



**WISE MEN BOARD
REPORT**

DEMOCRATIC OPENING AND SOCIAL PERCEPTIONS



**WISE MEN CENTER
FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES**

**Prepared By:
Dr. Salih AKYÜREK**

**Translated By:
Hacer ŞARTEPE**

**REPORT NO: 30
ISTANBUL**

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MARCH 2011



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BILGESAM PUBLICATIONS



Bilge Adamlar Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi **Wise Men Center For Strategic Studies**

Mecidiyeköy Yolu Caddesi No:10
Celil Ağa İş Merkezi Kat:9 Daire:36-38
Mecidiyeköy / İstanbul / Türkiye
Tel: +90 212 217 65 91 Faks: +90 212 217 65 93

Atatürk Bulvarı Havuzlu Sok. No:4/6
A.Ayrancı / Çankaya / Ankara / Türkiye
Tel : +90 312 425 32 90 Faks: +90 312 425 32 90

www.bilgesam.org
bilgesam@bilgesam.org

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FOREWORD

Making predictions for the future by closely following developments at home and abroad, conducting scientific research on bilateral and multilateral relations and the security strategies of Turkey, as well as on domestic problems in political, economic, technological, environmental and socio-cultural areas, providing also decision-makers with practical recommendations, policy options, and proposals in line with the national interests are all included in the foundation purposes of Wise Men Center for Strategic Studies (BILGESAM). BILGESAM, with regard to the resolutions taken in Wise Man Board's first meeting, is preparing reports to fulfill the purposes quoted above.

BILGESAM has published its survey study, which was conducted on 8,607 people in 17 provinces of the eastern and southeastern Turkey and in the quarters of Istanbul and Mersin, which are formed by migration under the name of "Sociological Analysis of the Southeast Problem." A qualitative study demonstrating the region's ethnic and sectarian structure in village and district basis was done in the same region, including 19 provinces. In addition, it has prepared the report "What are the Kurds and Zazas thinking about? A Look to the Shared Values and Symbols Kurds and Zazas," that includes the general findings and the data obtained from the survey studies. Besides, it has published the report "Democratization for the Solution of the Kurdish Problem, Opening for Political and Social Solidarity" prepared by Özdem Sanberk, a retired former ambassador, and the report "Opening for Democratization and Social Solidarity" approved by Wise Men Board.

BILGESAM is carrying on studies on the Kurdish problem, Turkey's most crucial problem. In this respect, the report "**Democratic Opening and Social Perceptions**" prepared by Dr. Salih Akyürek and developed with the suggestions of board members has been approved by Wise Men Board.

As stated in the report, for 25 years, Turkey has experienced terror problems that have high material and intangible costs. The problem has been recently defined under such names as the "Southeast Problem," "Kurdish Problem" and the "Democratization Problem," all of which are in search of the underlying reasons of the terror. Apart from the polarizations over demands for cultural identity, there have been problems in conceptually defining the problem. These, in turn, prevent the development of a new, reconciling political language and democratic negotiation processes and serve as a deadlock. This study tries to present findings and designations for developing a new reconciling language and for enabling both sides to understand each other; and brings constructive criticism to the "Democratic Opening" and "Democratic Autonomy."

The report prepared by Dr. Salih Akyürek has been published on <http://www.bilgesam.org/tr> I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Salih Akyürek and BILGESAM personnel who have put their efforts in this process, hoping that it will contribute to the democratization process of Turkey.

Assoc. Prof. Atilla Sandıklı
President of BILGESAM

DEMOCRATIC OPENING AND SOCIAL PERCEPTIONS

INTRODUCTION

It is necessary to emphasize that under the issues referred to as the “Southeast Problem,” “Kurdish Problem,” or “Democratization Problem,” lies the inherent problem of trust. On the one hand, the ones who have declared themselves as the representatives of Kurdish people express their disbelief towards the state, arguing that their rights have been abused, the promises have not been satisfied and their identities and language have been ignored via an assimilation policy for the last 90 years. On the other hand, either the state or one group of people supposedly talking on behalf of the state identify the Kurdish people with rebels of the past and regard them as a problematic group. For both sides, these perceptions stand as the problem of trust apart from being a communication problem. The most remarkable point here is that people who have named and defined the problem are not the public itself, but instead the ones speaking on behalf of the Kurds.

There lies such a fact that this society had undergone problems concerning minorities in the late Ottoman Empire and Turkish War of Independence. With the Republic, the same society had concerns over the same issue and in a protective attitude, it has put efforts to establish a nation-state which encompasses less differences.

More than 30,000 people have lost their lives and more people have been directly injured as a result of the events taking place in the region for the last 25 years. People, by some way or another, involved in this situation may easily otherize the other as a consequence of political polarization and their feelings. This polarization and otherizing is mostly based on ethnicity. However, this may sometimes come into being on a regional basis. This basic separation and differentiation results in ideas and perceptions that can not be overcome by both societies and that are not comprehended by the both, resulting in subsequent obstacles.

