

UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY OF KURDS' POLITICAL DEMANDS IN TURKEY

(WHY DO SOME OF THE KURDS IN TURKEY HAVE TERRITORIAL POLITICAL
DEMANDS, WHILE OTHERS OPPOSE TO IT?)

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This dissertation is dedicated to those who sacrificed their lives for the
freedom of their peoples

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1. The material included in this dissertation has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

2. The program of advanced study of which this dissertation is part has consisted of:

- i) Research Methods course during the undergraduate study
- ii) Examination of several dissertation guides of particular universities both in Turkey and abroad as well as a professional book on this subject.

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ABSTRACT

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UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY OF KURDS' POLITICAL DEMANDS IN TURKEY

This research attempts to understand the underlying causes for the variation among the Kurds' current political demands in Turkey following an inductive methodology. Majority of stateless ethno-national minorities do not represent homogeneity in the political mode(s) they call for. The Kurdish case in Turkey, in broad terms, exemplifies such (within case) variation with the political models they currently demand. However, comprehensive comparison with other cases has demonstrated that the Kurds present a higher degree of disparity in this case in point, which has not yet been examined extensively and sufficiently in existed literature. The Kurds in Turkey presently call for four political models under two classifications: non-territorial political models– democratic autonomy and cultural rights–and territorial models–federalism and nation-state. In this regard, to analyse the rationale behind the variation among Kurds' political demands the research considers the question; *why do some of the Kurds in Turkey have territorial political demands, while others oppose to it?* In order to explore the research question, a qualitative method was used and data were collected through primary sources-elite interviews with the leading authorities of the regarded groups and archival research. Due to the inductive method used in the study, generalizations and connections with the broader literature is presented at the end of the analysis.

Findings from the research conducted revealed there are several contributing factors for the emergence variation among the Kurds current political demands. These in broad terms are; demand for a constitutional national status, assimilation, differing opinions on the idea of nation - whether it should be considered through a particular ethnicity and territory or not (Democratic Nation), refusal or taking of the concept of territoriality as base, prioritizing of religion over ethnicity and Ummah understanding, state(s) oppression, collective memory, internal and external physical dangers, safety consideration(s), raising of national consciousness, territorial demographic weight, but also the dispersal of population, distrust to the state and internal conflict (within group). Testing the empirical findings of the research in the light of relevant theories is one of the main suggestions of this study for future research.

Key words: Kurds, Ethno-national minorities, Democratic autonomy, Cultural rights, Federalism, Nation-state.

KISA ÖZET

Deniz ÇİFÇİ

January 2015

TÜRKİYE'DE YAŞAYAN KÜRTLERİN SİYASAL TALEPLERİ ARASINDA OLUŞAN VARYASYONUN İNCELENMESİ

Bu araştırma tümevarımsal (inductive) bir metodoloji izleyerek Kürtlerin bugünkü siyasal talepleri arasında oluşan çeşitliliğin meydana gelmesine yol açan nedenleri incelemektedir. Devletsiz etnik azınlıkların büyük çoğunluğu siyasal talep noktasında homojen bir tutum göstermemektedirler. Türkiye’de yaşayan Kürtler, devletsiz etnik bir azınlık içerisinde siyasal talep noktasında oluşan çeşitliliği en iyi örnekleyen vakalardan birisidir. Fakat, diğer vakalar ile karşılaştırıldığında görülmektedir ki, Türkiye’de yaşayan Kürtler arasında siyasal talep noktasında oluşan varyasyon diğer vakalardan oldukça fazladır. Kürt vakası ile alakalı bu durum ilgili literatürde yeterince ve detaylı bir şekilde henüz ele alınmamıştır. Türkiye’de yaşayan Kürtler bugün temel olarak dört siyasal talep dile getirmektedirler; demokratik özerklik, kültürel haklar, federasyon ve bağımsızlık. Bu talepler, *topraksal* olmayan (demokratik özerklik ve kültürel haklar) ve *topraksal* talepler (federasyon ve bağımsızlık) olarak iki ana kategori altında ele alındı. Bu bağlamda, Kürtlerin bugünkü siyasal talepleri arasında oluşan farklılığın sebeplerinin analiz edilmesi için, bu çalışma, *neden Türkiye de yaşayan bazı Kürtler topraksal siyasal modeller talep ederken, neden diğer Kürtler buna karşı çıkıyor?* sorusunu sormaktadır. Çalışmanın sorusunun incelenmesi için gerekli olan veri kalitatif (qualitative) bir yöntem takip edilerek birincil ve ikincil kaynaklardan elde edildi. Birincil kaynaklar çalışmada ele alınan gurupların siyasi temsilcileri (elit) ile yapılan mülakatlardan oluşmaktadır. Arşivlerde yer alan diğer kaynaklardan da yararlanıldı. Çalışma tümevarımsal bir metot izlediği için, araştırmanın sonunda ilgili literatürde yer alan bazı teorilerden de yararlanılarak bazı genellemeler yapıldı (hipotezler üretildi).

Araştırmanın bulguları göstermektedir ki, Kürtlerin bugünkü siyasal talepleri arasında çeşitliliğin oluşmasına sebep olan bazı faktörler en geniş anlamda şunlardır; anayasal temelde ulusal bir statünün tanınması, asimilasyon, ulus kavramının tanımlanması üzerinde oluşan farklı yaklaşımlar-ulus topraksal ve etnik bir temelde tanımlanmalı mı yoksa tanımlanmamalı mı? (Demokratik Ulus), toprak olgusunun siyasal taleplerde göz ardı edilmesi veya esas alınması, din olgusunun etnik kimlikten daha öncelikli olması, Ümmet anlayışı, devlet baskısı, kolektif hafıza, iç ve dış fiziksel tehlikeler, güvenlik kaygısı, ulusal kimlik bilincinin oluşması, belli bir toprak parçası üzerinde nüfus yoğunluğu, aynı şekilde nüfusun dağınıklığı, devlete olan güvensizlik ve gurup içi çatışmalar. Araştırmanın

bulgularının literatürde var olan ilgili teoriler ışığında test edilmesi bu çalışmanın en önemli önerilerinden birisini oluşturmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler; Kürtler, Etnik ve Ulusal azınlıklar, Demokratik özerklik, Kültürel haklar, Federasyon, Ulus-Devlet

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AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi	Justice and Development Party
Azadî	Azadi İnisiyatif	Azadî (Freedom) Initiative
BDP Party	Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi	Peace and Democracy
CHP Party	Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi	Republican People's
CIP		Cultural Institutional Perspective
CUP	İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti	Party of Union and Progress
DTK	Demokratik Toplum Kongresi	Democratic Society Congress
DHF	Demokratik Haklar Federasyonu	Democratic Rights Federations
DP	Demokrat Partisi	Democrat Party
DDKO	Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları	Revolutionist Eastern Cultural Societies
<i>DDKD</i>	Devrimci Doğu Kültür Dernekleri Culture	Revolutionary East Centre
DEP	Demokratik Emek Partisi	Democratic Labour
DEHAP	Demokratik Halk Partisi	Democratic People's Party

DTP	Demokratik Toplum Partisi	Democratic Society Party
DÖKH	Demokratik Özgür Kadın Hareketi	Democratic and Free Women Movement
EMEP	Emek Partisi	Labour Party
HADEP	Halkın Emek Partisi	People's Democracy Party
Hak-Par	Hak ve Özgürlükler Partisi	Freedom and Rights Party
Hûda-Par	Hûr Dava Partisi	Free Cause Party
HEP	Halkın Emek Partisi	People's Labour Party
FRD (GAR)		Friendly Relation Declaration
HDP	Halkların Demokratik Partisi	People's Democratic Party
IBV	Ismail Beşikçi Vakfı	Ismail Beşikçi Foundation
ICESCR		The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICCPR		The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ISIS	Irak ve Şam İslam Devleti	Islamic State of Iraq an Sham

Işçi-Köylü	İşçi-Köylü	Workers and Peasants
KKH	Kürdisyan Kominist Hareketi	Kurdistan Communist Movement
KADEP	Katilimci Demokrasi Partisi	Participatory Democracy Party
KCK	Koma Civakên Kurdistan	Democratic Society Congress
KTTC	Kürt Teavün ve Terakki Cemiyet	Kurdish Party of Cooperation and Progress
KTHC	Kürt Talebe Hevi Cemiyeti	Kurdish Student Society of Hope
KTC	Kürdistan Teali cemiyeti	Society for the Rise of Kurdistan
KTIC	Kürt Teşkilat-i İctimai Cemiyeti	Kurdish Society for Social Organization
KUK	Kürdistan Ulusal Kurtuluş Partisi	National Salvation Party of Kurdistan
KİP	Kürdistan İşçi Partisi	Workers' Party of Kurdistan
KSH	Kürdistan Sosyalist Hareketi	Kurdistan Socialist Movement
Kom-Kar	Komaleyên Kurdên Ewropa (Avrupa Kürt Gurupları)	Kurdish Advice Centre

Med-Zehra	Med-Zehra Cemaati	Med-Zehra Community
MASIAD	Marmara Sanayici ve İşadamları Deneği	Marmara Industrialists Businessmen's Associations
TKDP	Türkiye Kurdistan Demokrat Partisi	Turkey Kurdistan Democrat Party
T-KDP	Türkiye Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi	The Kurdistan Democratic Party in Turkey
TKSP	Türkiye Kürdistan'ı Sosyalist Partisi	The Socialist Party of Turkish Kurdistan
TİP	Türkiye İşçi Partisi	Workers Party of Turkey
KDP-T	Türkiye'de Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi	Democratic Party of Turkey's Kurdistan
TÜMSİAD	Tüm Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği	All Industrialist and Businessman Association
PAK	Partîya Azadîya Kurdistan (Kürdistan Özgürlük Partisi)	Kurdistan Freedom Party
PKK	Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan (Kürdistan İşçi Partisi)	KurdistanWorkers Party
PYD	Partîya Yekitîya Demokratîk (Demokratik Birlik Partisi)	Democratic Union Party

PSK Party	Partîya Sosyalistên Kurdistan (Kürdistan Sosyalist Partisi)	Kurdistan	Socialist
RCIP		Rational Choice	
		Institutionalist Perspective	
SIP		Institutionalist Structural Perspective	
RP	Refah Partisi	Welfare Party	
SHP	Sosyal Demokrat Halk Partisi	SocialDemocratic People's Party	
KNMC	Kürt Neşr-i Maarif Cemiyeti	Society For the Spread of Kurdish Education	
ÖSP	Özgürlük ve Sosyalizm Partisi	Party of Freedom and Party	
UNESCO		United Nations Educational Scientific, and Cultural Organization	
UNUDHR		Nations Universal Rights Declaration of Human	
WMC	Akil İnsanlar Komitesi	Wise Man Committee	
FP	Fazilet Partisi	Virtue Party	

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Problem

In the political history of the World, development of nation-state (modern state) has a determinant role in shaping political affiliations in and between ethnic groups. The emergence of the modern state, particularly over an ethno-national identity, or desire to create homogeneity by denying ethnic minorities (Amoretti 2004; Marx 2002), brought about two important developments for ethnic groups. While some ethnic groups created their own state and become dominant groups¹, others became a minority (namely stateless ethnic groups) within founded states (Cook 2003; Güralp 2006a, 2-3) and faced various problems because most of these states refused to share their power with the minorities (Ersanlı and Bayhan 2012, 205–206).

In order to solve stateless ethnic minorities' identity problems and to provide them with equal political rights some steps were taken, for example, actions were outlined in international documents (Hadden 2010). The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (*ICESCR*) (*ICESCR* 1966), The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (*ICCPR*) (*ICCPR* 1966) and Friendly Relation Declaration (GAR 2625) (GAR 1970), for instance, are some documents that make mention of the rights of minorities, especially on the right of self-determination. Stateless ethnic minorities' some political rights were recognized in certain cases, for instance in Canada, Spain, Iraq and the UK. However, most of the states were unsuccessful in meeting their ethnic minorities demands and halting raising of tension with them (Guibernau 2010). Consequently, problems between stateless ethnic minorities and the state escalated and either turned into an ethnic conflict or were echoed in other various

¹ Schermerhon (1996, 17) describes dominant group(s) as a “ collectivity within a society which has preeminent authority to function both as guardians and sustainers of the controlling value system, and as prime allocators of rewards in the society.”

ways of violence and political oppression in many cases (Brubaker and Laitin 1998). In this circumstances, Hadden (2010, 79–80) explains states have some options in their approach toward ethnic minorities: removing their ethnic identity, assimilating and forcefully dominating them, granting their political rights, and lastly recognizing their right of self-determination. The state attitudes towards minorities in that sense has influences on shaping minorities' political demands (Canefe 2007, 27–31). Many ethnic minorities, either in order to create their own state or to obtain a political status² by different political models such as federalism or a powerful autonomy, initiate a struggle against the state ruling them. However, despite a general discontent against the state's policies, various voices raise in ethnic minorities with respect to the political model they demand. Some demands that have already been claimed by stateless minorities, include, separation from the central state, federalism, regional autonomy and granting of cultural (fundamental human) rights (Esman and Rabinovic 2004, 40).

Variance in the ethnic minorities' political demands is also the case for the Kurds in Turkey. The Kurds in Turkey present high degree of variation with regards to the political model(s) they call for solution of the Kurdish question. With reference to the context provided above, presently the Kurds' political demands can be classified into four categories; democratic autonomy, granting of their cultural rights, federalism (territorial autonomies) and independence (creation of a Kurdish nation-state). With considering the relevant literature, these models can also be divided into two categories; territorial political models (federalism and independence) which offer substantial power to minorities over their internal affairs (Safran 2000, 12), and non-territorial political models (democratic autonomy and cultural rights) that provides “control over a narrow range of matters” (McGarry and Moore 2005, 68).

In this respect this research, which deals only with Kurds living in Turkey, seeks to explore the causes behind increased variation in Kurds' political demands.

² The term *political status* simply defines the legal and political rights of a group in a society (Morde 1900).

1.2 Research Question(s)

The territorial and non-territorial political demands of the Kurds in Turkey and the resultant political variation among them led to the consideration of the main question below:

Why do some of the Kurds in Turkey have territorial political demands, while others oppose to it?

In the light of the question asked, the study explores the variation that emerge among the Kurds in relation to their demand for the models democratic autonomy, cultural rights, federalism and nation-state on an organizational and elite level. To clarify, organizations refer to NGO's, social groups and political parties. Therefore, the basic problem of the study is:

1. The description and study of the groups that mention the demand of Kurds for democratic autonomy, federalism, independence, or acknowledgement of only their cultural rights.
2. Explanation of the fundamental factors that leads to differentiation among the Kurds in relation to their political demands; both territorial and non-territorial.

The Kurds have a fragmented social structure. Along with their tribal structure, Kurds vary with respect to language, religion and to some extent to culture. These factors contributed to shaping of their political demands in the past. For instance, prioritizing tribal interests over ethnicity in the Kurdish principalities during the Ottoman Empire was one of the main reasons which prevented development of their national unity (Hassanpour 1997, 129–130). Likewise, previous tension between Alevi and Sunni Kurds (Hooglund 1996, 100) and as this continues to intensify with further changes along with linguistic (Zaza-Kurmanji) and cultural fragmentation (van Bruinessen 2000a, 56–85), as Karlsson (2008, 160) emphasizes, are certain reasons that precluded unity of the Kurds.

Based on this context, to examine the influence of social structure and ethnic and national identity in shaping groups' social and political relations in the Kurdish case, the following questions will be considered;

1. How do different Kurdish groups identify themselves? What are the determining components of this definition?
2. How and under which condition does religion contribute to development but also refusal of territorial claims? And how does it influence construction of relations between the Kurds and the Turks?
3. To what extent becoming a territorial group has a part in development of territorial claims? In other words, how does territoriality contribute to increased demand for territorial claims?
4. To what degree does variation in language influence variation in political claims?
5. To what degree the Kurds' collective memory and feeling of trust influence their approach to the Turkish nation? Or, to what degree the Kurds' experience with the Turks influence their political claims?
6. How does historical consciousness affect peoples' decision on their future?
7. To what degree having a feudal and tribal structure is determinant in shaping their political claims?

In order to examine the state's Kurdish policy in shaping of the Kurds' political demands, the following questions will also be regarded;

1. To what degree does the Kurds' armed conflict with the state affect their political claims?
2. To what degree does the state oppression influence shaping of the Kurds' political demands?

3. To what degree the state's economic policy of the Kurdish region influences Kurds' political demands?
4. How does socio-cultural and economic integration into Turkish national identity influence the change in Kurds' political claims?

Finally, to analyse the influence of the Kurds' internal political dynamics, in-group relations and effects of the regional development to their political claims, the questions below will be discussed;

1. How does the Kurdish groups' armed conflict with each other (internal conflict) influence variation in their political demands?
2. To what extent ideological differences are determinant in shaping of their political claims?
3. How and under which conditions do Kurds' political achievements or formation of autonomous regions in Iraq and Syria affect the Kurds' political claims in the same vein?
4. To what degree does nationalism shape the Kurds' political claims?

1.3 Clarification and Classification of The Groups Through Demanded Political Models

It was previously mentioned that presently a considerable number of Kurds claim for *territorial political demands*: independence (creation of their own nation-state) and federalism. Others seek for a non-territorial autonomy: democratic autonomy and their cultural rights. Table 1 presents a classification of territorial and non-territorial political demands among Kurds (Kurdish groups) living in Turkey.

Table: 1.1, A classification of territorial and non-territorial political demands among the Kurds (Kurdish groups) living in Turkey.

ORGANIZATIONS	KURDS' POLITICAL DEMANDS			
	TERRITORIAL POLITICAL MODELS		NON-TERRITORIAL POLITICAL MODELS	
	NATION-STATE	FEDERALISM	DEMOCRATIC AUTONOMY	CULTURAL RIGHTS
ORGANIZATIONS (Political Parties, NGOs, Associations)	Azadî initiative, PAK, KKH, TKDP and the Kurds involved in İşçi-Köylü (Kizilbayrak) group, DHF, and Ismail Beşikçi Vakfı	Hak-Par, Kadeş, Hûda-Par, Hezbollah, ÖSP and Med-Zehra and Zehra Groups	BDP/HDP, PKK	The Kurds who have political affiliations with the AKP and CHP

The Kurds' political claims are represented through various political organizations in Turkey, particularly political parties. However, not all of the organizations stem from a Kurdish origin, as will be discussed in greater detail in the analysis chapters to follow. A large number of the Kurds gather around the non-Kurdish origin political parties which acknowledge their Kurdish supporters' political demands.

Considering the current political demands of the Kurds, Azadî (Freedom) initiative, Kurdistan Freedom Party (Partiya Azadiya Kurdistan-PAK), Kurdistan Communist Movement (Kurdistan Kominist Hareketi-KKH), Turkey's Kurdistan Democrat Party (Türkiye Kurdistan Demokrat Partisi- TKDP), the Kurds involved with Ismail Besikci Vakfi, and those who were actively involved in the Democratic Rights Federations (Demokratik Haklar Federasyonu-DHF), and Workers and Peasants Party (İşçi-Köylü or Kızılbayrak Circle) all recognize the Kurds' independency demand. While Freedom and Rights Party (Hak ve Özgürlükler Partisi-Hak-Par), Participatory Democracy Party (Katilimci Democracy Partisi- Kadep), Free Cause Party (Hûr Dava Partisi-Hüda-Par), Hezbollah, Party of Freedom and Socialism (Özgürlük ve Sosyalizm Partisi-ÖSP) and Med-Zehra and Zehra groups call for federalism.

Contrary to territorial demands, the Peace and Democracy Party (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi-BDP)³ and the Kurdistan Workers Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan- PKK) vocally express their demand for the political model they call democratic autonomy. On the other hand, a considerable number of the Kurds who have political connections with the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi-AKP) and the Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi CHP) refuse independence, federation, and democratic autonomy as political models to solve the Kurdish issue, and instead heavily propose granting of Kurds their cultural rights only.

Based on these classifications, a deeper analysis is required to identify the causes behind the division in Kurds' political demands. Hence, as also mentioned previously, the present study considers the following question:

Why do some of the Kurds in Turkey have territorial political demands, while others oppose to it?

³ Although BDP is still active in politics, majority of its members currently joined to the People's Democratic Party (Halkların Demokratik Partisi-HDP) in 2014 that shares almost the same principles with the BDP. Therefore this research does not cover the current members of HDP because when the fieldwork was conducted for this research almost all HDP members were still within BDP.

1.4 Significance and Limits of the Study

Academic focus on the Kurds has increased over the last few decades. With the impediments and restrictions implemented by the states that rule the Kurds, the researches conducted on the Kurds remained limited for a long time. With some of these hindrances removed studies thrived but still need more academic attention, particularly from the social sciences.

On another note, looking at the existed academic interest in the Kurds' political demands, a majority of the existing researches have mostly focused on the Kurds' independence demand. There was not a lot of concern for Kurds' federalism, democratic autonomy, or cultural rights demands and research rested mostly on comparisons between multiple cases (*between-cases comparison*). There are no more studies that analyse the fragmentation in political demands among Kurds (*within case comparison*). Aware of such a void, this research aims to analyse the causes of the variation in Kurds' political demands. Thus, with a single case based research strategy where "we can look at a large number of intervening variables and inductively observe any unexpected aspects of the operation of a particular causal mechanism" (George and Bennet 2005, 21), it will be probable to examine many variables that cause variation in Kurds' political demands. In this regard, this research aims to generate hypotheses (and develop a new theory), which consists of one of the main purposes of the case study (Gerring 2004) relating to territorial and non-territorial political demands of ethnic minorities. This will be the first and most important contribution of this research to literature.

Moreover, the contribution of the study can also be seen as fourfold. It will firstly examine ethnic minority and state relations and ethnic minorities' intra-group relations over the demand of nation-state, federalism, and cultural rights. It will also attempt to redefine some significant concepts, such as, ethnicity, nation, and national identity - state-formation, tribal, and ethnic-affinities based on identity construction in the Middle East.

Secondly, the ethnic and national components of Kurdish identity will be explored, including, language, territory, history, descent, and religion. By explaining and categorizing these divergences, the determinant components of Kurdish ethnicity will

further be clarified helping further analysis of their influence on the variation among Kurds' political demands. In addition, this study has potential to shed light on the (re)definition of ethnicity, ethnic and national identity, and ethnic minority in the Kurdish case.

Thirdly, this study will present a greater understanding of Kurds' legal political parties, for example, BDP, Hak-Par, Hûda-Par, Azadî initiative, and the religious group Zehra community. Moreover, in order to clearly portray the Kurds who support for cultural rights, the political parties CHP and AKP will be defined with respect to their identity and approach to the Kurdish issue. Furthermore, as they have a strong influence on Kurdish politics and Kurds' political demands, armed organizations PKK and Hezbollah and tensions between them will also be explored. Thus, this research will portray almost all of the active and powerful legal and armed (illegal) organizations of the Kurds.

Finally, this research will define the political model democratic autonomy - a new term in the related field - which will be an input to related literature.

1.5 The Methodology

1.5.1 Case Study

There are several methods used to conduct a research. The case study is one of the approaches for investigating an empirical fact. The present study is a single case study seeking to analyse the variation in Kurds' political demands (within case comparison) by following an inductive approach, which Gray (2009, 14–15) claims pursues to make “generalizations”, produce hypotheses or build theory(ies) contrary to theory refining or testing.

Despite aims of the case study, on the other hand, it is feasible to challenge the approach because, as questioned by Gomm, Hammersly, and Foster (2000, 98), making generalizations through the outcomes of a case study is considered difficult. Flyvbjerg (2006) responds to these critique(s) by emphasising the input of case study's in development of existed information, which to Flyvbjerg clearly indicates that case study

findings can be generalized. In this regard, as Landman (2003, 34) also underlines, the case study findings can be used for “generating hypotheses for theories”. Taking issue from that sense, Yin (2011, 99–101) briefly formulates generalization of case study results as “analytic generalization”.

It is possible to run a case study through various research strategies. Yin (2002) deals with a case study using three research strategies; *exploratory* by asking “what”, *explanatory* by asking “how” and “why” and *descriptive* by considering “what”. Using the principle of Yin’s three conditions, the present study follows the *explanatory* research strategy to develop and explain the hypotheses (instead of theory testing), which can help to clarify the variation in other ethnic groups’ political demands.

This research is based on a ‘*within case variation*’ strategy to explain the causes of the diversity among the Kurds’ political demands. Therefore, the study in question uses the *multi-causality* (conjectural-joint causality) methodologically.

The Kurds are one of the largest stateless groups in the World. Their history, discussed in detail in Chapter Three, clearly shows that they had a political status prior to the formation of Turkish Republic in 1923. They raised a struggle against the Turkish Republic because they were stripped of their political status. However, they have not achieved a political status in Turkey, but instead have divided into various groups according to their political demands. Therefore, the Kurdish case differs hugely from many of the other stateless ethnic groups and could be considered as one of the *unique* case, especially due to the fragmentation caused differing social and political terms and demands. Thus, the given conditions require consideration of the Kurdish case as a *unique* case with respect to investigations on their varied political demands. Accordingly, application of a within single case comparison strategy is valuable for an elaborate explanation of variation in Kurds’ political demands.

1.5.2 Case study and Use of Theory

In a case study one of the curial points that also needs to be clarified is the use of theories during the research. The questions of why, how and in which part of the research

a theory or theories will be utilized, as Blaike (2000, 141) reiterates, is an important but still a debatable issues for researchers. Taking issue from that sense, if theory needs to be applied to a case study, researchers must consider a few questions, such as, in which phase of research and to what extent it has to be applied. Creswell (2009, 49–71) puts forward that in a case study, particularly in induction case studies, theories could be applied at the end of the research because this will support generalizations and theory building. However, Yin (2002, 27–32) suggests that theories can also be implemented at the beginning of the research in order to obtain general clarifications on the field and case prior to data collection and data analysis.

In this study, some relevant theories, such as ethnicity, nation and tribe theories, were used to clarify the research concepts for instance, minority, ethnicity, nation and tribe. These theories were also used to elucidate the Kurds' social structure and ethnic and national identity. In addition, to clarify the main concepts of the mentioned political demands for instance for the state formation *warfare* and *capitalism* theories were used, along with certain autonomy approaches which were utilized to clarify autonomy models. The theories used in this research are indefinite to these. To elucidate other concepts of research, additional theories are also applied throughout the research, which will be noted during the study. However, it is important to note that the aim of the research is not to test or refine any particular theory.

1.5.3 Level of Analysis

Similar to the clarification of the case and the question of how to use theories, the level of analysis also needs to be established in a study. There are two levels of analyses, *micro* and *macro*, which are applied to explore or investigate a fact in social science (Landman 2003, 18). As Landman explains, while *micro level of analysis* considers individuals' attitudes and practices in exploring facts (at the individual level), *macro level of analysis* deals with groups, processes and structures (at the group level) (Ibid.). The level of analysis of this study is group level. There are two fundamental reasons for analysing the research question at group level rather than individual level. This research firstly took *individuals* as the level of analysis to explore the research question. The study

was designed using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies (mixed methodology). As part of the quantitative method a small pilot/preliminary survey was conducted while interviews aimed at individuals were set up for the qualitative aspect of the research. However, the sensitive nature of the research faced some problems due to strict security conditions and hostility in the Kurdish region. A number of individuals either refused to respond to the research questionnaire or declined to be interviewed. Many also withheld their honest opinions and answers to the questions. This created a level of incoherency and more importantly, the issue of reliability was marked against the research. Therefore, taking individuals as a level of analysis and using a quantitative methodology had to be reconsidered. In response to this, it was decided to take groups as the level of analysis since *elites* of the groups were already representing their members' (individuals') opinions. They openly answered all questions during the preliminary fieldwork as well as the final study. With some changes made to the methodologies, the research in question examines the variation in Kurds' political demands at the group level. Data was collected from both primary, largely elite interviews (elites of groups), and secondary sources, all of which will be discussed further in later sections.

1.5.4 Case Selection

The Kurds' political demands, as explained earlier, are classified as territorial-independence and federalism and non-territorial-democratic autonomy and cultural rights.

To explore the variance in the Kurds' current political demands at a group level three types of groups are included in the analysis: primarily political parties and than organizations (NGOs), socio-cultural, economic and political groups. The following list highlights the primary conditions used in selecting the organizations: support the political model, either of Kurdish origin or supported by a considerable number of Kurds and hold a representative power. Providing these conditions, religious communities and armed movements were also studied.

Certain factors were also considered in selecting interviewees. The primary principles were regarded in selecting the interviewees were as follows; of Kurdish origin, advocate the political model, support the political group that defending the Kurds political model(s), hold a representative position, and have knowledge of the Kurdish political models argued in this research. In addition to the criteria the mentioned organizations' official organs, such as, webpages and written and visual media were deliberated and observed before selecting the organizations and the interviewees.

Within the context provided, to explore the territorial political model the Kurds independency demand, the groups Azadî initiative, PAK, KKH, TKDP and the Kurds involved with Ismail Besikci Vakfi, DHF, and İşçi-Köylü groups were studied. For another territorial political model – federalism - the groups Hak-Par, Kadep, Hûda-Par, Hezbollah, ÖSP and Med-Zehra and Zehra communities were examined.

Contrary to the territorial political demands independence and federalism, a high number of Kurds call for the non-territorial political models democratic autonomy and cultural rights. Regarding democratic autonomy, the groups the BDP and the PKK were considered. To deal with Kurds' cultural rights claim, the Kurds politically affiliated with the AKP and the CHP are studied.

1.6 Research Design

1.6.1 Data Collection

Data collection is an integral stage in the management of a research. A case study can be led either through quantitative or qualitative methodology or even by using both simultaneously. Therefore, in a case study the data can be obtained from primary (interviews, surveys, archives) and secondary sources (Eisenhardt 1989). Going one step further Stake (2000, 435) states that a “case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied.”

The present study is based on a qualitative method. To provide background (historical) knowledge for the study primary and secondary sources-archival documents,

books and magazines - were used systematically. The bulk of the primary sources in the form of in-depth interviews were collected during the fieldwork. In addition to the interviews, the groups' official publications, leaders or members' books, articles, and speeches were also utilized as primary sources. The observation techniques used in the research consist of semi-structured and unstructured in-depth elite interviews, focus group discussions and participant observations. The elite interviewees included parties and organization leaders, provincial and town heads of political parties, directors, mayors, members of parliament, and the directors of some groups and NGOs with representative power.

Extensive fieldwork was organised and conducted; 102 participants were interviewed. However, due to strict security some of the interviewees prohibited recording the conversation and only taking of notes was allowed. Moreover, in some cases only some parts of the interview was allowed to be recorded. Again, due to security concerns and the sensitivity concerning their positioning in their organizations some interviewees did not permit the use of their real name, organization and position. Therefore, fictitious names were used in some cases whereas with other interviewees, their organization name and position were withheld.

The interviews were held in three countries: Turkey, Iraq, and the UK. The majority of interviews were conducted in the Turkish cities of Istanbul, Diyarbakir, Batman, Bingöl, and Tunceli, where the Kurds have different political stances and socio-cultural pluralisms. The interviews in Iraq were held in the city of Erbil (Makhmour Camp). In the UK they were conducted in the city of London. Most of the interviews were done in person but because of the security restrictions as well as some technical conditions, some interviews were made via telephone, e-mail, Facebook or Skype. Those who were interviewed by these methods were based in the cities of Ankara, Çanakkale, Hakkari and Gaziantep. To comply with the preferences of the interviewees, questions were asked in Kurdish, Turkish or English languages.

Taking into consideration the sensitive subject of the study, many interviews were held in locations chosen by the interviewee. Privacy, confidentiality, and safety of the subjects were protected throughout the process of qualitative data collection.

1.7 Thesis Progress

As mentioned previously, this research examines the variation in Kurds' political demands by asking, *Why do some of the Kurds in Turkey have territorial political demands, while others oppose to it?*, and following the inductive method.

The structure of this research is divided into a general introduction, eight chapters and conclusion.

The introduction part explains the problem of the research, its main question, the research's contribution to literature, the main political demands of the Kurds, and the groups that raise these demands. Then as part of the methodology section, the research's case type, level of analysis, case selection and data collection are clarified.

The first chapter of the research consists two of sections; the first section clarifies the main concepts of the research, such as, minority, ethnicity, nation, and tribe. The second section defines the political demands of the Kurds - an independent nation-state, federalism, democratic autonomy and cultural rights, respectively.

The second chapter defines the case of the research - the Kurds. In this chapter Kurds are covered within the concept of social structure-tribe, ethnicity and nation. The chapter also examines specific notions - territory, history, language, religion, and descent - that have a contribution in shaping of the Kurdish ethnic and national identity. Lastly, a brief study on the development of the Kurdish ethnic and national identity in the light of Kurdish nationalism will be outlined.

The third chapter addresses the political and historical background of the variation in Kurds' political demands. This chapter is divided into two sections; while the first investigates the Kurds' political demands during the Ottoman Empire, the second looks at the difference in Kurds' political demands in the historical framework between the period

the Turkish Republic was established-1923 and 1980. The later period is covered in the first sections of analysis chapters since they cover the current Kurdish groups, most of which (their) date back to 1980s. The second section provides detailed information on the relationship among the Kurds and Republican, Kurds' rebellions, the relationship within the Kurds, their main organizations, in the light of the variation in their political demands.

The rest of the chapters (Four, Five, Six, Seven and Eight) constitute the analysis section. The organization of the analysis part is separated into five chapters. The first two chapters (Chapters Four and Five) handle non-territorial models-democratic autonomy and cultural rights. Chapters Six and Seven cover territorial models-federalism and nation-state. Each chapter is separated into two further parts. The first outlines development of a particular political demand within the framework of its defender organizations using the secondary sources. Furthermore, the profile of adherents of the model(s) will be elucidated through the organization(s) they are involved in. The second part in each chapter explores the causes underlying their political stand together with an explanation as to why the supporters refuse alternative political models, using primary sources obtained in the fieldwork.

Finally, Chapter Eight provides a theoretical discussion on the empirical findings of the research in the light of related literature.

CHAPTER ONE

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND CLARIFICATION OF POLITICAL MODELS THE KURDS DEMAND

Basing a research study on a single case study requires a clear and comprehensive identification of the case itself with respect to the existing literature. Accordingly, this chapter containing two sections firstly seeks to provide a conceptual framework for clarifying the study in question. The Kurds are the second largest ethnic minority in Turkey. Although they have a separate ethnic identity, their social structure continues to be a topic of discussion. Currently the Kurds' social construction comprises of three units, ethnicity, nation and tribe, which are all influential to a certain degree in shaping their political demands. The majority of the Kurds in support of territorial political models and democratic autonomy are aware of their national identity. However, a substantial number of Kurds do not rank or are oblivious to their national identity, principally those who have links with political parties AKP and CHP and currently call for cultural rights. Many argue that the tribal structure was one of the main conditions which prevented development of Kurdish national consciousness among Kurds. Hence, to clarify the case itself and the effect social structure has on the political models Kurds currently demand the first section explores the main concepts of the research: ethnicity, nation, minority and tribe that is of significance in Middle Eastern communities.

Based on the research question, the second part of this chapter will draw a conceptual framework for the Kurds' current political demands, state, federalism, cultural rights and democratic autonomy, respectively.

1.1 CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

As outlined in the beginning of this chapter, the first section will explain the case through its social and political structure focusing separately on the notions ethnicity, nation, minority and tribe.

1.1.1 Why Ethnicity?

The term ethnicity is one of the most contentious topics in social science. Even though there has been incredible focus and development on the subject, its definition remains ambiguous and no studies have arrived to a common agreement on its components (Enloe 1996). Deriving from the Latin word 'ethnos', it has had a broad scope of use in many disciplines and has mostly been used in the context of a 'traditional group of people', 'pagan', 'family' and 'class' or as in the Ottoman Empire, "millet" (Tonkin, Mcdonal, and Chapman 1996, 19–22).

However, ethnicity did not dynamically has impact on social relations between people for a long period. It was mostly used to denote paganism (Kedourie 2004b, 47) and the current meaning was only recently introduced. It was first mentioned in the 1972 issue of the Oxford dictionary defined as an identification of a group of people (Glazer and Moynihan 1975, 1). Intensified ethnic conflict and subsequent ethnic groups' identical claims have dramatically shifted the importance of ethnicity in social science as well as political agendas. Ethnic tensions and conflicts around the world began to amplify following World War II. Thus, contrary to arguments stating ethnicity would lose its importance, as Bell (1975, 169–171) highlights ethnicity has in fact become one of the key determinant factors in clarifying social and political relations. Moreover, Milton J.Yinger explains ethnic affinities provide protection and continuance of a group's cultural legacy. In addition, an association with ethnicity creates room for economic and political opportunities for disadvantage groups and close relations within group members as well as large communities. Therefore, group members can reflect on ethnicity for several purposes (Yinger 1985, 152). On another note, as a result of sharpened ethnic boundaries between ethnic minority and dominant groups, ethnic identity becomes a source of power for solidarity and self-identification in social relations (Parsons 1975). With this, as noted by Alberto Melucci, ethnicity is a decisive factor in constructing and shaping social relations, and thus, resolving traditional and existing socio-cultural and economic affinities. It starts to work as a unifying element among the group members and

build a sense of collectivity. Ethnicity in that sense becomes an instrument of “identification” for group members in sharing commonalities (Melucci 1996).

Given the cited clarifications also prevalent in the Kurdish case, ethnicity is active in creating present social and political relations. In support of this, the following section will elucidate ethnicity further.

1.1.1.1 Ethnicity Theories

Ethnicity’s importance in constructing and shaping social relations requires additional analysis through dominant and relevant approaches in literature.

Presently there are several ethnicity theories in literature. This research will examine closely the two paradoxical views which already have a substantial weight in literature, primordialist and social constructionist (namely instrumentalism) (Somersan 2008, 75). The primordialist approach, as its name suggests, focuses on the ideas of birth and genesis. Primordialism considers ethnicity through “kinship” with a particular emphasises on “biology” (Van Den Berghe 2005). With this approach ethnic affinities are, therefore, not chosen but ‘obtained at birth’ (Geertz 1996; Grosby 2005; Isaacs 1975). The primordialist approach provides a reliable outline for comprehending social structure in the Middle East. Gabriel Ben-Dor underlines that in Middle Eastern communities as with the Kurds, blood based affinities, such as race and descent, are important for determining and creating boundaries of Kurdish ethnicity. To Ben-Dor, thus, existence and effectiveness of these components demonstrate the relevance of primordialism in the Middle East (Ben-Dor 2004, 135).

Nonetheless, despite its significance and reliability, primordialism as D. L. Horowitz underlines, does not offer reasons for the adjustments in ethnicity that occur over time (D. L. Horowitz 2004). Relatively, primordialism for Horowitz fails to explain “the way in which ethnic identities arise out of interactions with other groups rather than out of a merely inward focus, the determinant of groups boundary change and of variable conflict intensity, the role of elites in ethnic consciousness”(Ibid.,75). Horowitz further highlights that primordialism also fails to explain the contributory role of “political

institutions” in raising and resolving ethnic conflicts (Ibid.).

The points primordialism is unsuccessful in finding reasons for are provided by the second approach of ethnicity, instrumentalism. Contrary to primordialism, in clarifying ethnicity the instrumentalist approach concentrates on social and political developments. Instrumentalism regards ethnicity as a “socially constructed” fact (Keating 1997, 690) and its boundaries are subject to change with the course of events. Therefore, socio-cultural, economic and political developments, and relations between different ethnicities are factors likely to prompt alterations in ethnicity. Unlike primordialism, instrumentalism rejects “genetic[s]” and “blood ties” as contributors of ethnicity and emphasises that ethnicity is not a rigid or static phenomenon because it was socially constructed and has permeable boundaries (Brass 1996). Here, the term interest plays a part in structuring ethnicity. In other words, as highlighted by Glazer and Moynihan (1975, 7–8), the interests of individuals are seminal in their attachment to and definition of ethnicity. In support of this, Bell (1975, 168-171) explains ethnicity provides new types of identification and benefits to group members. In addition, as Esman and Rabinoviç (2004, 30–31) argue instrumentalism proposes that ethnicity can be transformed, refused or strengthened depending on the interest and needs of the people, including, “status” and “security”. Taking connection between the notion interests and ethnicity, Hechter (1986, 271) rightly explains “individual benefit” impacts on group members attitudes.

From the discussions outlined above it is necessary to use both approaches in this research to elucidate the Kurdish ethnicity. Primordialism will be used to explain the blood based tribal affinities of some Kurds, more clearly Kurdish tribes. It is important to note, however, primordialism failed to some extent because a considerable number of the Kurds have gained awareness of their ethnic and national identity (with the modern developments) as over time tribal structures have either become entirely inactive or started to disintegrate in these Kurds. Herein in order to evaluate the construction of Kurdish ethnic identity in the light of modern progresses instrumentalism is applicable. Recalling the importance of interest and security determining individuals’ approach to

their ethnicity, the instrumentalist approach is far more significant for the Kurds who demand for cultural rights since a vast number of them do not prioritize ethnicity.

1.1.2 Nation

Discussions in the previous section specified ethnicity gains importance with increasing interaction between in and inter groups, even with the continuous debates on its content, constituents and function. Similarly to ethnicity, nation also has an influential role in designating current social and political relations. In order to observe this influence of nation in the Kurdish case, this section will provide a theoretical outline of the term nation and national identity.

Nation is a decisive concept in the changing social and political relations. It is, like ethnicity, one of the most controversial ideas and continues to be questioned in related literature (Arnason 2006). The term nation only started to be used in modern literature. According to pioneering modernist scholar, Ernest Gellner, advancement in industrial and capitalist processes led to critical developments in social, economic and political relations. To Gellner, therefore, industrial and capitalist developments are the founding conditions for the emergence of nation (E. Gellner 2006) and subsequent discussions. Following the eighteenth century, many scholars pondered over the term nation with emphasis on several of its components (Jaffrelot 1996, 54). Yet, upon its initial appearance in social science nation was not considered as a determinant factor in social and political relations. For instance, both well-known philosophers of the time, Karl Marx and Fredric Engels, neglected nation and took class as a core influence on building social and political relationships because they considered nation as a product of “superstructure” and believed it will dissolve with time (Topal 2003, 16–22).

Creation of modern state and increased nationalism led to greater focus on nation in agendas of scholars because nationalism encourages mobilization of ethnic sentiments among the people and further establishes this attitude into demand for state formation

(Olzak 1983, 364–365).⁴ Many were interested in the concept of nation and developed various understandings and approaches. Presently there are several approaches relevant for categorizing nation but the three leading methods in nation studies are: primordialism, modernist and ethno-symbolism.

The first approach, primordialism, identifies nation over ethnicity; “of course, nations are not a Western monopoly, nor were they born with the French Revolution. They have their roots in pre-existing ethnies” says, pioneering primordialist scholar, Van Den Berghe (2005, 113). Contrary to primordialism, the second approach, modernism, as implied by its name considers nation as a modern product (E. Gellner 2006; B. Anderson 2006) with the contribution of nationalism (Eriksen 2002, 155–160). According to the modernist approach, the concept of nation developed as a result of socio-cultural, political and economic developments, which came into existence with the modern period (Breuilly 2005; Hobsbawm 1990). In spite of this general consensus, some modernist scholars propose different viewpoints on the components of nation and to which degree they contribute to its creation. Benedict Anderson, a prominent figure of the modernist approach, developed the term “imagined community” in nation literature. Anderson regards nation as an “imagined community” of the modern period. In establishing an “imagined community”, prime importance is given to progression of “print-capitalism”. According to Anderson, “print capitalism”, for example, wide distribution of newspapers and books, created a level of connection between individuals with a common language because it provided a platform for those who did not even acknowledge each other to actually consider the same ideas presented in printed form. Thus, he says, people initiated

⁴ Nationalism has historically been linked with idea of state formation (Keating 2001, 19). In this process, the main notion that nationalism interacts with is territory (Storey 2002, 109). Nationalism suggests ethno-national groups should create their own state in order to sustain their national identity (Moltchanova 2009, 77), which is formulated as a coincidence of the “political and the national unit” by Gellner (2006, 71). Puts it more clearly, nationalist theory states that ethnic minorities should have right of self-determination and secession. This understanding of nationalism inspires ethnic minorities to reject further political hegemony from other groups and heighten their own national sentiments to encourage demand for their own state (Norman 1998, 35–36). Nationalism, in that sense could be considered as a determinative ideology in shaping minority group’s political rights (Calhoun 1993; Smith 1993). However, nationalism has not only become an influential ideology in these groups but also the main instrument in the hands of the state. To put simply, it was also used by the state for their own benefit (Llobera 2007, 129). For instance, In this light, Storey (2002, 109) argues that Kurdish nationalism attempts to form Kurdish nation-state in the Middle East.

creation of their “imagined community” termed nation (Anderson 1997; Anderson 2006). Like Anderson, another leading modernist scholar, Ernest Gellner, also perceives nation as a constructed and “imagined community” of the modern period. According to Gellner, people create their nation through their “beliefs”, “loyalty”, “solidarity” and “culture” (Gellner 2006, 77–78; Gellner 1997). In the development of nation Ernest Gellner highlights the industrial revolution as a trigger in general, but particularly its influence on the changes to production type. From Gellner’s point of view, with the transition from ‘agricultural society’ to ‘industrial society’ people were forced to restructure and design their socio-cultural and political norms and organizations. They were obligated to reconstruct themselves according to the outcomes and changes caused by industrial revolutions. He states that with the introduction of the new (industrial) society a homogeneous culture developed over time, which in turn led to construction of nation. Based on this, Gellner examines the transition to industrialization as the period of nation (Gellner 2006, 117–119).

Ernest Renan (1823-1892) and Max Weber (1864-1920), acclaimed scholars on nation highly referenced in nation literature, also consider the term nation in a modern sense. Renan was one of the first scholars to focus on the issue of nation. Upon comparing his nation understanding with some of the existed understandings clear differences are observed. Given the main nation components, race (E. Kedourie 2004a, 104–106), language, particularly a “standardized language” (Anderson 2006), religion (Coakley 2004), and territory (Aktoprak 2010, 23–24), Ernest Renan challenges them as vital constituents in the development of nation. To begin with, Renan harshly objects to using “ethnographic” affinities as a basis or component for defining a nation. For Renan, “ethnographic considerations have, therefore, played no part in the formation of modern nations” (Renan 2004, 32). Renan further questions the importance given to language, religion and territory (Ibid., 34-36) and instead classes ‘sentiments’, ‘soul’, and ‘spirituality’ as the driving forces for creation of nation. To Renan, “nationality, which is body and soul both, together has its sentimental side.” Renan places ‘spirituality’ and ‘men’ in the heart of his nation understanding (Ibid., 36). Taking his quote simply, it seems ‘spirituality’ constructs the ‘soul’ of nation; “a nation is a soul, a spiritual

principle.” The eloquent manner he speaks in and sheer importance he gives to ‘soul’ and ‘spirituality’ in nation making, his criticisms on the contribution of race, language, culture, religion and territory in the creation of nation are better understood (Ibid., 37-38). Max Weber, as mentioned previously, is another prominent scholar on the approach to nation. Weber’s understanding shares some common ground with Renan. For instance, Weber also rejects language, culture and history as main constituents for nation. He underlines that nation creates these constituents. On the contrary, he gives importance to “solidarity” (Weber 2004, 40–41) “prestige” and ‘interests’. In Weber’s nation understanding demand for “status” and people’s ‘interest’ are two key motives for individuals attaching themselves to a particular group. He stresses on the role of bourgeoisie class and intellectuals in forming this attachment (Ibid., 43-44).

In light of the nation considerations presented by the primordialist and modernist approaches, especially the paradoxical notions, an alternative method is ethno-symbolism. Ethno-symbolist presents a somewhat balanced position between modernism and primordialism. As with primordialism, ethno-symbolism holds ethnicity accountable for development of nation, however, it also gives a level of importance to modernization (Smith 2005). In that sense, ethno-symbolism asserts that nation’s ethnic boundaries are a pre-modern construction, or existed through centuries but obtained its political form (through politicization of ethnicity) with the modern period (Smith 2009, 23–40; Smith 1996).

Regarding the various discussions and methods for identifying nation, debates continue and are varied. Of course with each approach there are weaknesses and strengths, therefore, this research faces some difficulty in procuring an exact definition of nation by comparing all existing discussions on the topic. Nevertheless, Smith’s following characterization provides a large and worthy outline of nation components. Smith (1991, 14) regards nation as a political organization and identifies it through the following constituents; a ‘common culture’, ‘descent’, ‘language’, ‘sharing past’, ‘myths’ and ‘symbols’, ‘memory’, a “common mass-public culture”, attachment to a particular area of territory, demand for constructing a common future with the group members and

involvement in a larger economic cooperation.⁵ With reference to Smith's framework, Guibernau (2007, 11) defines national identity "as a collective sentiment based upon the belief of belonging to the same nation and of sharing most of the attributes that make it distinct from other nations."

The context provided above implies all three approaches may be used in clarifying Kurdish nation and national identity. However, modernism and ethno-symbolism could be most applied approaches in explaining the idea nation in the Kurdish case because a considerable number of Kurds date their ancestry to the pre-modern period, but most agree on politicization of their ethnicity and heightened national consciousness with the modern era.

1.1.3 Minority

Minority, derived from the Latin word 'minor' (Coontz 1986, 155), is a widely used concept in literature. However, it obtained a political association in the medieval era and it has been primarily used in contemporary literature (E. Kedourie 2004b, 50–52). It classifies a broad range of groups and is cited in many disciplines. However, there is still no common consensus on its definition and scope of applicability (Preece 2008, 906). Aware of the wide connotations it may portray in literature, in general terms, Friedrich Heckman underlines that minority refers to certain dissimilarities between two or more groups of people, in short, some groups' differences from the majority. Accordingly, he explains various groups, including, 'national', 'ethnic', 'regional', 'religious', 'homeless', 'drug addicts', 'vagrants', 'gypsies', 'prostitutes' and 'homosexuals' may be thought of as a minority. However, to Heckman this is an unsystematic method for classifying minorities (Heckmann 1983, 9–10). Therefore, to form an organised

⁵ Considering discussion provided on nation, Friedrich Meinecke- presents two classes of nation: cultural and political. Both cultural and political nations share certain values nonetheless there are considerable dissimilarities between them. In Meinecke's classification a *cultural nation* is gauged according to 'cultural heritage', whereas political nation is based on idea coalescing "of force of a common political history and constitution." Therefore, to Meinecke, while the concept of cultural nation is grounded on a common 'language,' a 'literature', and a 'religion', the core standards in *political nation* are 'consciousness', and a national 'will'. On the other hand, in view of political claims, Meinecke's definitions of cultural and political nations display characteristic differences from each other. A *political nation* desires to be treated as a separate political unit, and it has inclinations for the idea of self-determination (Meinecke 2004, 59–61).

explanation and clarification for minorities, he develops historical perspectives for the development of minority groups (Heckmann 1983). He creates a typology for the types of ethnic minorities as follows; “national minorities” and new “national minorities”, “colonized minorities”, “regional minorities” and “immigrant minorities” (Heckmann 1998). For a valuable clarification Baskin Oran identifies a minority group through objective and subjective conditions. Oran’s objective conditions are based on four principles, “numerically” and “politically” not being “dominant” in the host country, different characteristics from the major community and “to be a citizen”. Oran regards these objective conditions essential for identifying the term minority, however, the conditions are not sufficient to provide a definite identification. Oran, therefore, also examines subjective conditions to clarify the term minority, particularly for groups to develop a conscious understanding of their minority identity (diverseness) or “having of minority consciousness” (Oran 2004, 26–27).

1.1.3.1 Ethnic and National Minorities

Focusing on the body of individuals classified as minority groups, the largest of those consist of ethnic and national groups. Oran’s above noted method of identification provides a reliable framework to define the link between minority and ethnicity. Despite the high volume of uncertainty surrounding the term ethnicity, in general it is identified looking at objective and subjective conditions. Subjective conditions require recognition from outsiders (etic) whereas objective conditions are grounded on in-group or insiders (emic) definitions (Marshall 1999, 215; Eriksen 2002, 15–16). Reflecting on Oran’s method of defining minority along with the contribution of etic and emic identification in ethnicity, Schermerhon’s perspective takes prominence. Schermerhon argues that to identify an ethnic group as a minority firstly its population should be less than the host society’s population. He adds that this is in fact an insufficient condition to define an ethnic group as a minority because ethnic groups should also have limited access of economic and political resources and institutions (Schermerhon 1996, 18).

In literature, and a key focus in this research, a national group may also be treated as a minority (national minority) if it meets the minimum required principles for minority

classification. Despite such a general acknowledgment, national minorities display obvious variances from other minorities, especially from ethnic and cultural minorities. Therefore, in the view of Preece (2008, 906) national minorities define a group of people who hold “separate collective” identities with long-term attachments to particular areas of territory. Reflecting on the significance of territory in the definition of national minority, Magnet supports this further by placing emphasis on a group’s attachment to a particular part of territory in his classification of a national minority. He considers these minorities as territorial communities. However, Magnet highlights that territoriality alone may not be an adequate condition to categorize a group of people as a national minority, therefore, he asserts a “common consciousness” and “culture” should also be present among the group members (Magnet 2001, 399).

Attachment and the subsequent loyalty to a distinct territory, however, create a sense of controversy in the relations between national minority and dominant group (state). Due to their strong territoriality stance and ethnic difference from their host country (Heckmann 1998, 1–2), national minorities prioritized demands for territorial claims which were often disapproved by the host state, thus, in consideration of a group of people as a national minority their territorial concentration must be taken into account (Heckmann 1983, 12). Here the ideas of attachment to a territory and claims for territorial demands Joseph Eliot Magnet indicates are two key parameters which differentiate national minorities from the cultural minorities — though both differ from the dominant group in some manner. Magnet considers cultural minorities as groups of people who have an inclination to be attached and integrated to/in a dominant group’s identity. Contrary to cultural minorities, he considers national minorities as territorial groups who seek recognition through their national identity and more power to protect this identity (Magnet 2001, 399–400). Ted R. Gurr also underlines the link between national minorities and territorial political claims, including, a sufficient level of autonomy. Similar to the discussion provided above, Gurr too distinguishes national minorities from other minorities. He explains while minorities aim to make use of the social and economic resources in their host country in general, national minorities who reside on

specific areas of land want to be recognized with right of self-governance and territorial independence (Gurr 1993, 15).

The context outlined provides a substantial framework for classifying the Kurds as a national group or people, especially because of their distinct ancestry, culture, history, language, and most importantly, specific territorial location (Gurr 1993, 26). Still, as argued in the following chapter, the Kurds do not make up a homogeneous identity in general. The Kurds, especially those in Turkey, tend to possess different beliefs, dialects and cultural affinities. The common religious preferences of the Kurds in Turkey are Alevi and Sunni laws of Islam, and to a less extent, Yezidi (Jwaideh 1999, 36–41). Common languages of Kurds in Turkey consist of Kurmanji and Zaza (Muhammed Emin Zeki Beg 2010, 278–304). Based on these differences among the Kurds in Turkey, a number separate themselves further from the Kurdish ethnic identity, for example, some Zazas identify themselves as a distinct ethnic group through their language, Zazaca (van Bruinessen 2000a, 67). Some Alevis also categorize themselves through their religious identity by prioritizing their religious identity, Alevism, over their ethnicity (Arakelova 1999). However, a considerable number of Zaza (M. S. Kaya 2011; van Bruinessen 2006, 40) and Alevis continue to recognize themselves within the Kurdish ethno-national identity (Bayrak 2010). On another note, leaving aside for the moment the continuing discussions on ethnic identification of Zaza and Alevis, as Oran (2004, 57) argues, the Zaza speaking and Alevi faith based groups can be regarded as minority groups among the Kurds (internal minorities) in Turkey who majorly speak Kurmanji and follow Shafii mezhep (Sunni school/sect) of Islam. With reference to this, Alevis and as Patten (2005, 136) says Zaza are internal minority identities in Kurdish society

Evaluating once again the context provided above, this research will consider the Kurds as an ethno-national group primarily because they are a separate ‘ethni’ and reside in a particular territory(ies). The study will also highlight Alevi and Zaza groups as internal minority groups among the Kurds. Nevertheless, it is imperative to note that although this research examines the Kurds as an ethno-national group, it does not imply

that all Kurds are aware of their ethnic or national identity. Presently there is a high degree of partition in the social structure of the Kurds, which has had some effect on their ethnic and national consciousness.

1.1.4 Tribe

Similar to ethnicity and nation, as a social entity, the concept of tribe has also been dynamic in determining social and political relations among the Kurds. This will be elaborated in Chapters Two and Three.

Looking at the Kurdish history it seems religious identity and tribalism, contrary to ethnicity, were the two main contributors in shaping the Kurdish identity when the Middle East entered the period of ethnicity, nation and nation-state (Natali 2009, 63–66). Although the term nation began to develop around the intellectual circles in the last decades of the Ottoman Empire and further intensified following the development of capitalist economic relations and Kurds' struggle following the 1960s (P. J. White 2012, 15), tribal identity and tribe's interests remained a priority among ordinary Kurds. In internal and external relations, contrary to an ethnic cooperation or unity, tribal identity was significant (Strohmeier 2003, 9). Although it has started to dissolve over the last few decades, tribal structure is presently still active and influential in social and political relations of some areas in the Kurdish region (van Bruinessen 2010, 158–161). In this regard, as tribe along with ethnicity and nation is still a determinant entity in social and political relations in the Kurdish case, it needs to be clarified. Thus, clarifying the term tribe in general at this stage would be useful before defining the Kurdish tribal structure in the coming chapter.

As a social organization, tribes emerged for various reasons. Considering a group level situation; factors such as, war, defence and harbouring led to the development of tribes (tribal community) (Hay 2005, 72; Özer 2003). However, tribes and sub-tribe categories have existed for a long time and have even undergone various changes with new social and political structures and advancements. Continuous amendments and alterations have left tribes as an ambiguous and complex organization (Lapidus 1990, 26;

Özoğlu 1996, 6). In his article on tribe organizations, Steen (2009, 105) examines major tribes and tribe confederations of the nineteenth century, particularly those originating from the near east. In his writing he defines a tribe as “a segmentary social structure based on an accepted patri-lineal lineage system, consisting of families and clans bonded by a system of sodalities or social networks that crosscut the clan system”.

Tribes, as noted earlier, have undergone various changes and despite the uncertainty around structure and definition some successfully grew into relatively larger entities, for example, states. As mentioned in Tapper (1990, 50), the formation of some states through a tribal entity and the certain characteristics displayed by a tribe, such as, a tribe’s attachment to a particular territory, hierarchical governance system and powerful kinship affinities with in-group members allow associations between tribes and the state to be drawn. This supports Lapidus (1990, 27), Marx (1977) and Beşikçi's (1969a, 228) understanding of tribes as political organizations.

On the other hand, the idea of tribes is sometimes regarded synonymous with ethnicity in the Middle East due to its key elements. Although both units have some similar components, including, language, culture, lineage and descent, they are in fact different concepts (Tibi 1990, 130–131; O’Shea 2004, 37). Spira (2004, 256) herein argues that although both entities “emphasizes group identity and exclusiveness,” they cannot be considered as exchangeable concepts. To further distinguish the dissimilarity between both terms, Eriksen (1997, 37) regards ethnicity as a social entity which “relativizes boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’, between modern and tribal”.

1.2 A CONCEPTUAL AND HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF POLITICAL MODELS DEMANDED BY KURDS

This part comprised of four sub-sections will explain the political models currently demanded by the Kurds: independence (creation of their own state), federalism, cultural rights, and democratic autonomy respectively.

Firstly, creation of a state as a territorial political model will be explored, which was a popular choice for the Kurds involved with Azadî initiative, PAK, KKH, TKDP, İşçi-Köylü, DHF and Ismail Beşikçi Vakfı. With the term state the Kurds imply to the European model nation-state (modern state). To shed light on this state model, the first sub-section will initially focus on the main principles of the state with particular reference to scholars of the modern and early modern periods because they presented a comprehensive discussion on the main constituent of the state. Following this, the state formation process in Europe and in the Middle East will be clarified and differences between them will be drawn. Federalism, another territorial political model, will then be examined. Noted advocates of this ideology are the Kurds engaged with Hak-Par, Kadeş, Hûda-Par, Hezbollah, ÖSP, and Zehra and Med-Zehra groups. Since federalism is a territorial autonomy type, for a clearer definition the term autonomy will firstly be explained and then federalism. Thirdly, non-territorial model demand for cultural rights will be address, which is supported by the Kurds who have affiliations with the AKP and CHP. Finally, another non-territorial political model, democratic autonomy, proposed by the Kurds involved in the BDP and the PKK will be defined.

1.2.1 Conceptual Clarification of the State

This section aims to draw a conceptual framework for the European model of nation-state (modern state), which is presently supported by the Kurds involved in Azadî initiative, PAK, KKH, TKDP, İşçi-Köylü, DHF and Ismail Beşikçi Vakfı.

The term state originates from the Latin origin words ‘stare’ (to stand) (Vincent 1987, 16), ‘estat’, ‘state’ and ‘status’ (Skinners 2006, 3). Modern state commenced to develop in the earlier years of the medieval period with changes and resolutions to feudalism’s social and political structures (R. King and Kendall 2004, 28–29). Nevertheless, the current definition and notion of state has been traced back to just after the Renaissance period in Europe (L. J. Tivey 1981, 3).

Since its emergence the concept of state has become the foundational entity in building political relations and has great relevance in social science (Wimmer and

Feinstein 2010; Clark, Golder, and Golder 2009, 93). From the city states of Ancient Greece to modern day states, various attitudes have initiated developments in its definition, origin and practice (Dunleavy and O’leary 1987). Many of the ancient period scholars, such as Aristotle and Plato, late medieval period scholars, such as Machiavelli, Hobbes and Lock, and modern period scholars, Rousseau and Hegel, considered state in various manners and principles (Das 1975). For instance, in his well credited book, *The Prince*, Nicolas Machiavelli (1469-1527)⁶ cites state as a the more stable fact in the conditions of the day, and holds prince as the definitive understanding of authority and claims he should have supreme power. To Machiavelli for success and maintaining of prince’s authority and relatedly state, *prince* could apply coercion and oppression. Machiavelli herein states that in order to reach an aim, *prince* can act ruthlessly. And so, Machiavelli is ready to refuse some moral values (Tannenbaum and Schultz 2008, 212–214). Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679)⁷, in his *Leviathan* which symbolizes the state, regards the notion of state as a political actor providing order and protecting subjects of the state. Similarly to Machiavelli, he makes direct reference to the term ‘power’ in his classification of state and expresses that a state should have an ‘absolute’ and unlimited understanding of ‘power’ for its ‘sovereignty’ (Dunleavy and O’leary 1987, 13). John Locke (1632-1704) challenges the collection of an “unlimited power” in the hands of a state or prince and, on the contrary, places importance on the people’s ‘will’, ‘consent’ and ‘law’ (Locke 1967, 374–386). Jean Bodin (1530–1596) focuses on “supreme sovereign authority” in his understanding of state, but explains this authority should be “subject to limitations imposed by natural law and fundamental customary law (e.g. Consent and taxation)” (Richter 1987, 3). Discussions on sovereignty reached a new phase and Tibi (1990, 145) says the term obtained a national character -“national sovereignty” - following the French revolution. In other words, “with the French Revolution, nation and state merged” (Rejai and Enloe 1969, 145). Deliberations on the notion of state advanced with the creation of modern state and found acceptance from

⁶ Nicolas Machiavelli (1469-1527) was one of the first thinkers of the late medieval period to contemplate the issue of state.

⁷ Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), is a late medieval and early modern period scholar, focuses on the issue of state.

modern period thinker, G.W. Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831). For Hegel, the state is the central achievement of modern period and society. “the state-political community-is not a mere instrumental entity concocted by human practical reason for the furtherance of-individually oriented goals...He regards the state as an entity, whose aims are anchored in a web of interpersonal relationships transcending the wishes of any given single individual” (Avineri 1987, 196–197). Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Frederic Engels (1820-1895) regarded the state as a capitalist product of the hegemony maintained by the bourgeoisie class and claimed it will be removed once the class system is replaced by a communist structure (K. Marx and Engels (1848) 2007, 9–21).

The aforementioned thoughts contribute greatly to the weighty discussion on state, but Max Weber’s (1864-1920) elaborate consideration of state is widely accepted in literature. Before defining state, Max Weber underlines a “ruling organization” may be classed as “political” if the “ruling organization’s” “existence” and “order” is uninterruptedly “safeguarded within a given territorial area by the threat and application of physical force on the part of administrative staff”. Based on these stipulations, Weber concludes that state is a “compulsory political organization”, “insofar as its administrative staff successfully upholds the claim to the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force in the enforcement of its order” (Weber 1978, 54). Weber’s classification illustrates that state is essentially the “supreme power” of a particular part of territory. With this level of authority the state can implement coercion and has the right to apply laws to ensure its communities and people are protected (Dunleavy and O’leary 1987, 2). In the light of Weber’s classification of state, territory is an essential parameter in its definition because it is suggestive of a state’s field of activity (Pierson 2004, 9–10). Separate territories created with the aim of establishing subdivisions also reflect the power demand of state (the right to use power on a defined territory), in which it has “legal supremacy” over its people along with all other entities (Vincent 1987, 19). Nevertheless, the right of power over a given territory marks sovereignty and state’s “mutually constitutive concepts” (Biersteker 2013, 10). Sovereignty herein relates to the state’s right for using power, including physical force, on a given territory and its subjects to ensure correct operation of law and order (O’Neil 2013, 28). In other words, violence,

or ‘physical force’, is considered “something to be regulated by the state, in order to provide security for its members” (Shorten 2008, 35). This makes the state the only “source of the right to use violence”(B. E. Brown 2006, 85). With reference to this, the term authority, which is crucial in state definition, can be interpreted as “legitimate use of force” (Vincent 1987, 38).

Based on the aforementioned discussions, “monopoly (control of the means of violence)”, “territoriality”, “sovereignty”, “taxation” (Pierson 2004, 40–41) and “bureaucracy” can be held as the main ideologies (parameters) of a modern state (Dunleavy and O’leary 1987, 2).

1.2.1.1 State Formation in Europe

The emergence of state depends on the case and conditions. However, Deth and Newton (2005, 11–12) offer a general classification; most of the states have developed through either “gradual transformation of existed independent political units”, “unification of independent but dispersed political units”, or “secession or break-up of political units”. Still, there are numerous other factors which may have had an influential role in the formation of a modern state. Two factors widely considered and often discussed are warfare and capitalism (Ibid., 15).

Modern state differs greatly from the political units preceding its formation. However, it did not evolve independently from them. Poggi (2006, 105) explains modern state emerged from the remains and changes of these political elements. In this method of modern state creation warfare, particularly its influence on military technology, is significant (Tilly 1975). In early fourteenth century, as Spruty (2007, 214) notes, there was a drastic change to the military structure, for example, small, nonprofessional armies of feudal Lords were being replaced by larger centralized armies, modern and advanced weapons were introduced as well as ideas of a well-organized and disciplined army with and central training. Technological progress influenced rapid developments to the military assembly, but paradoxically intensified internal and external conflicts (Deth and Newton 2005, 15). In order to protect people from these threats, with the extent of their

hegemony and territories, Kings waged war with the new military equipment and this further escalated the conflict and rivalry (Rasler and Thompson 1985, 493 ; King and Kendall 2004, 21–22). Tension in territories between feudal Lords and Kings and battle between different monarchies created new needs -recruitment, administration, training and organization of more soldiers, and money (for war expenditure) (Spruyt 2002, 131–133). All these necessities had to be controlled and, thus, central institutions, such as central administrative units and centralized tax systems, were established (Spruty 2007, 214-215; Barkey and Parikh 1991, 527-535; Held 1992, 96). Charles Tilly expresses strongly the causal influence of extraction in state making; “the very activity of extraction, if successful, entailed the elimination, neutralization, or co-optation of the great lord's local rivals; thus, it led to state making” (Tilly 1985, 183). War making by the state contributed significantly to growing battles and competitiveness, leading to “industrialization for war” and colonialism (Giddens 1987). Tilly conveys this process as “the war made the state, and state made war” (Tilly 1975, 42) considering the contributory interaction between “war making”, “state making”, “protection”, and “extraction” (Tilly 1985, 181). With reference to this, colonialism and resultant wars are fundamental factors in creation of modern state because a state serves for the interest of war industry (Chomsky and Amin 1995).

Despite its relevance to some extent, the hypothesis “the war made state, and state made war” is a matter of debate. The underlying argument presented by most critics is that escalation of war has not always resulted in formation of a state (R. Cohen 1984). For instance, Taylor and Botea's (2008) research on the Vietnam and Afghanistan cases revealed that only the war in Vietnam led to state.

The second independent variable, “economic transition” (capitalism), is considered to have contributed to state formation. According to this view point, capitalism challenged the social and political structure of feudalism, and subsequently resolved its social and political units, which led to creation of “territorial state” (Spruyt 2007, 216). The capitalist class bourgeoisie have a decisive role in the disintegration of feudalism and subsequent development of modern state. To remove impediments on

market borders, particularly the strong monarchical system, the bourgeoisie class looked for a new political unit that would not present any conflict with its interests and priorities (Hall and Ikenberry 1989; Poggi 1990). Accordingly, this capitalist class had to ensure that there was a degree of “security” and “stability” for enhancing trade capacity and relative revenue (Deth and Newton 2005, 15). To reach this aim, capitalism built an infrastructure, implemented legal regulations, but more importantly formed centralized institutions. Capitalism reconstructed these changes into a state format because the state could only protect its interests and needs with centralized political units (R. King and Kendall 2004, 32). It is for this reason that Marx considers the state as an instrument in the hands of the bourgeoisie class (K. Marx and Engels 2007). Marx highlights that the bourgeoisie make use of the idea of state in a hegemonic manner over the majority of society and workers in order to protect and manage its affairs (Tannenbaum and Schultz 2008, 450).

Thus far only the eradication of feudal social and political structures and state making have been discussed in the light of the progress of capitalism. However, the achievements and consequences of a capitalist regime are not this limited. Changes from a ‘feudal society’ to an ‘industrial society’ (E. Gellner 2006) as a result of “industrial capitalism”, as Hans Kohn points out, paved the development of “rational individualism” in society. There was a shift in individuals’ loyalties in the modern period toward state rather than religion or feudal affinities and units (Kohn 1944). Scott (2006, 50), with reference to these changes, argues that the primary goal of modern state is “to create a population with precisely those standardized characteristics which will be easier to monitor, count, assess, and manage.” This viewpoint also strongly supports the connections between modern state and nation-state or consideration of modern state as a national state (Pierson 2004, 47). In this regard, Cornelia (1981, 35–36) outlines that the main “characteristic features” of modern state are equivalent to the main “characteristic features” of nation-state. In support of this, Deth and Newton (2005, 14) argue that to transform the state into a nation(al) state the elites created a common language, culture, myth, symbols and feeling of belonging among the citizens. These constituents, as noted previously, represent national identity.

On the other hand, 'warfare' and 'capitalism' as causative variables in modern state formation are also under criticism for their current level of influence. To Deth and Newton (2005, 16) these two factors contributed significantly to formation of modern state, however, they articulate warfare and capitalism cannot be considered as "direct causes of state formation". States created following World War II affirm the idea that the causes which led to these states differ considerably from the earlier European modern states (Spruyt 2007, 223–224). Herein decolonization (Hadden 2010, 82) and as (Heraclides 1991) highlights, the idea of secession influenced the emergence of the many states after World War II.

Upon presenting and highlighting the variances between early modern European state formation and those emerged later in different regions, the following section will specifically examine state making in the Middle East.

1.2.1.2 (Nation)-State Formation in the Middle East

The concepts of nation and nation-state, as argued by Kemal H. Karpat, were alien to the Middle East when modern state structure was introduced there. Neither idea coincided with the social fabric of the region because 'sense of community', 'solidarity' and 'religious identities' were prioritized over ethnicity and nation (Karpat 2004). However, following the early nineteenth century wide acknowledgement and emergence of the terms nation and nationalism in Europe started to connect with the Balkan communities of the Ottoman Empire. Subsequently, the Empire's Balkan subjects, having already established economic and political relations with Western Europe, started forming their own modern states (Hourani 1997, 319). These significant advancements physiologically affected the Empire's Middle Eastern Muslim communities and prompted the development of a new intellectual class which had prioritized the protection of Ummah (Cleveland 2008, 145). Harik (1972, 308) underlines socio-cultural and political growths in late nineteenth century, principally in "communication", "transportation" and "print-media" further triggered cultural awareness and highlighted socio-cultural, ethnic, and religious differences but also similarities between communities. With the Ottoman Empire's centralization policies, polarization in the Middle East created a sense of

mistrust toward and tension against the Empire. As a result, in line with Provence (2005, 11), the Middle Eastern communities were forced to focus on the terms ethnicity and nation in their agendas. Despite such awareness, the majority of the Middle Eastern communities did not have a strong predisposition to form their nation-state. It was not until the Ottoman Empire dissolved that Middle Eastern authorities began to consider the idea of nation-state. The term nation-state, therefore, was unfamiliar to the political culture of the region, especially because it wasn't mentioned in Islam (or the Islamic World) when nation-state developed in Europe (Kelidar 1993, 316).

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire was a pinnacle moment which led to dramatic reshuffling of the Middle Eastern political structure. According to Bessim Tibi, the region met with the ideology of nation-state which was imposed by Western powers following World War I (Tibi 1990, 143). Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt and Palestine were the first 'modern' state cases of Arab origin created, however, this was only under the mandatory instruction from France and Britain (Harik 1972, 309; Budeiri 1997, 194). Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Tunisia, Qatar etc. joined the family of nation-states later. Most of the states in the region were created by artificial territories after the First World War (B. Miller 2007, 135). They were established through "colonial borders and imposed from the outside that had very little to do with pre-existing ethnic boundaries" (Cole and Kandiyoti 2002, 192). Creation of these states over artificial ethnic boundaries is also one of the main causes for the failed transformation of existed traditional and tribal affinities into a national form and for the fail for creation of a Europe model nation-state (Tibi 1990).

After the First World War, a further two Middle Eastern communities (Turkish and Persian) followed the Arabs suit and commenced to remove tribal structures and traditional affinities in order to set up their own nation-state by generating a national identity and "nationalist ideology" (Tapper 1990, 69). In line with this purpose, Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey, formed a Turkish state in 1923 and made a conscious effort to create a new Turkish identity (Yörük 1995). Similarly, Shah Reza Pehlevi of Iran overthrew the Qajar dynasty and laid foundations for a modern Iran. Shah, with that

aim in mind, went on to develop a modern Iranian identity through a centralized bureaucracy, military and tough modernist understanding (Keddie 2003, 80–104). Shah, and later his son, concentrated on “persianizing” the whole society by creating a common ‘national identity’ (Beck 1990, 186) and had some success in instilling “national integration” by implementing tough policies, which impeded minorities’ revolts as well as silencing them (Avery 1965, 210–231). Both Turkey and Iran used the nationalist ideology, standardized education and creation of a homogeneous culture to transform their ‘state-nations’ into a ‘nation-state’.

Reflecting on the discussions and ideas presented, state formation in the Middle East is easily distinguishable from that of Europe (Hamid 1999; Tibi 1990, 146). Firstly, there is a considerable difference in the social structure of both regions and the influential dynamics that led to different socio-cultural and political relations. In this regard, nation-state in the Middle East did not develop over an ethnic or national consciousness as it did in Europe (Esman and Rabinovic 2004). Lisa Anderson also supports the idea that the main dynamics contributed in state formation in the Middle East show clear differences from the Europe case. Anderson, defends this by explaining “the historical significance of corporate, lineage, and tribal groups in exercising political authority alongside - and sometimes within - centralized bureaucratic administrations presents a starting point for state formation markedly different from that in Europe” (Anderson 1987, 14). Secondly, the main principle of modern-state of Europe also separates it from the Middle East case. Middle Eastern states failed to achieve or base their rule on the two main philosophies of European modern state; “legitimacy” (Khoury and Kostiner 1990, 3) and “monopoly of authority” Ibid.,15). In the light of this, Khoury and Kostiner declare the “term state associated with modern European conceptions and institutions does not necessarily correspond to Middle Eastern realities, even in the late twentieth century” (Ibid., 2). Their argument also helps explain why, contrary to an ethno-national identity, tribal affinities still have a considerable impact on social and political relations in the Middle East (Tibi 1990).

