organisations within society as a whole.

There are difficulties in directing youth towards freedom in the current situation in Kurdistan, because mainly youths pose many problems for the existing ruling system. Nevertheless, youths can play a great role in building a new, free and democratic society. The basic duty of the 'Democratic Autonomy' system is to create and implement positive projects for social and cultural development of all different strata within society, and in all aspects of social and cultural life. Therefore, the process of "re-establishment of the society in the 'Democratic Autonomous Kurdistan' will be actualized with the free organisation of labour, education, health, solidarity and similar units under the leadership of women and youths in particular", (DTK, 2011: 30).

Thus, the notion of social dimension of this project has the potential to discuss, to take decisions, to re-establish and to operate and then for that reason to be a base for the other dimensions to be implemented. There is huge scope in this project for women and the status of women and youths in society. To regain their own deserved position in leading society once again, women and youths must play an important role in the establishment of freedom, democracy and with human rights principles through their energy, dynamism, and play a leading role in social changes. 'Democratic Autonomous Kurdistan' will regard any sort of exploitation of child labour and sexual harassment as crime and treated according to international laws conventions on children's rights.

6. Economic Dimension

The KCK believes that as a result of the war, military occupations, political and economic colonisations of the external powers; Kurdistan became a land of a people who are dispersed all around the world. The land that was described in the texts of holy books as a cradle of civilisation and paradise land with enormous wealth has ended up a land of poverty and hunger. This project through its economic dimension tries to suggest a solution for this crisis. Those who occupied Kurdistan have destroyed the economic life of the people on this land and its people became easy prey and loyal to these hegemonic powers. People have been cultured to be dependent on occupation powers in Kurdistan. This condition affected Kurdish people's personalities and they became weak and lost self-trust. Such people cannot be fighters and founders of free, decent and democratic life and finally this became a fact and a destiny for the Kurds, Ocalan (2011).

Based on this reality, the KCK argues that the creation of an economic basis for

a society is a key dimension for them to become a moral and political society. Therefore, the main point to “develop in the building of ‘Democratic Autonomy’ will be the creation of an economically viable society which achieves the elimination of unemployment and poverty”, (DTK, 2011: 32). The KCK wants to focus on the economy as an important aspect of bringing about a democratic and fair society. It has been a matter for discussion and has a significant place in the project of ‘Democratic Autonomy’. However, implementing such ideas is far from possible under current circumstances, let alone the limitation and contradiction of the idea of tackling the issue of economic collapse in Kurdistan and in Turkey as a whole. The KCK mainly tries to look at the situation from the perspective of anti-capitalism and highlighting the role of women in promoting economic progress.

It is argued by the KCK that the reason for economic problems is controlling women by men through capitalist institutions. Therefore, the class system, urbanisation and the power of the current state, made society alienated from the social economic and democratic values and faced deep structural problems. To the KCK, good economic policy needs “socialisation and democracy”, (DTK, 2011: 33). This means that in order to conduct an economic policy that meets the needs of society, it must be through democratic and autonomous institutions of society. To promote the idea that Kurdistan has a potential to be the most developed and civilised society in the region and confront the reality. In reality it has become a deprived area and its society has faced huge economic collapse and economic genocide. Therefore, it will be very important for Kurdish society to “become an economically viable society by establishing its free and democratic life on the bases of ‘Democratic Autonomy’”, (DTK, 2011: 33).

7. Ecological Dimension

Surprisingly, the KCK tries to show that ecology is as important as any other aspect of rebuilding Kurdistan and Kurdish society. It is argued that state power in Kurdistan deliberately focused on destroying Kurdistan's nature through several methods. In Turkey, due to the state hostility to the Kurdish areas and its society, the ecological destruction for militaristic, political and economic purposes has done serious damage to Kurdistan's areas and its social structure.

As it has been mentioned earlier, more than three thousands of Kurdish villages and forests have been burned, residential areas demolished as a result of dam projects and other development plans jeopardize historic cultural monuments, and pastures were flooded with water. Many pastures have been left with no water and have turned into desert. Moreover, “thousands of square metres of farmlands have been planted with mines, making farming impossible”, (DTK, 2011: 36). In addition to that, the culture of respecting nature and ecology is slightly diminished due to the problems and instability in Kurdistan as a result of the war and limitation of freedom and democracy.

The KCK believes that a system in society cannot be regarded as moral and democratic if that system is not integrated with nature and does not respect ecology. The main reason for the ecological crises is the notion of capitalist greed that focuses on collecting profits only, regardless of moral, social and ecological outcomes of making interest and profits. Thus, the moral side of capitalism could be overwhelmed with an ecological approach. This can be effective only by having a policy that understands and respects the value of ecology. This means that, the issue cannot be tackled only through an environmental approach.

In this regard, the KCK wants to suggest a solution to tackle and reduce ecological disasters through cultural and social awareness. It argues that ecological awareness is necessary. Loving one's homeland and regarding the world as a homeland is an important principle. Thus, in order for society to have a healthy and clean environment, there is a crucial need for society to understand the sensitivities of ecology and its consequences. It is necessary to oppose the state policy of urbanisation that has damaged the ecological balance. The projects in Kurdistan that are called the Southeast Anatolian Projects, in Turkish, Guneydogu Anadolu Projesi "GAP"⁸, must be stopped as the aim of these projects is changing the "flora and the flooding of historical sites with water to wipe out the Kurdish people's history", (DTK, 2011: 36).

8. Diplomatic Dimension

If Kurdistan becomes an autonomous region within Turkey, and has its own flag and constitution as this project calls for, then it could have a chance for making some diplomatic activities. According to the KCK's understanding, diplomatic activities developed by the people, societies, different groups and finally by the states for the promotion of their own interests. Yet, the KCK criticises the notion of diplomacy within the framework of the nation- state as this notion only recognises states and pursuing diplomatic activities between nation-states. Thus, society and various groups are not predominantly respected.

Therefore, this project has suggested an alternative paradigm for understanding diplomacy and promoting its activities within the notion of 'Democratic Autonomy' for societies in Kurdistan. According to this project, the diplomacy

⁸ GAP project is a multi-sector integrated regional development project based on the concept of sustainable development in the south east Turkey. The KCK argues that this project is mainly for diminishing Kurdish struggle and Kurdish society.

dimension is “based on mutual solidarity and interest between peoples, different groups and societies”, (DTK, 2011: 37). Considering the reality of Kurdistan that has been divided into four parts within four different countries, this projects suggests that diplomatic activities of ‘Democratic Autonomous Kurdistan’ could be a corner-stone for development and endorsement of peace and progress among neighbouring groups, societies and people of all parts of Kurdistan and people of those four countries. This project argues that through diplomatic activities, people of Kurdistan who live in diaspora or in the metropolis in west Turkey can have legal, direct and formal recognition that can direct them to have a positive connection with home.

In the project that has been written by the KCK through these eight dimensions, ‘Democratic Autonomy’ was described as the embodied expression of their previous suggested solution projects in order to participate in the process of democratisation of Turkey in order to make the republic of Turkey a democratic state, DTK (2011). It was also stated that ‘Democratic Autonomy’ respects the Turkish state and is not attacking the sovereignty of Turkish borders and “it will reinforce the brotherhood of peoples and their unity within the borders, which will end conflicts; the Kurdish people and Turkey will reach a new contract and launch a new era in Turkish-Kurdish relations”, (DTK 2011, 15). Therefore, this project cannot be dangerous and the cause of intimidation for the state and for the government of Turkey.

However, this was rejected by the state and the Turkish government. The state harshly responded and started to intensify its imprisonment operation against the ‘KCK’ members. The question here is why the state had a very negative reaction against this project? This is a serious dilemma in the political arena within the Turkish state towards the Kurdish question. The discourse of the

state is to create new problems but in the same direction as earlier perspectives in which the Kurdish question is only a matter of security and terrorism rather than the cultural, social and political will of a nation that is called Kurdish people. This is in order to sustain the current situation and continue its old discourse, Olson (2011). Thus, the project of 'Democratic Autonomy' with all limitations and contradictions in the detail of it; can be regarded as a positive turning point in the Kurdish national movement discourse in the northern part of Kurdistan and Turkey. This is due to its real choice and respecting of the status quo of the Kurdish situation within the international borders of those countries that Kurds living.

On the one hand, the 'Democratic Autonomy' project has revealed itself as an alternative to the state, and the tyrannical and undemocratic state; on the other hand, it respects Turkish borders and brotherhood between Kurdish and Turkish people. This notion can be seen as a contradiction. This project is not dangerous for the Turkish people or the notion of Turkishness even; it only calls for cultural, social and political identity for the Kurds and other minorities within the borders of Turkey. It calls for equal rights and tasks for all. Nevertheless, this project presents some alternatives for the model and practice of the current state in Turkey. It calls for decentralisation and giving room to people in order to have voices and choices in participation of building public interest and empowering people to participate in writing their own destiny, rights in society and towards the state.

Thus, it is mainly about people and their freedom, their choice and empowerment rather than the state and controlling methods as it is currently. In the next section of this chapter, this project will be analysed and criticised. A point that is worth mentioning here is that the 'KCK' has started to implement its

policy according to the project of 'Democratic Autonomy' as much as possible without waiting for the state to answer or refuse the project. By looking at the DTK and the BDP activities in Kurdistan, especially through civil and legal institutions that belong to the 'KCK', it could be obvious that the policy is on its way to being implemented. The best and most accurate examples in this respect can be seen through activities of social, cultural and legal channels.