1.2.2 Autonomy

The term autonomy is derived from the Latin words “auto” (self/öz) and “nomos” (Law) (Eide 1998, 251). Autonomy in practice can be applied in various forms. A model of autonomy, which will be argued later, could be classified as territorial or non-territorial and this can be implemented over either of the following diversities: ethnic, religious, linguistic, or cultural. The varying nature of autonomy has raised countless discussions on its theoretical context (Kirişçi and Winrow 1997, 222). In this light, the two current political demands of the Kurds, democratic autonomy and federalism, may be looked upon within the concept of autonomy. This could also apply to Kurds’ cultural rights (cultural autonomy) demand, but majority of the Kurds in support of gaining cultural rights reject the term autonomy.

In a broad sense, the objectives of autonomy are to regulate the social, cultural, economic and political relations between central state and local groups. Autonomy, therefore, provides these groups a status, which consequently gives them a level of independence from the central state to arrange their internal affairs (Pratchett 2004, 362). And so, with autonomy central (national) state share (constitutively transfer) a percentage of power with the local groups, allowing these groups to manage a wide range of internal affairs. “Local self-government denotes the right and the ability of local authorities, within the limits of the law, to regulate and manage a substantial share of public affairs under their own responsibility and in the interests of the local population” (European Charter of Local Self-Government 1985, Article 3 (1)).

There are diverse and significant approaches available to explain the forms, principles and degrees of autonomy (the degree of power) local groups have over the central state. In his approach, Henri J. Steiner classifies three forms of autonomy that recognize local groups as independent powers to some extent; “power sharing”, territorial autonomy, and “personal law”. Firstly, his “power sharing” model prioritizes the rights of local groups to be represented equally in a central state. This model gives local groups the capacity to “veto” and “quota” central state suggestions, for instance, in the case of Belgium and Lebanon (Steiner 1991, 1541–1542). According to Steiner’s classification,

the second form of autonomy is based on territorial character. Territorial autonomy issues collective rights to the local groups concentrated in a particular region, who have distinctive ethnic and religious identities from the central state. The Devolution system in the UK, regional autonomy in Spain, federal models in Iraq and Canada are all example model systems based on Steiner's territorial autonomy form (Ibid., 1542).

Taking issue from that sense, territorial autonomy practice in Heintze's (1998, 18) words provides the local groups (that share a similar or different identity with the state) a political status and right of self-governance over the specific territory in which they are concentrated. However, this at present mostly applies to ethnic minorities. That being the case, territorial autonomy is classified as a model which seeks to remove local groups' (who has a diverse ethno-national identity to that of the central state) concerns by providing them a certain level of control over their internal affairs (Rothchild and Hartzell 2000, 259). Consequently, with territorial autonomy right of self-rule and a "certain degree of self-determination" can also be granted (Ibid.,260).

Steiner's final categorization of autonomy recognizes the "personal law", specifically "religious law", of members belonging to an ethnic community in a majority. In this form of autonomy, Steiner considers "personal law" as a necessity for building relations between local groups with diverse ethnic and religious identities and the central state. Countries which best represent this type of autonomy include India and Israel (Steiner 1991, 1542).

Along with deliberations made on the notion of autonomy above, the principles of autonomy have also been a topic of discussion, with particular focus on the degree of power local groups have over the central state in their relations.

Gordon L. Clark refers to two principles in his classification of autonomy - "power of initiation" and "power of immunity". He explains that the extent to which local groups gain from autonomy is dependent on these two values. The "power of initiation" idea rests on the right of "legislation" and "regulation" while "power of immunity" alludes to the "power of localities to act without fear of the oversight authority of higher tiers of the

state” (G. L. Clark 1984, 198–199). By combining these two principles Clark has divided the concept of autonomy into four typologies of local autonomy. In the first type local groups possess both “initiative” and “immunity”, and so in a sense they have a large level of autonomy. In Clark’s second type of autonomy local groups only possess “initiative”, and in the third categorization they have only “immunity”. Therefore, with his second and third classifications, local groups are given a limited degree of autonomy because they are left without either “initiative” or “immunity”. Finally, in Clark’s fourth classification local groups are deprived of both “initiative” and “immunity”, thus, they categorically lack autonomy (Ibid., 199).

Clark’s principles are indicative of the clarification of the degree of autonomy in regards to local groups’ values of “initiative” and “immunity”. However, Clark’s approach places the state at the forefront and, thus, neglects to highlight the influential role of local groups’ power in determining central state policies. Clark also neglects to mention the role of identity in determining autonomy.

Making an allowance for the key points Clark ignores in his approach, Pratchett developed three separate understandings of local autonomy. “Freedom from higher authorities” is Pratchett’s first approach, which “defines local autonomy as the degree of discretion that local authorities have from central government” (Pratchett 2004, 363). “Freedom to achieve affect particular outcomes” is Pratchett’s second approach by which he discusses the power of local groups over the central state. Here Pratchett highlights the local groups’ potential effect on central state decisions and authority (Ibid., 365–366). In his final approach, “reflection of local identity”, Pratchett focuses on and explains local autonomy through local identity. He defines local autonomy as “the capacity to define and express local identity through political activity”. With this understanding he emphasizes the power of local groups in obtaining a large degree of autonomy (Ibid., 366–367).

1.2.3 Federalism

The territorial political model federalism is supported by the Kurds involved in Hak-Par, Kadep, ÖSP, Hûda-Par, Hezbollah, and Zehra and Med-Zehra groups. This section outlines the main principles of federalism.

As a term federalism derives from the Latin words “foedus” (Elazar 2006, 5), “foederatus”, and has close links with the terms “foedus (treaty)” and “fidere (trust)” (O’Duffy 2009, 202). Similar to autonomy, federalism is also a contentious and ambiguous concept (Dare 1979, 34–35; Jinadu 1979, 13–14), and in general positions itself against the centralist administrative and political structures (Proudhon 2014, 68; Amoretti 2004, 10).

Federalism constitutionally was firstly recognized in the American Constitution of 1878 over an administrative criteria (Dare 1979, 26), and became an important alternative form of administrative and political governance to manage central and territorial local groups’ relations by providing unity of country, in many cases (D. Horowitz 2008, 102). However, federalism was initially classed as a political model and was a focus in this regard as nation-states formed. Creation of nation-state, either through a homogeneous nation understanding or its strong desire to assimilate minorities, gave rise to discontent in these groups and caused severe “territorial cleavages”(Amoretti 2004). Maiz (2000, 35) states such developments have strengthened federalism as an alternative political and administrative model in managing tension and providing stateless groups their ethno-national claims through unity with the state. To achieve these aims federalism works in line with the principles of “division of power” (Amoretti 2004, 9). Aroney (2009, 33) argues that “distribution of powers” through a national state and local-governments is a reliable method for identifying federalism. Herein, constitutional division of sovereignty minimum between two territorial units is significant in federalism (Hague and Harrop 2004, 228; W. R. Clark, Golder, and Golder 2009, 603).

Federalism, as noted earlier, remains a contentious subject. On another note, even though there is no concrete explanation there are a few powerful approaches in place for

the study of federalism, for example, Structural Institutional Perspective (SIP), Rational Choice Institutional Perspective (RCIP) and Cultural Institutional Perspective (CIP).

Among these approaches, SIP holds the rise in nation-state and capitalist progresses accountable for development of federalism because, to this approach, the capitalist class developed federalism to protect their interests and form their autonomy over a large part of territory (O'Duffy 2009, 212). The second approach, RCIP, mostly focuses on the terms “security” and “individual rights” by highlighting the raised concerns for ‘security’ and ‘individual rights’ in the modern period are determinative dynamics in the development of federalism (Ibid., 213). The third approach, CIP, gives emphasis to minorities’ demand for protection over their identity and their “interests” , which to this approach is responsible for the development of federalism (Ibid., 214). With reference to this, the federalism model, therefore, could provide a ground for stateless groups to protect and improve their identical differences by sharing power under the union of one state (Heintze 1998, 24). So, the federal idea endeavours to “accommodate, preserve, and promote distinct identities” (Burgess 1993, 3), through “territorial distribution of political power” for “holding together” various groups (Maiz 2000, 51), namely “holding together federalism” (Stepan 2004, 444). This is also the idea behind the power-sharing and decentralisation characteristics of federalism (Adegbite 1979). In doing so, federalism delivers stability and balance between central state and territorial groups (Gagnon 1993, 26–27) and provides “political integration” (Elazar 2006, 2).

Within the context provided above local and national governments shares responsibilities for managing of social, cultural, political and economic affairs. With reference to Ahmet Özer, in federalism federal units are mostly independent in their internal affairs and have authority to generate their own capital, assembly, constitution, policies, legislative and judicial powers. To Özer, communities within a federal system are also eligible for their own flag, march, anthem, local budget and local security forces. Dependent on decentralisation principles the national government, mainly carrying out

international affairs, provides defence the of country, and conduct huge economic investments (Özer 2009, 681–686).

1.2.3.1 Federalism Forms

The analysis and context provided above give a general outline for the rise in federalism demand and its main principles of authority. However, the various existing forms of territorial autonomy, most of which are considered federal samples, and the noticeable differences between federalism forms indicate that further specification and clarification of federalism is required. Therefore, with reference to W. R. Clark, Golder, and Golder (2009, 603) the following two sections will reflect on federalism under the categories, “federalism in structure” and “federalism in practice”.

1.2.3.1.1 Federalism in Structure

With “federalism in structure” W.R. Clark, Golder and Golder stress three main principle of federalism; “geopolitical division”, “independence” and “direct governance”. By the principle “geopolitical division”, W.R. Clark, Golder and Golder class a country as a federal country if it has more than one territorial unit and if these units are constitutionally recognized or have a status “that cannot be unilaterally abolished by the national or central government”. With their second principle, “independence”, they place emphasis on the importance of having an “independent bases of authority” between central government and local units. In this regard, their third principle, “direct governance”, focuses on power-sharing between national and regional governments. This principle, therefore, implies both parties - regional and central government - should act independently “at least in one policy realm” from each other (W.R. Clark, Golder, and Golder 2009, 605).

To further elucidate distinctions amongst federalism in structure forms, this section will also use the following sub-federalism categorizations: Congruent (mono-Ethnic or Administrative) and Incongruent (Multi-ethnic), and Symmetric and Asymmetric Federalisms.

i. Congruent (mono-Ethnic or Administrative) and Incongruent (Multi-ethnic), and Symmetric and Asymmetric Federalisms

Previous sections have shown that federalism is a prime subject of many theoretical discussions and is a model looked on by numerous stateless groups. Although it is still subject to questions and criticisms, most types of federal applications are currently practiced throughout the world. It is estimated that nearly one third of people are living under a form of federal autonomy (O'Duffy 2009, 201). Grounded on protection of internal varieties, a greater understanding of federalism will deliver territorial local groups power and authority to rule the regions they reside in. In doing so, territorial local groups are able to make better use of social and economic resources, provide security, and most importantly, live openly with their identical differences ((Elazar 2006; Jinadu 1979, 15, 20 ; Blondel 2004, 234). However, the aims of federalism reach wider. Federalism endeavours to manage tension between local groups with varied identities and central state, as well as establishing a better integration (Elazar 2006, 11-14). Federalism herein is seen as a political model capable of protecting minority groups' differences, managing ethnic and religious tension between various groups and preventing ideas of separation (Dare 1979, 29). Thus, when considering the states' aim to assimilate or take control of minority groups and raising of competition or conflict between minorities themselves, federalism is regarded as an appropriate political model for managing relations between minority groups themselves and with the state (Gagnon 1993, 21–22).

Currently, various forms of federalism are applied. Almost all rely on the model's core principles, but with each case the application also has its own principles. Despite the broad use of federal models when placed into practice, they can be grouped into ethnic and administrative federalism based on fundamental characteristics (Sharma 1979, 24–25). To begin with the latter, administrative or “cooperative federalism”(Laselva 1996, 175) (also known as mono-national federalism) consists of only one ethnic group or nation (mono nation). In this classification local groups and central state belong to the same ethnic identity or share the same social boundaries (O'leary 2004, 161). The former

classification entails more than one ethnic or nation (multi-national). In ethnic federalism local groups in specific regions share a diverse identity with the central state (Heintze 1998, 25–27).

Arend Lijphart organises this classification under “congruent” and “incongruent federalisms”. To clarify distinctions between “congruent” and “incongruent” federalisms, he compares the social and political boundaries of territorial units, such as ethnic minorities. Lijphart points out that “in incongruent federations these boundaries tend to coincide, but they tend to cut across each other in congruent federal systems” (Lijphart (1999, 196). Exemplifying existing federal cases in light of the discussed categories, the mono-nations (constructed through one nation) Germany and USA represent administrative federalism samples (Özer 2009, 686). Belgium, Spain, India, Iraq, Canada, Former Yugoslavia and Soviet Republic, comprised of numerous ethnicities (multi-national) concentrated in a particular region, are characteristic samples of ethnic federalism (O’Duffy 2009, 216–217). Both kinds of federalism are applied in most cases, however, evidence shows that presently ethnic (incongruent) federalism is most common. As mentioned before, the increase in self-rule requests from stateless groups makes the federal ideology preferable. Reflecting on the main principle of federalism, as Elazar (2006, 10) highlights, provision of “group pluralism and individual liberties” illustrates that ethnic federalism is the ideal unit to accommodate identical claims of stateless groups, and resolve any conflict present between them and the state.

The framework drawn above gives general categorizations of “federalism in structure”. Although all applications of federalism contain a few essential principles, there are distinct differences between them as they each also consist of other principles. To further clarify this point, certain federal applications will be examined in relation to their principles.

Taking into account some of the current federal countries, the United States characterises congruent federalism because the states (eyalets) and national government share the same ethnic identity (W. R. Clark, Golder, and Nadenichek-Golder 2009, 611). The cantonal federal model in Switzerland, on the other hand, is an incongruent form of

federalism (Lijphart 1999, 196). “Multiculturalism” and “multilingualism” constitute the two main pillars of the cantonal federalism model in Switzerland because ethno-cultural and linguistic identities are factors in the construction and function of cantons (Bachtiger and Steiner 2004, 40–41). Like Switzerland, incongruent federalism is also in place in Belgium (Lijphart 1999, 197). With tension between Wallonia and Flemish people at a high, federalism for its political and administrative characteristics was introduced into the constitution in 1993 (Hooghe 2004, 55). The structure of federalism in Belgium is made up of specific “regions” and “communities” - while Flemish, French, and German-speaking people comprise the three linguistic communities, Wallonia, Flanders and Brussels are the regional side of Belgian federation (Beland and Lecours 2007, 409). Each region in the Belgian federation makes use of autonomy and is in control of its internal affairs. By linguistic and regional decentralization, Belgian federalism manages the relations between central state and people attached to separate regions or have their own language (Hooghe 2004). Canada is another incongruent federalism case (Lijphart 1999, 196) centred on language and region diversifications. Federal units employ a significant amount of independence in Canada (Simeon 2004, 99), but the Quebecois province raises questions about the true success of federalism since there is demand for separation in some Quebecois. As Keating (1997, 695) explains, Quebec nationalism has had an influence on communities - the idea of establishing its own state has increased among individuals.

Along with administrative (mono-ethnic) and multi-ethnic classifications of federalism, some also fit under the categories “symmetric” and “asymmetric federalisms” (W. R. Clark, Golder, and Golder 2009, 612). In symmetric federalism all local governments carry a similar status or are considered equal in political and economic terms by the national government (state), for example, United States of America (Ishiyama 2012, 213). Asymmetric federalism is simply based on the idea that some regions gaining more social, economic (fiscal) and political power in comparison to the other regions in a country, for example, Canada, Spain and Russia (Martinez-Vazquez and Boex 2001, 4; Wheatley 2010).

1.2.3.1.2 Federalism in Practice

The study has already clarified that in order to consider a case as a “federal in structure” it has to illustrate three key principles: “geopolitical division”, “independence” and “direct governance”. However, albeit their substantial power some federal countries do not demonstrate the mentioned three principals together. They exhibit only some, therefore, cannot be considered as “federalism in structure” cases. Such cases, with reference to W. R. Clark, Golder, and Golder, will be classified under “federalism in practice” which they also consider as decentralization “that refers to the extent to which actual policymaking power lies with the central or regional governments in a country” (W. R. Clark, Golder, and Golder 2009, 612).

Spain is a prime example of a “federalism in practice” case. The country consisted of several ethnic and linguistic groups, of which Basques and Catalans are most noted. During the period of Franco (1939-1975) central state imposed its own identity and applied harsh policies to suppress minority groups, resulting in internal conflict (Aktoprak 2010, 282–300). In order to end the tragic internal tension, minority groups’ claims had to be recognized and, thus, Spain accepted federalism in its 1978 constitution (Beramendi and Maiz 2004, 123–124). The second article of the Spanish Constitution “recognizes and guarantees the right to self-government of the nationalities and regions of which it is composed and the solidarity among them all” (Spanish Constitution, 1978, Article–2, p.10). Based on this principle, regionally located groups, such as, Basques obtained the right to control the majority of their internal affairs (Llera 2000, 104). However, federalism in Spain does not meet the “geographical division” condition since, as W. R. Clark, Golder, and Golder (2009, 609) highlights, the central government has rights to retain some amount of power unilaterally given the regional governments.

India is another case which includes several ethnic, religious and linguistic groups that transitioned to a federal structure by acknowledging their differences. “Power-sharing”, “cooperation” and “accommodation” are the three main values the Indian case abides by, which were substantially successful in resolving most of the internal conflict in India (Kohli 2004; Majeed 2009). However, W. R. Clark, Golder, and Golder argue that

the case in India cannot be classed under “federalism in structure” since it does not display “geopolitical division”. They state that the national government has the right to intervene and change regional entities’ boundaries, which contradicts the idea of “geopolitical division” (W. R. Clark, Golder, and Golder 2009, 610–611).

The devolution system in the UK is a slightly different type of autonomy, namely devolution that “occurs when a unitary state grants powers to subnational governments but retains the right to unilaterally recall or reshape those powers” (W. R. Clark, Golder, and Nadenichek-Golder 2009, 609). With decentralization, non-British Welsh, Irish and Scottish people are granted a large degree of territorial autonomy and have power to manage most of their internal activities (Keating 2004, 167-168), though they each employ different levels from autonomy (Hannum 1990, 458; O’Duffy 2009, 204). Although devolution shares most values with a federal structure, it is not labelled federalism in order to remove any separation concerns (Leopold 2009, 247–248). Secondly and most importantly, it does not meet the “geopolitical division” criteria because the central government “retains the unilateral right to recall or reshape the powers that it has delegated or devolved to the regional governments” (W. R. Clark, Golder, and Nadenichek-Golder 2009, 609).

Overall, the discussions on autonomy in previous sections and on federalism above show they are similar in some ways but also demonstrate significant differences. Firstly, as Hand J. Heintze states, “autonomy is always a fragmented order, whereas a constituent state is always part of a whole. The latter participates in decision-making through organs of the federal state”. He adds that federal units affinities are more powerful than that of autonomous structures because federalism mostly concentrates on the following dynamics: territorial division, economic structure, historical background of the regional groups and relations with the central state, and ideology (Heintze 1998, 25). Taking the idea of federalism from that sense, as P. King (1993, 97–98) points out, federalism does not prioritize granting of cultural values or rights only, it takes the notion of territory as a whole into consideration and recognizes rights in this sense.

1.2.4 Cultural Rights

Culture is an idea based on the term ‘identity’ (Kupper 1999, 236-237). The strong connection between culture and identity greatly influences the collective identity of a group (Cole 2014). Consequently, culture plays a vital role in the emergence of ethnic identity (Gurr 1994, 348) and, thus, for a number of ethnic groups their demand for cultural rights takes precedence over other claims. For instance, the Kurds who gather around the AKP and the CHP have been found to claim for recognition of cultural identity; this will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapters.

Culture has been and continues to be used in many contexts. Several disciplines categorize culture from its various values and constituents (Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner 2006, 92). In general terms it is defined as the collective beliefs and ideas of a particular group or society, taking the following characteristics into consideration: language, tradition, convention, customs, faith and life-styles (Ibid., 92–93). Nonetheless, culture coupled with its distinctive factors also concerns “collective cast of mind” (Kupper 1999, 227). Its close links with society has resulted in many seeing culture and society as mutually complementary (Friedman 1994, 68).

The notion culture subjugates various disciplines in literature. A significant use of culture is through the term ‘right’. With reference to this, acknowledgment of culture is regarded as people’s substantial rights (Cowan, Dembour, and Wilson 2001, 2-4), but it was not considered as such for a long period because many feared culture could initiate separatist political claims among minorities. Cultural rights, therefore, were formally first accepted in 1966, to some extent similar to the concept of human rights (Robbins and Stamatopoulou 2004, 427).

Focus on culture and cultural rights grew as tensions began to escalate because of minority groups collectively demanding for claims to protect, practice and manifest their cultural values (Robbins and Stamatopoulou 2004). Cultural rights, therefore, offer a level of satisfaction to minority groups by recognizing their cultural identity and, consequently, resolving the hostility between them and the central state (Kymlicka 1995).

Weighing up cultural rights in this sense, Sançar (2011, 24), reflecting on the previous considerations, relates (cultural rights) to the political and legal recognition of minorities. D. N. Gellner (2001, 177) adds to this by explaining cultural rights seek to protect variances in society and reach “political and economic resources on the basis of cultural difference.”

Examining cultural rights in the light of the above discussions, it is evident that its principle objective is to protect and respect the differences in society. Recognition of cultural rights is wholly based on the protection of minorities’ values in a majority. And with this aim, cultural rights are focused on even more and tackled as a ‘human rights’ issue as hostility between minority groups and central state heats up, and as a result, cultural rights are a priority of many international covenants (Symonides 1998). United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was the first among these organizations. It highlights cultural rights in its 2001 conference and declaration. Article (4) mentions “cultural diversity (as) an ethical imperative, inseparable from respect for human dignity” and Article (5) declares “cultural rights are an integral part of human rights, which are universal, indivisible and interdependent” (UNESCO 2002). As a general rule cultural rights are identified as a “unified arrangement of practices and meanings”(Cowan, Dembour, and Wilson 2001, 8). Nonetheless, despite such attention on cultural rights it is mainly dealt with at the individual level and most international covenants⁸ and states are reluctant to recognize them at the collective level (Hamelink 2003, 7).

Reluctance to consider cultural rights at the collective level brings the question of whether cultural rights should be recognized at the individual level or collective (at the group) level to the forefront. According to Wall (2007, 236), collective rights imply further “power”, “immunity” and “liberty” for a group of people. Wall uses three perspectives to define collective rights under his three factors (Ibid., 237). Firstly,

⁸ For instance, despite stating of groups rights, The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights’ (UNUDHR) regards cultural rights at the individual level. The article 27 (1 and 2) from UNUDHR neglects to make reference to the term group or collectivity, and instead stresses on individual (everyone) rights (United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, Article 27 (1-2)).

collective rights or factors that regard the interest of more than one person. Second, he considers collective rights as a political fact that requires the right of power over a specific region, and finally, also relating to the second point, Wall associates collective rights with the notion of territory and demand for managing “public environment”. Thus, he emphasises “collective autonomy rights, then, are genuine collective rights and not mere shadows of individual rights of freedom of association” (Ibid., 238). Geoffrey Levey also widely discusses the notions of individual and collective rights. In one of his articles, Levey classifies cultural rights as personal (individual) and collective (group); “personal cultural rights” seek to provide freedom for “individual autonomy” while collective (corporate) cultural rights relate to collectivity and acknowledgement of “political autonomy” (Levey 1997, 237-238). Given the deliberations on individual and collective rights, Will Kymlicka develops a different standpoint and states collective rights are extensive and “so unhelpful as a label for the various forms of group-differentiated citizenship” (Kymlicka 1995, 45). Kymlicka, therefore, examines minorities’ rights through freedom for “individual autonomy” (Kymlicka 1995).

1.2.5 Democratic Autonomy as a New Concept in Literature

Following acquitting his independence demand, imprisoned leader of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, developed diverse political models, which will be analysed closely in Chapter Four. The Democratic autonomy political model was firstly drafted by Abdullah Öcalan, proposing democratic autonomy through his democratic republic and democratic confederalism projects (Yeğen 2011, 93). As a non-territorial and alternative system to existed models, democratic autonomy was rapidly accepted by the Kurdish Political Organizations BDP (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi Tüzüğü 2008, Article 3(c)), Democratic Society Congress (DTK-Demokratik Toplum Kongresi)⁹ - a roof organization including certain Kurdish groups - and PKK (Serxwebun (Temmuz) 2011). Therefore, although democratic autonomy has only been considered as a political model for a few years, it has been supported for and accepted by many of the Kurds. According to a nation-wide

⁹ For the DTK’s views regarding Democratic autonomy visit the organization’s homepage, available at (<http://www.demokratiktoplumkongresi.com/tr/index>)

opinion survey conducted by SAMER in the eleven districts inhabited mostly by Kurds, 41.6% call for democratic autonomy as a political model in order to solve the Kurdish issue (SAMER, Mart 2012, 27–28).

As also highlighted in the book, “Kürt sorununda cözüme doğru Demokratik Özerklik” (Towards the solution of the Kurdish Issue: Democratic Autonomy)¹⁰, democratic autonomy is a relatively new concept in literature (Bilim Aydınlanma Komitesi 2009, 121). Therefore, there are no sufficient sources on democratic autonomy to conduct a comprehensive theoretical discussion. Democratic autonomy, as noted in its draft submission form, aims to resolve existing ethnic minorities and central state troubles in the union of state (Draft Submission for a Democratic Autonomous Kurdistan 2011).¹¹ Based on this prime principle, the BDP declares that it will use the democratic autonomy model to solve the Kurdish question in Turkey (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi Tüzüğü 2008, Article 3(c)). This model was also declared by the PKK affiliated Democratic Union Party (Partiya Yekitiya Demokratik) by the Kurds in Syria, called the *Rojava* region (Kurdistan National Congress 2014).

Democratic autonomy is based on eight dimensions: political, legal, self-defence, social, economic, cultural, ecology and diplomacy (Draft Submission for a Democratic Autonomous Kurdistan 2011). Political dimension recognizes the Kurds’ individual and collective rights equally through obtaining a national status in political terms (Ibid., 18-21). For instance, the Kurds who demand this model founded the Diyarbakir city centred People’s Democratic Congress (Demokratik Toplum Kongresi-DTK), which functions as a local parliament representing the Kurds and other groups in the region(s) mostly populated by the Kurds. Legal dimension provides democratic autonomy itself and assures that the Kurds’ political status is constitutional. In other words, it gives democratic autonomy a legal status (Ibid., 21-24). Self-defence dimension was developed to protect people’s moral and political values. In this regard, all villages, towns and cities

¹⁰ This book was prepared and published by a PKK affiliated group named Bilim Aydınlanma Komitesi.

¹¹ Democratic autonomy as noted before was created by Abdullah Öcalan but DTK further developed it over Abdullah Öcalan’s perspectives. This draft submission of democratic autonomy therefore was based on the idea(s) of Abdullah Öcalan but published and declared by the DTK.

will have opportunities to defend themselves from any attacks. For example, with this dimension they will have the means to form their own security systems, such as, local people's defence forces (Ibid., 24-25). Cultural dimension entails protection of people's cultural, artistic and historical values. It recognises the Kurdish language as the mother tongue and encourages for it to be used in education and as an official language, as with the Turkish language. Moreover, it requests the original Kurdish region titles and Kurdish symbols back, including, their flag, colours, customs and anthem (Ibid.,25-27). Social dimension proposes creation of organizations - city, town and village councils - and assemblies among various classes, such as, democratic workers congress and democratic women and youth organizations (Ibid.,28-31). Economic dimension seeks to create self-economic systems and underlines that people should have authority over their tax collection and use of underground and over ground economic sources (Ibid., 31-34). Ecological dimension prioritizes conservation of nature. For instance, democratic autonomy challenges expansion and construction of dams (Ibid.,34-36). Lastly, in order to manage their affairs in regional and international relations, diplomatic dimension suggests the creation of institutions and committees involving the Kurds (Ibid., 37-38).

Abdullah Öcalan considers democratic autonomy through his democratic confederalism project; "a non-state social paradigm" which rests on the development of social, cultural, economic and political interactions, avoiding territorial border changes among the Kurds who reside in Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran (Öcalan 2011a, 33-34; Bilim Aydınlanma Komitesi 2009). According to Öcalan's concept of democratic confederalism, the Kurds in the four neighbouring countries would construct their democratic autonomy models and as a result to initiate relations and associations among one another. In his view, democratic confederalism will not interrupt current territories and will function as a supra-state structure. In other words, it will act as a roof structure among the democratic autonomies of the four Kurdish regions. Democratic autonomy herein is regarded as an element of democratic confederalism (Öcalan 2010).

In accordance to this framework, the main objective of democratic autonomy is to find a solution for the Kurdish issue by developing new theoretical and practical

understandings. It classes the emergence of nation-states as the main factor for the escalation in coercion, oppression, violence and denial, and the indirect Kurdish issue which developed (Draft submission for a democratic autonomous Kurdistan 2011). Democratic autonomy as a socially and politically focused model refuses to categorize itself as nation-state, nor form a Kurdish nation-state because of moral and ideological motives (Bilim Aydınlanma Komitesi 2009; Öcalan 2010).

Democratic autonomy's state refusal brings the question of how it considers existed states to the forefront. Although democratic autonomy refuses new nation-states, it acknowledges current ones. "Democratic autonomy is neither state-building nor a state-destroying project" (Draft submission for a democratic autonomous Kurdistan 2011, 17). Therefore, it does not have any intention to destroy the Turkish Republic. On the contrary, it seeks to manage the internal affairs of the Kurds with some cooperation with the state. And so, with democratic autonomy the Kurds will be able to self-govern their region with democratization of the Turkish Republic (Draft submission for a democratic autonomous Kurdistan 2011). Hence, as also noted in an article (with strong reference to Abdullah Öcalan) published in PKK affiliated magazine, *Serxwebûn*, contrary to one ethnicity based nation-state understanding, democratic autonomy develops the term "democratic nation" which recognizes all ethnic, religious and linguistic groups' identities in the union with Turkey. Democratic nation herein is as a roof nation which acknowledges differences in order to manage and construct peaceful affiliations between varied groups, differing to creation and domination of one nation over the others (Serxwebûn (Temmuz) 2011, 9–10). Based on this, Abdullah Öcalan differentiates his nation understanding from the others by saying "I suggest that we understand nation only as another term for country and that we separate it from any ethnic connotations" (Öcalan 2011b, 79).

As a political and administrative model, democratic autonomy handles the Kurdish issue as a national issue resting on claims for the recognition of Kurds' collective rights. It therefore, opposes to acknowledgment of only individual and cultural rights, and demands recognition of collective national rights (Draft submission for a democratic

autonomous Kurdistan 2011, 18–19). Democratic autonomy, in particular with reference to the reasons behind the Kurdish issue, is an important model in highlighting the political status Kurds enjoyed during the Ottoman Empire. Recognition of Kurds' political status is a priority of democratic autonomy (Ersanli and Bayhan 2012, 204 ; Akat Ata 2012) because it is perceived as a political will of the Kurds in “democratic autonomy Kurdistan” (Draft submission for a democratic autonomous Kurdistan 2011, 19) where the Kurds will gain their own flag, customs, language and traditions (Bilim Aydınlanma Komitesi 2009, 126–127).

Moreover, the discernible differences between territorial autonomy and democratic autonomy begin to blur with increased demand for political status and focus on a democratic autonomous Kurdistan. Despite such controversy, democratic autonomy is not founded on ethnic, religious and territorial affinities (Yeğen 2011, 94). The creation of new ethnic or territorial boundaries, as noted previously, are seen as the sources for new conflict and suffering of the masses. Therefore, democratic autonomy is labelled as a non-ethnic, religious and territorial political model (Draft Submission for a Democratic Autonomous Kurdistan 2011, 19–20).

Unlike the ethnic and territorial structures, democratic autonomy administratively restructures Turkey into 20-25 regions (Yeğen 2011, 96; Serxwebun 2011, 4), basing the functions of the regions on democracy. Each region contains assemblies comprised of local people, where all processes involving decisions are grounded on the participation of the people. Democratic autonomy here aims to sensitize the state to democracy and categorizes itself as state + democracy. Under this label, democratic autonomy is the main instrument between state and democracy (Draft submission for a democratic autonomous Kurdistan 2011, 20).

With the new state structure in place democratic autonomy identifies delegation of authority between central state and regional autonomies. With this regulation, central state will control foreign affairs, defence and treasury issues whereas autonomous regions will have the authority to maintain their local education, sport, tourism, cultural and social issues, public improvements, social insurance and issues concerning women's

rights etc. (Özer 2009, 710–711). Democratic autonomy, therefore, is identified as a model which provides further decentralization and reduces state power (Draft submission for a democratic autonomous Kurdistan 2011, 15-16). In concise words, democratic autonomy focuses on “less state (and) more society” through the democratic self-governance understanding (Serxwebûn (Ekim) 2010, 9).

In the light of the main criteria of democratic autonomy provided above, the model shows clear differences to territorial political models. The model’s rejection of ethnicity and territory particularly demonstrate these dissimilarities. Territorial political models, for instance state and federalism, as noted previously take a particular ethnicity and territory as base, while democratic autonomy distance itself from these ideas. On the other hand, despite democratic autonomy’s distance to territorial political models, its above-noted eight dimensions rises the question whether democratic autonomy could be considered within a territorial autonomy framework or not? Because democratic autonomy’s eight dimensions, which are also considered by most of the territorial autonomies, associates it with the territorial autonomies. Mentioning on formation of a regional parliament, creation of regional local security forces, collection of tax, establishment of international diplomatic committiees, or briefly demand for self-governance, are some points relates democratic autonomy to the territorial autonomy formations. In that sense, it is safe to say the model democratic autonomy is ambiguous.

Democratic autonomy’s emphasis on “democratic nation” and demand for recognition of a national status also differs the model from the idea of cultural rights because the latter, as Wong (2013, 58) reiterates, takes “cultural identification” as its main principle. Democratic autonomy’s focus on both individual and collective rights together also differentiates it from the cultural rights recognition model because cultural rights are mostly regarded through an individual sense.

Taking into account the discussion provided, the model democratic autonomy could be positioned or identified between culturual rights and territorial autonomy.

CHAPTER TWO

IDENTIFICATION OF KURDS THOROUGH THEIR ETHNO-NATIONAL IDENTITY

The introductory chapter underlined that identification of the case in question has a significant and prominent impact on the research study. Case clarification is particularly important in induction methodology because it provides an in-depth context.

The focus question of this research, *why do some of the Kurds in Turkey have territorial political demands, while others oppose to it?*, requires clear identification of the Kurds in order to analyse the determinant conditions behind their varied political demands. Also, identification is imperative as this study is based on a single within case comparison. In this respect, the main objective of this chapter is to clarify the Kurds' social structure whilst taking into consideration their ethnic and national identity.

To achieve this, the chapter will firstly clarify some of the main components of the Kurdish ethnic and national identities: language, religion, territory, history and descent. Secondly, it aims to outline Kurdish tribal, ethnic, and national identities that emerged from these components. Finally, the formation of Kurdish nationalism will be discussed since it has a catalytic role in the development of the identities noted.

2.1 MAIN COMPONENTS OF KURDISH IDENTITY

This section outlines the Kurdish identity through its main constituents: history, descent, territory, language and religion.

2.1.1 The Terms 'Kurds' and 'Kurdistan'

The Kurds were unable to form their own state when the notion of nation-states began to be exercised in the modern period. The disintegration of the Ottoman Empire further fragmented the Kurds and consequently they became ruled by four neighbouring countries - Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria - and experienced tough assimilation. They were

prohibited from writing their own history, the Kurdish history, and instead it was either completely denied or written by the powers who ruled them (Aksoy 1996). Therefore, despite the academic focus the Kurds were mostly considered in a political sense for a long time, which bring the terms ‘Kurd’ and ‘Kurdistan’ to discussion.

The arguments relating to the Kurds, their history, territory and ethnic origin (descent) can be classified under two groups. Both groups’ views show clear differences from one another (Yilmaz and Akagündüz 2011, 38). The first argument refused to recognize the ethnic identity of the Kurds and considered them of Turkish origin (Ibid., 38-39). They strongly maintained the idea that, historically, the terms ‘Kurds’ and ‘Kurdistan’ either did not exist or were not used in relation to the Kurdish ethnicity (Ibid., 39). Considering these views, it seems that their main objective was to remove the central constituents of the Kurdish ethnic identity in line with their Kurdish ethnicity refusal policy. Nevertheless, denial alone was not a sufficient condition to convince the Kurds that they are not ‘Kurd’. As a result, those who proposed the initial argument, especially Turks who share the Turkish official ideology, started to use propaganda to convince Kurds they are of Turkish origin (Kürdoloji Çalışmaları Gurubu 2011, 93). For instance, Fırat (1970), a well-known pioneer of this claim, identified the Kurds as ‘Turks’ while other scholars, such as Seferoğlu and Türközü (1982, 3), defined the Kurds as “proto-Turks” (as a Turkish proto type) and harshly challenged the identification of the Kurds as a separate ethnic identity.

There was no great mention of this first argument in relevant literature because, despite certain discussions on Kurdish history, most scholars agree that the Kurds are a separate ethnic group and demonstrate clear differences from their neighbours’ nations (P.J. White 2012; Jwaideh 1999; Aksoy 1996). Nonetheless, the first argument provoked raising of counter nationalist agreements among the Kurds. Accordingly, the second argument is based on the nationalist viewpoint of the Kurds and rejects all aspects of the first groups’ standpoint involving states’ authority over Kurds. Instead, they consider the Kurds through their primordial affinities (O’Shea 2004, 129; Vali 2005, 84–87). History, a predominant factor in establishing ethnic identity (E. H. Cohen 2004, 88), and territory

both play a significant role in the construction of Kurdish ethnicity. Kurdish nationalists' understanding of Kurdish ethnicity hold both facts as influences (O'Shea 2004, 163). According to this interpretation, Kurds are a diverse ethnic community with their current territory history dating to the ancient period (Bender 1991; Meho (1997, 7). The Lulu, Guti, Elam and Kassite clans of the time (present in BC period) are thought to be the ancestors of the Kurds (Bois 1966, 10–11; Ekrem Cemil Paşa 1995). Consideration of the Kurdish descent and history in this view raises some questions. Firstly, findings from previous researches do not prove such claims. As Özoğlu (1996, 8-9) argues, there is still no reliable or sufficient data to relate Kurds to the named clans or date their history to BC. Kurdish history, rather than verified knowledge or data, is examined through a nationalist perspective (O'Shea 2004, 56–57), which “forms an inverted copy of the Turk Tarih Tezi” (The Turkish History thesis) (Hirschler 2001, 150).

Putting aside discussions on the Kurds' ethnic origin and ancient period history, Arabs have been found to be one of the first nations to have used the term 'Kurds' back in the seventh century (Minorsky, Bois, and Mac Kenzie 2004, 11). Upon converting to Islam Kurds either interacted more closely with Arabs or were subject to their domination. Despite their initial resistance to follow rules of Islam, subsequent to their conversion they actively took part in the Islamic powers of the time, for example, Abbasi Dynasty (Jwaideh 1999, 27–28). As a method of identification Arabs named the Kurds “ekrad”, so it was easier to distinguish between the Kurds and Arabs. However, it still remains unclear as to whether Arabs used “ekrad” in an ethnic sense (Burkay 1992, 47). On the other hand, despite prevalent use of 'Kurds' in history, the Kurdish region was not referred to or named (presently known as Kurdistan) for a very long time. Data from previous researches indicate that neither the Kurds nor the authorities with which they interacted with mentioned the term 'Kurdistan'. The name 'Kurdistan' was first notably used by the Seljuk sultan, Sanjar, in the twelfth century (McDowal 2004, 6). Similar to the term 'Kurds', there remains some uncertainty as to whether the use of 'Kurdistan' during that period had an ethnic connotation. Izady (2004, 109) indicates that the label 'Kurdistan' was used within an 'administrative' context in the Seljuk period. In support of this, Bazil Nikitin also proposes that the notion of 'Kurdistan' initially appeared in the

Seljuk period, and like Izady, he too contests to the ethnic association of its use. However, to Nikitin Seljuks used ‘Kurdistan’ as a geographic definition (Nikitin 1994, 56–57). To further strengthen his argument, he also underlines that there was a huge distinction between the Kurds’ boundaries during the Seljuk period, Ottoman Empire and modern state today. Therefore, he states that Kurds’ ethnic definition may not coincide to the region labelled ‘Kurdistan’ throughout history since Kurds’ ethnic proliferation shows differences (Ibid., 58). Given the contextual based discussions made on the term ‘Kurdistan’, James (2011, 63) highlights that the ‘Kurdistan’ entity was used for “more than one reality and social representation” in the medieval times. According to James, ‘Kurdistan’ was mostly used when referring to community, life-styles (nomadic-settled) and different social statuses instead of an ethnic identity.

Succeeding the Seljuk period the terms ‘Kurds’ and ‘Kurdistan’ once again appeared during the Ottoman Period. Ottoman authorities used the name ‘Kurds’ to identify Kurdish speaking nomadic and settled tribes (McDowall 2004, 13). While the use of the Kurdish language as a method of identifying Kurds is significant, the Ottoman rulers continued to dismiss the term ‘Kurds’ in an ethnic sense (Ibid.,13). As with the Kurds, in the Ottoman Empire ‘Kurdistan’ was also used in a geographic sense. In 1847 the Ottoman Empire named the Kurdish region ‘Kurdistan’ (Kurdistan eyaleti) (Kürdoloji Çalışmaları Gurubu 2011, 93–99). One of the first and most reliable sources regarding the Kurds and Kurdish history in the Ottoman Empire is Sharafname (1597), written by emir of Bitlis Sharaf Khan (Şerefhan) (1543-1604), which uses both terms widely. In his book, Sharaf Khan uses ‘Kurds’ and ‘Kurdistan’, and gives details about the Kurdish history by mentioning famous Kurdish leaders, dynasties and tribes. He puts more emphasis on the collective side of the Kurdish identity and associates it with the term ‘Kurdistan’(Şeref Han 2006).

Following the second half of the nineteenth century, the terms ‘Kurds’ and ‘Kurdistan’ were used more extensively and related with ethnicity, which will be detailed in later sections.

2.1.2 Kurdish Language - As a Main Kurdish Identity Making Component

Language, as mentioned in the previous chapter, is one of the key elements in ethnic and national identification.

Kurdish language, which includes various dialects, is a branch of the Iranian language belonging to the Indo-European language family (Blau 1996, 20). The Kurdish language has an abundance of dialects and the sheer volume has been a subject of many discussions. This has also raised the question of whether each of these dialects can be regarded as independent languages. Mehrdad R. Izady divides the Kurdish language into two groups: ‘Kurmanji’ and ‘Pehlewani’. In Izady’s classification, ‘Kurmanji’ also entails two dialects: North Kurmanji (Bahdinani) and South Kurmanji (Sorani). North Kurmanji is common among the Kurds who live in eastern parts of Turkey and western parts of the Iraqi Kurdistan region. South Kurmanji, on the other hand, is mostly spoken in the city of Sulemania of the Iraqi Kurdistan region and by some of the Kurds settled in Iran (Izady 2004, 299–307). Similar to Kurmanji, Izady highlights ‘Pehlewani’ also comprises of two dialects: Zazaki (Dimilki) and Gorani. Based on this classification, he explains Zazaki is prevalent in the cities of Tunceli, Adiyaman, Bingol, Elazig and in some areas of Bitlis and Diyarbakir in Turkey. Gorani, on the other hand, is widely spoken by Kurds who reside in Iraq and Iran (Ibid., 307–308). In addition to this, van Bruinessen (1992, 27), a pioneering scholar in Kurdish studies, suggests that the Kurdish language actually consists of four dialects: ‘Kurmanji’, ‘Zazaki’, ‘Sorani’ and ‘Gurani’.

Similarly to classifying these dialects of the Kurdish language, there is also a high degree of dispute on whether they should be considered within the Kurdish language or as independent languages. Mentioning on this point, Minorsky (1988, 74–75) indicates Kurdish dialects Zazaki, Sorani and Gurani vary from one another. In the light of these questions, some, including, Hassanpour (1997) and Aristova (2002, 26–27), regard such differentiations within language variation (dialectal differences). However others, for example, Çay (2010, 167–188), do not consider the Kurdish language and its dialects as a language at all. Ziya Gökalp, one of the first scholars focused on the Kurdish language, at that point, indicates that variances between Kurdish dialects are sufficient to

identify them as independent languages. In other words, he, considers Kurdish dialects as independent languages and not as parts or dialects of Kurdish (Gökhalp 2011, 30). That is an important point when considering the identification of individuals who separate themselves from the Kurdish ethnicity – they will refer to their dialect as an independent language. For instance, presently some Zaza identify themselves as a distinct ethnic group by specifically mentioning their separate language, Zazaki (Mutlu 1996, 519).

Despite such variation, the Kurdish language has a prominent contribution to the formation and influence of the Kurdish identity. Being different from their neighbours' language, the Kurdish language has become one of the causative elements in the establishment of ethno-cultural boundaries between the Kurds and the surrounding nations since the sixteenth century (Sheyholislami 2010, 290). This influential role of the Kurdish language, according to Blau (2006), has become greater throughout the modern period and a critical factor in identification of the Kurdish ethnic identity. The Kurdish language contributed to the development of the Kurdish ethnic and cultural identity in various ways. As highlighted by Amir Hassanpour, the Kurdish language's influence to Kurdish culture and literature has been decisive. In agreement with Hassanpour, Kurdish philosopher, Ehmedê Xanî (1650-1707), and Kurdish poet, Hecî Qadî Qoyî, (1816-1894) had long shown interest in the Kurdish language itself and by relating it to the development of Kurdish identity in literature clearly illustrates the contribution of Kurdish language to identity. Xanî in his famous book *Mem û Zîn* (1695) and Hacı Qadirî Koyî through his poems attempt to identify Kurds and their political rights through the Kurdish language. They state the importance of language in the identification of the Kurds as a separate ethnic group (Hassanpour 2005, 147–174) .

2.1.3 Religion and the Kurds

The Kurds in general are a religious community. Since converting to Islam religion has turned into a determinant dynamic in their social and political affairs. Religion, thus, has contributed to their social and cultural development and influenced the Kurds' ethno-cultural identity (Kamal 2001, 35). The Kurds follow the Sunni school of Islam which is common among many Middle Eastern communities (P. J. White 2012,

51). Consequently, religion may not serve as a contributory condition for ethno-national boundaries between many different societies. However, as the majority of the Sunni Kurds pray in Şhafii law, which differs from other laws of Islam, such as Hanefi law, Shafiism (Şafilik) “contributes to a sense of Kurdish identity” (Kreyenbroek (1996, 93). In agreement with this idea, Acker (2004, 101) held Kurdish Islam’s “syncretistic nature and incorporation of elements from older cults” responsible for its influence on Kurdish identity, which to Acker shows clear differences from other Islamic communities.

Kurds in general possess various beliefs and religions. These may be categorized under four headings: Orthodox Sunni Islam, Heterodox Alevism, Yezidi and A/Ehli Haq beliefs.

The lack of reliable and official facts regarding the Kurds’ religions makes tracing their religious map rather difficult. However, it is estimated that nearly two thirds of the Kurds are Orthodox Sunni (Andrews 1992, 153). Religion, particularly with Sunni Kurds, tend to be organized through Sheiks and tariqas. The most popular tariqas are Qadiriya and Naqshbandiya (Kreyenbroek 1996, 95). The Qadiriya tariqa was established in Baghdad in the twelfth century by Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (1077-1166), and by the fifteenth century spread through the Middle East (Mojuetan 2005, 7). Another tariqa, Naqshbandiya, is prevalent in the Middle East. Even though its origin may date back further, Naqshbandiya obtained its central order from Kawaja Bahu-ud Din Naqshbandiya (1318–1389) in the fourteenth century and was passed on to generations by the tariqa’s Sheiks and Caliphs (Zelkina 2000, 80; Gunter 2009, 141). Naqshbandiya tariqa, as noted, is largely popular among Middle Eastern Muslim communities, even more so with the Kurds. The tariqa was introduced to the Middle East in early nineteenth century by Mevlana Xalid, who is of Kurdish origin and from the city of Sulemania of Iraqi Kurdistan (P.J. White 2012, 52-53). This tariqa has become powerful among Kurds. According to Martin Van Bruinessen, Naqshbandiya tariqa was rather popular among the Kurds firstly because Xalit was of Kurdish origin, and secondly, because most of the Kurdish religious authorities, such as Sheiks, were assigned as Caliphs. This strong

connection of the Kurds to Naqshbandiya tariqa left Qadira tariqa short (van Bruinessen, 2000a, 26).

Soon after finding place among the Kurds both tariqas have been an influential force on the Kurdish society. Likewise, Sheiks' success in handling conflicts and the traditional respect of religion already present among majority of Kurds confirmed them as political leaders along with their religious authority following elimination of the Kurdish Emirates (Natali 2009, 42; McDowal 1992, 12; Bulut 2009, 339–340). Thus, with their new found political leadership and religious power they strengthened their control of the Kurdish communities (Taşpınar 2005, 70). In late nineteenth century many of the Kurdish rebellions were led by Kurdish Sheiks because they were so popular among the communities. Independence aimed rebellions of Sheik Ubeydullah in 1882 (Bulut 2005, 137), Sheik Sait rebellion in 1925 (Olson 1992), Sheik Mahmoud Berzenci during, 1918-1930 (Hilmi 1995), and Mullah Mustafa Barzan's rebellion continued for decades, are the most well-known Sheik-led Kurdish rebellions of the twentieth century (Jwaideh 1999). The prime political claim of these rebellions, as will be argued in coming chapters, was independence, or at least a territorial autonomy, and the Sheiks were successful in gathering masses to fight for a common political claim. Their religious authority was an obvious cause for their success and construction of a common political demand among the Kurds. Religion therefore, through the use of religious figures, is highly influential in the Kurdish politics (van Bruinessen 2000b, 25). In addition, to highlight H. Bozarslan (2002, 844–845), religion became affixed to the Kurdish ethno-national identity.

Alevisim (Alevilik) is the second widespread belief among the Kurds (the Kurdish Alevis). Due to the lack of reliable data the number of Alevis is still a contentious issue in Turkey, but it is anticipated approximately twenty per cent of the Turkish citizens consist of Alevis (Shakland 1999, 136). Kurdish Alevis¹² comprise

¹² Majority of the Kurdish Alevis are majority reside in and around the regions of Elazığ, Bingöl, Cermik, Dicle, Siverek, Varto/Mus, Tercan, Kemah/Erzincan and in Dersim. The majority of the Kurdish Alevis speak in Zaza but Kurmaji is widespread in some regions (White 2003, 21–22; van Bruinessen 2000a, 88–89).

roughly one-third of all Alevis (Leezenberg 2003, 197) and consist of nearly twenty-five per cent of the Kurds in Turkey (Romano 2010, 20). Alevis name their belief in general as 'Alevism'. It is in essence an Anatolian origin belief (Kieser 2001, 89). Alevism has a broad use, firstly because of its variations but also due to differences in its etic identification (being described by outsider). It was originally named Qizilbash (red hat)¹³ and referred to as "Ali worshipers", explains van Bruinessen (2000a, 21).

As is the case with Sunnis, the Kurdish Alevis also vary in the language they speak. Languages found to be spoken by the Kurdish Alevis are Kurmanji and Zazaki (Vorhoff 1998, 232). Moreover, despite sharing the same name there are considerable differences between the Kurdish and the Turkish descendant Alevis. David Shankland argues that there is a huge distinction between the two groups. Shankland underlines that contrary to the Turkish descendant Alevis' 'complex' relation with Islam, the Kurdish descendant Alevis distance more from Islam, particularly its Sunni school (Shankland 2003, 18–19). This is also the point which raises the question whether Alevism is part of Islam or a separate religion. However, the conception(s) of Alevism in relation to Islam, especially whether it is a branch of Islam or an independent religion, is a contentious issue among many (O'Shea 2004, 25). Alevis themselves do not have a consensus on that point. While some Alevis consider Alevism as an independent religion (Geaves 2003, 53), for others it is a belief in Islam (Hirschler 2001, 157). Due to the small academic focus on Alevism, it is difficult to state whether Alevism is a religion or not. However, van Bruinessen (1996, 7), reminds us that a distinctive feature of Alevism is their belief and practice - largely different from the Sunni school of Islam or the Sunni identity.

Lastly, Yezidi and A/Ehli-Haqq (or Kakai - People of Truth) religions are also adopted by some Kurds mostly located in Iraq, Iran and Armenia (Acker 2004, 99–100). Comparing with the other Kurds, the Yezidi population is quite small and has decreased considerably. The majority are located in Iraq but some also reside in Turkey, Syria and Armenia (Jwaideh 1999, 40). Many Yezidi people speak Kurmanji dialects of the Kurdish language, and according to Fuccaro (1999), they are of Kurdish origin. With

¹³ The name Qizilbaş Selçuk (2012) says has been given to the some Alevi groups, such as "Anşa Bacılılar" as they put on a red hat.

reference to Heintz Gstrein, the Yezidi belief is based on a God understanding that is inaccessible. However, according to the Yezidi belief despite the fact that ‘Melek Tavus’ (Angel) is considered as the right hand of God, in reality the ‘Melek Tavus’ itself is considered as God (Gstrein 2009, 56–59). The Holy leader of the Yezidi belief is Sheik Adi Bin Misafir and their Holy book is ‘Misvaka Reş’ (The Black Book or the Book of Revelation) (Açıkyıldız 2010).

Ahl-i Haq, albeit their small numbers, is another belief system that has Kurd followers. According to Mir-Hosseini (1994, 267), “a principal belief of the Ahl-i Haq, an esoteric sect centred in Iranian Kurdistan, is the Divine Essence has successive manifestations in human form”. Mir-Hosseini adds although Ahl-i Haq is loosely associated with Shia Islam - its main principle and practice differ massively (Ibid.). Moreover, there has been considerable tension between Ahl-i Haq and Islam, with the right words between their followers (van Bruinessen 1992, 29). Some followers of Ahl-i Haq and Yezidis also live in Turkey but their population is quite small.

The contribution of religion in the development and shaping of the Kurdish identity was noted earlier in this section. However, due to the divided religious structure of the Kurds, Nejat Abdulla points out that religion prevented the Kurdish unity. He adds, the Kurds were unable to leave their religious differences behind to construct a national unity (Abdulla 2009, 116–117). Religion in that sense became the primary constituent in identification. As highlighted by Aristova (2002, 29), the Muslim Kurds in particular identified themselves through their religion (Islam) first and then their ethnicity (Kurdish).

2.2 TRIBE, ETHNICITY AND NATION: DEVELOPMENT OF KURDS’

ETHNO-NATIONAL IDENTITY

This section provides a context for the entities, tribe, ethnicity and nation, which form the Kurds’ social and political structure.

2.2.1 Tribalism among the Kurds

Tribes are a common social unit in the Middle East. The Kurds as a Middle Eastern community also possess a tribal structure. The Kurdish tribes included both nomadic and settled groups. However, the social and political developments which took place in the modern period led to some Kurdish tribes settling. The political advancements in the twentieth century, particularly the intensified conflicts and resulting changes to territorial borders, fragmentation among some areas and increased migration from rural to urban regions were some influencing developments that drove the nomadic tribes to settle on specific territories (Dahlman 2002, 276). Many of the elements can be viewed to have had an impact on construction and shaping of the tribes. However, territory and ancestry are integral in identifying majority of the tribes (McDowal 2004, 14). Ismail Beşikçi, who is one of the first scholars to have made detailed researches on the Kurds' social structure with a particular focus on tribal structure. According to Beşikçi, territory and blood ties are immensely significant in classifying Kurdish tribes. Both factors are heavily involved in shaping of in-group and inter-group relations in Kurdish tribes (Beşikçi 1969a). Another scholar who did research on the Kurdish tribes and highly refereed in literature is Fredrik Barth. In his field based research on Caf confederation in Iraqi Kurdistan in 1951, Barth stresses on strong "lineage" affinities in Kurdish tribes (Barth 1953, 10).

Taking into account Kurdish tribes' structure it is evident they are not homogeneous entities. They have a heterogeneous structure and include various sub tribe units under different names. 'Kabile', 'taife', 'asira' (Poladyan 1991, 90), 'family', 'tire', 'ocak', 'mal', 'sülale', 'kehl' and 'hoz' are a few of these sub-tribe categories (Jwaideh 1999, 56). These groups are not common among all Kurdish regions and have various meanings, which alter with tribe and geographic location (McDowal 2004, 13). This, as Jwaideh (1999, 55-56) rightly states, makes difficult to find a common terminology to categorize all the Kurdish tribes' subunits. Hence, despite certain similarities between them, Barth (1953, 34-40) has found that each sub-category has an independent

organization, leadership and structure. His research, therefore, has led him to conclude that the Kurdish tribes have more than one social form (Ibid., 9).

Taking into account the Kurdish tribes' social and political attitudes, as will be argued largely in the following chapter, they mostly acted independently and were either in conflict or rivalry with one another. Their tribal structure also caused conflict even though some tribes came together under the leadership of an emir and formed tribe confederations (emirates), which ruled the Kurds with semi-autonomous status almost three centuries during the Ottoman Empire (Lazarev et al. 2001, 105–115). In this regard, examining Kurdish tribes through an anthropological and historical sense, paying close attention to their fragmented structure and construction of confederacies, it is probable that tribal structure had reciprocal effects on Kurdish society. On the one hand, while tribes impede national unity, because of their primordial structure they protected the dissolution of Kurdish cultural identity (Nikitin 1994, 306–307). Naci Kutlay, a scholar of Kurdish studies, also touches on this point. He presents this more clearly by emphasizing Kurds' divided structure as a result of tribes has delayed the emergence of national identity and development of a larger union, namely a nation. He also explains that intra-tribal relations and the significance of primordial affinities in tribes, such as blood ties, have protected assimilation of Kurdish culture and identity (Kutlay 2006a, 9).

2.2.2 Kurdish Ethnicity

Ethnicity, as noted in the previous chapter, is generally identified through 'a shared name', 'culture', 'language', 'ancestry', 'myths', 'symbols', 'solidarity', 'history', and in some instances, 'territory' (Hutchinson 1996, 6). However, each constituent may not contribute the same degree to ethnicity. This section explores how these constituents influence or are involved in establishing the Kurdish ethnic identity.

Considering the Kurdish ethnicity with reference to the general rules of ethnicity development, research showed their tribal structure and the conflict and competition among them plus the variation in language and religion delayed Kurds' emphasis on ethnicity (van Bruinessen 1992). Moreover, in spite of this hindrance Kurdish ethnic

identity has not melted but has transferred to today. Loyalty to a specific part of territory (territorial consciousness) has been shown to contribute to the development and movement of Kurdish ethnic identity (Romano 2010, 20). Likewise, “race” and “history” also influenced Kurdish ethnicity, and despite the numerous dialects, Kurdish “language” also played a part (Bois 1966, 1).

Each constituent has a varied degree of contribution to Kurdish ethnicity. In fact, language has a prominent role. For instance, Kurdish philosopher, Ehmedê Xanî, made use of the Kurdish language in an ethnic sense and regarded it as a significant element in determining Kurds’ ethnicity (Blau 2006, 105). The terms ‘Kurds’ and ‘Kurdistan’, which were explored earlier, are also involved in the emergence and transfer of the Kurdish ethnic identity. Ehmedê-Xani used both terms in the sixteenth century to define a diverse ethno-national group. In his acclaimed book, *Mem û Zîn* (1695), Xani highlights the political status of the Kurds and notes their diversity from their neighbouring countries. Xani strongly protests that as a diverse nation Kurds should be entitled to their own state (Ehmedê Xanî (1695) 1990). His focus on Kurdish language, history, character and statelessness is indicative of Kurdish ethnic awareness at the individual level in “some rulers and tribal elites” during his period (van Bruinessen 1992, 38–39). Xani’s awareness, however, did not echo throughout the Kurdish masses for a long time. Kurds were incapable of constructing a unified identity until the late years of the Ottoman Empire. Tribal structure, conflict and competition between tribes, and their loyalty to the ideas of Islam and Ottomanism were definite factors which prevented them from forming a unified ethnic identity at the group level (Chaliand 1994). Nonetheless, the political developments in the last century of the Ottoman Empire and the Middle East began to sensitize many of the people to their ethnicity. The intensified ethno-national claims in Ottoman Empires’ Balkan subjects and migration of Turks from Caucasia are two key developments which raised ethnic awareness of the Turks (McDowal 2004, 91-92). Mounting ethnic awareness in the Empire’s land, especially of the Turks, in late nineteenth century sparked Kurdish intellectuals’ ethnic sentiments. The Kurdish intellectuals, most of whom were from Istanbul, began to show mass interest in Kurdish ethnicity and formed organizations around this identity (Ibid., 92–93). Kurds’ ethnic

awareness, as the coming chapter largely covers, advanced and developed into a territorial issue during the late years, but particularly subsequent to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. As underlined by Malmîsanij, defeat of the Empire and the new political alliance and formations in the Middle East were two central developments of the time, which led to greater open discussions and further variation among the Kurds regarding their political status. For instance, as an intellectual group and a pioneering role in the Kurdish struggle, most members of Cemilpashazade (Malmîsanij 2010) and Bedirhan families openly called for Kurds' independence (Süreyya Bedirhan 1994). Moreover, one of the well-known Kurdish leftist intellectuals, Abdullah Cevdet (Strohmeier 2003, 49), and a leading religious figure, Sayet Abdulkadir, claimed for autonomy (H. Bozarslan 2005, 206). As a religious philosopher, Said-i Nursi, who organized the Nurcu movement in Turkey, was also in demand of cooperation between the Kurds and Turks on the condition that there was equality between the groups (Laçiner and Bal 2004, 495). Taking development of Kurdish ethnicity in this light, it could be implied that it progressed into a new phase with formation of modern Turkey. The creation of modern Turkey over a homogeneous national identity and its reluctance to include Kurds resulted in further counter reactions from the Kurds, further contributing to greater "Kurdish ethnic awareness" (Beşikçi 1993).

Explaining Kurdish ethnicity in view of ethnic and national identity constituents and the discussion provided above, a common name, a shared history, descent, language, myths and symbols, culture, territory and religion, principally Shafii sect(mezhep), are some of the determinative components which assisted in creating Kurdish ethnic identity (Asatrian 2009, 10–45). Almost all of the mentioned constituents contribute but at various levels. Most of them, particularly culture, have been recognized by the majority of the Kurds, been used in socio-political life and protected the "material cultural integrity" of the Kurds (Aristova 2002, 316). Based on this, Izady (2004, 321) points out even if the Kurds have "internal differences and heterogeneity", a strong social cohesion, historical consciousness and their material culture entail them to identify with a nation rather than an ethnic group.

2.2.3 Nation Formation among the Kurds

The previous chapter revealed that the ideas nation and ethnicity shares some common components. As Steve Fenton highlights, the terms ethnicity and nation are closely related and boundaries between them are permeable. Fenton explains that sharing some components, such as, 'language', 'descent', 'culture', and 'history', further blurs these boundaries. Despite such commonality, he underlines that while nation has a close affiliation with the state and the means to self-govern, ethnicity lacks these understandings (Fenton 2003, 52).

Focusing on the relationship between ethnicity and nation in the Kurdish case, the first point to note is the complexity of the issue. As the Kurds still possess tribal, ethnic, and national character and structure, it is difficult to explore the interaction and transition between them. Although presented with some difficulty, Hrock's 'three-frame steps (A, B, C)' model could be helpful in understanding the expansion of the Kurdish national identity as a result of the Kurdish national movement.

Hrock uses the 'three-frame steps' model to analyse the changes in national movements of the European nations. According to Hrock, in its development process a national movement has three separate structural phases. The first phase, 'A', he bases on intellectual studies regarding the group's language, culture and history. In the second phase, 'B', priority is given to the creation and spread of national identity in the light of a political programme. In the final phase, phase 'C', national movement obtains a mass character (Hrock 1996, 63).

Considering the Kurds in terms of Hrock's phases, the Kurdish national movement was in Phase 'A' at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During that period the Kurdish intellectuals were focusing on the Kurdish 'language', 'history' and 'culture' studies in order to search and re-examine the Kurdish identity. Publication of the first Kurdish newspaper in 1898, *Kurdistan*, illustrates the success of intellectual studies on the Kurds and is also an indicator of Hrock's Phase 'A' (Strohmeier 2003, 25). Notably, many socio-cultural and political organizations were

established soon after Kurdistan was published. Throughout this period, although many of the Kurdish political authorities and intellectuals' political claims were 'cultural', they made a conscious effort to develop Kurds' organizational level and Kurdish identity awareness (H.Bozarslan 2005, 203-204). This also enters into Hrock's second phase, 'B', where Kurdish intellectuals tried to spread national identity across large areas of Kurdish society via a framed "political programme" (Strohmeier 2003, 25-26; Bozarslan 2005, 205). In his article in the first issue of magazine *Rojî Kurd* (1331/1913), Abdullah Cevdet, a well-known intellectual involved in the Kurdish national movements during the Ottoman period, for instance, calls upon the Kurds to make their own history and increase their national identity awareness. Cevdet demands all Kurds to have an "ideal" for their own nation in the future (Cevdet (1913) 1980, 17–18).

Even though successfully going into Hrock's 'A' and 'B' phases, whether the Kurdish national movement has reached Hrock's 'C' phase is debatable.

The Kurdish ethnic identity began to develop during the last decades of the Ottoman Empire, however, it turned into a political arrangement following the First World War. This was, as Ömer Taşpınar explained, mostly a result of the reactions against 'Turkism' (Türkçülük) and influences from the politicization process among the Empires' other subjects. Aims of creating a homogeneous Turkish nation and the increase in Turkish nationalism have largely influenced the Kurdish political identity (Taşpınar 2005, 77-82). Creation of modern Turkey, more precisely its intention to impose the Turkish national identity on the Kurds, prompted the feeling of "Kurdishness" among many of the Kurds (Beşikçi 2008, 17). Kurdish awareness further strengthened the in-group identity consciousness through association with collective activities. According to Murat Somer, 'collectivity' among the Kurds developed as the Kurdish political organizations started to form, primarily between the years 1960 and 1980 as well as later years. As a result of these groups' activities and emergence of 'collectivity', most Kurdish intellectuals deemed themselves "more 'Kurdish' in a social-psychological sense" (Somer 2002, 78). Development of Kurdish collectivism raised ethnic awareness and national sentiments, later advancing to a demand for a common future of the Kurds,

leading to greater state oppression (Z. Aydın 2005, 239; Beşikçi 1993). Nevertheless, the term ‘nation’ cannot be classed as the only or most powerful social and political unit in Kurds’ social and political relations. As will be argued in following chapters, an ethno-national awareness among some of the Kurds has progressed as a result of the increasing level of conflict between the PKK and state security forces. However, vast numbers of the Kurds continue to prioritize their tribal or religious identity over their national identity, some do not even acknowledge their national identity (Kirişçi and Winrow 1997, 33). Bearing this in mind, as O’Shea (2004, 129) highlights, despite attaining the basic criteria to be recognized as a nation the Kurds now even need to create their “imagined political community”.

This discussion provided above shows that the idea of nation is still in formation process among the Kurds. Thus, considering Hroch’s ‘C’ phase in this context, Kirişçi and Winrow M. (1997, 32) underlines the difficulty in judging whether the Kurdish national movement has managed to reach the ‘C’ phase of Hroch’s steps.

2. 3 KURDISH NATIONALISM

Nationalism as a modern ideology (Conversi 2004, 7–8) “connote[s] identity with and loyalty to the nation” (Connor 2004, 25) and has worked for liberation of stateless groups in the modern period for many cases. With reference to this, Fred Halliday underlines nationalism prioritizes the independence of stateless groups and, therefore, their claims are heightened. To Halliday, in general terms Kurdish nationalism also supported creation of a Kurdish nation-state. The influence of nationalism on Kurds’ national struggles within the last century, to him, confirms the close interaction between Kurdish nationalism and demand for independence (Halliday 2006, 16). Taking discussions on Kurdish nationalism from this sense, Sami Zubaida argues Kurdish nationalism is a modern production similar to other types of nationalism. He regards the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and creation of modern states as two key developments which led to the increase in Kurdish nationalism (Zubaida 2006, 94). In support of this, Fred Halliday expands on the other conditions which contributed. According to Halliday, development of nationalism in other societies either directly led to Kurdish nationalism,

such as Turkish nationalism, or increased the idea of Kurdish nationalism in the Kurdish society. The latter is predominantly because of the conflict and competition between the Kurds and other groups. Secondly, he proposes “modernizing states” created a foundation for the emergence of Kurdish nationalism (Halliday 2006, 16).

In the light of the political developments during the last decades of the Ottoman Empire, the expansion of Armenian nationalism is highly regarded as a trigger for Kurdish nationalism (van Bruinessen 1983, 378). There was considerable competition and rivalry between the two peoples principally because they resided in the same territory with entirely different belief structures (Ciment 1996, 85). Based on this, some scholars hold the Sheik Ubeydullah revolt as the onset of Kurdish nationalism (Yeğen 1996, 219). The revolt was a counter reaction against the formation of an Armenian state and missionary activities on the territory that the Kurds were sharing with the Armenians (P.J.White 2012, 92). Sheik Ubeydullah began gathering many of the Kurdish tribes under his religious and political leadership to fight for one purpose and goal (Ibid., 92-93). This, coupled with the Sheik’s struggle for the Kurds’ independence, were significant steps in the development of Kurdish nationalism (O’Shea 2004, 74). Accordingly, Olson (1992, 17-26) regards Sheik Ubeydullah’s rebellion as a milestone in the nascent of Kurdish nationalism. When investigating the crucial component of the many Kurdish rebellions of the period in question, religion seems to be instrumental in each. The Sheik Ubeydullah rebellion of 1881 illustrates how the Kurds used religious and the Kurdish national identity against the Armenians (Natali 2009, 49; Kutlay 2012a, 87). In other words, religion provided political loyalty and played a role in gathering various Kurdish tribes who had previously disagreed with one another to fight for common political claims. According to Hakan Yavuz, this function of religion created a platform for interaction between religion and ethnicity. This, to Yavuz caused evolving of the “Kurdish ethnic awareness” through and ‘Islamic’ sense (H. Yavuz (2007, 5). The interchange between religion and Kurdish identity deepened afterward. This contributory characteristic of religion continued with many of the Kurdish rebellions until mid-twentieth century (Meho and Maglaughlin 2001, 8). However, despite Kurdish nationalism advancing to a new level in reaction to Turkish and Armenian nationalism, it

did not grow over an ethnic level and remained at a cultural level. The aim had not changed and Kurdish nationalism supporters were still in demand for living together under the political authority of the Ottoman Empire (Kutlay 2012a, 6). As reminded by Abbas Vali, although there was an ethnic awareness among most Kurdish intellectuals and authorities who led the Kurds at that time, they refrained from using ethnic codes in their political activities and nationalism. Kurdish nationalism, therefore, developed on a cultural ground (Cultural nationalism) and did not show an inclination for ethnic nationalism (Vali 2005, 130). By way of explanation, H. Bozarslan (2005, 203–204) points out Kurdish nationalism had a local character and was not exclusionist. As a result, many Kurds foresaw their future in unity with the Ottoman Empire. Accordingly, most Kurdish nationalists of the period did not consider Kurdish nationalism as a reaction or danger to the union with the Ottoman Empire (Klein 2007, 147).

Religion, as already highlighted, was one of the main dynamics which instilled Kurds' loyalty to the Ottoman Empire. Likewise, Kurds' internal dynamics also prevented ethnic and political Kurdish nationalism from progressing during the Ottoman Period. Consequently, Kurds' feudal structure and Kurdish religious authorities close social, political and ideological interests and relations with the Ottoman Empire impeded development of Kurdish nationalism or nationalist sentiments among Kurdish masses (Celili et al. 1998, 82). Kurdish nationalism, as noted previously, had mostly cultural inclinations and begun to move into a new phase in the second period of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP). CUP instigated the expansion of 'Turkification' and Turkish nationalism, which in turn escalated Kurdish nationalism to a new phase (Kirişçi 1998, 236). As underlined in the previous section, although CUP did not have or display its objective to develop Turkish nationalism during its initial years of activity, its practice after the 1908 revolution contradicted this. Upon attaining power in later years CUP put effort into improving and expanding Turkish nationalism (Taşpınar 2005, 72–73). Such activity from CUP or Young Turks generated trouble among the Kurds and imparted Kurdish nationalism (van Bruinessen 1983, 378). A number of advances, such as, establishment of Kurdish cultural and political organizations and publication of newspapers and magazines, had an undeniable influence on the development of Kurdish

national sentiments and laid the foundation for the expansion of Kurdish nationalism (Malmîsanij 2010).

Considering the development of nationalism through its influence on Kurds' political claims, most of the Kurdish intellectuals who were leading the Kurds, including Syed Abdulkadir, demanded autonomy for the Kurds on the basis of respect and loyalty to the concept of Ottomanism (Özoglu 2004, 90). Although numbers were small and majority were from the political elite class of the Kurds, some secular and nationalist Kurdish intellectuals, such as Bedirxani and family members (Ibid., 95–103) and the Cemilpaşazade family, presented a rational understanding and effort for the independence of the Kurds (Ibid., 104-107). As demand for independence was drawn into the agenda, Kurdish nationalists commenced to discuss the ethnic dimension of the Kurdish identity. With reference to this, Kutlay (2012a, 12-15) argues that increased demand for independence, albeit at the individual level, as well as constant mention of the Kurdish identity show the transition from “cultural nationalism” to “political nationalism”. Moreover, Olson (1991, 397) regards the period between 1908 and 1924 as “public establishment of Kurdish nationalist organization”.

The cessation of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of modern Turkey saw Kurdish nationalism enter a new stage. Rejection of the Kurdish identity in modern Turkey was a pivotal and unexpected development which reformed Kurdish nationalism (Z. Aydın 2005, 230-235). With “ethno-religious” rebellion of Sheik Said in 1925 (H. Yavuz 2007, 8), Kurdish nationalism further grew. The rebellion is a direct example illustrating the heavy influence of religious and nationalist leanings (Z. Aydın 2005, 237; Houston 2001, 99). Subsequent to Sheik Sait Rebellion Kurdish nationalism progressed to another stage with the revolt of Ağrı (1927-1930). More clearly, Kurdish nationalism evolved through a secular and ethnic character and turned into demand for independence with this revolt (Kutschera 2001, 113–115).

Following the last defence rebellion, Dersim, in 1938, the Kurdish national movement remained quiet until the 1960s when socialist and nationalist Kurdish organizations began to emerge. The new movements promoted growth of the “Kurds’

consciousness” and made emphasis on recognition of the Kurdish identity, bettering of the Kurds’ economic conditions and to some extent demand for the right of self-determination (H. Yavuz 2007, 9–10). Among the emerged Kurdish movements, especially DDKD, Kurdish nationalism advanced to a new point because it carried mass character and was the most powerful among the other Kurdish nationalist organisations which emerged after the Dersim revolt failed (P.J.White 2012, 189-190). Nevertheless, Kurdish nationalism did not reach large numbers of Kurds or mobilize masses. However, with the PKK Kurdish nationalism further revived and it was success to bring various Kurdish classes together for an ‘ethno-national’ aim, in the light of Kurdish nationalism (H.Yavuz 2007, 11; İçduygu, Romano, and Sirkeci 1999, 994). PKK’s contribution to the development of Kurdish national awareness and nationalism will be covered in Chapter Four, which focuses on the PKK and BDP groups who prioritize democratic autonomy.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORY OF VARIATION IN POLITICAL DEMANDS OF KURDS: THE KURDS IN OTTOMAN EMPIRE AND IN MODERN TURKEY

Variation in Kurds' political demands is not a new issue. As is the case now, throughout the recent history their political demands have demonstrated significant differences. Both in the Ottoman Empire and in modern Turkey Kurdish groups have demanded for different political models. The main objective of this chapter is to provide a historical account of the political demands of the Kurds which were formed and how they differed during the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey. Against the background of the context to be outlined in this chapter, the following (four) chapters in analysis part will underlying the motives behind the fragmentation among the Kurds' current political demands through their existing political organizations.