Democratic Autonomy: a Critical Examination

This is a concept that has been brought to the social and political arena by the KCK as an alternative model of managing society to that of the centralist statist authority in Turkey. In the previous section, this project was described in detail. The whole project with the series of the KCK policy and practice was elaborated. Here, the limitations and ambiguities of the project will be critically discussed. It is difficult to discuss the suggestion of democratic autonomy since even the authors of the project seem to define it in contradictory terminologies. It is obvious that the project has been prepared in the shadow of the speeches and writings of Ocalan, mainly based on the Road Map that was presented earlier in this chapter.

It can be argued that those who wrote this project did not understand exactly what Ocalan wanted to say. For instance, on the one hand, it is suggested as a democratic solution for empowering people without touching the border and sovereignty of the Turkish state. On the other hand, it is calling for establishing an entity for the Kurds that could be called 'Democratic Autonomous Kurdistan' that must have social, political, ecological self-defence, even diplomatic institutions, DTK (2011). Moreover, the project has been suggested for establishing a Kurdish entity within the borders of Turkey. However, it

recommends that Kurds across four parts of Kurdistan could establish their own autonomous entities under the notion of democratic autonomy. In addition to this, the project says that it is not based on ethnicity. Yet, it is calling for a formal parliamentary entity that has Kurdish as a formal language. It says that it is not limited only to Kurdistan, but for the whole of Turkey that must be divided into several regions or counties. However, there is not any clarification regarding the criteria on which the borders of the regions could be based.

What is important here is to ask who, where and what will be autonomous? None of these questions are clearly answered by the project. On the one hand, the project can be seen as a societal initiative only for mobilizing Kurdish people to highlight their distinctiveness in order to get more social cultural and political rights. On the other hand, it can be seen as the KCK demand for establishing a confederalism “state” within the Turkish state. Even if the KCK does not name the entity as the “state”, the policy and practice of such an entity is similar to that which the state has. The Democratic Autonomous Kurdistan that the KCK calls for has institutions to manage all aspects of legal, political, cultural and social life. It is based on eight dimensions of political, legal, self-defence, social, economic, cultural, ecological and even diplomatic associations, DTK (2011).

Similar to the majority of the KCK activities, the process of implementation of this project is unbearable by the Turkish state. This is not only due to the issue of the illegality of the KCK. It is due to the ambiguity of the project as a result of misunderstanding the calls of Ocalan through his books and defence letters via his solicitors from 2005 until 2011. In Ocalan’s piece of writing that mentioned earlier in this chapter. It was named as ‘the Road Map’ that has been recently published and translated to several languages. Ocalan calls for a democratic nation before any sort of power and governance. He argues that all nations in

the Middle East are suffering from a nightmare that he calls it the nation state. According to Ocalan, the nation state has prevented people living in peace and prosperity with autonomy and a decent democratic life, Ocalan (2012). Therefore, as it has been presented earlier, he suggested nine principles as a solution for the chaos that he mentioned.

All these principles indicate that a democratic nation must be created. If democratic individuals, then groups and communities and then democratic society have been created, then the power and authority will be democratic and people can respect the government and the state. In the previous sections, the principles were presented and briefly analysed. Hence, the project of Democratic Autonomy has been suggested based on the Road Map. By looking at the principles of the Road Map and the dimensions of the Democratic Autonomy project, it can be clearly seen that they are all the same or at least similar. It can be argued that, the main limitation of the project comes from this point. The road map was written for analysing the problems of the Middle East. It was suggested as an alternative for the despotism of nation states. However, the project of Democratic Autonomy has been written for the Kurdish society and to some degree for the Turkish people.

Therefore, at some points it is about Kurdistan and an autonomous entity for the Kurds. At other points, it is about the whole of Turkish society and creating decentralised and communal autonomy for the people across the country without harming its borders and sovereignty. At some points, it is about all Kurdish people across all parts of Kurdistan and making several democratic and autonomous entities within the borders of their countries in the Middle East. It can be strongly argued that all this ambiguity has come from misunderstanding the discourse of Ocalan and the KCK in the communal and social arena of the

DTK and the BDP characters. Therefore, the project of the KCK has been misinterpreted by the state and by its activists as well. The result of this has been undertaking some steps that are not appropriate and became a reason to irritate the state and cause a negative reaction towards Kurdish activism within Turkey.

On the other hand, the KCK through its different autonomous institutions and through its internal disharmony has made several mistakes that have negatively affected other parts of its policy and practice. For instance, the same day that Democratic Autonomy was declared in 'Diyarbakir', seventeen Turkish soldiers were killed in a town close to 'Diyarbakir' called 'Silavn'. The same thing happened previously when Ocalan was in negotiation with president 'Turgut Ozal'. In 1993, on the main road between Bingol and Alazig cities, thirty three on vacation soldiers were killed by the PKK, Tan (2011). Therefore, as a result of the ambiguous steps of the KCK through announcing the project of Democratic Autonomy; the state harshly reacted and started to activate operation of detaining the KCK members that was started since 2009. The operation was highly escalated straight after the announcement of the Democratic Autonomy project.

The state was not sure what was happening. On the one hand, the DTK was claiming that it is only a cultural and social association that is holding some local and non-governmental activism. On the other hand, the DTK was calling for a Democratic Autonomous Kurdistan that has all institutions similar to the state. The state thought that this new way of Kurdish national struggle would increase the credits to and legitimacy of the Kurds, making them closer to separation and establishing their own entity. The state knew that this was true but there was no choice but to deal with it. Therefore, they

returned to the old treatment of the Kurdish question. They went back to focus on the military solution and treating the KCK as terrorist entity. The Prime Minister clearly suggested that he never allows for any state within his state to be created. A senior KCK leader argued that “the Prime Minister has regarded the KCK as a state within his state”, (interview with A2 on 23/09/2012).

Therefore, the state answered the project by arresting the KCK members across Turkey. Thousands of Kurdish members have been arrested during a short period. Moreover, the undercover negotiation between the state and the KCK in Oslo-Norway has been ended. Ocalan has been harshly isolated and visits to Imrali have been totally banned for about two years.

What is very significant in this respect is the power and hegemony of the KCK through its numerous institutions in Turkey to make people do what they do not even understand. As it was argued earlier, even the majority of the BDP and the DTK senior members do not understand what Democratic Autonomy exactly means. How people can be democratic and autonomous? Where exactly do the projects need to be implemented? It is very interesting that despite all limitations and ambiguities of the project, despite the impossibility of implementation of the project, it has had a controversial and huge reaction from the state. The KCK put the state into a circle so that it had no choice but to think of alternative ways of solving the question. After a long time of examining the military solution and treating the movement as an illegal, terrorist group and marginalising the Kurdish issue and limiting it to the terror and security issues only, the state had to accept the reality that this movement is wider and broader than they imagined.

There has been an impact of the project and attempts to implement it even if it

is blurry and vague. It has made people move again and have hope that the status of the Kurds will be created. No matter what the project suggested, Kurdish people hope for having a status, no matter whether the status might be an independent state, or federal entity or some Kurdish autonomous entity within Turkey. However, the Democratic Autonomy project has come to reject the state with all its shapes and colours. It has come to focus on a democratic societal solution for the issues without interfering and touching states and using their tactics and strategies. This can be regarded as contradiction in the project that shows the limitation of the KCK policy.

As a matter of argument, the project is the development of a series of ideas about democratic republic and democratic confederacies that was advanced by Ocalan based on his understanding of the principles of radical democracy. Nevertheless, the outcome of his understanding has become a different project that is rejecting states with all their shapes and colours. Moreover, it accepts the existence of the state as long as they are not interfering and allowing the democratic societal nations to manage themselves, Ocalan (2013). Therefore, it can be argued that the project is a post state or at best a parallel to the state. It is impossible to make the state give up the power and let people organise themselves through cultural, social and non-governmental associations. It is also not easy to make the state accept another powerful entity within the range of the state. This was the point that made the Turkish state harshly react against the project of Democratic Autonomy and the KCK itself.

It is hard to understand what is going on. On the one hand, people and the KCK activists do not understand the project. On the other hand, they have started to implement it wherever they can, whatever they think it is. Hundreds of social, cultural and communal groups are performing their activism under the notion of

making diversity and creating status for people in the Kurdish areas in Turkey. The hegemony of the KCK has covered almost all aspects of people's lives in the Kurdish areas. Every group directly or indirectly is under the power of the KCK. However, the KCK calls for democratic and autonomy for the people and for ignoring the power of the state. These are series of paradoxes that can be seen within the KCK and its various activisms.

The KCK claims that it does not want any power. It only wants people to be empowered in order to reach a status to be able to have their own democratic nation. Two dimensions of building a democratic nation are presented in the Democratic Autonomy project. In order for the Kurds to have a democratic nation, these two dimensions are very crucial. The first one is the free perceptive or thinking dimension. Kurds must have collective democratic thinking and perspectives. For that, language, culture, history, moral, economic and all other aspects of their lives must be developed based on democratic thinking rather than the perspectives of power and hegemony as it has been seen in the case of nation state building. The second dimension of the democratic nation is physical. The Kurds must have democratic activism by any cost. They must examine and develop their language, culture, social, moral, economic and all other aspects of their lives based on democratic thinking.