Taking into account the Kurdish history with respect to their political demands, we observe that some Kurdish groups declared for independence and also revolted for that mandate while others demanded for federalism, certain types of autonomy or cultural rights. During the Ottoman period the refusal of independence and attachment to the Ottoman Empire were largely grounded on the ideologies of 'Ottomanism' and 'Islam'. However, demand for independence at the group level remained low. This was mostly voiced by a small number of Kurdish intellectuals. This chapter, which is divided into two parts, initially seeks to elucidate the plurality in Kurds' political demands during the Ottoman Empire focusing on historical context. This part will firstly clarify the political status represented by the Kurdish principalities (emirates) up until almost the last quarter of the nineteenth century when their status was eradicated. Secondly, it will address changes of their political demands just before World War I broke out and throughout. Finally, it will cover the basic political demands the Kurds set into their agenda soon after the war ended and how they were contended with at the Paris Peace Conference and the Treaty of Sevres.

As already noted, Kurds' political demands allude to the variances in modern Turkey. The two fundamental political demands up until the 1980s were autonomy and independence. Interest in and support for independence and federalism saw a dramatic increase since the 1960s. The second part, thus, aims to uncover the variation in Kurds' political demands in modern Turkey, focusing on the period from the formation of modern Turkey (1923) to the military coup d'état on September 12th, 1980. With this purpose in mind, the second part will firstly shed some light on the different political demands of the Kurds whilst taking into account their relations with the founder of modern Turkey, Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk), during the Turkish War of Liberation. Moreover, it will clarify modern Turkey's homogenous nation and state creation project, and the influences it had on the deterioration of the links between the Kurds and the state as well as on the Kurds' political demands. In order to further elucidate the latter point, some Kurdish revolts will be revealed, in particular those that took place in reaction to the state's denial and oppression policies and stance against the Kurds. To finish, the Kurdish political groups formed between the years 1960 and 1980 will be discussed, focusing closely on their ideology and political demands.

3.1 VARIATION IN POLITICAL DEMANDS OF KURDS DURING OTTOMAN EMPIRE PERIOD

This part as mentioned earlier covers the Kurds' political demands during the Ottoman Empire Era.

3.1.1 Religion, Ottoman-Kurdish Alliance and Formation of Semi-Autonomous Kurdish Principalities

This section seeks to cover the pathway that brought the Kurds and the Turks together and the status the Kurds had in the Ottoman Empire.

The discussion provided in the previous chapter demonstrated the terms 'Kurds' and 'Kurdistan' came into use after the seventh century. However, some Kurds date their history to BC and claim the Med-Empire was of Kurdish origin (Silopi 1969) or had

close affiliations and alliance with them (Yildiz 1989, 11). Following the collapse of the Med-Empire, most Kurds were living together and were a powerful ally of the Sassanian Empire (McDowal 2004, 21). As Eppel (2014, 40) underlines, despite the lack of appropriate data regarding the Kurds' beliefs before Islam, it is likely that most were following the teachings of Zoroastrianism along with some other religions. The Kurds held this belief structure (Zoroastrianism) until the late sixth century, when Islam appeared in the same century. Islam began to emerge and quickly spread across the Middle East soon reaching the Kurdish region despite their resistance to some extent (Jwaideh 1999, 27). However, following the defeat of Sassanians in the war of Qadisiya in AD 637 by the Arabs, a majority of the Kurds converted to Islam and this change in their belief system resulted in drastic changes to their social, cultural and political structure (Safrastian 2007, 37–39). Upon converting to Islam Kurds began to interact with other Muslim communities. As a result, they were greatly affected by the developments which occurred in Islam. The different sects of Islam that started to emerge - Sunni, Shia, Harici and various others - dispersed and were taken up by Kurds. Consequently, Kurds were also divided through Sunni-Shafii, Shia and Harici alliances (Burkay 1992, 115–120; Poladyan 1991, 17–27).

The impacts of converting to Islam extended further than their social structure reaching their politics. Under the supra identity Islam, the Kurdish tribes constructed more powerful and larger tribe organizations, namely dynasties. Hasneviye (942-1122), Mervani (1009-1062), Eyyübi-Ayyubi (1171-1250) and Fedlavi (1148-1424) are some of the Kurdish dynasties that had a significant level of authority during their rule (Özer 2009, 60). These dynasties had an autonomous status and mostly acted independently. Therefore, there was no real solidarity or engagement between them to create larger organizations (Nezan 1996, 12). Almost all of the dynasties either lacked or were completely disinterested in their Kurdish identity to even consider developing a sense of unity based on it. According to Marita T. O'Shea, Islam was their prior identity and succeeded their ethnicity. Saladin Ayubi, of Kurdish origin but mostly known through his Islamic identity and battle against the crusade, is a prime example to illustrate Kurdish dynasties' disregard to their Kurdish identity. Despite his Kurdish origin, Saladin Ayubi

made no reference to it and prioritized his Islamic identity instead (O'Shea 2004, 68). According to Özer, the most significant development which materialized from Kurds' history during the period of dynasties was the cooperation between the Kurds and Sultan of great Seljuq Empire, Alp Arslan, (1029-1073) at the battle of Malazgirt, 1071. He highlights that this battle initiated the alliance between the Kurds and the Turks as the former opened the border of Anatolia to the latter (Özer (2009, 61).

Subsequent the Seljuq Empire period, Kurds once again encountered the Turks, this time in the Ottoman Empire (1299-1918). As Maria T. O'Shea details, the interaction between the Kurds and the Ottoman Empire developed as a result of the attacks launched on the Kurdish region by Safavid. Both the Ottoman Empire and Safavid had the objective to expand their dominance over a larger region, which was intersected by the Kurdish region. The Kurdish region was located between the two empires, therefore, subject to Safavid attacks. Their fragmented geographical structure meant that they did not have sufficient means to defend themselves (O'Shea 2004, 71–72). In other saying, they were a defenceless community and region between two powers – the Ottoman and the Safavid Empires (Izady 2004 114). Therefore, to protect their territories and themselves Kurds had to make alliances with one of these empires. Comparing the two it seems the Ottoman Empire had certain advantages. For example, as stated in Eppel, equal religious identity (Sunni) and the belief among the Kurds that they can obtain an autonomous status and the Ottoman's structure. These were all justifiable reasons for the Kurds to go ahead and form an alliance with the Ottoman Empire against the Safavids (Eppel 2014, 45). However, among these reasons, Hirmis Aboona highlights their common religious belief, particularly Sunni mezhep, was the crucial reason for the cooperation. Many of the Kurdish tribes refused to form an alliance with Safavid because of its Shia identity. The Safavids' attacks on the Kurdish region and its intention to convert the Kurds into Shia sect was also a significant reason for Sunni Kurds to approach and cooperate with the Ottoman Empire (Aboona 2008, 98–99). Thus, with

immense effort of Idris-i Bitlisi¹⁴, notable scholar of Kurdish origin (Imber 2002, 45), most of the twenty-five Kurdish Beys, came to an agreement with Ottoman Sultan Selim and then formed their semi-autonomous principalities, which will be argued in detail following. The agreement outlines were as follows;

- (1) All the Kurdish principalities that sign the agreement will be autonomous in line with the conditions set out by Sultan
- (2) Sultan will authorize whether the agreement descends from father to son with the laws of the state or it is legalized with the decree of the empire
- (3) The Kurds will fight in all the battles of the Ottomans
- (4) The Kurds will be given support against foreign attacks
- (5) The Kurds will pay all tax required of them to the Ottoman Empire (cited from Özer 2009, 120-121).

With support from the Kurds the Ottoman Empire had an advantage and, therefore, defeated the Safavid in the war of Chaldiran in 1515. After their victory, to meet the political demands of the Kurds and to implement the remaining conditions of the agreement made Sultan assigned Idris-i Bitlisi as a point of contact for the Kurds (Klein 2011, 55; Aboona 2008, 100). In line with these promises Kurdish principalities formed and were given right of authority to rule over a particular territory (Celil 1992, 51). With the creation of principalities Sultan wanted the Kurds to appoint a governor for the Kurdish region. However, as Ahmet Özer highlights, Bitlis-i requested Sultan to assign a governor instead. Bitlisi explained the Kurdish tribes would not be able to reach a sense of harmony, therefore, assigning an outsider as a governor would be beneficial for them. In addition, Özer explains that although the Kurds established their semi-principalities there was no supra Kurdish authority to unite them, thus, completely passing the opportunity of a union (Özer 2009, 131). Bitlis-i's behaviour was not left unnoticed by the Kurds. While some Kurds consider him a respectable politician and saviour of the Kurds since they claim he was instrumental in the Kurds' autonomy success, the others

¹⁴ Idris-i Bitlisi, who lived between second half of the fifteenth century and beginning of the sixteenth century, was a famous statesmen, religious scholar and philosopher of the Ottoman Empire (Başaran 2002, 201; Bayraktar 2006).

raised many questions about his intentions and underline the fact that he allowed the Ottoman Empire to take control of the Kurds, which prevented them from creating their own state (Ibid., 137). Considering these two incompatible views, Ahmet Özer explains Bitlis-i opposed to the idea of Kurdish unity because he believed it may potentially spiral into a larger confederation and even empire. A development of this scale would prove a danger for both his and the Empire's interests. Özer adds that Bitlisi's 'Islamic' and 'Ottomanism' identity, which were superlative over his Kurdish identity, also had an influence on his attitude (Ibid., 151–152).

The established semi-autonomous principalities gave Kurdish princes a degree of power, which guarded them from Safavid attacks for a long time. Nonetheless, the Chaldiran war separated the Kurdish territory between two different empires-Ottoman and the Safavids (Z. Aydın 2005, 226), and with many independent Kurdish principalities forming there was further fragmentation of Kurdish internal dynamics (Yıldız 2006, 31–34). The conflict and struggle between Kurdish principalities and tribes weakened their power. This divide and conflict among the Kurds could be easily targeted by the Ottoman Empire (Strohmeier 2003, 10).

Moreover, along with territorial and power division the Chaldiran war and Kurds' alliance with the Ottoman Empire also initiated religion based divisions among the Kurds. During and following the war, majority of the Sunni Kurds sided with the Ottoman Empire while some Kurdish Alevis supported Safavid Empire (Izady 2004, 114). Preferences of both Sunnis and Alevis were based on religious factors. The division and support for opposing powers further advanced the socio-cultural and political gaps between the Sunni and the Alevi Kurds. Accordingly, Kurdish unity and identity disintegrated further (Lazarev et al. 2001, 102; Özer 2009, 112–113). Consequently, it is fair to suggest that after the Battle of Chaldiran, territorial, tribal and religious separation and fragmentation of the Kurds expanded, which prevented the development of Kurdish unity and a national alliance during the Ottoman Empire period (O'Shea 2004, 72).

3.1.2 Defeat of Principalities, Rising Power of Sheiks and Alteration in Political Demands

The Kurdish principalities and the Kurdish region under their rule could manage most of their internal affairs independently, and ruled for nearly three hundred years (Kendal 1993, 15). Despite their immense power, neither the Ottoman Empire nor the Safavid could command complete control or rule of the Kurdish principalities during this period (Halpin 1992, 19). Although the Ottoman Empire agreed on forming semi-autonomous Kurdish principalities, it did not allow them power to rule over a large area (P. J. White 2012, 86).

The relations between the Kurds and the Ottoman Empire started to deteriorate as the Empire introduced centralization policies and demanded control of the Kurdish region (Henri J. Barkey and Fuller 1998, 7). The Empire's objectives were to have sole power over the Kurdish region and diminish the authority of the principalities (Findley 2010, 142). To achieve this, the Empire began to reduce the Kurdish princes' power and intervened in principalities' internal affairs (Kendal 1993, 17). Undeniably this was not welcomed by the Kurdish principalities and they harshly challenged these objectives. With these drastic developments taking place, the Kurdish principalities, Baban, (1806), Kor Muhamad Pasha (1826-33), Bedirxanies (1843-6) and Yezdanser (1853-55) revolted against the Ottoman Empire (Ibid., 17-23).

All of the Kurdish rebellions failed for similar reasons. Each rebellion needs to be considered in the time and social and political conditions in which they occurred, but their general character and underlying reasons can be evaluated. First of all, the Kurdish principalities did not have sufficient independent power against the Ottoman army and there was the internal conflict and competition between the principalities (Celil 1992, 170). Second as Garo Sasoni states, the principalities did not want to lose their authority and privileges, and so prioritized their local interests over their national interests. Therefore, most of the rebellion principalities struggled for their principality or regional independence rather than national independence (Sasoni 1986, 46). Third, contrary to

ethnicity, 'tribe' and 'religion' were two determinant identities in determination of principalities' social and political relations, therefore, the prospect of alliances between them were very low (Aziz 2011, 54). In this regard, although Kurdish principalities were aware of their identical differences from the Ottoman Empire, or at least did not consider themselves as Turkish, they were unaware of their national identity (Kutlay 2012a, 71). However, the rebellion of Bedirkhan bey in 1847 had some national character because it fought for independence of a considerably large area (Nezan 1996, 13).

Elimination of the Kurdish principalities in the nineteenth century forged a significant authority gap and further intensified tensions among the Kurdish tribes. This outcome presented Sheiks with the opportunity to become society leaders because they already had substantial religious authority (Laçiner and Bal 2004, 482–483). Kurdish sheiks filled this gap and became new religious and political leaders in order to mediate and end the conflict between the Kurdish tribes. Their authority and power heightened with the Ottoman Land Code and Registration Laws of 1858 and the abandoned Armenian properties following their migration (Kutlay 2002, 49). By using religion “as a political weapon” Sheiks were able to function as uniting powers and gather various Kurdish tribes; this was mainly down to the religious respect they had and new found political status (McDowal 2004, 52). For instance, in the Sheik Ubeydullah rebellion of 1882, Sheik Ubeydullah formed ‘Kurdish unity’ (Kürt ittifaki) which entailed several Kurdish tribes, including, aghas and beys, as well as some religious figures (Avyarov 1995, 123). The formation of “Kurdish unity” is indicative of the national goal of the rebellion. Taking this into account, the insurrection under the leadership of Sheikh Ubeydullah is one of the significant Kurdish revolts of the time which clearly demanded for independence (Kendal 1993, 23–24). Sheikh Ubeydullah made use of his religious and political authority in line with his demand for independence to conquer an important part of the Kurdish region within the borders of Iran in 1882 (McDowal 2004, 53). As explained in Halfin, he justified his actions by highlighting the pressure imposed on the Kurds by Iran. The Ottoman Empire was apprehensive about the situation and wanted to seal an agreement with Iran in order to stop the activities of the Sheikh within the borders of the Ottoman Empire. Sheikh Ubeydullah was left to fight for independency also

against the Ottoman Empire but was quickly defeated (Halfin 1992, 88–93). Despite its swift defeat, ‘Kurdish unity’ generated further interaction among Kurds, resulted in the emergence of a collective identity and heightened national sentiment (Sasoni 1986, 105). A letter sent to the English consulate in Uremia in 1878, written by the Sheik, illustrates clearly the national character of the rebellion and the relative demand for independence (Jwaideh 1999, 151);

“The Kurdish nation is a people apart. Their religion is different (to that of others), and their laws and customs are distinct. They are known among all nations as mischievous and corrupt...The chiefs and rulers of Kurdistan, whether Turkish or Persian subjects, and the inhabitants of Kurdistan (the Christians) one and all are united and agreed that matters cannot be carried on this way with the two governments, and necessarily something must be done so that the European governments having understood the matter shall enquire into our state...We want our affairs to be in our hands... Otherwise the whole of Kurdistan will take the matter into their own hands, as they are unable to put up with these continued evil deeds, and the oppression which they suffer at the hands of the two governments of impure intentions” (Cited from Olson 1991, 392).

Evident from his letter the Sheik is aware of the term nation, and most importantly, the national character of the Kurds. Accordingly, it can be suggested that he has an ethnic consideration of the Kurds (Abdulla 2009, 263). Furthermore, the Sheik Ubeydullah rebellion was notably the first Kurdish rebellion of the nineteenth century focused on independence demand (Celil et al. 1998, 33; Abdulla 2009, 263). However, it needs to be considered more closely because religion grew to be a decisive factor in Kurds’ national struggle and political claims, respectively, as a result of this rebellion afterward (Kutlay 2012a).

3.1.3 Hamidiye Kurdish Corps (Hamidiye Alayları) and Fragmentation of the Kurds

The termination of the Kurdish principalities and the failure of the Sheik Ubeydullah rebellion generated doubts between the Kurds and the Ottoman Empire following the second half of the nineteenth century. The Ottoman Empire could not adequately manage conflicts and assert its full authority. Thus, the Empire’s desire to

restore the order, to take full control of the eastern regions (van Bruinessen 2010, 157), Armenians' intense political activities and the security gap in eastern boundaries all forced the Empire to develop a new strategy toward the Kurds (Olson 1992, 27–29). Sultan Abdullhamid II aimed to use the Kurds and religion to prevent national struggle intensifying among them. In line with that aim, Sultan Abdulhamid II successfully implemented his 'Islamic unity' project in his interaction with the Kurds (Malmîsanij 1986, 10). Thus, by actively applying his "pan-Islamist" policy, Abdulhamid constructed close relations with the Kurds, particularly the Kurdish feudal class; this later grew into a cooperation (Kendal 1993, 25). In order to tackle above noted dangers and build Empire's authority in the Kurdish region, Sultan Abdulhamid formed the Kurdish Hamidiye Corps in 1890 (Klein 2011, 3). In pursuing Avyarov Hamidiye Kurdish Corps were established, taking the corps Russia had formed with the Kazakh people as an example. It is estimated that the Hamidiye Corps was comprised under 65 Kurdish corps in total (Avyarov 1995, XIV). To provide order and quash the chaos in the Kurdish region, Hamidiye corps took severe measures and were involved with the killing of Armenians (O'Shea 2004, 78), particularly during their involvement in the Armenian unrest(s) between the years 1894-1896 (Kendal 1993, 25-26). Taking into account the role of the Hamidiye corps, Klein (2011, 4) remarks that it was founded for the following causes; "supressing of Armenian activities", "Islamic unity", and "bring the region into the Ottoman fold".

However, the Hamidiye corps' oppression and severe measures were not restricted to the Armenians. They also threatened some Kurds in the same manner (Henri J. Barkey and Fuller 1998, 8). In order to make further use of the fragmented structure of the Kurds and to sustain it, Abdulhamid formed the Hamidiye corps from Sunni (Shafi) tribes. The Zaza and Alevi Kurds did not become part of these corps (Yildiz 2006, 53–54). Some Sunni Kurdish tribes applied a significant amount of pressure on Alevi Kurds (Taşpınar 2005, 71) and as a result, internal conflict in the Kurdish region further intensified (McDowal 2004, 60). The Hamidiye corps, therefore, triggered hostility and contributed to in-group variation among the Kurds (Minorsky, Bois, and Kenzie 2004, 101). The tension between the Alevi and the Sunni Kurds, as Van. Bruinessen (2000a,

32–33) articulates, continued during their uprisings against the Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic, and further provoked in-group fragmentation. In other words, disputes between the Alevi and the Sunni Kurds increased the Kurds' internal dynamics.

In order to gain more loyalty from the Kurds and rule them through their elites, Sultan Abdulhamid took the children of the Hamidiye corps into imperial tribal schools (Aşiret Mektepleri) in Istanbul. According to Alişan Akpınar and Eugene L. Rogan, Abdulhamid aimed to raise the ideologies of 'Ottomanism' and 'Pan-Islamism' within them, which were the two main pillars involved in the Kurds and the Empire relations. This "social-engineering" project (Akpınar and Rogan 2001, 13–14), was a well-designed plan implemented by the Sultan to ensure Kurds' long-term fidelity and integration (Kendal 1993, 26). Sultan Abdulhamid's project was effective in a few tribes and changes were observed in some of the children who attended tribal schools (O'Shea 2004b, 79). However, in general, the majority of Kurdish notables involved in Hamidiye corps, and whose children also attended tribal schools, did not serve in line with Sultan's expectations. Also, despite Sultan's vigorous effort to prevent the rise in national sentiments and independence claims, they became active in Kurdish national movements in later years and greatly contributed to the expansion of Kurdish nationalism (Abdulla 2009, 274; H. Yavuz 2007, 5). One of the leaders of the Hamidiye corps, Cibranli Halit, who helped raise the profile of Sheik Said rebellion in 1925, is one of the Kurds who can be considered as an example to illustrate how the Hamidiye corps led to further Kurdish national movements and nationalism itself (Yıldız 2006, 57).

3.1.4 The Party of Union and Progress (CUP) and the Political and Cultural Organizations of the Kurds

Despite all measures undertaken, the Ottoman authorities could not halt the Empire from collapsing, especially following the second half of the nineteenth century. To stop this state of affairs, the Party of Union and Progress (CUP)-(İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti) was firstly founded in 1889 under the name, İttihad-i Osman-î, with the objective of saving the Empire, and in 1894 it became known as the Party of Union and

Progress (Mardin 1991, 97–98). With reference to Tarik Zafer Tunaya, early on in its years of activity the CUP attracted a great amount of interest, particularly from the bureaucrats and soldiers who objected to the rule of Sultan Abdulhamid, and the intellectuals, most of whom were educated in the western countries. The members of these groups were labelled “Young Turks” and their main aim was to halt the Empire weakening (Tunaya 1988, 19–21). CUP, as will be argued later, also wanted to reinstate Meclis-i Mebusan which was firstly opened in 1876 by Sultan Abdulhamit-II with the first constitutionalist period. Certain rights were guaranteed under the constitution, including, religious, individual, education and training, and legal equality (Shaw and Kural Shaw 1977, 177–178). Although the first constitutional period did not bring sufficient restriction to Sultan’s authority, it was a significant mark in the positive steps taken to recognize minorities’ rights. On the pretext of the war with Russia (1877-1878), Meclisi Mebusan was closed and the first constitutional period ended in a sense (Ibid., 187).

The CUP founders and members had diverse ethnic, religious and regional backgrounds. The Kurdish Intellectuals, Abdullah Cevdet and Ishak Sukuti, were involved in founding the CUP and worked with the party for a long time (Kutschera 2001, 30). The primary aim of the party was to push Sultan Abdulhamid to implement certain reforms, such as, opening the Chamber of Deputies of the Ottoman Empire and reopening and convening the 1876 constitution (Findley 2010, 160–165). As explained by Janet Klein, the Kurds polarized into two groups with the start of the Second Constitutional Era in 1908. The CUP and the Second Constitutional Era were welcomed by the young Kurds who faced trouble during Sultan Abdullahmid’s II reign and shared close ideals with the Young Turks movement. On the other hand, the traditional Kurds, especially the sheikhs and tribe leaders who had authority in their local areas, and the tribe leaders who were members of the Hamidiye corps were very concerned with this situation (Klein 2007).

Despite the significance of reconvening the 1876 constitution, soon after the revolution of 1908, but particularly after the Empire’s Balkan subjects’ independence

declaration, the CUP's political attitudes and purpose changed dramatically and "Turkification" policies became the focus (Dündar 2006, 37). They intensified centralization policies and took severe measures to achieve this. It also began to rely on (follow) Turkish nationalism (Shaw and Kural Shaw 1977, 289). In line with these new purposes, the CUP toughened its approach against the non-Muslims and even against the non-Turkish Muslims, and performed authoritarian policies (Ekinci 2011, 27-28). It closed many Kurdish organizations and prohibited the publication of some of the Kurdish newspapers and magazines (Celil 1992, 201). The CUP did not tolerate the basic cultural and religious rights claims of the Kurds and reinforced suppression on them. For instance, the Kurdish Sheiks demand for education in the Kurdish language, appointment of Shafi'i officials who spoke Kurdish to work in the region, recognition of Kurdish as an official language in certain districts and towns, and demand for application of Shaira law, were all prohibited (Jwaideh 1999, 203-204). In short, their demand for "cultural" and "religious" rights were harshly punished (O'Shea 2004, 80).

During the CUP's later years of rule, as mentioned by Martin Strohmeier, Kurdish notables and intellectuals were becoming annoyed by their policies and consequently prioritized the development of the Kurds' ethno-cultural identity and improving Kurds' socio-cultural and economic conditions. To achieve this, as also noted by Strohmeier, they established the Kurdish Party of Cooperation and Progress (Kürt Teavün ve Terakki Cemiyeti) in 1908 and following its closure founded Society For the Spread of Kurdish Education (Kürt Neşr-i Maarif Cemiyeti) and the Kurdish Constitutionalism School (Kürt Mesrutiyyet Mektebi) in 1910 and 1911, respectively (Strohmeier 2003, 41-55). One of the main aims of almost all of the Kurdish organizations was education in the Kurdish language and building independent Kurdish schools (Bajalan 2010, 123). Following the establishment of the above-mentioned organizations, Kurds' cultural and political activities further intensified, and the following organizations were founded: the Kurdish Student Society of Hope (Kürt Talebe Hevi Cemiyeti) in 1910, the Society for the Rise of Kurdistan (Kürdistan Teali cemiyeti) in 1918, and Kurdish Society for Social Organization (Kürt Teşkilat-i İctimai Cemiyeti) in 1920 (Jwaideh 1999, 200–201). With creation of socio-cultural and political organizations, Kurdish nationalists were aiming to

raise the Kurds' organizational level and in developing their political claims into a national form, which were resulted with raising of nationalist ideas in religious Kurds (Ibid., 202-205). Kurds' socio-cultural and political organizations and the various newspapers which were published, for example, Kurdistan, and magazines further developed their identity awareness and Kurdish nationalism (Abdulla 2009, 114). In other respects, Kurds tried to construct their own "Imagined Community" derived by B. Anderson (2006), through creating and increasing knowledge on their ethno-cultural and national identity (Malmîsinaj 2004).

Considering the formation of the Kurdish organizations with certain political claims during this period, it is possible to argue that most of the Kurds involved in these organizations were aware of their national identity. For instance, Kurdish Student Society of Hope openly promoted Kurdish nation (M.Emin Bozarslan 1988, XI–XII). However, majority of the Kurds, as stated by Bajalan (2010, 133), favoured decentralization in their political claims. There are numerous reasons for the disinterest in independence, but strong loyalties to (in) Islam is considered to be the primary motive (Ibid.,). Accordingly, most of the Kurdish organizations founded before World War I vocalized their demand for living under the political authority of the Ottoman Empire on the condition that decentralization was provided. For example, Kurdish Society of Solidarity and Progress (Kürt Teavun ve Terakki Cemiyeti) founded in 1908, stated in its first article it was established to protect the constitution that was based on sharia law and ensure the prosperity and the happiness of the Kurds within the Ottoman Empire held its integrity (Malmîsanij 1999, 19–20).

3.1.5 The Kurds in the Period between Paris Peace Conference and the Treaty of Sevres

Taking into account the political history of the Kurds in the light of the aforementioned developments, the outbreak of the First World War and subsequent defeat of the Ottoman Empire was a decisive moment in their history. Although they were hit with troubles in the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century and CUP's

policies which instilled in them anger, the majority of the Kurds sided with the Ottoman Empire during the war. Yet, after the war the Kurds fell into an immense socio-cultural, economic and political confusion and destruction (Göldaş 1991, 117,128; Olson 1992, 45).

Considering the issue with reference to their political demands, Kurds fragmented further following the war. According to Attar (2004, 94), three political claims were mainly voiced after the war; those who proposed unity of the Ottoman Empire, those who wanted to form alliances, particularly with the Triple Entente Powers (French, Russia and the United Kingdom), and those who demanded for independency. Among these, an alliance or acting together with the Ottoman Empire was essential, but as noted previously, only if Kurds were recognized with an autonomous status. Hence, autonomy was the most demanded but independence, which some intellectuals considered even before the war, also came to the forefront again. Based on these two claims Kurds reorganized and founded the Society for the Rise of Kurdistan (Kurdistan Teali Cemiyeti-KTC) in 1918, under the leadership of the aristocrat Kurdish families, intellectuals and some religious leaders (Göktaş 1991, 31–33; Özoğlu 2004, 81–83). The KTC was well organized and many branch offices of the party were opened in the Kurdish region. Although majority of its members had a Sunni sect religious background, mostly Shafii, and spoke Kurmanji dialect of the Kurdish language, it also appointed some Zazaki speaking and Alevi Kurds into its ranks (Zürcher 2004, 170). Therefore, unlike previous organizations, the KTC did not exclusively appoint urban Kurdish intellectuals and was a nationalist group. The party also involved the tribe members and Kurdish leaders that were effective in the local units (Olson 1992, 45). The KTC made a great effort to forge political demands in line with the Fourteen Points of Woodrow Wilson, which were declared in 1918. Woodrow Wilson “suggested guidelines for the settlement of territorial questions in Europe and the Middle East” (Ambrosius 1987, 36). In other respects, it recognized ethno-national groups’ national self-determination rights (Moore 1998, 136). The twelfth principle centred on the Ottoman Empire and recognized its subjects’ self-determination rights (Hannum 1990, 183). This principle outlined sovereignty of the regions located mostly by the Turks in the Ottoman Empire should be provided along

with acknowledging the autonomy demands of “nationalities” living under the Turkish rule (cited from Ishay 2007, 309).

Declaration of Wilson’s principles with the cooperation of international powers meant the KTC had the opportunity to obtain political rights for the Kurds. Accordingly, Wilson’s principles revived the Kurds’ hopes. In order to fully attain this opportunity, Kurds did not only persist with their independence claim but also considered autonomy as an alternative (Özoğlu 2004, 83). Parallel with that, the party (KTC) formed a Kurdish committee under the leadership of Kurdish Şerif Pasha to attend the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. This committee joined the Paris Peace conference with a few key objectives in mind; to highlight the Kurds’ unity and determination in obtaining their political rights (Göktaş 1991, 32). Şerif Pasha declared and presented the political claims of the Kurds and the Kurdistan map at the Paris Peace Conference and successfully reached an agreement with the Armenian committee in line with this purpose, as well as some other demands (Minorsky, Bois, and Kenzie 2004, 103–104; Lazarev et al. 2001, 205–206).

The Paris Peace Conference resulted in a number of significant changes for both the Kurds and the Armenians. Firstly, according to Garo Sasoni despite tension with Armenians during the last decades of the Ottoman Empire and claims over (approximately) the same region, both the Kurdish and the Armenian delegates managed to cooperate and agree upon some of the main principles. Secondly and most importantly, the Kurdish and the Armenian delegations approved establishing an independent Armenia and Kurdish state (Sasoni 1986, 164–165). Nevertheless, even though there were some positive outcomes from the conference, Serif Pasha’s independence declaration particularly his agreement with the Armenian Committee, which was led by Bogos Nubar Pasha, angered some Kurdish notables, especially religious figures (Göldaş 1991, 215–216). Kurdish notables’ anxieties were further raised with the Ankara governments’ strong campaign and they were provoked to challenge Sharif Pasha and refuse to recognize the agreements he had made (H. Yildiz 2006, 90). In addition, the Kurds who rejected the notion of independence, particularly the Kurdish religious authorities,

claimed for the union of the Kurds and the Turks under the political authority of Sultan instead. Therefore, contrary to independence they proposed for autonomy, for instance, recognition of their basic ethno-cultural rights (Kurubaş 1997, 86–87). Over these developments, Şerif Pasha resigned from the presidency of the commission representing the Kurds at the Paris Peace Conference of 1920 (McDowal 2004, 134). The Kurds' negative reactions and attitudes toward Şerif Pasha and his efforts at the Paris Peace Conference clearly reveal the division among the Kurds in the aftermath of the War, and consequently, they were left without a delegate at the Paris Peace Conference (Ibid.). The differing opinions voiced concerning political demands created separation within the KTC. The party divided into two groups; those who supported independence of the Kurds and those who favoured an autonomy in which the Kurdish culture and identity would be recognized within certain borders (Kutlay 2012a, 167). Subsequently, the former groups' members in favour of full independence withdrew from the party and founded the Kurdish Society for Social Organization (Kürt Teşkilatı İctimai-Cemiyeti) in 1920 (Göktaş 1991, 33).

Following the declaration of Wilson Principles, the Kurds' situation was considered in the Treaty of Sevres signed in 1920. Articles 62, 63 and 64 focused on the Kurds. Article 62 outlined a commission of English, French and Italian representatives would recognize a local autonomy in the eastern part of Euphrates River (Fırat), whose population consisted mostly of the Kurds. The Article also claimed the Kurds had the right to apply to the League of Nations for their independence but only after one year (Treaty of Peace With the Turkey (Sévres) 1920, Article 62). On the other hand, articles 88-93 and 144 concerned the Armenians and particularly Article 89, which approved the foundation of the Armenian Republic in a specific area, including the cities, Trabzon, Erzurum, Van and Bitlis (Ibid., Article 89-93). Focusing on the articles relating to the Armenians, Kemal Burkay states, the important cities with a dense Kurdish population were given to the Armenians and plans for an independent Armenia in the northern provinces of the Kurds were set. While an autonomous Kurdistan was planned over a small area of Kurdistan by the Entente powers (Burkay 1992, 529–530). Despite that, The Treaty of Sevres instilled some excitement among the Kurds since they believed either

their independence or autonomy based political rights would be given. However, these expectations were never met. The fragmented social, cultural and political structure of the Kurds, the policies prioritized by Entente powers serving their best interests and most importantly the empowered Ankara government are some of the fundamental reasons which left the agreements of Treaty of Sevres just on paper, and led to the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 (Sasoni 1986, 167).

3.1.6 War of Independence and The Kurds Political Demands between the Period

World War I and Formation of Modern Turkey

After the World War I the Entente States invaded the territories of the Empire with Mudros Armistice Agreement on October 30th 1918. The Sultan was inactivated in military and political terms (Davison 1998, 136). The collapse of the Ottoman Empire during the World War I triggered serious turmoil among the Kurdish society. Following the war, the Kurds faced harsh social and economic conditions (Ahmed 1992, 36–50). For example, pitch battles were organised on their territories and there was continuous fighting at many of the war fronts, all of which led a massive destruction in Kurds. In other words, after the war the Kurds' demographic structure and social balance flipped (O'Shea 2004, 90–92). This situation naturally laid the foundation for reformation of the social and political structures in Kurdish society. With reference to Erol Kurubaş, the Kurds who lived for many years with an autonomous status under the power of the Ottoman Empire had two options; fight to form their own state or fight for autonomy under the rule of the Ottoman or the British Empire. Therefore, similar to the situation before the war the Kurdish authorities once again split into two main groups relating to their political demands; the Kurds who demand for independence and those who call for autonomy (Kurubaş 1997, 37). Some Kurds in the KTC, at the time led by Sayet Abdulkadir, demanded autonomy for the Kurds. Sayet Abdulkadir also did not declare their request for for their own state out of respect for the Caliph (Kutlay 2012a, 20). In spite of this, several members of the KTC left the society and defended the idea of independence (Silopi 1969). Despite such a division, the socially and politically fragmented structure of the Kurds in that period, lack of a sufficient organization level

and power, concerns about the Armenians, a common religion with the Turks and the intention to save the Empire on behalf of religion pushed majority of the Kurds to form alliances with the Turks under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal during the Turkish National Liberation War (McDowal 2004, 125-127). According to Zülküf Aydın, Kurds believed that “Muslim lands” had been occupied by their enemies and they had to cooperate with their Muslim brothers, the Turks. Thus, religion was the main instrument behind Kurds’ loyalty and alliance with the Turks during the War of Liberation (Z. Aydın 2005, 235). Along with these reasons, Kurds’ cooperation with M.Kemal was also based on the condition that they would be granted autonomy status following the war (Arokan 2014, 145). In line with this aim, Kurds were promised a “limited autonomy” based political rights (Olson 1992, 46). M.Kemal used the War of Independence as a platform to win over the Kurds and to instil in them greater confidence that they would be granted with their political rights (Z. Aydın 2005, 236). Atatürk mentioned this promise of autonomy very clearly in Amasya Protocol (October 20-23, 1919), a bill regarding autonomy of the Kurds discussed on February 20th 1922, at the Turkish Grand National Assembly, in his speech at a press conference on January 16th and 17th 1923 in Izmit and during some of his interviews (Parlar 2005, 634–637; Özer 2009, 289–292).

During this period Mustafa Kemal acknowledged that the Kurds constitute a separate ethnicity and that their social, cultural and political rights would be recognized (Yeğen 2013, 110–112). Accordingly, to receive great support from the Kurds when he started the War of Independence in Anatolia, M. Kemal used loyalty to the caliphate, religion and the Armenian issue (Gawrych 2013, 88). He sent letters to numerous Kurdish Aghas and Sheikhs, who already had social influence over the masses, requesting their support in freeing Anatolia and Caliph (Ibid.). For that purpose, he invited many of the Kurdish notables in preparation for the Congresses of Sivas (in 1919) (Akyol 2007, 79) and Erzurum (in 1919) (Gawrych 2013, 88). Over Mustafa Kemal’s positive messages and also the promise that their political rights would be acknowledged, the Kurds formed an alliance with the Turks and participated in the Turkish National Liberation War. From this new alliance, M. Kemal promised the Kurds autonomy among

other benefits, however, almost all promises were forgotten in the Lausanne Treaty of 1923 (Zürcher 2004, 170), which will be examined further in the coming section.

3.2 DENIAL OF KURDISH IDENTITY AND FRAGMENTATION IN KURDS'

POLITICAL DEMANDS: KURDS IN TURKEY FROM 1923 TO 1980

This part addresses the Kurds' political demands through their relations with the Turks, the State's approach to the Kurdish identity and their response to this, and most importantly their main political organizations between the period 1923 and 1980. The year 1980, specifically 12th September 1980 coup d'état, is a turning point in the political history of Turkey as well as the Kurds. With this d'état, almost all Kurdish political organizations were closed. Many of the present Kurdish political organizations, were founded or became more active after 1980. Due to this, the Kurds' later period, as of 1980, in relation to their political demands will be explored in the analyses chapters which initially clarify the existing Kurdish political organizations before analysing the rationale behind the variation in their current political demands.

3.2.1 Foundation of the Republic, the Forgotten Promises, and the Policy of Denial

The political history of the Kurds once again dramatically changed and moved into a new phase upon the creation of modern Turkey subsequent to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Following the Liberation War, relations between the Kurds and newly founded Turkish state quickly began to deteriorate mostly because of the state's negative stance against recognition of the Kurdish identity (Zurcher 2004, 170-171). And with signing of the Treaty of Lausanne on July 24th 1923, which is at the same time the treaty for the recognition of the modern republic of Turkey, Kurds' concerns were further raised since there was no reference to Kurds in the Treaty (Yeğen 2013, 112). The Treaty of Lausanne, therefore, is seen to have brought destructive results for the Kurds since the Kurds as a non-Turkish Muslim minority are not recognized in this treaty, they are instead "deprived of the political and cultural rights provided for in the International treaties agreements" (Gürbey 2006, 161).

Soon after the Lausanne Treaty was signed the young republic made some restrictions to religion and removed the Caliph on March 3rd 1924, who was an influential figure in maintaining the unity between Kurds and Turkey. Elimination of religion, when considered along with the oppression and denial of the Kurdish identity, worsened relations between the Kurds and the new Republic (Romano 2010, 58). Policies issued later by the Republic further heightened the Kurds' concerns. For instance, as a method of assimilating non-Turkish Muslims', but essentially the Kurds' ethnic identity the new rulers launched 'Turkification' policy (Bali 2006; Arokan 2014, 146–147). It was clear M.Kemal had abandoned his promises regarding recognition of a multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-ethnic structure of society, which he constantly uttered during the War of Liberation (Gunter 2005, 222). Contrary to his idealistic promises, Leven Köker notes that M.Kemal introduced a "homogeneous nation" and tried to assimilate diverse identities into Turkish identity. 'Nationalism', 'populism', and 'secularism' were the key principles defining the new identity M.Kemal was aiming to create (Köker 2010, 53). According to Resat Kasaba the Republic aimed to create a homogeneous nation and develop a secular ideology in line with their modernization process (Kasaba 1997, 16–17).

Based on this 'new' aim of creating a homogeneous nation, Rifat Bali points out "Turkish culture", "Turkish Language" and most importantly "Turkism" were primary issues to be dealt with in the characterization of Turkish nation within the defined borders, Misak-i Milli. In line with this intention and to eliminate the social and cultural loyalties to the Ottoman Empire, M. Kemal issued a series of reforms. Thus, to Bali, M.Kemal tried to remove any connections between his new nation design and the Ottoman Empire by ensuring religion had no place in his understanding of nation (Bali 2006, 43). In support of this argument, Lewis explains Mustafa Kemal sought to turn citizens' loyalty to the Ottoman Empire and Islam to the idea of Turkish national identity (Lewis 1968, 358–359). On the other hand, despite M.Kemal's intentions establishing a homogeneous Turkish nation over the ashes of a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and religious Ottoman Empire had its setbacks. To achieve this Taner Akçam stresses that the Republic intended to create a 'nostalgic' and 'ideal' 'Turkish national identity'. Akcam further

highlights, as will be explained in the following section, that the Republic showed no hesitation in performing ‘barbaric’ methods to impose this identity (Akçam 2004, 56). For instance, in order to proliferate Turkish national identity among the Kurds, and hence to eradicate their ethnicity, Kirişçi (2004, 277) explains the Republic attempted to destroy the demographic structure of the Kurds by applying forced migration and locating Turks in their region. This intention to remove Kurdish ethnic identity in the Kurdish region, as Lundgren (2007, 45) argues, was significant for the Republic’s aim to build a new nation-state through Turkish national identity. Attempts founded on the assimilation and dismissal of the Kurds were made to prove this understanding, involving projects such as, Turkish History Thesis (Türk Tarih Tezi)¹⁵ and the Sun Language Theory (Güneş Dil Teorisi)¹⁶ (Beşikçi 1991; Hirschler 2001, 147).

The Republic enhanced its aim to develop and spread the Turkish national identity and assimilate the Kurdish identity during later years of activity. The Kurds were outraged and as a reaction against the Republic’s assimilation tactics various Kurdish rebellions broke out (Zürcher 2010, 149; İçduygu, Romano, and Sirkeci 1999, 993). Considering Mustafa Kemal's attitude toward the Kurds, drawing comparisons between the promises made during the Liberation war and the policies he implemented on Kurds following the creation of modern Turkey, the latter is indicative of the devastating period of denial and assimilation of the Kurdish identity (Karlsson 2008). With the terms of McDowall (1992, 14), “Ataturk toyed with the idea of autonomy for the Kurds in 1923, but the idea was never discussed publicly, let alone implemented.”

3.2.2 The Kurds’ Reaction against the Denial

Against the new Republic’s denial policies of the Kurdish identity, the Kurds reacted through a number of rebellions. The rebellion of Sheik Sait-1925, Agri-1927-

¹⁵ Turkish History Thesis, as highlighted in Kirişçi and Winrow, put forwards that the Turks ethnic roots come from the Central Asia and they are the community who disseminated civilization to the rest of the Worlds. The Turkish History Thesis in that sense claim that there is continuity between the Turks in Anatolia and the Sumerians and Hittites of the ancient civilizations (Kirişçi and Winrow 1997, 121).

¹⁶ The Sun Language Theory, with reference to Kirişçi and Winrow, based on the idea that there was only Turkish language spoken in Central Asia previously. And so, to this theory, Turkish language formed the main foundation for all other languages. In this regard, this theory claims that the present Anatolian Turkish language was the perpetuation of Turkish that was spoken in Central Asia (Kirişçi and Winrow 1997, 121).

1930 and Dersim-1938 insurrections are three which had significant an influence on the Kurds in many aspects.

3.2.2.1 Ethno-Religious Rebellion of Sheikh Said in 1925

The previous section outlined the escalated concerns of the Kurds brought about by the Republic's restrictions on religion, in particular dismissal of caliphs, and its failure to provide the Kurds an autonomy status that was promised during the War of Liberation. The Kurds were disappointed by the Republic's approach to, or rather restrictions on, religion and the Kurdish identity. The anxiety and the frustration of the Kurds manifested into the rebellion of Sheik Said (Oran 2002, 875). The technical and ideological aspects of the rebellion were structured by Azadî (Freedom)¹⁷ organization, which its members initially organized in the city of Erzurum (Keiser 2003, 189). There is no specific date for the foundation of the Azadi, but it is estimated that it was established in 1923 by some Kurdish notables, intellectuals and Kurdish officers who were members of Hamidiye corps (McDowal 2004, 192). In keeping with Robert Olson, Azadî sought to bring Kurds together and mobilise them for a common political purpose. Therefore, Olson cites the movement set aside the tribal, linguistic and religious differences amongst the Kurds and attempted to organize a national movement (Romano 2010, 60). In this regard, Olson (1992, 76) explains the basic aim of Azadî was "saving the Kurds from the Turkish oppression", "freedom of the Kurds" and ensuring foreign support because the social and political condition in the Kurdish region and Middle East required foreign support for the success of the Kurdish insurrections.

Azadî was firstly headed by Cibranli Halit, who was an officer in the Hamidiye corps. However, soon before the outbreak of the rebellion he was detained (O. Aydın 2006, 60–61) and Sheikh Said of Palu was appointed as the leader of the rebellion mainly because of his religious (Naqshbandiya) identity. Pursuant to Baskin Oran, as the core cadres of Azadî possessed a secular identity, which did not coincide with the social fabric

¹⁷ Before the outbreak of the Sheik Sait rebellion, Azadi movement organized attacks against the Turkish military garrison in the Beytussebab region in 1924. In line with its nationalist purpose, Azadi aimed to raise a rebellion with this attack. Azadi's aim failed but it created a ground for outbreak of the Sheik Sait rebellion in 1925 (Gündoğan 1994).

of the Kurds, and as the majority of the Kurds lacked national consciousness, Azadî foresaw that they may not reach and mobilise masses for demand of independence unless commanded by a religious and notable leader. For this reason, Azadî assigned Sheikh Said, who was strong in religious terms, as the leader of the revolt. As Oran says, it was his charisma and authority that allowed Azadî to carry out their national(ist) agenda through religion (Oran 2002, 875).

The Sheikh Said rebellion found popularity among the Sunni (mostly Naqshbandi) and the Zaza Kurds because the Sheikh was also a Zaza Kurd and Naqshbandi (Kutlay 2002, 264). Becoming prevalent mostly amongst the Zaza and the Sunni Kurds, on the other hand, raised questions of the rebellion's character and purpose. For instance, Zurcher (2004,171) differentiates the purpose of leader cadres from the other ranks who were involved in the rebellion. According to Zurcher, the leadership of the rebellion either intended to create an independent Kurdish state or, at least, obtain an autonomous status whereas the ranks or other supporters mostly acted with religious inspiration and wanted to bring Caliphate to power and re-construct a religious law. Other viewpoints that were largely supported, however, singled out the Sheikh Said rebellion as the first large-scale and strong 'religious' based Kurdish 'nationalist' rebellion (Davison 1998, 150; Gunter 2004, 200). Taking the character and aim of the rebellion from that sense, Van Bruinessen (2003, 387) points out that it sought to create a Kurdish state in which the main rules of Islam and an Islamic identity would be respected and protected.

The Sheikh Said rebellion commenced earlier than planned and could not get mass support from the Kurds (Kutlay 2002, 268). The rebellion clearly highlights the division among the Kurds. As previously stated, majority of the Zaza Kurds joined the insurrection while mainstream Kurmanji speaking Kurds and the Alevi Kurds refrained from showing support (Ekinçi 2011, 43). The competition, conflict and religious differences between Kurds, but especially between the Alevi and Sunni (Shafii) Kurds destroyed the prospects of coming together for a common action (Romano 2010, 61). Despite its early success the rebellion failed to reach its aim. After Sheikh Said's arrest

the rebellion lost significant power, thus, it was almost completely over by 1925 (Sever 2010, 327).

Following suppression of the rebellion the Republic's violence, which had already begun soon after the Treaty of Lausanne was signed, became a vicious mass attack. The Republic already waged a war against the Kurds who had any connection with the rebellion, but their harsh methods also extended to those Kurds who did not join or help the rebellion. Along with Sheik Said many leader cadres were executed, thousands of Kurds were killed and thousands were put on trial and exiled from their homeland (Celil et al. 1998, 163; Robins 1993, 660; van Bruinessen 2000c, 143). The Sheik Said rebellion provided the foundations for the Republic to perform its suppression, assimilation and pacification policies on the Kurds. For instance, they formed an independence tribunal which started punishments in the Kurdish region (Jwaideh 1999, 399–401). In addition, soon after the revolt the foundation of the new Kurdish policy of the state, Mehmet Bayrak says was systemised with the 'Eastern Reformation Plan' (Şark Islahat Planı) dated September 24th 1925. As detailed in Bayrak, the Eastern Reformation Plan was issued in order to prohibit the use of the Kurdish language in a public space, force the Kurds to emigrate to western cities and bring Turkish immigrants to their homeland, punish or exile the families of those participated in the rebellion, supply more military precautions in the region and take full control of the region by constructing new roads, bridges and railways (Bayrak 2009, 35–40). With with these policies the Republic wanted to intimidate and break the will of the Kurds, especially those with a rebellious streak (R. Aras 2014, 49–51; A.B. Çelik 2012, 245). However, the Republic's severe measures did not deter the Kurds from their case and it could even be said that it further strengthened their determination in obtaining their rights and national sentiments (Kutlay 2002, 265), and as the next section will discuss, laid the foundation for the Ağrı rebellion.

3.2.2.2 Independence, Xoybun Organization and the Kurdish Rebellion in Ağrı (1927-1930)

After the Sheik Said rebellion a great number of Kurdish notables, intellectuals and local leaders involved in the rebellion were exiled, most of whom chose to settle in Syria (Ekinici 2011, 46). Syria had become a new centre for the Kurds who escaped the persecution delivered by the Republic. To carry out their political and cultural activities some of these Kurds established Xoybun (Independence) in 1927 in Syria, which had a national view of Kurdish identity (Alakom 1998, 21–23; Celil et al. 1998, 175). As reported by Sureyya Bedirhan, who also fled to Syria after the Sheik Sait Rebellion and was active in Kurdish national movements, the Kurdish leaders with differing political beliefs joined by other political relations took part in Xoybun. Xoybun, therefore, he says, was established as a national organization fighting for the independence of Kurds. For that purpose it soon joined the Ağrı rebellion which initially broke out separate from Xoybun in 1927, took its organization and declared independence (Sureyya Bedirhan 1994). The movement, as noted before, had a national (ist) identity and was determined to clear the Kurdish region from Turkish military forces. In its congress in August 1927, for instance, it decided “to fight against the Turks until the last Turkish soldier is cleared out from the holy Kurdish land” (Celil et al. 1998, 175).

The Ağrı rebellion grew soon after Xoybun was launched, but the two were independent entities as noted previously. Angered and frustrated by the Republic’s oppression and exile policies, the Kurds in the city of Ağrı revolted under the local leaderships (Kalman 1997, 25–26). Xoybun actively joined and led the rebellion under the direction of İhsan Nuri Paşa (A. B. Çelik 2012, 245). Xoybun’s involvement with the Ağrı rebellion meant that it was well planned and determined in its independence demand (İhsan Nuri Paşa 1992). Xoybun made intense efforts to reach large numbers of Kurds and awaken their national spirits and views for establishing an independent state for this aim, it used all national instruments belonging to the Kurdish community to mobilise them (Chaliand 1994, 37–38). The majority of the people involved in the Ağrı rebellion had a religious personality but Xoybun’s identity meant that the rebellion did not have an

overall religious character or purpose. This, therefore, makes Ağrı rebellion different from the previous Kurdish rebellions (Ciment 1996, 46).

The revolt was mostly supported by Kurds who resided near Ağrı and the regions surrounding it and lasted for three years (1927-1930). The subsequent defeat of the rebellion was caused by its inability to attract majority of the Kurds, the betrayal of some Kurdish tribes, technical deficiencies and Iran's support for the Turkish Republic (McDowal 2004, 206-207). As stated by Chris Kutschera, following the collapse of the rebellion the Republic, similarly after the Sheik Said rebellion, applied greater pressure on the Kurds. For instance, the Republic's military operation in the Zilan district of the city of Van in 1930 which killed thousands of Kurds. The devastating results brought about from the Ağrı rebellion labelled it a tragedy (Kutschera 2001, 125). Suppression of the Ağrı revolt and the Republic's subsequent tough policies broke Kurds' resistance will for a considerable number of years. Xoybûn was also seriously affected by this defeat and lost its political and organizational efficiency in the Kurds, for instance, Xoybûn shifted its focus onto intellectual studies contributing massively to the development of the Kurdish language, literature and history as well as nationalism much later (Alakom 1998, 14-16).

3.2.2.3 From Koçgiri to Dersim: Kurdish Alevi's Revolts

In order to clarify the Kurdish Alevi's relation with the Republic and also their Kurdish identity, this section explores the Koçgiri and the Dersim rebellions.

The first Kurdish Alevi rebellion, the Kocgiri, broke out in 1920 when the newly founded Ankara government was still involved in the War of Liberation and discussions were being made on the Treaty of Sevres for the Kurdish case (P.J. White 2012, 111). Kocgiri rebellion took place in Kurdish Alevi (Keiser 2003, 184) concentrated cities, including, Sivas, Erzincan, Dersim and Elazig districts. Mehmet Bayrak also categorized this rebellion as a Kurdish Alevi origin rebellion, and so, obtained support from KTC's Alevi and secular members. To Bayrak, the objective of the rebellion was to provide the Kurds with autonomy status in fulfilment of articles 62 and 64 of the Treaty of Sevres

(Bayrak 2010, 132–133). The other demands voiced by the Koçgiri rebellion, conditional to autonomy of the Kurds, were:

- (i) acceptance by Ankara of Kurdish autonomy as already agreed by Istanbul;
- (ii) the release of all the Kurdish prisoners in Elazığ, Malatya, Sivas and Erzincan jails;
- (iii) the withdrawal of all Turkish officers from areas with a Kurdish majority,
- (iv) withdrawal of all the Turkish forces from the Koçgiri the region (Cited in McDowall 2004, 185).

The rebellion seized control of some Kurdish Alevi regions and forced Ankara government to come to an agreement (Olson 1992, 56-57). Turkish state refrained from interfering with the rebellion primarily because she was already occupied with the National Liberation War and only agreed to the conditions laid out by the rebellion to buy more time (Ibid., 57). However, when political and physical conditions became appropriate, Turkish forces intervened and the rebellion was defeated quickly in April 1921 (P. J. White 2012, 112). The Kocgiri rebellion had a high possibility to achieve its goal since both the government in Istanbul and the Kemalist campaign were very weak at the time. However, Olson (1992, 62) states it was unsuccessful because of the Kurds tribal structure, disagreements between the tribes involved in the rebellion, lack of foreign support and variation in their belief and religion.

The Kurdish Alevis' defeat at Kocgiri silenced them until another Kurdish Alevi defence based on insurrection rose up in 1937-1938 – Dersim insurrection. It broke out in and around the Dersim region as a reaction against the Republic's policies over the Dersim region and was of Kurdish Alevi origin (A.B. Çelik 2012, 246). Although not in political terms, Dersim had a semi-independent status since the Ottoman period and it wanted to keep the advantages of this status in the Republic era. Neither the Ottoman Empire nor the Republic took complete control over Dersim until 1937, this was a problem for the Republic because it was determined to have authority all over the country (Doğan 2012). However, the Republic was adamant to remove the de-facto semi-independent status of Dersim and focused on the region following the suppression of the Ağrı rebellion (P.J. White 2012, 123-124; Lazarev et al. 2001, 245). The Republic was resolved in harshly punishing the Kurds in order to break their political will (Kutschera

2001, 148). In line with this purpose, the Republic constructed new outposts, roads and bridges, and deployed numerous soldiers to *siege* the Dersim region from 1934 onwards (McDowal 2004, 208). For instance, the name Dersim was changed to Tunceli on January 4th 1936 (P.J.White 124-125). As a continuance of its aim to destroy Dersim's de-facto semi-independent status and to put in effect the assimilation policy to abolish the Kurdish identity, the 'Obligatory Settlement Law' (Zorunlu İskan Kanunu) was enforced on June 14th 1934 (Beşikçi 1977, 132–146). The basic principles of the Obligatory Settlement Law were briefly outlined under the following articles;

(Article7-B); those who are not of Turkish race, albeit do not want support from the government, have to settle in the places that the government deems fit and to stay there as long as the state does not allow them to settle in other areas....

(Article11-A); it is prohibited for those whose mother tongue is not Turkish to establish village, district and worker or artist unions, collectively. It is forbidden for the same to restrict a village, district, a profession or art to their own kin.

(Article 13/3); it is obligatory to settle those who are not of Turkish origin to villages, separate districts or into towns or cities on the condition that they will not constitute a mass (cited from Beşikçi 1977, 132–146).

In order to apply this plan, in other words to eliminate the Kurdish identity, the Republic also issued the 'Law on Resettlement, no. 2510' (McDowal 2004, 207). To easily assimilate the Kurdish identity into the Turkish identity, Turkish territory was grouped into three zones in line with this Resettlement;

- The First Zone: First zone was the areas where the 'original' Turks lived; mostly in the Western parts of the state. Settlers from this part of country were intended to be resettled in Kurdish populated areas as a part of the Turkification process.

- The Second Zone: The second zone was named as 'receiver' areas, which were safely Turkish enough in culture and mentality to resettle Kurds from the East. The second was where the Kurds would gradually get assimilated and dissolve among the large Turkish populations.

- The Third Zone: 'Regions to be completely evacuated'; where the Kurdish tribes mostly lived and the Kurdish language was the mother tongue. The third zone would be the refugee sender part of the country and its inhabitants would have to adopt the Turkish mores gradually in the second zone. Resettled Kurds were banned from forming more than %5 of the population in the localities they were settled and the laws were preventing them from forming civil institutions, villages or groups (Kurdish Human Rights Project April 2003, 7 cited in Sagnıç 2010, 131).

The settlements enforced by the Republic illustrate their urgent desire to destroy the Kurds' demographic structure and territorial concentration to assimilate the Kurdish identity (Tan 2009, 255). Bayrak (2009, 83) formulates it as the Republic's aim to eliminate the ideological basis of the Kurdish identity.

The Kurdish Alevis of Dersim region objected to these activities issued by the Republic because they deemed it as a siege. Thus, in order to halt the siege of their region and defend themselves they united under the leadership of Sayed Reza. Sayed Riza called for "construction of a local government which will respect the people's national rights" from the Republic (Kutschera 2001, 152). The Republic refused Sayed Rıza's demand, it even tightened its surrounding measures in the Dersim region (Ibid.). Despite lacking sufficient military material, Dersim fought against the Republic's military forces. However, their defence struggle was broken down and Dersim was almost completely destroyed between the years 1937 and 1938 (Jwaideh 1999, 418). The Republic's forces applied very harsh military methods in their attacks against the Dersim resistance and killed thousands of people (Kutschera 2001, 156). Their methods did not only involve the killing of thousands, it is estimated that thousands of Kurdish Alevis were also exiled (Jwaideh 1999, 419). Bayrak (2011, 225) states the Republic intended to cleanse the region of ethno-religious identity by applying "Te'dip (Civilise-Edeplendirme)", "Tenkil (Punishment-Cezalandırma)", "Temdin (Turkish Islamisation-Türk İslamlaştırma)" and "Tasfiye (liquidation)" policies.

The suppression of the Dersim revolt allowed the Republic to obtain power and enforce its authority on almost all areas of the Kurdish region. It took the Kurds and their region under a tough control. Following the end of the revolts, Kurdish politics remained inactive and were unable to show any powerful movement in line with their ethno-national rights until the 1960s (Robins 1993, 662).

3.2.3 Transition to Multi-Party System, Democrat Party and the Kurds

Between the years 1924 and 1946 Turkey was governed by a one party system, also referred to as one-party regime. Only the Republican People's Party (CHP) ruled between these years. During the one-party regime, except in the years 1924 and 1930,

opposition groups were forbidden to form their own party, hence naming this period “an authoritarian one-party regime” (Z. Aydın 2005, 96; Zürcher 2004, 176). The Republic persisted with the single party rule until 1946. Nevertheless, subsequent to the second World War, with increased reactions from both inside and outside of the party, the Republic was forced to transit into a multi-party system (Szyliowicz 1966, 275; Ahmad 2003, 99). Soon after, the Democrat Party (DP), which was founded by Celal Bayar, Adnan Menderes, Fuat Köprülü and Refik Koraltan, entered Turkish politics in 1946 (Karpas 2010, 485).

The formation of the Democrat Party was welcomed by a large number of the Kurds (Güçlü 2006, 31–32). The Kurds, who had experienced tough punishment and assimilation since the Republic was established, had faith in the DP to implement some changes relating to their concerns (Tan 2009, 316). Given their experience during the one-party system, they expected steps to be taken to remove some restrictions both on their ethnic and religious identities (Ibid.). The DP took measures to remove the restriction on religion and created a strategy so that Kurds could be represented at the assembly to some extent (Henri J. Barkey 2000, 94–95). Also, as the Kurds considered the DP the only alternative to the “military-dominated established order”, it was enough a reason for the party to win the support of Kurds (H.J. Barkey 2009, 8).

Despite major support from the Kurds, there was no change in the Republic’s approach to the Kurdish identity during the DP’s rule (Tan 2009, 317). As a way of gaining mass support from the Kurds, the DP constructed close ties and patronage relations with the traditional Kurdish leaders, including, Sheiks, agha and beys by providing them economic opportunities, giving rise to the Kurdish bourgeoisie (Ekinci 2011, 54–58). In support of this, Naci Kutlay underlines that with the DP most of these Kurds integrated with the states and obtained some economic privileges. Therefore, Kutlay highlights although these Kurds did not deny their Kurdish identity they also did nothing to defend the Kurdish identity (Kutlay 2012a, 365). This specific strategy enforced by the DP further divided Kurdish politics. As a result of the patronage relations, Kurdish notables, Sheiks, Agha, Bey and businessmen involved with the DP

joined Turkey's political system and continued to associate with Islamist and even Turkish nationalist parties following the end of the DP (McDowal 2004, 398-401). On the other hand, the Kurds with leftist and relatively nationalist ideologies took part in Turkish or Kurdish leftist organizations after the DP became inactive. This will be addressed in detail in the coming section.

As mentioned in Naci Kutlay, the DP toughened its Kurdish policy during the latest years of its rule. The Iraqi Kurds' struggles, led by Molla Mustafa Barzani, instilled a level of political fear in the DP. To Kutlay, they feared that the rise in Kurds' national struggle and Kurdish nationalism in Iraq would influence the Kurds in their region. In order to prevent such an effect, the DP began to embrace the Republic's mentality on the Kurdish issue (Kutlay 2012a, 30) and applied its method of arrest. Fears of intensified national sentiments among the Kurds prompted the DP to arrest fifty Kurdish intellectuals, students and some leading peoples, but one individual faced his death in prison (Emin Batu). This particular case is defined as the '49's' (49'lar) (Ekinçi 2011, 61). With the arrest of fifty Kurdish intellectuals, the DP presumed the Kurds' national activities or inclinations would be suppressed or postponed (Çamlıbel 2007, 22-23). Taking the issue from that sense, as Köker (2010, 58) put into words, the DP did not have the intention to change the Republic's homogeneous nation creation project, but instead tried to manage the Kurdish issue through the Kurdish tribes' and religious leaders by empowering them in the party.

3.2.4 Military Coup D'état of May 27, 1960 and Its Kurdish Policy

The period in which the DP ruled, counting almost ten years, ended with the military coup d'état on May 27th 1960. The coup removed the DP from power and its leader, Adnan Menderes, and two of its ministers, Fatin Rüştü Zorlu and Hasan Polatkan, were arrested and executed "for violations of the constitution of 1924" (Davison 1998, 179–180). The coup ended the Menderes era but caused further problems for Turkey's internal dynamics and politics. Following the coup, the military considered itself as a central defender of the Turkish Republic and the principles of Kemalism, thus, intervened in civil politics through various methods (Hale 1994, 133–134). After the coup d'état a

new constitution was drafted in 1961 by a committee which was assigned by the Military Coup Council (Committee of National Unity). With the new constitution the military proposed “to establish political and legal checks and balances” (Dodd 1992, 20). However, despite its purpose the 1961 constitution issued certain legal regulations which allowed the formation of leftist organizations. Succeeding these regulations, many of the trade unions, student and leftist organizations emerged (A.B.Çelik 2012, 246). Although the constitution of 1961 did not have any toleration for the Kurdish identity and did not acknowledge rights for establishing Kurdish organizations, most of the Kurds actively took part in the Turkish leftist movements and even later formed their own (Ciment 1996, 48).

Taking into account the military coup, removal of the DP and 1961 constitution with respect to the Kurdish issue, it is evident that nothing improved or changed in the Republic’s approach to the Kurdish issue and the Kurdish identity. In fact, oppression on the Kurdish identity was toughened (A.B. Çelik 2012, 246). For instance, as stated by Naci Kutlay who was also among the ‘49s’ arrestees, while nearly all of the political prisoners were released after the coup d’état, the political Kurdish prisoners whom the Menderes government imprisoned (the ‘49s’) and those arrested after the coup were kept imprisoned. This clearly illustrates the state’s determination for maintaining restrictions on the Kurdish identity (Kutlay 2006b, 159–160). In order to carry out and heighten its authority and assimilation over the Kurdish identity, the state renamed most of the Kurdish villages into Turkish ones (Beşikçi 1969b) and arrested and sent 380 Kurdish notables to the Sivas camp, just four days after coup d’état in 1960 (Kutlay 2012a, 32). Among them, 55 were then chosen and settled in western parts of Turkey with suspicions of supporting Kurdish national awareness (Z.Aydın 2005, 238). Most of those who were sent to the camp had a level of influence on the Kurdish society, for example, Kurdish intellectuals, sheiks and aghas. Contrary to the expectations of the state, many of these individuals became proactive in Kurdish politics following their release (Kutlay 2012a, 31–32).¹⁸ As Nevzat Çiçek highlights, although most sent to the camp were of Kurdish

¹⁸ Among the arrestees, for instance, Faik Bucak formed the Turkish Kurdistan Democrat Party (TKDP in 1965) and Kinyas Kartal’s nephew of another arrestee of Sivas camp Remzi Kartal became and still head of

origin not all of them were aware of the Kurdish identity. He adds that sharing up to nine months of obligatory stay in the Sivas camp enforced their Kurdish identity (Çiçek 2010, 20–21).

To conclude, it is clear from the ‘49s’ and Sivas camp cases that the state wanted to continue denial and assimilation of the Kurdish identity and sought to take control of Kurdish politics by arresting their social and political leaders and intellectuals (Ciment 1996, 48). However, as noted above, the state’s expectations were not met since the majority of the Kurds arrested played an active role in Kurdish national politics following their release.

3.2.5 Politicisation of the Kurdish Identity: Between the Military Coup D’état of May 27th, 1960 and March 12, 1971

The previous section argued that although the 1961 constitution was drafted with direction of the coup committee, it issued certain regulations which created a legal environment for establishing various leftist organizations. Workers Party of Turkey (Türkiye İşçi Partisi-TİP)¹⁹, formed in 1961, was one of the first to have had a significant role in the history of Turkey’s socialist movements (M. Şener 2007, 356). Most of the leftist and nationalist Kurds joined the TİP and took an active role in almost all ranks of the party, including, leadership cadres. The TİP became a voice for those Kurds with leftist identities who also acknowledged their ethno-cultural identity and had some expectation from the party (H. Bozarslan 2007, 1175). Comparing with previous parties, the TİP was almost the first political party which boldly took the Kurdish issue into its agenda. With reference to Mehmet Ali Aybar, TİP identified the Kurdish issue as an ‘Eastern Question’ and underlined that economic development and fair income distribution along with recognition of the cultural identity would resolve that matter. Nevertheless, the TİP’s positive steps towards appreciation of the Kurdish identity, in

Kurdish National Congress (KNK) are only two samples to illustrate how the state’s punishment mechanism on the Kurds backfired, which are going to be uncovered in the coming sections.

¹⁹ For further discussions on TİP see (Aren 1993).

political terms, was also one of the significant reasons for their outlaw (Aybar 1988, 64–66).

Contrary to the Kurds with a socialist ideology, the Kurds who share a conservative and national opinion formed the Democratic Party of Turkish Kurdistan (Türkiye Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi- TKDP) under the leadership of Faik Bucak in 1965 (Ekinci 2011, 67). Although the TKDP did not position itself against the leftist Kurds or those associated with TİP, it was a party for Kurds who did not carry a socialist ideology and instead prioritized national rights (Burkay 2002, 183). The TKDP took action soon after its foundation and obtained considerable backing from the Kurdish religious and feudal classes (Ibid.). According to Epözdemir (2005, 24), the basic political demands of the TKDP were halting settlement of non-Kurdish immigrants in the Kurdish region, recognizing the Kurdish language as the official language in the Kurdish region, allowing the Kurds representation in parliament in accordance with their population intensity, and reinstating the Kurdish names of those settlements which had been removed by the Republic.

Few years after its foundation, political conflict and competition rose in the TKDP. The group who acted together with Dr. Şivan (Sait Kızıltoprak) withdrew from the TKDP and established The Kurdistan Democratic Party in Turkey (Türkiye’de Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi-T-KDP) in 1970. Creation of the T-KDP had a significant role in the political history of the Kurds during that period as well as future changes because it strongly considered Kurds’ nationality and national rights (H. Bozarslan 2007, 1177-1178). As mentioned by Selahatin Ali Arik, the T-KDP fought for Kurds’ right to determine their own fate and demanded equal rights for Turks and Kurds in the territorial integrity of Turkey. The T-KDP’s solution for obtaining Kurds’ basic rights and independence was to commence with an armed battle. Although, this suggestion was met with disapproval from some Kurdish powers (Arik 2011). The T-KDP claimed that an armed struggle, armed people’s war (Silahlı Halk Savaşı), is necessary for the Kurds of Turkey to obtain their political rights (Büyükkaya 2008, 24). The T-KDP’s strategy also

prepared the foundations for the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) which emerged later (in 1978).

The Kurds' political awareness advanced as leftist political activity in Turkey increased following 1965. The number of Kurdish workers, intellectuals, students and ordinary people who were concerned with the Kurdish issue and the Kurds' socio-economic conditions rapidly grew (Akyol 2007, 144-146). In most parts of the Kurdish region, Eastern Meetings (Doğu Mitingleri) were organized between 1967-1969 by TİP and the TKDP for the purpose to increase awareness of the Kurdish issue and current socio-economic conditions (Karadoğan 2006). As cited by Hamid Bozarslan, during these meetings Kurds vocalized their ethno-cultural rights along with improvements to their social and economic conditions. Eastern Meetings, therefore, carry a significant weight in the political history of the Kurds because it was the first time since the Kurd revolts that they asserted their claims by mobilising masses. These meetings are also important in showing how the Kurds' "cultural rights", "economic progress" and "social justice" based on the political claims of 1960s transformed into demand for self-determination (H.Bozarslan 2007, 1176-1777).

An increase in national awareness among the Kurds also resulted in growing discussions in Turkish leftist movements with respect to their Kurdish issue identification and solution proposals (Yeğen 2007a). Revolutionist Eastern Cultural Societies (Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları-DDKO) were created over these discussions by some Kurds, most of whom had left Turkish leftist organizations in 1969 (Ekinci 2010, 601–602).²⁰ The DDKO along with its socialist and nationalist ideology guaranteed significant support from the Kurds in a short period of time (Buran 2011, 71). The political and national awareness in the DDKO affected its political claims and as Güçlü (2005, 133) suggests, although there was a common agreement to end the denial and assimilation on the Kurdish identity, two political demands, independence and federalism, found place in DDKO's members.

²⁰ DDKO was the Kurds' first legal organization in modern Turkey, it, therefore, had a great contribution to the Kurds democratic legal struggle and further politicization of the Kurds (Maraşlı 2010).

3.2.6 Fragmentation among the Kurdish Organizations between the Military

Coup D'état of March 12th, 1971 and September 12th, 1980

Only eleven years after the military coup d'état of May 27th 1960, Turkish military forces once again intervened into politics on March 12th 1971. With military memorandum many of the Turkish and Kurdish leftist organizations were closed and a number of their members were either arrested or fled Turkey. Military memorandum considerably weakened the Turkish and Kurdish leftist movements' organizational structure and activities (Kutschera 2001, 400; Ciment 1996, 49). Despite this destruction, following the release of these movements' cadres from prison along with the general amnesty of Bülent Ecevit in 1974, many Kurdish organizations were founded once again. The most prominent among these movements is The Socialist Party of Turkish Kurdistan (Türkiye Kürdistan'ı Sosyalist Partisi-TKSP) that was founded under the leadership of Kemal Burkay in 1975 (Ekinci 2010, 866). The TKSP carried a socialist ideology and proposed for Kurds' equal status in a federal structure, still, it did not close its doors to independence and considered it as an alternative political model for the Kurds (Çay 2010, 498).

The establishment of the TKSP saw many other Kurdish leftist and national organizations also develop. The National Salvation Party of Kurdistan (Kürdistan Ulusal Kurtuluş Partisi-KUK) in 1975, Beş Parçacılar, the Workers' Party of Kurdistan (Kürdistan İşçi Partisi-KİP) also known as (Pêşeng (Vanguard)) in 1978 are only three of them (H. Bozarslan 2007, 1190). The KUK, Özgürlük Yolu (The Road to Freedom) and the KİP, coordinated and established the National Democratic Coalition (Ulusal Demokratik Güç Birliği UDG) in 1979, however, it was active for only one year and disbanded in 1980 (Burkay 2010, 169–171). In the years that followed 1975, the number of Kurdish political organizations almost doubled. Rizgari in 1977, KAWA in 1976, Tekosin in 1978, Yekbun in 1979 and Kurdistan Socialist Movement (Kürdistan Sosyalist Hareketi-TSH) in 1980 were some of the other Kurdish political organizations established just before the military coup d'état (Romano 2010, 76). Along with the varied organizational structures, practices, and to a certain extent ideologies, the organizations

also presented different political claims. For instance, while the TKSP, DDKD and KIP were claiming for recognition of federation, later groups, including, Tekoşin, Rizgari, KUK, KAWA (Özer 2009, 583–584) and Pêşeng prioritized creation of an Independent United Socialist Kurdistan (Çay 2010, 498–499).

By 1980, with another military coup d'état in place(September 12), almost all of the above mentioned Kurdish groups, except for the Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partîya Karkerên Kurdistan-PKK) PKK, disappeared. The PKK was established under the leadership of Abdullah Öcalan on November 27th 1978, and was demanding independence (Lundgren 2007, 47). Despite its establishment prior to 1980, PKK raised its activities and gained power after the coup d'état of 1980. The PKK is presently one of the most powerful groups in Kurdish politics and demands for democratic autonomy. The PKK case will be covered more closely in the analysis chapters since it is significant in clarifying the groups which call for democratic autonomy.

The identity of the Kurdish political organizations during their active years transformed along with the Kurdish identity. With reference to this, Hirschler (2001, 146) perfectly underlines the movement of Kurdish politics in relation to their identity; “the general trend of identity in Kurdish society has thereby been a move from one with strong religious components in the 1920s-30s, to one with strong class components in the 1960s-70s, to one with ethnicity as the core layer in the 1990s”. This transformation in Kurdish identity was one of the most significant reason for the Kurds' varied political demands in past. The Kurdish identity has changed further since the 1990s impacting on the Kurds' current political demands, which will be examined in the analysis chapters.

ANALYSIS PART

The previous chapters provided background information on the variation in Kurds' political demands until 1980. This part of the research, composed of four chapters, describes Kurds' current political demands, namely democratic autonomy, federalism, independent (nation) state and cultural rights, and attempts to analyse through an inductive way the reasons behind such a variation. In this regard, this research asks the following question; *why do some of the Kurds in Turkey have the territorial political demands, while others oppose to it?*

Currently there are four major political models demanded by the Kurds, specifically democratic autonomy, cultural rights, federalism and independent (nation) state. As explained in the introduction, nation-state and federalism are classified as territorial political models while democratic autonomy and cultural rights as non-territorial. Democratic autonomy is supported by the BDP adherents and by the Kurds having affinity for the Kurdistan Workers Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan-PKK). Kurds with political affiliations with the AKP and the CHP sway toward cultural rights. As for the groups advocating territorial models, federalism is defended by those Kurds involved with Hak-Par, Kadep, Hüda-Par, Hezbollah, ÖSP and Med-Zehra and Zehra groups (communities). And finally, Kurds associated with Azadî initiative, PAK, TKDP, KKH, DHF, İşçi-Köylü and Ismail Besikçi Vakfi (Foundation) support creation of an independent Kurdish nation-state. In selection of the groups three main conditions were taken into account; defend the political model, either of Kurdish origin or supported by a substantial number of Kurds and hold a representative power. Providing these conditions, primarily the political parties, armed organizations and religious groups were approached. Some social, cultural, economic and political organizations which have affiliations with these groups were also considered during the fieldwork. To meet these conditions, therefore, a comprehensive preliminary research was conducted before selecting the group. Table: 4.1 presents a classification of the Kurds' political demands and the groups (along with some affiliated organizations) struggle for these models.

Table 4.1, A classification of the Kurds' territorial and non-territorial political demands and the groups call for them

GROUPS	KURDS' POLITICAL DEMANDS			
	TERRITORIAL POLITICAL MODELS		NON-TERRITORIAL POLITICAL MODELS	
	NATION-STATE	FEDERALISM	DEMOCRATIC AUTONOMY	CULTURAL RIGHTS
THE MAIN GROUPS	Azadî initiative, PAK, KKH, TKDP and the Kurds involved in İşçi-Köylü (Kizilbayrak) group, DHF, and Ismail Beşikçi Vakfi	Hak-Par, Kadeş, Hûda-Par, Hezbollah, ÖSP and Med-Zehra and Zehra Groups	BDP/HDP, PKK	The Kurds who have political affiliations with the AKP and CHP
AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS (Social, Cultural, Economic and Political Organization)	Gik-Der	Nubîhar Foundation, Kom-Kar, Mustazaf-Der, PSK, DDKD, Tev-Kurd,	EMEP, Istanbul Kurdish Institute, DÖKH, Peace Assembly, Yüzleşme Foundation, Zaza-Der, Roj Women, London Kurdish Community	MASIAD, TUMSIAD, Martyrs Family Associations, Glasgow Alevi Federation Association, London Alevi Cultural Centre and Cem Evi, British Alevi Federation

As will be explained in each chapter in detail, in order to analyse the underlying reasoning for the variation in Kurds' political demands in-depth interviews with the mentioned groups' prominent authorities (elites) were conducted between 2012-2014 (intensely between 2013-2014) in Turkey, Iraq and UK. The level analysis of this research is (based on) group hence interviews were conducted with the elites of organizations, including, MPs, mayors, parties and groups' leaders, heads, executives and their political activists.

The primary conditions used in selecting the interviewees were as follows; being of Kurdish origin, support for the groups, advocate above noted political models, hold a representative position and have knowledge of Kurdish political models. To achieve this, the above list of organizations' official organs and written and visual media were studied and observed before determining the organizations and interviewees. During the fieldwork, 102 participants were interviewed. Along with interviews, cited groups leaders', and noticeable authorities' talks, articles, books, and official publications were also used as primary sources.

The structure of the analysis section is divided into five chapters. The first two (Chapters Five and Six) deal with non-territorial models—democratic autonomy and cultural rights models, and the Chapters Seven and Eight are devoted to territorial models—federalism and nation-state. Each chapter is further divided into two sections. The first section provides an overview of the development of a particular political demand within the context of its supportive organizations. In addition, the profile of supporters of the model(s) will be clarified through the organization(s) they are involved in. The second section in each chapter is devoted to the analysis of the reasons underlying this political stand along with an explanation as to why the proponents reject other political solutions. Finally, Chapter Eight analyses the research findings within a theoretical context.

CHAPTER FOUR

DEMAND FOR THE DEMOCRATIC AUTONOMY MODEL

This chapter will discuss the democratic autonomy model proposed and supported by the Kurds who gather around the BDP and who have sympathy to the PKK.

The main characteristics of the democratic autonomy model were examined in detail in Chapter One. Nonetheless, outlining the models' main principles here once more would be beneficial prior to analysing the rationality behind the emergence and the rejection of other political models. .

Democratic autonomy, which is drafted by the PKK's imprisoned leader Abdullah Öcalan, aims to solve the Kurdish issue along with other cultural, ethnic and religious groups' problems in Turkey. It regards the Kurds as one nation and seeks to provide them with a national political status (Constitutional recognition of Kurdish identity), conveyed as status of a "democratic nation" indefinite of (not based on) a particular ethnicity and territory. Democratic autonomy, therefore, is a non-territorial, non-ethnic and non-religious political model and, relatedly, challenges the idea of national state and federalism which relies on the ideas of ethnicity and territory.

Democratic autonomy, which was clarified in detail in Chapter One, prioritizes the constitutional recognition of the Kurds' national political status but also supports other cultural, ethnic and religious groups' political rights by highlighting the significance of administrative re-structuring of Turkey between 24-26 regions. In that sense democratic autonomy is argued to be applicable in all regions of Turkey. Moreover, proponents of democratic autonomy claim that it offers greater opportunities for Kurds regardless of where they reside or their internal distinction (Zaza and Alevis), since that model suggests formation of autonomous region(s) and/or participating in decision making processes through peoples' assemblies.

Based on this general framework, democratic autonomy is grounded on eight dimensions: political, legal, self-defence, cultural, social, economic, ecological and

diplomatic. These dimensions obtain the Kurds a national status, construction of regional and local parliaments and councils, education in the Kurdish language and recognition of Kurdish as an official language along with Turkish, Kurdish origin names returned, formation of diplomatic committees, self-defense security forces, and most importantly protection for the Kurdish culture and values (Draft Submission for a Democratic Autonomous Kurdistan 2011).

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part intends to define the political actors (groups) who are currently supporting the political model of democratic autonomy—namely, the PKK, and the pro-Kurdish political party BDP. Against this background and in line with the main research question of the study (*why do some of the Kurds in Turkey have the territorial political demands, while others oppose to it?*) the second part of this chapter will analyse the underlying factors behind the demand for democratic autonomy and rejection of other political models—specifically, cultural rights only and territorial political models.

4.1 KURDISH GROUPS DEMANDING DEMOCRATIC AUTONOMY

The previous chapter revealed that certain segments of the Kurds living in Turkey rebelled against the state in order to obtain their political rights. They established several political organizations and revolted for that objective. Nevertheless, as already explained, these organizations did not gather mass support. Since the 1980s, however, as explained in the coming section, the PKK has influenced the Kurdish politics. Therefore, this part will firstly explore emergence and identity of the PKK because its leadership-Abdullah Öcalan firstly introduced the model, democratic autonomy, which has consequently shaped the model. Secondly, it will explore the Kurdish political party the BDP which requests democratic autonomy. This will enable us to take a closer look at the demographic, sociological and political backgrounds of the Kurds who demand democratic autonomy.

4.1.1 Emergence of the PKK and Demand for Independence

The Kurdish political organizations founded between 1960 and 1980 and their struggle in securing Kurds' political rights by heightening their demand for independence and federalism disappeared; and their power considerably weakened following the military coup d'état on September 12th 1980 (Burkay 2010, 204–205). However, the Kurdish organizations active during these years left an undeniable heritage in the politics, primarily the PKK, which was founded on November 27th 1978 by Abdullah Öcalan and some of his friends²¹ (Balli 1991, 204). Abdullah Öcalan's experiences in Turkish and Kurdish origin leftist movements allowed him to clearly analyse the weakness of existing groups, their relations with the state, and Kurds as a whole, which encouraged him to form the PKK (Ballı 1991, 203–205; P.J. White 2012, 197–198).

PKK as a 'political' and 'practical' movement" in line with the terms set by its leader, Abdullah Öcalan (Öcalan 2011b, 50), was formed in reaction to the unstable political atmosphere of the time; in which the state had tough restrictions on recognition of the Kurdish identity (PKK (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan) Kuruluş Bildirgesi 1984). Therefore PKK, as expressed by the prominent scholar of Kurdish studies Ismail Beşikçi, used this intense atmosphere to initiate some changes and obtain Kurds' ethno-national rights, which as Beşikçi explains, had been denied following the development of modern Turkey (Beşikçi 1992).

The political advancements between the military coup d'états of 1971 and 1980 (in Turkey), particularly the rise in leftist and Kurdish national organisations as noted previously, had a considerable impact on Abdullah Öcalan's political views, attitudes and action plan on the Kurdish issue. Although his political activities date back to the 1970s and taking into account his involvement in Turkish leftist organizations, Abdullah Öcalan suggested that the Kurdish issue has to be considered independently and not grouped with the Turkish leftist movement's "revolutionary solution" understanding (Imset 1992, 9–10). PKK's harsh criticisms were not restricted to only Turkish leftist

²¹ For all details about the people who joined the meeting formation of PKK see, (Kısacık 2012, 31).

movements. As İsmet G. İmset notes, both prior and following its formation PKK scrutinized Kurdish leftist and national organizations and alleged that they were being feudal, state agents, “collaborator-slaves” or “agent-provocateur(s)” (Ibid., 206). These bold accusations were not accepted by Kurdish organizations of the time. These claims, therefore, led to tensions between PKK and the Kurdish movements before the military coup d’état of 1980, which then progressed into a conflict between PKK and Kurdistan National Liberation movement (Kurdistan Ulusal Kurtuluşçuları-KUK) resulting in many of deaths from both parties (H.Bozarslan 2004a, 96; Burkey 2010, 159–163).

Along with the conditions that led to the emergence of the PKK, the party’s ideology also needs to be covered because it was influential in shaping the movements’ political demand(s) at that time. PKK’s political principles in general were strongly affected by the political atmosphere in Turkey when the movement appeared. Abdullah Öcalan’s involvement or experience in the Turkish leftist and Kurdish national movements of the time were influential in shaping of his and the movement’s ideology. According to Robert Olson, ‘Marxism-Leninism’ and ‘nationalism’ were two main pillars of the movements’ ideology during its initial years (Olson 2011, 1). Almost all PKK sources refuse to be attached with nationalism (Serxwebûn (Agustos) 2000, 6–9), however, to Barkey and Fuller (1998, 24), PKK is still a nationalist organization. The creation and outlines of the PKK’s ideology in that sense show clear similarities with other national struggles across the world during that time. In other respects, Akkaya and Jongerdin (2013, 247) argue that the analytical formation of the PKK during its earlier years developed in a similar vein with the other movements which carried a national struggle in various regions.

Although the PKK challenged to be identified as a nationalist movement, it openly defined itself as a Marxist-Leninist movement with the aim of creating a Socialist United Independent Kurdish state, which was the focus of its party programme (PKK (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan) Program ve Tüzüğü 1995, 79–80) and formation charter (the foundation declaration) (PKK-Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan-Kuruluş Bildirgesi 1984). As highlighted in Rafet Ballı, PKK’s demand for independence had close associations

with the demographic and territorial division of the Kurds following World War I, leading to denial of the Kurdish identity (Balli 1991, 207). PKK's main argument herein, as Rafet Balli stresses, was that since the Kurdish region was divided the Kurds could be liberated only through obtaining an independent Kurdish nation-state, and that this, the movement believed, could only be achieved by an armed struggle (Ibid.). In this regard, during its initial years the movement harshly challenged solution of the Kurdish issue through autonomy models and the political movements that claim this demand (P.J.White 2012, 209-210). PKK, therefore, believed that except creation for a Kurdish socialist state all other political models would damage development of the Kurdish national struggle (Ibid., 209-210). Therefore, as previously noted, PKK thought that establishing a socialist Kurdistan was the only means of freeing Kurds. To reach its purpose PKK sought to distance the Kurds from the state by carrying out ideological and military activities. The hope was to cut the relations between the Kurdish feudal class and Turkish state, since the cadre of the PKK belied that the Kurdish feudal class played a major role on integration and assimilation of the Kurds (Karayılan 2012, 99–105). PKK, because of this belief, first instigated a war against the Kurdish feudal classes, tribes, *aghas* and groups who had strong affiliations with the state, and then commenced its attacks against the Turkish security forces in 1984 (Öcalan 1993, 121–122; PKK II. Kongresine Sunulan PKK-MK Çalışma Raporu 1984, 35–36). PKK's declaration of war against these classes diminished these groups power in society to some extent. However, with conflict intensifying PKK wanted to use some of them and began to support certain tribes in its struggle against the rival tribes and the state, though this strategy caused further fragmentation among the Kurds (P. J. White 2012, 226–228). This outcome provided a ground and certain advantages for the powers wanting to eliminate the Kurdish political organization(s). For instance, aware of the disjointed structure of the Kurds, the state formed a paid army from within the Kurds, namely *village guards*, to fight against the PKK; which, in turn, intensified the division and enmity amongst the Kurds (McDowall 2004, 423–425). Introducing the village guards was depreciated by the PKK. Soon after their formation PKK attacked village guards and killed many of them (Imset 1992, 109).

The conflict between PKK and village guards and some tribes - which sided with the state - escalated the conflict among the Kurds (Lundgren 2007, 48).

4.1.1.1 Paradigm Shift in PKK's Ideology and Political Demands

Soon after its foundation and particularly following the break out of war against the Turkish security forces, PKK started to gain popularity amongst Kurds. Many of the Kurds from various backgrounds joined the movement (Westrbeim 2010, 40). Its stress on the Kurds' ethno-national identity and the state's tough approach, as will be argued following, were two main dynamics contributed to joining(s) to the movement. Though, with increased popularity amidst various sects of Kurds and political polarization among the world, as cited in Ramazan Aras, the movement could no longer continue its Marxist-Leninist ideology because of the power of religious identity in the Kurdish society. More clearly, as Aras points out, prominence of religious identity among the Kurds prompted the movement to avoid emphasis on its Marxist-Leninist ideology in order to gain popularity amidst the Kurds (Aras 2014, 76) . PKK's strategic shift in its ideological stance caused change in its symbols as well. To distance itself considerably from the Marxist-Leninist ideology, it removed the symbols of the hammer and sickle from its flag, which represented the movement's concept of communism (Şimşek 2004, 133). In line with this development, the movement's leader Abdullah Öcalan stated that they had to develop a new approach in understanding socialism. Mostly following the 1990s he began to criticize the Soviet Socialism practise (Serxwebûn (Ekim) 1995, 12–13); Ballı 1991, 287–289), along with the initial goal of the PKK—i.e. foundation of a socialist Kurdish state, PKK began to revise its approach to ideological issues and creation of a nation state as well. As highlighted by Akkaya and Jongerden (2013, 204), Öcalan abandoned “Pan-Kurdish” tendencies and began to put emphasis on development of “radical democracy” and “democratic confederalism,” and initiated a new understanding of socialism in his movement. Emphasizing radical democracy and democratic confederalism illustrates Öcalan's determination to distance his movement - PKK - from the existed socialist experiences.

Along his, earlier noted, criticism of the Socialist Soviet experience Öcalan also openly stated that in a political struggle everything should be done for people and humanity not for the state itself (Serxwebun (Ekim) 1995, 12–13). His ideas reveal that he aimed to put people in the centre of his struggle and not the state; because, as cited by Rafet Ballı, for Öcalan forming a state would not result in ultimate freedom for stateless nations. Öcalan, herein talks about ‘mental and ‘moral’ freedoms and deems them substantial for the freedom of people before considering creation of their own state (Ballı 1991, 231–233). Bearing in mind the issue in the Kurdish case, Öcalan highlighted that the Kurds’ intense economic and demographic integration complicated the situation further, and affiliations with the state made the idea of a Kurdish state even more difficult and unattainable (Ibid., 234). Taking into account Öcalan’s distance from creation of a Kurdish state, Barkey and Fuller (1998, 25-26) consider the end of the Cold War, weakening of socialist bloc and collapse of Soviet Russia, PKK’s failure in obtaining support from large number of Kurds and Turkish state’s power certain conditions for the movement’s detachment from the idea of a Kurdish state.

PKK’s distance demand of nation-state became more achievable as the Turkish political authorities agreed and welcomed it. For instance, in an attempt to resolve the Kurdish issue, president Turgut Özal (1927-1993) formulated certain steps and issued the complete laying down (burying) of arms in 1993. It is argued that consideration by the president for ending the long-standing Kurdish question, and political reconciliation, or at least some signs of talks between PKK and the state further encouraged PKK’s refusal of independence (Lundgren 2007, 48-49; Kirişçi and Winrow 1997, 176) and consideration of federalism as an alternative political model (Marcus 1993, 242 ; Imset 1992, 231).

PKK’s approach to state and a solution for the Kurdish issue once again changed course with kidnapping of Öcalan in Kenya in 1999. Following his arrest Öcalan intensified his criticism of nationalism and creation of a state even more, and went one step further by challenging the solution of the Kurdish issue through territorial political models, particularly creation of a Kurdish nation-state (Öcalan 2009). More clearly, he strongly rejected both nation-state and federalism models for solving the Kurdish issue

and instead, he began to focus on democratic solutions and proposed granting the Kurds' democratic rights within the constitution (Güneş 2012, 126–129). Öcalan's refusal of territorial political claims (federalism and nation-state) was not welcomed by some Kurds (Marcus 2007, 288; Akkaya and Jongerdin 2013, 248). However, despite the criticisms Öcalan persisted on his new paradigm and sought to reconcile the Kurdish issue through democracy and formulated his political demand as a creation of “democratic republic” (Marcus 2007, 287–288) under his “democratic confederalism” understanding (Akkaya and Jongerdin 2013, 251), and hence, a democratic autonomy status for the Kurds.

4.1.1.2 The PKK and the Kurdish Identity

This section seeks to explain PKK's influence on development of the Kurdish ethno-national identity this, as will be argued later, has impact on the Kurdish political demands.

The conflict between PKK and state military forces generated a massive socio-cultural, political and economic destruction of the Kurdish people. With reference to Robert Olson, it is estimated that the conflict between PKK and state military forces left more than 50,000 dead, including 17,500 unsolved murders, arrests of tens of thousands of Kurds, evacuation of 3,500 villages and migration of more than 2.5 million Kurds from their own homes. Olson also underlines that a vast number of Kurds have been affected by this rivalry, but mostly due to the state's violent coercion (Olson 2011, 3–4).²² The state's actions, Imset (1992, 242) says, actually caused the Kurds' trust and confidence in the state to fall. H.Bozarslan (2004b, 84–85) and van Bruinessen (2000a, 115–116) also touch on the consequences of the state's tough policies against the Kurds and express that this led considerable numbers of the Kurds to approach the PKK. Mentioning the state policies, Yalçın-Mousseau (2012, 55) highlights on another result and explains that the constrains on the “ethnic politics” generated “disintegration of some Kurds from the Turkish state and society”. The point underlined by Mousseau is rather crucial, taking the research question into account, because this, as a result,

²²For details to see some state apparatus' involvement in some killings in the Kurdish region see, (Uslu 2010).

“radicalized the Kurdish population” (McDowall 2004, 428) and initiated the politicization of Kurdish ethnic identity and growth of Kurdish nationalism (Romano 2010, 230–231; Gürbey 1996, 17-18, Yalçın-Mousseau 2012, 55).²³

By taking into account the state’s tough policies against the Kurds and Kurds’ reaction to this (Marcus 2007, 176-177), PKK further intensified its struggle and pursued to show that it is the sole power which can save Kurds from state violence and free them (Romano 2010, 128). In line with that purpose PKK began to organize the Kurds through civil organizations along with an armed struggle. PKK organized social and cultural activities, formed associations and tried to reach all aspects of the Kurds through a national discourse and purpose. Their efforts were successful as many Kurds worked intensively to create their own socio-cultural, political and economic organizations. For instance, they established radio and TV stations to create national awakening of the political struggle and to advertise their demands for collective rights (Gürbey 1996, 21–22). PKK’s aim(s) created a platform to mobilize masses for their political rights (Romano 2010; Beşikçi 1992). The activities soon brought results and catalysed the movement of masses in most parts of the Kurdish region. The 1990s saw a number of *Serhildan(s)* (Başkaldırı-upraising), which they named “intifada”, protests in regions

²³ Nationalism has been one of the vital constructors of modern Turkey’s ideology, and has been more influential in establishing the state’s political stance against minority groups. It has been viewed as a forward medium in the construction of “cohesion” in society (Dumont 1984, 29). The impact of Turkish nationalism on Turkey’s internal politics has escalated in line with the development of the Kurdish issue. It is purposely employed against the Kurdish ethnicity in order to create a homogeneous Turkish nation (Yeğen 2007b ; Beller-Han and Hann 2001, 39–40). Therefore, in escalation of Turkish nationalism, Kurds’ ethno-national struggle, as Ferhat Kentel states, has an undeniable role. A considerable number of the Turkish community consider Kurds’ political claims as a source of trouble for the state. Turkish nationalism herein functions as a “bridge” or common point between these Turks in their reaction against the Kurds (Kentel 2014, 99). On the other hand, the state or Turkish nationalisms’ tough approach and disregard of Kurds’ demands have a counter effect. Their mistreatment of the Kurds actually becomes a significant inducement in development of Kurdish ethno-national consciousness (Erdoğan 2009). Continuous conflict between PKK and the state’s military forces, along with the state’s tough policies against the Kurds, further reinforced Kurdish nationalism and (it) obtained ethnic affinities. Put otherwise, Kurdish identity additionally *ethnized* and heightened the Kurdish ethno-nationalism (H. Yavuz 2007). Emergence of Kurdish ethno-nationalism, as underlined by Tezcür (2009, 8) provoked *radicalisation* of Turkish nationalism. In simple terms, both nationalisms have effect on each other (Özcan 2011, 87–88). This-their influence on each other, fragmented the social fabric of society, and to some extent, built social and cultural barriers between Turkish and Kurdish identities. This subsequently caused *radicalisation* and intensification of the Kurdish political claims (Keyman and Özkırımlı 2013, 48); with secessionism the next step as Kurdish nationalism carries on intensifying (H. Yavuz 2007, 11).

densely populated by Kurds (P.J.White 2012, 236; Gunter 1990, 90–91; Gürbey 1996, 23). PKK's struggle lead to Kurds collectively voicing their political claims for the first time following the defeat of Kurdish rebellions which took place in the first three decades of the Republic and collapse of Kurdish national movements established between the years 1960 and 1980. PKK in that sense was responsible for repairing Kurds' self-confidence with respect to Kurdish national identity; which had been denied subsequent to the foundation of the Turkish Republic (Güneş 2012; Beşikçi 1992). Thus, PKK instilled Kurds with awareness of their 'statuslessness' (*statüsüzlük*) (Beşikçi 1992). This, in turn, made many Kurds conscious of their collective identity and has led to the creation or imagination of their own national identity.

4.1.2 From HEP to the BDP: Politicization of the Kurdish Identity

The previous section outlined that creation of the PKK, particularly its conflict with the state security forces, contributed to politicization of the Kurdish ethno-cultural identity and growth of Kurdish nationalism. As mentioned previously, to further raise Kurds' ethno-national consciousness or politicize the Kurds the PKK begun to intensify and spread its activities following the 1990s, for example, through organizing *serhildan*(s) (uprisings). To prevent all these and annihilate the PKK, the state took severe measures which resulted in serious human rights violations in the regions populated by mostly Kurds (K. Yıldız 2005a).

Despite intense conflict between the PKK and security forces plus human rights violations, existed political parties were unable to manage or solve the issues at hand. N. Watts (1999, 631) underlines that the state did not want Kurdish political organizations which prioritized the Kurdish ethnic identity to develop. To prevent this, the state took to legal measures too. For instance, the Turkish legal system closed all doors to the political parties which "based on regionalism and ethnicity" (Güney 2002, 122). Despite the state's such strict policy, the Kurds insisted on carrying out their struggle through legal channels. To discuss the Kurdish issue on a legal platform(s) Kurdish politicians, intellectuals and Kurds with strong opinions on political rights founded People's Labour Party (HEP-Halkın Emek Partisi) on June 7th 1990 (N.Watts 1999, 632). Despite

including some Turkish origin leftist politicians, HEP predominantly consisted of Kurds and made clear references to certain international covenants, including, Universal Declaration of Human Rights because it wanted to solve the Kurdish issue through a legal base, or more clearly, in a civil and democratic manner (Ibid., 636). HEP made efforts to bring the Kurdish issue into the public agenda and to provide a political and legal base for discussions in the hope of reaching solutions. In resolving the Kurdish issue, HEP primarily claimed for recognition of the Kurdish national identity in the Constitution, wanted the state to take decisive steps towards developing human rights and a democratization process, and principally requested democratic rights for Kurds, including, progress on freedom of expression, education in their mother tongue, Kurdish broadcasting, deterring military operations and precluding torture (Ölmez 1995, 161).

HEP participated in the 1991 general election soon after it was formed. However, the 10 percent election threshold meant that it ran on the tickets of the SHP and secured 22 seats in parliament (Tayiz 2014, 9). Although HEP did not obtain this success with its name, election of Kurdish MPs who were sensitive to the Kurdish issue was remarkable since it provided the opportunity of bringing the Kurdish question into parliament's agenda. However, the cooperation between SHP and HEP did not last long due to speculations of HEP maintaining ties with the PKK, which led to reactions from SHP members causing in Kurdish parliamentarians to sustain their time in HEP (Güney 2002, 124).

Despite its limited power and split from SHP, HEP played a considerable role in increasing awareness of the Kurdish issue to the public. It was the first time the Kurdish issue was brought forward to the Turkish parliament in a civil manner. HEP is, therefore, considered as a revolutionary party for politicizing the Kurdish issue in the public sphere (Ölmez 1995), but also for raising questions on the Turkish political and judicial structures. HEP's focus on Kurdish identity, activities and positive remarks on the PKK instigated their closure by the Turkish Constitutional Court in 1993. The Turkish Constitutional Court declared that the party was a focal point for terrorism against the

indivisible integrity of state because of its links with the PKK.²⁴ Despite HEP's counter claims (defence), as pointed out by Koğacioğlu (2004, 447–448), the Constitutional Court refused to acknowledge the Kurds as a minority group with reference to the Lausanne Treaty that recognized religious communities with a status, this, therefore, was taken as base for claiming that the HEP damages unity of nation by mentioning an ethnic group which is not included in the Lausanne Treaty. To put it simply, HEP's political activities, particularly the emphasis on Kurdish ethnicity, were perceived as a challenge to the solitary (single) understanding of nation by the Constitutional Court.

Given the reasoned decision in closing HEP, it is possible to suggest that Turkey was not ready to face Kurdish reality (recognition of Kurdish identity) through a legal base. The authorities did not accept the public recognition of the Kurdish identity and, as is the case with HEP, punished those who attempted to take such action during the mentioned period.

In other respects, like the state the Kurds also were not deterred from their legal struggle either and took a firm stand in obtaining their ethno-national rights. It is even plausible to imply that the state's aggressions against the Kurdish identity further encouraged them to maintain their activities. With this determination the majority of the Kurds who were took part in HEP set up Democratic Labour Party (DEP-Demokratik Emek Partisi), on May 7th 1993 soon after HEP was closed (Tayiz 2014, 9; Güney 2002 125). As the successor of HEP, DEP also prioritized the Kurdish issue and fought for recognition of Kurdish identity. Majority of DEP members were of Kurdish origin but the party initially also included a considerable number of Turkish origin members. However, DEP was unable to maintain majority of its Turkish origin members because of their strong focus on the PKK; it therefore, can also be considered as a Kurdish origin party (Alınak 1996, 67–73). As with HEP and as noted previously, DEP also attempted to bring the Kurdish issue to the attention of the Turkish public and parliament. Moreover, DEP did not recognize PKK as a terrorist organization in spite of the state's reaction (N.Watts 2009, 648). Most of its efforts were concentrated in creating a dialogue between the state

²⁴ To see the decision of HEP's closing case see, (The Turkish Constitutional Court 1992/1 E, 1993/1 K, Date: 14.7.1993).

and PKK. Taking into account DEP's understanding of the Kurdish issue and proposition for Kurdish political rights, as Gürbey (1996, 26-27) reveals, the main objective of the party was to solve the Kurdish issue through recognition of the Kurdish ethnic identity in addition to the political rights associated with ethnic minorities.

However, due to the state's rejection of the Kurdish identity DEP also soon faced a closing case from the Constitutional Court and was officially terminated on June 30th 1994. The actions of the state were spurred on by the allegations that DEP had links with PKK and sought to destroy the union of the state.²⁵ The collapse of DEP, as with HEP, did not dissuade (deter) Kurds from their political fight to be included in Turkish politics with their own identity. It was because of that aim a new political party, People's Democracy Party (Halkin Emek Partisi-HADEP), was established in May 1994 (P.J. White 2012, 246). Their efforts in organizing HADEP illustrate that Kurds were adamant to solve the Kurdish issue and maintain their political struggle by willing to be part of parliament and present their demands through the Turkish legal and political system regardless of the state's impediments (N. Watts 1999, 632).

In its political life HADEP participated in the 1995 and 1999 elections. In the first election it won only 4.2 % of popular votes (Turkish Statistical Institute, 11) and could not pass the national electoral threshold of 10%. Majority of the votes went to the conservative Welfare Party (RP-Refah Partisi).²⁶ Many reasons could be considered to elucidate HADEP's defeat in Turkey and RP's success in the Kurd region. But, according to Aylin Güney, a sound explanation for this was the secular identity of HADEP and its distance from religion. She adds that the election results demonstrate that the Kurds' religious identity rather than their ethnic identity was the primary determinant of their choice of party (Güney 2002, 127). HADEP also participated in the local and national elections of 1999, gaining only 4.7% of popular votes (Turkish Statistical Institute, 11). Again, HADEP failed to reach the 10% threshold in the general election. However, they

²⁵ To see the decision of the DEP's closing case see, (The Turkish Constitutional Court 1993/3 E, 1994/2 K, Date. 30.06.1994).

²⁶ For the votes RP obtained in 1995 general elections in total and in the regions mostly dominated by the Kurds see (Turkish Statistical Institute 2012).

gained some success in the local election by securing 36 municipalities, including municipalities of the cities with high population of Kurd communities - Diyarbakır, Ağrı, Batman, Bingöl, Hakkâri, Siirt and Van. HADEP's accomplishment in the local election and by obtaining sizeable votes from Kurdish cities proved that it was one of the leading powers among the Kurds, also the party representing "Kurdish ethnic votes" (Güneş-Ayata and Ayata 2002, 139). To deal with the Kurdish issue HADEP considered taking democratic, political and economic steps. To achieve this, HADEP proposed decentralization, strengthening of local units, education in the mother tongue, election of governors and local police chiefs by local residents, prevention of torture, freedom of expression, use of the Kurdish language in the public sphere and reclaiming original Kurdish village and town names (Güney 2002, 129). HADEP's demands show that it did not focus on creating an independent Kurdish nation-state or federalism as territorial claims but highlight and acknowledge cultural identity (Ibid.).

Despite the fact HADEP's, as well as previous Kurdish political parties', political messages and focus on resolving the Kurdish issue through democratic methods and/or via a legal ground, the state did not alter its view on the Kurdish identity. The state carried out a tough stance against anyone who expressed their Kurdish identity or Kurdish identity in general; this resulted with killing, kidnapping or arresting of the many of the party members, and the party was closed down (Ciment 1996, 158).

HADEP's emphasis on the Kurdish identity and its political activities quickly caught the attention of the Turkish Constitutional Court. Like previous Kurdish political parties, HADEP was outlawed on the grounds of having suspected associations with the PKK and promoting separatism against the unity and territorial integrity of the state.²⁷ Due to this, after HADEP was outlawed almost all of the party members joined another pro-Kurdish party – Democratic People's Party (Demokratik Halk Partisi-DEHAP) - founded on 24th October 1997 as an alternative party (Çakır 2011b, 6). DEHAP joined the 2003 election but like HADEP they also failed to pass the 10% national election threshold, achieving approximately 6.2% of votes in total (Kurubaş 2008, 34). Following

²⁷ To see the decision of the HADEP's closing case see, (The Turkish Constitutional Court 1999/1 E, 2003/1 K, Date. 13.03.2003)

the election results, which were inadequate to move the party to parliament, DEHAP dissolved itself and most of its cadres joined Democratic Society Party (DTP-Demokratik Toplum Partisi), which had been established on 17th August 2005 (Çakır 2011b, 9). As a replacement for previous pro-Kurdish parties, DTP also prioritized the Kurdish issue by adding it in its agenda and joining the 2007 and 2009 elections. In the 2007 elections, DTP ran with independent candidates to pass the 10% electoral threshold by procuring 22 seats.²⁸ Considering the Kurds' political choices in the general election of 2007, it is also worth noting that more than half the Kurds in Kurd populated areas voted for AKP (Tayiz 2014, 12).²⁹ Given AKP's religious identity, as Karlsson (2008, 168) underlines it is likely a large number of Kurds identified themselves primarily through their religious identity and separated themselves from the secular Kurdish party DTP, further illustrating the impact religion plays on shaping some Kurds' political choices

Similar to previous Kurdish political parties, DTP also placed the Kurdish issue as a primary concern in its agenda. However, with reference to Kirişçi (2007, 19), two separate understandings at that point developed in the party; while the first one proposed a solution to the Kurdish issue through a pluralist democracy understanding, the second approach looked to federalism for a resolution. As with such political claims, ties with PKK also became a contentious issue within the party. In regard to this separation, prominent scholar in Kurdish studies, Robert Olson, underlines that whilst some members of the party strongly suggested having relations with PKK and Abdullah Öcalan as well as maintaining an armed struggle, others proposed ceasing the armed struggle. This debate, Olson says, was favourable for those who did not want to end PKK's armed struggle until the Kurdish question is resolved (Olson 2009, 39, 70). This, in turn, had great effects on Kurdish politics. Having a common social ground between PKK and DTP, as Tan (2009, 515) argues, far increased PKK's influence on Kurdish politics and expanded affiliations between them.

²⁸ The cities the DTP obtained seats; Batman (2), Bitlis (1), Diyarbakır (4), Hakkâri (1), Iğdır (1), İstanbul (2), Mardin (2), Muş (2), Siirt (1), Şanlıurfa (1), Şırnak (2), Tunceli (1) and Van'da (2)

²⁹ For 22 July 2007 General Election Result also visits Supreme Committee of Elections (Yüksek Seçim Kurulu) homepage available at (http://www.ysk.gov.tr/ysk/faces/Secimler?_adf.ctrl-state=9cgjmzhve_9&wcnav.model=YSKUstMenu&_afLoop=22089026474476664 accessed 11/08/2014)

DTP shared its predecessor's destiny and it was outlawed by the Constitutional Court in 2009; the main accusations being that the party orchestrated the central events against the inseparable unity of the state, the country and the nation.³⁰ Closures of pro-Kurdish political parties did not deter the Kurds from forming new political party(ies). Thus, soon after it was closed almost all cadres of the DTP decided to join Peace and Democracy Party (BDP-Bariş ve Demokrasi Partisi), which was established in 2008 (Çakır 2011b, 6) and gave emphasis to the Kurdish issue by proposing a democratic autonomy model, which will be covered in more detail in the upcoming section.

BDP is still active in politics but majority of its members joined the Peoples' Democratic Party (Halkların Demokratik Partisi-HDP) founded on October 15th 2012. HDP shares almost the same political principles with BDP and supports democratic autonomy as the most applicable political model to solve the Kurdish issue (HDP Parti Programı 2012).³¹

4.2 ANALYSIS OF CAUSAL FACTORS IN THE DEMAND FOR DEMOCRATIC AUTONOMY

This part endeavours to understand the reasoning leading certain Kurdish groups-PKK and BDP to prefer democratic autonomy –which seeks to provide the Kurds a political status through administratively re-structuring Turkey into 24-26 regions –but not other territorial and cultural political models for the Kurds.

The level analysis of this research is (based on) group, hence, interviews were conducted with the elites of organizations—, including MPs, mayors, parties and groups' leaders, heads, executives, and their political activists. More specifically, prominent figures (elites) of the BDP and PKK, and organizations (or some in these organizations) with close affiliations with the BDP were approached. Thus, along with BDP and PKK, the organizations-HDP, Istanbul Kurdish Institute, Democratic People's Congress

³⁰ To see the decision of DTP's closing case see (The Turkish Constitutional Court 2007/1 E, 2009/4 K, Date. 11.12.2009).

³¹ HDP's party programme is available on the party's home page. To see party's programme visit <http://www.hdp.org.tr/parti/parti-programi/8>

(Demokratik Toplum Kongresi-DTK), Peace Assembly, Yüzleşme Association, Wise Man Committee, Zaza-Der, Democratic and Free Women Movement (Demokratik Özgür Kadın Hareketi-DÖKH), London Kurdish Community and EMEP- were also observed and their prominent elites were interviewed.

Based on the given context, 24 interviews were conducted to clarify the causes behind the demand for democratic autonomy and refusal of other political models. In addition to the interviews, articles and books by mentioned group leaders and prominent political figures - such as PKK leader (s) Abdullah Öcalan, the organization's commanders Mustafa Karasu, Duran Kalkan and BDP MP Ayla Akat and Demir Çelik - were also used as primary sources.

Considering the data and information collated from the interviews and primary sources, this part will bring to the forefront the reasons behind demand for democratic autonomy among Kurds who support BDP and have close affiliations with the PKK. At the same time, this section will explain why supporters of democratic autonomy reject alternative solutions presented by other Kurdish groups and organizations.

4.2.1 Why Democratic Autonomy Model?

The Kurds' demand for political status has been ongoing for the last two centuries. The points specially presented in Chapter Three provides an illustrative framework to analyse the Kurds who insist on a democratic autonomy status claim.

Empirical research of this study shows that claim for a political status, more clearly demand for constitutional acknowledgement of the Kurds' national status, is common amongst both democratic autonomy supporters and proponents of territorial political models. However, while the latter's national status request is centred on recognition of a particular ethnicity and territory, the former rests on the non-territorial and non-ethnic terms, mainly within the framework of democratic nation. That also explains why demand for a national status brings about two different political models, which are analysed in depth later in this and the following chapters.

With reference to findings from the fieldwork, the Kurds' support for BDP implies constitutional recognition of the Kurds' national status, which is one of the primary aims of democratic autonomy. This section, therefore, lays out the causes which lead to demand for democratic autonomy in the light of the data obtained from interviews, observations and other primary sources.

4.2.1.1 “A Nation Cannot be Without Status”: Demand for a Political Status

The fieldwork has revealed that supporters of democratic autonomy distrust the state and believe that because they have not been given a national status, more clearly as they their national identity is not recognized and protected by the constitution, their ethno-national identity is being assimilated and political achievements they have already obtained may be taken away from them. Consequently, they argue that only through constitutional recognition of the Kurdish national status (at the collective level in political and legal terms), would be eliminated their concerns. Thus, they rationalize democratic autonomy model within the context of national status.

Taking into account the concerns and claims of the Kurds, the associations between political status and national identity are conveyed in the democratic autonomy model drafted by Abdullah Öcalan, but based on Öcalan's main principles it is further developed by the Democratic Society Congress (DTK). Democratic autonomy deems constitutional acknowledgement of the Kurds' national status as its primary objective. As explained in democratic autonomy draft booklet, “Democratic autonomy is the way to express that the Kurds refuse the political status based on the Turkish state's denial and destruction policies and are willing to reach a new status that allows them to live in freedom and democracy” (Draft Submission for a democratic autonomous Kurdistan 2011, 14). Democratic autonomy model, therefore, “represents the Kurdish people's political status” (Ibid., 19).

The beginning of the section noted the Kurds proposing democratic autonomy highlighted that Kurdish ethno-national identity is still denied and under the risk of assimilation. This was a very common concern alluded to during the fieldwork. For

example, Kudret Gülün the BDP Istanbul Esenyurt district co-chair³², stated that Kurds do not trust the state and believe that without acquisition of a political status Turkey will continue with its assimilation policies over the Kurdish identity.³³ Like Kudret Gülün, Arif Erol, who is also BDP's Istanbul Esenyurt district co-chair, argues that the state has progressed with its assimilation policies over Kurdish identity in order to remove or at least weaken Kurds' national will. For instance, Arif Erol deems the lack of an official mention to the Kurdish identity as proof of their concerns.³⁴ The apprehensions regarding assimilation was also highlighted in an interview with Hasan Yıldız, who is a consultant for some BDP affiliated organizations. Hasan Yıldız often stressed on the intense assimilation taking place amongst the Kurds because many did not have the opportunity to organize themselves and protect their ethno-national values. With the words of Hasan, Kurds are faced with a "dis-identification policy (*Kimliksizlesme*)", which he holds accountable for the outbreak of tension between the Kurds and state.³⁵ Assimilation policies against the Kurdish identity was formulated as part of the state's systematic assimilation approach to its minorities according to Rahime Kanilga, who is HDP Çanakkale executive and was HDP Çanakkale Municipality Co-Mayoral Candidate in The Turkish local elections held on *March 30th* 2014. Rahime defined the assimilation policies in Turkey with the following words;

Assimilation is not the strategy (*policy*)³⁶ that is only applied to Kurds. Assimilation is a state policy that is applied to all nations in different forms and power. Because Kurds' consciousness of opposing this assimilation is significant, they have been subject to assimilation more than other nations. This starts with the national pledge during primary school. This is a non-bloody genocide that was revealed in 1990s with forbidding education in mother tongue, banning Kurdish publications, forbidding Kurdish names and places. This is an absolute must for colonialism. It is not possible to stop assimilation entirely; but democratisation could clear the way for the people to live with the language and culture they

³² Contrary to other political parties in Turkish politics, BDP implements co-chair system at party's all mechanisms. Co-chairs consist of one male and female.

³³ Interview with Kudret Gülün in Istanbul, 25 December 2012

³⁴ Interview with Arif Erol in Istanbul, 25 December 2012

³⁵ Interview with Hasan Yıldız in Istanbul, 16 December 2012

³⁶ To further clarify interviewee's explanations or what they mean by some words I made quite short explanations in italic in some of the direct quotations. All the italics parts in interviewee's direct citations are belong to me, thereafter.

prefer. Assimilation is the effort to reduce to colour of the rainbow to one. Infact the rainbow is much better with its all colours.³⁷

In line with these concerns, Sami Tan, the Istanbul Kurdish Institute head argued that “Kurdish issue, at least, the relations between the Kurds and Turks cannot be maintained or carried out as before. Kurdish issue, hence, makes recognition of a political status necessary.”³⁸

The Kurds who claim for cultural rights, which will be analysed in Chapter Five, consider the aforementioned anxieties unrealistic or at least exaggerated for the present time. Nonetheless, political authorities and the negative stance of some parts of the Turkish public toward acknowledgment of Kurds’ political status supports democratic autonomy exponents’ above argument to some extent. For instance, a survey carried out by KONDA clearly reveals that the majority of the Turkish public are apathetic to the possibility of Kurds gaining a political status. The results of the survey show that majority of Turks are opposed to recognizing the Kurdish identity within the Constitution and Kurds receiving education in their mother tongue (KONDA 2011, 124–126). This position towards the Kurdish identity further increases democratic autonomy supporters’ anxieties that were also clearly revealed during the fieldwork. Sako (Fictious name), a DÖKH activist, openly articulated her concerns regarding assimilation and degeneration by the state through well-organized and planed methods against the Kurds. Sako pointed out that even if the state does not apply forced assimilation policies or openly refuse Kurdish ethnic identity, it does not mean Kurds are recognized as a nation equal to the Turks or that the state is willing to abandon its aim of removing Kurds’ ethno-national identity over time.³⁹

Many voiced the points mentioned by Sako during the observations. For instance, CHP parliamentarian Birgul Ayman Guler’s remark that ‘Kurds cannot be equal to the Turkish nation’, in her speech at parliament in 2013, (Sol Portal-January 11, 2013) and similar ideas were considered by many Kurds during the observations as the state’s

³⁷ Interview with Rahime Kanilga, 15 November 2014. (As Interviewee was based in Çanakkale, she responded asked questions on phone and in a written form via Facebook).

³⁸ Interview with Sami Tan in Istanbul, 27 April 2013

³⁹ Interview with Sako (Fictious name) in Istanbul, 28 April 2012

official ideology. For example, Rahime Kanilga mentioned about the difficulties she experienced during her election campaign because of the nationalist (*Ulusalçı*) identity of the city. She noted that “there are conservative and nationalists values that have been taught and insistent upon, anyone who digresses this is a traitor.” She stresses that such claims have created many difficulties for her, but also leads her to further concentrate on her political struggle.⁴⁰ The concerns mentioned by Rahime, hence, is the main catalyst for a political model –democratic autonomy in this case—that would guarantee political status for the Kurds. This connection between recognition of political status and democratic autonomy model was also emphasized by Mustafa Ünlü⁴¹, who was former DEHAP Gaziantep Provincial executive and currently actively takes part in political activities in HDP.

The field research also revealed that the anxieties of the Kurds (about implicit assimilation) further escalate with taking place of nationalist cadres in the government. Turkish nationalism’s negative reaction and position against the diverse ethno-religious groups, particularly against the Kurds (Kentel 2014), is one of the critical conditions in raising of their apprehensions and doubts relating to the state’s approach towards their national identity, which clearly appeared during the fieldwork. Emine Ayna’s (BDP Diyarbakir MP) following citation shows the distrust of the Kurds who call for democratic autonomy toward the state, and relating to this, the importance in their struggle for obtaining a political status. With respect to this, she argues some state authorities, for example, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, are Turkish nationalists and do not want Kurds to have national status;

‘...Erdogan, in reality, believes Turkish-Islamic syntheses. He is, essentially, a Turkish nationalist, he is an ultranationalist, and he has roots in MHP. He is both a radical Turkish nationalist and has roots in Turkish idealist (*Ülkücü*) movement. Because of that Erdogan never wants the Kurds to have their status. He does it, if he has to. Not because he wants. ...Therefore, we talk about the right of self-

⁴⁰ Interview with Rahime Kanilga, 15 November 2014. (As Interviewee was based in Çanakkale, she responded asked questions on phone and in a written form via Facebook).

⁴¹ Interview with Mustafa Ünlü, 15 November 2014. (As Interviewee is based in Gaziantep interview was made via Skype).

governance or status for the Kurdish identity and Kurdistan people.⁴²

Similarly to Emine Eyna, BDP Diyarbakir MP, Altan Tan, also communicated the same point in an interview conducted on behalf of the Centre for Turkey Studies (CEFTUS). He expressed that the current government, AKP and leader, do not want to recognise Kurds' national status. Altan says;

The Republic of Turkey, including Tayyip Erdogan, from the start has not had good intentions. Initially, the public regarded Erdogan and the government as conservative Muslims who also suffered from the regime and were imprisoned in the hands of the state. Therefore, people hoped that they would eliminate Kemalism, establish a democratic Turkey and grant rights to Kurds. But it appears that Tayyip Erdogan and his colleagues are not able to go beyond the Turkish-Islamic nationalist paradigm. They never acknowledge Kurds as a different people, as a nation.⁴³

In the same line, in response to the question, “*so they will never acknowledge Kurds as a nation?*” Tan specified that;

They never see and will never consider Kurds on equal terms as a nation, an ethnic group or as a people. What I mean is that they will never do so voluntarily. This can only happen if Kurds take their rights. As they say rights are never granted, but obtained. That will be the case for the Kurds.⁴⁴

Altan Tan and Emine Ayna's quotes indicate these Kurds do not trust the state and current government-AKP, and there is fear among them that without a political status their ethnic identity would become vulnerable. For this reason, majority of democratic autonomy defenders expressed that political status at a legal base is a necessity. Thus, gaining a political status is regarded, as uttered by Arif Erol, as “a method of defence of Kurdish ethno-national identity and removal of the legal base that legitimize the state's

⁴² Interview with Emine Ayna in Diyarbakır, 03 May 2013

⁴³ Interview conducted with Altan Tan (by Deniz Cifci, Zeynep Köserreisoglu, Serdar Sengul, Buket Bora and Jonathan Friedman, on Behalf of the CEFTUS) in London, 18 October 2013, available at CEFTUS (Centre for Turkey Studies) 2013) homepage, <http://ceftus.org/2014/01/28/ceftus-insights-interview-with-altan-tan-peace-and-democracy-party-bdp-mp/#.VGELwvSUefM>, (Accessed 09/10/2014)

⁴⁴ Interview conducted with Altan Tan (by Deniz Cifci, Zeynep Köserreisoglu, Serdar Sengul, Buket Bora and Jonathan Friedman, on Behalf of the Ceftus), in London, 18 October 2013

assimilative rules.’’⁴⁵

The interviews point out that fears of assimilation and Kurds’ concerns for their future further increase if they perceive a threat against their existing achievements. Comparing with the past, although still limited and some obstacles still in the way, currently Kurds can use the Kurdish language in public, print Kurdish newspapers – Azadîya Welat – broadcast in Kurdish – TRT-6 – open social and cultural organizations and have the option to take selective Kurdish courses in universities. On top of these achievements, BDP won 103 municipalities in the 2014 local elections on March 30th.⁴⁶ However, the Kurds who defend democratic autonomy, as Fırat Anlı member of the DTK and Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality’s current co-mayor (elected in/with 2014 election) highlights, they believe that most of these achievements are not protected through a legal system and are under the firm control of the state.⁴⁷

In this regard, another concern noted during interviews, which also leads Kurds to claim for a political status is the idea that the achievements Kurds struggled to obtain can be easily snatched away from them. The interview conducted with Fırat Anlı is significant in that regard. According to Fırat Anlı, Kurds obtained the achievements through an arduous and bloody struggle with unforeseen costs. He argues that the success of BDP is a direct correlation to the Kurds’ struggle. The party won the municipalities of ninety-nine provinces in the 2009 elections and it has great power in several provincial councils in the Kurdish region. However, he asserts, there is no guaranteed protection of BDP’s achievements as they are under the tough tutelage of the state apparatus; such as the governor and district head official. Thus, he asserts that the successes of the Kurds can be easily taken from their hands. For Fırat Anlı, Kurds’ political freedom may be meaningless unless their achievements are implemented and guaranteed in a legal manner, in order to protect their gains and national identity. For instance, he openly says

⁴⁵ Interview with Arif Erol in Istanbul, 25 December 2012

⁴⁶ In the 30 March 2014 Local Election BDP won 103 municipalities. For the 30 March Local Election results visit Supreme Committee of Election’s (YSK) homepage available at (http://www.ysk.gov.tr/ysk/faces/Secimler?_adf.ctrl-state=9cgjmzhve_9&wcnav.model=YSKUstMenu&_afLoop=22089026474476664 accessed 11/08/2014)

⁴⁷ Interview with Fırat Anlı in Diyarbakır, 08 May 2013

they do not trust the state when asked how he considers the negotiation between the state and PKK, namely peace process'⁴⁸, which currently continues to find solutions for the Kurdish issue. Fırat Anlı openly verbalizes his concerns and mistrust with the government;

When the current situation with the peace process is considered, Kurds are hopeful but cautious (*temkinli*) at the same time. ...Because of the previous experiences, so much disappointment has been seen. So many turnabouts have been experienced. I am telling this with considering similar experiences such as Habur and Oslo. There is always a feeling of failing this process.⁴⁹

Examining the Kurds' concerns in that sense, according to Seydi Fırat a member of DTK's Permanent Council and the Peace Assembly executive and Spokesman, granting a political status (constitutional recognition of the Kurdish identity) is in fact equivalent to granting Kurds' national identity.⁵⁰ It signifies constitutional recognition of Kurds' national identity, subsequent to a long period of denial.

Overall, it appears that to alleviate the fears of assimilation, and hence distrust of the Kurds against the state, democratic autonomy model, which is to provide Kurds a national political status, is embraced as an effective solution. This status, as highlighted previously, was named "democratic nation". According to the creator of model, Abdullah Öcalan, "democratic nation" is "a nationhood that brings unity", therefore, he says it should not be linked with the idea of nation-state (Öcalan 2012a, 17–19).

According to Abdullah Öcalan, in a democratic nation individual and collective rights and freedoms complement one another (Öcalan 2012a, 19–20). With reference to this, the national status understanding of the Kurds who struggle for democratic autonomy varies from the status which finds a large place in territorial models. To these Kurds their national status "is Kurdish people's status but it is not only the status of the Kurdish region where Kurds located. This status also includes the Kurds who live in

⁴⁸ For details about peace process and its background see research conducted by (Ankara Strateji Enstitüsü 2013).

⁴⁹ Interview with Fırat Anlı in Diyarbakır, 08 May 2013

⁵⁰ Interview with Seydi Fırat in Diyarbakır, 10 May 2013

Istanbul, Antalya and so on.”⁵¹ This, as observations made plainly indicate, has a decisive role in raising demand for democratic autonomy. For instance, Cafer Solgun, who is the writer and president of the Association for Confronting the Past (*Yüzleşme Derneği*), underlined that democratic autonomy as a political model can provides Kurds as well as its internal minorities - such as Alevi - a political status, which they had lost during the ‘Kemalist regime’.⁵²

Within the framework discussed above and as the fieldwork conducted clearly revealed, being a distinct nation and having concerns and distrust regarding the state’s approach towards Kurdish national identity and Kurds’ achievements contribute significantly to the rise in demand for democratic autonomy. To these Kurds granting of their national status, within legal and political terms, could remove their concerns with respect to assimilation of their ethno-national identity. In this light, democratic autonomy struggles for constitutional recognition of all ethnic, religious and cultural groups through a decentralization sense-but not by creation of territorial formations (Draft Submission for a democratic autonomous Kurdistan 2011). In this regard, as deliberations made-above reveal, the Kurds who gather around the BDP believe that democratic autonomy will provide such a status for protection of the Kurdish national identity. If political status is the major concern for the Kurds to support democratic autonomy model, then, it is pretty obvious why “cultural rights” only models are not appealing to these Kurds—as will be analysed in the following chapter. Yet one can claim, other territorial political models can also grant political status for the Kurds. So why do the cadres of BDP not support alternative political models?. Following sections deals with this question.

4.2.2 Why Not Alternative Political Models?

This section investigates the causes that led to refusal of other non-territorial political model (granting of cultural rights only) and territorial-political models (federalism and nation-state) respectively.

⁵¹ Interview with Sami Tan in Istanbul, 27 April 2013

⁵² Interview with Cafer Solgun in Istanbul, 16 May 2013

4.2.2.1 Refusal of the Cultural Rights Only model

The discussion in the previous section evaluated that because of the doubts toward the state's Kurdish identity approach, democratic autonomy adherents fear their national identity is at risk of assimilation and their current accomplishments can be snatched away at any point by the state. They highlighted that by approving their national status their national identity will be protected (at the collective level), which for them democratic autonomy offers.

This point, demand for constitutional acknowledgement of Kurdish national identity, is also a sufficient reason for these Kurds to justify their refusal in granting the cultural rights only model because a collective Kurdish identity is far more significant for them. This ideology was specified on numerous occasions during the fieldwork. For instance, according to Selim Kurbanoglu the BDP Diyarbakir Yenisehir Municipality mayor, the Kurds are a distinct nation and their status must be considered as such. He put emphasis on the collective rights or the collective side of the Kurdish identity and strictly confronted acknowledgements of Kurd's national will and identity through granting of their cultural rights only. Selim Kurbanoglu noted, "our demands are collective rights; but they (those Kurds who demand only granting of their cultural rights), talk about individual rights. ...We say, we want to self-govern ourselves."⁵³ Throughout the empirical research many of the democratic autonomy defenders were asked about the issue of individual and collective rights, with a particular focus on their persistence on gaining collective rights and rationale for refusing cultural rights at the individual level. In support of this, Jiyan (Fictitious name) a political and women's rights activist in the Kurdish diaspora in London mentioned on the 'national' side of the Kurdish identity (national identity) and stated, "it is shameful that we are still talking about the individual rights or authorities talking to solve the Kurdish issue through the individual rights." She added that in spite of the Kurdish national struggle continuing over a century Kurds are still deprived of their collective national rights. Jiyan also underlined that the Kurdish people will never give up their demand for national identity because their national

⁵³ Interview with Selim Kurbanoglu in Diyarbakir, 07 May 2013

identity is at the heart of their being - as already seen, they would rather give up on their lives than give up the struggle for their national identity. To Jiyan this proves that the state's wishes to grant individual rights are meaningless.⁵⁴

During the fieldwork research it appeared that these Kurds want to self-govern as a nation, but expressed that this is impossible with the cultural rights only model, according to Mustafa Ünlü.⁵⁵ Mentioning on the this point, Jiyan (Fictious name) pointed out that Kurds are well aware of the state's aim to destroy the sense of Kurdish national identity among the Kurdish people. Therefore, Jiyan explained "demanding only individual rights for the Kurds would mean denial of Kurdish national identity."⁵⁶ The ideas highlighted by Jiyan are also specified by the BDP Diyarbakir MP, Altan Tan. The following from Tan demonstrates the Kurds' attitude toward the current government's (AKP) refusal of their self-governance demand (collective rights) – AKP's goal is to have control over the Kurds;

Kurds, like Arabs, like Albanians, like Georgians are a different nation; they have a right to learn in their mother tongue and to govern themselves. Kurds and Turks are brothers and sisters. The two peoples will live together not in separate states, but in one state. Yet the (government's) mindset is different. They see Kurds as a minority to be governed or at best, a younger sibling. The big brother who controls money and governance can act as it wishes; it can beat the younger sibling or give pocket change to the younger sibling, who has no say in anything anyway.⁵⁷

Thus, taking the issue in this vein, the BDP supporters proclaim that Kurds as a nation cannot be without a status which will grants their collective rights.⁵⁸ And so, consider democratic autonomy as a political model which is able to provide them with a

⁵⁴ Interview with Jiyan (Fictious name) in London, 23 September 2014

⁵⁵ Interview with Mustafa Ünlü, 15 November 2014. (As Interviewee is based in Gaziantep interview was made via Skype).

⁵⁶ Interview with Jiyan (Fictious name) in London, 23 September 2014

⁵⁷ Interview conducted with Altan Tan (by Deniz Cifci, Zeynep Kösereisoglu, Serdar Sengul, Buket Bora and Jonathan Friedman, on Behalf of the CEFTUS), in London, 18 October 2013, Available at CEFTUS (Centre for Turkey Studies) 2013) homepage, <http://ceftus.org/2014/01/28/ceftus-insights-interview-with-altan-tan-peace-and-democracy-party-bdp-mp/#.VGELwvSUefM>, accessed 09/10/2014, (Accessed 09/10/2014).

⁵⁸ Interview with Seydi Fırat in Diyarbakır, 10 May 2013 and Interview with Selim Kurbanoglu in Diyarbakır, 07 May 2013.

political will and status to gain their collective rights, explains Çelik (2012a), BDP MP from Muş city. In this respect, as Ülsever (2011, 88–89) clarifies, with democratic autonomy Kurds want to be considered as a nation and largely manage their internal affairs independently. That is also the main reason why these Kurds challenge the idea of resolving the Kurdish issue through the cultural rights only model.

4.2.2.2 Refusal of Territorial Political Models

It was previously revealed that the Kurds who defend for democratic autonomy put emphasis on the Kurds' national character and how this contributes to obtaining a political status. In spite of this, and remembering the importance of territory in the definition of nation (see Chapter One), the empirical research for this study shows that the Kurds who defend democratic autonomy do not reference territory in their political demand. As followings section(s) will explore, they clearly detach themselves not only from nation-state but also from federalism because they consider it as a projection of the state. To put simply, they do not have any interest in separation or creation of an independent nation state nor federation for the Kurds. This is also the key point questioned by the Kurds who call for territorial political models, which will be analysed in following chapters.

The observations collected from BDP voters showed that Kurds' demographic distribution (dispersion), fragmented structure (existence of Kurdish internal minorities), consideration of territorial models as the crux of the conflict and decline in national boundaries are supposed causes for refusal of territorial political models and seeking democratic autonomy instead. This section, thus, aims to scrutinize causative factors in refusal of territorial political models and consideration of democratic autonomy as an alternative model with reference to the data collected during the fieldwork.

4.2.2.2.1 Dispersion of the Kurds in Turkey

The outcomes of this study demonstrated that the physical distribution of the Kurds around Turkey is one of the determinant conditions in rejection of territorial

political models and consideration of democratic autonomy as an alternative, predominantly because the latter can be applied throughout Turkey.

Many of the interviewees during the fieldwork research addressed the Kurds' demographic distribution and its influence on their political demands. For instance, DÖKH activist Sako (fictitious name), echoed that more than half of the Kurds migrated from their homeland, and are now have close social, cultural and economic interactions with the Turkish community. Because of this interaction, Sako stated that the Kurds have been integrated into Turkey's ethno-national identity to a certain extent and they no longer have a yearning to return to their traditional homeland. Therefore, to Sako, substantial number of the migrant Kurds feel more a part of the region they live in, thus, making it ever more difficult to solve the Kurdish issue through territorial political models.⁵⁹ The point Sako emphasised was repeatedly alluded to by the other democratic autonomy adherents. BDP Diyarbakir MP Emine Ayna's following citation stresses on the same argument and explains why the Kurds who call for democratic autonomy find application of territorial political models rather challenging considering Kurds' current physical dissemination;

Kurds and the minorities of the Kurdish region do not only live in Kurdistan. They populate all around Turkey. For instance, the Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan dwell on a particular region. ...However, the Kurds in Turkey do not reside on a particular region. If you approach the Kurdish issue with a federal model that means you exclude the Kurds who live in Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir.⁶⁰

Supporting this, Altan Tan, author of the book 'Kürt Sorunu' (Kurdish Issue) and BDP Diyarbakir MP, explains there is an intensive interaction between the Kurds who migrated, the Kurds who settled in Kurdish regions and other communities, for example, the Turks and the Arabs. Kurds' socio-cultural and economic relations with the 'others', Altan says, cut across Kurdish regions' boundaries therefore, conditions for forming territorial structures, particularly creation of new state, became difficult (Tan 2009, 553-554). With reference to this and the Kurds' current demographic distribution, Hasan Yildiz, a lawyer and consultant for some Alevi and BDP affiliated organizations,

⁵⁹ Interview with Sako (fictitious name) in Istanbul, 28 April 2012

⁶⁰ Interview with Emine Ayna in Diyarbakir, 03 May 2013

underlined that “proposing federalism or nation-state for the Kurds would result in heavy consequences (blow-*darbe*) for them.” Consequently, Hasan added, that due to the distribution of the Kurdish population as well as the socio-cultural and economic integration with Turkey, the idea of territorial boundaries in most Kurds is removed, notably in migrated Kurds.⁶¹ This is because to these Kurds territorial political models, both nation-state and federalism, focus on the Kurdish region and don’t propose plausible solutions for migrant Kurds nor the diverse identities in the Kurdish region.⁶² Therefore, with reference to the physical division of the Kurds BDP Diyarbakir MP, Emine Ayna, proposes creation of local assemblies and councils over territorial political models because with these structures each cultural, ethnic and religious group will have equal opportunity for representation. Ayna added;

If you propose an autonomy which could be applied to the entire Turkey, then, each region would find an opportunity to have its own parliament and other mechanisms. ...These parliaments or local assemblies will provide all groups the right of representation, including the Kurds as well. Accordingly, the Kurds who live in other parts of Turkey, such as Istanbul and Izmir or Manisa, will find opportunity to take part in the local assemblies of the regions where they are located.⁶³

Considering Ayna’s words, democratic autonomy proposes restructuring of Turkey by forming 24-26 regions across Turkey. In these regions Kurds as well as other ethnic and religious groups will have the prospect to practice their identities and independently organize where they live through local assemblies. In that sense, with reference to the model, the Kurds first of all will be recognized as nation and based on this in the regions they consist majority they will have their own parliament (which will be a supra organization over autonomous regions majorly settled by the Kurds) and Kurdish language will be official language, along with creation of other social, cultural and political organizations which are clarified in the eight dimensions of the model (Draft Submission for a Democratic Autonomous Kurdistan 2011). The democratic autonomy model herein becomes an alternative because it can be applied across Turkey

⁶¹ Interview with Hasan Yıldız in Istanbul, 16 December 2012

⁶² Interview with Sako (fictious name) in Istanbul, 28 April 2012

⁶³ Interview with Emine Ayna in Diyarbakır, 03 May 2013

(nationwide). Consequently, as stated in ‘*Yerel Bölgesel Sorunlar ve Demokratik Ulus Çözümü*’ (Local and Regional Issues and Democratic Nation Solution), edited and published by the PKK affiliated *Serxwebûn* publishing company, although democratic autonomy seeks to cater to all Kurds, because it can be applied throughout Turkey by establishing local and regional structures, it also attracts migrant Kurds and groups who categorize themselves through different identities (Serxwebûn 2012a, 148).

Interviews conducted showed that as a result of the fragmented structure of the Kurds, demand for democratic autonomy among Kurds who gather around BDP increased primarily because it can function across Turkey. This is also a determinant condition for refusal of territorial models among these Kurds. For instance, the BDP Diyarbakir Yenisehir municipality mayor, Selim Kurbanoglu, argued that because federalism and nation-state can only be applied within the Kurdish region and take the interest of only the Kurds who live there, these models are defective in solving migrated Kurds’ ethno-national concerns. Contrary to these models, he noted, democratic autonomy satisfies all Kurds, particularly those who do not inhabit Kurdish regions, by granting protection of all their ethno-national rights through unity with Turkey. Kurbanoglu, therefore, added, “we (*the Kurds*) do not propose any political model which makes reference to a particular ethnic group or identity. That means conflict. Because of this we suggest democratic autonomy.”⁶⁴ Contrary to a particular region and ethnicity, application of democratic autonomy all over Turkey is also one of the notable ideas which separates democratic autonomy from territorial political models, says Emine Ayna. In addition to this, she added;

‘...that is the point differs our autonomy model from federalism and other autonomous. In our model the Kurds will be represented wherever they live. There are the Kurds in almost all parts of the Turkey that means, they will have right to take part in decision-making and rule themselves wherever they living. We do not restrict democratic autonomy only with a region. ...That is our difference from the federalism.’⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Interview with Selim Kurbanoglu in Diyarbakir, 07 May 2013

⁶⁵ Interview with Emine Ayna in Diyarbakir, 03 May 2013

In regard to this, Ayla Akat Ata, BDP Batman MP, highlights the uniting characteristic of democratic autonomy – a model capable of bringing the Kurds, Turks and other groups together, further enhancing social, cultural and economic interplay by granting them their identical differences and, thus, decreasing the state’s intervention with peoples’ affairs (Akat Ata 2012).

After all, to the democratic autonomy proponents, as the founder of model Abdullah Öcalan also stresses, Kurds’ physical distribution and their close social, cultural and economic connection with the Turks makes both their separation from Turkey and construction of a federal system impossible (Öcalan (1999, 78–79). However, to these Kurds, as BDP Diyarbakir Mayor Fırat Anlı emphasizes, application of democratic autonomy across Turkey makes it a preferable political model, but also an alternative option over nation-state and federalism.⁶⁶

4.2.2.2.2 Fragmented Structure of the Kurds (Kurdish Internal Minorities)

Along with the above explanations, the research conducted on democratic autonomy advocates, particularly with Alevi and Zaza Kurds, clearly demonstrated that another reason for refusal of territorial political models is the fragmented structure of the Kurds. The individuals interviewed stated that Kurds’ ethnically and religiously heterogeneous structure and resultant Kurdish internal minorities makes implementation of territorial political models difficult since these models take a specific territory and ethnicity into account. On the other hand, although the proponents of democratic autonomy made mention to the negative consequences of territorial political structures on the Kurds they, especially Alevis and Zaza, also underlined the possibility of further assimilation and oppression of the Kurdish internal minorities in Kurdish and Turkish identity, and a greater divide of the Kurds due to ethnic and religious tensions. During the interviews these Kurds underlined that in order to protect the Kurdish internal minorities’ differences or values in Kurdish unity, these minorities (Alevi and Zaza) should construct their own autonomous regions, which democratic autonomy model largely considers. In line with this, this section will firstly explore the underlying cause(s) that contribute to

⁶⁶ Interview with Fırat Anlı in Diyarbakır, 08 May 2013

increased call for democratic autonomy in the Kurdish Internal minorities who support BDP. Moreover and related to this, the refusal of territorial political models and reasons for selecting democratic autonomy as an alternative model will also be discussed.

Majority of Alevis and Zaza who vote for BDP identify themselves within the Kurdish ethnic identity and call for a democratic autonomy model. Despite their concerns, which will be covered below, the fieldwork research revealed these Zaza and Alevis are not alienated from the Kurdish ethnic identity. However, some Zaza and Alevis who support AKP and CHP and currently demand for cultural rights only model were isolated, which will be argued in detail in Chapter Five. This chapter, thus, covers the Zaza and Alevis who vote for BDP and demand for democratic autonomy.

Observations of Zaza and Alevis Kurds in support of democratic autonomy model uncovered that they feared assimilation in both the Kurdish and Turkish identity and the thought of being oppressed. Due to lack of opportunities, Zaza- a language based internal minority group - and faith based internal minority group - Alevis - stress that their minority identity is under risk of assimilation in majoritarian Turkish and Kurdish identities (Partiya Serbestiya Dersim (PSD) Program Taslagi 2009). For instance, a vast majority of Zaza speaking Kurds, as highlighted by Hidir Çelik president of Zaza-Der, are apprehensive about the dissipation of their language because it faces constant assimilation by majoritarian Kurmanji spoken Kurdish identity. Hidir Çelik's following words clearly reveals his concerns;

‘... we come together with different friends and constantly say that we are a dying generation, last representatives of a language, and this language will disappear after us. This is the first concern, this is a very important concern, if this language disappears, the culture also disappears. As Confucius says, ‘why cut the nation, destroy its language instead’; it is enough. We start the struggle with this concern. Then there was a critique against the Kurdish political movement. This was the second reason because the Kurdish political movement's common ground does not matter from which way is Kurds. To them, ‘Zazas and Kurmanji are Kurds. Both Zaza and Kurmanji are dialects of Kurdish. We all are Kurds. We need to fight for the Kurdish case’. Saying something against this means dividing the fight and a national betrayal. You know this literature (*discourse*). However, when we discuss with them, they could not answer the following questions: If Zazas are Kurds and Zaza is a Kurdish dialect, why do you make all your

investment on Kurds(ish). Since they both are dialects, the scale pan should be equal. Since they both are dialects, why do you put the weight on one side but not the other. ...When I go to the south (Iraqi Kurdistan) they say ‘shame on you, you do not speak Kurdish. When I say ‘I know Zaza, they say ‘Kurdish is our mother tongue, a Zaza can learn Kurdish in four months’. Why does a Kurd not learn Zaza in four months? Is he stupid? That is not the case, this is actually a political view. ...Actually Zazas have a point to differentiate from Kurds, they are assimilated quickly. Therefore, integration with Turks is quick within them.⁶⁷

Along with language-based fear of assimilation and resulting fragmentation, the interviews managed showed that another dynamic contribution to increased tension and division in Kurds relates to the dispute between Sunni and Alevi identities, which as noted in Chapter Three is a long history. For instance, a vast number of the Kurmanji and Zazaki speaking Alevi Kurds do not trust and feel insecure in themselves, as well as being sceptical of the Sunni identity. This was repeatedly stressed during the fieldwork research. For example, Alevi origin Academician Zuhul (fictitious name) stated;

‘...well the trust is like this: Alevis will create a space for themselves actively and will say ‘we are here as a power’. If they build all the political organs by themselves from bottom to top, if they manage this, when they will say this organ is ours, then this trust will occur. Otherwise, it will not occur. It will never occur because there is a traumatic memory since the Ottoman Empire. It is strange, this is being transferred, very odd. It appears untimely - it is very difficult to get over with the historical memory. Really, it is not happening indeed. You prepare the conditions, practices; they will continue. ...Trust is transferable. We are still in a transitional stage for this trust; there is no transferable trust but we are in the process.’⁶⁸

The anxiety expressed by Zuhul also came across in an interview with Hasan Yıldız, who is a Zaza speaking Kurdish Alevi. According to Hasan Yıldız, Alevi Kurds remember Sunni Kurds through their alliance with their Sunni partnerships and their attacks on Alevis. During an interview, Hasan Yıldız often referred to Idris-i Bitlisi and stated that Alevis have not forgotten Idris-i Bitlisi and Sunni Kurds’ attacks on the Alevi Kurds. To Yıldız, Ottoman Empire and Turkish state always oppressed and provoked Kurdish

⁶⁷ Interview with Hıdır Çelik in Istanbul, 19 December 2012

Although Hıdır Çelik demands for democratic autonomy model and vote for BDP he considers Zazaca as a separate language. He is also the only one in my interviewees did not want to be identified within Kurdish ethnicity in those Kurds who demand for democratic autonomy.

⁶⁸ Interview with Zuhul (Fictitious Name) in Istanbul, 14 November 2012

Alevis by using Sunni Kurds.⁶⁹ Hasan Yıldız's thoughts on the Sunni Kurds' perception of Alevis explicitly demonstrate that Alevis' fears are not constrained to their religious identity. In this regard, the author of book '*Alevilerin Kemalizm ile İmtihani*' (Alevis' Challenge with Kemalism) and the president of Yüzleşme (Confrontation) Foundation, Cafer Solgun, uttered that their Kurdish identity is also a reason they were subjected to discrimination in Turkey. Due both to their ethnic and religious identity, Solgun explained majority of Alevis have been singled out (Solgun 2008). BDP Tunceli Mayor, Edibe Şahin, also comments on this;

Well a Sunni Kurd finds himself in this state because of his Sunniness and a Safi Kurd because of his Şafiness. Maybe he/she could not see himself with his ethnic identity but with his belief and sect, he finds a place in governance, in government, in the system. However, we religiously, ethnically, and linguistically suffered. We have our dialect and it is one of the dying dialects in the World. Because of this we are always considered as society's 'others'.⁷⁰

Taking these concerns, which were also communicated during the research, Sunni identity has the potential to catalyse isolation of Kurdish Alevis who support BDP from the Kurdish identity unless their identity finds protection soon. This is primarily because of the tremendous fear in Alevis. Kurdish Alevi origin academician Zuhâl's (Fictitious name) following citation elaborates on this;

Actually the Sunni Kurds have a definition of Alevi in their mind, we know what it is. There is an approach to Alevis. ...They consider Alevis as a problem and an issue and, they (Sunnis) think they will tolerate and absorb them. This is not an equal approach. Alevis have their own self-confidence, their own legal norms that they defined themselves, they have their own values, their own cultures. They try to exist within it, but there is no such approach within the Sunni group that develops this argument and no such trust. Sunniness, no matter Turkish or Kurdish, does not provide trust for Alevis. We should accept this. My family is in the position to express its Kurdish identity very clearly but when Sunniness is the issue, there is a distance. This is not a distance that we use to define them, this is a distance that they use to define us. Sunniness is a state sect, state religion. It has the power. ...This is a point where the State, its political history involves lynching. Mass lynchings. I do not know if that happened anywhere else in the World but they burned the Alevi intellectuals of this country. This was resented. This government politically pays off. To whom it will give confidence now.