Ocalan (2013) argues that promoting the notion of a democratic nation could be achieved through two ways. The first one is through an agreement with the state that the democratic nation process does not harm the state and creates diversity and prosperity in society. Then the state will have better status as a result of the production of a democratic nation. The second one is through democratic activism of the nation and without waiting for states to allow the

Kurds to establish their own democratic nation. In this case, “it would be a confrontation with those states as it has been seen in the past. However, for the sake of freedom and democratic life there would be no choice but continue the struggle no matter what will happen”, (Ocalan, 2013:487). Moreover, the project of Democratic Autonomy is organising society to follow political democratic steps. In the KCK’s discourse, politicizing society is important to reduce the power of the state. Ocalan (2013) claims that wherever, politics and democracy is strong, the state is weak and inevitably lets people be free. Thus, the KCK is not a form of the state. The main policy maker of the KCK is legislative council ‘Kongra Gel’. It is a democratic organ. It is an alternative to the progress of the process of nation building through the initiative of people rather than the senior politicians, elites and upper classes. The management council ‘Konseya Reveberi’ is not acting as the Ministers council in the case of state; it is coordinating the units of Kurdish activism among the people. However, through the practice and hegemony of the KCK on the people and groups within society, it is obvious that the KCK is a power that has parallels to the state.

In point of fact, the Democratic Autonomy project is about to continue the struggle as the KCK knows that the state so far does not accept the reality of the Kurds. As a result of that, the struggle has changed and developed to the social, cultural and multi-dimensional in order to show the state that they must change their perspectives too. Thus, the KCK has examined its struggle without the permission of the state, Olson (2011). It has started a new stage of struggle from different dimensions towards a democratic nation. That stage is different from that which the PKK was following. It is not only a political party and guerrilla warfare. The task of the KCK through its diverse branches is rebuilding

the nation through all dimensions of the democratic nation model rather than building a nation state for the Kurds as it was the main aim in the era of the PKK.

Conclusion

Despite mentioning the theories of social movement less obviously in analysing the projects of the KCK in this chapter, it was clearly shown that the KCK can be regarded as the main actor of social movement since it has a multi faced struggle in Turkey and Kurdistan and became an umbrella entity for all political, cultural, social and societal activities. Moreover, since the KCK has plans and projects to widen its range of activisms and keep making people gather around its ideology, it can be regarded as a social movement, (McAdam, et al 1996: 331). The suggested projects of the KCK made new ways for the Kurdish national struggle. The first project was the 'Road Map' that has been suggested by the KCK leader Ocalan in 2009 as a solution for the Kurdish question. The other project was the 'Democratic Autonomy' that has been suggested by the DTK and the BDP as legal faces of the KCK in Turkey. The second project has been prepared based on the Road Map for solving the model of the nation state and presenting the model of a democratic nation.

The project of Democratic Autonomy as an alternative model to the state and the nation state model has impacted on the people and the state as well, no matter whether the project is clear or not. It has moved a significant amount of people on the one hand. It has also shaken the state policy towards the Kurds and their struggle in the south east of Turkey. No matter what the state reaction was, the project has made the state seriously think again. It has had an impact on the Turkish public on the other hand. There is a visible difference in the

Kurdish question and its struggle since the KCK has come to the stage.

Moreover, as a result of the KCK and its new approach to the Kurdish national struggle, celebrating diversity and communal activism through various ethnic, religious and cultural groups in Kurdish areas has been widely seen. In other words, the task of the KCK is rebuilding the nation through all dimensions of the democratic nation model rather than building a nation state for the Kurds as it was the main aim in the era of the PKK.

In the next chapter, the visible outcomes of transformation in the policy and practice of the KCK will be discoursed. This means that the KCK as a multi-dimensional system can be regarded as the main actor of social movement in the Kurdish part of Turkey. Borrowing some arguments from Castells (2012), this is because the KCK can have power and policy in changing political, cultural, social and societal values within Kurdish society in Turkey.

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE KCK: THE OUTCOMES OF THE TRANSFORMATION

Introduction

This chapter will critically discuss aspects of transformation from the PKK to the KCK. This will be examined through the KCK's policy and practice, its political, cultural, social and societal activism. It will consider the KCK and use an examination of social movement theories in order to elaborate the extent of social movement elements within the KCK. Particularly, based on the notions of transformation and changing societal values which are the main tasks of social movements according to theories, the detail of the transformation of this main actor of the Kurdish national struggle will be examined. If a social movement's main task as Castells (2012) argued is changing the values of society, producing and reproducing values in society, where is the change of values in Kurdish society since the KCK has been actively performing a role among Kurdish and Kurdistani societies? If it is argued that the KCK is a social system rather than a political movement, then the process of changing values, production and reproduction of values in Kurdish and Kurdistani societies should be seen.

Debatably, the KCK as the main actor of the Kurdish national struggle has reached a point that can be regarded as a wide multi-dimensional movement that is focusing on the social and cultural aspects of struggle more than the political aspect only. In other words, it can be argued that at the current time, the Kurdish national struggle and the KCK as a main character of this struggle is a social movement. Moreover, all the changes that have happened recently were due to the existence of the KCK as a new social and communal phenomenon. As it has been stated several times, the main point of whole thesis is; why has the KCK shifted from its previous shape 'the PKK' to the new multi-faced entity 'the KCK'? In the previous chapters, there was in detail

a presentation of the way that transformation from the PKK to the KCK has been taken place. In this chapter, there will be more discussion about the reasons behind that transformation. In other words, it will clearly answer the main question of the thesis through presenting and critically examining the KCK as an innovative social movement.

The KCK as a Social Movement

By looking at the KCK from outside, the answer to the question could be superficial. One may say that due to the rapid changes in the world system affecting the Middle East and Turkey alike, the PKK had to reshape itself and find another entity. For instance, in the previous years there were several events such as collapsing the Soviet bloc and the Berlin wall, gulf war and the western policy of promotion of democracy rather than stability in the region. It can be argued also that due to imprisonment of their leader 'Ocalan', the PKK has been ordered to change its policy and objectives. All these events could have impacts to encourage the PKK to melt down itself and create another entity that has finally been known as the KCK. These can be regarded as arguments. Yet, these arguments cannot survive long enough.

Through highlighting the construction of the Kurdish society on the one hand and by looking deeply into the PKK and the current KCK detail, it could be discussed that the shift is not coming only due to external opportunities. It can be argued that the change has deeper roots and internally some notions have commanded the PKK to understand that the road of struggle has reached a dead end. As mentioned earlier, the PKK never competed accordingly with the mainstream social theories. The theory of rational choice and political opportunities, Zald and Ash (1966), Eisner (1973), Tarrow (1983), Zald and

McCarthy (1987) were not taken into account in the case of this movement. In contrast to that, the PKK and to some degree the current KCK took anti-rational choice steps during their start and their social and political struggles. Cemil Bayik as a founder of the PKK and current co-chair of the KCK argues that “through the mainstream mentality and logic, the movement cannot be understood. The reason behind that is that the KCK itself was not established based on the mainstream logic and mentality”, (Cudi, 2008: 476).

Thus, understanding the KCK is rather difficult if it be looked at through the mainstream social theories. As mentioned in earlier chapters, the main dilemma of the Kurds is having a notion of collaboration with enemies against its own entity and struggle throughout history. The PKK was the only Kurdish political party that properly understood this dilemma and worked hard to tackle it. Ocalan (2013) argued that at that point, the movement was “established based on that notion and for tackling that dilemma”, (Ocalan, 2013: 431). Therefore, it started with challenging chieftains and landowners in Kurdistan at first. Then through landowners and local chieftains, it has challenged the state and the Turkish system.

Despite its ideology that has been influenced by socialism and the classic version of Marxist Leninist socialism, yet the notion of Kurdishness and fighting for the Kurds and Kurdistan was the priority in its program. Thus, the PKK ideology was a Kurdish interpretation of socialism and the main goal was establishing the Kurdish independent socialist state, Ozcan, (2006). The reason for that was that the PKK could not overcome the mainstream understanding of the concept of socialism and nationalism. Therefore, it combined Kurdish nationalism with the notion of socialism in the frame of the nation state as the main and only frame for its struggle. Therefore, it can be argued that the PKK

was nothing, but a timely response to the state policy towards the denial and deleting the notion of Kurdishness in Turkey, Ocalan (2011). The trick was that the PKK wanted to do so through the same policy and practice as the state had undertaken. Therefore, the policy and practice of the PKK reached a dead end.

Why was the PKK reshaped and the KCK established? In other words, why has the PKK shifted its ideology and the main goal from an independent Kurdish state to a democratic nation that can live in harmony with other nations in the region? All the details and explanations in the previous chapters, from the theories to the literature reviews, all were for the sake of preparation for answering the question of the transformation of the struggle of this movement. The shift in perspectives and ideology leads to the shift in practice and arrangement. Thus, the shift of ideology must have been happened in this respect. However, the shift of ideology became a cause of taking a different step. The new step was creating the different system 'the KCK' that has made a change in the values of Kurdish and Kurdistani societies.

The KCK is a social movement by itself. In a better description, the KCK is the main character of the Kurdish national movement at the current time. Through the viewpoint of Castells (2012), the process of changing values, producing and reproducing social values is a main task of social movement. It can be argued that the KCK has accomplished a large amount of changed values and producing of social and societal values. It on the other hand can be argued that the KCK is regarded as a innovative social movement as it is focusing on multi-dimensional sources and producing values, Touraine (1981). The KCK has started to pursue its struggle from multiple channels; not struggling only through political parties or guerrilla warfare as previously done by the PKK. It has developed its struggle through different cultural and social channels.