⁶⁹ Interview with Hasan Yıldız in Istanbul, 16 December 2012

⁷⁰ Interview with Edibe Şahin in Tunceli, 13 May 2013

Alevis never ever trust it. They do not trust anything which represents Sunniness.⁷¹

Taking into consideration the Kurds' heterogeneous structure - Kurdish internal minorities - and their concerns, majority of the Alevis and Zazas demand for a status through establishing their own autonomous region. For instance, the 'Dersim autonomous region' where their population densely reside, explains Zubeyde Teker a representative for the east Anatolia Wise People Commission.⁷² In support of this, Cafer Solgun argued "this has a meaning to erase the concerns of Kizilbaş Alevis who created more than 90% of the Dersim population. Dersim is a centre of Alevis. Giving it a status has a meaning to remove the concerns substantially."⁷³ For instance, in Wise Man Commission's meetings in the city of Bingöl most Alevis and Zaza openly expressed their need for status, and desire to protect and practice their identical values freely.⁷⁴ These Zaza and Alevis, but particularly Zaza spoken Alevis want to establish their own autonomous region because of their trepidation to assimilation within both Turkish and Kurdish identities (Partiya Serbestiya Dersim (PSD) Program Taslagi 2009). In this regard, most of these Alevis and Zaza, as will be argued following, consider creation of territorial political models (federalism and nation-state) as source of oppression over them because they proclaim these entities based on a particular ethnicity and religion; their this claim makes democratic autonomy as an alternative model for them.⁷⁵

Taking issue from that sense, according to Emine Ayna, considering the existing diverse ethno-linguistic and religious minorities, distrust among them and their political demands will only worsen if separation or territorial federal regions are established. The divided structure of the Kurds and disputes between some Kurdish groups to Ayna makes creation of territorial political models problematic. Ayna highlighted that forming a Kurdish nation-state or implementing the federalism model cannot solve these groups' problems because these models are grounded on the ideology of one ethnicity or

⁷¹ Interview with Zuhale (Fictional name) in Istanbul, 14 November 2012.

⁷² Interview with Zubeyde Teker in Bingöl, 11 May 2013

⁷³ Interview with Cafer Solgun in Istanbul, 16 May 2013

⁷⁴ Wise Man Committee's meeting in Bingöl, 11 May 2013

⁷⁵ Interview with Halis Yurtseven in Bingöl, 10 May 2013

particular group, and take only a specific region into consideration. Herein, she suggests democratic autonomy as an alternative because it is not based on one ethnicity;

If a federation or state is formed in the Kurdish region, it would be named as a Kurdish state or Kurdish federal region... We do not approve this because we say that not only the Kurds live there. We say this opposing the nation state. ... We do support the understanding of nation state neither for the Turk or Kurds nor for any other people. Also, we do not identify Kurdistan over Kurdish identity, as we do not identify Turkey through Turkish identity. We do not have an ethnic or national approach. That is also the reason why other movements, particularly Kurdish organizations, do not understand us. As they consider issues from this sense they do not understand us.⁷⁶

Given the multifariousness composition of the Kurds and the concerns of Alevis and Zaza, Kurdistan Community Union (KCK)⁷⁷ executive council member Mustafa Karasu explains that with democratic autonomy, if a population belonging to a different identity is densely located in a particular territory it will be entitled to form its own autonomous region or take part in regional assemblies. Therefore, he continues, diverse cultural, ethnic or religious groups would find the opportunity to have representation in the autonomous regions' assembly if they represent the minority (Karasu 2009, 271–272). Democratic autonomy herein aims to characterise and acknowledge all ethnic and religious groups to govern themselves by enabling them to form their autonomous regions or take part in city councils or people assemblies (Draft submission for a democratic autonomous Kurdistan 2011). Based on the mentioned framework of democratic autonomy, the BDP's Alevi and Zaza advocates, as Hasan Yildiz articulates, believe that democratic autonomy illustrates and suits the realities of the Kurds and Turks. To Hasan Yildiz, for example, it exemplifies humane fundamentals of a democratic political model. Yildiz further added that “democratic autonomy is a humanistic political model. Therefore, it is the political model I can propose to the whole Middle East.”⁷⁸ Based on Alevis and Zaza's above-mentioned anxieties and their claim for their own autonomous region, Cafer Solgun proposes the construction of state

⁷⁶ Interview with Emine Ayna in Diyarbakır, 03 May 2013

⁷⁷ KCK (Koma Civaken Kurdistan), with reference the Micheal Gunter, was formed in 2005 by the PKK as an umbrella for the Kurdish organizations. To Gunter KCK formed and function as an alternative organization to the state in the Kurds (Gunter 2013, 77).

⁷⁸ Interview with Hasan Yildiz in Istanbul, 16 December 2012

(province-Eyalet) systems which he believes democratic autonomy, particularly construction of autonomous regions, envelop. He explains;

This system is not the one that is insistently considered as the danger for the unitary system of Turkey. This is an administrative system but it suits Turkey's realities and answers these realities. With this political structure that is shaped according to a provincial system, each province will have its own parliament. Within its boundaries, it will solve its interior issues; it will elect its rulers. Issues related to education will not be a problem anymore; it will get rid of the habit of giving full authority to the central state almost in every matter.⁷⁹

Mentioning on democratic autonomy's decentralized structure, Halis Yurtseven, BDP Bingöl provincial chairman stated; "I suggest democratic autonomy for all people, not only for Alevis, I propose it also for Armenians, Christians and all other minorities". In response to the asked question "as an Alevi do you not have concern", Halis articulated that "thanks to Kurdish political movement, its struggle and democratic autonomy democratic autonomy", he does not have more concerns. Consequently, he states that democratic autonomy will be used to tackle Alevis, Zaza and other minorities' anxieties. With reference to this, Halis identifies democratic autonomy as a "cultural Revolution project" because in his view the model deals with all cultures equally and, thus, is the ideal means to settle their issues. Lastly, he added that only when all Mesopotamian people live their cultures, beliefs and other values freely, will they understand importance of democratic autonomy.⁸⁰ Like Halis Yurtseven, the president of Zaza-Der, Hidir Celik, also considers democratic autonomy as the most appropriate and applicable model for all internal minority groups consisting mainly of Kurds in the region(s). He underlined that it is presently the only way to satisfy cultures and beliefs of distinct groups amidst the Kurds whilst providing them security. To this he added; "democratic autonomy involves us."⁸¹

Taking issue in this vein, the Kurds who support BDP articulate that instead of creating a territorial structure which they consider as out of date and unrealistic for

⁷⁹ Interview with Cafer Solgun in Istanbul, 16 May 2013

⁸⁰ Interview with Halis Yurtseven in Bingöl, 10 May 2013

⁸¹ Interview with Hidir Çelik in Istanbul, 19 December 2012

conditions of the Kurds⁸², democratic autonomy recognizes and considers all identical differences in the Kurdish region by granting status to both Alevis and Zaza.⁸³ Herein the decentralization structure of democratic autonomy gives separate ethnic and religious groups the capacity to form their autonomous regions and, thus, protect their identity (Öcalan 2012b; Öcalan 2012a). Hence, as Edibe Sahin highlights, with democratic autonomy internal minorities - Alevis and Zaza - would be able to form their autonomous regions, organize themselves wherever they reside and will have close interaction with all the Kurds; which incites development of Kurdish national identity among the Kurds. Appointment of some Kurdish Alevi origin BDP MPs in Sunni Kurd dominated regions, she highlights, clearly proves this since it provides interaction between various Kurdish identities and is a step forward in removing some concerns and mistrust between Alevi and Sunni Kurds.⁸⁴ Moreover, with democratic autonomy Kurdish identity is recognized as a “corporate identity” (*Kurumsal Kimlik*) by protecting the differences of internal minorities.⁸⁵ For instance, Sami Tan points out “If Zazaca wants to (or will) survive, it should not separate itself from the Kurdish society.”⁸⁶

Within the framework discussed above, the empirical research of the study indicates that the BDP proponents believe democratic autonomy unifies Kurdish national identity because it prevents probable tensions with internal minorities from escalating by ensuring needs of the people are met. Thus, as Öcalan (2012c) underlines, for many of these Kurds democratic autonomy is considered as a political model that does not have any intention to assimilate and design others, unlike nation-state and federalism. This is a fundamental factor for democratic autonomy adherents; to protect their linguistic, religious and cultural difference in unity of the Kurdish identity.⁸⁷ Thus, with reference to the fieldwork results, majority of the BDP Alevi and Zaza supporters who identify themselves within Kurdish identity demand democratic autonomy because they believe it

⁸² Interview with Halis Yurtseven in Bingöl, 10 May 2013

⁸³ Interview with İlhan Ilbay in Tunceli, 12 May 2013,
Interview with Edibe Sahin in Tunceli, 13 May 2013 and
Interview with Mustafa Taskale in Tunceli, 12 May 2013

⁸⁴ Interview with Edibe Sahin in Tunceli, 13 May 2013

⁸⁵ Interview with Mustafa Taskale in Tunceli, 12 May 2013

⁸⁶ Interview with Sami Tan in Istanbul, 27 April 2013

⁸⁷ Interview with Halis Yurtseven in Bingöl, 10 May 2013

has the potential to protect all minorities in Turkey, particularly Kurdish internal minorities' identity within Kurdish national identity.⁸⁸ This strategy, BDP Muş MP Demir Çelik (2012b) and Öcalan (2010, 13–14) highlight will firstly encourage preservation of the identical differences of Kurds, and secondly, prevent disintegration of the Kurdish identity as it meets the demands of the internal minorities. This is one of the substantial motives which makes democratic autonomy desirable for Kurdish internal minorities who want to live their differences under the Kurdish national identity and easier for them to reject territorial political models because they take a particular ethnicity, religion or region as a basis.

4.2.2.2.3 'Nation-State is the Crux of The Conflict'

In addition to the mentioned reasons, another explanation for rejecting nation-state is related to its strong centralist and conflictual (çatışmacı) character (Öcalan 2012c). According to Öcalan (2010), the state's intention to maintain sole power and strong desire to shape society in line with its interests initiates problems and conflict. Based on this, he underlines that even though certain matters were attended to the state itself became the main source of the problem. Öcalan (2009, 101) goes a step further by linking the state with concepts of totalitarianism and fascism. This section, thus, determines the link between these Kurds' nation-state understanding and dismissal of a Kurdish nation-state.

The fieldwork suggested that the Kurds who call for democratic autonomy share the same attitude as Öcalan and are adamant in their decision to decline the request for a creation of a Kurdish nation-state. For them democratic autonomy is a model which seeks to provide freedom of living for different identities. According to these Kurds, all diverse ethno-cultural and religious groups derive from the social and cultural richness present in Turkey.⁸⁹ Demanders of this model argue that democratic autonomy will unify the state by keeping peace between different identities. For instance, Rahime Kanilga the HDP Çanakkale Provincial executive, mentioned that without this model in place it will be

⁸⁸ Interview with Edibe Sahin in Tunceli, 13 May 2013

⁸⁹ Interview, with Kudret Gülün in Istanbul, 25 December 2012

difficult to keep peace among the different identities, resulting in inevitable conflict. She noted;

There is a phrase that has been said a lot and I think it is true: Kurdish issue is actually the issue of Turkey's democratization. We do not want democratic autonomy only in order to solve to Kurdish issue but we also want it to build democracy in this country. ...The first step that would provide equal citizenship rights for everybody in this country is democratic autonomy.⁹⁰

In support of this, DÖKH activist Sako (Fictitious name) explained;

Look, Turkey is multi ethnical, multi religious, multi lingual, and a cosmopolitan country. Previously Turkey had problems with its minorities. There is still a conflict. Despite this, there is a strong integration. Today, Kurds live all around Turkey. Arabs, Laz and other groups are spread all over Turkey. If we try to solve these groups' demands by creating an individual state or federation, there will be a blood bath in Turkey. ...The source of a conflict over hundred years old and the war is the State itself. Therefore, territorial settlement means more conflict, violence and blood. Because the territorial model is a pressure mechanism itself, solving Kurdish issue with these types of models would be a disaster for the Kurds. ...Unfortunately, the Kurds who demand independence and federation do not understand this. At this point democratic autonomy has meaning. Because it does not deal with or rest on the territories, it tries to improve democratic values. It does not separate the people of Turkey by drawing borders. Contrary, it unifies them.⁹¹

Supporters of democratic autonomy, including, former HADEP Youth's Branch President Ahmet Şeker, claim that the conflicting character of nation-state and relating to it the creation of a homogeneous Turkish nation and state are the main motives behind the Kurdish issue.⁹² Democratic autonomy followers, therefore, conceive creation of a new nation-state as a source for conflict, oppression and hegemony of an interest group on people (Karasu 2012). Democratic autonomy herein argues that as nation-state is the main reason behind the existence of the Kurdish issue, it has the potential to cause many other problems. Thus, it is not a suitable political model to apply for solving the Kurdish issue (Draft submission for a democratic autonomous Kurdistan 2011).

⁹⁰ Interview with Rahime Kanilga, 15 November 2014. (As the Interviewee was based in Çanakkale, she responded to the questions on phone and in a written form via Facebook).

⁹¹ Interview with Sako (Fictitious name) in Istanbul, 28 April 2012

⁹² Interview with Ahmet Şeker in London, 10 September 2014

The observations made at BDP and related organizations alluded that for these Kurds the creation of a new nation-state and change in territorial boundaries will cause a cascade of conflicts, resulting in tremendous suffering in the regions. For instance, Sami Tan, president of the Istanbul Kurdish Institute, highlighted that creation of a Kurdish nation-state in Turkey means or can lead to killing of more than one million people.⁹³ The interviews conducted showed that the majority of the Kurds who call for democratic autonomy have a strong resistance, even hate, against the nation-state.⁹⁴ For instance, Dorşin (Fictitious name), a political activist in the pro-Kurdish organizations, depicted that it is not ethical to support nation-state because it has already caused great distress for the Kurds in the last century. To Dorşin, nation-state is a key factor for oppression, violence and lack of free expression.⁹⁵ Similar to Dorşin, Sami Tan, also deems the state as the substantial reason for the suffering faced by the Kurds, and strongly believes that as it was in the past nation-state still has the potential to instigate huge trouble for the Kurds and the Middle East in future years.⁹⁶ The following citation by Selim Kurbanoglu, BDP Diyarbakır Yenişehir Municipality Mayor, is useful in analysing the refusal of state because he details the damages the state has caused to humanity, and resulting demand for democratic autonomy alternatively among the BDP voters;

In politics, after strategic changes we made, we said we do not want a state. Why not? We saw the state's damages. Even if it is our state, we do not approve a state that oppresses its own people, in other words, we do not approve the structure that is ruled by a specific elite. ...People can criticize this. They may say, while you demand for democratic autonomy, you demand less things. That is desire of people. But my people want this. ...Go to Diyarbakır; Diyarbakır says 'I want democratic autonomy'. It is like that; we think the state finishes nations in the long term, it does not work as people oriented, it does not consecrate the people, nation, and community but it consecrates itself. There are examples, it may be a bit odd, but we say during the last five thousand years of traditionalist history of the state these kinds of bad things happened. ...For example, before the state (ist) traditionally women ruled all kinds of work. They were consecrate because of that. Because women are procreant, in natural communities, at the places where women rule there was order and discipline. But after some stages state

⁹³ Interview with Sami Tan in Istanbul, 27 April 2013

⁹⁴ Interview with Kudret Gülün in Istanbul, 25 December 2012 and Interview with Emine Ayna in Diyarbakır, 03 May 2013

⁹⁵ Interview with Dorsin (Fictitious name) in London, 24 September 2014

⁹⁶ Interview with Sami Tan in Istanbul, 27 April 2013

construction improved and that order changed. Even during the first state formations, in the Sumerian empire, its structure was similar to a pyramid. At the top there was God, then the king, and at the bottom there was the community. ...We say before the statist period people had lived naturally for about 95 thousand years; women were dominant and things were in order.⁹⁷

The concept presented by Kurbanoglu is also supported by the KCK executive council member, Mustafa Karasu, who is an influential political authority amidst the Kurds who have sympathy to the BDP and PKK. Mustafa Karasu expresses that the Kurds oppose nation-state because they believe it has caused immense suffering for other nations and has not focused on people's wants/needs. In other words, it is not human. To Karasu, these Kurds fear that the creation of a Kurdish nation-state will also generate the same trouble for other Kurds. A Kurdish nation-state, he says, would turn into an authoritarian character and become a source of new injustice and conflict, causing further persecution of the masses (Karasu 2009, 268–269). Dorşin's (Fictitious name) following words are quite significant in understanding refusal of nation-state by these Kurds;

The state, inherently, is designed according to inequality and war. Because of this I do not find it right that Kurds get away from one unequal and dependent system, and start living in a similar system, although it is itself called Kurdish State. Because this state will also be unequal and will restrict freedoms.⁹⁸

Dorşin's response is a common retort among many Kurds. For instance, as an academician, Zuhale (Fictitious name) focuses on the same points - criticizing nation-state and considering autonomy as the alternative model. Zuhale argues that all identities should live their own values free, which she says cannot be possible within nation-state;

The state is always a politically distance body for me. When you say a state you need to define its religion, flag, and anthem. If you define them, you will always become an obscurant (reactionist), you will always become an authoritarian structure. Therefore, solutions (*structures*) and political arguments out of state are always closer to me.⁹⁹

As demonstrated by Dorşin and Zuhale, and also highlighted by many of the interviewees, these Kurds' concerns of nation-state are at a peak. For instance, in response to the asked

⁹⁷ Interview with Selim Kurbanoglu in Diyarbakır, 07 May 2013

⁹⁸ Interview with Dorşin (Fictitious name) in London, 24 September 2014

⁹⁹ Interview with Zuhale (fictitious name) in Istanbul, 14 November 2012

questions; *is it not possible to form a democratic nation-state?*” or democratize existed states? BDP Diyarbakir MP Emine Ayna clearly noted; “nation-state cannot be transformed into a democratic structure.”¹⁰⁰ Based on this criticism of nation-state, democratic autonomy aims to sensitize the state to democracy. More clearly, as also noted previously, it prioritized the people’s interest and not the state’s. Thus, to prevent tension between various groups it recognizes all ethnic and religious groups’ identities. In addition, democratic autonomy seeks;

To change the hardened mentality of the nation state that is meeting none of the needs of the peoples 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 (Draft Submission for a Democratic Autonomous Kurdistan 2011, 14–15).

The focus of democratic autonomy is unity between all the different ethnic and religious identities, and does not oppose to or have any intention to remove existing states’ national symbols. The model assures all ethnic and religious groups will be free to have their own symbols and values, such as, flags, colours and anthems (Draft submission for a democratic autonomous Kurdistan 2011, 19–20). This principle of democratic autonomy can also be applied across Turkey and is not exclusive to one ethnicity, highlights Öcalan (2010, 10–11) the creator of the model. Thus, to these Kurds, as KCK executive council member Duran Kalkan points out, while creation of territorial structures (nation-state and federalism) leads to conflict, assimilation and division between various cultural, ethnic and religious groups, democratic autonomy is thought of as a relief to the damage caused by these territorial models (Kalkan 2012).

To sum up, looking at the issue as so and as the fieldwork also alludes, the concept of nation-state leads to categorization and fragmentation of the people and creates a hunger for power in interest groups. And this, according to democratic autonomy supporters provokes conflict. This is one of the key points why proponents of democratic autonomy reject the notion of nation-state, the other main reason being the nation-state’s proposed ethnic and territorial borders. Thus, they consider democratic

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Emine Ayna in Diyarbakır, 03 May 2013

autonomy as the only alternative political model able to unify stateless groups with existing states, creating a peaceful and democratic environment.

4.2.2.2.4 Refusal of Kurdish Nation (al)-State

A theoretical framework of criticisms against the territorial political models, particularly against nation-state is mentioned in detail by Abdullah Öcalan, who has considerable impact on PKK and BDP's views regarding the model when applied to Kurds. Abdullah Öcalan refuses the notion of nation-state as well as Kurdish (nation) state because of moral and ideological reasons relating to the connection between nation-state and democracy (Öcalan 2012a). This section, thus, will analyse the irrationality behind rejection of a Kurdish nation (al) state formation with primary focus on the views of the model creator, Abdullah Öcalan, and empirical findings of the research.

Abdullah Öcalan, creator of model, underlines that nation-state essentially serves and functions in the interest of a small group or clique instead of masses, for example, the bourgeoisie. To support this argument, Öcalan highlights the federal status of the Kurds in Iraq and points out that resulting of this structure with creation of a Kurdish nation-state in other Kurdish regions will serve to the interest of small groups, namely "Kurdish Capitalist Modernity". To Öcalan, a Kurdish nation state formation will not serve the Kurdish peoples, but benefit the powers that want to use the Kurds (Öcalan 1999, 87). Öcalan's interpretations on refusal of nation-state speak to the Kurds who act in a similar vein. BDP Diyarbakir MP Emine Ayna's following remarks accurately support Öcalan's arguments for denial of nation-state;

We believe the state's mentality will improve the ruling (*iktidar*) mentality, and an elite group will dominate over the people living there and will hold the sources. This elite group will hold the sources and come to the power. Therefore, we believe that it is necessary not to introduce our community to nation-state and not to identify our people with the nation state. Our model is based on an autonomous structure close to the people's assembly understanding. Because of that we also do not accept a federal state structure either.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Interview with Emine Ayna in Diyarbakir, 03 May 2013

With reference to this and comparisons with territorial models, Seydi Firat, DTK and Peace Assembly member, strongly underlines that democratic autonomy is not the model to be ruled by an elite group or function for said groups' concern. To Firat, the structure of democratic autonomy does not allow this.¹⁰²

Along with the reasons mentioned, Abdullah Öcalan also harshly challenges nation-state because it contradicts the democracy. He argues that nation-state does not give prevalence to democracy because nation-state itself is not founded on democratic values. The state's relations with power, use of force, aims to build a homogeneous nation and denial of differences are some points mentioned by Öcalan to explain nation-state's inconsistencies with democracy (Öcalan 2009). To (Öcalan 1999, 77), "what is experienced in states where there is no democracy."

Like his challenge against the state, based on the above-mentioned causes Abdullah Öcalan also criticizes other territorial autonomies, particularly federalism as he considers them non-democratic. He recalls that Kurds' previous autonomous status and state-aimed struggles were based on a feudal and tribal characters. He states "it is difficult to view these uprisings as movements based on the free will of the population". To Öcalan, feudal and tribal structures and prioritizing tribal interest impeded the development of democratic values and significance of people's will. With reference to this, he says;

The concept of federation which now being discussed in this context, would be dependent on a backward social structure, they would not really allow for the development of democratic values. These would do more to strengthen feudal and tribal remnants. The experience of southern Kurds largely proves this. Furthermore, these are the forms most conducive to collaborationism and being a tool in the hands of whoever wants to use it the most and has the power to do so. Because they have not evolved democratically, they are quite open to both traditional types of rebellion and destruction (Öcalan 1999, 78).

The correlation between nation-state and democracy are largely covered in democratic autonomy. The political model, as mentioned earlier, distances itself from nation-state and aims to democratize the existing states (Draft submission for a

¹⁰² Interview with Seydi Firat in Diyarbakır, 10 May 2013

democratic autonomous Kurdistan 2011, 20). To the Kurds who support democratic autonomy, as BDP Muş MP Demir Çelik notes, the model restricts the state's power and develops people oriented rulership understanding, which he claims contributes to democracy. The relationship between the state and democracy is formulated as “state + democracy”(D. Çelik 2012b). To put simply, as highlighted in the PKK's monthly published paper, *Serxwebûn*, democratic autonomy defines the model as “less state” and “more society” in relation to democracy (Serxwebûn 2012b, 135). From this point forth, Seydi Firat stated that by using the term ‘democratic’ for their model they aim to affiliate democratic autonomy with democracy.¹⁰³ Accordingly, as stated by Karasu (2009, 276), of KCK Executive Council member, based on its close connection with democracy democratic autonomy supports and gives preference to grassroots organizations, all leading to an increase in local participatory mechanisms and construction of local assemblies. Construction of city and council districts from bottom to top, and development of various social, cultural and economic associations to heighten civil society understanding in these Kurds organizations were clearly seen during the extensive field research in the Kurdish regions

Consequently, unlike the hegemonic use of power in a nation-state democratic autonomy establishes itself on a horizontal organizational understanding and takes the will of people seriously (Serxwebûn 2012c, 101). Furthermore, this is also one of the key reasons for the refusal of territorial political models and increased demand for democratic autonomy.

4.2.2.2.5 Decline in National Boundaries

The previous section examined the Kurds' critical understanding of territorial political structures, and on this basis, rejection of a Kurdish (nation) state creation.

The interviews carried out with democratic autonomy exponents alluded that weakening territorial character of nation-state in international relations also directly influences denial of territorial political models in these Kurds. Thus, as interviews'

¹⁰³ Interview with Seydi Firat in Diyarbakır, 10 May 2013

results indicated, Kurds who seek democratic autonomy reject creation of a Kurdish nation-state to keep in line with the modern world's attitude to national borders and nation-states – they, to these Kurds, have started to remove them. This, as noted by BDP Istanbul Esenyurt co-chair Kudret Gülün, leads the Kurds to socially, culturally and politically exceed the territorial borders and move forward with the changing world. To support this point further, Kudret Gülün states; “I do not think about and want an independent Kurdistan at the moment. The territories are being vanished and in a place like this, if we remember how the state is an oppressive power, I deny the state as a ‘fact’.”¹⁰⁴ In line with Kudret Gülün, president of the Istanbul Kurdish Institute, Sami Tan, suggests;

‘...in this sense, the thing Kurdish movement needs to do is to construct a system that will not cause problems and conflict and construct the system in which they will be able to maintain their existence and identity. Maybe, with emergence of supra-national structures, Kurds could create their unity on the principle of unity with the other Middle Eastern societies. This unity, with the Middle Eastern societies, could be based on the principle of a supra-national understanding.’¹⁰⁵

In addition to the above, in an interview with Baran (Fictitious name), who was conducting KCK's political activities in the Middle East, he highlighted that people of the global world do not want to be limited or constrained with their state's sacralised (divined) borders. To this, Baran explained people are in intense interaction with others, but territories become meaningless when they construct social, cultural and economic affiliations. He concluded by clarifying that territory no longer holds importance for them, henceforward, the Kurds should cease establishing new territorial borders.¹⁰⁶ Abdullah Öcalan's (founder of democratic autonomy) following explanations are also rather instructive;

Today, in the light of globalisation, and in particular in view of a world market enforced by scientific and technological progress, national markets and the state itself have become obstacles standing in the way of development, behaving like the conservative feudal dynasties of old. We see more and more supranational political or economic entities, or regional federations. And they are increasing in

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Kudret Gülün in Istanbul, 25 December 2012

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Sami Tan in Istanbul, 27 April 2013

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Baran (Fictitious Name) in Iraq, 25 November 2009

importance. The international community has never seen stronger times (Öcalan 2011b, 10).

Like Öcalan's above words, DTK and Peace Assembly member Seydi Firat's following quotation also clarifies why the Kurds who gather around BDP consider the decline in territorial borders as a cause for demand for democratic autonomy;

It is not proper to talk about the territories these days. It is different when we look at Asia, America and Europe now. It is not realistic to talk about strict territories in the present day. The borders become indistinct. This is not something that we specifically made up. The World's state of affairs is like that and this is the right thing. The World's river flows this way. We also need to flow that way. As a bayou of this river, we also flow downstream. We do not have a fantasy to decide about the whole world's destiny. The reality is, the water flows that way. If we flow to a big sea we need to have a way like Euphrates and Tigris. The World is trying to elude from rigid territories. It creates bigger associations. The technologic and economic developments impose this as well. We also have to act together with the modern World, considering these realities in the World. We should act together with people around us with similar approach rather than remaining within our territories.¹⁰⁷

Looking at the issue in this way, as BDP Istanbul Esenyurt Co-chair Arif Erol cited, the start of the decline in national boundaries is one of the conditions that led Kurds who propose democratic autonomy to terminate creation of new territorial borders or a Kurdish nation-state. Arif Erol considered territorial political models synonymous with socio-cultural and economic isolation from the rest of the world. He also expressed that "there is no sense to restrain Kurds in a narrow designated geography in a century where the boundaries in the world have vanished."¹⁰⁸ In the light of this, creation of a Kurdish nation-state in these Kurds and as argued by Öcalan (2012a), is considered as a new isolation and dependency on hegemonic powers rather than freedom. In concurrence with this, KCK Executive Council member Mustafa Karasu states that they challenge the assertion that each nation should in the current conditions have its own state (Karasu 2009). Consequently, democratic autonomy's mentality and structure – against the idea of constructing boundaries between people – and for adopting the world's direction of flow, make this the ideal model for these Kurds.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Seydi Firat in Diyarbakır, 10 May 2013

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Arif Erol in Istanbul, 25 December 2012

CHAPTER FIVE

DEMAND FOR THE CULTURAL RIGHTS ONLY MODEL

This chapter will explore the demand for cultural rights, whose main supporters are Kurds associated with the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi-AKP) and the Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi-CHP).

The leading aspects of cultural rights were examined in Chapter One. Nonetheless, it is important to outline its main criteria here before exploring the underlying reasons for its demand over other political models (democratic autonomy, federalism and an independent state).

The term cultural rights is used in a large context. In a broad sense cultural rights are regarded as basic human rights. As Chapter One clarified, granting cultural rights seeks to recognize as well as protect individuals and communities' values, including, language, culture, literature, artworks, history, tradition and symbols. Cultural rights in this context endeavours to respect and protect different identities (cultures, languages, beliefs, ethnicities and so forth) in major groups. Cultural rights can be granted at two different levels; individual and collective. Individual rights establish the freedom for 'individual autonomy'. In other words, these rights are acknowledged at the individual level. Collective rights, on the other hand, recognize people's rights at the group level (groups' rights), or in other terms, groups gaining 'political autonomy'.

Typical demands expressed by cultural rights supporters, most of whom are associated with the CHP and AKP, include, free use of the Kurdish language, Kurdish as an educational language in regions populated by mostly Kurds, recognition and protection of Kurdish culture, beliefs, history, literature, traditions and art, eliminating the barrier blocking free organization of different cultures, original Kurdish names of places (towns, cities and villages) that were Turkified previously to be returned, and banning all racial and discriminatory behaviours and symbols which deny the Kurds.

This chapter is made up of two parts. The first seeks to clarify the political groups (AKP and CHP) which recognizes people's cultural rights (at the individual level) in relation to their political identity and approach to the Kurdish issue. Based on this background and in accordance with the main question of the study (*why do some of the Kurds in Turkey have the territorial political demands, while others oppose to it?*), the second part will elucidate the motives which led to demand for cultural rights over other political models.

5.1 CLARIFICATION OF AKP AND CHP, AND THEIR KURDISH MEMBERS DEMANDING CULTURAL RIGHTS

Currently, majority of the Kurds who support the cultural rights only model gather around the political parties AKP and CHP. To define these Kurds, this section will briefly identify the mentioned political parties in relation to the Kurdish issue.

5.1.1 The Kurds and AKP

Turkey was ruled by one party - CHP - from 1923 until 1945, almost twenty-three years. The party held the same ideologies as the Republic, which is covered in more detail in Chapter Three. With the transition to a multi-party system, except for a certain interregnum, centre-right and conservative parties found considerable support from the public and the opportunity to stay in politics as an opposing or a ruling party. Most of the conservative parties formed after 1960s took inspiration from the Democrat Party (Taskin 2008) and with the words of Ahmet Kuru, challenged the "assertive secularist" understanding of the Republic; which was embodied by CHP between 1923-45. The Republic aimed to drive religion out of the public sphere, restrict religious identity and make religion a private entity (Kuru (2007). As Kuru explains, "assertive secularism" became a platform for the state to control religion in line with its ideal nation project (Ibid.). Despite this secularism policy (i.e. intention to restrict religion to the private lives of individuals) religion continued to influence social and even political dynamics in society through various ways, for instance, through tariqas and communities (J. B. White 2002, 108-109). Religious communities and organizations, therefore, have had an

undeniable contribution in keeping religion active in society and increasing its political power (Margulies and Yildizoğlu 1997, 146). Mentioning on the relations between religion and society, Camila T. Nereid highlights that religion's power in society became even more obvious as the conservative parties and rural communities started to interact more. According to Nereid, increased interaction and the relationship which developed brought about two results. On the one hand it provided new opportunities for rural people to represent themselves sufficiently in the political system and, on the other hand, awakened reactions from Republican authorities related to their secular principles of republic (Nereid 1997). Many conservative parties were either stripped of power by a military coup d'état, for example, DP in 1960, or were outlawed by the Constitutional court on the grounds that their activities (allegedly) overlooked the secular (laic) principle of the Turkish Republic, such as, the Welfare Party (Refah Partisi-RP) in 1998 and Virtue party (Fazilet Partisi) in 2001. Nevertheless, the state's pressures and tactics were unsuccessful in impeding the rise in religious values and new conservative parties emerging in Turkish politics, such as, Felicity Party (Saadet partisi in 2001) and JDP (in 2001). Taking into account the election results it seems that these parties gained considerable support from within the society, for instance, RP which came to power in 1997, and JDP which has had sole power since 2002.¹⁰⁹

Conservative parties also notably gained support from the Kurds primarily because of the parties' religious identity and respective approach to the Kurdish issue unlike the Republican's policy (Çaha, Toprak, and Uslu 2010). Religion here, as also detailed in Chapter Three, is one of the vital factors which contributed to Kurds' close affiliation with Turkey. This association, as underlined by Shakland (1999, 99), grew once the Welfare Party (Refah Partisi-RP), mostly popular among Sunnis, was established. As a result, RP became one of the most supported conservative parties among the Kurds prior to its successors. According to J. B. White (2002, 126), the RP's religious identity and acceptance of the term "Millet", which granted each subject the right of self-governance during the Ottoman Empire, were the two main motives for the

¹⁰⁹ For instance, for the General Election of Representatives Province and District Results 2011, 2007, 2002, 1999, 1995, 1991 see booklet published by Turkish Statistical Institute (2012)

immense support the party received from the Kurds. In this regard, RP's actions in its approach to the diverse groups' identical differences were very brave for that time. For instance, the party was wise in leaving Turkish and Kurdish ethnic roots out of its agenda (Duran 1998, 112). RP instead, as Duran mentions, sought to resolve Turkey's ethno-cultural and faith based problems through religion because it was a powerful dynamic in both communities (Ibid.). The party set to achieve two key points in response to the Kurdish issue; recognizing Kurds' cultural identity under the supra identity of Islam and distancing the Kurds from territorial models, such as, federalism and independency (Calmuk 2001).

RP's survival in politics was cut short in 1998 when it was shut down by the Constitutional Court due to allegedly acting against one of the main principles of the state - secularism.¹¹⁰ Following on from this development, another Islamist party was formed in 1998, The Virtue Party (Fazilet Partisi-FP). However, the party lacked serious political activities, thus, was divided between traditionalist and reformist groups (Yavuz 2011, 101). The latter group formed the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi-AKP) on August 14th 2001, led by Abdullah Gül until the political ban on Recep Tayyip Erdogan was removed (Ibid.).

AKP came into power soon after it was established on November 3rd 2002. The party's success, on the other hand, caused raising of reaction in the Republican authorities who were sensitive on the ide of secularism. Jenkins (2006, 185) explains that the party was regarded as a threat to the fundamental principle of the Republic, i.e. secularism. However, despite this criticism AKP distanced itself from RP because, as noted above, the party was banned for allegedly acting against the secularism principle of the Republic. For instance, according to Yalcin Akdogan (2006, 63), the Prime Minister's consultant during the party's fourth period of governance, AKP differs from RP's 'National Vision' understanding "in most respect, including its organization, its political identity, its style, and its campaign slogans". To further separate itself from RP, AKP

¹¹⁰ To see the decision of RP closing case see, (The Turkish Constitutional Court 1997/1 E, 1998/1 K, Date: 16.1.1998)

categorised itself as a “conservative democrat”¹¹¹ party (Dinçşahin 2012, 619). From this identification AKP developed the phrase “conservative democracy”, describing it as a merger of “democracy” and “religion”, “modernism” and “traditionalism”, and “state” and “society” (Çağlıyan-İçener 2009, 606). Accordingly, considering existed perceptions on politicization of religion at the time, Fuller (2008, 50) remarks that AKP demonstrates the efforts taken to “distance itself from any formal relationship with ‘İslam’.”

5.1.1.1 AKP and Its Approach to Granting Cultural Rights

As stated above, a large number of Kurds who claim for cultural rights coalesce around the AKP. In order to fulfil their demands AKP has developed specific democratic packages and a ‘Democratic Opening Process’ since coming to power, which are detailed in the party’s booklet, *‘Demokratikleşme Adımlarının Bölgeye Yansımaları’* (2002-2012) (Reflection of the Democratization Steps to the Region). As explained in this booklet, AKP’s proposed project for solving the Kurdish issue is founded on the understanding that Kurds’ being permitted their fundamental rights at the individual level. The party takes into account the social differences amidst the diverse groups when considering implementing the various claims. For instance, AKP’s pluralist understanding involves the following conditions; education to be taught in diverse languages at the private schools or to be taught as selective courses at the state schools, broadcasting in various languages, and respecting and protecting cultural values of all groups (AKP Booklet: *Demokratikleşme Adımlarının Bölgeye Yansımaları* (2002-2012), 2013). In line with this ideology, AKP stresses the importance of national citizenship and presents it as the fundamental condition in uniting Turkey and their approach to various groups’ ethno-cultural claims. These issues were openly highlighted by the leader of AKP, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, during his speech on the state and AKP’s approach to the Kurdish issue in Diyarbakir on August 12th 2005. Prime Minister Erdoğan spoke of the state’s misguided approach to the Kurds and professed that the state had previously misjudged (made mistakes) this issue. He declared that the Kurdish question is in fact a ‘Kurdish issue’ and adopted it as his concern. Erdoğan defined the Kurdish issue as a matter which

¹¹¹ For further details on the phrase “conservative democrat” see, (Akdogan 2006).

concerns not only individuals, but the nation as a whole. He clearly mentioned that Kurdish question is a 'Kurdish issue' said it is also his issue. He went further by announcing that in response to the Kurdish issue, his party will distance from the nationalist approach and instead follow the principle of 'further democracy', 'further nationality law' and 'further welfare' (Yenişafak Newspaper-August 13, 2005) in the hope of reconciling the ethno-cultural and ethno-religious groups' demands.

In a step to settle the Kurdish issue, AKP, as will be covered in detail shortly, released specific democratization packages, which included, the use of Kurdish letters - X, Q, W - in private school education, selective Kurdish lessons available in universities, use of original Kurdish district names, political propaganda available in different languages, and removing the student oath which had increasingly strong nationalist undertones.

In the AKP's approach to the Kurdish issue religion in general plays an instrumental role. In support of this, M. Hakan Yavuz and Nihat A.Özcan articulate that AKP held 'Kemalist Ideology's' secularist and nationalist policy responsible for the Kurdish question. Moreover, they claim AKP recognises that replacing tough 'secularist' and 'nationalist' ideologies with Islamic and brotherhood ties will solve Turkey's longstanding Kurdish question and satisfy the Kurds (M. H. Yavuz and Özcan 2006, 103). Considering the issue from that sense, M. H. Yavuz 2011, 136) explains that the party separates itself from both Turkish and Kurdish nationalism and places emphasis on the notion of ethnicity because it believes this has the potential to destroy the association between them.

With this at the forefront and to ensure promises made to the Kurds were met as well as and requirements for democratization and EU membership, the AKP launched a democratic initiative in 2009. In spite of the tough criticisms it received from various parties in Turkey, such as, Nationalist Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi-MHP) (Somer and Liaras 2010), the 'Democratic Opening Process' is a significant strategy to consider when analysing the AKP's understanding of the Kurdish issue. The AKP's intention for introducing the process, according to Yayman (2011, 447–470), was to

democratically unravel ethnic and cultural issues, and creates some sort of dialog between ethno linguistic groups in order to meet Kurds' cultural demands with the basic principles of democracy. Akdogan (2011, 20–21) also considers this process for recognising different groups' social and cultural rights. In support of this, Efegil (2011, 31–32) mentions that the party seeks to settle Turkey's long standing Kurdish issue and other minorities' affairs by permitting their fundamental social and cultural rights at the individual level.

Overall, as indicated by the discussions provided above, AKP distance itself from granting Kurds their cultural rights at the collective level. They, contrary, attempt to solve the Kurdish issue by granting Kurds their cultural rights at the individual level.

5.1.2 The Kurds and CHP

Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi-CHP) has a long history in Turkish politics, and in their words represents the Republic's main principles; republicanism, nationalism¹¹², statism, secularism, revolutionism and populism (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi Tüzük 2012, Article 2). CHP was established through the main principles of the Turkish Republic and became the main vehicle in spreading Kemalist principles. It prioritizes Kemalism and focuses on the secularism issue, which is one of the founding blocks of republicanism (A.-G. Ayata 1992). Based on this context, as noted above and clearly mentioned in the party's programme, the party identifies itself as the defender of republican values, challenges the manipulation of religion in politics and strongly disagrees with using of religion as a tool in state and social relations. CHP, therefore, openly proclaims it is against the "politicization of religion and religionazition of politics" (Cumhuriyet Halk Partis Programı 2013, 49).

Like the AKP's religious identity, an influencing factor for a considerable number

¹¹² Along with secularism, nationalism is also a key component of CHP's identity. Nationalism constitutes one of the six branches of the party. The party programme identifies their nationalism as *Ataturk's nationalism*. According to CHP their nationalism, therefore, does not rest on an ethnic, religious, cultural or regional group, and it does not consider race and blood ties. They consider all diverse groups equally and respect their individual cultural rights in a union with Turkey (Cumhuriyet Halk Partis Programı 2013, 13–14).

of Sunnis involved in CHP is their secular identity. The party, as S. Ayata and Ayata (2007, 220–221) point out, provides a common ground for many groups of people, for instance, Alevis¹¹³ who have apprehensions of Sunni Islam. Reflecting on the discussed issues, it is evident that ideological motivations play a predominant role in pushing Alevis closer to CHP for support. To be more specific, as Grigoriadis (2006, 455) explains, Alevis' fears and anxieties toward “political Islam” triggers them toward CHP. The rise in Sunni identity (based on) parties and related political understanding were perceived as a form of opposition by Alevis. As a result, a majority of Alevis supported the Republican's laicism concept and voted for CHP, which they saw as a political authority willing to protect the idea of laicism (S. Ayata and Ayata 2007, 221).

Although CHP is the first political party of modern Turkey and has since come into power on numerous occasions, it did not consider the Kurdish issue for a long time. CHP embraced the founding ideology of the Republic, which outright denied the Kurdish ethno-national identity mentioned in Chapter Three. However, with conflict between PKK and state military forces underway, and the implications it had on Turkey provoked the party to alter its Kurdish issue understanding. CHP's interest or suggested bold proposals in solving the Kurdish question were firstly announced in the ‘*Kürt Raporu*’ (Kurdish Report) report, declared by the Social Democratic Populist Party (Sosyal Demokrat Halkçı Parti-SHP) in 1989, which later joined CHP. The report stated that the Republic of Turkey does not prioritize its principles according to any particular ethnic or religious group and presents itself as a state for all citizens. Therefore, as written in the report, if some parts of society refer to themselves as Kurds then Kurdish cultural identity must be appreciated. In that respect, the report openly proposed that all legal and practical

¹¹³ Alevis interest in CHP dates back to formation of the Republic which takes secularism (Laicism) as one of the main principles in its identification. Republican's secular ideology was the main factor in Alevis' contentment (*memnuniyet*). Kemalist regimes' secular character and certainty regarding separation of state from religious affairs, as well as removing religious power from the public sphere made Alevis more accepting of secular Republican because majority of Alevis believed these steps would remove any risk posed to their identity (Kehl-Bodrogi 2003; Neyzi 2003, 113; Shakland 1999). Puts it more clearly, Alevis perceived Kemalist regimes as the power which can protect them from the oppression mostly comes from the Sunni groups (Kehl-Bodrogi 2003). On the other hand, despite Kemalist regimes' negative stance against their ethnic and even religious identities to some extent (Geaves 2003), and their opposition toward a homogeneous Turkish nation creation project, Kurdish Alevis gladly welcomed the secular character of Kemalism (van Bruinessen 2000d, 35).

obstacles preventing recognition of the Kurdish identity should be removed, for example, use of the Kurdish language (SHP Doğu ve Güneydoğu Sorununa Bakışı ve Çözüm Önerileri Raporu 1989). According to S. Ayata and Ayata (2007, 217), the points brought to attention in the report illustrate the SHP's sincere and bold approach towards granting Kurds their cultural rights.

Subsequent to the release of the report, CHP started to alter its approach to the Kurdish issue and recognition of Kurds' fundamental rights. CHP has focused on ethnic issues and developed projects related to this, which are included in their programme. The party programme makes reference to the Lausanne agreement of 1923 and highlights their appreciation and respect for the identical differences of the various minorities recognized by the treaty (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi Programı 2013, 46). In relation to the Kurdish issue, CHP refers to the Kurdish report published by the SHP to emphasize its approach to this matter, thus, also recognizing the cultural rights of minority groups. The party strongly underlines that it respects its citizens' differences and acknowledges their individual rights in a unitary understanding of the state. In addition, CHP through the party programme voices that "ethnic identities are the honour of a person" that has to be protected and respected by the state (Ibid.46). Contrary to its stance in the past (during the Republican period), CHP asserts that ethnic and religious differences no longer pose a danger to the unitary structure of the state and for "construction of a common nation" these groups' cultural rights at an individual level must be acknowledged (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi Programı 2013, 47). CHP in that sense, as S. Ayata and Ayata (2007, 220) point out, challenges recognition of these rights at the collective level and any other kind of political autonomy, but acknowledges Kurds' cultural rights at the individual level.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ With respect to the Kurdish issue understanding, there are some dissenting opinions - neo-nationalists (ulusalcılar), raises in CHP. For instance, these party members challenge education in the mother tongue, further decentralization and removing of the term "Turks" from the constitution. Thus, as the party does not have a homogeneous understanding to the Kurds issue, this research takes the party's program a base.

5.2 AN EXPLORATION OF THE CAUSAL FACTORS UNDERLYING THE DEMAND FOR CULTURAL RIGHTS

This section aims to explain the underlying causes for Kurds' demand for cultural rights only model and refusal of other political models. In this respect, the interviews were conducted with people who specifically mention this demand, such as, leaders of associations and organizations, MPs, mayors, the party's provincial and district presidents, directors and political activists. Along with the interviews, publications, speeches, articles and books of these groups are also used as primary sources. To analyse the increase in demand for cultural rights and rejection of other political models, 29 interviews were conducted.

Thus, considering the information obtained from interviews and other primary sources, this section will firstly examine why demand for the cultural rights only model increased, then while other political models were refused.

5.2.1 Why Cultural Rights Only Model?

This section will focus on the Kurds' demand for cultural rights. Overall, the empirical findings of the research revealed that Kurds want to live in a union with the Turks (without ethnic and territorial boundaries) and believe that gaining cultural rights would provide respect and restore the damage created to the Kurdish identity as well as relations between Kurds and Turks. This, in their view, will further contribute to interaction between two peoples - the Kurds and Turks- and Kurds' connection with Turkey. Granting cultural rights, therefore, is regarded as a necessity for strengthening Turkey's unity. This will be discussed further in the following section.

5.2.1.1 Respect for the Kurds' Cultural Identity and Demand for Turkey's Unity

The interviews conducted with the target Kurds showed that they consider recognition of their cultural rights as the initial step in removing the social, cultural and emotional destruction caused to the Kurds and Kurdish identity as well as maintaining

relations between the Turks and Kurds. For instance, according to the AKP's Tunceli provincial party executive, Riza Taskin, granting Kurds their cultural rights would ease the Kurds on a psychological level.¹¹⁵ AKP Tunceli provincial party executive, Candaş Özçelik, also highlighted this point; "If the cultural rights are accepted, Kurds' dignity will be honoured." Candaş added that the years of damage and destruction will be compensated, and empathy between two nations will be created. For Candaş, "the broken ties between the state and the nation will be repaired."¹¹⁶ Acknowledgment of cultural rights in that sense, as AKP Diyarbakir provincial deputy Adnan Nabikoglu asserts, establishes a sense of respect toward the Kurds, heightens trust for one another and strengthens integration between two diverse groups. He says;

Social and cultural rights have to be granted. We were shying of speak in Kurdish language in past. We thought we are going to be blamed. ...My mother still cannot speak in Turkish. If you still refuse that reality, how we can construct strong affiliations with each other.¹¹⁷

Considering the issue in that sense, for these Kurds gaining their cultural rights will protect their individual and human rights because they believe it will lead to equality between one another, which is clearly underlined by CHP Bingöl Provincial Charmin, Mustafa Kurban, in the following statement;

Today, in all around the world, in America, Europe, Africa, everywhere, people support the individual rights (*laws*) in order to be considered as individuals. ...These rights sometimes could be for a minority, sometimes could be for a small group of people. What's important here is the individual rights (*laws*)...We support individual rights. Kurds, Turks, Alevi, Cherkes Armenian, everybody can live together. None of the races have any value for me. ...For instance, one MP from our party said that 'I do not consider Kurds and Turks equal'. It should not happen. When I go to the street people say 'you still do not accept Turks and Kurds as equals, how can I come to your party'. This caused reaction... This is not logical. It should not be said...What we need to do is...recognise everybody's rights. ...For example, the new constitution should not be written based on superiority of a race or belief.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Interview with Riza Taşkın in Tunceli, 13 May 2013

¹¹⁶ Interview with Candaş Özçelik in Tunceli, 13 May 2013

¹¹⁷ Interview with Adnan Nabikoğlu in Diyarbakır, 05 May 2013

¹¹⁸ Interview with Mustafa Kurban in Bingöl, 10 May 2013

To further clarify the connection between protection of minorities' individual and human rights and demand for cultural rights, the interviewees were asked what they thought of education in mother tongue - Kurdish. For instance, Mustafa Kurban openly cited that he doesn't give much attention to his ethnicity. However, he highlighted that people's cultural rights should be granted because they form the basis of human rights and are essential for a democratic understanding. He continued by referring to the education system in Turkey; if English, German and French education is available in Turkey then Kurdish should also be accessible to the Kurds. However, it should be feasible without having to divide Turkey.¹¹⁹ Suat Özdemir, the MASIAD Batman President, also supports this viewpoint;

People's all cultural rights need to be granted, even if it is not right to say these have to be given since they are already given at birth and we have to respect them...people's rights for education in their mother tongue or what they are, should be granted. Not only for the Kurds, for everyone. Cherkas may want to live with their languages. Why do you want to preclude this? You, as a man (Kul), do not have right to prohibit a right that is given by God, of another man. No one gives you this right. ...This is a cruelty.¹²⁰

The Kurds in question believe that by gaining basic cultural rights Kurds will be freer. With their rights they will attain respect for their values, obstacles blocking the use of the Kurdish language will be removed, they will have freedom of education in their mother tongue and discrimination of Kurds will be largely removed. In addition, Kurds' cultural values will be protected. Acknowledgement of cultural rights, therefore, as highlighted by CHP Istanbul Esenyurt district head, Kemal Deniz Bozkurt, they believe would bring equality between various groups with fair opportunities.¹²¹

Observations from the fieldwork conducted showed that granting Kurds their cultural rights is considered as one of the key factors that will impact on the interaction and integration between the Kurds and Turks, and consequently, renew the unity of Turkey. During the research many of the interviewees immediately revealed that they refuse territorial political models and explained their reasons for supporting cultural

¹¹⁹ Interview with Mustafa Kurban in Bingöl, 10 May 2013

¹²⁰ Interview with Suat Özdemir in Batman, 09 May 2013

¹²¹ Interview with Kemal Deniz Bozkurt in Istanbul, 08 January 2013

rights. For instance, during the interview and conversations that followed, Mirza Güçlü frequently commented that the Kurds and Turks have been living together for more than one thousand years and there is no real hostility between them. With reference to this, he explained they have common cultural values, history and union through marriages. So, to Mirza, granting cultural rights would show Kurds that their state respects them and regards them as equal citizens through recognition of their values, which he believes would further strengthen unity and interaction between peoples.¹²² Acknowledgement of cultural rights, to these Kurds, will create a platform in which communities can coexist in peace with respect for one another, and vice versa.¹²³ Therefore, recognition of cultural rights to these Kurds are regarded as warranty for unity in Turkey and refusal of territorial models in the solution of the Kurdish matter, and without these rights there is potential for the state to separate;

Kurds' all rights should be given within the framework of democratic laws. These rights also have to be given to all peoples, such as Cherkes, their freedom have to be recognized. AKP does it. If I do not believe this I would not be in this party... If these rights are not given, Turkey will be divided, weak, and there will be conflicts.¹²⁴

As underlined by Adnan Nabikoglu above and also by many of the research participants, to these Kurds, if Kurds' cultural rights are overlooked Turkey would be divided. However, if their cultural rights are acknowledged they will have no reason to disassociate themselves from Turkey. Aydin Karataş, CHP Tunceli Provincial executive, gives more detail on the link between acknowledgement of cultural rights and unity of Turkey. He pointed out that by granting Kurds their cultural rights and freedom both communities will further build solidarity and establish a peaceful atmosphere;

Why we want granting of Kurds democratic rights, for Kurds obtaining their freedom. A society which obtains its freedom does not create danger. On the contrary, it will create integration. The Kurds and Turks would easily integrate... We want Kurds to be free. They need to obtain their democratic rights, which will not cause any danger for separation of Turkey. If the Kurds do not get

¹²² Interview with Mirza Güçlü in Istanbul, 21 December 2011

¹²³ Interview with Kemal Deniz Bozkurt in Istanbul, 08 January 2013

¹²⁴ Interview with Adnan Nabikoglu in Diyarbakır, 05 May 2013

their freedom, this country will be separated. If the Kurds' freedom is granted...then there will be a peaceful atmosphere.¹²⁵

Permitting Kurds their cultural rights, in their opinion, will prompt positive sentiments toward the state because social, cultural and economic interactions between the two communities will be heightened, and thus, Kurds will feel safer.¹²⁶

As a result, the interviews conducted illustrated that these Kurds believe the cultural rights only model will reinforce cooperation between Kurds and Turks and Kurds will no longer feel their existence is denied, as it was during the last century, and will finally be appreciated by their 'brothers'-Turks.

5.2.2 Why Not Alternative Political Models?

This section examines the reasons for Kurds' refusal of territorial political models (an independent state or federalism) and democratic autonomy over cultural rights. This section, containing two parts, will initially explore the rationale behind rejecting territorial models then democratic autonomy.

5.2.2.1 Rejection of Territorial Political Models

The comprehensive interviews conducted with prominent group figures (See Table 4.1) revealed the Kurds' social and cultural integration with Turkey and emphasis on religious identity (Sunni and Alevi faiths) over ethnicity (refusal of ethnicity) as the two leading conditions which led them to reject territorial political models.

5.2.2.1.1 Socio-Cultural Integration and Difficulty for Application of

Territorial Models

Data obtained from interviewing Kurds associated with AKP and CHP indicated that many Kurds shared the same viewpoints on the ideas which influenced their denial of territorial political demands. These being the intense social, cultural and economic interaction and integration with Turkey through religion, education, mixed marriages and

¹²⁵ Interview with Aydin Karatas (Focus Group) in Tunceli, 13 May 2013

¹²⁶ Interview with Fahri Aslan in Diyarbakir, 06 May 2013

migration. Reflecting on Kurds' integration within Turkey's socio-cultural and economic structure, they believe that applying territorial models (federalism and an independent state) will cause damage to the Kurds in many aspects, particularly physical and emotional destruction.

During the fieldwork many participants made mention to the interaction and integration between the Kurds and Turks. Widespread use of the Turkish language amongst the Kurds, particularly migrant Kurds, was highlighted as an indicator for Kurds who had joined the Turkish culture and community. For instance, MASIAD executive Mirza Güçlü, disclosed that he has been living in Istanbul for more than 15 years and although he can speak Kurdish he does not need to use it in daily life. For him, an individual's native language is important in many respects. Despite highlighting the significance of a person's mother tongue, he also revealed that his children do not communicate with him in Kurdish.¹²⁷ The Turkish language is not only used by migrated Kurds. Kurds living in Kurdish regions also use Turkish in their daily lives, for example Diyarbakir, Tunceli, Bingol and Batman. Many of the interviews explained that they have no need to use the Kurdish language or any intention to learn because they have a good command of the Turkish language. They are able to express themselves clearly in Turkish, therefore, there is no need to make effort to learn the Kurdish language, especially as it seems to be a dying language. This is supported by AKP Diyarbakir provincial head, Aydin Altaç, who explained; "I can speak Kurdish but not so fluent. However, I do not use Kurdish in daily life very often. I express myself well in Turkish."¹²⁸ Most believe that they do not need, feel or simply they have no reason to learn or use Kurdish language in their daily life.¹²⁹ Most of them, as AKP Diyarbakir Sur district executive Ahmet (fictitious name) stated, believe the Kurdish language will not make much difference to their regular day¹³⁰, demonstrating their rational approach to language. Some seemed unaffected by idea that the Kurdish language is dying, most likely because they don't use it every day and so it is of no significance to them.

¹²⁷ Interview with Mirza Güçlü in Istanbul, 21 December 2011

¹²⁸ Interview with Aydin Altac in Diyarbakir, 04 May 2013

¹²⁹ Interview with Mustafa Kurban in Bingol, 10 May 2013

¹³⁰ Interview Ahmet (Fictitious name) in Diyarbakir, 03 May 2013

Results from the fieldwork indicated that the vast number of Kurds emigrating from their homeland and then becoming part of their new regions' culture/society, in turn influenced large scale interaction and assimilation of the Kurds within major group. For example, a substantial number of migrant Kurds revealed that they were welcomed and happily joined Turkish culture or locality, and therefore, have no urge to return to their homeland.¹³¹ "There are so many Kurds living in Istanbul, Izmir, Mersin, Antalya... Why do the Kurds who live in Western Turkey go there after creating the Kurdish state. ...I do not want to be separated from Turkey".¹³² This idea was strongly supported by Adnan Nabikoğlu. According to Nabikoğlu, the Kurds who relocated to western parts of Turkey have no intention to return to their homeland if a territorial political model is established in the Kurdish region. He added that even his brothers and uncles, who hold their Kurdish identity quite close, will not return when they are asked.¹³³ In their opinion a considerable number of the Kurds have already integrated into Turkey and feel themselves part of a major group. Mentioning on the same point, Mustafa Kurban the CHP Bingöl provincial chairman, revealed that some of the Kurds want to be buried where they live and not in their birth place. For example, Kurban spoke of his father's experience; "My dad lives in Izmir, he has 100 decare (acre) land in the village. I asked my dad: if there is a Kurdish state will you return? He said, 'son, I will stay in Izmir, I will not return...Do not even take my corpse to Bingöl'".¹³⁴ This noticeably shows how they integrated into Turkey.

Given the high level of socio-cultural interaction and assimilation to a certain degree, as Aydın Altaç underlines, territorial political models and democratic autonomy are unrealistic for the Kurds and Turkey's conditions, and can potentially lead to conflict if established;

We are intertwined. Look, here doesn't resemble Iraq, Syria or Iran. There, for instance in Iran, Syria or in Iraq the Kurds are generally located in a particular region. But here in Turkey it is not so. Majority of Kurdish population is not here,

¹³¹ Interview with Hakan (Fictious name) in Istanbul, 24 April 2012

¹³² Interview with Kemal Deniz Bozkurt in Istanbul, 08 January 2013

¹³³ Interview with Adnan Nabikoğlu in Diyarbakır, 05 May 2013

¹³⁴ Interview with Mustafa Kurban in Bingöl, 10 May 2013

they live in western parts of Turkey. Despite that reality if you declare federalism or democratic autonomy, then, how will you bring them here? How will our Turkish and Kurdish brothers in the west accept this...Then, the Turks in western Turkey will tell you to return to your home. This will cause conflict. We have to see this reality. ...Kurdish issues is the issue of democracy.¹³⁵

The view that territorial political models cannot be implemented in Turkey was expressed throughout the fieldwork. Mirza Güçlü indicated that in the regions where ethnic and religious borders are dramatically separated or there is less interaction amongst the societies, territorial models may be applied. However, in countries like Turkey where social and cultural conditions and interaction are strong, but particularly because the connection between ethnicity and religion is so intense, or there is no sharp ethnic and religious division between peoples, territorial models cannot be implemented successfully. Because these models' priority on ethnicity, he stated, will lead to conflict and destruction under the current conditions in Turkey and similar countries. For instance, he added, hostility between the Kurds and Turks in western parts of Turkey are likely to occur.¹³⁶ With reference to this, the Kurds who demand for cultural rights believe that establishing territorial political models could damage affiliations between various groups and the unity in Turkey because of the Kurds' demographic distribution and the high levels of integration that have already taken place. Therefore, these political models can potentially lead to persecution of minorities, for example, Zaza.¹³⁷ In addition to this, supporters of the cultural rights only model explain that building territorial boundaries will not benefit the Kurds; "I will never allow Turkey to be separated. The boundaries do not have any importance. What I say, for my happiness there should be no boundaries."¹³⁸ Accordingly, CHP Istanbul Esenyurt district head Kemal Deniz Bozkurt's following response to 'why should the Kurds and Turks live together?', illustrates that there are a number of reasons for these Kurds to live alongside Turks and refuse territorial models;

¹³⁵ Interview with Aydın Altac in Diyarbakır, 04 May 2013

¹³⁶ Interview with Mirza Güçlü in İstanbul, 21 December 2011

¹³⁷ Interview with Sinan (Fictitious name) in Bingöl, 11 May 2013

¹³⁸ Interview with Adnan Nabikoglu in Diyarbakır, 05 May 2013

‘...So many reasons. There are indispensable motives...Also, there is no reason to be separated from each other...Cultural intertwinement is too much. There are many common sharing (commonalities). Bride exchange (Inter-community marriages). There is economic relationship. Common history is so strong. There is common shared...It is not easy to divide this nation...There are a lot of nests.’¹³⁹

Taking the issue in this vein, observations of these parties found that they are open to mixing with the Turkish identity because it is a simpler way to gain status, a job or improved living standards.¹⁴⁰ In that sense, they consider territorial claims as an obstacle preventing integration and use of social and economic resources;

If I am happy in Turkey and if the welfare level is better here, why should I claim for federalism or independency? More jobs, welfare, and peace would make my people and me happier. And so, I say Kurds’ cultural rights should be granted but we never want a federation or secessionism.¹⁴¹

The aforementioned discussions clarify that most of the Kurds who have a close link with Turkey or have integrated into their culture and society are involved in the territory of their environment and are impassive of their own region - a strong indicator for their denial of territorial political models. Moreover, many of these Kurds perceive territorial political models as the underlying cause for social, cultural and economic destruction and conflict in Turkey. For these Kurds a cultural rights only model is appropriate because, they think, unlike with territorial political models with cultural rights a level of respect for cultural values will be obtained as well as stronger interaction and integration between Kurds and Turks.

5.2.2.1.2 Superseding of Ethnicity with Religion

Chapter Two and Three clarified that the Kurds are not of a homogeneous community and carry diverse linguistic (Kurmanji and Zaza) and religious (Sunni and Alevi) characteristics. Religion herein contributes greatly to their rebuttal of territorial political models and demand for unity with the Turks. Their beliefs supersede their ethnic identity, which has an influence on their refusal of territorial models because these models

¹³⁹ Interview with Kemal Deniz Bozkurt in Istanbul, 08 January 2013

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Mirza Güçlü in Istanbul, 21 December 2011

¹⁴¹ Interview with Ahmet (Fictitious name) in Diyarbakır, 03 May 2013

prioritize ethnicity. This section, thus, will explore how religion influences Sunni and Alevi Kurds' refusal of territorial models.

5.2.2.1.2.1 Negation of Ethnicity through Religious Identity: The Sunni Kurds

Results from a survey conducted by SETA & POLLMARK revealed the level of impact religion has on the relationship between Turks and Kurds. According to the findings, 26.7% of the participants marked religion from twelve other factors as the principal element which brings various Muslim ethnic groups and Turkey together (SETA and POLLMARK 2009, 36). Within the same survey, 31.9% of Kurds see religion as a significant reason to live alongside Turks (Ibid., 37). The interviews and observations collected during the fieldwork also exemplify the influence of religion on these Kurds' political behaviours. A high percentage of the participants highlighted religion as a decisive factor in their demand to live within the Turkish community. As the Kurds are religious people, "the common ground of Turks and Kurds is religion. If it is not diagnosed well, it is a trouble....In order to be together, it is very important that religion is a common ground between two peoples, Turks and Kurds."¹⁴² Adile Gurbuz, the AKP Batman provincial vice-chairman, also presents a similar argument and identifies religion as a common value between Kurds and Turks. To Adile Gürbüz, religion brings Kurds and Turks, and eastern and western part of Turkey closer. She explained that the Kurds consider Turkey as their motherland. When asked, 'is it only religion provides this?' Gürbüz stated;

At least 99% of the Kurds consider Turkey as a motherland because of religion....We fought together in the war of Gallipoli and Malazgirt. Salahiddin Ayyubi and Ahmed-i Xani are our common values. We lived and protected everything together in the past. It was because of our Ummah understanding we did all these things together...Before anything else, we say Ummah, then differences come.¹⁴³

¹⁴² Interview with Adnan Nabikoglu in Diyarbakir, 05 May 2013

¹⁴³ Interview with Adile Gurbuz in Batman, 09 May 2013

For these Kurds religious identity is essential for establishing their social, cultural and political in intergroup, in-group relations.¹⁴⁴ In regards to this, AKP Diyarbakir MP Abdulrahman Kurt said; “in my view, religion is not about performing daily prayers or fasting. Religion preaches that you behave in a certain way, for example, to be fair towards other people. This has a direct implication upon the rights of women, different ethnicities and children.”¹⁴⁵ Mirza Güçlü’s following words illustrate how religion influences these Kurds’ attitudes, in particular the shift in significance of ethnicity to religion (Sunni identity). Güçlü openly declared he’d rather live with pious Turks than non-religious or non-Muslim Kurds, such as Yezidi or Suryani Kurds;

Belief is very important for me. I find closer with a Muslim Turk better than agreeing with a Suryani Kurd. I get along with a Muslim Turk better. I have more common grounds with a Muslim Turk. I think religion is the thing that holds people together. ...In my mind the Kurds and Turks have to live together.¹⁴⁶

This idea expressed by Mirza Güçlü is shared by many Kurds and impacts on the practice of territorial models. The following explanation from AKP Diyarbakir Sur district executive, Ahmet (Fictitious name), further emphasises this;

Our party base does not consider the Kurdish issue as an ethnic issue. They do not even use the term ethnicity. They do not need to use this term. We do not ethnicize (etnikleştirme) the Kurdish issue. Therefore, our party base does not consider ethnicity for solving the Kurdish issue. Accordingly, we do not think about the territorial political models.¹⁴⁷

On the whole, as outlined in the above discussions and as results of the research suggested, majority of Kurds who demand for cultural rights place their religious identity ahead of their ethnicity. Contrary to ethnicity, their religious (Sunni) identity is a determinant in shaping their political demands - unity with their religious fellows. This, in turn, contributes to denial of territorial models since these models prioritize and consider Kurdish ethno-national identity as a supra-identity on a specific part of territory.

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Mirza Güçlü in Istanbul, 21 December 2011

¹⁴⁵ Interview conducted with Abdulrahman Kurt (by Deniz Cifci, Buket Bora, Nazli Akyuz, Zeynep Köserreisoglu, Serdar Sengul, and Josie Delves, on Behalf of the CEFTUS) in London, 10 September 2013, available at CEFTUS homepage, (CEFTUS. 2013) available at <http://ceftus.org/2014/02/07/ceftus-insights-interview-with-abdurrahman-kurt/#.VHN1s2SUci4> (Accessed 23/10/2014)

¹⁴⁶ Interview with Mirza Güçlü in Istanbul, 21 December 2011

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Ahmet (Fictitious name) in Diyarbakir, 03 May 2013.

5.2.2.1.2.2 Prioritizing of Religious Identity over Ethnicity: The Alevi Kurds

The interviews conducted as part of the research illustrated that, similar to the Kurds involved with AKP, the Kurds (majorly Alevi) who support CHP also prioritize their belief (Alevism) over their ethnicity. The strength of their religious beliefs also significantly impacts on their political demand. Their concerns with Sunni identity, or as they define it, the increase of ‘political Islam’ in Turkey (particularly among Kurds) along with the other mentioned conditions form are the main reasons for their demand of unity between Turkish and Kurdish origin Alevis. In addition, these factors also influenced their challenge of territorial political models as these models take Kurdish ethnicity into consideration rather than religious beliefs.

During the research study, most of the Kurdish Alevis in support of the CHP repeatedly stated that they identify themselves as ‘Alevi’ first. For instance, in response to the question, ‘how do you define your ethnic identity?’ Yasar Demiralay answered, “I am Alevi”.¹⁴⁸ In regards to the same question, many interviewees stated they preferred to identify themselves through their belief (Alevism) but explained that if it was needed they will class themselves as ‘Kurd’. Most mentioned that they tend not to confirm their Turkish or Kurdish ethnic identity, nor their “Turkishness” and “Kurdishness” because their central identity is Alevi.¹⁴⁹

The interviews carried out also revealed that the Sunni identity (both Turkish and Kurdish Sunnis) is a threat for most Kurdish Alevis who support CHP. Kurdish Alevis are worried Sunni groups will take any opportunity that may arise to take control of Alevis.¹⁵⁰ Dispositions of both groups, therefore, further deepen the socio-cultural and political boundaries between them.¹⁵¹ Research’s empirical findings indicated that Alevis have very little trust in Sunni identity. For instance, in response to the question, *the current government launched an Alevi opening process, why do you remain suspicious of*

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Yasar Demiralay in London, 15 June 2014

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Kemal Bozkurt in Tunceli, 13 May 2013

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Kemal Bozkurt in Tunceli, 13 May 2013

¹⁵¹ Interview with Nevzat Çiçek in Istanbul, 14 March 2011

Sunni identity or do not have trust in the current government - AKP? CHP Istanbul MP Muslim Sari responded;

‘...Well, there is no Alevi opening process. There is just a government that pretends it deals with Alevis’ problems. Well, Alevis’ problems are and their solutions are obvious. ...The government otherizes (othering). It strengthens its base through otherizing. It strengthens the Sunni identity. It creates an enemy, and through this enemy it strengthened its base. It has such a strategy. The biggest other is Alevis. Alevis are tukaka (slander) for this government. For them, Alevis do not have any problem to be solved. For them, Alevism itself is a problem...Because there is a government shaped with the Sunni Turkish ideology...Because of this, Alevis are being otherized. This process has gone one step further.’¹⁵²

Analysing the anxieties of Alevis in that respect, CHP Bingöl provincial chairman Mustafa Kurban, notes that Alevis place emphasis on protection for secular character of regime rather than their ethnic and national identity. He added; “the citizens here have concern because of their sensitiveness on secularism which is artificialized in Turkey. They are worried whether there will be a sharia state soon. They are worried and think if that happens what will happen to Alevis.”¹⁵³ The following statement from CHP’s Istanbul MP, Muslim Sari, also gives some context to understanding Alevis’ concerns;

There was Alevis’ claim within equal citizenship in the constitution. ...Set aside obtaining these claims, Alevis’ lives are in danger. Especially after Islamic State of Sham and Iraq (ISIS), people are being killed on the way to Cemevi in the East and South East region by Police. Their living space is getting narrow slowly. They tried to live by living in a specific area or neighbourhood.¹⁵⁴

Taking into account Alevis’ concerns obtained from the interviews conducted, it appears Alevism has become a common thought for most Alevis, meaning their liberation is dependent on harmony between Alevis. Most Alevis believe that their ethnic identity needs to be gathered under Alevism, which overrides Turkish or Kurdish identities.¹⁵⁵ Muslim Sari confirms this idea by stating that oppression over the Alevis “causes

¹⁵² Interview with Muslim Sari in London, 15 June 2014.

¹⁵³ Interview with Mustafa Kurban in Bingöl, 10 May 2013

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Muslim Sari in London, 15 June 2014

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Israfil Erbil in London, 15 June 2014

gatherings of Turkish, Kurdish, and Arabic speaking Alevi¹⁵⁶. In other words, it turned Alevism in to a “supra identity”.

The research findings revealed that the idea of Sunni identity gaining superiority in Turkey on the grounds of Islamic understanding or politics is one of the fundamental conditions which has led Kurdish Alevi who support CHP to prioritize their religious identity, Alevism, over their ethno-national identity. Consequently, territorial political models are not considered.

Moreover, another two reasons found to contribute to religious identity being prioritized over ethno-national identity and territorial models rejected are; increased Sunni-Alevi tension and unity between Sunni Kurds and Turks, which in turn strengthened Sunni identity.

Throughout the course of the fieldwork, many Kurdish Alevi commented on their fears and apprehensions toward Sunni Kurds. They openly expressed their concerns regarding the growing influence of religion on the world of politics, especially in the Kurdish region. A focus group discussion involving four Kurdish Alevi who immigrated to the UK almost fifteen years ago in an effort to escape political oppression they faced in their homeland, who are also currently active in some Alevi organizations in London, support the former points mentioned. The discussion topic of the focus group was prioritization of Alevi identity over Kurdish ethnic identity and the political model they recommend will solve the Kurdish issue. The discussion started with the question how do

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Muslim Sari in London, 15 June 2014

The fear of Sunni Identity is not only common among the Alevi in Turkey. For instance, born in Turkey and an Arab Alevi, the president of Glasgow Alevi Federation Aynur Doğan highlighted that Alevism has to be a supra-identity in all Alevism. In response to the question *how does she consider Sunni Identity*, Aynur noted ;

I’m Arab Alevi... But, my ethnic origin does not matter at all; I am totally Alevi... I am against the structure you mentioned (*Sunni identity*), with Alevi identity... Look, we have never been accepted...Since Karbala, we have been exposed to massacre...I am opposed to the system that does not accept us, does not recognise us...This is our reaction...We have to protect our identity...Alevism is the supra-identity for me...Our concern is Alevism; protecting Alevism and its unity (Interview with Aynur Dogan in London, 15 June 2014).

you consider AKP's success in 2014 local electoral, particularly in the Kurdish region?
Zeynep (Fictitious name) responded with;

I was voting for the BDP in previous elections. But, as majority of the Sunni Kurds voted for the AKP in 2014 local elections I will not support any Kurdish origin party. Sunni Kurds' religious identity and support for AKP because of that scares me. Therefore, I will call myself an Alevi not Kurdish.¹⁵⁷

Kurdish Alevis' anxieties are not limited to only this. They claim religious groups or parties, like the AKP, consciously *otherise* Alevis to further strengthen and unite Sunni groups in Turkey, but particularly in regions with large numbers of Kurdish communities;

Well, since Ottoman period, even since the Republic, backward (*gerilik*) parts of Islam and backwardness (*gericilik*) have been supported in the Kurdish region. '...Now, certain Islamic groups and groups who struggle for Sharia exist. ...12 years AKP government strengthened its power with the hate against Alevism... It strengthened Sunnism through Alevi hate. ...It already approaches Kurdish movement through this identity. This is what bothers us...That is why we are annoyed.'¹⁵⁸

Considering the issue in this vein, another reason for Kurdish Alevis' growing fears and their doubt in Sunni Kurds is the close relationship between Kurdish and Turkish descendant Sunnis, which was highlighted by a number of the research participants. Many of the political leaders interviewed from Alevi organizations and CHP branches in the Kurdish region associated the interaction between Sunni Turks and Kurds (alliance between Sunnis) as the reason for Alevis' fears;

AKP is in fighting with basic principles of the Republic. It wants to remove existed political structure. For instance, making regulation in curriculum, formulated as 4 +4+4, is a sample for this. With this they aim to construct a religious society and want to raise a religious youth. They seek for revenge. For instance, they strengthen Directorate of Religious Affairs. AKP does this with the support of BDP. BDP supports them...They support each other.¹⁵⁹

These Kurdish Alevis, therefore, consider Sunni identity as a connection point between Sunnis (Sunni Turks and Sunni Kurds), but also a danger for the Alevi identity. Moreover, Kurdish Alevis believe they have been purposely excluded by Sunni Kurds as

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Zeynep (Fictitious name-Focus group discussion) in London, 03 April 2014.