Through the beginning of the process, for the first time in the history of the Kurds, the PKK as a main actor of the Kurdish national movement has established Kurdish media means through the satellite television⁹. For the first time, Kurdish people could watch and listen to their own language with its several dialects and get news about different parts of Kurdistan. That was the first visible step of the movement towards promotion of cultural activism. At that time, the PKK was in the stage of rethinking its policy. As a matter of fact, since 1993, the PKK and Ocalan have thought of change and making different policies and ideology. This step can be regarded as value production and a different way of cultural revival. Hutchinson (1987) argues that when the political and visible ways of national struggle have been depressed, a nation would bring about different notions and ways to continue its struggle. Since Kurdistan was not free as a land or state, Kurdish struggle tried to promote another way of the process of national struggle. Making a nation on paper and through media means, could be a new step for the Kurds to manifest their distinctiveness. Interestingly, this media corporation was established in Europe, far from Kurdistan. Yet, the programs and targets of the project were for the Kurdish people and Kurdish cause.

As mentioned earlier, for a long time Kurds were working hard to create a nation state. To gain what other nations already have. Yet, it was not easy; it was almost impossible for them. However, this time, the struggle was not about the nation state. No matter, it is a hard or easy process. It is no longer about whether it is hard or not. It is about the new perspective which is the KCK believes that the project of the nation state in the region can no longer meet moral and democratic rights and the reality of the people in the region. Other

⁹ In 1995, broadcast of a Kurdish satellite 'MED TV' for the first time was established.

Kurdish political parties such as the KDP and the PUK were always fighting for their own regional Kurdish rights within the border of the state within which Kurds live. They called for autonomy of the federal system within Iraq or Iran. Their arguments for not calling for an independent nation state for the Kurds were coming from their weakness and the impossibility of that demand. 'Jalal Talabani', a famous Kurdish leader who recently became the Iraqi president has gone further by saying that establishing a Kurdish state is a dream of poets or the young novice.

Yet, after long debates and analysis of the Kurdish situation and the struggle, the KCK leadership has come to the conclusion that the Kurdish people are the victims of the nation state. The nation state cannot answer the needs of diversity and equality within Kurdistani societies. Therefore, this time the KCK wanted to let alone the struggle for building a Kurdish state and start struggling for nation building and for democratic rights for the people and societies in the region alike. Therefore, the shift from the goal of the PKK which was to establish a Kurdish nation state to the policy of the KCK which is promoting a democratic Kurdish nation has come from the shift in the perspectives of the movement. If the PKK goal was a reaction to the Turkish state, the KCK is not a reaction to the PKK or the state. Ocalan (2013) claims that after a long process of thinking and analysing the phenomenon of the state and nation, the movement came to believe that the situation of the constructed socialist approach has helped and strengthened the liberalist capitalist approach. The reason for the collapse of the socialist bloc was the crisis of the state and power through the view of the nation state only. Therefore, as we saw from the experience of China and Russia, these states have become capitalist states in a way that is much worse than the western model.

As a result of this analysis, the KCK has decided to leave the notion of the nation state alone and develop its policy towards a democratic nation based on social justice and radical democracy where the power and resources are not limited in the hands of a few greedy elites, Ocalan (2013). Therefore, all aspects of the change from the PKK to the KCK essentially go through the shift from nation state to democratic nation. In other words, the KCK is a post-state entity not an anti-state entity. This means that the centralist state is no longer needed. People can be empowered in a way that they can be able to manage their own social, cultural and societal needs without the formal forms of the centralist state. Therefore, cultural and social aspects of people's life are highlighted rather than the political aspect. Consequently, social and cultural nationalism have been promoted in Kurdistan and Turkey rather than political nationalism as such.

As it is argued, focusing on the process of promotion of the nation building rather than nation state building is the main face of transformation. Therefore, this cannot be looked at as a political tactic but it is an ideological strategy. It is cultural strategy on the other hand. Promoting the notion of nation building comes from the idea of cultural nationalism rather than a political one. As Kohn (1946) in Hutchinson (1987) argues, "there are two forms of nationalism- political which is rational, and cultural, which is 'mystical'- and that the dominance of one over other is related to the level of socio-political development of a community, (Hutchinson, 1987: 31). In fact, Kurdish nationalism in Turkey has been shifted from political to cultural. The KCK argued that political nationalism is a fake one in Turkey. The outcome of that politically shaped nationalism is bringing about the unification of society.

Unification of society that political nationalism brings about can be manifested

only in the shape of the nation state that has brought despotism rather than social justice. In the words of Hutchinson (1987), political nationalism can make a fake “unification of the community within a given territory”, (Hutchinson 1987: 30). Therefore, the KCK argued that the Kurdish nation does not need to experience the same mistakes as Turkish nationalism went through. Instead of that, Kurdish society must opt for cultural nationalism, based on radical democracy and autonomy of the different groups and colours of society.

Despite the difficulties of understanding the new phase of the KCK, it wants to continue with the notion of a democratic nation rather than the nation state. It was not easy to persuade even senior members of the KCK about this new and radical change, let alone the Kurdish public. A senior member of the KCK has expressed the feeling about the difficulty of that shift by making an example of the prophet Mohammed and his people. He argued that this shift resembles the time when Mohammed came and told his people that all the Idols that they had worshipped were useless, (interview with C3 on 16/09/2012). For a long time, the PKK told people that one day Kurds will have a state such as the Turks have. Kurdish people were obsessed by the idea of independence and having a Kurdish nation state. Suddenly the KCK came up with the idea that the nation state is the main source of the Kurdish disastrous condition. Therefore, it was almost impossible to persuade people about this change.

When the KCK announced the “Democratic Autonomy” project as an alternative project for the nation state building, it was misunderstood by most Kurdish people. They thought that the KCK no longer had Kurdish national goals. As a matter of fact, through the new ideology and policy of the KCK,

the process of Kurdish and Kurdistanian nation building has been promoted widely. This point can be regarded as a turning point of the KCK's new policy. It was a transformation from independence and the notion of a statehood of Kurdistan to the autonomy and democratization of people in Kurdistan.

Another aspect of changing values is the Kurdish perspective of women and their status within Kurdish society. The KCK has fundamentally worked to bring about a system that can respect women and treat them equally with men. In previous eras, women were treated as equipment, as babysitters and house servants in the best situation. However, in the KCK era, women have become a symbol of resistance and struggle. Women within the KCK system are no longer slaves or prisoners at home. They are leaders and active members of society. At the current time, the presence of women in a very active way can be seen in every aspect of the KCK's struggle. The best example of this is the numbers and percentage of women within the KCK leadership and all organisations that are under the umbrella of the KCK. Simply, by looking at the present percentage of women within the KCK leadership, we can see almost fifty-fifty chances for taking positions. For instance, the KCK 'Executive Council' management comprises six people since the 9th conference of 'Kongra Gel'; they are three women and three men. The co-leader system also always gives a chance to have a man with a woman holding leadership in all KCK organizations.

In contrast to other parties in Turkish parliament, from members of all four main parties, it can be seen that the HDP as a Kurdish or pro-Kurdish party under the umbrella of the KCK has twice the percentage of women deputies than that of the Islamist AKP and Nationalist CHP and three times higher representation than the Ultra-Turkish Nationalist party MHP. Moreover, the presence of women

is not only due to the quotas as a decision of the KCK that must be 50 per cent or over. It is actually due to the real presence and active struggle by women that are inspired by the 'Ideology of PKK' within the KCK. Ocalan (2013: 497) argues that the old woman in Kurdish history has gone, and a new one appeared due to the KCK new phase. Women are no longer slaves or servants. They are leaders and freedom fighters in all aspects of life.

Another value that has been touched due to the KCK and the new Kurdish social movement is treatment of the minority ethnics and religious groups within Kurdish society. In the previous era, Sunni Muslim Kurds as the majority were treating Alevis, Christians, and Yezidis as groups that did not deserve any respect. They were culturally, socially, even physically excluded. There was not any chance to make a close friendship between Sunni Muslims and those groups, let alone marriage or any other close relations with them. Yet, since the KCK and the new movement have power and influence on the Kurdish societies, there is very different treatment and respect towards such marginalised groups. These groups are no longer marginal. The best examples in this respect can be electing two deputies amongst the Kurds who are not Sunni Muslims. For the first time in the history of the Kurds, a female, Yazidi person became a member of the European Union Parliament. Her name is 'Feleknas Uca'. She is currently a famous figure within the Kurdish national movement. She is not a Muslim, not a male, not a daughter of any chieftains or religious men. She is a Yezidi, female, from an ordinary family. The main reason that she is one of the leaders of the movement is that she is an active and loyal member to the movement.

Another example is 'Erol Dora'. In the history of the new Turkish state, for the first time, a Christian deputy has entered the parliament of Turkey 'TBMM'. This

has happened with the votes of the Kurds. Not in Istanbul or Ankara, but in the predominantly Kurdish city of Mardin. During the fieldwork for this thesis, Dora was interviewed and he told an interesting story. He argued that when he was a young boy, once he was hit by a Muslim friend in the neighbourhood. He was few years older than him and had few other friends. He told little Erol that he hit others only once because they were not respectful. But he hit him twice. Once because he was not respectful like other children and the second time because he was not a Muslim, he was 'Flla' Christian. 'Erol Dora' smiled and said that he is a deputy with forty five thousand votes of Muslim Kurds in Mardin. This is an indication that the main and important point for the people is the loyalty for their movement rather than their religious sects or ethnics. These are two simple examples in the reality of this movement as a very visible notion of changing values in Kurdish society¹⁰. In the next section, there will be attempts to critically investigate the faces and essence of transformation in the Kurdish struggle from the PKK to the time when the system of the KCK was established.

Social Movements, the Essence of Transformation Due to the KCK

Discussing social movement is different from new ways of implementing a social movement. Here the KCK can be seen as an innovative social movement with regards to its elements of multiple tasks and its multiple aspect character on the one hand, Touraine (1981), Kriese, et.al (1995). On the other hand, the KCK has been characterized by producing new values and creating a new personality for the individuals within Kurdistani societies and changing the old values of the people, Castells (2012). If this argument cannot be true for all Kurdish people or for the Kurds in the northern part of Kurdistan, it can be

¹⁰ In fact, there are plenty of examples in this respect. Within the KCK; several senior members are Alevies, Ezidies, Zazas and Turks.

surely true at least for the people who are under the umbrella of the KCK system directly and those who are influenced by the KCK.

The KCK has successfully touched the long-constructed walls of the traditional structure of the Kurdish society and people that have become a huge barrier in front of the Kurdish national struggle. This movement has destroyed the wall of fear and weakness of Kurdish character. It has changed the reality of the Kurdish minds. Castells (2012) gave a brilliant quotation from an Egyptian demonstrator of Al-Tahrir Square. He wrote: “we have brought down the wall of fear; you brought down the wall of our house. We will rebuild our homes, but you will never rebuild that wall of fear”, (Castells, 2012: 218). The previous Kurdish minds thought that they could not do anything without external powers. For a long time, the Kurds thought that their destiny could only be under the hegemony of neighbouring states and commands forever. Through the manifestation of the projects of a democratic republic, then democratic confederacies and then through the project of Democratic Autonomy; the KCK has delivered at least theoretically, a successful alternative system to the reality of the Kurds in the Middle East and especially within the borders of the Turkish republic. Kurds no longer wait for the states to give them what they want. As a KCK senior member argued, “No-one will give anything to the Kurds. All that we need must be gained only through our own struggle”, (interview with A18 on 19/04/2012).

Nevertheless, the issue of implementation of these projects has faced and been facing a series of obstacles and limitations. The process of democratization of Kurdistan societies is not an easy task. As a matter of fact, the previous PKK failed in democratising its internal body as a practical political movement. Moreover, it failed in democratising society as a larger

entity than the movement itself. Therefore, the process of internal democratisation within the body of the KCK is unavoidable. This is the main and most serious challenge in front of the KCK that can be regarded as an essential point in relation to the changing of values and producing of new values. The KCK has taken several steps to change values and create new characters of society. Yet, the process of internal democratisation will be a king maker in terms of the implementation of the new values and the sustainability of the social movement alike. Yet, the KCK has bravely tried to start the process of democratisation within itself. The recent change of the leadership system can be regarded as a positive start in that respect. As a matter of fact, in the ninth congress of 'Kongra Gel' in July 2013, the model of co-leadership was adopted by the KCK organs from the very bottom to the very top.

Moreover, some crucial figures such as the chief of the 'Executive Council' 'Murat Karaylan' have been changed through an internal election of the 'Kongra Gel' and both 'Cemil Bayik' and 'Bese Hozat' have been appointed as co-leaders of the 'Executive Council'. It can be argued that this can be seen as a sign of starting to promote internal organisational democratisation within the KCK system. In this respect, the notion of comparison between the KCK and any other previous or current Kurdish or Turkish organisation cannot help. The issue of internal democratisation within the KCK must be scrutinised independently. Otherwise, the process of democratisation within parties such as the KDP as the main Kurdish party in the southern part of Kurdistan is undeveloped and much more limited than the previous PKK and the current KCK. Within Turkish parties such as the AKP, also, the same argument can be true. For more than a decade, the AKP has the same

leader and policy. Yet, the KCK needs to go through a series of democratisation processes in order to survive and develop during its journey.

As it is mentioned in the previous chapters, the process of thinking about change started from 1993 within the movement. However, it was not as visible and mature as it was in 2005. Capturing Ocalan and having plenty of time behind the bars of Imrali Island gave him a golden chance to think of change and reshuffle the policy of the PKK and call for a change in practice. This shift has spearheaded the movement to reshape itself and establish itself as a new body that lately called the KCK. That was a positive step. Once again, having Ocalan alive and producing new ideas could lead the KCK to go through the process of democratisation and promotion of civil and legal activism.

In all cases, the movement has been changed in several aspects. Nevertheless, more changes and transformations are still on the way. The series of changes that have happened so far can be investigated through the classification of the KCK activities in different aspects as follows:

1. Transformation in the Policy 'Ideology'

The KCK was established as a result of the deadlocked policy of the PKK. Clearly, Ocalan (2013) argues that the policy of the PKK was a reaction against the policy of denial of the Kurdish people and their culture, language and history. In other words, the PKK was a project for confronting the policy of Kurdish denial by the state. The reaction to the Turkish slogan that said: 'how happy is he who says I am Turk', 'Ne Mutlu Turkum Diyene' was the slogan of the PKK that said: Kurdistan will be the graveyard for the fascists, 'Kurdistan Fasizme Mezar Olacak'. Analysing the discourse of the PKK through this slogan is very interesting. It makes the situation so clear that the discourse of the PKK was reactive in all

cases. Moreover, that policy was under the hegemony of the statist ideology. It came as a reaction and with the same mentality as the Turkish state had.

The old policy focused on the confrontation of the state and its internal allies. It was a Kurdish interpretation of the left and socialist ideology with the pedagogy of Marxist Leninist and rather Stalinist dogma of revolutionary movement. This notion of the agenda led the party to stick with the authoritarian style of ideological commitment to the party. As a matter of fact, due to that authoritarian dogma, the PKK committed serious crimes that have negatively affected the Kurdish society, Kurdish revolution and the struggle of the movement alike. The notion of labelling terror on the PKK did not come from nowhere. There were some horrible incidents of activism by the PKK personnel against civil and non-armed officers in Turkey, especially in the 1990s, Marcus (2009). Of course the state was using every opportunity to create a negative image for the movement. For instance, there were several contra-guerrilla activisms that made a negative image for the PKK, (interview with A12 on 03/08/2011).

Yet, the notion of violence and the mentality of banditry were inside the heart and behaviour of plenty of the PKK cadres and commanders, Ocalan (2011). Therefore, the policy headed the movement to a limited stage that could not go any further. Ocalan (2013) has confessed that even in 2000, the PKK was dealing with all these new events with the mentality and policies of the seventies. Thus, the result was a sequence of harsh failures and the loss of huge amounts of their human resources and reputation. As a matter of fact, despite all such damages and negative outcomes, the PKK was always the first and only party in the northern part of Kurdistan. As Ozcan (2006) argues, the position of the PKK as the main actor of the Kurdish struggle

was intact. That was due to the lack of any other active or even less active alternative in the arena whatsoever. Therefore, there was a necessity for a change of policy. Yet, the change could not be achieved through an old and classic organisation such as the PKK. Therefore, the PKK had to be renewed.

Consequently, the KCK was established. The policy of the KCK is not focused on the state. Its lines are not running parallel to the state lines and strategies. The policy of this new movement is overcoming the state and focusing on wider targets than the state targets. As mentioned earlier, the state policy is about the power. It is about highlighting the lines of centralist national power in a formal manner. However, this movement's policy is about people. It is for people and their empowerment. It is about diversity and equality of opportunities. It is for the depressed and less-advantaged groups' empowerment. The policy of the KCK has a multi-dimensional notion. The discourse of this new movement is to promote a communal democracy within the Kurdish nation and a culture of diversity among all different ethnic and religious groups alike. To the KCK, this type of promotion of democracy is the real and natural power and empowerment of society.

In this sense, the policy of the KCK does not take central power and state hegemony into account. It is focusing on a sort of power that is coming from human and cultural resources to promote democracy and the respect of diversity by people themselves, Akkaya and Jongerden (2012). The outcome of this policy can bring about some sort of societal democracy amongst the Kurdish people to a certain degree. In terms of theory and policy, this notion can be developed and better organised by the KCK policy makers. However, in terms of the practice of this policy, there is a huge difficulty in

understanding and implementing such policies amongst Kurdistan people in Turkey. As a matter of fact, the process of mobilisation of the struggle of the KCK has been facing huge difficulties and obstacles. Therefore, the policy has not been explained to people as it is needed to be.

Due to illegality of the KCK within Turkey, most of the people and activists who are under the umbrella of the KCK are facing several sorts of confrontation with the state and its prosecution channels. Therefore, the policy of the KCK has never been fully implemented yet. Despite the reality of the situation of the Kurds and the KCK system in Turkey and all obstacles, the notion of the KCK policy is not familiar and understandable in accordance to the mainstream policy or the systems and the state. The KCK claims that its system has nothing to do with the state and with power. Yet, this is a clear contradiction to the steps and the practice of the policy of the KCK. Internally, there is a strong organisation and connection between all parts of the system. Externally, there is a harsh competition between the KCK and other powerful entities such as the state and the AKP policy at the current time. There is a clear hegemony of one of these two main powers in Turkey; at least in the places where the Kurds live and the KCK has power. Life and all kinds of collective or even individual activities in Kurdistan and those areas in which Kurds live are divided into two different styles and perspectives.