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Israfil Erbil in London, 15 June 2014

¹⁵⁹ Interview with Aydin Karatas (Focus group) in Tunceli, 13 May 2013

well Turks.¹⁶⁰ CHP Tunceli Provincial executive, Aydın Karatas, explained in an interview;

The Sunni Kurds and Sunni Turks have common beliefs. Even though the people who live in the Southeast are ethnically of Kurdish origin and a separate nation, they share the same life-styles and/or belief with the Sunni Turks. They pray the same belief and in the same religious place, mosque. They are similar to each other in this sense.¹⁶¹

CHP Istanbul provincial MP, Muslim Sari, also spoke of the relationship between Alevis and Sunni Kurds and Turks;

Look, for instance, this ideology, Sunni Turk ideology, gets along with the Kurds. Turks and Kurds get along well under the umbrella of Islam. There could be mentioned Turkish-Kurdish brotherhood...But Alevism, Alevisim's DNA and Alevis' lifestyles are incompatible with this ideology.¹⁶²

Kurdish Alevis' fear of Sunni Kurdish identity and Kurdish politics, which were expressed in many of the interviews carried out, reached such incredible levels that they identify some relations between the PKK-BDP and state authorities as a compromise or alliance between Sunni Kurds and Turks. For instance, Abdullah Öcalan's letter¹⁶³ put emphasis on the Islamic solidarity of the Kurds and Turks and underlined the importance of Islam and its contribution to the close affiliation between the Kurds and Turks (Akşam-March 21, 2013), caused a trouble and fear in many Alevis. For instance, mentioning on Abdullah Öcalan's letter, *European Federation of Associations of Dersim Alevis (ADDF)* highlighted that the points in the letter disappointed many of the Kurdish Alevis and further raised their concerns (Çıla (24 March), 2013). During observations, many Alevis shared their thoughts about instigating talks between the jailed leader of PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, and the state, and also their apprehensions about releasing of Öcalan's letter. Majority of these Alevis regard the talks between Öcalan and the state as a positive step in creating an alliance or corporation between Sunni Kurds and Sunni Turks;

¹⁶⁰ Interview with Imam Göçer (Focus group) in Tunceli, 13 May 2013

¹⁶¹ Interview with Aydın Karatas (Focus group) in Tunceli, 13 May 2013

¹⁶² Interview with Muslim Sari in London, 15 June 2014

¹⁶³ As a part of peace process continued between the state and PKK, Abdullah Öcalan's letter written in Imrali prison, was declared to the public at the Newroz festival in Diyarbakir on March 21st 2013.

Kurdish movement had a discourse to protect Alevis' rights in the past. Especially Kurdish Alevis' rights. Principally with the reconciliation after peace process, saying Kurds and Turks can gather under the umbrella of Islam means looking at the issue from the Sunni perspective. This annoyed Alevis a lot. Kurdish and Turkish Alevis are not in this equation. There are Sunni Turks and Sunni Kurds in this equation. This is annoying, this annoyed Alevis.¹⁶⁴

Kurdish Alevis' criticisms of Öcalan's letter are so vast that they regard it as the fundamental factor which led to their distrust towards Sunni Kurds, especially when taking into account their previous tension with Sunni Kurds;

There is a previous history...Because we received a nasty blow from Sunni Kurds and Sunnis, we deliberate now. We want to be sure. We have no power to take the slaughters and devastation anymore...That letter, therefore, has a huge impact. In one sense, it is proof not to trust (Sunni Kurds).¹⁶⁵

Observations of CHP party branches, including mostly Kurds and Kurdish Alevi organizations who support CHP, revealed that many Kurdish Alevis, as noted by CHP Tunceli provincial executive Mustafa Alabat, believe "Sunni Kurds and Sunni Turks would support each other over a common religious and political base and exclude Kurdish and Turkish Alevis". To put it simply, they think Alevis would be left to their own devices and fates.¹⁶⁶

Considering Alevis' anxieties in light of the discussions provided, findings suggest that the social and political boundaries between Sunni and Alevi Kurds continue to grow and have already reached a significant level; with formation of some radical Kurdish Islamic groups, for example, Hezbollah.¹⁶⁷ This, in turn, led to them to prioritize their religious identity over their ethnicity, more clearly unity between Alevis, for protection of their belief but most importantly providing of their security. Reflecting on this, CHP's Bingöl provincial chairman Mustafa Kurban stated that they do not place emphasis on their ethnicity because "Alevis have fear of death, fear of death from the Sunnis". In an explanation for their increased fears, he added that currently, many people

¹⁶⁴ Interview with Muslim Sari in London, 15 June 2014

¹⁶⁵ Interview with Yaşar Demiralay in London, 15 June 2014

¹⁶⁶ Interview with Mustafa Alabat (Focus group) in Tunceli, 13 May 2013

¹⁶⁷ Interview with Mustafa Kurban in Bingöl, 10 May 2013, Interview with Imam Gucer (Focus group) in Tunceli, 13 May 2013 and Interview with Mustafa Alabat (Focus group) in Tunceli, 13 May 2013

from the city of Bingöl are fighting for Radical Islamist Groups in Syria. Therefore, he explained, as Alevis anticipate their death they cannot prioritize their ethnic rights.¹⁶⁸

The fieldwork elucidated that because the Sunni identity in Sunni Kurds is a point of alarm for Alevis, they give priority to their religious identity – Alevism - and unity between Alevis of Kurdish and Turkish origin. In other words, examining the discussion between Kurdish ethnicity and Alevi identity in light of the above points, “Alevi identity is very strong, so strong that it overcomes ethnic differences” (Shakland 2003, 18). As Leezenberg (2003, 197) explains, some Kurdish Alevis chose to distance themselves from the Kurdish identity and regard the term “Kurds” to mean “Sunni”. Kurdish Alevis, therefore, relate more to Turkish Alevis than Sunni Kurds (Seufer 1997, 172 in Houston 2001, 105). This, moreover, led to many rejecting the concept of territorial political models because they suspect it has the potential to damage any likely union between Kurdish and Turkish descendant Alevis. In addition to this, they believe territorial political models will reinforce Sunni identity in regions with a high Kurdish population, and give Sunni identity power over the Kurdish Alevis. Contrary to territorial political models, they stated that all ethno-cultural and ethno-religious identities must be respected and protected as this will encourage harmony between Alevis in Turkey. And so, while acknowledgment of territorial claims increases fears of Sunni identity, oppression and inequality, recognition of cultural rights are regarded as basic human rights that will reinforce trust between Kurds and the state as well as Kurdish and Turkish Alevis in Turkey.¹⁶⁹

5.2.2.2 Rejection of Democratic Autonomy Model

Like territorial political models, democratic autonomy is also harshly criticized by cultural rights supporters because they believe this model will give the PKK control over areas populated by Kurds.

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Mustafa Kurban in Bingöl, 10 May 2013

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Hidir Arat (Focus Group) in Tunceli, 13 May 2013 and Interview with Mustafa Alabat (Focus group) in Tunceli, 13 May 2013

The previous section detailed that the majority of the Kurds who demand for cultural rights prioritize their religious identity (either Sunni or Alevi) over their ethnic identity, and because of this, reject territorial political models since these models rank ethnicity first. Despite democratic autonomy defenders' explanations, which were noted in Chapter Four, that democratic autonomy considers all ethnic and religious groups and could be applied across Turkey, many of the cultural rights adherents do not regard this as a genuine statement. They argue that conditions of democratic autonomy are insufficient for Turkey and not 'sincere'.¹⁷⁰ Therefore, to these Kurds, "declaring democratic autonomy and right to self-govern ourselves is not realistic."¹⁷¹

Many of these Kurds who participated in the study claimed that democratic autonomy will provide authority to only specific groups –BDP and PKK - and will offer nothing to others, such as, Alevis. This point was also brought up by Kemal Bozkurt;

Neither PKK nor the state gives us anything...For instance, there was Abdullah Öcalan's explanation in his letter, what was he saying? He was sending his compliments to Fethullah Gülen. He was talking about Islamic unity and brotherhood. Öcalan did not mention Alevis. Did he say anything about Alevis' rights, no. Is there any demand about Alevis' rights in them, people from the southeast, no. Some of the BDPs talk about Alevis' rights, when then they come here, but, just for the sake of conversation. There is nothing apart from this. Even if some of their MPs or high-level individuals have something to say about Alevis' rights, the people of southeast do not have such an idea.¹⁷²

Bozkurt adds that if any kind of autonomy is granted to the Kurds in this region serious problems would arise. This is because, he stated, south-eastern communities do not share the same level of awareness (consciousness) as the rest of the Alevis and Sunni Kurds do not understand them.¹⁷³ Based on this, another reason many of these Kurds refused democratic autonomy is their view that democratic autonomy will establish an authoritarian structure under the governance of PKK-BDP. Many Kurds, as also mentioned throughout the research study, believe democratic autonomy's structure and affiliation with PKK and BDP will result in persecution of the individuals who oppose

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Düzgün Akyıldız in Tunceli, 13 May 2013

¹⁷¹ Interview Aydın Altaç in Diyarbakir, 04 May 2013

¹⁷² Interview with Kemal Bozkurt in Tunceli, 13 May 2013

¹⁷³ Interview with Kemal Bozkurt in Tunceli, 13 May 2013

this model.¹⁷⁴ For instance, AKP Diyarbakir Sur district executive, Hasan (fictious name), spoke of the Diyarbakir Municipality's, which was won by BDP in the last election (2014), approach against opponents of BDP and democratic autonomy. He explained that if you are not a relative of anyone who lost their life during PKK's struggle or those imprisoned because of the affiliations with the PKK, it is not possible to get any support from or manage your affairs easily with the municipality. He added that with democratic autonomy Kurds are restricted in carrying out their internal affairs.¹⁷⁵ Many thought that with democratic autonomy, minorities such as Alevis would be further oppressed and inequality among groups would intensify.¹⁷⁶ Bingol Martyrs Family Association President Ziya Sözen, who lost his father to the conflict with the PKK, for instance, explained that democratic autonomy will only work to establish the PKK's authority in the region. To these Kurds the democratic autonomy model structure will initiate this.¹⁷⁷

Considering the motives behind rejection of democratic autonomy, empirical findings of the research suggested these Kurds believe democratic autonomy will allow PKK to establish power over other groups, leading to persecution of cultural rights only model proponents.

Overall, in light of the comprehensive interviews conducted, this chapter argued that the Kurds who gather around the political parties AKP and CHP support recognition of cultural rights for Kurds. Gaining their basic human rights symbolises a level of respect from the state and rebuilds the Kurds' trust in the state. Therefore, cultural rights are considered as fundamental human rights which will remove Kurds' concerns and strengthen the unity between communities. They also revealed that their religious identity (Sunni and Alevi faiths) is prior over their ethnicity because ethnicity impedes development of relations within Sunnis and Alevis in Turkey respectively. Moreover,

¹⁷⁴ Interview with Ahmet (Fictious name) in Diyarbakir, 03 May 2013

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Hasan (Fictious name) in Diyarbakir, 03 May 2013

¹⁷⁶ Interview with Zulfu Kulaci (Focus group) in Tunceli, May 2013, Interview with Aydin Karatas (Focus Group) in Tunceli, 13 May 201, Interview with Mustafa Alabat (Focus group) in Tunceli, 13 May 2013), Interview with Hidir Arat (Focus group) in Tunceli, 13 May 2013 and Interview Ahmet (Fictious name) in Diyarbakir, 03 May 2013

¹⁷⁷ Interview With Ziya Sözen in Bingöl, 11 May 2013

ethnicity for the Kurdish Alevis is a barrier preventing affiliations among Turkish and Kurdish descendent Alevis. For the Sunni Kurds, on the other hand, it is a barrier between Sunni Turks and Sunni Kurds. This then becomes a primary reason for rejecting territorial models, which rank ethnicity and territory. Thus, contrary to the territorial political models, which they believe would damage the union between Kurds and Turks, and democratic autonomy that could potentially provide PKK power, cultural rights is considered the most suitable alternative by these Kurds.

CHAPTER SIX

DEMAND FOR THE FEDERALISM MODEL

This chapter aims to analyse the underlying factors for why some Kurds demand federalism and refuse democratic autonomy and cultural rights only models. Moreover, because of the strong correlation between federalism and nation-state the chapter will also examine the critics of nation-state.

Federalism, as discussed in detail in Chapter One, is a “power-sharing” model between national and local government(s), and is founded on the principle of “diversity in unity”. In this regard, federalism involves sharing “legal sovereignty” between both local and national governments (Hague and Harrop 2004, 228). Currently various forms of federalism are applied, in both mono and multi ethnic countries. Federalism, as Chapter One outlined, can be administrative - federalism in Germany - or ethnic - federalism application in Canada.

In a federal case, national defence, sizeable economic investments and foreign affairs are usually dealt with by the national government (Hague and Harrop 2004, 229). Local governments have power over their internal affairs, including, education, housing, health, transportation and traffic issues (Ibid., 229). In some cases, although more often the national government’s responsibility, local governments also have power over tax collection. In such cases, both local and national governments can potentially share tax collection responsibility at different levels (Brown and Schafft 2011, 57; W. R. Clark, Golder, and Golder 2009, 614).

The interviews revealed that through federalism Kurds want to achieve recognition of their national status on their territory, that is, acknowledgment of their territorial national status as with the Kurdish case in Iraq. In that sense, with a federal model they want to have their own parliament, judiciary, local defense forces, recognition of Kurdish as an official language, right of tax collection, power over their economic resources, powerful representation in national government (in Ankara), their own schools, hospitals,

universities and control of all of their other internal affairs, namely housing, transportation, sport, health, education and so on.

Federalism as a territorial political model is highly prevalent among the Kurds. Despite their different ideological, political and organizational backgrounds the Kurds who demand federalism gather around the political parties Hak-Par, Kadep, ÖSP, Hûda-par, Hezbollah, and the religious groups Med-Zehra and Zehra. To elucidate the Kurds who support federalism, the first part of the chapter will identify the Kurdish groups Hak-Par, Kadep, ÖSP, Hûda-Par, Hezbollah, and Med-Zehra and Zehra communities. Comparisons will be made on their ideology, social structure, relations with the state and each other, and most importantly, ideological and historical connections with previous Kurdish organizations.

The second part of the chapter, which is divided into a further two sub-sections, will firstly analyse the main motives which led these groups to propose federalism as a political model. The empirical findings of the research indicated that these Kurds support federalism because they believe it will impede the use of religion in assimilation and integration of the Kurdish identity, construct equality between the Kurds and Turks by acknowledging Kurds 'territorial' national status, resolve ethnic tension and put an end to the discrimination of the Kurds, and lastly, give them power over their economic resources. These causes will be discussed in further detail later in the first section, followed by the reasons for refusing other political models (independent state, democratic autonomy and cultural rights only model).

6.1 IDENTIFICATION OF GROUPS DEMANDING FEDERALISM

As clarified at the beginning of this chapter, the Kurds who demand for federalism have various socio-cultural, ideological and political backgrounds. Part one, thus, will clarify the Kurdish groups Hak-Par, Kadep, ÖSP, Hûda-Par, Hezbollah, and the Kurdish religious groups Med-Zehra and Zehra Communities, which demand federalism.

6.1.1 From Med-Zehra to Zehra Community: Kurdish Islamists (Nurcular)

Previous chapters showed that religion has always played a pivotal social and political role in shaping and determining the Kurds' both in-group and intra-group political relations. As mentioned earlier, religion was the main motive for the cooperation between Kurds and M.Kemal during the period when modern Turkey was established.

The religion based relations between the Kurdish Islamists and Turkish Islamists¹⁷⁸ developed further as both parties accepted the teachings of well-respected Kurdish origin religious scholar, Said-i Nursi (Kurdi)¹⁷⁹ (Bediüzzaman-The Wonder of the Age) and took them as guidance. The Turkish and Kurdish Islamist Nurcu groups follow Said-i Nursi's teachings (interpretations), which are collected in *Risale-i Nur Külliyyati*¹⁸⁰ (M. H. Yavuz 2006, 130). The relations between Kurdish and Turkish *Nurcus* and various understandings in the *Nur* movement continued without any serious dilemmas during the period Nursi was still alive. However, soon after his death in 1960, as M.H. Yavuz (2006, 152-158) details, his followers divided in line with 'regional', 'class', and 'ethnic identities'.

Kurdish Islamists' approach to social and political issues also took Nursi's interpretations as a base. Nursi's approach to the Kurdish issue is, therefore, decisive in shaping Kurdish Islamists' understanding to the Kurdish question (Aydinkaya 2012; Atacan 2001). Because of their strong emphasis on Nursi and his teachings, Med-Zehra harshly criticized some Turkish Islamists because they claimed that after Nursi's death some Turkish religious communities made changes in *Risale-i Nur* by replacing the terms

¹⁷⁸ Turkish Islamists comes from different social and political backgrounds. Various understandings, Islamic organizations, tariqas and religious communities, such as Nurcu movements consist of Turkish Islamists. For further information on the Turkish Islamist groups see; (Shakland 1999, 64–86) and (Şentürk 2011).

¹⁷⁹ Said-i Nursi used the surname "Kurdi" until the adoption of Surname act in 1934. Under this law the state gave him the surname "okur" but he never used it. He used Nursi - the name of the place name where he was born (Zinar 2011, 156).

¹⁸⁰ *Risalei Nur Külliyyati* (*Risalei Nur Collection*) consist of twelve volumes; *Sözler* (The Words), *Asa-Yı Musa* (The Staff of Moses), *Mektubat* (The Letters), *Tarihçe-i Hayat*, *Şualar* (The Rays), *Lem'alar* (The Flashes), *İşsaretü'l İ'câz* (Signs of Miraculousness), *Kastamonu Lahikası* (The Kastamnu Letters), *Emirdağ Lahikası* (The Emirdag Letters), *Barla Lahikası* (The Barla Letters), *Denizli Lahikası* (The Denizli letters), *Mesnevi-yi Nuriye* (<http://www.risale-inur.org/risaleinur.php>).

‘Kurds’ and ‘Kurdistan’ with others (Atacan 2001, 123). These supposed changes to Nursi’s *Risale-i Nur Kulliyati*, principally the aspects which regarded the Kurds and their regions, consequently, generated discontent among Kurdish Islamists, highlights Dursun-Seyhanzade (1993, 27–47; 1998, 6–12). According to Zinar (2011, 156–157), the aim to remove or weaken Nursi’s Kurdish identity, some Turkish Islamists effort was not only restricted to make changes in *Risalei Nur*. To Zinar, they also persisted by attempting to associate him with the Arab title *Sayyid*. This continued, he says, despite Nursi’s family and Kurdish Islamists’ explanations that his ethnic identity is Kurdish and does not have any connection with the *Sayyid* title (Ibid.,157). Considering discussion on Nursi’s ethnic identity, Yavuz (2003,176) suggests that Kurdish Islamists’ counteraction to the approach taken by Turkish Islamists to Said Nursi’s Kurdish identity are their way of placing emphasis on “a Kurdish Nursi”.

The reasons mentioned above raised the Kurdish Islamists’ dissatisfaction, which were further intensified over time. Med-Zehra-affiliated DAVA magazine noted that Turkish Islamists remained close to Turkish nationalism. In addition, there was alleged interaction between Turkish Islamists and ‘*Turkism*’ understanding (DAVA Dergisi 1993, 12–13; Yavuz 2003, 175-176). For the Kurdish Islamists, it was nationalism which prompted Turkish Islamists to overlook Said-i Nursi’s Kurdish identity as well as his opinions regarding the Kurds and solution for the Kurdish issue (Canlı and Beysülen 2010, 239–241). Following the heightened uneasiness, Yavuz 2006, (157–158) explains Kurdish Islamists took further interest in Kurdish identity and were adamant to solve the Kurdish issue by taking inspiration from Nursi’s approaches.

Kurdish Islamists’ assertions that Turkish Islamists were closely linked with Turkish nationalism (Şengül 2004, 532) and the concerns given above provoked these Kurds to search for and create their own organization(s) (Aydinkaya 2012). Thus, based on their criticisms of Turkish Islamists and intentions to solve the Kurdish issue, Kurdish

Islamists formed their own community in 1973 - Med-Zehra¹⁸¹ , under the leadership of Mehmet Siddik Dursun (Seyhanzade) (Şentürk 2011, 270–271).

The majority of Med-Zehra members were of Kurdish origin and spent much more intellectual effort in creating public awareness of Kurdish identity and finding a solution for the Kurdish issue. Nevertheless, Med-Zehra did not describe itself only as a Kurdish origin religious community but took the teachings of Said-i Nursi with respect to its approach to the Kurdish identity (Şengül 2004, 532) and took action to highlight Nursi's Kurdish identity, which find a large place in their official publication DAVA magazine. In line with these targets, Med-Zehra published DAVA magazine in 1989 which encompassed "Med Zehra's dual Kurdish and Islamic identities" (Atacan 2001, 112). DAVA gave great importance to the Kurdish issue, Kurdish culture, identity and history with respect to Nursi's interpretations. Many of the magazine issues published articles which exposed Turkey's oppression of the Kurds. In addition, most of articles raised questions on finding a solution for the Kurdish issue through an Islamic Ummah understanding, and often criticized the Turkish Islamist organizations. Given Med-Zehra's focus on the Kurdish issue, Yavuz (2003, 176) suggests that Med-Zehra community "attempted to maintain balance between Kurdish nationalism and Islamism". To Hamut (2011, 19), Med-Zehra's views on the Kurdish issue and identity, and its religious standpoint has considerable importance in the development of Kurdish Islamist understanding because it was the first noted time Kurdish Islamists organized independently (of Turkish religious communities) to address "Muslim Kurdish identity" in modern Turkey with reference to Said-i Nursi's views. Fulya Atacan supports this by underlining that Med-Zehra was the first Kurdish Islamist community to openly address the Kurdish issue through an Islamic sense and harshly challenge the approaches of the Republic to the Kurdish issue (Atacan 2001). Therefore, she adds, "Med-Zehra is not only an important Nurcu group in Turkey but also an important representative of Kurdish Islamic movements" (Ibid., 112). Despite its significant contribution in development of

¹⁸¹ The name Med-Zehra derives from the name of a university-'Medresetul Zehra' which Said-Nursi proposed to be formed in the city of Van providing education in three languages; Kurdish, Turkish, and Arabic (Atacan 2001, 112).

Kurdish Islamic Identity, Med-Zehra faced numerous internal struggles in 1990, mostly regarding leadership and governance issues. Med-Zehra was unable to resolve their internal issues and subsequently divided into two groups; Med-Zehra and Zehra. Some Kurdish Islamists left Med-Zehra and founded Zehra Education & Cultural Foundation under the leadership of Izzettin Yildirim¹⁸² in 1990 (Yavuz 2006, 157–158; Şentürk 2011, 271). To Yavuz (2003, 176), the latter included mostly Kurdish Islamists with nationalist inclinations.

Zehra community following Med-Zehra suit published Kurdish-Turkish language based *Nûbihar*¹⁸³ magazine in 1992 (Şentürk 2011, 271). It was their main tool to reach out to the Kurdish society and construct intellectual studies on Kurds. Focusing on Kurds and the Kurdish issue, it became a platform for many to express their outlooks on the Kurdish issue and possible solutions. It covered the Kurdish question in many of its issues.

Subsequent to its division, Med-Zehra lost almost all of its influence on society and presently Zehra community holds more importance. Zehra community followers were largely of Kurdish origin and they focused on developing Kurdish ethno-national identity and settling the Kurdish issue- as well as making stress on their Islamic identity. Although Zehra community is mainly located in the Kurdish region, they are also active in Anatolia. Zehra community becomes a centre for the Kurds who want to practice their belief and ethnic identity together. Şahan (Fictitious name)¹⁸⁴ a prominent authority in the community for instance said that “Kurdish identity expresses itself within us. Kurdish youth who do not want to be deprived from their religion, language, and ethnic identity consider us as a shelter”.

¹⁸² The leader of Zehra community, Izzettin Yildirim (killed in 2000), is well respected among the Kurds. Yildirim was born in the city of Agri in 1946. In order to spread teachings of Nursi, he actively took part in Nurcu communities from the onset. Along with his focus on religion, Yildirim also concentrated on the Kurdish issue and often mentioned on Kurdish identity and suffering they experienced. He made great practical and intellectual effort for solution of the Kurdish question (Tekin 2013; Çakır 2011a, 281).

¹⁸³ The name *Nûbihar* comes from the Kurdish philosopher Ahemd-i Xani's book (*Nûbihara Piçûkan*). *Nûbihar* started its publication in 1992 and mostly focuses on the Kurdish language and Kurdish issue through Said-i Nursi's approach through an Islamic perspective.

¹⁸⁴ Interview with Şahan (Fictitious name) in Diyarbakir, 08 May 2013

Zehra community continues its activities through student houses, gatherings around bookshops, through preparation schools, publishing independent magazines and establishing special publishers. The community is well organized in almost all parts of the Kurdish region as well as Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir, Bursa and Adana; all of which also have a high Kurdish population.

6.1.2 From Hezbollah to Hûda-Par: ‘Radical’ Kurdish Islam

Free Cause Party (Hür Dava Partisi-Hûda-Par) was founded on December 17th 2012. Soon after it was established it organized around some parts of Turkey, particularly areas rich in Kurds. Although the party is rather a new wind in the political arena, its roots trace back to the 1980s with the political and armed organization Hezbollah. Therefore, it is evident that Hûda-Par is a progression of the Hezbollah, says Çağatay (2014, 5), or at least as the party’s Diyarbakir provincial head Vedat Turgut clarifies, they share the same grassroots.¹⁸⁵ Therefore, in order to identify Hûda-Par this section will firstly elucidate the Hezbollah.

Although the exact date for when Hezbollah¹⁸⁶ was established remains unknown, according to the book ‘*Kendi Dilinden Hizbullah; Mücadele Tarihinden Kesitler*’ (Hezbollah in Its Own Words; Selection from the History of the Struggle)¹⁸⁷ published by Hezbollah affiliated İ.Baggasi (Isa Altsoy), members started to come together between the years 1979 and 1980 to solve, as they claim, the issues the Islamic world was facing which organizations of the time were unable to deal with (İ.Baggasi 2004). Hezbollah was founded in the cities of Batman and Diyarbakir around the ‘*İlim*’ and ‘*Menzil*’¹⁸⁸ bookstores and most members were of Kurdish origin (Şentürk 2011, 593). And so, with

¹⁸⁵ Interview with Vedat Turgut in Diyarbakir, 08 May 2013

¹⁸⁶ Although Hezbollah (in Turkey) shares a common name with the Hezbollah movement in Lebanon, they do not have any association with each other (Düzgit Aydın and Çakır 2009, 101).

¹⁸⁷ This book is almost the first publication published by Hezbollah.

¹⁸⁸ The Hezbollah members who gathered around the ‘Menzil’ bookstore named Hezbollah Menzil group, while others (those gathered around ‘İlim’ bookstore called as Hezbollah İlim group). İlim group, under the leadership of Huseyin Velioglu, harshly attacked Menzil members and killed many of them, including leadership cadres. Hezbollah Menzil group, therefore, does not have any power over Kurds currently (Aydıntaşbaş 2000). And so, the current Hezbollah is known as Hezbollah İlim group. On the other hand, although there is similarity between their names, Hezbollah Menzil group does not have any connection with Adıyaman based in Menzil Tariqa.

reference to the book '*Kendi Dilinden Hezbollah; Mücadele Tarihinden Kesitler*', as an Islamic movement Hezbollah is a Kurdish region born movement and recruited mostly Kurdish origin members (İ.Baggasi 2004, 55).

According to Hezbollah authorities, there were certain “historical reasons and Islamic liability” involved in the development of Hezbollah (Tutar 2011, 115). Numerous political changes in the late 70s and early 80s had huge impacts on the construction and organization of Hezbollah (Şenturk 2011, 591, Baggasi 2004). According to the Hezbollah affiliated above-mentioned book and the movement’s manifesto, the state’s repressive policies against Muslims, Republican’s secularism understanding, growing Marxist-Leninist ideology and the existed problems of Islamic powers were definite advances which led to Hezbollah emerging (Hizbullah manifestosu 2012; Baggasi 2004).

Despite its ideological similarities to some Islamic movements in Turkey, Hezbollah pointed out that they are by no means a replacement of any (Baggasi (2004, 27). The movement’s ideology was affected and shaped by some internal and foreign political and religious figures. According to Çakır (2011a, 249), the philosophical ideals of Hezbollah were based on teachings of Ayatollah Khomeini - leader of the Iran revolution - *Salafism* doctrines and Said Havva. Hezbollah also took aspects from Said-i Nursi’s *Nurculuk*, Sayyid Qutub and Ihsan Sureyya Sirma’s understandings (Uslu 2007, 133).

Given the conditions which led to the emergence of Hezbollah and structuring of its ideological codes, religion is the underlying factor in its political identity and policy decisions. In line with its ideology, as noted previously, Hezbollah criticized existed Islamic organizations’ weakness and links them with the state. In this respect, according to the Hezbollah affiliated book '*Kendi Dilinden Hizbullah; Mücadele Tarihinden Kesitler*', the main aim of Hezbollah in its first years was to remove the secular Kemalist regime in Turkey and form an Islamic state. The group found the regime to be the route of most problems in Turkey. And so, combining their thoughts of the regime with their general aims, it is clear that religion was the essence and drive for the movement (Baggasi 2004). Once Hezbollah had established its ideology, its priorities stood with

development of their organization and propagation of its Islamic programme (Ibid.) Therefore, as Sinem D. Aydın and Ruşen Çakır explain, Hezbollah labelled itself as a movement seeking to save all Muslims. Based on this strategy, D. Aydın and Çakır explain that to ensure they were not categorized as a Kurdish movement Hezbollah consciously underplayed the Kurdish issue in their agenda. In line with this, they add, Hezbollah distanced itself from Kurdish nationalism (Düzgit Aydın and Çakır 2009, 103). This strategy was the main reason for their success, but they later deserted this policy, as will be explored later in the chapter.

Hezbollah's strategy and objectives according to M.Hakan Yavuz dramatically changed following the 1980s because the movement realized that it was unfeasible to form an Islamic state in Turkey. This understanding, Yavuz says, caused a shift in Hezbollah's strategy and their priority moved to creating an Islamic Kurdish state, or at least providing a strong Islamic understanding and way of life in the Kurdish region (M.H. Yavuz 2011, 217). Consequently, Hezbollah's (predominantly Hezbollah Menzil groups') interest for the Kurdish issue and harsh criticisms of the state and Turkish Islamists' Kurdish policy grew, for example, in a reaction against the Turkish Islamists, Hezbollah Menzil group placed emphasis on "Kurdish Islamic Synthesis" (Bulut 2009, 359). Accordingly, Hezbollah prioritized further organisation of the movement in the regions highly populated by the Kurds in line with their creation of a "Kurdistan Islamic State" (Siverekli 2008, 143).

Hezbollah's focus on Kurdish identity reached a new phase and became a necessity for the movement, with debilitating repercussions – conflict ensuing between the PKK and state security forces in 1984. Although Hezbollah was not formed as an armed organization and initially focused on Dissemination (Teblig), Guidance (İrşad), and Jihad (Cihad) activities (van Wilgenburg 2012, 4; Baggasi 2004, 40), outbreak and subsequent escalation of the conflict in the Kurdish region seriously influenced its struggle and political priorities. Hezbollah "sought to be the only voice for Kurds, Islamists, and eventually Turkey" (Nugent 2004, 70). Therefore, Hezbollah resisted in allowing PKK to have sole power and control and tried to join power in the Kurdish

region, causing further hostility between Hezbollah and PKK (Ibid.). Hezbollah declared PKK as an enemy of both Islam and the Kurds. Along with ideological competition, where Hezbollah attacked PKK's Marxist-Leninist ideology, it also blamed PKK for destroying Kurds' values (Baggasi 2004, 75). Trouble between PKK and Hezbollah further intensified following 1990, with PKK's activities mounting but Hezbollah's also strengthening to some extent. The conflict and hostility between the two movements deeply altered political affiliations in the regions, for instance, Emre Uslu says, "some officials simply ignored Hezbollah's activities in the region" (Uslu 2007, 127) to weaken and break the resistance and power of PKK (van Wilgenburg 2012, 4).

The conflict between Hezbollah and PKK also gave rise to social, political, psychological and economic destruction in Kurdish populated regions. It left hundreds dead, thousands of Kurds relocated, (de-territorialised) and most significant, as also underlined earlier, the political split between the Kurds intensified (Uslu 2007, 127; Pekoz 2009, 325–327).

Aware of the immense cost and crushing outcomes the conflict had on both parties, PKK and Hezbollah came to an agreement in 1998 which ceased the physical conflict (Nugent 2004, 71). However, Hezbollah's truce with the PKK did not prevent criticisms on the movement. A deep hatred for Hezbollah developed because of the impetuous oppression on its opponents, such as, killing of Zehra community leader Izzettin Yildirim, and some other Kurdish leaders and businessman, which further caused fragmentation in Kurdish Islamists (M.H.Yavuz 2011, 216). Thus, with excessive negative reaction from the public and, as van Wilgenberg (2012, 4) explains, since Hezbollah began to be considered "as a threat to the state", drove the state to act against the movement. In the first months of 1999 the state launched operations against Hezbollah, culminating in the killing of its leader Huseyin Velioglu, and the arrest of thousands of its militants and supporters (Bulut 2009, 361–362; van Wilgenburg 2012, 4–5). The state's severe operations weakened Hezbollah's power considerably (I.Baggasi 2004, 145–146), however, it was unable to completely eliminate it.

Following the state's actions, Hezbollah silenced its arms and concentrated on civil politics. Accordingly, Hezbollah's transition from a period of violent enforcement to civil politics illustrates that the movement aims to implement political changes via a legal platform (van Wilgenburg (2012, 7). It gave precedence to civilization and began to create legal associations. Hezbollah, under different names, started to open bookstores, publishers, and published books as well as daily/weekly newspapers and magazines (Düzgit Aydın and Çakır 2009, 104-105). In order to strengthen their struggle against secular PKK and some Islamist groups in the Kurdish region, and to also obtain grassroots, Hezbollah used a nationalist discourse and put the Kurdish identity and issue into its agenda; often as its initial priority during its civilization process (Jenkins 2012). The movement at that point can be argued to have achieved some success. Uslu (2007, 131) points out, "the Kurdish character of the organization helped it to gain support in the southeast. In turn, Hezbollah reinforced the Kurdish consciousness of Islamist Kurds in Turkey."

In line with its civilization and legalization purpose, creation of a political party became a prerequisite to join power in the Kurdish region for Hezbollah or Hezbollah linked organizations. With this and the termination of the Hezbollah-affiliated faction Mustazaf-Der on 11th May 2012, the majority of Mastazaf-Der founders formed the *Mustazaf-Der Movement (Mustazaf-Der Hareketi)* (Işık 2013, 219) and then the Hûda-Par party on 17th December 2012.

Hûda-Par's party programme gives priority to the causes (see page 8-10) which influenced the Kurdish issue and the urgent steps needed to be taken to settle it. To achieve this, it demanded constitutional recognition of the Kurds, consideration of the Kurds as a primary constituent of the founder of the Turkish Republic with the Turks, recognition of the Kurdish language as an official language as with Turkish, the Turkish anthem and similar symbols which refuse the Kurds to be removed, Kurdish city, town and village names to be returned, removing articles which place emphasis on the term 'Turk' in the constitution, village guard system removed, further decentralization, and election of local authorities/officials by the local people (see page 30-35). With that

respect, it is suggested that Hûda-Par intends to fill the existing political gap in the regions mostly Kurds dwelled by recognizing Kurds' religious and ethno-national identity. In addition, it is implied that the party was initiated primarily as a mechanism to solve the problems in Turkey, particularly those regarding religion and the Kurdish issue (Hür Dava Partisi Programı 2012).

Hûda-Par is mostly active in the Kurdish region and districts inhabited by Kurds. A substantial percentage of their members and supporters are of Kurdish origin. Results from the 2014 local elections held on 30th March strongly support this as Hûda-Par obtained a great majority of its votes from the regions largely populated by the Kurds.¹⁸⁹

6.1.3 Hak-Par

Rights and Freedoms Party (Hak ve Özgürlükler Partisi-Hak-Par) was formed on February 11th 2002 with the intention to elucidate the Kurdish issue (Hak-Par Programı 2002). Although Hak-Par is considered as a young party in politics, its ideological roots date back to some of the active Kurdish political organizations of 1960-1980, such as, Kurdish Socialist Party (Partiya Sosyalîstên Kurdistan-PSK) (Miroğlu 2012, 253–254). Hak-Par gives prominence to the Kurds' national identity and collective rights. For instance, in his speech at Hak-Par's fifth party congress, the current leader of the party Kemal Burkay , states that Hak-Par emerged due to the political void in the Kurdish region and to meet Kurds' desire for a *national* party. In the opinion of Burkay, Hak-Par was established because the PKK and pro-PKK legal organizations disregarded the *national* interests of the Kurds (Burkay 2012b).

The party identifies itself as a Turkish and Kurdish party, but in practice it predominantly organized in the Kurdish region and its grassroots consist largely of Kurds. Soon after its establishment, Hak-Par was at risk of being closed but instead was

¹⁸⁹ For the votes Hûda-Par obtained on 30 March 2014 local election visit Supreme Election Committee (Yüksek Seçim Kurulu-YSK) homepage; ([Http://www.ysk.gov.tr/ysk/faces/Secimler?_adf.ctrl-state=9cgjmhve_9&wcnav.model=YSKUstMenu&_afLoop=22089026474476664](http://www.ysk.gov.tr/ysk/faces/Secimler?_adf.ctrl-state=9cgjmhve_9&wcnav.model=YSKUstMenu&_afLoop=22089026474476664) accessed (11/08/2014)

issued a dismissal of action.¹⁹⁰ To underline, the party's political agenda centralizes the Kurdish issue and efforts in finding a viable resolution (Hak-Par Açılım Ve Kürt Sorunu İçin Federal Çözüm Önerisi Kitapçığı, 3–4, 2009). In this respect, Hak-Par openly proposes federalism, which is based on an equal constitutional recognition of the Kurds as a nation (Hak-Par Parti Tüzüğü 2002, Madde-3, 6-7).

6.1.4 Kadeş

Participatory Democracy Party (Katilimci Demokrasi Partisi-Kadeş), which represents “conservative democratic tradition” in Kurds (Miroğlu 2012, 254), was founded in 2006. Like Hak-Par, Kadeş also proposes the federal model as an answer to the Kurdish issue (Kadeş Parti Programı 2006, 19). Kadeş shares almost the same political principles as Hak-Par. However, Kadeş was unable to reach masses in the Kurdish region and after the death of its charismatic leader Şerafettin Elçi on December 25th 2012, lost almost all authority. Consequently, majority of the party members either joined Hak-Par or currently support the party in elections.

6.1.5 ÖSP

Freedom and Socialism Party (Özgürlük ve Sosyalizm Partisi-ÖSP) was founded in 2011. The party's ideology is based on Marxist principles and gives significant mention to identification and resolution of the Kurdish issue. The party recognizes the Kurds' right of self-determination, and related to this, proposes federalism which is named “Kurdistan Federal Region of Turkey” in the party's programme (ÖSP Programı ve Tüzük 2011).

6.2 ANALYSIS OF CONDITIONS CAUSE IN DEMAND OF FEDERALISM

Part one clarified the Kurdish political groups Med-Zehra and Zehra Communities, Hûda-Par, Hezbollah, Hak-Par, Kadeş and ÖSP in relation to their social structure, identity, relations with the state and each other, and viewpoint of the Kurdish

¹⁹⁰ For justified decision about closing case of Hak-Par see, (The Turkish Constitutional Court 2002/1 E, 2008/1 K, Date. 29.01.2008).

issue. These groups vary in their historical and political background, however, these differences have not prevented their common political demand for federalism. The second part of the chapter seeks to analyse the conditions which led to demand for the federalism political model among these Kurds.

Through federalism, considering its main principles explained previously, these Kurds want to rule themselves (self-rule) on a defined territory, which they name 'Kurdistan'. To do so they require their own parliament, judicial power, local police forces, official recognition of the Kurdish language, power over tax collection and economic issues, and the right to manage their other internal affairs - transportation, housing, tourism, sport and so on.

To understand the rationality behind demand for federalism and refusal of other political models (democratic autonomy, independent (nation) state and cultural rights only), research was conducted with the Kurds who gather around Med-Zehra and Zehra groups (communities), Hûda-Par, Hezbollah, Hak-Par, Kadep and ÖSP. The organizations with close political affiliations to the mentioned groups were also considered in the fieldwork (see Table 4.1). Based on the level of analysis of the study (group level), 32 interviews were carried out with the mentioned organizations' prominent authorities (elites).

Reflecting on the comprehensive interviews with the mentioned groups' prominent authorities together with the primary sources, this part of the chapter will initially clarify the causes for demand of federalism then rejection of other models (independent state, democratic autonomy and granting of cultural rights only model) respectively.

6.2.1 Why Federalism Model?

The data collected during the research revealed that four main reasons led to federalism demand among the Kurds involved in Zehra and Med-Zehra groups, Hak-Par, Kadep, ÖSP, Hûda-Par and Hezbollah movements.

The interviews conducted showed that these Kurds', particularly Kurdish Islamists, religion based confidence and trust in the state and Turkish Islamists weakened because they proclaim religion has been consciously used in separating the Kurds, and hence integration of the Kurdish identity into the Turkish national identity. However, with a federal status they believe they would have sufficient power and opportunities to prevent use of religion in such a way. This view is considered to be the first factor which contributed to the increase in federalism demand. Furthermore, the idea that a comprehensive equality could be constructed between nations through acknowledging their territorial status, which is recognised by federalism, has also contributed to the increased support for the political model. These supporters explain that a nation is deemed a nation, and equality between nations can be obtained and maintained only when status is granted through territory, which they believe federalism provides. The fieldwork concerning this group of Kurds also indicated that a federal political model could be instrumental in resolving growing ethnic tensions between the Kurds and Turks, as well as removing, or at least decreasing discrimination towards the Kurds. Finally, these Kurds noted that to improve financial conditions they need power over their own economic resources, especially as many believe the state consciously impeded development of their region.

6.2.1.1 Reaction Against the Use of Religion in Assimilation and Integration of the Kurdish Identity

The interviews with the groups Med-Zehra and Zehra communities, Hûda-Par, Hezbollah, Hak-Par, Kadeş, ÖSP and related organizations indicated the uncertainties of both the state and the Turkish Islamists regarding their approach to the Kurdish identity. As will be argued in detail below, these groups stated that despite sharing the same religion Turkish Islamists (such as religious communities and conservative parties) made no change to the founding ideology understanding of the state; which they noted continues to deny Kurdish ethnic identity. Therefore, as this section explores, these Kurds specifically underlined that due to their shared religious beliefs, religion is either consciously used or involved somehow in removing the Kurdish ethnic identity,

particularly considering the intense social, cultural and economic engagement between the Kurds and Turks. Consequently, the groups under consideration emphasised that only with a federal model will Kurds be able to protect their national identity because this model will give them power to self-rule on their own territories and the opportunities to obstruct assimilation through religion. This section, therefore, will explore how opposing the use of religion for political gain turns into federalism demand.

Many of the interviewees, for example Halis (fictitious name) who has a prominent position in the Zehra community, revealed that they were the main allies of the Turks during the Ottoman Empire and Turkish War of Independence. Halis repeatedly raised the religion based alliance between the Kurds and Turks, and noted that despite all the policies issued by the secular (laic) Republican regime Kurds continued to associate with the religious Turks. To Halis, the main aim of the Kurds was to remove this secular regime and construct a religion based brotherhood ideology between two nations - the Kurds and Turks. Nonetheless, he explained that the state and some religious powers in Turkey never wanted the Kurds to obtain their national rights. To prevent development of Kurdish national identity, he noted, these powers took every opportunity to do so. For instance, he said, some clandestine powers in the state killed their leader Izzettin Yildirim with the hand of Hezbollah because Izzettin Yildirim was seen as the figure responsible for merging the Kurdish religious and national identity.¹⁹¹ An interview conducted with Tahir (Fictitious), who also has a representative position in Zehra community, revealed similar sentiments. During the meeting and two days following Tahir continually made reference to how the state and Turkish Islamists disappointed the Kurds by refusing their ethnic identity, especially because they used religion as a tool to achieve this. He explained that Kurds' expectations of gaining their ethno-cultural rights by overcoming the secular and nationalist ideologies of Republican regime had started to turn into a distant goal with religious parties coming to power. Contrary to their expectations of the Turkish Islamists, Tahir indicated that Turkish Islamists developed an "artificial Islamic" understanding which does not involve an Islamic approach to the *kavims'* (nations') rights. To Tahir this Islamic understanding did not want to recognize the Kurdish ethnic

¹⁹¹ Interview with Halis (Fictitious name) in Istanbul, 24 July 2015

identity.¹⁹² The point highlighted by Tahir was also voiced by Şahan (fictitious name), who is well respected among religious Kurds particularly in Zehra community. Şahan noted;

The organizations, like Tasavufi (*Sufist*) groups and Suleyman Hilmi Efendi groups, which started during the period of Yeni Said (*since 1925*), turned to the community's culture and values. For example, providing Qur'an tutorials, or running activities in Madrasas which were carrying out activities secretly. With removing of lodges and Zawiyas, including mentioned groups, almost all the civil organizations became opponents of the system. However, after a while, the organizations that were fundamentally against the system, started to integrate into the system. By integrating into the system they become opponents to their origins. This caused problems. When these opponent groups integrate into the system, we do not like it.¹⁹³

Another interviewee, Recep (fictitious name) - who had vast experience in Turkish and Kurdish religious communities and is currently active in Zehra community—regards the associations between the religious Turks (communities) and the state as a development of “artificial Islamic” understanding. Recep explained that Turkish Islamists have not discontinued using religion to assimilate the Kurdish ethnic identity and did not dispute the state's use of religion for such a purpose.¹⁹⁴ According to the federalism proponents, Turkish Islamists “wanted to distance Kurds from their national purposes through religion.”¹⁹⁵ Christopher Houston also supported the claim discussed by federalism proponents to some extent, by stating that their understanding of religion in a national sense kept Turkish Islamists silent when the Kurdish identity was denied by the state (Houston 2001). In this regard, Mustafa Peköz an academician and writer, and also active in Kurdish diaspora in Europe, articulated that many of the Kurds have alienated their ethno-national identity as religion significantly influenced their integration and assimilation into Turkish identity. In Kurds' assimilation through religion he stated Turkish Islamists has a great contribution (Pekoz 2009).¹⁹⁶

The point articulated by Peköz is significant in understanding the influence of religion in shaping of these Kurds' political demand. For instance, which will be

¹⁹² Interview with Tahir (Fictitious name) in Istanbul, 24 and 25 July 2014

¹⁹³ Interview with Şahan (Fictitious name) in Diyarbakır, 08 May 2013

¹⁹⁴ Interview with Recep (Fictitious name) in Istanbul, 23 and 24 April 2013

¹⁹⁵ Interview with Şahan (Fictitious name) in Diyarbakır, 08 May 2013

¹⁹⁶ Interview with Mustafa Peköz in London, 20 March 2013

discussed further with reference to Kurds who demand for cultural rights, the Kurds' religious based connection with Turkey prioritize their religious identity over ethnicity and refuse any form of territorial political demand; for them, establishing territories between the Kurds and Turks will damage the unity of Islam and Turkey. However, contrary to the Kurds' demand for cultural rights, discussions with federalism adherents revealed that religion does not hold similar weight for these Kurds because they place emphasis on their ethno-national identity. For instance, Murat (Fictious name) who had actively taken part in Hezbollah between the years 1990 and 2000 and currently active in Hezbollah affiliated organizations, mentioned that Turkish Islamists' insensitiveness towards the Kurdish issue and their disinclination to recognise Kurds' ethno-national rights, as the state does, has raised suspicions amongst them.¹⁹⁷ Similarly to Murat, Şahan also explains that there are no more differences between the state and Turkish Islamists in their approach to the Kurdish issue, which he refers to as denial of the Kurds.¹⁹⁸

Based on this idea, many of the Kurds involved in the groups under consideration have doubts in the state and Turkish Islamists. For instance, the following statement from Hûda-Par Batman provincial head and candidate of Batman's mayoral local election (held on March 30th, 2014), Aydın Gök, highlights this point by referencing other Muslim nations' considerations of Kurds;

We have been servants during the history. We served, in other words. Well, really, truthfully we served. We did not receive anything in return. We could not see it. Some people showed us Islam as a target. ...Kurds suffered a lot because of Arabs, Persians and Turks. Kurds really served during the history.¹⁹⁹

These concerns, as the empirical findings also revealed, prompted Kurds to take measures against the use of religion ,as an influencing power, by their neighbour Muslim nations because to these Kurds, as Tahir (Fictious name) notes, religion recognizes equality of nations not serving of one to another. Reflecting on these thoughts, he believes more could be achieved by heightening Ummah understanding.²⁰⁰ This would

¹⁹⁷ Interview with Murat (Fictious name) in Istanbul 15 July 2012.

¹⁹⁸ Interview with Şahan (Fictious name) in Diyarbakir, 08 May 2013

¹⁹⁹ Interview with Aydın Gök in Batman, 10 May 2013

²⁰⁰ Interview with Tahir (Fictious name) in Istanbul, 24 and 25 July 2014

also influence their political inclinations. An interview with Enes (Fictitious name), who was heavily involved with Hezbollah and later with legal Hezbollah-affiliated organizations, helps clarify how Turkish Islamists' approach to Kurds and disinterest in Kurdish identity effected Kurds' political inclinations;

‘...I used to vote for the Welfare Party. Then I started to vote for AKP. Of course being a religious party and looking after Kurdish issue at the beginning had a considerable effect on supporting AKP. These days, recognizing the cultural rights and living together like brothers made so much sense. Because I wanted to believe the sincerity of the Turkish Muslims. ...However, after seeing AKP's and Turkish Muslim's attitudes on Kurdish issues and how they started to act and think like the state, strong Kurdish identity started to develop in me. I focused more on my nationality. ...Let me give an example. When I looked at a library at one of the Turkish Muslim NGO's I only noticed Turkish scholars. I saw Ömer Seyfettin books for instance. They got very angry at me when I asked 'why there is no book related to Kurds and written by Kurdish scholars'. This affected me a lot. At that moment I understood that Turkish Islamists are with us in terms of religion but they do not want to recognise our ethnic identity. Anyway, I do not vote for AKP or any other Turkish party any more. ...Our Turkish Muslim brothers did not act sincerely towards us. Therefore, I believe we have to be regarded and have rights as a nation has. Kavims' (nations') rights are already approved by our religion. Otherwise, it may not be possible to prevent future discrimination and assimilation against our identity.²⁰¹

Recep's (Fictitious name) following quote is also illustrative in understanding how these Kurds' concerns in relation to using of religion in fragmentation of the Kurdish identity cause raising of reaction in them, in a political sense. Recep underlined that Muslims have no hesitations about using religion as a tool to remove Kurdish ethno-national identity, regardless of the effect this has on Kurdish people. He added that this is because, as also mentioned by Enes (Fictitious name) above, Turkish Islamists place emphasis on religion but had no interest in acknowledging the Kurdish identity;

Belief is the assurance of all races, cultures and the things that cannot oppose to it. However, when it comes to the Kurds, they used belief not as an assurance but as an attack. They used the belief to destroy Kurds' culture and it was the Muslims who did it...God created all the races to recognize each other but Muslims, in general, used the belief to destroy the Kurds in this geography; there is no belief like that. Whoever identifies this as a belief acts like a nonbeliever....Well, they deny it under the name of Islam. They, of course, use Islam. What I say is that,

²⁰¹ Interview with Enes (Fictitious name) in Istanbul, 10 July 2012

even if the students of Bediuzzaman stand against the Kurds' fundamental rights, which means they do not understand Bediuzzaman and risale. Because Bediuzzaman does not do Selman-ı Farisi' as Selman-ı Arabî. He does not do Bilal-i Habeşi as Bilal-i Arabî. So why do you make Kurds Turk or Arab. Do you understand the religion better than them or do you have better knowledge of Islam. This is wrong. Therefore, denying the Kurds under the name of religion, risale or Bediuzzaman, means that you do not know the religion, risale, and Bediuzzaman totally. Someone who knows should not say this. Because the belief does not say that. Bediuzzaman does not say that, risale does not say that. On the contrary, these three sources are assurance for recognizing Kurds rights.²⁰²

Taking into account criticisms and concerns of federalism supporters regarding the state and Turkish Islamists' approach to the Kurdish identity, Hûda-Par Batman provincial head Aydın Gök, voiced this as discrimination against the Kurdish identity. Consequently, as Gök's following statement indicates, political dispositions are impacted;

‘....we deem this as racism. We start the fight, from now, we will not be your servants. With starting the fight we say we are not your servants anymore. We say you will saturate Islam. You will give Kurds rights equal to those of the Arabs, the persians and Turk have.’²⁰³

Thus, in order to stop the denial of the Kurdish identity and solve the Kurdish issue president of Nûbihar association, Rauf Çiçek, highlighted they have to take certain steps and develop Kurds' national consciousness. Çiçek, for instance expressed that as the state and associatively some religious communities wanted to remove the terms Kurds and Kurdistan from their memory, they first published Nûbihar magazine then opened Nûbihar foundation in reaction to the state. Rauf Çiçek added that to settle the Kurdish question, develop Kurds' national consciousness and remove their concerns they must have the right to self-rule (self-governance). To Çiçek this will prevent their neighbours from intervening into their affairs.²⁰⁴ This idea was also supported by Aydın Gök, Hûda-Par Batman provincial branch head. He directly stated that they do not want to stay under the political authority of Turkey without a territorial status in line with Islam. Gök explained Kurds accept Islam as an authoritative condition but accept living under it with

²⁰² Interview with Recep (Fictious name) in İstanbul, 24 April 2013

²⁰³ Interview with Aydın Gök in Batman, 10 May 2013

²⁰⁴ Interview with Rauf Çiçek in Diyarbakir, 06 May 2013

the prerequisite that they will gain national rights in one state. In addition, during the interview Gök reiterated that they challenge the Kurds' submission to other nations in the name of religion. He strongly affirms that they will no longer tolerate Turkey's use of religion as their pawn. He explained;

Allah says we divided you to different races, groups to know each other. We divided you not to fight with the world or between each other... We divided you into *kabila* to know each other. When we say that, we say whoever appropriates Islam, not to rule other races. There is an assumption that, because the Turks act like they inherited Islam because of the Ottomans, they consider that they can rule other races. We never accept this. Some people abuse this. ...When we look at it considering Islamic references, it is not possible to have a race that is superior to others. We cannot accept this. We do not want to accept this either. We do not say that. Islam provided equal rights for everybody. Allah says 'Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you'. ...When a Turk expresses himself and his rights without any problem; a Kurd should also be able to that. He should learn his language, his generation; he should have a political status. Kurds should self-govern-themselves. The status is necessary. ...Therefore, whoever did something for this nation and country it is good (*Hayırlı*). We see this and appraise as brothers. ...However; we should add that although we accept Islam's priority, we do not accept that it would be in the hands of Turks only...You should stop there if someone imposes something on you. The understanding even if it is Islam, it should be in our hand, it is not Islamic and sincere. We do not do and accept this. Well, we are Kurds, we will do what Kurdishness requires. You cannot prevent this.²⁰⁵

Taking issue from that sense, according to the federalism proponents but particularly Kurdish Islamists, religion is clear about recognition of kavims' (nations) right of self-rule under an Ummah ideal.²⁰⁶ Based on this idea but also with reference to Said-i Nursi's "*Cemahir-i Müttefika-i Islamiye*" understanding (The United Republics of Islam), Kurdish Islamists, thus, take religion as a foundation in order to grant Kurds the right of self-rule.²⁰⁷ In regards to mentioned concerns and political claims, Azad Ayyıldırım and Burkay Aslan, both Kurdish Advice Centre (Confederation of the Associations of Kurdistan in Europe- Komkar) executives and Kurdish politicians in Kurdish diaspora in London, articulated that their demand for self-rule over their territories can only be

²⁰⁵ Interview with Aydın Gök in Batman, 10 May 2013.

²⁰⁶ Interview with Recep (Fictitious name) in Istanbul, 24 April 2013 and Interview with Sıddık Dursun Seyhanzade in Istanbul, 27 April 2013

²⁰⁷ Interview with Nevzat Eminoğlu in Istanbul, 10 July 2012

accepted with federalism.²⁰⁸ This is also one of the prevalent points highlighted throughout the fieldwork research.

Consequently, based on interviews conducted with the Kurdish groups under consideration, these Kurds suppose that continuous use of religion by Turkish Islamists and the state to assimilate the Kurdish identity is one of the prominent conditions which reduced the power of religion in keeping Kurds without a territorial status in Turkey, and in turn, raising demand for self-governance i.e. federalism. Therefore, as argued above, to these Kurds but specifically the Kurdish Islamists religion deems all nations equal and recognizes their social and political rights across the same level and not through assimilation of some nations by others. Accordingly, the fieldwork findings alluded that to these Kurds acknowledgement of the Kurds' demand the right of self-rule is the first necessity when considering Islam's approach to nations' rights, which in turn, they mentioned, has the potential to prevent the state from assimilating the Kurdish identity through religion.

To conclude, as fieldwork research results also introduced, this is primarily because these Kurds believe that Kurds can prevent use of religion in dissolving and integrating the Kurdish ethnic identity with a federal model.

6.2.1.2 Demand for a Territorial National Status and Building of Equality Between the Kurds and Turks

The previous chapter revealed that BDP proponents consider recognition of the Kurds' national status, which they named as national status of a 'democratic nation' (non-territorial and non-ethnic), as a primary factor for the rise in democratic autonomy demand. This, which will be argued in detail in the next sections, is harshly opposed by federalism defenders because they consider territory as a necessary constituent in identifying and recognising the national status of Kurds, and respective equality between the Kurdish and Turkish nations. In this regard, outcomes of the research revealed that

²⁰⁸ Interview with Azad Ayyildirim in London, 25 March 2013 and Interview with Burkey Aslan in London, 21 March 2013

desire to be acknowledged with a territorial national status and based on this, construction of national equality between the Kurds and Turks, is a significant foundation that contributed to federalism demand.

The interviews conducted with the federalism supporters uncovered that two facts/notions are essential in these Kurds' status request; nation and territory. Throughout the research study many of interviewees, including, PSK (Kurdistan Socialist party) leader Mesut Tek, Azad Ayyildirim-Kurdish politician and Kom-Kar executive, Tahir (Fictious name), Cudi Dabakoğlu Kom-Kar president, underlined that a nation can be thought of as a nation when it has authority over its own territory. They associate the term 'nation' directly with a particular part of territory; which they name Kurdistan. They explicitly underline that if a nation has a territorial concentration then it should be given right of power over its territory. Territory, to these interviewees, is at the forefront of Kurds' national identity and political claims.²⁰⁹ Consideration of territory in this sense is influential in their political demand. For instance, Ismail (Fictious name) who was an executive of the closed Hezbollah affiliated Mustazaf-Der association, openly said that he considers "Medine Vesikasi"²¹⁰ (Medina Constitution) as a factor in the recognition of Kurds' territorial claims. He explained that because the Kurds are a separate territorial nation, their status must be acknowledged in light of this.²¹¹ The point highlighted by Ismail is further strengthened by Kadep Diyarbakir provincial chairman Ciwanroj Ceyhan. According to Ciwanroj Ceyhan, becoming a territorial nation makes self-governance a necessity; which he believes could be achieved through federalism. He associates demand for federalism with territorial nation status as follows;

Turkey need be ruled by a federal system because there are 2 nations. One is the Kurdish the other one is the Turkish nation. This cannot be denied. We should not ignore this. Also, Kurds live on their own territories. They reside on their own homeland. Some people in Turkey sometimes twist (çarpıtmak) it by saying; there

²⁰⁹ Interview with Azad Ayyildirim in London, 25 March 2013, Interview with Cudi Dabakoglu in London, 26 March 2013, Interview with Tahir (Fictious name) in Istanbul, 24 and 25 July 2014, Interview with Mesut Tek in London, 25 February 2013 and Interview with Cemal (Fictious name) in Istanbul, 11 July 2012

²¹⁰ Medine Vesikasi (Medina Constitution) "establishes a kind of alliance or federation between nine different groups" during the period of the prophet (Muhammad) (Watt 1970, 41).

²¹¹ Interview with İsmail (Fictious name) in Istanbul, 10 January 2013

are also Laz, Georgians, and Circassians. They are also nations but their homeland is not here. This is not their territory. This territory belongs to Kurds. This geography, this land is of the Kurds. It was also named as Kurdistan in history. Because of that we think federal system is suitable. Two nations could live in such a common system. It could be within the unitary boundaries.²¹²

The idea expressed by Ciwanroj Ceyhan was also voiced in another interview with PSK leader, Mesut Tek. Mesut Tek disclosed that territoriality of a nation had an influence on the demand for territorial political assertion, in this case federalism. He repeatedly highlighted that Kurds are one of those nations that depend on territory for their national identity. He continues explaining that the Kurdish nation cannot be described without their territory, which they have lived in for thousands of years. In order to legitimize his statement further, Tek referenced the Kurdish history and Kurds' rights of self-rule in the nineteenth century. He argues that within a federal structure Kurds will be protected;

‘...If there is a nation like Kurdistan, and region like Kurdistan, why not federation. It should be because it has a historical equivalence...This is a historical reality. They are the real owners of these lands...If there is a land where their ethnic identity was given, why did they give up from their territorial demands. If there is a federation that is based on territory, they will look at the future more securely. They will be more secure.’²¹³

Mesut Tek further added that Kurds' previous struggle for their territorial status clearly shows the strong affiliation between territory and national status of the Kurds. In line with this he clarified that territory is an essential constituent of Kurds' national character and highlighted that it should be considered in their political demand.²¹⁴ Presenting similar points, *Revolutionary East Culture Centre's* (Devrimci Doğu Kültür Dernekleri-DDKD) Diyarbakir executive Halim İpek, stated that as the Kurds are a distinct territorial nation and have “consciousness of their national identity”, their relations and status in Turkey should be considered within this respect.²¹⁵ Subsequent to this explanation, he responded to, *why federalism?*, by explaining that Kurds as a nation want to have power over their territory and rule themselves, not be ruled by others. He added;

²¹² Interview with Ciwanroj Ceyhan in Diyarbakir, 08 May 2013

²¹³ Interview with Mesut Tek in London, 25 February 2013.

²¹⁴ Interview with Mesut Tek in London, 25 February 2013.

²¹⁵ Interview with Halim İpek in Diyarbakir, 05 May 2013

I want to be my own master. I do not want anyone to be my master. The federation will provide me this. I will have a word in my own parliament. I will have a word for my own safety, my own culture, history and academy. Federalism provides lots of benefits.²¹⁶

In addition, former leader of Hak-Par, Bayram Bozyel, explains that Kurds are a nation of territory with a population of about 40 million. However, he says, as their territory is divided between their neighbours their national identity, particularly language, can also potentially be divided. Bozyel, thus, suggests that protection of Kurds' national identity could most appropriately be provided by obtaining a territorial status - which is supported through federalism. Otherwise, Kurdish national identity would become partial and weak (Bozyel 2012, 28).

Debating the issue with this in mind, the interviews with Kurds involved in Hak-Par, Kadep, ÖDP, Hûda-Par, Hezbollah, and Zehra and Med-Zehra communities denote that gaining a territorial national status will give the region right of self-government. Thus, taking into account empirical findings, they believe that Kurds' national status needs to be recognised by acknowledging their territories, which they suggest is achievable with federalism because the model provides status without separation.

With reference to acknowledgement of a territorial national status, another condition which contributes to demand for federalism is these Kurds' request for equality between the Kurds and Turks. Being recognized with territorial national status herein is considered as a pre-condition for building equality between the Kurdish and Turkish nations.

Many of the research participants expressed Kurds want to be treated as an equal nation. For instance, in his speech at for the Hak-Par Istanbul branch and in response to the question, *why federalism?*, Hak-Par president Kemal Burkay stated federalism will provide political and status equality between the Kurds and other nations.²¹⁷ In other saying, they believe, it will provide equality between the Kurds and other nations, in regards to recognition of the Kurds political will (Burkay 2004, 75). By identifying the

²¹⁶ Interview with Halim Ipek in Diyarbakir, 05 May 2013

²¹⁷ Interview with Kemal Burkay, in Istanbul, 15 June 2012 and his talk at Hak-Par Istanbul Provincial

Kurds as a nation, also in support of the claim(s) emphasized by Kemal Burkay, Nûbihar executive chief Süleyman Çevik also highlighted the necessity for building equality between nations - namely the Kurds and Turks. He explained that, if the Kurds have a political and administrative status and authority over their territory they can be classed as a nation and free people. If not, Kurds will be labelled as “*second class citizens*” in Turkey. Çevik added;

The ideal community is the community where all people are equal and independent, all people benefit from the rights equally. But, it seems it is not possible for Turkey’s context. In Turkey the problems are not solved by saying we are all brothers. When your language is not free as his, when you have no power in the government as he has, when your governors do not have powers as his ones have, you become a second class and he becomes the first class. ...When you say we are brothers in Turkey, it does not mean that we are equal in rights, laws, and using benefits. There is an understanding that we are equals but you should be dependent on us. In circumstances like this, it is not possible for the Kurds to gain their rights, speak their language and live their culture.²¹⁸

The statements and anxieties cited by Çevik were also mentioned by veteran Kurdish politician, intellectual and one of the founders of Hak-Par, İbrahim Güçlü. Güçlü regarded federalism as a necessary condition for protecting Kurds’ national identity and will, and also provides constitutional recognition of Kurds as an equal nation;

Well, normally Kurds are a nation. Like any other nation, they have a nation feature on a specific land, especially because it is divided between four states. The state’s denial policy up until now, actually, was refuted with existence of the other Kurdish parts. ...That is why federalism will show that Kurds and Turks are equal nations. We can consider this equality both in status and in rights.²¹⁹

According to Hak-Par president Kemal Burkay (Burkay 2012a, 15–16), in his article in Hak-Par affiliated *Deng* magazine and ÖSP general vice president Aziz Mahmut AK’s (Ak 2010) ,article in the party’s official organ, *Sosyalist Mezopotamya* (Socialist Mesopotamia), federalism is the model which has the potential to remove disparity between the Kurdish and Turkish nations. Mentioning on the same point, Hak-Par’s previous president, Bayram Bozyel, also points out that providing social, cultural, economic and political equality in Turkey at group level, or at the nation level, demand

²¹⁸ Interview with Süleyman Çevik in Istanbul, 15 July 2013

²¹⁹ Interview with İbrahim Güçlü in Diyarbakir, 08 May 2012

for federalism among the Kurds must be prevalent. Bozyel states that by simply creating a federal model as a nation they will obtain their free rights and the Kurdish issue will be settled over an egalitarian base (Bozyel 2012, 29). Otherwise, as Hûda-Par's Diyarbakir provincial chairman Vedat Turgut explained in the following statement, they believe, Kurdish national identity would be divided and separated further by the more politically and culturally powerful nation; which they'd already faced within the last century from their neighbouring nations. Turgut stated;

When dealing with the Kurdish issue, let us not be misunderstood, as our party leader says, we should be like nail and the finger (*inseparable*). However, they consider the Kurds as nails and themselves as fingers. The nail can be trimmed when the time comes, it may not be useful. Because of that, we say we do not want to be like nails and fingers, you always make yourself like fingers and us like nails. If there is justice and equality, we want to be like the equal teeth of a brush. Since you accept that there was genocide against the Kurds, assimilation, and injustice, in order to eradicate this suffering you need to make positive discrimination. At least with this way they could come to your level economically and culturally.²²⁰

The concerns mentioned by Vedat Turgut are commonplace for many Kurds. For instance, Halim Ipek, who is the executive of *Revolutionary Democratic Cultural Associations* (Devrimci Demokratik Kültür Derneği-DDKD), spoke about the inequality between Kurds and Turks;

We have been living together for 1000 years, we exchange daughters. It is true. We tried to live like brothers. But, we were not approached as brothers. However, imagine a brotherhood that does not give any of my rights and puts me on side if it is its own benefit. If you are disturbed from my Kurdish identity, education in mother tongue, some of my rights and so on, where is the brotherhood.²²¹

In support of Halim Ipek and Vedat Turgut's standpoints, Hak-Par Istanbul provincial head, Semra Arcan, expressed that the starting point in politics for them are the terms 'Kurdish nation' and 'territory'. According to Arcan, they make great effort to protect Kurds' territorial national identity because it is the only manner for defending the Kurds' will and providing a sense of equality.²²² In this regard, Kemal Burkay suggested that the

²²⁰ Interview with Vedat Turgut in Diyarbakir, 08 May 2013

²²¹ Interview with Halim İpek in Diyarbakır, 05 May 2013

²²² Interview with Semra Arcan in Istanbul, 02 July 2012

principal way of achieving this is gaining authority of their territory, and thus, taking their nation affairs into their own hands. This ideal concept he stated can be supported by federalism; “with federalism equality would be provided between two nations; the Kurds and Turks”. If this is successful, Burkay added, there will be no need for separation because both nations could live together in peace.²²³

Taking into account the discussions provided above, to these Kurds federalism is a model capable of deterring other nations from governing/controlling the Kurds and establishes equality between the Kurdish and Turkish nation.

6.2.1.3 Federalism Resolves Ethnic Tension

Discussions made in Chapter Three provided an illustrative context for the Kurds’ territorial claims, which date back to the second half of the nineteenth century but predominantly intensified once modern Turkey was established. To instil recognition of their ethno-national rights, Kurds rebelled against the state numerous times for their independence or at least their right of regional territorial autonomy.

Although conflict between the Kurdish national movements and the state developed, which was often highlighted during the fieldwork, there was no similar observation with Kurds and Turks. In other words, an ethnic conflict has not taken place between two people at the group level. However, most of the interviewees also referenced the growing tension, mistrust and social gap developing between two peoples- the Kurds and Turks. These factors could at any point lead to an ethnic conflict, with discrimination (in social, cultural, and economic senses) against the Kurds reaching new levels.²²⁴ For instance, Cudi Dabakoglu president Kom-Kar, demonstrated that the increased ethnic tension in Turkey, but largely the intense discrimination against the Kurds, prompted these Kurds to develop methods and tactics to protect themselves from

²²³ Interview with Kemal Burkay in Istanbul, 15 June 2012 and his talk at the Hak-Par Istanbul provincial

²²⁴ The research conducted by KONDA’ in 2011 provides illustrative data on the growing social and cultural distance between the Kurds and Turks. Findings reveal that 57.6% of the Turks do not want to have a Kurdish spouse, 53.5% do not want to have a Kurdish business partner, and 47.4% do not want any Kurdish neighbours. On the other hand, similar questions to the Kurds yielded relatively smaller percentages; 26.4% of the Kurds do not want to have a Turkish bride, 24.8% do not want a Turkish business partner and 22.1 % do not want a Turkish neighbour (KONDA 2011, 106).

any attacks inflicted. He proclaimed that if their ethno-national identity is recognized by the principle of ‘self-rule’, in other words through a federal model, reasons for ethnic conflict would be removed because the Kurds would be satisfied.²²⁵ As Ibrahim Güçlü conveys below, the Kurds who claim for federalism argue that gaining authority over their territories will, consequently, provide protection. Herein he noted that federalism is the model which deals with nations equally and noticeably satisfies ethno-national minorities’ claims. He explains, this particular value of federalism will impede any potential ethnic conflict. To Güçlü;

The relationship between Turks and us until now has not been voluntary and independent; we have been forced to have a relationship. This relationship is by force. It should not be like this. Before anything else, we should be equal nations. We should be equal in both rights and status. If this equality is not fulfilled as much as it is for the Turks, Arabs and Persians there will be more conflict. Let’s consider, a father has five children, we say they are brothers. If you give more property to three of them, the other two brothers will create a dispute. ...Kurds would fight if they do not obtain equal rights like other nations. For instance, why is Chechnya fighting because they say they want Chechnya to rule themselves...Because it does not want to be dominated by Russia...If it is not given, there will be conflict. This is the same for many nations. We do not want to shed blood but it is shed.²²⁶

Considering this through federalism proponents, they declare that the conflict will not conclude unless their collective rights are recognized and they are recognised as a nation by gaining right of self-governance on their territory.²²⁷ Therefore, they pointed out that “the equality has to be constructed between the Kurds and Turks. Otherwise, there will be chaos, war or racism.”²²⁸

To further clarify the contribution the idea that federalism will bring ethnic tension to an end had on Kurds’ political demands, The DDKD executive, Halip Ipek was asked, *how do you consider federalism as a political model in resolving existed tension and preventing outbreak of ethnic tension and what will happen if federalism is not recognised?* Ipek responded with the following;

²²⁵ Interview with Cudi Dabakoglu in London, 26 March 2013

²²⁶ Interview with İbrahim Güçlü in Diyarbakır, 08 May 2013

²²⁷ Interview with Azad Ayyildirim in London, 25 March 2013

²²⁸ Interview with Necat Özdemir in Diyarbakır, 07 May 2013

Well, first we experienced an emotional crash. My brother has not recognised me up until now, if it continues like this, this emotional crash will be more fatal...There will be a crash. Kurds would resist. They would have civil disorder. They would rebel. Kurds will carry on their democratic political activities, this will cause a crash.²²⁹

Considering the “emotional crash” between the Kurds and Turks noted by Halim İpek, İbrahim Güçlü explained that federalism is a necessity not only for ending raising of tension between the Kurds and Turks, to Güçlü, it will also normalize the Kurdish politics. He put;

Hostility will end with federation. 100 years of dispute will end. The tension between Turks and Kurds will end. It will change Kurds. The most important thing with federalism is that it will end the politics of ruling the Kurds which comes from Kemalism. Therefore, Kurds will become a nation that rule themselves. Kurdish politics will be normal, it will be multiplied and democratic. Kurdish politics looks like the Kemlist model now.²³⁰

The discussion provided above based on observations made at the Kurdish organizations, shows that these Kurds, by exploring the long-standing history of the conflict between Kurdish national movements and the state, believe the current tension in Turkey is likely to advance into an ethnic conflict at the community level and spread through society. Aware of this possibility, the Kurds who support federalism stress that the only method for avoiding ethnic conflict in Turkey, but also to satisfy the Kurds relies on right of self-rule over their territories as a nation. To these Kurds the distribution of power and the right of territorial self-rule, which federalism prioritizes, are essential points able to end the tension between the Kurds and the state and impede the possibility of a community level ethnic dispute.²³¹ This idea, therefore, contributes to the increased demand for federalism in these Kurds.

6.2.1.4 Demand for Power of Economic Resources

The empirical outcomes of this research indicated that another reason for the rise in federalism demand among Kurds under consideration is their request for power over

²²⁹ Interview with Halim İpek in Diyarbakır, 05 May 2013

²³⁰ Interview with İbrahim Güçlü in Diyarbakır, 08 May 2013

²³¹ Interview with İbrahim Güçlü in Diyarbakır, 08 May 2013

their economic resources. With reference to the fieldwork, these Kurds note that although the regions mostly populated by the Kurds have rich natural resources Kurds remain one of the poorest communities in Turkey because of the state has failed to manage their economic resources and avoided steps to improve Kurds' economy.