From the viewpoint of the KCK, life has been divided into the life and activities of, the people (Gel) and the perspective of the state (Sistem). Anything in a major city such as Diyarbakir has been divided into the style of living according to the people or belonging to the state that they call it (System). On the other hand, in the same place and time, according to the state and perspective of the government, life has been divided into the life of 'terrorists', the "KCK people"

or the life of 'legal people', "people who are belonging to the state". This is a very uniquely odd classification that has occupied all angles and parts of life in Kurdistan. This means that the KCK has not so far been able to bring about an atmosphere that can provide a notion of freedom and prosperity. Despite its claim that the policy of the KCK is post state and focusing on the promotion of cultural and social areas rather than politics and power seeking, the policy of the KCK is not free from the statist notion and politics.

2. Transformation in Politics

The concept of politics has its rather specific meaning from political scholars and has been practiced in certain ways by political activists, parties and states. Yet, this concept was differently understood by the previous PKK. Since the PKK was a practical, political one-dimensional party, Ocalan (2011), it was only focused on the state and power. Therefore, the aim was confronting the Turkish state and establishing an independent socialist Kurdistan state. Without understanding the reality and opportunities of the Kurdish society, such demands were very irrational and far from any achievement. In contrary to all expectations, the PKK survived and developed its struggle to a certain degree. However, the rehearsal of the ideological and political views forced the party into a dead-end. Therefore, "the matter of sustainability" (McAdam, et al 1996: 340-341), of political vision could not be guaranteed in the case of the PKK.

On the other hand, the viewpoints of the KCK towards politics are wider and much more realistic. In the era of the KCK, politics cannot be glued into ideological commitment. The politics must be rather pragmatic and strategic. Therefore, the KCK does not put all its focus on politics only. It has only a small committee to deal with politics, power and the state. As a matter of fact, even

the majority of political characters within the KCK are dealing with the cultural, educational and ideological aspects of the struggle rather than politics as such. When the KCK discovered that the previous PKK approach was limited to mainly focus on politics and armed struggle, it started to pay less attention to politics. By looking at the legal political character of the KCK within Turkey, it is clear that the majority of activism of that party is not political for itself. Undeniably, the HDP and the BDP have political activism; however, its political notion has some moral and cultural flavour. The KCK understood that the challenge of the state cannot be managed by taking similar steps as the state takes. Therefore, it changed the notion of the politics of the previous PKK.

The KCK has examined politics through its ideological understanding that a change in the perspectives of the people could be the starting point of democratic politics rather than focusing on the political characters that are in the arena. Therefore, to the KCK, fighting with the system is important, not the government personnel or prime ministers and head of the army of the Turkish state. This means that, for the KCK, the challenge is with the mentality of the state and the notion of unity and hard-core nationalism in Turkey. Borrowing a terminology from Smith (2001), the struggle of the KCK is to think of national state rather than the nation state in Turkey. A national state has a wider and diverse notion. It is not about the Kurdish or Turkish ethnics. It is a national entity that includes all the different colours and voices of the people in the country; free from exclusions and discriminations. Thus the political struggle of the KCK is distinguished from the one of the previous PKK and the current Turkish state through the idea of refusing direct power for the direct characters.

That is one of the social movement's characters that there could be no particular leader. As Castells (2012) argues, when there is no leader, it means

all of the people are leaders. It is not important who the leader is. It is important which political ideology and perspective has power upon the people and society. As a senior leader of the KCK argues, “that is why the KCK system calls it democratic politics rather than hegemonic and authoritarian politics”, (interview with A2 on 23/09/2012). In the words of a senior member of the KCK, “when the power has been created from communal bases rather than political élites, the notion of politics will be democratic and closer to the fair politics”, (interview with A1 on 22/09/2012).

Nonetheless, in a social and political atmosphere such as the one in Turkey and Kurdistan, everything is politicised. Therefore, all social and cultural activities certainly have the notion and flavour of politics. However, the notion of politics is framed and limited to the practice of communal and social empowerment. At least theoretically, there is no politics and hegemony of the people’s will. In contrary to this, there is always people’s will and power in the politics and decisions that have been taken by the politicians and policy makers within the KCK. In terms of practice nevertheless, the politics activists are managed by a few characters that are dedicated for the task by the KCK decision makers.

For that, the power and hegemony of the KCK on political activism comes from the senior committee that is in the mountains of Qendil. Thus, the notion of power and politics is still regarded as important and run somewhat centrally. It is argued that there is a decent amount of autonomy for the political legal characters such as the BDP managers within Turkey. However, most of the crucial decisions come from the mountain of Qendil or Imrali prison. That is a contradiction to the notion of Democratic Autonomy and empowerment of society which are in the policy of the KCK. This can be regarded as a main

criticism in the KCK's inconsistency during the practice of its policy, especially with regards to the practice of power and political activism.

3. Transformation in the Social Sphere

The PKK has touched the long-built wall of social injustice from the very beginning of its struggle. The first activism started by bringing about just treatment to the peasants and workers by the chieftains and landowners. Despite the harsh, premature and limited ideology behind that act, the notion behind this attempt was to show sympathy for the depressed and disadvantaged people in society. Therefore, the social aspect of the struggle was important from the very start of this movement.

Notwithstanding, the PKK was not responding to the needs of the people on the level of social sphere. That was due to the countless problems of the people that were the victims of the Turkish harsh policy of assimilation, unification and Turkification across the whole of the twentieth century. Moreover, the tools and the apparatus of the PKK to confront the state policy were weak and inappropriate. It was a premature reaction and with the same tools as the state used, but very limited and weak compared to the state capacities. Therefore, the PKK only could do limited work for Kurdish and Kurdistan society on the social level. Moreover, due to the reaction of the harsh policy of the state, the PKK had left very little room for the promotion of democracy and accepting serious debate and criticism within the movement.

As a Leninist party, the PKK believed that democracy and other critical issues such as free debate and institutional democracy must be postponed for the era after the triumph of the revolution. The PKK argued that "Democracy should follow revolution rather than coming first", (Marcus, 2009:91). That was one of

the critical issues that drove the PKK to an impasse and dead end. This was also a mistake that made the PKK lose significant amount of human and social resources. Plenty of good intellects and democratic members and sympathisers were lost due to the harsh and undemocratic approach of the PKK. Since it was a reaction to the state, it was taking the same undemocratic steps as the state took. Therefore, the PKK had no vision to focus on the social aspect of the struggle as was needed. Subsequently, changes became a certain necessity.

Nevertheless, the KCK has come with a different notion that the social aspect must be very much focused on and to a certain degree and the political aspect must be diminished in the process of change and liberation. The KCK argues that bringing freedom and liberation for the Kurds does not come from outside of society and as a gift from outsiders. "It is a process of individual and collective feelings and preparation of people on the social level to accept and start their serious struggle for it", (interview with A2 on 23/09/2012). It will come with the notion of social empowerment to bring about diversity and equality for people. Therefore, the KCK on a wide and diverse level has suggested focusing on civil society activities more willingly than keeping to politics only.

As mentioned earlier, there are hundreds of small, medium and large organisations under the KCK umbrella. Ergo, social and cultural activities have been prioritised in the struggle of the KCK. All these social and cultural activities have come from the fact that the KCK is spending the majority of its social, financial and human resources on the process of education and changing the values of society. A senior member of the KCK argues that "more than %85 of the power of this movement is going for education, the rest is about visible activities, such as assemblies, conferences and media activities", (interview with C3 on 16/09/2012).

These educational processes are not very visible in Turkey. This is what made the Turkish state irritated and create a wide operation for detaining members of the KCK, especially since 2009. The state has named the operation afterwards as the 'KCK operation'. However, the KCK has continually been pursuing its social activities across Kurdish areas and some major cities such as Istanbul and Ankara. As a matter of fact, these activities are not only for the Kurdish people in Turkey; it is for all peoples of Turkey alike. As mentioned earlier, recently Ocalan has called for establishing a new entity to undertake activities of the KCK outside of the Kurdish areas in Turkey. Consequently, the new organisation named as the 'Democratic People's Congress' HDK has been established firstly as a successor of the DTK and BDP in case of closure. However, it has become a wide ranging organisation to cover non-Kurdish activism outside of the Kurdish areas in Turkey - under the umbrella of the KCK. In other words, it is parallel to the Democratic Society Congress DTK that is active in Kurdistan. Thus, the HDK is Turkey's version of the DTK. Also the 'Democratic People Party' HDP within the HDK has been established. The HDP is the main party for whole Turkey while the BDP is for the Kurdish region within the DTK¹¹.

The purpose of this was that the KCK wanted to show Turkish people that their struggle is not only for the Kurds, but for all people in Turkey and for the sake of promoting democracy and respecting diversity and equality on the basis of social justice in Turkey. Nevertheless, all these activities cannot make the KCK free from the label of violence in the eyes of the Turkish public and social and political elites. Moreover, the notion of Kurdishness as the main character of the KCK struggle remains as a point of the movement that will never be in a position of

¹¹ In April 2014, within the 'TBMM' also, the BDP deputies switched their fraction to the HDP fraction. It is to show that the HDP is a wider party for all Turkey and the BDP (name changed to DBP) is a party only for the Kurdish part of Turkey.

acceptance by the majority of Turkish society. Therefore, the steps towards change by the KCK remain limited.

4. Transformation in the Cultural Sphere

Mainly the cultural aspect has a much intertwined link with the social one. The only specialisation that the cultural aspect has is focusing on the points that are specifically dealing with different ethnic and religious groups within society. Since the PKK was the movement that finally the KCK was born from the ashes of; it can be argued that all aspects of notions and activism are those which existed within the PKK to an incomplete and certain degree. Nonetheless, the KCK was established as a response to the mistakes and limitations of the PKK. Therefore, all aspects of the previous PKK can be seen in the KCK in a better form, somehow more mature and appropriate. However, due to the one-dimensional activism of the PKK, there was a lot of necessary cultural activism that was never implemented by the PKK.

Cultural education and activism was slightly approached by the PKK. Respect to Armenians, Christians, Ezidies, Aleves, non-Kurds and non-Muslims were always appreciated within the PKK. Yet, it was never a matter of full appreciation. Respect for women and female empowerment was visibly respected likewise. Despite the notion of the nation state and aiming at the Kurdish independent state, always within the PKK, there was a respect for the others who would be living within the potential Kurdistan state eventually. As a matter of fact, due to the limited information of the PKK's members including Ocalan himself; about the reality of Kurdistan and its history, geography, social and cultural life, there was no real understanding of the importance of cultural diversity and respecting others.

However, despite all its limits, from the first day, the PKK wanted to understand the reality of the Kurds. The main difference between the PKK and other movements in the world can be seen in the manner of recruiting members. For other movements, members must be patriotic, and then they join the movements and become revolutionary. In the PKK's case this was the opposite. Members of the PKK did not even know that they were Kurdish when they started to join the revolutionary group of the PKK. The power of assimilation and Turkification harshly affected people's personality, culture and nature.

Therefore, the PKK could not promote the cultural aspect while there was that huge wave of assimilation and unification on the one hand. On the other hand, the PKK and its members including Ocalan himself were products of that assimilated society. Thus, they lacked all the necessary elements to start the revolution, let alone the importance of cultural and social aspects. Consequently, the PKK could only challenge the wave and let some part of the Kurdish people at least understand that they were Kurds. In other words, the PKK had a challenge to stop the process of Kurdish denial and start whispering the words of Kurdistan and freedom of the Kurds amongst the people. However, promoting the Kurdish language as an important part of the culture of the nation; was almost totally ignored by the PKK. At the time, the PKK was arguing that people must recognise that they were Kurds first, no matter which language they use. That was one of the biggest mistakes that the PKK made and it has had negative effects until today's date. As a matter of fact, the majority of the Kurds in Turkey cannot speak, read and write in Kurdish. Moreover, almost all Kurds in Turkey including Ocalan himself can speak, read and write Turkish better than Kurdish.

The KCK, nonetheless, has deeply understood the importance of the cultural

aspect and promoting diversity and equality in society. Therefore, it has focused mainly on civil and societal engagements and working on the revival of the depressed and excluded and marginalised groups in society. The notion of a multi-dimensional struggle is very visibly manifested in the KCK's cultural activism. There are wide networks across the Kurdish areas and some parts of major cities in Turkey where the KCK has cultural activism via its several non-governmental organisations. For the very first time in one hundred years in Turkey, some depressed and ignored minorities have been revitalized and started to recognise themselves once again and struggle for bringing about self-esteem for their own groups.

Very recently for instance, the Armenian Church in Diyarbakir has been renovated, and referring to Armenian culture has been making a slight return. Aleves also, through establishing their own organisations and private worship houses that are called the "house of congregation" 'Cem Evi', have started to have their own religious and cultural rituals despite state hostilities. What is very interesting here is that the KCK has argued in agreement and through the projects of 'Democratic Autonomy' that power and choice must be brought back to the peoples and communities. Thus, to a good extent, there is an autonomy and respectful notion for the diversity amongst peoples and communities. It is necessary to reinforce the fact that there is a difference between the KCK's attempt to promote democracy and autonomy amongst the people; and the process of democratisation within the KCK personnel as such. Until very recently and only after establishing the KCK, one can say that there is some sort of attempt toward democratisation within the KCK.

However, the outcome of the KCK's cultural activism is very visible in that a reasonable amount of Kurdistani people have been going through a set of self-

recognitions and democratisation together with the notion of autonomy and openness for Kurdistan societies. That is the face of transformation and change of the values that the KCK has brought about. Nevertheless, the hegemony of the KCK and Ocalan himself, as a main and powerful character on this stage, often shows itself and threatens the notion of openness and autonomous democracy in society. In other words, despite all the claims of the KCK that it does not want power as such, the hegemony of the KCK can be felt everywhere within Kurdistan societies in the northern part of Kurdistan. The substance of cultural framing in this respect, once again, is under the hegemony and influence of the KCK. This means that, the KCK is the policy maker and decision taker for the majority of cultural phenomenon that is recently taking place in the predominantly Kurdish areas in Turkey. By any cost, the Kurdish and Kurdistan people have been seeing diverse and colourful cultural activism since the KCK has been established and started to implement its policy within Kurdistan communities.

Conclusion

This chapter was very important since it was critically discussed the main points of the Kurdish national struggle and the reasons behind the process of transformation from the PKK to the KCK. In other words, the current KCK through its new approach that has recently been manifested as the Democratic Autonomy project has shifted the Kurdish national struggle in Turkey. The shift of the Kurdish national struggle that has happened was from building a Kurdish nation state by the PKK similar to other nations and especially mirroring the Turkish nation state, to the process of building a democratic nation without focusing on the state by the KCK. Therefore, the KCK has attempted to change

the struggle from political to multi-dimensional activism. For the KCK, social and cultural dimensions of the struggle were mainly focused on. Moreover, education and promoting awareness through diverse groups that are under the KCK were taken into account. Women's rights and the active presence of women within Kurdish society and the KCK activism have been promoted widely due to the shift of the struggle of the KCK. Moreover, as a result of the KCK and its new approach to the Kurdish struggle, celebrating diversity and communal activism through various ethnic, religious and cultural groups in Kurdish areas has been widely seen. The project of Democratic Autonomy as an alternative model to the state and the nation state model has impacted on the people and the state as well.

However, the KCK has several different limitations in relation to its policy and practice alike. Whatever the claims of the KCK are, and whatever the policy of the project of Democratic Autonomy is, the reality of the Kurdish national struggle has been changed. The social and cultural dimensions of the Kurdish struggle have been widely improved. Therefore, the KCK and its recent project have made an enormous change to the status of the Kurds in Turkey. It has also affected the state and its policy and practice towards the Kurds and the Kurdish question in Turkey. It can be argued that the KCK has shown several aspects of transformation in the Kurdish national struggle in the recent years.

CONCLUSION: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the entire thesis was to examine the recent transition that has happened to the Kurdish national struggle in Turkey, with the emergence of the KCK as a key actor in Turkey and in the northern part of Kurdistan. As a result of this transition, the Kurdish national struggle mutated into a different kind of movement, that can be described as self-aware and moving towards self-rule. The KCK has recently suggested the project as an alternative model for the long term dream and struggle for establishing an orthodox nation state for the Kurds. Through the project of 'Democratic Autonomy', this time the Kurdish national movement wants freedom and self-sufficiency over a different entity. In contrary to all other Kurdish movements and entities, due to the KCK' a new struggle, the Kurdish movement in the northern part of Kurdistan now wants to have cultural, social and societal autonomy rather than a Kurdish state that is parallel to the Turkish state.

The main focus for the thesis was to examine the reasons behind this transformation; why the PKK has been replaced by the KCK? The thesis has argued that the KCK was established as a result of the deadlocked policy and practice of the PKK. The PKK was a political project for confronting the policy of Kurdish denial by the Turkish state. Nonetheless, focusing on the process of promoting nation building rather than nation state building is the main face of transformation. Therefore, this cannot be looked at as a political tactic but rather as an ideological transition and strategic policy as well as a cultural strategy.

Throughout the whole thesis, it has been argued that the Kurdish national struggle in South-Eastern Turkey/Northern Kurdistan has undergone a transformation from a purely political movement of armed struggle in pursuit of a state, to one which is more social movement oriented about promoting values and identities rather than violence, Castells (2012). This thesis has argued that

the KCK is a movement that cannot be fully understood via mainstream policies and theories. The Kurdish national struggle in Turkey under the KCK did not start and does not operate according to resource mobilization theory per se. Instead, this thesis has suggested that in the special circumstances and within an exceptional cultural framework such as the Kurdish society, the national movement could grow and achieve some goals without following the steps of rational choices and political opportunities. The PKK was not able to achieve these objectives through its political agenda, and therefore the pursuit of the Kurdish national struggle required the development of a multi-dimensional approach to promote the Kurdish notion of building a democratic and autonomous nation rather than creating a Kurdish nation state. Promoting the notion of nation building comes from the idea of cultural nationalism rather than a political one, (Hutchinson, 1987: 31). As part of this argument, the thesis has put forward the idea that the main task of the social movement is changing the values of society, Touraine, (1981), Castells (2012). Therefore, the KCK, through its steps towards changing values of the Kurdish society, is regarded in this thesis as a social movement rather than a political movement as was the case in the era of the PKK. The notion of transformation has been manifested by the practice of several aspects. Mainly, the KCK has broadened its range of the struggle from political and guerrilla combat to cultural, social and societal struggle within Kurdish and Kurdistani societies.