The Kurds who demand for federalism describe that Kurdish regions' economic resources have not been used in their favour, and they have faced economic discrimination and deprivation from the state.²³² The research found that federalism supporters believe the state consciously avoided developing the economy in their regions. This point was also alluded to by Hak-Par Diyarbakir provincial executive Eşref Çakan. He referenced previous economic policies issued by the state to help support this argument because, he said, these plans also did not prioritize regions' economic matters.²³³ For instance, ÖSP general vice president Aziz Mahmut Ak openly pointed out that they do not have confidence in the state when it comes to their financial matters and demand power over their economic sources and to largely manage their economic affairs independently. To Ak, the state does not want the economy of the Kurdish regions to grow, so, they intentionally use Kurdish regions' underground and overground sources to benefit Turkey's other regions. He dubbed this policy as "acquisition", "plundering" and "colonisation" of the Kurdish region. Ak added;

Kurdistan has its own under and overground sources, has its own market... Turkey applies colonial politics at the moment. Actually, with this, Kurds are an annexed and non-status colony. You know in oversee dependency there is more colonisation than annex. However, here, in Kurdish region, we talk first about annex then colonisation. Therefore, colonial politics is pillage politics at the same time. Pillage of richness. Ignoring its owners. For instance, Latin America is very much nationalist these days, it rejects imperialist pillage in its country. They say you mine the underground and sell the richness to somewhere else. This is the same for Turkey actually. For instance, the industry is almost half the size of Kurdistan in the city of Izmit. Therefore, the raw material and energy are carried substantially from there. We should support providing equality herein.²³⁴

²³² Interview with Aziz Mahmut AK in Diyarbakır, 07 May 2013

²³³ Interview with Eşref Çakan in Diyarbakır, 06 May 2013

²³⁴ Interview with Aziz Mahmut AK in Diyarbakır, 07 May 2013

These Kurds think that the right of power over their economic resources will subsequently create dramatic changes to their overall development, as well as national development. This is a popular common thought amongst federalism adherents. For instance, Hak-Par Diyarbakir provincial head Vasif Kahraman, underlined that power over their economic sources means their capital will remain in their region, their own market will emerge, and thus, Kurds will have choice over how to use their economic resources. Furthermore, he added, the Kurdish region has rich underground and overground sources, and sufficient capital. In order to prevent development of national consciousness and initiate development of the Kurds, he suggested the “state either impedes accumulation of capital in Kurdish region or transferred it to the western parts of Turkey.” Therefore, he articulated, if they have authority over their territory with federalism capital will be stocked in the region mostly inhabited by the Kurds, and Kurds will be able to make their own market. In this regard, by considering bourgeoisie class’ security anxieties, he stated that with federalism state oppression will be eliminated and Kurds will have security in the Kurdish region, therefore, Kurdish bourgeoisie will invest in Kurdish region.²³⁵

To the Kurds who demand federalism, which was often mentioned throughout the fieldwork research, the Kurds have economic self-sufficiency but they cannot use their own resources because of the state policy in place. As a result, they are left to live in the poorest conditions. Therefore, having right of power over their own resources is considered as a necessary condition for the Kurdish region to develop economically, said the former president and current executive of Kurdish Advice Centre (Kom-Kar), Burkay Aslan.²³⁶ To justify their argument many of the interviewees mentioned the economic development of Kurds in Iraq. Kurdish Advice Centre president Cudi Dabakoglu explained that economic investment and the economic development in the Iraqi Kurdistan region has increased since the region established federalism. He added that the case of Iraqi Kurds illustrates very well the positive impact of having authority over their

²³⁵ Interview with Vasif Kahraman in Diyarbakır, 06 May 2013

²³⁶ Interview with Burkay Aslan in London, 21 July 2013

economic growth and sources.²³⁷ Reflecting on the Iraqi Kurdistan case, the Kurds in Turkey who call for federalism point out that if they also have such authority over their sources under the model of federalism, the Kurdish region would develop similarly. In support of this, ÖSP leader Sinan Çiftiyürek argued, “Kurds should have right to manage their own sources which are rather rich. Kurds should decide how they would use their source.”²³⁸ Furthermore, as in the Kurdish case in Iraq, Aziz Mahmut Ak expressed the importance of having the right of self-rule or power over their region as well as economic resources on their development;

When this is happening we have a mission to protect Kurdistan’s under and over ground sources. As I said, this will happen with coming to power. Like it happened in the South (*Iraqi Kurdistan*), although oil is the matter of concern now, they gain the right substantially.²³⁹

Güçlü’s following explanation also highlights the significance of federalism related to the points presented above. In the same vein, Güçlü pronounced that federalism will play a vital role in Kurds obtaining power to manage their economic resources and affairs, and further develop production type. In addition, he emphasised Kurds will no longer be strongly dependent on the central state when federalism is in place;

Federation will improve our economic welfare. With the current situation the government thinks, if the Kurds develop economically and reach the economic standards of other nations they will demand their freedom, therefore, the state left region without any development. For that reason, the feudal structure and outdated production relationships continue. With federation, with regards to national, mental, right and independent sense, there will also be economic developments. We will have the sources. We cannot benefit from underground sources, water, land and agriculture because of the state’s colony politics. All of them are outdated. Or agriculture methods are primitive. Our concerns will be handled. There will be fair income distribution.²⁴⁰

Taking all of the points presented collated from empirical findings of the research, to these Kurds the state deliberately precludes economic growth in the regions populated by mostly Kurds and does not use Kurds’ economic resources for the welfare of the

²³⁷ Interview with Cudi Dabakoglu in London, 25 July 2013

²³⁸ Interview with Sinan Çiftiyürek in Istanbul, 15 May 2013

²³⁹ Interview with Aziz Mahmut Ak in Diyarbakır, 07 May 2013

²⁴⁰ Interview with İbrahim Güçlü in Diyarbakır, 08 May 2013

Kurds but for their own gain. This, in turn, heightened demand for power over their economic resources and subsequently for the federalism model, which, they asserted, will provide capital, national market and efficient use of resources in the interest of their own nation.²⁴¹ Thus, by applying federalism they suppose the regions', majorly inhabited by the Kurds, economy will grow and in turn contribute to Turkey's economic growth (Burkay 2012a, 16). This idea, as the fieldwork outcome suggested, has a significant contribution in raising demand for federalism.

6.2.2 Why not Other Political Models?

Earlier sections discussed the instrumental factors in emergence of the demand for federalism among Kurds associated with Med-Zehra and Zehra communities, Hak-Par, Kadep, Hüda-Par, Hezbollah and ÖSP. This section will analyse why independent state, democratic autonomy, and cultural rights only models were refused and federalism considered as the alternative model.

6.2.2.1 Refusal of National State Model

As will be argued later, there is a close connection between federalism and nation-state. This raises the question of why the Kurdish groups cited in this chapter essentially demand for federalism and not nation-state even though they respect people's right of self-determination. Firstly, they believe that establishing a Kurdish nation-state, considering the Kurds' social and political structure and political conditions in Turkey and Middle East, can lead to a conflict between them and the states of the region. Furthermore, Kurdish Islamists highlight that separation could damage the Ummah understanding prevalent in current conditions.

According to Osman Resulalan, highlighted in his article written for Med-Zehra associated *DAVA* magazine, the creation of a nation-state would further complicate the solution of the Kurdish issue in the current conditions. Interaction between the Kurds and Turks along with the regional powers' tough approach on Kurds' independence demand, he says, can generate a massive conflict between the Kurds and the state. This, in turn,

²⁴¹ Interview with İbrahim Güçlü in Diyarbakır, 08 May 2013

has potential to negatively impact on the Kurds because they do not have sufficient powers in present conditions (Resulalan 1991, 15). Herein Kürt-Kav administrative committee member and veteran Kurdish politician, Mehmet Emin Eren, stressed that international and regional political conjuncture and Kurds' neighbours' tough stance on creation of a Kurdish state made it difficult to construct a Kurdish state because, in their view, such a demand could lead on to other problems. For instance, Eren argues establishing a Kurdish state could generate conflict with their neighbours considering the current integration and interaction of peoples.²⁴² Thus, against the idea of constructing new borders between peoples and states, Hûda-Par general vice president Necat Özdemir said;

As Hûda-Par, we never support having of borders, walls, fences or mine field between Muslim countries. We want them removed entirely. Likewise we want borders with Iraq, Iran, Syria, Georgia and Armenia removed as well. The borders could be defined (*considered*) as in the case of Europe where borders are becoming meaningless.²⁴³

Looking at the issue from the Kurdish Islamists' perspective, separating nations by states could damage the Ummah understanding. For instance, according to Murat (fictious name), who had affiliations with Hezbollah linked organizations, their aim is to create unity not separation between nations. This is the fundamental reason for claiming federalism because the model proposes unity of nations by granting all their political rights.²⁴⁴ Nevzat Eminoglu highlighted the same point by referring to Bediuzaman Said-Nursi's "*Cemahiri Müttefika-i İslamiye*" project, which Eminoglu explained, acknowledges nations' rights. He noted that they want recognition of the Kurds' national rights along with other Muslim nations under the umbrella of Islam.²⁴⁵ The points revealed in an interview with Enes (Fictious name) also support Eminoglu's view;

Allah created me as a Kurd. He deemed me suitable for this. I and no one else can object this. Why is it wrong to defend a nation's rights that Allah thought I am suitable for? It is wrong to deny that. Beucase of that I say, as Bediuzzaman says,

²⁴² Interview with Mehmet Emin Eren in Istanbul 25 July 2012

²⁴³ Interview with Necat Özdemir in Diyarbakır, 07 May 2013

²⁴⁴ Interview with Murat (Fictious name) in Istanbul 15 July 2012

²⁴⁵ Interview with Nevzat Eminoglu in Istanbul, 10 July 2012

I support the idea of '*Cemahir-i Müttefika-i İslâmiye*', and I believe this is the right thing to serve under the umbrella of Islam for my nation.²⁴⁶

As Enes' statement indicates, and as also argued earlier, these Kurds, essentially Kurdish Islamists, consider the idea of Ummah as a model for protecting nations' rights. They therefore assert creation of a nation state can damage the ideal of Umma.

On another note, despite their stance against nation-state and emphasis on unity of people, the Kurds who demand for democratic autonomy and cultural rights proponents assert that federalism could repress minorities within the Kurds. Interview conducted with Hûda-Par Bingöl Provincial executive Orhan Açıkbâş, who is also a Zaza, was rather illustrative in understanding of federalism exponents' response to this claim. In response to this criticisms, Açıkbâş stated that if a federal status is given to the Kurds, some Zazas may become anxious. However, majority of them will not see it as an issue because, he explained, the state put pressure not only on the Kurds but Zaza and Alevis too. Therefore, Açıkbâş noted that, if Zazas' and Alevis' rights are also acknowledged, a federal structure would not pose threat to their identity. He added that problems are only likely to occur if the Kurds use federalism in favour of a specific group and design or assimilate the others.²⁴⁷ In this regard, İbrahim Güçlü considers federalism as a political model which will re-obtain Kurds' internal minorities' identities. Güçlü underlined that with federalism Kurdish internal minorities, Alevis and Zazas, and Kurds will respect and recognize each other's identities and learn to live together.²⁴⁸

In the light of this, these Kurds believe that forming a Kurdish state may lead to conflict. Current socio-political conditions of the Kurds and region mean they are not presently prepared for that level of change.²⁴⁹ Federalism, therefore, is considered as the ideal political model to either remove or ease ethnic tension between the Kurds and Turks by satisfying the Kurds' ethno-national sentiments in their union with Turkey. The idea of federalism, as the research consequences introduced, thus, is regarded as a necessity for annihilation of separatist inclinations in Kurds.

²⁴⁶ Interview with Enes (Fictitious Name) in Istanbul, 10 July 2012

²⁴⁷ Interview with Orhan Açıkbâş in Bingöl, 11 May 2013

²⁴⁸ Interview with İbrahim Güçlü in Diyarbakir, 08 May 2012

²⁴⁹ Interview with Tahir (Fictitious name) in Istanbul, 24 and 25 July 2014

6.2.2.2 Rejection of Democratic Autonomy Model

Arguments in previous sections elucidated that achieving a territorial national status was significant in heightening demand for federalism in the Kurds. As revealed earlier, liberation of nation is conceived as liberation of territory. This is also one of the crucial points which differentiates federalism from democratic autonomy because, as noted in previous chapters, democratic autonomy does not base itself on a territorial understanding. With reference to this, Azad Ayyildirim, London Kom-Kar executive and political activist in Kurdish diaspora, underlined that democratic autonomy is not a *national* project and it does not aim to achieve Kurds' requests for a nation because "democratic autonomy first of all is not based on a territorial understanding". Moreover, Azad explained that because democratic autonomy does not clarify or mention Kurds' territorial borders "it cannot be identified as a 'Kurd' or "*Kurdistani* model".²⁵⁰ Like Azad Ayyildirim, İbrahim Güçlü also deemed democratic autonomy, as not for benefit of the Kurds and national. To Güçlü this project belongs to the state, with influence from the Kemalist powers to remove Kurds' status demand and weaken their national mobilization. For Güçlü, therefore, democratic autonomy cannot provide Kurds a status.²⁵¹

Democratic autonomy's aim to re-structure Turkey into 24-26 regions, including the regions mostly inhabited by the Kurds have in turn provoked criticism of the model because, as PSK leader Mesut Tek noted, these Kurds believe, its objectives are likely to divide Kurds' homeland and Kurdish national identity.²⁵² With reference to this, these Kurds claim that since democratic autonomy rather divides society by re-structuring Turkey through 24-26 regions, it has potential to further increase tension.²⁵³ Furthermore, federalism proponents also share their criticism of democratic autonomy by highlighting it is to some extent a "social engineering" project and still remains ambiguous. For instance, Hak-Par leader Kemal Burkay harshly criticized democratic autonomy when asked, *what are the differences between democratic autonomy and federalism and why do*

²⁵⁰ Interview with Azad Ayyildirim in London, 25 March 2013

²⁵¹ Interview with İbrahim Güçlü in Diyarbakir, 08 May 2012

²⁵² Interview with Mesut Tek in London, 25 February 2013

²⁵³ Interview with Burkay Aslan in London, 21 July 2013

you refuse democratic autonomy model?, during an interview when he visited Hak-Par Istanbul provincial;

Now, they (*democratic autonomy defenders*) say ‘we do not want land’. ‘We do not want borders’. If you call for autonomy, autonomous region has its own borders. How a village has its own borders and an autonomous region has its own borders too. ...You demand some rights for a particular region and a particular people... Borders have to be defined (*certained*). ...But, in democratic autonomy, borders are not defined. ...They say ‘there won’t be land, any borders’...Autonomy region should definitely have a flag...But they do not even say that. No border, no flag, no official language, they say ‘unitary’ for this. If these happen, it will not be called autonomous. They say ‘we will not touch the unitary structure’, but if unitary structure is to stay there will be no autonomy. ... Democratic autonomy is a monster. ...Kurds will not gain any rights with this... Come on, do not deceive Kurds. ...Everything is societal engineering. It is not necessary to play with Kurds like this.²⁵⁴

Taking into account Kemal Burkay’s standpoint and as the fieldwork outcomes illustrated, territory is the main factor which led many to refuse democratic autonomy and consider federalism. In other words, because the Kurdish issue is described as a nation’s territorial rights, to these Kurds the solution is also tied with territoriality. This in turn is the main explanation for rejecting democratic autonomy - the model refuses to approach or consider the idea of territory in the solution process for the Kurdish issue.

6.2.2.3 Refusal of Cultural Rights Only Model

Meetings with elites from Med-Zehra and Zehra communities, Hak-Par, Kadep, Hüda-Par, Hezbollah and ÖSP and related organizations revealed these Kurds refer to the Kurds’ collective identity and its association with the concept of nation. For this connection they object recognition of the Kurdish identity at an individual level or for merely citizenship. They proclaim that granting only cultural rights would neither satisfy nor appreciate the Kurdish (group) identity in any respect.²⁵⁵ In his article in Med-Zehra community affiliated *DAVA* magazine, Resulalan (1991, 15) highlights that as granting only cultural rights will not satisfy the Kurds’ ethno-national claims completely it also

²⁵⁴ Interview with Kemal Burkay in Istanbul, 15 June 2012 and his talk at Hak-Par Istanbul provincial

²⁵⁵ Interview with Azad Ayyildirim in London, 25 March 2013 and Interview with Tahir (Fictitious name) in Istanbul, 24 and 25 July 2014

cannot resolve the Kurdish issue. As a result, Dabakoğlu explains, Kurds will always struggle for their territorial national rights which could drive the country into chaos.²⁵⁶

Taking issue from that sense, academician and writer Mustafa Peköz stated that there is a national belonging, national feelings, territorial integrity and historical memory within Kurds. Referring to the Kurds' national character, Peköz argues that such objective and subjective parts of identity cannot be described just with the cultural rights. To Peköz, as Kurds are a nation like Turks, Arabs, Persians, Scots, and Welsh, which have their own flags, symbols, parliaments, and education in their native language, Kurds should also have the same advantages. Therefore, he reiterated that granting of cultural rights only would not bring the Kurds these same needs.²⁵⁷ The point declared here once again recapitulates the importance and impacts of being a nation on political demand of these Kurds. In line with this, Ciwanroj Ceyhan professed that by securing cultural rights alone, Kurds will not have sufficient power and authority. However, the state can remove their rights at any moment. Kurds, therefore, are always at risk of losing their cultural rights if these rights are not assured with a federal status added Ciwanroj. And so, Ciwanroj emphasized that by granting only cultural rights Kurds will not feel protected, thus, lose trust in the state. Moreover, he stressed that recognition of only cultural rights does not reassure the Kurds.²⁵⁸

Overall, taking into account the background provided in light of the interviews conducted, becoming a territorial nation contributes to demand for collective rights. Federalism herein is conceived as a political model in which Kurdish identity is recognized by a national status over a historical part of land. This is considered as the primary approach in conceding the Kurds' rights at the *collective level* and ensuring equality between the Kurds and other nations is sustained, especially with the Turks.²⁵⁹ To these Kurds federalism will provide them with power and rights to handle their national affairs. For them the cultural rights only model as a non-territorial political

²⁵⁶ Interview with Cudi Dabakoğlu in London, 25 July 2013

²⁵⁷ Interview with Mustafa Peköz in London, 15 March 2013

²⁵⁸ Interview with Ciwanroj Ceyhan in Diyarbakir, 08 May 2013

²⁵⁹ Interview with Nevzat Eminoğlu in Istanbul, 10 July 2012 and Interview with Mehmet Baki Aslanurgun in Istanbul, 02 July 2012

model does not provide this. Similarly, they also reject democratic autonomy because they believe this model is not applicable nationally (Kurdish nation) and can even lead to further division of the Kurdish identity. On another note, although federalism proponents respect the nations' right of self-determination they believe that under current conditions creation of a Kurdish nation-state could lead to conflict in Turkey and Middle East, and as the Kurds do not have sufficient power to defend themselves this could result in a series of social, political and economic damages.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DEMAND FOR NATION-STATE MODEL

Another territorial political model considered by some Kurds is creation of own nation-state. By establishing an independent state these Kurds imply their desire for creating a modern Kurdish national state, which in general terms is based on the following principles; legitimate use of power on a defined territory, a defined nation, (national) sovereignty, taxation, bureaucracy, as well as advancing other state apparatus (such as central government and a national army). In that sense, they require European model national state.

Before analysing the Kurds' nation-state demand, two anomalies must be addressed in this chapter. The first issue is due to the individuals who involve in some groups which do not prioritize Kurdish nation-state demand in their agendas. Therefore, it likely that some of the Kurdish individuals who strive for independence are found among diverse political models demanded groups. Consequently, classifying the Kurds who claim for independence has proved difficult because many of the Kurds who show their support for independence belong to group demanding various political models. However, since the organizations do not push for creation of a Kurdish nation-state these individuals are disregarded, even though they request a Kurdish state. Since the level analysis of this study is based on 'group level', the political groups that recognize Kurds' nation-state demand are considered.

The second problem lies with the affiliation between the two political models, federalism and nation-state. There are close links between these models as both are considered territorial political units. This connection complicates the analysis on Kurds' independency demand because the Kurds who are in favour also acknowledge ideologies of a federal model. Their intention is to establish their own state by accepting the federalism model because they see federalism as the system that will lead to their independence. However, this results in confusion of their classification - are they federalism or independency supporters? To clarify the latter, their classification was

decided upon their ultimate aim. Taking this into account, the Kurds who consider federalism for a transitional period and creation of a Kurdish nation-state as their primary aim are grouped as Kurds who request a Kurdish nation-state.

With regard to the context provided, the Kurdish origin groups, Azadî movement, Kurdistan Freedom Party (Partiya Azadiya Kurdistan-PAK), Kurdistan Communist Movement (Kurdistan Komunist Hareketi-KKH), Turkey's Kurdistan Democrat Party (Türkiye Kurdistan Demokrat Partis- TKDP), the Kurds associated with Ismail Besikci Vakfi (IBV) support Kurds' right of self-determination. This is also echoed by various extremist leftist organizations, such as, Democratic Rights Federations (Demokratik Haklar Federasyonu-DHF), and Workers and Peasants (İşçi-Köylü-Kızılbayrak Circle), who openly describe themselves through their socialism ideology.

The Kurds associated with these groups carry various social stratus. While Azadî mostly include Kurds strongly associated with religion, other organizations include individuals with working class and peasant backgrounds, migrant Kurds, Kurdish diaspora, socialist background and so forth.

This chapter is divided into two parts, with the first part briefly identifying the aforementioned groups in relation to their identity and Kurdish issue approach. The second part is split into further two sections. The initial section of this part will focus on the causes that contributed to demand for an independent state. In line with this aim, involvement of safety consideration (derives from internal and regional conditions) on the demand of state will be regarded alongside their demographic territorial weight. The second section will focus on the reasons behind rejecting other political models, including, federalism, democratic autonomy and cultural rights respectively.

7.1 CLARIFICATION OF GROUPS SUPPORTING KURDS' INDEPENDENCE

7.1.1 Azadi Initiative

As noted in the opening section, the Kurds who demand for territorial independence (creation of a Kurdish state) derive from various political and ideological

backgrounds, such as the Azadî (freedom) initiative who had a strong interest in the Kurdish issue. Azadî was founded by some Kurdish Islamists on 6th November 2012. The group is based in Diyarbakir but also extends to other areas in the Kurdish region and has links with Kurds in western areas of Turkey. In its Declaration and Agreement Text, (Înîsiyatîfa Azadî (Metnên Declerasyone û Mutabeqetê) 2012), Azadî describes itself as an initiative comprised of Kurdish Islamists who look at Islamic strategies to find a solution for the Kurdish issue. For Kurds in Turkey Azadî identifies them as a separate nation, names the Kurdish region Kurdistan, considers this region Kurds' ancient homeland (Ibid., 27) and regards the two common dialects of the Kurdish language, Kurmanji and Zazaki (Ibid., 28). The group openly express that the division and ruling of the Kurdish region by their neighbouring nations, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria, has consequently stripped the Kurdish nation of any political status (Ibid., 28). Azadî ,therefore, highlights that Kurdish people and Kurdistan are presently under forced political domination of their neighbouring states, and as a result, their social, cultural, political, and economic rights have been denied, neglected or compromised (Ibid., 29). With regard to the mentioned context, Azadî proposes that Kurds should have the freedom and right to make decision on their social, cultural, political, and economic life. To elaborate, Azadî claims Kurds should have the freedom to decide on their future and “right of self-government in Kurdistan”(Ibid., 31). They based this ideal on the principles of national self-determination rights (Ibid., 31-32).

7.1.2 PAK

Another Kurdish origin party founded on October 19, 2014 in support of an independent Kurdish nation state, Kurdistan Freedom Party (PAK) has Kurd members from various classes (PAK Programı 2014). The party uses the slogan “Kurdistan right now”.

7.1.3 KKH

Kurdistan Communist Movement (KKH) is another Kurdish origin party, which was founded in 1982. KKH's main areas of focus are the mostly Kurds located regions in

Turkey, and seek to group these regions together as Kurdistan. In their struggle they often highlight the state has annexed the Kurdish region. Therefore, they consider the Kurdish issue as a matter of nation's liberation (Yirmi Birinci Yuzyilda Özgürlük ve Sosyalizm Manifestosu 2008). The movement's members currently are mostly active in Europe.

7.1.4 TKDP

Turkey's Kurdistan Democrat Party (Türkiye Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi-TKDP), founded in 2014, is a rather new political party and so sources providing their background are limited. However, they openly declare for creation of an Independent United Kurdish Nation-State in the Middle East (TKDP Tüzüğü 2014; TKDP Programı 2014).

7.1.5 The Kurds involved in IBV, DHF, and Workers and Peasants Groups

The Kurds involved with İsmail Beşikçi Foundation (İsmail Beşikçi Vakfı-IBV)²⁶⁰ and have a leftist ideology also propose establishment of a Kurdish nation-state. Presently, there are numerous active extremist leftist groups in Turkey. A substantial percentage of these groups include Kurd members. Although it is not possible to list all in detail, the following are the most active and powerful in political terms; Democratic Rights Federation (Demokratik Haklar Federasyonu-DHF)²⁶¹ and Workers and Peasants group (İşçi-Köylü-Kızılbayrak)²⁶². Despite certain ideological differences almost all continue in their struggle for a socialist Turkey and they recognize and accept Kurds' right of self-determination.

7.2 ANALYSIS OF UNDERLYING FACTORS IN DEMAND FOR AN INDEPENDENT STATE

²⁶⁰ For further details on İsmail Beşikçi Vakfı (Foundation) visit their homepage, (<http://www.ismailbesikcivakfi.org/Default.asp?>)

²⁶¹ For further details on DHF visit their homepage, (<http://www.demokratikhaklarfederasyonu.org/demokratik-haklar-dernekleri-federasyonu-tuzugu.html>)

²⁶² For further details on İsci-Koylu (Kızılbayrak) group visit homepage, (<http://www.kizilbayrak.net/ana-sayfa/>)

This part will analyse the primary data collated during the fieldwork research to address the contributory factors which led to demand of Kurdish nation-state amongst the Kurds involve in above mentioned groups.

The data was collected from the interviews conducted with prominent figures (elites) of the Kurdish origin groups, Azadî initiative, PAK, KKH, TKDP, and the Kurds involved with IBV, DHF and Kizilbayrak Circle groups. To analyse the reasons behind demand for an independent nation-state and refusal of other models 17 interviews were conducted with the mentioned groups authorities.

In this regard, this part, consisting of two sections, will initially analyse the causative factors behind demand for an independent state taking safety considerations and territorial demographic weight as causes. Following this, the motives for refusal of other political models (federalism, democratic autonomy and granting of cultural rights only) over an independent state will be investigated.

7.2.1 Why an Independent State Model?

This part will cover how these Kurds' safety consideration (s) and territorial demographic weight separately influenced demand for an independent state.

7.2.1.1 Safety Consideration(s)

The interviews conducted with Kurds involved in the groups under consideration revealed that because of their mistrust toward the state(s) rule over Kurds (Turkey and regional countries-Iran, Iraq and Syria) they have dramatic safety considerations, including, physical oppression, annihilation, mass arrests, torture and forced migration. The empirical outcome of the research also indicated that rise in ethnic and religious conflict in the Middle East further escalated their concerns. This is a primarily because these Kurds believe the state(s) rule over the Kurds led to further attacks against the Kurds. However, for them this fear can be removed if they establish their own state - this will be the focus of this section.

Over the course of the fieldwork, many of the interviewees made mention to the state's approach against the Kurds over the last century. The following remarks from Azadî initiative Istanbul representative, Mahmut Koyuncu, clearly demonstrates these Kurds claim that the state intended to destroy the Kurds demographic structure by applying various acts of violence;

Just look at the state policies in the past in 1990s; firing of the Kurdish villages, town, cities, and evacuation. The problem for the state was; most Kurds were inhabiting in Kurdistan...If Kurdish population was less than 60% of all population settled in Kurdistan, the state would not have evacuated or burnt down the Kurdish settlements. The State's main objective was to evacuate Kurdish villages and force Kurds to migrate from their homeland and move to western parts of Turkey. Because Turkey believed that it would be easy to assimilate the Kurds in this way.²⁶³

Adnan Firat, of Azadî initiative executive, noted that their past experiences stand as one of the main reasons behind their distrust in the state and demand for their own state because, Firat indicates, statelessness was the main factor that led to their oppression;

‘...First, let's recap this. What ever happened to the Kurds is because they are stateless and without status. What ever happened, all the 100 years of exiles or participation, whatever we complain now, happened because we are a nation that does not rule ourselves, we have had no power. It is because we have had no word to say. It is because we were not decision makers. It is very normal that the people who experienced this for 100 years want independence or state. This nation's intellectual memory has been constructed through these experiences. That is normal if they want to form their own state. Both from the Islamic political and secular notion perspectives, people's rights and nations' state demands are legitimate. Especially if they have experienced all kinds of cruelties because of their national identity, demanding state is compulsory.’²⁶⁴

The state's previous attempts against the Kurds, as inferred by the above quotation, contributes to these Kurds' apprehensions of living in union with Turkey because to these Kurds “the state still aims to destroy Kurds' demographic structure and their unity.”²⁶⁵ The thoughts regarding the state's approach to the Kurds and their certainty that these are continuing is mentioned in interview in detail by Adnan Firat. To Firat, as it was in the

²⁶³ Interview with Mahmut Koyuncu in Istanbul, 31 January 2012

²⁶⁴ Interview with Adnan Firat in Diyarbakir, 07 May 2013

²⁶⁵ Phone Interview with Fuat Önen in Istanbul, 20 September 2014

past, lack of status and state are still the main reasons behind their suffering and fears today;

‘...Look, yesterday one Kurd was killed, a student. Nationalists killed him. One was also killed in Diyarbakir. Look, how many people were killed in Roboski. The day before someone else was killed. They did not even become news. It is very easy to kill Kurds. Almost the easiest thing. Why? Because Kurds do not have power to decide. They do not have power to resist this. Imagine, a Turk was killed at the Greek border during smuggling. What will happen? Would the Turkish state not make a big fuss? Yes it would...But everyday tens of Kurds are killed but the state ignores. That means we are abandoned people. No one looks after our lives. Because of that we value our language, culture, and identity. We value ourselves. We take life seriously. We are people who have dignity. How can I accept such things that have happened and are happening to the Kurds? Even for the education in mother tongue I do not know how many people will die. ...We are not like them. As a nation, we suffered too much because of statuslessness. We experienced all kinds of suffering. That is why our independence claim is necessary. That is a human reflection. Does not matter, you can say Islamic, humanist, or civilized this is a necessity. Look from another angle. Theoretical reference is obvious. Neither Islamic nor Socialist or Internationalists can deny this.’²⁶⁶

The conditions revealed in Adnan Firat interview above were also highlighted by DHF political activist Zelal (Fictitious name), experience of being taken into custody a number of times. According to Zelal there will never be a time when Turkey will recognize Kurdish ethno-national identity and end its oppression, unless dissolve the Kurdish identity. In interview with Zelal often remarked that, “the Kurds should not trust this state, therefore, an armed struggle is necessary for formation of a socialist Kurdistan and Turkey.”²⁶⁷

Taking issue from that sense as Irfan Burulday, one of founder members of the Azadî initiative, highlights in his blog post titled “Free and Independent Kurdistan”, these Kurds do not trust the state and statelessness means defencelessness and more suffering for them (Burulday 2013). This idea was expressed by many during the fieldwork. Numerous interviewees made mention of this and explained how it creates barriers between constructing their future with the Turks or under the political authority

²⁶⁶ Interview with Adnan Firat in Diyarbakir, 07 May 2013

²⁶⁷ Interview with Zelal (Fictitious name) in Istanbul, 02 December 2013

of Turkey. For instance, prominent Kurdish politician, Ruşen Aslan, who is also the IBV executive, professed that these barriers literally and metaphorically block their union with Turkey and this opinion is largely due to the state's attitude to the Kurdish issue. To Aslan;

‘...at this point the state has a disruptive role. That is why if the solution is not based on that status linking to the territory, the danger is always there. Disruption will improve and this will be performed seriously... Now, look at the Kurds, they have been in a serious war for about 30 years. Nevertheless, they are not even given education in their mother tongue. Now, how can you pass along your future or a nation's future to this state? How can you trust this state? And so, Kurds, in any case, should obtain their own status...Today, cyclically federation but as a nation and right, Kurds' independence is essential.’²⁶⁸

The interviews conducted brought to the light that to these Kurds the state's approach and their safety considerations are two of the main causes that pushed them to turn to independence demand. Gaining their own state, as Adnan Firat underlines in his following citation, believed will halt destruction of their people, territory, and identity.

‘...I also say the same thing. This is not permissive. There are things that force you to claim independence. Your language is disappearing. Is there anything beyond that? Today there is a huge assimilation in Kurdistan. Look at Diyarbakir Street, no one speaks Kurdish. Is there anything beyond that? New generation cannot speak Kurdish...Beyond that, Kurds already have national consciousness. It has been like that since Ahmedi Xani... Even during those days there was a nation between two empires. And even in those days these two empires used this for their benefits. Ahmedi Xani shouted this. Ahmed Xani said the only solution for this is Kurds with the term of the day having their own Sultanate or in today's word their own state....He formulated this... We are now way behind the Xani period. At least there was no problem of education in mother tongue. There were madrasas that carried on education in mother tongue. There was no cultural rights problem...but still they wanted their own state...These conditions are stronger now. We need historical consciousness. We apply a bit of anachronism. We have history... If we know and read this huge history that is in front of us, and still do not do anything, this means we are insulting ourselves...Demanding state is not only the natural result of national consciousness, it is a raise that is based on social and political conditions or it is a way of independence, liberation.’²⁶⁹

²⁶⁸ Interview with Rusen Aslan in Istanbul, 20 May 2013

²⁶⁹ Interview with Adnan Firat in Diyarbakir, 07 May 2013

With reference to this, Irak (Fictitious name), a Kurdish politician and activist in London, highlighted that “as majority of the Kurds are conscious of their national identity and ready to form their own state, it is now time for creation of a Kurdish state. Because it could be late in this state, tomorrow.”²⁷⁰

The meetings (interviews) with organizations under consideration indicated that an independent state proponents’ safety considerations are not only a result of their distrust with Turkey, but also because of their mistrusts toward the regional countries (Iran, Iraq and Syria). In addition, intensified ethnic and religious tension in the Middle East plus some of the violent attacks against the Kurds further contributed to their growing concerns and related demand for an independent nation-state.

The interviews revealed these Kurds associate their statelessness to the attacks and assaults they are receiving. In an interview, Vahit Aba, one of the founders of PAK, with reference to the Islamic State’s (of Sham and Iraq) (ISIS) assaults on the Kurds in the Shangal district of Iraq and Kobani enclave in Syria, expressed that these attacks on the Kurds affirmed the necessity for creation of a Kurdish state. To Aba, “the Kurds will always be oppressed, tortured and faced cruelties without having a status and state or if they do not become their own masters.”²⁷¹ To further support that point, Dersim (fictitious name), who was arrested and harshly tortured during the 1980s and currently a political activist in Kurdish diaspora, in a group conversation at a Kurdish organization in London responded to the question asked by the author of research, *why has ISIS continuously attacked the Kurds* by simply reverting to the fact they are ‘stateless’. Without even waiting for the following question—Why?—he added that if the Kurds had their own army, heavy weapons and air forces, neither the regional state(s) neither nor ISIS would dare to attacks the Kurds.²⁷² Independent state proponents, therefore, believe that because the regional countries either oppress or show no attempt to ally with the Kurds, they (the Kurds in the Middle East) must merge their power. This is, says PAK leader Mustafa Özcelik, the only possible way for them to protect themselves and became a strong power

²⁷⁰ Interview with Irak (Fictitious) in Londra, 04 March 2013

²⁷¹ Phone Interview with Vahit Aba in Ankara, 19 November 2014

²⁷² Conversation (Interview) with Dersim (Fictitious name) in London, 08 November 2014

in the region. To encourage this idea he referred to the cooperation between PKK/PYD and Peshmerge forces of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) developed in Kobani, and explained that if they have their own state no authority can defeat or destroy the Kurds.²⁷³

Taking the assaults faced by Kurds into account, independent nation-state supporters highlighted that “Kurds should have right to merge with other Kurdish regions.”²⁷⁴ In this regard, they deem existed boundaries as “the political boundaries which separate head and the body of Kurdistan”²⁷⁵ and, as Fuat Önen, of Kurdish politician and intellectual, states, they want “to remove artificial territories between them” and enhance the idea of united Kurdistan among the Kurds.²⁷⁶ Therefore, the Kurds who stress for independence openly expressed they will eradicate these boundaries as soon as an opportunity arises because they want to live together with their nation members. Mentioning on that point Fuat Önen added;

We, the Kurds, want to live with the Kurds on our land, Kurdistan. As a Kurd, I first want to live with a Kurd from Mahabat, Kobani, Hewler or other Kurdish parts, not with a Turk from Bursa city of Turkey. After Kurds united then we can live with a Turk from the city of Bursa...The political development and Kurds’ achievements in Syria and Iraq led to hope and show that the Kurds in all parts will obtain their status ultimately...Then they will remove the political borders

²⁷³ Phone Interview with Mustafa Özçelik in Ankara, 20 November 2014

²⁷⁴ Interview with Ruşen Aslan in Istanbul, 20 May 2013

²⁷⁵ Written Interview with Kani Yado in Diyarbakir, 27 September 2014

²⁷⁶ Phone Interview with Fuat Önen in Istanbul, 20 September 2014.

At that point, these Kurds, even going one step further and consider mostly the Kurds dwelled region as occupied region and claim they live with Turkey because of the force of guns not with their will. For example, the Kurdish Communist Party, of asserts for creation of an united Kurdish nation state (with merging of all regions mostly located by the Kurds), describes the Kurdish geography as an occupied region and label Turkey’s Kurdish policy as a type of colonial policy. In other words, this party, considers Turkey as a country that annexed the Kurdish region (Kurdistan Kominist Partisi 1990, 8) and “*enforcing captivity on Kurdish nation*” (Written Interview with Kani Yado in Diyarbakir, 27 September 2014). With reference to this, Adnan Firat highlighted that their nation has been taken under control and dominated by other powers against their will. Therefore, he said,

Kurds’ self-determination right cannot be rejected or denied. With which reason can it be rejected? With which right and law can it be rejected? If they reject it will be fascism...colonialism. Look at it from another view. Look at Turkey that rules Kurdistan...I am a nation that is oppressed and taken under control by the force of guns. All my rights were taken away from me with that. Even this shows us that the solution is the right to govern, right to govern by guns that you can protect yourself (Interview with Adnan Firat in Diyarbakir, 07 May 2013).

drawn between them and they will unite. Kurdistan part in Turkey with the largest territory and population will have a determinant part in construction of a united Kurdish state.²⁷⁷

Taking into account these Kurds' considerations and demands specified above which were derived from empirical findings of the research, for them "the backward (reactionary) status quo will not be destroyed unless Kurds manage to create a modern state formation on the land they live."²⁷⁸ This is predominantly because, they believe, the "state formation of Kurdistan will have a deterrence effect on terror and reactionary" in the Kurdish region and Middle East, with particular stress on ISIS and similar organizations' current attacks on the Kurds.²⁷⁹ Otherwise, as Vahab (fictitious name), executive of İşçi-Köylü group illustrated, "Kurds would be at risk of oppression, assimilation and violence in Turkey and in the Middle East."²⁸⁰ In this regard, they describe the Kurds as an "oppressed nation"²⁸¹ and highlighted that "if a nation faces oppression and pressure, it has right of national self-determination" in order to protect itself.²⁸² Therefore, based on this framework and, as Kani Yado noted, they think "within the current conditions of the World and the region, it is a necessity for the Kurds to be an independent state."²⁸³

7.2.1.2 Territorial National Demographic Weight

The high volume of interviews conducted with Kurds of the groups under consideration also revealed the Kurds' demographic density, particularly the concentration on a specific part of territory, as a one of the main reasons for entitlement to right of territorial national self-determination. This is especially significant when considered along with their safety considerations.

²⁷⁷ Phone Interview with Fuat Önen in Istanbul, 20 September 2014

²⁷⁸ Written Interview with Kani Yado in Diyarbakir, 27 September 2014

²⁷⁹ Written Interview with Kani Yado in Diyarbakir, 27 September 2014

²⁸⁰ Interview with Vahap (Fictitious name) in Istanbul, 03 May 2012

²⁸¹ 'Oppressed nation' defined as a nation deserving of self-determination and secession rights (Lenin 1998, 118). Lenin states that ignoring of an oppressed nations' self-determinations right would be considered as betrayal of socialism (Ibid., 132–133).

²⁸² Interview with Firat (Fictitious name) in Tunceli, in 12 May 2013

²⁸³ Written Interview with Kani Yado in Diyarbakir, 27 September 2014

On the course of the fieldwork research most of the Kurds interviewed highlighted that Kurds are one of the fourth largest stateless communities, with a population of forty million on a particular territory in the Middle East alone. They associate the Kurds' demographic weight with the right for creation of their own state.²⁸⁴ For instance, veteran Kurdish politician, Kani Yado, noted that "based on the ethnicity and the population, Kurds are the biggest nation within the regional nations. Demanding state formation of Kurdistan and its independence is the right of the Kurds as nation, it is the right of every Kurd."²⁸⁵ To these Kurds, such a crowded population should not be managed or ruled by other nations since they regard this an insult to Kurds' will. In their point of view, being ruled by smaller countries both in terms of territory and population is unacceptable, but also the main causes behind their partition.²⁸⁶ This idea is further supported by prominent scholar in Kurdish studies, İsmail Beşikçi. He argues although the Kurds have a heavy demographic weight as well as a historical piece of land, they currently remain without status in Turkey and International Relations with a divided socio-cultural and political structure (Besikçi 2013, 203-204). To Beşikçi, statelessness is the main reason for the fragmentation of Kurds' territories and, more importantly, their suffering (Besikçi 2013). In his talk at SOAS University London he further asserted two significant motives for Kurds to push for their own nation-state is the idea of transforming into a territorial nation and occupying a particular region of territory for a length of time. To emphasize his argument even more, he draws attention to the huge impact of territory and demographic weight on nations and nation-state with considerably smaller territory and population than that of the Kurds. He explains Kurds should have permission and freedom of their own state because if these smaller nations are capable of gaining state status and authority over their territory, Kurds should also be entitled. Finally, Beşikçi clarifies that if Kurds join other nation-states they will no longer be governed by smaller states.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁴ Phone Interview with Vahit Aba in Ankara, 19 November 2014

²⁸⁵ Written Interview with Kani Yado in Diyarbakir, 27 September 2014

²⁸⁶ Phone Interview with Mustafa Özçelik in Ankara, 20 November 2014

²⁸⁷ İsmail Besikci's talk at the SOAS University London, 08 April 2014

The points underlined by Beşikçi were repeatedly mentioned during the fieldwork. Observations made exposed that gaining a territorial national status and their demographic weight provokes motive in these Kurds' independency assertion. For instance, the question, "why do many of few thousands or millions communities, like Cyprus, Luxemburg, Kosovo or former Soviet republics have their own state, while Kurds of more than 25 million inhabitants do not?" was a common point drawn upon by most of the Kurds who advocate for the right to their own state. They openly stated that they do not want to be governed by a state which is territorially and demographically smaller than the Kurds.²⁸⁸ That is an essential perspective that sets a realization among the Kurds that they should have the right to decide freely on the future of their own nation and geography. Otherwise, as they believe, the Kurdish question cannot be solved and other territorially and demographically smaller states will decide on their future.²⁸⁹ They, therefore, highlight that their demographic weight and concentration on a particular territory provides them with sufficient reason to be granted with the right of self-determination.

Overall, the data obtained from the in-depth interviews suggested that having safety considerations (both internal and external) and demand for self-rule in the largest stateless community within the region are two (related) instrumental factors which led to a high demand for independence. To put it in different way, these two reasons generate demand for the right of territorial national self-determination, namely state, in international relations. Based on this context, to these Kurds, with the words of Ruşen Aslan, "independence is a right and the Kurds have this right, to form their own state."²⁹⁰

7.2.2 Why Not Alternative Political Models?

This section will explore the rationale among Kurds for refusing the models federalism, democratic autonomy and cultural rights with consideration of an independent state alternatively.

²⁸⁸ Phone Interview with Mehmet Emin Kardaş in Istanbul, 25 November 2014

²⁸⁹ Phone Interview with Mustafa Özçelik in Ankara, 20 November 2014 and Phone Interview with Vahit Aba in Ankara 19, November 2014

²⁹⁰ Interview with Rusen Aslan in Istanbul, 20 May 2013

7.2.2.1 Criticism against the Federalist Model

The beginning of the chapter reiterated that many of the Kurds fighting for an independent state also accept a federal formation. However, they consider federalism only for a transitional period or for a steady transition to state. Consequently, most motives behind increased demand for an independent state are also true for federalism. However, in their approach to Turkey their trust and safety considerations differ to some extent.

The issue of distrust toward the state is not a concern only among the Kurds who struggle for creation of their own state. As chapters six revealed, federalism supporters to some extent also do not have trust in the state. However, federalism adherents believe that Kurds would be able to defend their national identity if they obtain a political status in Turkey. They pointed out that with this status Kurds will also be able to protect themselves from any physical attacks they may encounter. Therefore, since the Kurdish issue can be solved by the state which rules over the Kurds, they suggest there is no need to create an independent Kurdish state because this will cause further trouble, conflict and chaos.

This idea stated by federalism supporters is opposed by the Kurds who call for an independent state because they believe without their own state, Kurds as a nation do not have means to protect themselves. Kurds' historical experience, as noted previously, has greatly influenced their doubt in the state and respective demand for establishing their own state. Based on this, academician Helin (Fictitious name) noted “it is a danger for the Kurds when the Arabs, Persian, and the Turkish states, whom they have been oppressed by for many years, have the only say for the situations related to the Kurds.”²⁹¹ In simpler terms, they believe since the state (s) oppressed the Kurds and currently does not show many structural differences to the past, they are hesitant.

They justified their idea by issuing attacks on Kurds in the Iraqi Kurdistan region. They highlighted that although the Iraqi Kurdistan region has the most powerful federal

²⁹¹ Phone Interview with Helin (Fictitious name) in Hakkari, 23 November 2014

structure, as they did not have modern and heavy weapons they were unable to impede ISIS from occupying some areas of their region and cause a tragic scene in their Shangal district.²⁹² With reference to this, they noted a federal model cannot provide the Kurds with sufficient power to establish their safety. Their actions have impacted on all Kurds because federalism denies Kurds their own air forces, strong international diplomatic network or central military army with heavy weapons.²⁹³ In addition to this, they want to invest in security. As a result of these restrictions, they criticize federalism and explain only an independent state has potential to deliver Kurds' needs because "in their own state they will feel in safe."²⁹⁴

Within this framework, Mahmut Koyuncu articulated, "Kurds should not be told that they are going to be confronted with many problems, if a Kurdish nation-state is created" because their objective and subjective conditions for obtaining a territorial status are developed (certain). Furthermore, Koyuncu explained although current political conditions makes creation of a Kurdish state to some extent problematic, it eventually has to be formed.²⁹⁵ This is also the point that differentiates these Kurds from federalism demanders, because they consider federalism as a transitional model before eventually establishing a Kurdish nation-state.

7.2.2.2 Refusal of the Democratic Autonomy Model

Independent nation-state advocates challenge democratic autonomy primarily because it is a non-territorial and non-ethnic model. A strong emphasis to the territorial side of the Kurdish identity is one of the determinant points which separates independence demanders from those Kurds who call for democratic autonomy and cultural rights. This is because, as PAK leader Mustafa Özçelik underlined, for them the Kurdish issue is a national issue and it wants right to self-govern and right of self-determination.²⁹⁶ Herein, as democratic autonomy is not based on territorial recognition

²⁹² Phone Interview with Fuat Önen in Istanbul, 20 September 2014

²⁹³ Conversation (Interview) with Dersim (Fictitious name) in London, 08 November 2014

²⁹⁴ Interview with Ekber (Fictitious name) in London, 17 March 2013

²⁹⁵ Interview with Mahmut Koyuncu in Istanbul, 31 January 2012

²⁹⁶ Phone Interview with Mustafa Özçelik in Ankara, 20 November 2014

of the Kurds, Mahmut Koyuncu deems this model as ambiguous and underlines that such models “weaken Kurds’ resistance power.”²⁹⁷

Taking the issue from that sense, these Kurds claim that their past struggles to free their territory and the heavy price paid has made establishing their own state a necessity. They state that Kurds made these struggles to rescue their nation and territory.²⁹⁸ Therefore, contrary to providing freedom to a nation without any consideration to their territory, Kurdistan Communist Movement, which stands for independence, describes the Kurdish issue as liberation of both the Kurdish territory and Kurdish nation. Freedom of nation and independence is considered as freedom of territory; the opposite is also true (Yirmi Birinci Yuzyilda Özgürlük ve Sosyalizm Manifestosu 2008, 57). Territory in that sense is not classed merely as a part of a land for these Kurds; “Territory is not only a piece of land. It is not only a border. It is name of a state. If a nation lacks its own state and language, that means this nation does not exist.”²⁹⁹ The connection between territory, nation and state is formulated as, “one of the conditions that makes a nation real nation is the ideas of country” and territory.³⁰⁰

Furthermore, another reason contributing to rejection of democratic autonomy, in these Kurds, is that the model is unable to provide Kurds sufficient conditions and opportunities to protect their physical existence, as is the case with federalism. According to PAK leader Mustafa Özcelik, since democratic autonomy does not define the Kurds’ status through a defined territory nor make mention to their national liberation, it cannot solve the matter related to the “Kurds and Kurdistan”.³⁰¹ Therefore, they exclaim they will not have command to make their own decisions; therefore, their existence will always be in danger with democratic autonomy. “If democratic autonomy is established, I believe there still will be a dependant and insecure environment for the Kurds. In other

²⁹⁷ Interview with Mahmut Koyuncu in Istanbul, 31 January 2012

²⁹⁸ Written Interview with Kani Yado in Diyarbakir, 27 September 2014 and Interview with Devrim (Fictitious name) in London, 01 March 2013

²⁹⁹ Interview with Mahmut Koyuncu in Istanbul, 31 January 2012

³⁰⁰ Written Interview with Kani Yado in Diyarbakir, 27 September 2014

³⁰¹ Phone Mustafa Özcelik in Ankara, 20 November 2014

words, the national (*central*) government will decide what to do if there is any danger against the Kurds.”³⁰²

To further clarify this idea, TKDP founding leader, Mehmet Emin Kardaş, responded the question *If the Kurds in Rojava*³⁰³, *contrary to democratic autonomy, have had their own state*, would ISIS still attack them? by briefly expressing that ‘no’ they would not attack.³⁰⁴ Accordingly, especially these Kurds’ mistrust toward the state(s) and other Middle Eastern powers, Fuat Önen asserted that other political models - democratic autonomy and federalism - cannot prevent the Kurds from incursions;

These models cannot provide sufficient instruments for the Kurds to tighten their security and to protect themselves from the attacks. For instance, as the Kurds do not have their own state, they do not have heavy weapons, military forces and other instruments. Therefore, they could not prevent seizing of some Kurdish regions in Iraq and Syria by Islamic State of Sham and Iraq (ISIS). This terrorist movement seized the Shangal region of Yezidi Kurds in Iraq and now it is assaulting the Kurdish region in Rojava. Therefore, except the formation of a Kurdish nation-state, other models cannot protect Kurds from these offenses. These attacks may happen to the Kurds in Turkey as well. Kurds, so, should have their own state. That is the only way for the Kurds to protect themselves from the states’ that rule them attacks and from the other powers’ offensives, like ISIS. Other political models cannot provide this because, as I said before, they will not provide Kurds sufficient weapons and power.³⁰⁵

Taking the Kurds’ independence demand in the light of the conditions previously mentioned the following questions need to be considered; “how do they consider alterations made in Kurds demographic structure?” and “doesn’t this make creation of a Kurdish state impossible?”. In response to these questions, Mahmut Koyuncu stated;

Although majority of the Kurds migrated from their region that does mean that there is no Kurdish population in the Kurdistan region. Kurds still consist the vast majority of people in Kurdistan... 90% of the people who live in Kurdistan are still Kurdish origin.³⁰⁶

³⁰² Phone interview with Helin (Fictious name) in Hakkari, 23 November 2014

³⁰³ Democratic autonomy model was formed in Rojava by the PKK-affiliated organization PYD in 2012-13 (Kurdistan National Congress 2014).

³⁰⁴ Phone Interview with Mehmet Emin Kardaş in Istanbul, 25 November 2014

³⁰⁵ Phone Interview with Fuat Önen in Istanbul, 20 September 2014

³⁰⁶ Interview with Mahmut Koyuncu in Istanbul, 31 January 2012

In response to the same questions, Kani Yado's following explanations are also significant since he clarifies reasons why Kurds' demographic distribution is not an obstacle for creation of a Kurdish nation-state in these Kurds;

It is obvious but not binding that some Kurds, who migrated to metropolitans and obtained properties, become anxious when Kurds' independency is mentioned. Except these exemptions, the migrated Kurds' connection to their homeland is not broken (cut off). In contrary, it is very strong. Even, it is not escaped from the attention that they are in favour of more active struggle. When Israelis spread to the World the same claim had been made but now they take their position within the prestigious state as a strong country on their land. Kurds did not forget their language; Israelis did but their language is now one of the living languages.³⁰⁷

Taking issue from this sense, Ali (fictious name), who is a member of the leftist İşçi-Köylü group stated, "Kurds should be entitled with right of self-determination since that is their more than 1000 years old dream. That is why democratic autonomy is unrealistic and less-demanding."³⁰⁸

Overall, the discussions presented indicate that the Kurds who demand for creation of a Kurdish nation-state have no trust in the states and powers around them and believe that democratic autonomy will not provide them with sufficient rights and means to protect their ethno-national identity and also defend themselves against any attacks. Consequently, they deem creation of a Kurdish nation-state as the only viable option in protecting the Kurds in every respect.

7.2.2.3 Refusal of Cultural Rights Only Model

Similarly with democratic autonomy, the Kurds in support of establishing independence also harshly challenge granting the Kurds with only their cultural rights. The interviews conducted plainly showed that these Kurds identify the Kurdish issue as a nation's demand for acknowledgement of their collective rights. Therefore, they stated that granting the Kurds only human or individual rights will not satisfy the Kurds nor

³⁰⁷ Written Interview with Kani Yado in Diyarbakir, 27 September 2014

³⁰⁸ Interview with Ali (Fictious name) in Istanbul, 03 May 2012

solve the Kurdish matter.³⁰⁹ The following passage from an interview with Mahmut Koyuncu accurately illustrates why Kurds reject the idea of granting cultural rights alone;

I spent 35 years to get rid of Turkishness or the dirt that Turkish education caused. ... If I waited or spend 35 years of my life to forget the epileptic seizure for Turkish flag, independence marsh, or November 10th commemoration, you should think the rest. ... Few days ago my daughter was punished by her teacher for not writing Ataturk's first letter in capital. Her teacher made her say 'Ata' please forgive me' while clasping (*attaching*) her hands. In a system like this only demanding cultural rights means Kurds' assimilation. And it is only a waste of time...Because they do not want to grant Kurds legal status. While Kurds' history is still fresh, there is no guarantee that people who do not give status to Kurds with sidesteps, will not do the same thing again. ...We have a crisis that Kurds are denied. Kurds should create all organizations based on their national identity. Otherwise time works against them. The state also knows that. Therefore, only recognition of cultural rights is assimilation and a waste of time.³¹⁰

The Kurds who demand for creation of a Kurdish nation-state, as findings of the research also suggest, hold territory as a key factor in development of their independence struggle, but also refusal for granting of their cultural rights only since this does not consider territory. This, as Azadî initiative's Press Secretary and Executive Adnan Firat cited, also clarifies why the Azadî movement identifies itself as a "Kurdistani" movement and refuses the idea of acknowledging only the cultural rights of Kurds. Adnan Firat, added;

We are a Kurdistani movement. I underline this. Kurdistani means freedom of Kurdistan. I do not mean that in the meaning granting of cultural rights. I mean as people and nation freedom of the Kurds. We accept Kurdistan as a state and we aim to struggle for it by achieving Kurds' national rights.³¹¹

Overall, empirical findings of the research indicated that the Kurds demand for an independent state stem from their distrust of Turkey and other regional states due to their previous political approach toward the Kurds. Their concerns seem to have risen especially after the recent attacks against the Kurds in Iraq and Syria. Because of their security considerations these Kurds highlight that the Kurds in Turkey should form their own state and in long term they should unite with the other Kurds living in regional states-Iran, Iraq and Syria. Because, statelessness is considered as defencelessness.

³⁰⁹ Phone Interview with Mehmet Emin Kardaş in Istanbul, 25 November 2014

³¹⁰ Interview with Mahmut Koyuncu in Istanbul, 31 January 2012

³¹¹ Interview with Adnan Firat in Diyarbakir, 07 May 2013

Therefore, they primarily reject the other political models with thinking that these models are not able to provide security for the Kurds. Among these models, democratic autonomy and cultural rights are also criticized for not targeting Kurds territorial and ethnic concentrations. Because according to these Kurds, Kurdish question is a national issue and it should be solved with recognizing of their territorial national identity that means being entitled with the right of national self-determination considering their security considerations.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The previous four chapters analysed the data obtained from the fieldwork. This fieldwork showed the causes behind the varied political models that are demanded by the Kurds (democratic autonomy, cultural rights, federalism and an independent state).

This chapter explores the research's empirical findings in the light of relevant theoretical discussions. The non-territorial political models, democratic autonomy and cultural rights will firstly be considered followed by territorial political models, federalism and nation-state.

8.1 Analysis of the Findings on Demand for the Democratic Autonomy Model

Democratic autonomy, as explored in Chapter Four, considers the constitutional recognition of the Kurds' national identity (granting of a political status) as the base. Democratic autonomy identifies the Kurds as a nation and seeks to provide them with a national status within the union with Turkey. This, as revealed through the fieldwork, is one of the substantial motives the model started to receive support.

Demand to "access state power" (Cederman, Wimmer, and Min 2010) and to be recognized through their ethno-national identity, more clearly a political status claim, has been raised by many national minorities (Mybury-Lewis 2002). In other words, demand for equal use of social, cultural, economic and political resources, and collective rights are determinant factors which drive national minorities to claim for constitutional recognition (Thompson 2006, 116). Such recognition means constitutional acceptance of their ethnic identity and its protection at a legal base. Taking into account nation-state's aim to assimilate minorities in line with their homogeneous nation and state creation project (Eriksen 1992; Canefe 2007), gaining of such status or groups rights has been the main focus for many of the minorities for protection of their identity (Casals 2006). With the words of Grimshaw (2006, 327) "minority status is important politically because it is the foundation of the demand of a particular community for recognition and equal rights."

Ethnic but mostly national minorities' status demand, as the last century witnessed, was not welcomed by most *host* states because it contradicts with their "state-building process", and so, some regions saw conflicts and tensions break out (Gunaratna, Acharya, and Pengxin 2010, 15–17). Politically and culturally dominant nation's, which mostly represents the state, aim to propagate "a common language and political values" across their countries (Kymlicka 2008, 160), further raises stateless minorities' concerns because this aim means denial of their ethno-national identity. Disregard of their political rights and harsh oppression implemented on them causes these "minorities to do not perceive their current political status as 'legitimate' " (Gunaratna, Acharya, and Pengxin 2010,17), thus, their desire for equal rights and political status triggered a struggle against the state which rules them (Guibernau 2010). Accordingly, stateless groups have not easily accepted nation-state's assimilation policies and resist protecting their ethno-national identity (Ryan 1990). In line with that purpose, many of the ethno-national minorities paid a high human price to protect their ethnic identity; but this also had a counter outcome - the states were forced to deal with minorities' political demands (Borchgrevink and Brochmann 2003, 96–97). Therefore, it is currently difficult for most states to sustain their oppressive denial policies against their minorities, at least with the same tough methods they implemented in the past. This is primarily because the states ruling ethno-national minority groups are well aware these groups are more conscious of their political issues due to their, as highlight by Smooha and Hanf, organizational and mobilization levels, and therefore, there is a greater likelihood of ethnic conflict occurring. And so, present conditions prove difficult to keep an ethno-national group without a political status and suppress their claims through the tough methods they performed previously. The states include minorities therefore, Smooha and Hanf say, have certain options to manage ethnic conflict; "partition", "ethnic democracy", "constitutional democracy" and "liberal democracy" (Smooha and Hanf 1996). Mentioning on the same point Brochmann also states that current conditions makes it difficult for most of the multicultural states to deny and apply harsh methods to dissolve minority's identity because both minority and majority's interest are up to each other the most extent. "The multicultural state is also dependent on a framework for its existenc-

kind of nation concept that embraces ethnic groups and other groups by appealing to a sense of responsibility and cohesion within a delimited identity. Minorities are dependent on the majority community's glue to guarantee any special rights they enjoy" (Brochmann 2003, 10). This mutual dependence, he highlights, requires a new type of nation building (Brochmann 2003). On the other hand, although most of the states are well aware of that, they are still not reluctant to recognize ethno-national minorities' political status' assertion. Most of the states are still in aim to assimilate their minorities identity. For instance, due to the state's homogenisation policy such as aim to create a common language, most of linguistic minorities language are facing the risk of extinction (Eriksen 1992). Consequently, as democratic autonomy supporters and Güzel (1995, 143) underline, contrary to previous methods many of the states currently perform 'natural assimilation', along with various of different methods, policies to permanently integrate and assimilate stateless minorities, making their political status claims irrelevant over the long run. As a result of this aim, concerns of minorities are heightened, pushing them to fight recognition and protection of their identity (Song 2007). These arguments in the literature provide a valid context for democratic autonomy supporters' status demand. In spite of the argument that the "status quo" which denies the Kurdish identity cannot be sustained in current conditions (Barkey and Fuller 1998, 184), İsmail Beşikçi argues assimilation against the Kurdish ethnic identity is still effective, but may not be implemented by old methods, because Kurds remain without constitutional recognition. As a result, he says, there are no legal steps in place to protect Kurds' ethnic identity because they are not acknowledged as a separate ethno-national group from the Turks (Beşikçi 2013). Turkish nationalists and Turkish military forces' tough stance against resolution of the Kurdish issue through granting Kurds' their collective rights and current government's-AKP reluctance or slowness to take some concrete steps for further democratization and performing of democratic packages they issued (Bahçeli and Noel 2013, 176–195), or briefly the states' one step forward two steps back policy in relation to the Kurdish issue (Walker 2013), herein, are some indicators makes democratic autonomy defenders' constitutional recognition of their ethnic identity (political status) demand more relevant.

Democratic autonomy advocates' political status demand is more significant and relevant when considering the fragmented social structure of the Kurds (existence of internal minorities). Chapter Four revealed majority of the Kurdish internal minority groups, Alevi and Zaza, believe their identities have been assimilated within the Turkish and Kurdish identities and to preclude this from continuing they demand for a status. In this regard, they considered democratic autonomy as the most applicable model for obtaining a status within the Kurdish identity and with the new-found power to form autonomous regions concerns will subside. Kurdish internal minorities mentioned concern(s) and status demand are common for many internal minorities' cases. Although many of the minorities include different separate identities, namely internal minorities (minorities within minorities), internal minorities demands and concerns are usually overlooked. As minorities became new dominant groups (in the region they rule) concerns of internal minorities grew because many of the minority groups could withhold their power from internal minority groups (Moore 2005). Remembering contribution of the "collective fears of the future" in ethnic tension (Lake and Rotchild 1996, 41), internal minorities concerns could cause to conflict within minority. Taking Kurds' fragmented structure and internal minorities' anxieties, in particular the tension between major identity Sunni Kurds and minor identity Alevi (See Chapter Three), in this light, applying of democratic autonomy to the entire Turkey makes it an appropriate political model because of its decentralized structure which allows for (creation of) local autonomous regions. This could remove Kurdish internal minorities concerns and prevent taking place of tension between various Kurdish groups.

Moreover, the divided structure of the Kurds and physical dispersion, as the founder of democratic autonomy model Abdullah Öcalan states, makes creation of territorial political models rather difficult (Öcalan 1999, 78). Herein, John McGarry and Margaret Moore's view that "non-territorial autonomy is useful for national minorities that are too dispersed or few in number to exercise or to aspire to territorial autonomy" (McGarry and Moore 2005, 71), further supports democratic autonomy exponents' demand for their constitutional recognition without reference to territorial political

models. In simple terms, this means, constitutional acknowledgement of national minorities' status through non-territorial political models.

On another note, although democratic autonomy makes strong emphases on the term nation (national status), as explained in Chapter One, it is mainly a definition of 'democratic nation'. The main reason for formulating nation as 'democratic nation' within the context of democratic autonomy is because this model differentiated 'democratic nation' from the existed *nation* concept(s) since the latter consider *ethnicity* and *territory* as base. Democratic autonomy's refusal of ethnicity and territory, as will be argued following, clashes with the relevant nation understandings, raising questions to the model itself, particularly on its reliability and practicability.

The concept of "democratic nation" has not yet been accepted in broad sense in literature nor has it been properly conceptualized because nation in a broad sense as Van Den Berghe (2005, 115) states is a territorial political organization, more clearly, it is a "politicized ethnicity". The relations between territory and nation "naturalizes the linkage between blood and soil" (Kaiser 2004, 230), two factors *insignificant* in democratic autonomy's 'democratic nation' conceptualization which mainly stresses language, culture and history (Bilim Aydinlanma Komitesi 2009, 103). In addition, as Schulze (2005, 195) notes, nation shares most common points with state. Nation, in other words, usually has inclinations to find its identity in a state form (Bruer 2010, 29–30; Weber 2004, 43). That is also the point which differentiates democratic autonomy defenders' perception of national status from territorial political model supporters' understanding because democratic autonomy does not consider political status specifically for a particular region or to create a state. Therefore, although democratic autonomy makes strong emphasis on the idea of nation and demand for a national status, it does not provide clarity on how it will gain these demands without regarding the main components of nation; ethnicity and territory.

Apart from ambiguity on its conceptualization, as the research revealed, the idea of 'democratic nation' is also one of the main reasons for democratic autonomy exponents to refuse territorial political models because these models, as highlighted

earlier, deem ethnicity and territory as the main factors in their structure. To democratic autonomy advocates (See Chapter Four), territorial models themselves, especially nation-state, are the main sources for conflict, mostly since these models prioritize and develop a particular ethnicity and territory.

The objection of nation-state in democratic autonomy is relevant to some extent, particularly the idea nation-state itself is the main source of conflict and it is in decline. Since the idea of nation-state was introduced, particularly its intention to provide and maintain 'political loyalty' of its (all) citizens, they have become the basis of trouble in many ethnic, religious or national minorities (Waller and Linklater 2003). In most cases, nation-states developed over a single ethnicity (or nation) (Duncan, Jancar-Webster, and Switky 2009, 65) and mostly refusal of ethnic minorities' demands. Nation-states' oppressive and homogenization aimed approach to ethnic minorities resulted with massive destruction for most societies (Arendt 1973). This, "to create a nation-state or to protect it", brought about the question of "legitimacy" of nation-state (Canefe 2007, 4). Development of "supranational governance", "globalization", "national territorial fragmentation" "political apathy" and "lifestyle" are also certain factors further raise question on the idea of nation-state (King and Kendall 2004, 3-6). Among them development of "supranational organizations", such as creation of the EU, demonstrates ways individuals cut across their national boundaries (McGray and O'leary 1996, 336–337) and globalizations raised even more queries on the concept of nation-state. For instance, improvement of globalization in the areas of social, politics, culture, and economy not only highlights boundaries being exceeded but it also shows nation-state does not fulfil their citizens' needs considerably (Gülalp 2006b). To put simply, people's needs intersect the nation-states' boundaries, therefore, the fact of nation-state became a fundamental topic of discussions (Castless et al. 1996, 359–361).

These outline supports democratic autonomy proponent's hypothesis that it will not be of benefit for Kurds to draw territories around them (creation of a Kurdish state) while the model of nation-state is not capable to meet its citizens all needs and it is in decline. However, it is not certain nation-state is at the stage of annihilation or

dramatically decreasing. It is true that nation state is more argued than before, but the idea of nation-state is still powerful in many societies (Lewellen 2011, 278–279). "Despite all its shortcomings, the nation-state has shown amazing resilience" (Drucker 1997, 159), and it is still the main and powerful actor in international relations (Nester 2010, 30). Moreover, many of the stateless nations continue to look for creation of their own state (Ibid.). This contradicts the democratic autonomy followers' argument that national boundaries, and as a model, nation-states are in a 'sharp' decline.

8.2 Analysis of the Findings on Demand for the Cultural Rights Model

The research findings illustrated that gaining basic cultural rights means Kurds are no longer restrained and have respect for their cultural values and ethnic identity, which in the last century they have been without. Acknowledgment of cultural rights in view of this, therefore, is obligatory in removing Kurds' mistrust toward the state and strengthening integration and common affinities between the Turks and Kurds, further supporting the union of Turkey.

Granting minorities their cultural rights are relatively supported highlighting the host country's respect for their identity. It, therefore, means the states which rule minorities recognize their differences (Stavenhagen 2013) and do not have any intention of implementing assimilation that seek to dissolve minorities' or different groups' identity in a major group (Gordon 1964; Alba and Nee 1997). Granting of cultural rights herein could work in removing ethnic minorities' concerns and mistrust of the host state; accordingly, it can further provides integration of minorities to major group, consequently strengthening the state's unity (Kirişçi and Winrow 1997, 239; Efeğil; 2011). Integration, which has a "positive perception of ethnic differences" (Brochmann 2003, 4), therefore, is significant in developing relations between minority and major group because it aims to provide further dialog between both groups and provides minority groups' attachments to the host country while maintaining their own values (Maliepaard, Lubbers, and Gijssberts 2010). Intermarriages (Kalmijn 1998), education, (Iadicola 1981, 193; Gijssberts and Dagevos 2007, 807), demand for "highest positions" and reach all resources (Cook 2003, 91), or minorities' predisposition to dominant group

assimilation at the individual level in order to also use benefits provided to dominant groups (Kónya 2005) are some of the key dynamics which have an influence on the integration process. Taking contribution of integration in attachment of minorities to host society and relatedly the idea of unity, granting minorities their cultural rights acquires more importance since this re-establishes minorities' trust to host state.

Relating the context provided above to the Kurdish case and as underlined by cultural rights defenders in Chapter Five, there is a massive integration between the Kurds and Turks. Currently, a high number of Kurds have been integrated through various methods in Turkey (Akyol 2007), for example, intermarriages (between Kurds and Turks) have contributed greatly to the Kurds' integration with the Turks. Despite the lack of specific statistics, it is estimated that there is roughly 3.5 million mixed Turkish and Kurdish population as a result of intermarriages (KONDA 2011, 91). Migration, particularly Kurds' demographic dissemination across Turkey, is also one of the crucial dynamics which has contributed to their integration. Substantial numbers of the Kurdish population do not presently reside in their traditional homeland- most live in western parts of Turkey as well as several other countries (Sirkeci 2000, 156–161; Hassanpour, Skutnabb-Kangas, and Chyet 1996, 369). Kurds' physical dispersion, as underlined by Erdal Gezik, made it hugely difficult for them to practice and develop their ethno-cultural values, but also drove them to adopt the major group's identity. This, as he underlines, further intensified the social and political gap between various Kurdish groups such as between Alevi and Sunni Kurds (Gezik 2012, 102). Thus, migration of almost half of the Kurds from their homeland, but particularly their “dispersed settlement”³¹² across Turkey, contribute further to their interaction and integration with Turkey (Karlsson 2008, 161). In light of this, as Akyol (2007) states, territorial models could potentially cause a devastation to social, cultural and economic structures of both Kurds and Turks. These models, along with democratic autonomy as Efegil (2011, 36) underlines could also instigate a “political conflict” and “internal armed fighting” in general in Turkey but particularly among the Kurds.

³¹² For further information on contribution of ‘dispersed settlement’ in integration and assimilation of minorities see; (van der Laan Bouma-Doff 2007).

The discussion provided above supports the cultural rights defenders' argument that a considerable number of the Kurds integrated with the State, and by gaining their cultural rights previous suspicious of the state because of its assimilation approach in the past will be eradicated. Granting of cultural rights in a sense has the potential to restore relations between the Kurds and Turks, and further attaches the Kurds to the state (Türkmen 2009). Granting Kurds' cultural rights will re-construct their trust toward the state, which heightens the union of Kurds and Turks (Akyol 2007; Pamak 2005). In agreement with this idea, an eminent journalist familiar with the Kurdish issue and Middle East, Cengiz Çandar, suggests Kurds can refrain from their independency claims and struggle for forming their own state when they feel the Turkish state as their own. For this to transpire, he recommends that the states that have political power over the Kurds should alter their political mentality since these states still refuse to acknowledge the Kurdish identity in anyway (Çandar 2013, 60). Otherwise, being deprived of recognition and representation in a state with their own values and being restricted to reach all resources may socially and politically distance minorities from the state (Nimni 2009).

Although there evidence illustrating granting minorities their cultural rights protects their values to some extent, two counter questions against this have been raised. The first, also highlighted by Kurds who demand for territorial models and democratic autonomy, questions whether cultural rights can satisfy politicized ethnic minorities over the long run (Kirişçi and Winrow 1997, 39). This is a significant point considering the territorial character, and politicization and *ethnicization* of Kurdish identity. As addressed in chapter two, territory and ethnicity are two of the main constituents of the Kurdish identity and were previously influential in shaping their political demands. Consequently, as illustrated, cultural rights can satisfy some Kurds, however, these rights may not be sufficient to satisfy the identity demands of a considerable numbers of the Kurds, considering the reasons explained in analysis part and the Kurds current territorial political achievements in the Middle East and their implications on the Kurds in Turkey (Taşpınar and Tol 2014). The second question raised against the cultural rights model is, how can cultural rights be adequate enough to protect or prevent assimilation of the

minorities' identity in the high level integration between major and minority groups, if they are not granted with the collective rights that does not find *more* place in cultural rights granting model? As explained in Chapter One the idea of cultural rights is mostly regarded giving of these rights at the individual level. Looking at the point in the Kurdish case, the political parties AKP and CHP, which include the Kurds advocate for granting of their cultural rights, also consider recognition of these rights at the individual level (See Chapter Five). Acknowledging of Kurds their cultural rights at the individual level, however, as some segments of the Kurds argue, could not prevent assimilation of the Kurdish ethnic identify considering the Kurds physical dispersal and fragmented structure, and high level of interaction and integration between the Kurds and Turks. Because, as territorial political models (See Chapter Six and Seven) and democratic autonomy adherents (See Chapter Four) highlighted, although integration on the one hand contributes to developing relations between the Kurds and Turks and heightening the Kurds' attachment to the state, on the other hand, assimilation of Kurdish identity over time is very likely. More clearly, close links between the Kurds, but particularly migrated Kurds, and Turks has the potential to develop over time to Kurds' assimilation in Turkey. Majority of these Kurds' ethnic identity is blurred daily and they begin to identify themselves through the major groups' values (Tan 2009, 539–540; Rubin 2003, 318). In support of this, Altan Tan refers to intermarriages and explains that most of the children born from these marriages cannot speak the Kurdish language and associate themselves more with Turkish culture and identity. This is considered as a clear indication of Kurdish identity assimilation in Turkish identity (Tan 2009, 539). In light of this, as research findings revealed, granting Kurds their cultural rights could heighten to some extent their trust to the state, thus, contributing to the idea of unity between the Kurds and Turks. However, as noted earlier, due the Kurds' demographic distribution and strong association and interaction with the Turks, granting them their cultural rights only (at the individual level) may not halt their identity from dissolving in the major group's identity. Integration herein may lead to assimilation of the Kurdish identity in the long-term. For instance, mentioning on contribution of modernization and urbanizations in Kurds' integration and also assimilation in Turkey Naci Kutlay states that with the development

of integration most Kurds were left to worship Shafii mezhep, which was one of the factors involved in determining Kurdish identity and recognized as a symbol for identifying Kurds during the Ottoman Empire. Instead they turned to Hanefi mezhep, which is widespread in Muslim Turkish descents (Kutlay 2012b, 10–11). Religion, thus, becomes the essential component for identification and overrides ethnicity in some Kurds. Taking issue in that vein, granting of the Kurds their cultural rights at the individual level, according to Cuma Çiçek means assimilation of the Kurdish identity in the long run (C. Çiçek 2011, 24). This is also the reason why territorial models and democratic autonomy advocates reject the idea of granting the Kurds only their cultural rights.