The range of this thesis has focused on the social, cultural and political transformation in the limited period between 2005 and 2011 only. The thesis has argued that through the policy and practice of the KCK, the Kurdish movement is struggling for democratic autonomy rather than a nation state per se, despite the fact that until today's date, the Kurdish national struggle has not

achieved total autonomy and independence for the Kurds. It has also not achieved social, cultural and political rights for the Kurds within the legal framework in Turkey. However, the Kurdish national struggle under the KCK has taken tangible steps towards autonomy including social, cultural and political rights in Turkey. This has been achieved essentially due to the new approach to the Kurdish national struggle since the KCK was established. The process of denial of the Kurds was clogged during the course of the harsh struggle of the PKK in previous decades; however, the process of Turkification has been effectively confronted by the KCK in recent years. Moreover, the process of revitalisation of the notion of Kurdishness has actively been put under-way through the start of the multi-dimensional struggle that the KCK has brought about.

Despite these changes, the Turkish state continues to view the 'Kurdish issue' through the lens of state security. In the last ninety years, the Turkish state has treated the Kurds and the Kurdish question only as a matter of security and dealt with it through military solutions. The response of the Turkish state to the Kurdish question was the process of Turkification, Unification and Assimilation. Likewise, at the current time the state has almost the same policy and approach to the Kurdish question. Presently, there are semi-open negotiations with the leadership of the KCK and Abdullah Ocalan himself in his prison in Imrali Island. However, all the process is managed through security and intelligence arm chief personnel "Hakan Fidan" rather than the Prime Minister or any other civil personnel. This means that all achievements by the Kurdish national struggle so far, is the harvest of their hard work and resistance rather than the state appreciation of promoting democracy and human rights for its Kurdish citizens in Turkey.

Therefore, the Kurdish national struggle no longer wants to wait for the state to give some rights to the Kurdish people. Through the KCK, the Kurdish national struggle has started to recognise its rights by itself and promote self-awareness and democratic autonomous entity for the people in the Kurdish areas of Turkey. This has happened despite the state's obstacles and barriers. Hence, this struggle has been pursued outside of the frame of the state. The KCK has touched the base of values that were built long ago. Changing values and producing new, different values are emphasised by the KCK. Promoting diversity and equality, empowering women and depressed groups of ethnic and religious minorities have been focused on by the KCK.

The impact of the KCK struggle has not only been on Kurdish society; the impact has been on the Turkish public and the state as well. Despite the obstacles of the state, the KCK has pursued its struggle and become an effective policy maker in the predominantly Kurdish areas of Southeast Turkey, acting in parallel to the formal state. This has threatened the state since it has comprehended that an invisible set of institutions, mirroring those of the state, are active within South-Eastern Turkey. This has forced the state confront the KCK and severely depress most of its active arms within Turkey. Shortly after the announcement of the Democratic Autonomy project of the KCK, the state intensively started to detain the KCK members. However, the impact of the struggle of the KCK has finally made the state to think of negotiations.

This thesis also represents one of the first attempts to examine the KCK as a social movement outside of state derived security lenses. This thesis has argued that the transformation from the PKK to the KCK has delivered on specific potentialities to expand cultural, social and societal rights for the Kurds and other depressed ethnic and religious groups in Turkey. The Kurdish

struggle has been transformed essentially in terms of value changes rather than superficial changes of names and political parties. The values of the Kurdish people have been improved. Their personality and values have been touched and changed. As was elaborated, the project of Democratic Autonomy is about to continue the struggle as the KCK knows that the state so far does not accept the reality of the Kurds. As a result of that, the Kurdish national struggle has changed and developed to the social, cultural and multi- dimensional in order to show the state that they must change their perspectives too. Therefore, the KCK has examined its struggle without the permission of the state.

During a period of nine years, this change has visibly occurred through establishing hundreds of civil, cultural, social and political autonomous organisations that have different aims and structures and all are under the umbrella of the KCK. All these organisations are autonomous on one hand and under the umbrella of the KCK on the other hand. Thus, it can be interpreted that the KCK has relatively succeeded in implementing its new policy of Democratic Autonomy. However, it is less successful in the process of internal democratisation within its structure. Moreover, the thesis pointed out that the KCK has a vague and blurry policy that has become the cause of misunderstanding by the public, the state and by its own activists as well. However, despite that vague policy; it has played effectively and made huge changes within the Kurdish people and their struggle in recent years. It has also had the effect on the state to think of solutions for the long term Kurdish question.

To conclude, it must be admitted that there are several related issues and aspects of the KCK and the Kurdish national struggle that this thesis did not have a chance to examine. For instance, this thesis did not examine the matter

of current negotiations between the Turkish state and the KCK indirectly and between the state and Ocalan directly. The process has certainly started as a result of the struggle of the KCK and the certainty of the state that the long term policy for solving the Kurdish problem is no longer applicable. Moreover, this thesis did not have scope to examine the role of the KCK in promoting the policy of democratisation in Turkey through establishing a multi-faceted communal entity the 'HDK' and the multi-colour party in Turkey the 'HDP'. Both entities are under the umbrella of the KCK and were established directly with the command of Abdullah Ocalan. These points can be elaborated by future academic works. Furthermore, analysing the process of implementing the notion of Democratic autonomy in Syria that is directly connected to the KCK through its Syrian Kurdish actors such as the PYD, YPG and YPJ is another area of this thesis that could be highlighted in future academic researches. The last statement of this thesis is that the Kurdish national struggle has been transferred from political to social movement due to the KCK as the main actor of the Kurdish national struggle in Turkey. Likewise, the process of democratisation of Kurdish and Turkish societies and communities has been influenced by the KCK.

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APPENDIX: INTERVIEWS

Apart from secondary sources, I undertook several interviews for this research that were conducted between June 2011 and Sept 2012. The majority of interviews were recorded and saved. However, a few interviewees that gave information through a long meeting did not want me to record their voices. Due to the sensitivity of the research, anonymity of the interviewees was taken into account. Some of the interviewees agreed to be named. However, I have decided to keep all names anonymous. I have used codes for the interviews. I have put letter (A+Number) for those who are from Turkey or living in Turkey, (B+Number) for those who are from Iran, I met my (B) interviewees in Europe and Iraqi Kurdistan since I did not need to travel to Iran during this research. I have put letter (C+Number) for interviewees from Iraq and letter (D+Number) for Syrian Kurds. I met my (D) interviewees in Europe and Iraqi Kurdistan likewise. I have correspondingly put the letters (M) for male interviewees and (F) for females. I have shown the date and place of interviews with some information that helps the reader to understand which kind of interviewees they are.

Interview with A1, a senior member of the KCK, (M), Brussels: 22/09/2012

Interview with A2, a senior member of the KCK, (M), Brussels, 23/09/2012

Interview with A3, a member of Turkish Parliament (M), Diyarbakir 25/03/2012

Interview with A4, a former member of the PKK (M), London, 14/09/2012

Interview with A5, a member of Turkish Parliament (M), Ankara, 28/7/2011

Interview with A6, a member of Turkish Parliament (M), Ankara, 28/7/2011

Interview with A7, a member of European Parliament (F), Diyarbakir 05/08/2011

Interview with A8, senior member of the KCK (F), Diyarbakir, 06/08/2011

Interview with A9, a senior member of the BDP, (M), Diyarbakir, 07/08/2011

Interview with A10, a member of Turkish Parliament and political party leader (M), Ankara, 02/09/2011

Interview with A11, a member of Turkish Parliament and political party Leader (M) Ankara, 04/09/2011

Interview with A12, a deputy political party leader (M), Diyarbakir, 03/08/2011

Interview with A13, a senior member of the KCK, (M), Istanbul, 17/04/2012

Interview with A14, a senior member of the KCK, (M), Diyarbakir, 26/07/2011

Interview with A15, human rights activist and KCK citizen, (M), Van, 17/06/2012

Interview with A16, a senior member of the AKP, (M), Diyarbakir, 22/04/2012

Interview with A17, human rights activist and journalist, (F), Diyarbakir, 21/03/2011, 04/08/2012 and 25/04/2012

Interview with A18, a senior member of the BDP and KCK, (F), Istanbul, 19/04/2012

Interview with B1, a senior member of PJAK and a political party leader (M), Brussels, 21/09/2012

Interview with B2, a senior member of PJAK, (M), Suleimaniah-Iraq, 25/10/2011

Interview with B3, a journalist, (M), Suleimaniah-Iraq, 27/09/2011

Interview with C1, a member of Iraqi parliament and senior Kurdish politician, (M), Erbil-Iraq, 27/02/2012

Interview with C2, a senior member of the PCDK, (M), Suleimaniah-Iraq, 10/07/2011

Interview with C3, a senior member of the KCK, (M), Brussels, 16/09/2012

Interview with C4, a senior member of the PUK, (M), Suleimaniah-Iraq,

22/02/2012

Interview with D1, a senior member of the PYD and political party leader, (M),
London, 20/06/2012

Interview with D2, a member of the PYD, (M), Brussels, 03/06/2012

Interview with D3, Kurdish human rights activist and journalist, (M),
Suleimaniah-Iraq, 13/07/2011.