Along with socio-cultural integration, as empirical finding of the research showed, another rationale for refusing territorial political models and considering cultural rights as an alternative model is the priority given to religious identity (Sunni and Alevi identity) over ethnicity, the latter being the basis of territorial political models, among the Kurds demand for cultural rights.

Religion, which has many different definitions and understandings, has an enormous influence on social and political relations in society (Woodhead 2011). For instance, religion impacts on ethnic identity, especially in cases consisting of diverse religions or beliefs (Enloe 1996). In such circumstances, despite the competition between ethnicity and religion strong alliances can develop with both identities overlapping one another. With other words, religion “could provide a basis for group formation and for the mobilisation of these groups for social and political conflict and co-operation” (Rex 1993, 19). Religion, thus, can have an effect on “ethnic and individual self-definition”(William Safran and Liu 2012, 273) and could be one of the prominent ethnic identity making component (Hammond and Warner 1993, 59). Therefore, given the affiliations between religion and ethnic identity in this sense, for instance, Geertz (1963 cited in Rex 1993, 18) considers religion as a primordial factor, which he states, can have an impact on establishing group consciousness among the group members and contribute to “group formation”. This outline shows that religion could become “a defining feature

of nation” (Veer 1999, 19). The function of religion on Kurds in the nineteenth century, as explained in Chapter Four, clearly proves this idea. Because due to the rivalry and dispute between the Kurds (Muslim) and Armenians (Christian), religion was one of the main Kurdish identity making components during that time.

Religion, however, may not have the same influence on ethno-national identity in all cases, particularly in cases where religion is shared. In such cases, as Christiano, Swatos JR. and Kivisto highlight, the role of religion is seen as a supra-identity bringing distinct ethnic groups together. In other words, having a distinct ethnicity does not crosscut religious affiliations since religion advances as a common identity of all the different ethnic groups, such as consideration of religious identity over ethnicity in many of the Middle Eastern ethnic groups in the United States of America. More clearly, social and political cooperation among similar religious groups overlap ethnic separations under the umbrella of religion (Christiano, Swatos JR, and Kivisto 2008, 160). “Religion in this pattern extends beyond ethnicity, reversing the previous pattern, and religious identification can be claimed without claiming the ethnic identification” (Hammond and Warner 1993, 59). Religion under these conditions may be instrumental in dissolving ethnic identity boundaries, with other saying “religious homogeneity may not be the *sine qua non* of ethnic boundary maintenance” (Enloe 1996, 202), as it has happened with some Kurds, which is also asserted by federalism proponents, in Turkey. Majority of the Sunni Kurds demand for their cultural rights, as discovered in Chapter Five, currently identify themselves through their religious identity-with their ethnicity carrying second importance. Religion herein as majority of the Kurds and Turks share the same belief (majorly Sunni identity) further provides interaction and integration between two communities. Granting of cultural rights, as noted earlier, here heightens religious fellowship, in other words, removes Kurds’ concerns and reinforces ties with the Turks substantially (Pamak 2005). To highlight importance of religion between both communities, for instance, Hamza Turkmen states that the Turks and Kurds have to deal with the Kurdish issue through an *Ummah* understanding (Türkmen 2009). More clearly, religion is prioritized over ethnicity, which was happened with some Kurdish groups in past. For instance, although the Kurds were presented with opportunities to create their

own state they opposed in order to retain the religion based unity between the Turkish and Kurdish communities, with other saying, they prioritized their religion instead of their fight for ethnic or national identity (Özer 2009, 376–381; Tan 2009, 536).

Similar to some Sunni Kurds, some Kurdish Alevi also prioritize their religious identity (Alevism) over ethnicity. There are two dynamics which influence these Kurdish Alevi's preference of their belief-Alevism over their ethnicity. The first is the previous hostility between the Sunni and Alevi Kurds. The in-group conflict and tension between Alevi and Sunni Kurds in the past remain alive for (in) the many of Kurdish Alevi's 'collective memory'³¹³. For instance, Sunni Kurds' indifferent attitudes of Kurdish Alevi's Kocgiri revolt in 1920 and Dersim insurrection in 1938 (Keiser 2003, 184), and Alevi distance to Sunni Kurds' rebellion of Sheik Said in 1925 (Leezenberg 2003, 201) clearly indicate the tension and the political gap which emerged between the two groups. Because of this tension and gap in social and political ideals, the Kurdish Alevi's trust for the Sunni Kurds was damaged and remains as so. In other words, their 'collective memory' contributes to their growing suspicions of the Sunni Kurds. Consequently, Alevi's suffering, their 'collective memory' or historical consciousness "constitutes the background of Alevi identity politics" (Ulusoy 2011, 416). The second and most important condition which contributed to them prioritizing Alevism over ethnicity, as the data obtained from the research indicated, is the belief that political Islam intensified in Turkey and rapprochement between the Sunni Kurds and Turks through a Sunni identity is underway. Their fear of Sunni identity created a platform which pushed a substantial number of Kurdish Alevi to prioritize their religious identity, Alevism, over their ethno-national identity and define themselves as Alevi (Leezenberg 2003, 203–204). Some Kurdish Alevi, therefore, primarily list their religious identity, Alevism, (Natali 2009, 174), and were determined to have all Alevi in Turkey. This is because their safety and protection of their Alevi identity is dependent on Alevi collectively gathering in Turkey. *Alevism*, thus, has become a primary and supra identity approaches the Kurdish Alevi to the Turkish descendant Alevi rather than Sunni Kurds (Arakelova 1999, 399). In that

³¹³ Collective memory is defined by Halbwachs (1992) as a socially constructed fact that emerges through people's collective past experiences.

sense, “emergence of a wider Alevi Identity transcending the various Alevi communities, the efforts to reconstruct Alevi belief and ritual at the supra-level, and discourse on Alevis as a type of ethnicity” (van Bruinessen 2006, 40). The point highlighted in van Bruinessen clearly shows some Kurdish Alevis, mostly who gather around CHP, supersede their ethnicity with Alevisim. This, as the research highlighted, contributes to refusal of territorial models because they take ethnicity as base. Consequently, territorial political models means supremacy of the Sunni Kurdish identity since the Sunni Kurds consists the majority and politically are more powerful in the Kurds, among these Kurdish Alevis. The historical background provided in Chapter Three and discussion made in Chapter Five, considering along with raising of some radical Islamic groups, for instance Hezbollah, among the some Sunni Kurds, supports these Alevis argument(s) noticeably.

8.3 Analysis of the Findings on Demand for the Federalism Model

Chapter six revealed four causes in development of federalism demand in the Kurds who advocate the model: the fear of being assimilated through religion, demand for construction of equality between two nations - the Kurds and Turks, the idea that federalism will resolve ethnic tension and right of power for their economic resources.

To begin with the first, religion has the power to interact and affect politics at most levels. The level of influence played by religion and the subsequent changes it generates differ with each case. İlder Turan analyses the effect of religion on ‘political culture’ in the case of Turkey. His research looks at four aspects as a way of categorizing the changes - “identification of political community”, “provision of political legitimacy”, “construction of political ideologies”, and lastly, “shaping of political values and wording/styles”. He states the four conditions affected Turkish ‘political culture’ at different degrees over time (Turan 1991). Religion, in this regard, has played an influential role in the social and political lives of the Kurds. And so, religion has always been one of the determinative powers in the “historical development” of the Kurds (Nikitin 1994, 357), and in this context it has also been significant in building relations between the Kurds and Turks (Akyol 2007, 233-235).

Nonetheless, federalism supporters claimed that a common religion with the Turks and the power of religious identity amongst the Kurds also presented an opportunity to the state to use in integrating the Kurds with the state. Aware of the power of religion on Kurds, Houston (2001, 85) explains the Turkish Republic used religion “in the state’s nation-building project” and for (Shakland (1999, 44) as a “social order” in controlling society particularly by Turkish Director of Religious Affairs (TDRA) (Diyanet Isleri Baskanligi). In support of this, İhsan Yılmaz, for instance, states that Republic used TDRA as an instrument to take religion under the tough control of the state, in line with their aim to create ‘Laic’, ‘Kemalist’, ‘Sunni Muslim’ and ‘Turks’ (Laik, Atatürkçü, Sunni Müslüman ve Türk) nation (Yılmaz 2013).

Along with support to the claim that the state used religion for the purpose to take citizens under its control and creation of a homogeneous national identity, federalism exponents also stated that Turkish Islamists too used religion in line with their ‘Turkish Islamist Synthesis’ creation project (See Chapter Five). Based on the empirical findings of the research, federalism advocates stated that there is a close interaction between religion and Turkish nationalism in Turkey. Mentioning on that point Parla (1993, 207–210) notes, in order to harmonize religion with nationalism a “religious nationalism” (*dinci bir milliyetçilik*) understanding was developed in Turkey. Creation of such harmonization (or “hybridization” of religion with nationalism) has been one of the main aim of Turkish conservative parties, for example in RP and AKP to achieve idea of unity in nation members (Tuğul 2010, 72), which, as argued in Chapter Five has been achieved among some Kurds. Many of these Kurds takes their religious identity as base in shaping of their social and political associations. Religion in that sense has contributed in attachment of the Kurds in the major identity. In this process, with reference to Mustafa Peköz, religious communities and tariqas have a position in the integration of the Kurds in Turkish identity (Pekoz 2009, 406–410). According to another research conducted by Strategic Researches Centre (Stratejik Arastirmalar Merkezi) more than thirty per cent of the Kurds in regions containing mostly Kurds have a connection with tariqas (cited from Kırmızı and Bölme (2009, 116). Reporting on the same point, Musafa Peköz states it is estimated that about seventeen per cent of the Kurdish population is dedicated in

following any religious community across Turkey (Peköz 2009, 407). Majority of these Kurds prioritize their religious identity, and as argued in chapter five, do not stress on their ethnicity. In their religion based attachment, as highlighted by federalism defenders and also Houston (2001), some Turkish Islamists and the state itself actively took part. This supports federalism advocates' claim, as Malmîsanij (1991, 13) also highlights, that the state used religion to suppress Kurds' views on the Kurdish national identity and struggle and was successful to some extent.

Despite using religion in line with this aim, generalizations on the results this had cannot be made. As highlighted above, using religion for creating close ties between the Kurds and the state has been effective with some Kurds. However, not all Kurds have been swayed. Herein it is applicable to underline that for the Kurds who are aware of their ethno-national identity, such as among the Kurds have connection with the Zehra and Med-Zehra communities and Hûda-Par, religion does not have an influence on their integration with the state or assimilation. In these Kurds, "ethnicity and religion in different forms have played a significant role in the formation of Kurdish identity and in their overlap, they appear to have strengthened one another" (Atacan 2001, 138). That is also one of the powerful reasons behind the demand for territorial political models (Ibid., 138) and reinforcing cleavage. Zeki Sarıgöl's informative research also supports this idea. According to Zeki Sarıgöl, the hypothesis that religious consciousness will decrease ethno-national identity does not work in the Kurdish case. To Sarıgöl, religious consciousness does not obstruct the increase of ethno-national identity and tendencies among the Kurds (Sarıgöl 2010, 542–543). Christopher Houston's following words also further support this argument; "for Kurdish Islamism Islamic fraternity involves not merely the acceptance of, but active support for, the protection of ethnic difference, not its cancellations in some meta-Islamic identity" (Houston 2001, 178). Taking the issue in this vein, although religion has contributed to the integration and assimilation of some Kurds in Turkish identity, it has not influenced all of the Kurdish communities in a similar way or at least in those Kurds who are aware of their ethno-national identity and who demand for territorial political models. The reason for this is as discussion presented in Chapter Five indicated has a close relationship with the development of ethnic

awareness and subsequent national consciousness in these Kurds. Ethnicization of Kurdish identity (*Kurdishness*), in these Kurds, contributed to the development of Kurdish national identity despite the states' efforts to deter this. In that regard, the Kurds who demand for territorial political models make emphasis on their national character and its close interaction with territory. In other words, in these Kurds, Kurdish national consciousness reached a point that could only be satisfied by either gaining their independence or territorial autonomy of their homeland. These Kurds identify the Kurds as a territorial nation and highlight that by self-ruling their territory Kurds can impede assimilation of their nation, specifically given the ways religion was used by the state. Becoming a territorial nation herein further strengthened Kurdish national identity and raised the demand for a territorial political change; in this case federalism, which offers them protection under any conditions.

The second idea which contributed to federalism demand, as noted earlier, is demand for equality between the Kurds and Turks so they are two equal nations in every respect. As the research outcomes revealed, for federalism exponents the federalism model is the possible way to obtain opportunities to protect the Kurdish identity from dissolving and constructing equality between the Kurds and Turks in all aspects. Looking at the issue in that sense, federalism as largely argued in Chapter One aims to protect minorities' identity through "self-rule" principle of the model (Elazar 2006). Federalism in that sense could well function and be useful mostly for the minorities which concentrated on a specific region (Kirişçi and Winrow 1997, 219). Therefore, as the model essentially considers a specific region, it may not successfully in the ethnically intermingled cases (Ibid., 228) and preclude the dissolving of migrated individuals' (ethnic minority members) identity. In this light, due to dramatic alterations to Kurds' demographic structure federalism could fail, comparing with certain cases such as Basque (Eryıldız 2012), to meet migrated Kurds' concerns regarding disbanding of their identity to major groups and may not be capable of constructing equality between the Kurds and Turks.

As noted above, the idea that federalism can accommodate ethnic tension between the Kurds and Turks and put an end to the heightened discrimination against the Kurds were another related reasons which caused demand for federalism. Although no ethnic conflict between the Kurds and Turks at the community level has been noted, with conflict intensifying between the PKK and state security forces, an “ethnic felicity” (etnik hoşnutsluk) has been in raise between the Turks and Kurds (Kurubaş 2008, 32) and associations between the two communities has begun to deteriorate. With tensions progressing, the social and emotional distance of the two groups further increased and, consequently, discrimination against the Kurds has escalated (MAZLUM-DER 2008, 77–123; Gambetti 2007). KONDA’s research conducted in 2011 provides illustrative data on the growing social and cultural distance between the Kurds and Turks. Findings reveal 57.6% of Turks do not want to have a Kurdish spouse, 53.5% do not want to have a Kurdish business partner and 47.4% do not want any Kurdish neighbours. On the other hand, similar questions to the Kurds yielded relatively smaller percentages; 26.4% of the Kurds do not want to have a Turkish bride, 24.8% do not want a Turkish business partner and 22.1 % do not want a Turkish neighbour (KONDA 2011, 106). Taking into account results of the KONDA research and the local level ethnic tension already in place particularly with the migrant Kurds in western regions of Turkey (Saraçoğlu 2010), such as in Inegöl and Ayvalık districts of the city of Bursa, there is a high risk for existing tensions advancing to an ethnic tension in Turkey (IHD Araştırma Raporu 2010). Herein, Kurds’ disputable history with the state as a result of their ethnic identity being denied has created a suitable ground for such a conflict to emerge (Kirişçi and Winrow 1997). Accordingly, considering the contribution of “memory” in the development of ethnic conflict (Cairns and Roe 2003, 4), increased ethnic dispute in Turkey in general but more importantly the intense discrimination against the Kurds as H. Bozarslan (2004b, 79) reiterates has the potential to turn tensions between Kurds and Turks into an ethnic conflict, or “civil war”, at the community level.

Reflecting on the aforementioned, as argued in detail in Chapter One, federalism is highly regarded as a conflict resolution model. Federalism has a determinant role in resolving of conflict, which mostly emerges because of “conjunction of shared

grievances with a strong sense of group identity and common interests” (Gurr 1993, 124), “economic inequalities” (Malesevic 2006, 34), “security dilemma” (Jesse and Williams 2011, 46), stress on territoriality (Coakley 2003), or “territorial cleavages” (Amoretti 2004), between minorities and host state (Elazar 2006). The main principles of federalism - “power-sharing” based on “share-rule” and “self-rule” in other words, “diversity in unity” (Ibid. 2006) and certain of its other principles- are effective in accommodating tension between central and local units (Moots 2009). For instance, Spain and UK with a long history of tension between minorities and the state or Belgium with a dispute between Walloons and Flemings, decreased this tension and either removed or at least delayed secessionist leanings among minorities following the transition to certain types of federalism (Marchildon 2009). This discussion supports federalism demanders’ assertion that federalism can halt the tension between the Kurds and Turks to a substantial degree.

Despite the success of federalism in resolving ethnic tension between the minority and state in certain cases, it cannot be said this is the case for all. There are also examples where federalism has failed to resolve ethnic issues and remove separatist inclination among minorities (Kumar 2007). For instance, despite minorities’ considerable autonomy, Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Slovakia federal cases were collapsed and currently in some federal cases tension continue such as Quebec in Canada (Kirişçi and Winrow 1997, 227-228) and the Kurds in Iraq. For instance, the Kurds in Iraq looking for creation of their own state (Rafaat 2007). Both the successes and failures of federalism in settling ethnic tension, even though federalism is not always effective in resolving all ethnic tensions, the certainty in most cases is that it has either dealt with these disputes or at least reduced them, for example as is the case in India, Belgium, Britain and Spain (Conversi 2000; Marchildon 2009).

The final causes behind demand for federalism was the model supporters’ demand for having power on their economic affairs because they claim the state has either consciously prevented economic development of their regions or it cannot successfully manage the Kurds’ economic resources. Kurdish regions in the Middle East in general,

but in particular in Turkey, have rich natural resources (Izady 2004, 389–412). Despite this fact, the Kurdish regions in Turkey remain the poorest districts.³¹⁴ The reasons behind this are varied, but one to note, as McDowall (2004, 447) explains, the state did not take any serious steps in improving the economic structure of the region. Consequently, per capita income of the Kurds in the region is proportionally low. Secondly, the state could not successfully manage the mostly Kurds located regions' economic sources, which further worsened as the battle between the PKK and state military forces developed (Yildiz 2006, 220–228). Taking into account minorities economic deprivations based on concerns, federalism through “self-rule” and “shared rule” grants federal governments the right of power over their regions in most aspects (Maiz 2000, 53). And so, taking federalism in a fiscal sense central state mostly takes responsibility for managing “macro economic stabilization and income distribution”, while federal regions have power to provide “goods and services” for their own population (Majocchi 2009, 425). Such power enables federal regions to independently manage their economic sources and “carry the weight of their own financial decisions” (Maiz 2000, 56), which could remove ethno-national minorities' concerns relating to their resources and grievances of economic deprivation. Federalism, therefore, could run to satisfy minorities in an economic sense. Federalism in that sense could remove Kurds' concerns and contribute to their economic development.

8.4 Analysis of the Findings on Demand for the an Independent Nation- State

Model Demand

Based on the findings of the research independence demanders argued because the Kurds were politically ruled by Turkey against their will, and because the state's approach to the Kurds has always rested on denial, physical oppression and forced migration, the creation of a united Kurdish state is the only way their safety consideration can be removed and they will be satisfied. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria's (Islamic State-IS/IS) current assaults on the Kurds in the Middle East in that sense further raised

³¹⁴ See, Socio-Economic Development of the Provinces and Regions' Research (SEGE (2011) Results 2013, 67–84)

their safety considerations and became a reason to justify their demand for independence, because statelessness means defencelessness in all respects for these Kurds. In this regard, as revealed in chapter seven, becoming a particular territory concentrated nation (territorial nation), along with demographic weight, and being under the risk of assimilation and physical oppression are two key linked motives which breed demand for ‘self-determination’³¹⁵ among these Kurds.

³¹⁵ Self-determination, which gained attention following the second world war (Crawford 2006, 112), is one of the most highly disputed issues in international relations at the moment. Despite numerous researches as well as being the current topic of international covenants, there is still no agreement on how and under what conditions should national groups be entitled right of self-determination (Xanthaki 2005). For example, Kirişçi and Winrow (1997, 63) emphasise the versatility of self-determination by presenting the various forms it can be applied; as federalism, recognition of groups’ rights in multicultural cases, construction of a common society, secession from a host country in order to join a mother or new country and creation of a new state. Taking issue from that sense the right of self-determination in broad terms is about granting minorities status. Gaining this status with self-determination principles, provides people the right of free will and decision on their future, that means independence (Weller 2009) or briefly as Crawford (2006, 107) cites its is “right to be a state”. Daniel Philpott herein associates the right of self-determination directly with idea of independence; either through with creation of an independent state or utilizing from large amount of power through federalism (Philpott 1998, 81). Mentioning on this point, United Nation Charter (UNC) referred to self-determination as the “right of peoples to determine their internal political status” (Xanthaki 2005, 16). The following extract from the Charter of the United Nations (CUN) outlines the purpose of organization regarding entitlement of peoples’ self-determination; “to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples” (Charter of United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice 1945; Article 1 (2); see also Article 55). In addition, UNC clearly emphasises peoples’ self-determination rights but also includes certain ambiguous points. First of all, the Charter does not specify how and under which conditions the right would be applied. For instance, the current crisis in Crimea raised questions yet again in International Relations regarding this obscurity. To recap, with intensified unrest in Ukraine, Crimea areas of Ukraine underwent a referendum with 95.5% of participants voting for independence from Ukraine and union with Russia (BBC News March 16, 2014). With the referendum in place and declaration of independence, international powers were divided in opinion. While Russia recognises Crimea’s independence declaration, the EU, including Turkey, and US consider the referendum as a violation of International law and discarded the results. Secondly, as argued in Moltchanova (2009, 2) there is a certain speculation in the UNC’s broad and vague use of ‘people’ when referring to self-determination. The term can relate to various groups of individuals; minority, nation, ethnic or national groups. Despite that, as Patricia Carley highlights, with a surge in ethnic conflicts in many parts of the regions, International Relations discussions turn to the option of entitling some minority groups with self-determination. Subsequent to decolonization process, the right of self-determination was mostly perceived as a right of independent statehood for distinct ethno-national groups (Carley 1995, V). The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (*ICESCR*) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (*ICCPR*), are two significant documents that accurately mention right of self-determination. The shared article (1) of both covenants discusses self-determination;

Article 1 (1). All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right, they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development. Article 1 (3). The States Parties to the present Covenant, including those having responsibility for the administration of Non-Self-Governing and Trust Territories, shall promote the realization of the right of self-determination, and shall respect that right, in conformity with the provisions of the

Many scholars mention on the conditions which enable minorities to secede from the host country and gaining their right of self-determination. Allen Buchanan highlights the conditions which influenced the idea of secession in minorities. Buchanan states that if minorities are beset with “discriminatory redistribution” policy, they have right of secession from the host country. Based on this, Buchanan points out that “discriminatory redistribution” can occur in three different forms; if the state runs an economy policy in favour of a particular group but at the disadvantage of others, if a minority’s identity, culture, life-style or other values are under risk of extinction, and finally if the state is unable to protect minorities from internal and external attacks (Buchanan 1991, 38–45). In addition, Herber C. Kelman notes facing a physical assault, assimilation, annihilation, violation or many other forms of discrimination create the means for minority groups to claim secession and being entitled with the right of self-determination. To Kelman under the mentioned conditions the right of secession could be regarded but, with also considering those groups (mostly the host state) that will be effected from this decision (Kelman 1997). With reference to this, as highlights in David Miller, dominant groups’ intention to remove minorities’ identity and impose theirs creates a national state as an alternative avenue for minority groups (Miller 1995, 88). Apart from these conditions democratic autonomy supporters also regarded the claim that they have been living under the rule of Turkey without their will to justify their demand of independence. Vladimir I. Lenin here underlines that forcing a nation to be under the control of a state, he names it as ‘annexation’, creates legitimate ground for seeking secession and self-determination.

charter of the United Nations (ICCPR 1966; ICESCR 1966).

Friendly Relation Declaration (GAR 2625), an international document declared in 1970, is another and key document that also recognizes the right of independence through the principle of self-determination. Article 5 (7) offers a clear statement on people’s right of self-determination;

Nothing in the foregoing paragraphs shall be construed as authorizing or encouraging any action which would dismember or impair, totally or in part, the territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent states conducting themselves in compliance with the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples as described above and thus possessed of a government representing the whole people belonging to the territory without distinction as to race, creed or colour (Friendly Relations Declaration 1970 Article 5(7)).

Thus, to Lenin this nation has right to save its nation and free its territories from the state or those that forcibly rule it (Lenin 1998, 139–140).

The context provided above, particularly Buchanan's second and third conditions, are to some extent applicable to the Kurdish case in Turkey regarding their political history of the twentieth century, which was covered in Chapter Three. With the words of Thomas H. Eriksen, "the Kurds officially did not exist until 1991; they were officially labelled 'mountain Turks'" (Eriksen 1992, 326). As revealed in detail in Chapter Three Kurds were faced various kinds of oppression. For instance, Oral Çalışlar explains the conflict between the Kurdish national movement and the state security forces resulted in destruction of Kurds' demographic and even sociological structure. During these events the Turkish republic was either directly involved in some crimes or remained silent and did not offer Kurds protection (Çalışlar 2013, 30–36). With reference to this, Ismail Beşikçi asserts that the Republic sought to wipe out Kurds' political will and ethnic identity from history, and political authorities took to any means to achieve this (Besikçi 1990; 1992). David Miller's comparison between the Kurdish and Catalan case regarding the demand for independence herein rather illustrative. Although Miller does not consider creation of a Kurdish state the only way for solution of the Kurdish issue, he reveals that state's tough policies left the Kurds no other way except for independence when he compares Kurdish case with the Catalan case which did not face such a policy in Spain (D. Miller 1998, 66).

On the other hand, despite its denial policy of the Kurdish identity in the last century, the Turkish state has revised its approach to the Kurdish issue upon comparing the state's approach to the same matter in the last two decades. At present, there has been a substantial decrease in physical violence, forced migration or torture of the Kurds (K. Yıldız 2012, 153–158). These are significant developments which complicate Kurds' secession demand. However, the KCK operations³¹⁶, oppression on the Kurds political organizations, the 33 Kurdish individuals killed by Turkey's air forces in the Roboski district of Sirnak in 2011 (International Crisis Group 2012), the discrimination against the

³¹⁶ More than 5.000 Kurdish politicians were arrested over allegations that they have link with the PKK affiliated KCK organizations.

Kurds particularly in Turkey's metropolitans (MAZLUM-DER 2008), and the attacks occurring on the Kurds in Iraq³¹⁷ and Syria³¹⁸, who have close social, cultural, economic and political relations with the Kurds in Turkey, according to Ismail Beşikçi are justifiable reasons for Kurds' independence demand in light of theoretical framework provided above. Establishing a Kurdish nation-state, therefore, Ismail Besikci argues is the solitary choice for protecting the Kurdish ethno-national identity (Beşikçi 2013).

Along with their fear of assimilation but particularly safety considerations, being a territorial nation and demographic weight are also regarded as two other linked contributory factors in demand for secession and entitlement of right of national self-determination. As'ad Ghanem deems "territorial concentration" and "demographic weight", "internal cohesion", and "the quality of leadership" as three determinant "auxiliary variables" influence minorities' political demands (Ghanem 2012, 363). Due to the fragmentation in the Kurds' social (existence of internal minorities) and political structure, Ghanem's last two variables as revealed in chapter four and five prevented raising of demand for radical political models (such as federalism or independence). These two variables therefore cannot be considered as contributory factors in raising of radical (or territorial) political models among the Kurds. However, Ghanem's first variable, "territorial concentration" and "demographic weight" as stated previously has influence on intensification of the Kurds' political demands. They were considered as significant variable(s) for being recognized with right of national self-determination by independence supporters.

According to Ghanem, "territorial concentration" and "demographic weight" have an effect on the minorities degree of political demands. Ghanem argues historical

³¹⁷ The Iraqi Kurds have long fought against the Iraqi regime since Iraq's independence was established in 1921, with staggering costs to their physical, mental, economic and social state. Revolutions against the Iraqi state were common and civilians were constantly exposed to killings, torture, mass deportation, exile, and massacres by Iraqi regime (Yıldız 2004; Özer 2009, 343–357; McDowal 2004, 287–386).

³¹⁸ Like the Kurds in Iraq the Kurds in Syria also faced with oppression and discrimination by the state. For example, to destroy the homogenous structure of the Kurdish region forced migration policies were applied and Arab populations were located to the Kurdish districts with the Arab Belt Project accepted in 1963 (Ziadeh 2009; Yıldız 2005; Fuccaro 2012; Vanli 1992, 143–164).

links with a particular territory and its population density generates intensification of political demands and provides a greater advantage for ethno-national minorities to pressurise the host state to grant them their collective political rights (Ghanem 2012, 367). John Coakly also considers the ideas territory and the groups' size as two significant conditions influence minorities' political claims. With making comparisons between groups' "territorial concentration" and "ethnic cohesiveness of territory" Coakly categorizes minorities under four models; "the locally weak, territorially dispersed group", "the locally weak, territorially concentrated group", "the locally strong, territorially dispersed group", and "the locally strong, territorially concentrated group". Based on this classification, territorial concentration, especially in circumstances where the ethnic group is "locally strong", intensely influences ethnic minorities' political entitlements and has the potential to act as a dynamic factor in raising territorial political claims (Coakley 2003, 8–10). Ghanem's third model considerably matches with the Kurds current conditions because although they consist majority in their regions, a high number of the Kurds dispersed.

Ghanem and Coakley's suggestions provide us with a fundamental foundation to make further discussions on the independence demand of the Kurds in relation to the notion of territory since this, as argued in chapter seven, is not only a piece of land for these Kurds but a nation and state as well. In the opinions of Storey (2002, 109–110) populating on a particular area of land for long periods creates a strong attachment to it. He puts forward that this connection to the land is heightened by experiences which occur whilst on the land, especially if they are at the cost of the people. For example, war, death and suffering. With reference to this, Itzhak Galnoor suggests the existence of close bonds between territory and people establishes strong "emotional attachment" to territory. Territory, he adds, becomes part of an "individual and collective identity and, therefore, also of the nation" (Galnoor 1995, 9). "This in turn justifies their claim to exercise continuing political authority over that territory" (Miller 1998, 68). As the discussion outlined in chapter seven demonstrated, territories function in a similar way and are regarded as a main condition in Kurds gaining right of national self-determination when considered along with their demographic weight and safety consideration.

Becoming a territorial community and demographic weight, are, no doubt, significant objective conditions contribute in raising of demand for territorial independence. However, first its is not necessary to claim that every nation should have its own state or the idea of nation should be identified with a state (Kalaycı 2008, 91), second becoming a territorial national community and demographic weight are not sufficient conditions for causing an ethno-national group to demand its full independence. In addition, there two conditions remain to be met in order to further argue a minority group' right of self-determination. Miller (1998, 69) explains the first; ethnic groups' request for secession can be recognized if it is capable to act as a nation, and second capable to govern itself (practise power) on the territory it located. The point mentioned by Miller raises the question whether the Kurds are capable, primarily because chapter three clearly revealed Kurds' social structure does not only consist of the idea of nation and fragmented by their language and religion. More clearly, their social and political structure is rather fragmented (even some refuse to be identified within Kurdish ethnic identity such as some Zaza), therefore, can they act as a nation at all and due to their politically fragmented structure how will they be able to rule themselves? Tension between some Kurdish groups, for example between Alevi and Sunni sects, or as armed groups between PKK and Hezbollah and PKK and Villgae Guards, further makes this question relevant. These stipulations make the Kurds' demand for being entitled with the right of national self-determination rather problematic (Yilmaz and Akagündüz 2011).

Overall, the discussion provided suggests that some factors, for instance having high level of security consideration(s) taking into account the state's tough oppression in the past and current attacks over the Kurds in the Middle East, along with their territorial demographic concantration to some extent, justify these Kurds' independence demand. However, creation of a Kurdish state is still difficult becase of Kurds' fragmented social and political structure and most importantly because of the possible negative influences on Turkey and Middle East in case of their secession.

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This thesis studied the rationale underlying the variation among the Kurds' current political demands, which are categorized as non-territorial (democratic autonomy and cultural rights) and territorial (federalism and an independent state) with following an inductive methodology. Within this context, the research asked the question; *why do some of the Kurds in Turkey have territorial political demands, while others oppose to it?* Along with the comparison between the causes of variation in the Kurds' territorial and non-territorial political models, the variation within non-territorial and territorial models themselves was also examined. This study based on within a single case comparison.

In exploring the rationale motivating the variation in Kurds' present political demands the research study involved in-depth interviews with the regarded groups' (See table 4.1) leading authorities (elites). The fieldwork was carried out between the years 2012 and 2014 (but intensely in 2013 and in 2014) in Turkey, Iraq and UK. In course of the fieldwork, 102 interviews were conducted.

Examining a fact through a single cause study requires a comprehensive social and political clarification of the case itself. Accordingly, the case (Kurds) was elucidated in the light of the concepts tribe, ethnicity and nation. In this light, Kurds' language(s), religion(s), history, territory, ethnic and national identity and descent were studied. Chapter Two argued that the Kurds have a fragmented social structure; while some Kurds maintain tribal organizations others represent ethnic and national characters. Religious (Alevi and Sunni) and linguistic (Zaza and Kurmanji) differences were also revealed.

The Kurds constitute the biggest stateless group in the Middle East. Their current varied political demands were also echoed in earlier years. Therefore, the research provided a historical overview of the variation in the Kurds' political demands and the reasons behind this disparity. Discovered that their tribal structure, religious and linguistic division, relations with the state, conflict and competition between their organizations and religion were some definite dynamics for their diverse political demands in the past.

i. Findings for the Democratic Autonomy Model

The research showed that as an armed and political movement the PKK has a considerable influence on the political demands of Kurds residing in a number of regions in Turkey. Their impact on Kurds is driven by two key motives; the state's Kurdish identity denial policy and their strong emphasis on the Kurds' ethno-national identity. In these regards, since its foundation the main aim of the PKK has been to create a sense of *being* among the Kurds and make them really think about and question 'who are the Kurds'. To achieve this purpose, the PKK took to ideological and practical efforts. The state's denial and oppression in addition to the latter pushed many of the Kurds to approach the PKK and make their ethnic and national identity a prime focus. With the conflict intensification between the PKK and state security forces Kurds face severe persecution from the state, and as a result have become more mindful of their national identity. In other words, the conflict between PKK and state security forces, but particularly the state's tough policies, resulted with the politicization of Kurdish identity.

Related to this background, the research findings demonstrated that there is great emphasis on the term *nation* among the Kurds who call for democratic autonomy, which they refer to as 'democratic nation'. Democratic autonomy put 'democratic nation' at the centre of the solution process for the Kurdish issue and it proposed acknowledgement of the Kurds' national status (Constitutional recognition of the Kurdish identity). The Kurds in support of the BDP and have consideration for the PKK persisted with their claims for a political status in order to remove legal and political grounds for ethnic denial and acknowledgement of Kurds as a nation. They believe recognition of a political status, which is strongly mentioned in course of the fieldwork (see Chapter Four), will provide the Kurds protection and recognition for their ethno-national identity. Therefore, as the fieldwork also suggested, one of the key agendas of the democratic autonomy model is the demand for a national status, which in fact is one of the instrumental factors for demand of the model itself. The research data also highlighted this as one of the main reasons these Kurds refused the cultural rights only model because in this situation Kurds' national rights are still overlooked. These Kurds consider themselves a separate

nation and so request for their political rights to be acknowledged as the nation's collective rights, unlike cultural rights which are mostly granted at the individual level.

On another note, the study found that Kurds demanding both democratic autonomy and territorial political models (federalism and nation-state) agree their nation and political status need to be recognized at a collective level. However, democratic autonomy supporters' understanding of nation is formulated as a 'democratic nation' which does not draw boundaries between nations nor put emphasis on ethnicity whereas the Kurds who demand for territorial political models underline the importance of ethnicity and territory in their understanding of nation, which they claim can solve the Kurdish issue.

Considering the issue in that regard, the Kurds who struggle for democratic autonomy believe that structuring territories is of no benefit to the Kurds and cannot be applied. This is mainly for the dramatic shift in Kurds' demographic structure. Although the Kurds have lived in distinct areas of territory for years economic reasons, especially the conflict between the PKK and the state security forces, caused a massive change in their demographic structure. Therefore, to democratic autonomy supporters, extensive changes to the demographic structure of the Kurds complicate establishing territorial political models because nearly half of the Kurds are spread all across Turkey.

Taking account the research findings, the changes in demographics also impede any territorial solutions for the identity concerns of migrated Kurds because territorial political models focus on a particular region which these model defenders called as Kurdistan. This is a fundamental reason for BDP supporters suggesting establishing a democratic autonomy model as an alternative because, the model supporters claim, it can be implemented throughout the country by re-structuring Turkey into 24-26 regions. With this structure in place, these Kurds state, all diverse ethnic and religious groups dependent on their population quantity will either directly rule or be represented in some form. In the case of the Kurdish region, they underline Kurds are the majority group, therefore, they will have authority over the region. However, in western parts of Turkey they will be represented according to their population because Kurds are the minority

group in that case. In support of this the empirical findings of the research showed that the democratic autonomy supporters use the case of Kurds in Turkey to illustrate why this model is the most appropriate political model for protecting Kurdish national identity regardless of their geographical location (wherever the Kurds are living in Turkey). This also revealed one of the reasons as to why supporters of democratic autonomy reject territorial political models.

The data obtained from the fieldwork research suggested that another reason why supporters of BDP-PKK rejected territorial political models for democratic autonomy relates to Kurds' social structure (existence of internal minorities). Discussion provided in Chapter One and Two displayed that although the Kurds are a nation they are not homogeneous. They include linguistic and religious internal minorities. The fieldwork presented that majority of Alevi and Zaza who define themselves through Kurdish ethno-national identity demand democratic autonomy because they highlight this model offers them to create their own autonomous regions, which will provide rights and control over their internal affairs. It can be argued that this is their response to the years of oppression they faced from the state and to some extent other major identities, for example, Alevi from Sunni identity. Herein lies their main reason for rejecting territorial models and seeking democratic autonomy instead. Territorial political models, to these Kurds, are predisposed to shaping diverse identities in line with the identities of political and cultural dominant group(s). Consequently, as the research outcome illustrated, many Kurdish internal minorities fear their identity will be in danger with no opportunity handed to them to protect themselves if territorial political models are applied. For these Kurds creation of a Kurdish nation-state would be a disaster for Kurdish internal minorities and Kurds living outside of the Kurdish region because this model prioritizes a specific region and will permit a homogeneous Kurdish identity. Consequently, contrary to territorial models, they identify democratic autonomy as a decentralist structure which they state offers them circumstances to form their own autonomous regions in terms of their collective identities and geographical intensity. In other respects, democratic autonomy is deemed as a model able to protect Kurds' internal diversity within Kurdish

unity, which is another underlying reason for the rise in demand for democratic autonomy.

The research's findings specified that, along with above explained objective conditions, to these Kurds their ideological and moral standings also do not coincide with the territorial political models, which contribute to their refusal of these models. Despite the close correlation between establishing a nation and demand for nation-state or federalism, democratic autonomy proponents reject the idea of an independent Kurdish nation-state. In the light of research findings, they claim that nation-state functions in the interest of an elite group only and will not hesitate in inflicting oppressive measures over majority of the society when the interest of both groups are at the forefront. They put emphasis, with their words, on nation-state's conflicted nature explaining that it will contradict with the essence of democracy. To these Kurds, since it was first established nation-state has plainly shown how it causes competition and hostility among the peoples, especially in the case of the Middle East. In that regard, they deem creation of a Kurdish nation-state as source of conflict between both the Kurds and the other Middle Eastern communities, with their words, because of nation-state's hegemonic nature and aim of creating a homogeneous nation and to assimilate and design other identities in line with this aim. To democratic autonomy supporters, establishing territorial boundaries has potential to impact negatively on the relations between diverse identities. Thus, conflict will be unavoidable between diverse nations. Democratic autonomy defenders also highlight that conflict will also reach major Kurdish identities and Kurdish internal minorities. In the light of research findings, the aforementioned consequences further encouraged democratic autonomy adherents to question the ideology of nation-state as well as federalism because they highlight federalism also creates boundaries between people and it is a state oriented model.

Along with these motives, the interviews conducted in the research study illustrated that questions on the state's national territories as a result of social, cultural and political developments in the modern world were also raised and created further doubt for the model supporters concerning territorial models, particularly nation-state for

the Kurds. They questioned why Kurds should isolate themselves to a small part of region whilst the world discusses removing territories. The research outcome alluded that they are adamant to act with the modern world, which they believe cannot be possible if the territories are constructed between the Kurdish nation and other nations.

In conclusion, the desires to protect the achievements granted related to the Kurds' national identity and to obtain a political status, emerge as the conditions leading to demand for democratic autonomy.

ii. Findings for the Cultural Rights Only Model

The research findings suggested that if Kurds are granted their cultural rights their mistrust toward the state will be removed and interaction and integration between two communities will develop. The study revealed that Kurds' integration with the Turkish identity had an influence on their political demands. It was substantially easy for some Kurds to become part of the Turkish identity because almost half of the Kurds had already migrated to western parts of Turkey and there was considerable growth in social, cultural and economic interactions between them and Turks (major group). Empirical outcome of the research introduced that through integration and assimilation many Kurds have become part of the Turkish national identity and have alienated their ethno-national identity as well as their territory. Social and cultural integration in that respect isolates the Kurds from their own ethno-national identity, which are strongly highlighted by territorial political models and democratic autonomy. Long term integration, particularly its turning into assimilation, as the research outcomes presented, initiates disintegration of the Kurdish ethnic identity, which is one of the main reasons for refusal of territorial assertions.

Outcomes of the study further revealed that although the PKK effectively created a national consciousness among some Kurds, it also widened the socio-cultural and political diversity among Kurds. This was predominantly due to the PKK's past conflict with some Kurdish leftist organizations, Marxist-Leninist ideology, distance from religion, physical and ideological attacks on the Kurdish feudal classes and conflict with

the village guards. Mentioned motives have encouraged a number of Kurds to distance from Kurdish ethno-national identity. On the contrary, as argued in Chapter Five, these groups further strengthen their ties with Turks especially on the grounds of religion. Some even reluctantly integrated and assimilated with Turkish national identity. Majority of these Kurds currently request the cultural rights only model.

Taking issue from that sense, religion greatly influenced the development of such interaction and integration between two peoples (the Kurds and Turks) as well as rejection of territorial political models in some Kurds, as highlighted by the empirical findings of the research. The historical alliance between the Kurds and Turks as covered in Chapter Three was one of the main dynamics that created closer relations between Sunni Turkish and Kurdish communities, and made religion their common identity in modern Turkey. With raising the conflict between the PKK and state security forces, these relations between some Sunni Kurds and Turks further intensified. As conflict emerged, some religious Kurds sided with the PKK and have made emphasis on their ethno-national identity, who currently demand for either territorial political models or democratic autonomy. However, a considerable number approached the state and the religious Turks as noted earlier, because of the PKK's distance from religion and pressure on those who have connections with the state. To these Kurds construction of territorial political models and democratic autonomy will result in further persecution, and their interaction and religious affinities with the Turks will be damaged. Thus, as the study's empirical outcomes highlighted religion (essentially Sunni sect) in that sense becomes a significant measure of identity for the Kurds who gather around the political party AKP. For the substantial number of Kurds who continue to identify themselves through their religion, ethnicity is of either second importance or has no relevance. In other words, religion supersedes those Kurds' ethno-national identity and they consider territorial models destructive for the union of Sunni Kurds and Turks. Therefore, it is discovered that most of the Kurds who call for cultural rights and gather around the AKP prioritize their religious identity over ethnicity. In this light, contrary to territorial models, they call for granting of their cultural rights because they believe this will contribute to strengthening of religious affinities between two communities.

Moreover, the research study also found that although religion (primarily Sunni mezhep) plays a crucial role in building close ties between Sunni Kurds and Turks it also widens social, cultural and political gaps between the Sunni and Alevi Kurds. In other words, it causes disparities within Kurds. Kurdish Alevis' collective memory distances them from Sunni Kurds but allows them to form associations with Turkish Alevis. Sunni faith created a foundation for the cooperation between Sunni Kurds and Turks while Alevism created a common ground and social cohesion between Turkish and majority of the Kurdish Alevis who gather around the political party CHP. On another note, the increase in political Islam in Turkey, particularly among the Kurds, escalated Kurdish Alevis' Sunni fears. Consequently, Alevism became their superior(prior) identity. The unity between Alevis, as the study's outcome showed, is now a matter of life and death for most of the Kurdish Alevis who support the CHP. Herein, as illustrated by the research outcomes, Alevis who mostly demand democratic autonomy and territorial political models consider the state as the main factor responsible for their ethnic and religious suffering. In addition, they believe Alevis will only be liberated if their ethnic identity is free. On the other hand, the Kurdish Alevis in demand of the cultural rights only model prioritize their faith over their ethnicity. Because, based on the research outcomes, they believe liberation of Alevis depends on the idea of union among all Alevis in Turkey. Therefore, they refuse territorial political models because they foresee these models will damage common ties between Kurdish and Turkish descent Alevis. As a result and similar to the Sunni Kurds who support AKP, they replace their ethno-national identity with their faith, Alevism, which makes unity of all Alevis prominent and territorial political models insignificant. To put simply, because territorial political models and democratic autonomy in this case will be constructed and ruled by Sunni majoritarian identity, these Alevis believe they'll be a degree of pressure on them if the models are actually implemented.

Empirical findings of the research showed that the main factor(s) which influenced call for cultural rights only model is these Kurds' demand for respect to the their cultural values which they think will contribute removal of the Kurds' mistrust to the state and in return heightening of Turkey's unity. The factors that influenced rejection

of territorial political models, include, Kurds' intense interaction and integration with the Turks and in the long-term assimilation within Turkey's socio-cultural and economic structure and prioritizing their religious identity over ethnicity.

The above mentioned arguments showed that, demand for respect from the state, aspiration for strengthening the integration of the Kurd and the Turks, the aim on eliminating the social and political damage that has been done before between two nations, and most importantly, prevalence of the religious identity over ethnic identity appear to leading to demand of cultural rights, rather than other political demands, among the Kurds.

iii. Findings for the Federalism Model

It was previously highlighted that religion, principally the Sunni sect of Islam, played a crucial role in bringing majority of the Kurdish and Turkish communities together and forging strong alliances. However, according to the Federalism proponents, particularly Kurdish Islamists, religion was used as an instrument in assimilation of the Kurdish identity in Turkish identity by the state and some Turkish Islamist groups. According to these Kurds, Turkish Islamists became impartial to the Kurdish issue or, if they still maintained some interest, cooperated and acted in line with the state's approach to the Kurdish issue. To the federalism adherents the state attempted to develop and spread 'Turkish Islamic Synthesis', which they suggested in the long run would integrate and assimilate majority of the Kurds within Turkish national identity. Accordingly, the research consequences showed that to the Kurdish Islamists the repercussions of using religion as a tool to disseminate Turkish national identity, the development of 'Turkish Islamic Synthesis' and assimilation of Kurdish identity prompted them to question the role of religion as a unifying parameter between two communities. In reaction to this, thesis outcome revealed that they have begun to challenge the role of religion in their relationship with the Turks. Moreover, the research outcome discovered while religion previously created the opportunity for these Kurds to remain in Turkey without a territorial political structure in place, in current conditions particularly with the development of national consciousness in Kurdish Islamists religion no longer has the

same influence or power to keep them in Turkey without a territorial status. Kurds who demand for federalism believe that this is because the state would no longer be able to use religion as an influencing power in the assimilation of the Kurds and secondly because they will have power to protect their national identity.

The state's denial of Kurdish identity and its repressive policies resulted in tension in Turkey, although this did not reach community level. However, with intense armed conflict between the PKK and the state military forces coupled with the amounting discrimination against the Kurdish identity, tensions obtained ethnic codes with the potential to evolve into a widespread ethnic conflict. The increase in Kurds' ethno national awareness and the state's reaction to this further escalated the tension in Turkey. Related to this, the fieldwork found that federalism advocates believe the only way to prevent further conflict is to satisfy the Kurds' national sentiments and convince the Turks that this will intensify Turkey's unity. Moreover, the study's consequences discovered that to these Kurds federalism's 'diversity in unity' principle can resolve existing ethnic tension and prevent the possibility of a full-blown ethnic conflict whereas other political models contribute to conflict.

The research conducted discovered the Kurds' demand for power over their economic sources is another significant reason for their federalism demand. These Kurds (federalism exponents) strongly believe the state either failed to meet Kurds' economic needs or consciously prevented their economic development in order to impede their national consciousness, which in turn has shown to have a positive impact on economic development. Thus, these Kurds claim that to prevent the state from using Kurds' economic resources and to raise Kurds' economic development Kurds need power over their economic sources, which they believe can be obtained only through establishing the federalism model under a union with Turkey.

According to the fieldwork research, there are many motives for federalism supporters refusing other political models. To begin with, although they place emphasis on the territorial character of Kurdish nation, federalism proponents, in particular Kurdish Islamists, object to a Kurdish nation-state because they believe it could damage their

Ummah understanding and unity between nations. Secondly, they also highlighted that because of Kurds' social and demographic distribution establishing a Kurdish state can lead to conflict, considered along with the regional states' negative approach to the Kurds' independence demand.

This study found that both territory and nation are determinant dynamics in emergence of demand for federalism. The concept of nation is also stressed by the Kurds who demand for democratic autonomy. However, as discussed earlier and in Chapter Four, they identify their nation understanding as a 'democratic nation' which doesn't take ethnicity into account and rejects any territorial political models. The Kurds who demand for federalism herein harshly challenge democratic autonomy because, to their mind, the model's fundamental ideology is ambiguous and unrealistic as a political model. Federalism supporters also pointed out that democratic autonomy's proposition of restructuring Turkey into 24-26 regions will in fact fragment Kurdish national identity further. They also explain that democratic autonomy can influence integration and assimilation of Kurds because it does not consider Kurds' territorial concentration. It is also important to note that while democratic autonomy ideologically rejects structuring territories between nations, the Kurdish region and Kurdish nation are fundamental in the philosophy of federalism. Based on this, federalism defenders don't see democratic autonomy as a *national* political model.

Furthermore and similarly to supporters of democratic autonomy, federalism proponents challenge the cultural rights only model. They argue that Kurds are a nation, therefore, their political status has to be acknowledged through their collective rights otherwise Kurds will not be satisfied which will lead to further unrest.

The above mentioned arguments indicate that demand for construction of equality at the national level between the Kurds and the Turks, the desire to obtain power over the economic resources of the region, and the fear that religion can be used to to assimilate Kurdish identity into Turkish identity, the desire to end the ethnic conflict, and, all together lead to a call for federalism.

iv. Findings for the Nation-State Model

Findings from the research study highlighted the Kurds' mistrust toward Turkey and regional powers is one of the main condition for territorial national independence demand. To the independence adherents, Turkey is still looking for way(s) to assimilate the Kurdish ethno-national identity and destroy their social and political structure. The state's previous denial policies on and persecution of the Kurds plus some of the violent attacks which occurred in recent years (Roboski) are the basis for their claims that the state was either directly involved in or purposely did not protect the Kurds from these attacks. The assaults on the Kurds in the Kurdistan region in Iraq and Kurdish region in Syria (Rojava) by IS(IS) further raised their safety considerations because they claim the regional countries (including Turkey) were behind these assaults. Therefore, they explain that without their own state the Kurds will be defenceless. In this regard, they believe, creation of a Kurdish state in Turkey and in other regions plus their mergence are essential in order to annihilate the Kurds' safety considerations and provide them security and protection for their ethno-national identity.

The two linked variables - being of a territorial nation and demographic weight – when regarded with their security concerns are also significant in these Kurds demand for territorial national self-determination. The idea of territory here plays a fundamental part in call for independence when considered in the light of its meaning in the Kurds' national movements in the past. Chapter Three revealed that Kurds' struggle to form their own state traces back to the second half of the nineteenth century, following the abolition of the Kurdish emirates. Kurdish rebellions in the first two decades of the Turkish republic and PKK's first decade of political activity noticeably supported Kurds' battle for independence. Kurds' territorial national struggle for independence, therefore, has a historical continuance, which as covered in Chapter Three has contributed to the construction of *territorial* Kurdish national consciousness. The historical background of the study (see Chapter Three) showed that in this process of struggle liberation of territory overrides all stages. The research findings indicated that territory, especially when considering the Kurds' demographic weight, is not only a piece of land for these

Kurds. Territory, therefore, comprises collective memory. In other words, territory here holds an essential meaning for these Kurds, consequently, strongly influences their demand for territorial independence. Because to these Kurds liberation of nation is equivalent to liberation of territory. Taking the issue from that sense, to independence demanders, Kurds' territorial consciousness and demographic weight highlight the need for a Kurdish nation-state.

The thesis also explored the significance of territory for Kurds demanding federalism. However, comparing with the Kurds who demand for right of territorial national self-determination, they still want to live with Turks but demand power over their region. The Kurds who demand for federalism prioritize equality of nations over separation of nations in unity. As a result, Kurdish federalism supporters do not focus on finding a solution for the Kurdish issue through formation of a Kurdish state, while independence supporters claim that federalism will not provide the Kurds sufficient security since they will still be dependent on the state in most aspects.

The data achieved through the fieldwork found that democratic autonomy exponents place emphasis on the idea of nation-‘democratic nation’ whereas independence supporters see this model as insufficient to satisfy the Kurds’ national demands and provide them with safety. To independence supporters because democratic autonomy does not ground itself on a territorial sense it cannot provide the Kurds security nor dissolve of the Kurdish identity. Independence adherents also reject the cultural rights only model because they underline that the Kurdish issue requires liberation of their nation and territory not liberation of individuals. Therefore, to independence advocates, granting only cultural rights will result in denial of the Kurds’ national identity and disintegration of the Kurdish identity. In addition to these outcomes, Kurds will be defenceless, therefore, at risk of any form of attack.

When we consider the arguments centering on the demand for an independent state the causal factors which surface are safety considerations, Kurds’ demographic weights on a particular territory, and the desire to obtain a territorial national status.

Although the research focuses on the motives which led to the variation in Kurds' political demands through an inductive method, it has certain limitations. The first restraint is related to the data collection and fieldwork. The limitations of the fieldwork are fundamentally due to the security concerns for the researcher and the participants. Pre-planned interviews with the considered organizations' leaders and prominent authorities were completed. Along with the current legal organizations' elites interviews were also conducted with some PKK and Hezbollah executives. However, due to tight security conditions (security of the researcher and participations) it was impossible to interview some Hezbollah and PKK executives and leaders. Due to the same security concerns the number of interviews that were conducted with armed group village guards were also limited. The second significant limitation is related to the clarification of and number of interviews with some legal political groups. The main reason for inadequate interviews with these groups was because some were newly formed, such as, Azadî initiative, TKDP and PAK. Moreover, the groups were not sufficiently clarified because secondary data was also limited.

Implications

The research has variable implications. In first place, the research has practical implications concerning the international arena where Kurds live in high numbers. Kurds currently live under the political rule of their four neighbouring countries; Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, and political tension between these states and the Kurds are still present. In other words, each of these cases has a Kurdish issue. Similar to the Kurds in Turkey, the political demands of the Kurds in these neighbouring states are also varied. The research findings, therefore, can be used to explore the variation in the Kurds' political demands in Iran, Iraq and Syria, taking the close social, cultural and political affiliations between them into account.

Furthermore, the research also provides data which can be used to examine similar cases in other states. There is on-going political tension between many minorities and the states which have authority over them, for instance, Basques in Spain, Quebec in Canada, and Scots in the UK. These minorities, similar to the Kurds, also present mixed

political demands. However, they mostly demand for either independence or autonomy. The research outcomes, therefore, can provide an insight into the diverse political demands of these minorities. With reference to this, findings from the study have significant internal implications. Although these minorities are also divided in their political demands (variation, internal tension and fragmentation), it is not as significant as with the Kurdish case in Turkey. The data obtained through the research study can be used to clarify Kurdish political authorities in order to explore the variation in the Kurds' political demands even further, with a particular focus on the following questions; 'although many of the cases have been oppressed by the states who rule them or their identity was denied, why don't these minorities political demands vary remarkably?' and 'why do the Kurds' political demands vary prominently?' With reference to this, the research findings can provide a brief context of the Kurdish political authorities to develop a common sense (ortak akıl) in order to find an answer to the long-standing Kurdish issue through offering a political model which will be accepted by majority of the Kurds in Turkey. The research outcomes in that sense can also improve the understanding of Turkish political authorities in the Kurdish issue resolution process.

Another important implication is related to the effect of religion in shaping political demands. The empirical findings of the study are significant in elucidating the impact of religion on the varied political demands of the Kurds because religion has long been an influential component behind shaping of political demands and outbreak of conflicts not only in the Middle East but also across the world. The research revealed that religion has a reciprocal impact in shaping of the Kurds' political demands. For the Kurds who demand cultural rights religion plays a role in their integration to and attachment with the state. More clearly it contributes to the blurred ethnic boundaries between the Kurdish and Turkish identity, and so, prevents Kurdish ethno-national consciousness development. These Kurds consider religion as a powerful entity responsible for constructing a common future with the Turks whereas federalism proponents consider religion as a system which regards nations and their rights equal. As these Kurds are aware of their ethno-national identity religion does not influence assimilation of the Kurdish identity within major Turkish identity in them. Given the Şafii sect which

shows differences from the hanefi sect (followed by the Turks), these Kurds consider religion as Kurdish identity making component. This result is relevant for the Turkish and Kurdish political authorities who aim to solve the Kurdish issue through idea of religious brotherhood in Turkey. However, it might be more valuable for those authorities or scholars who claim that heightening religious affinities between the Kurds and Turks could prevent the increase in territorial political demands in the Kurds because, as the research found, this idea did not work in the religious Kurds who call for the territorial political models.

The above mentioned influence of religion can also be of advantage to researchers studying ‘why and under which conditions does religion have a bivious (reciprocal) effect on the minorities’ political demands and their relations with the state which rule them in the common religion sharing cases?’

Another implication of the research study is related to the issue of ‘trust’ which the research outcome revealed that has a determinant part on shaping of the Kurds political demands. Based on the research findings, a vast majority of Kurds who demand territorial political models as well as democratic autonomy do not trust the state, especially the state’s approach to the Kurdish identity. These Kurds claim that because the state has not internalized (içselleştirme) the Kurds as a separate ethno-national group its aim of dissolving the Kurdish identity remains. In addition to this, some cultural rights defenders also challenged the state’s approach to the Kurdish issue, although this wasn’t as prevalent as with territorial and democratic autonomy supporters. In case of further raising of mistrust toward the state, as the research findings highlighted, could result in Kurds demanding for their own state. The research revealed that the first and most significant psychological step which needs to be ensured is minorities’ trust toward the state in Kurdish case in Turkey. The fieldwork data in that sense may be constructive for the state authorities, in order find answer how to remove separatist idea in some Kurds, in their request for construction of social peace and most importantly a resolution for the on-going Kurdish issue solution process (peace/settlement process).

In light of the above, it can be argued that the research findings could also be helpful to provide a valuable context for cases where political or armed tension is ongoing as well as cases with continuing peace talks or negotiations between the minorities and the states, for example, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in Colombia.

Throughout the research it was often noted that the ethnic minorities' constitutional recognition claims and self-rule demand – either through territorial autonomy or gaining their own state – advanced to an ethnic tension in most cases once the states which ruled them refuse these requests. The minorities' demands and the states' reaction to them brings two points to mind. The first considers the link between achieving a national status and being entitled with right of territorial national self-determination. This point has been a focus in international relations for a long time. However, considering the high number of ethnic groups at present and current international relations it is not an easy task to authorise all ethno-national minorities with the right of national self-determination. And so, the question of how stateless groups can accomplish their political demands comes to the forefront. The research data herein could be a basis for those interested in ethnic minorities' demand for independence because the Kurdish case revealed that by providing Kurds some rights many Kurdish individuals considered abandoning their demand for their own state as alternative political models could adequately meet their requests. This study, therefore, could provide a framework for the political authorities both in Turkey and in the cases there is a variation in minority group's political demand, for how to develop a common point of satisfaction in minority members related to their political demands.

Prosperous Avenues for Future Research and Recommendations

Based on the hypotheses developed, this study suggests four possible avenues for further investigation. The first suggestion is examining existing hypotheses through relevant theories, which can potentially yield valuable results to include in current literature.

Making within comparison in socially and politically varied a case (through an inductive method) makes data collecting rather important. The data in this research was obtained through interviews with political authorities (elites) from organizations highlighted throughout the study. To broaden the extent of the research, the hypotheses developed could also be tested in the light of data obtained either through interviews or surveys conducted with individuals of non-elites (ordinary). This will provide supportive information to also gauge what extent the elites represent their members' or follower's views in the Kurdish case in Turkey.

Moreover, the research findings can be applied to different cases - either within a single case comparison(s) or comparisons between various cases. In this regard, the research outcomes can be transferred to the Basques and Catalan cases in Spain, Irish, Welsh and Scots in UK, the Kurds in Iran and Syria, Turkmens in Iraq or a comparison could be made between these cases and the Kurds.

The hypotheses developed in this study can be duplicated in the Kurdish case as well as others by considering their interaction with certain independent variables. In this regard, the questions, the interaction between religion and nationalism, national consciousness and bourgeoisie, or between collective memory and ethnic and religious conflict, and their influence in shaping minorities' political demands are more meaningful.

Finally, the Turks' approach to resolving the Kurdish question could also be (re) considered by the political authorities and researchers, in the light of findings of this research.

Recommendations

Subsequent to analysis of the variation in Kurds' political demands in Turkey, the research also offers some recommendations to different groups and organizations. Upon observing the Kurdish organizations which demand democratic autonomy, it was clear a considerable number of their authorities and members could not define democratic autonomy clearly. Some simply reiterated the words of Abdullah Öcalan when expressing

their definition of the model. On the back of this, it is highly recommended that BDP raise their members' knowledge of democratic autonomy model. Moreover, although the PKK formed a democratic autonomy structure in the Rojava region of Syria through the PYD, it displays certain differences from the model they proposed for Turkey. The democratic autonomy model in Rojava was constructed over a cantonal system that shares many characteristics with federalism. The model proposers herein must clarify this point by removing to the model's ambiguity.

Chapter seven showed that while some independence proponents consider creation of federalism first then developing this into a nation-state, others, such as, PAK used the slogan "Kurdistan Right Now". However, there is no clarity on how they will provide the objective conditions to form a Kurdish state, including, creation of an army, parliament, legal system, currency and so forth. This, as voiced by other political models' exponents during the research study, makes these Kurds' independence demand unconvincing. PAK has to develop concrete answer(s) to the question is raised by other model supporters.

One of the main issues for Kurdish politics is the continuing tension between some Kurdish groups (internal tension), for example, the armed conflict between PKK and Hezbollah and PKK and Village guards, the social and political tension between Alevi and Sunni Kurds and currently between some Zazaki and Kurmanji speaking Kurds. A question which was asked to a number of territorial political and democratic autonomy defenders was how they would cope with such tensions if Kurds are granted with the right of self-rule. Most explained that the tension among the Kurdish groups and the Kurdish internal conflict will be managed, subsequent to obtaining the right to self-rule. However, during the fieldwork it was revealed that most of the village guards harshly challenge these models and are ready to raise an intense armed struggle against them. Because they believe their life will be in danger if these models are implemented due to their conflict with the PKK. The political authorities who propose territorial and democratic autonomy models, in this regard, should take concrete steps to eliminate the Kurdish groups' anxieties. The village guards come first among these groups because

their security considerations must be alleviated. If no action is taken, as clearly revealed during the fieldwork, the Kurdish internal tension has potential to intensify and pose a serious threat on the political model(s) they struggle for. Therefore, they must settle the on-going Kurdish internal tension before establishing the model they call for.

The fieldwork conducted highlighted that Kurdish Alevi^s are in fear of Sunni Kurdish identity. Their suspicions and anxiety grew as Hezbollah affiliated Hûda-par and several other religious organizations were formed, as explained in Chapter Six, because of Hezbollah's negative stance on some Kurds in the past and the party's radical Islamic views. Like the Kurdish Alevi^s, a considerable number of the Sunni Kurds in BDP are also apprehensive of Hezbollah because of the on-going conflict between PKK and Hezbollah, which contributed to the Kurds' internal tension. In order to restore its image among the Kurds, Hezbollah and Hûda-Par need to take satisfactory and reassuring steps. For instance, Hezbollah could make a public self-critique and apologize for its harsh practice between the years 1990-2002, which were covered in Chapter Six.

Chapter Five explained that majority of the Kurds who call for cultural rights are associated with AKP and CHP, and expect their cultural rights to be acknowledged. The delay in meeting these expectations, such as, the right to receive education in the Kurdish language, can harm these Kurds' trust of the state and radicalize their political demands over time. In this regard, as the AKP is the ruler party they need to take constitutional steps to acknowledge the Kurds' cultural rights soon. CHP in the mean-time needs to do more, for instance, clearly state it is ready to recognize Kurds' cultural rights, in order to lose (remove) the negative image they hold in Kurds which they gained by previously challenging recognition of the Kurdish identity. The party, therefore, should firstly convince the Kurds that they recognize them as a separate group and should put more pressure on the government to acknowledge Kurds' cultural rights. At present, although a considerable number of the Kurdish Alevi^s vote for CHP, they still have certain concerns regarding the party's approach to the Kurdish issue. For instance, the Dersim massacre took place in 1938 during CHP's rule is still alive (powerful) in many Kurdish Alevi^s collective memory. Furthermore, both parties should also distance themselves from

nationalism ideology because otherwise, this ideology could damage their Kurdish members trust to their parties as well as Turkey.

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APPENDIX

TABLE A.1, THE LIST OF INTERVIEWS

POLITICAL DEMAND	INTERVIEWEE DETAILS			INTERVIEW DETAILS	
	NAME	ORGANIZATION	POSITION	PLACE	DATE
DEMOCRATIC AUTONOMY	Kudret GÜLÜN	BDP	Esenyurt District Co-Chair	Istanbul	25.12.2012
	Arif EROL	BDP	Esenyurt District Co-Chair	Istanbul	25.12.2012
	Sami TAN	Istanbul Kurdish Institute	President	Istanbul	27.04.2013
	Sako (Fictious Name)	BDP And DÖKH	Women Activist and DÖKH Executive	Istanbul	28.04.2012
	Emine AYNA	BDP	Diyarbakır MP	Diyarbakır	03.05.2013
	Firat ANLI	BDP	Diyarbakır Mayor	Diyarbakır	08.05.2013

Seydi FIRAT	Peace Assembly	Peace Assembly Spokesman	Diyarbakır	10.05.2013
Cafer SOLGUN	Yüzleşme Association	Writer and President of Yüzleşme Assoc.	Istanbul	16.05.2013
Selim KURBANOĞ LU	BDP	Yenişehir District Mayor	Diyarbakır	07.05.2013
Dorşin (Fictious namel)	Kurdish Diaspora	Women Activist	London	24.09.2014
Zuhal (Fictious name)		Academician	Istanbul	14.11.2012
Baran (Fictious name)	PKK	Politician	Makhmur Camp-Iraq	25. 11.2009
Hasan YILDIZ		Lawyer and Politician	Istanbul	16.12.2012
Edibe ŞAHİN	BDP	Tunceli Mayor	Tunceli	13.05.2013
Zübeyde TEKER	Wise People Com (WPC)	East Anatolia WPC Representative	Bingöl	11.05.2013
Hıdır ÇELİK	ZAZA-DER	ZAZA-DER President	Istanbul	19.12.2012

	Halis YURTSEVEN	BDP	Bingöl Provincial President	Bingöl	10.05.2013
	İlhan ILBAY	EMEP	Central Executive Committee Member	Tunceli	12.05.2013
	Mustafa TAŞKALE	EMEP	Tunceli Provincial President	Tunceli	12.05.2013
	Altan TAN	BDP	Diyarbakır MP	London	18.10.2013
	Jiyan (Fictious name)	Roj Women and Political Activist	Political Activist	London	23.09.2014
	Mustafa ÜNLÜ	DEHAP	Political Activist	Gaziantep	15.11.2014
	Rahime KANILGA	HDP	Party Executive	Çanakkale	15.11.2014
	Ahmet ŞEKER	HADEP	Youth's Branch President	London	10.09.2014
FEDERALISM	Şahan (Fictious name)	Zehra Community		Diyarbakır	08.05.2013
	Vedat TURGUT	Hüda-Par	Diyarbakır Provincial President	Diyarbakır	08.05.2013

	Recep (Fictious name)	Zehra Community	Istanbul	Istanbul	23- 24.04.2013
	Rauf Çiçek	Nubihar Association	President of Nubihar Association	Diyarbakır	06.05.2013
	Aydın GÖK	Hüda-Par	Batman Provincial President	Batman	10.05.2013
	Enes (Fictious name)	Hezbollah		Istanbul	10.07.2012
	Azad AYYILDIRIM	Kom-Kar	Kom-Kar Executive	London	25.03.2013
	Burkay ASLAN	Kom-Kar	Kom-Kar Executive	London	21.07.2013
	Cudi DABAKOGL U	Kom-Kar	Kom-Kar President	London	26.03.2013
	Tahir (Fictious name)	Zehra Community		Istanbul	24- 25.07.2014
	Halis (fictious name)	Zehra community		Istanbul	24.07.2014
	Sıddık DURSUN- SEYHANZAD	Med-Zehra Community	Founder and Leader of the Community	Istanbul	27.04.2013

E				
Murat (Fictious Name)	Hezbollah		Istanbul	15.07.2012
Cemal (Fictious Name)	Hezbollah		Istanbul	11.07.2012
Ismail (Fictious Name)	Mustazaf-Der	Muztazaf-Der Executive	Istanbul	10.01.2013
Ciwanroj CEYHAN	KADEP	Diyarbakır Provincial President	Diyarbakır	08.05.2013
Mesut TEK	PSK	Leader	London	25.02.2013
Halim IPEK	DDKD	Diyarbakır Executive	Diyarbakır	05. 05.2013
Süleyman ÇEVİK	Nûbihar Magazine	Editor	Istanbul	15 .07. 2012
Ibrahim GÜÇLÜ	Hak-Par and DDKD	Politician	Diyarbakır	08.05.2013
Semra ARCAN	Hak-Par	Istanbul Provincial President	Istanbul	02.07.2012
Kemal	Hak-Par	General President	Istanbul	15.06.2012

BURKAY					
Mehmet Emin EREN	Hak-Par and Tev-Kurd	Tev-Kurd Executive	Istanbul	25.07.2012	
Necat ÖZDEMİR	Hüda-Par	General Vice President	Diyarbakır	07.05.2013	
Orhan AÇIKBAŞ	Hüda-Par	Bingöl Provincial Executive	Bingöl	11.05.2013	
Mustafa PEKÖZ	Kurdish Diaspora in French	Intellectual and Writer	London	15.03.2013 and 20.03.2013	
Nevzat EMİNOĞLU	Zehra Community		Istanbul	10.07.2012	
Mehmet Baki ASLANURGU N	Hak-Par	Istanbul Provincial Executive	Istanbul	02.07.2012	
Aziz Mahmut AK	ÖSP	General Vice President	Diyarbakır	07.05.2013	
Sinan ÇİFTYÜREK	ÖSP	General President	Istanbul	15.05.2013	
Eşref ÇAKAN	Hak-PAR	Diyarbakır Provincial Executive	Diyarbakır	06.05.2013	
Vasıf	Hak-Par	Diyarbakır Provincial	Diyarbakır	06.05.2013	

	KAHRAMAN		President		
NATION-STATE	Dersim (Fictious name)	Kurdish Diaspora in London	Politician	London	08.11.2014
	Ruşen ASLAN	Ismail Beşikçi Foundation	IBV Executive and Politician	Istanbul	20.05.2013
	Fuat ÖNEN	Tev-Kurd	Writer and Politician	Istanbul	20.09.2014
	Mahmut KOYUNCU	Azadî Initiative	Istanbul Representative	Istanbul	31.01.2012
	Adnan FIRAT	Azadî Initiative	Press Secretary and Executive	Diyarbakır	07.05.2013
	Devrim (Fictious Name)	Kurdish Diaspora in London	Activist	London	01.03.2013
	Kani YADO		Politician	Diyarbakır	27.09.2014
	Zelal (Fictious Name)	DHF	Activist	Istanbul	02.11.2013
	Irak (Fictious Name)	Gik-Der	Activist	London	04.03.2013
	Ali (Fictious name)	İçşi-Köylü (Kızılbayrak) group	Activist	Istanbul	03 May 2012

	Ekber (Fictios name)	Kurdish Diaspora in London		London	17.03.2013
	Fırat (Fictious name)	DHF	Activist	Tunceli	12 .05.2013
	Vahap (Fictious name)	İşçi-Köylü (Kızılbayrak) Group	Activist	Istanbul	03.05.2012
	Mustafa ÖZÇELİK	PAK	General President	Ankara	20.11.2014
	Vahit ABA	PAK	Executive	Ankara	18.11.2014
	Mehmet Emin KARDAŞ	TKDP	General President	Istanbul	25.11.2014
	Helin (Fictious name)		Academician	Hakkari	23.11.2014
CULTURAL RIGH	Adnan NABİKOĞLU	AKP	Diyarbakır Provincial Executive	Diyarbakır	05.05.2013
	Adile GÜRBÜZ	AKP	Batman Provincial Executive	Batman	09.05.2013

	Aydın ALTAÇ	AKP	Diyarbakır Provincial President	Diyarbakır	04.05.2013
	Mirza GÜÇLÜ	MASIAD	MASIAD Executive	Istanbul	21.12.2011
	Ahmet (Fictious Name)	AKP	Diyarbakır Provincial Sur District Executive	Diyarbakır	03.05.2013
	Ziya SÖZEN	Martyrs Family Associations	Bingol Martyrs Family Association President	Bingöl	11.05.2013
	Rıza TAŞKIN	AKP	Tunceli Provincial Executive	Tunceli	13.05.2013
	Candaş ÖZÇELİK	AKP	Tunceli Provincial Executive	Tunceli	13.05.2013
	Suat ÖZDEMİR	MASIAD	MASIAD Batman President	Batman	09.05.2013
	Aynur DOĞAN	Glasgow Alevi Federation Association	Glasgow Alevi Association President	London	15.06.2014
	Yaşar	London Alevi Cultural Centre	London Alevi Cultural Centre	London	15.06.2014

	DEMİRALAY	and Cem Evi	and Cem Evi President		
	İsrafil ERBİL	British Alevi Federation	British Alevi Federation President	London	15.06.2014
	Kemal BOZKURT	CHP	Tunceli Provincial President	Tunceli	13.05.2013
	Nevzat ÇİÇEK	Time Türk	Journalist	Istanbul	14.03.2011
	Muslim SARI	CHP	Istanbul MP	London	15.06.2014
	Mustafa KURBAN	CHP	Bingöl Provincial President	Bingöl	10.05.2013
	Zeynep (Fictious name)	London Alevi Cultural Centre and Cem Evi		London	03.04.2014
	İmam GÖÇER	CHP	Tunceli Central District President	Tunceli	13.05.2013
	Mustafa ALABAT	CHP	Tunceli Provincial Executive	Tunceli	13.05.2013
	Aydın KARATAŞ	CHP	Tunceli Provincial Executive	Tunceli	13.05.2013
	Kemal Deniz	CHP	Istanbul Esenyurt	Istanbul	08.01.2013

	BOZKURT		District President		
	Zülfü KULACI	CHP	Tunceli Provincial Executive	Tunceli	13.05.2013
	Hıdır ARAT	CHP	Tunceli Provincial Executive	Tunceli	13.05.2013
	Düzgün AKYILDIZ	AKP	Central District President	Tunceli	13.05.2013
	Fahri ASLAN	TUMSİAD	TÜMSİAD Diyarbakır Executive	Diyarbakır	06.05.2013
	Abdurrahman KURT	AKP	Diyarbakır MP	London	10.09.2013
	Hasan (Fictious name)	AKP	Diyarbakır Sur District Executive	Diyarbakır	03.05.2013
	Hakan (Fictious name)	CHP		Istanbul	24.04. 2012
	Sinan (Fictious name)	AKP	AKP Bingöl provincial Executive	Bingöl	11.05.2013