In the past, many events -good or bad- took place, which will be judged in time. Today, these events can be discussed, but if that discussion is turned into a means of resentment and

revenge, it is in no way possible that this hatred and hostility will give birth to good things. Today, events taking place in the region are interpreted on the basis of ethnicity and discrimination. The number of those being in line with this tendency is increasing day by day. Events and perceptions interpreted on the basis of ethnicity have put the considerable number of cultural identity demands on Turkey's agenda. Thus, it would not be adequate to offer solutions to the problem on the basics of economy and education.

This study, with the field works conducted on social perceptions, tries to make out the necessity of dealing with the concept of cultural identity and the demands within this scope from the perspective of dialogue. The report brings criticism to the process of "democratic opening" and the "democratic autonomy" demands that are presented with declarations. In addition, it puts forward some designations and suggestions within the frame of Turkey's democratization problem.

CULTURAL IDENTITY AND DIALOGUE

Political, economic and cultural developments in the world after 1990 have given birth to many critical changes. One of the most important changes has been the demands and conflicts based on cultural identity. Likewise, recognition policy and demands for cultural identity have defined the political sphere of today's world and stand as one of the main reasons for the administration, representation, legitimacy crises, instability and the problem of credibility.¹ In Turkey, events taking place after 1980s in the provinces of the east and southeast have put the demands for cultural identity of the Kurds to the forefront. It would not be appropriate to attribute all these demands to the happenings and the terror in the region in the last 30 years.

In this scope, without analyzing the cultural demands and conflicts based on religion, ethnicity and culture etc. and without finding long term solutions, it becomes difficult to paint the picture of a stable and a reliable Turkey.²

There also exists a dire need of analyzing the effects of terror on the demands related to identity. When demands for identity include conflicting paradigms, this would hamper the development of a dialogue atmosphere. Thus, first and above all, dialogue has to be built against violence and should not be delayed until the struggle ends so that dialogue can prosper. Any delay in this sense would deal a new blow to freedom and ultimately preclude dialogue.

As of today, it is of utmost importance to make evaluations for the post-conflict period of the region and to generate projects for this end. In this sense, establishment of a sound and free atmosphere of dialogue is a sine qua non for this purpose. *"In the post-conflict society, any kind of discourse, except for the one including violence, should be found natural. Yet, approaches that will convert the process of dialogue into 'the dialogue of the deaf' would obstruct reconciliation process and would in itself have the potential of reactivating the once tense process. To the extent that each side develops a political language based on communication, freedom will be enhanced."*³

The basic problem and obstacle to the solution and for the start and maintenance of the peace process is the radical discourses of both sides, which are nourished by the values of

¹ E. Fuat Keyman, "Identity Problems and Democratization in Turkey" *East West Journal (Doğu Batı Düşünce Dergisi)*, No: 41, May-June 2007, p. 217-230.

² See Keyman, above-mentioned work.

³ Uğur Kömeçoğlu, "Post-Conflict Society: Dialectic between National Powers and Local Powers, Public Domain based-on Dialogue and Democratization, Unpublished article (It will be published among the books of BILGESAM).

social culture. Then, how should these obstacles, which constitute big problems for the peace process, be overcome?

It has to be noted that the development of a new political language which will prioritize humanity and the right to life, will play the key role in the initiation and maintenance of the peace process. The process of democratic opening, despite many mistakes and insufficiencies, can be considered as the initiative of this peace process. If the ones who are in search of peace, instead of continuously suggesting antithesis and starting counter accusations, look at themselves and apply self-criticism, this will enhance all the efforts of conciliation.⁴

Given the fact that the process of modernization has been state-centric and in a top-down manner just like any process in Turkey, it is inevitable that initiatives that are put into practice in this way will bring about social engineering projects which themselves will result in crises. Hence, a social reconstruction has to take into account the demands for ‘cultural identity.’ At this point, the following key questions have to be asked:⁵

- i. *How should we perceive the cultural identity?*
- ii. *How should we respond to demands and conflicts based on identity?*
- iii. *What are the long term solutions to the demands for identity without having a recourse to violence and only via democratic negotiations?*
- iv. *In parallel to these, how can we enable the terrorist organization to give up their weapons?*

“It is of no use to propose unilateral doctrinal ideologies in the name of dialogue. Due to such ideologies, this leads to a lack of communication instead of serving for constructive dialogue. Peace processes have to be sustained with the avoidance of any discourse that is hegemonic and overprotective for all parties. Nobody, by trying to protect citizens alone, should see himself as the only actor in this process. Otherwise, in its new forms, one will once again encounter the pathology of being the only actor which has already existed and originates from both ethnicism and authoritarian nationalism. Instead of these aspects, one has to unveil the mechanisms of social “interaction” in the region.⁶

⁴ Kömeçoğlu, a.m.w

⁵ See Keyman, a.m.w.

⁶ Kömeçoğlu, a.m.w

Several suggestions⁷, which will provide permanent solutions to the demands and conflicts based on identity, have been summarized below. These suggestions will much contribute to the understanding of the identity-based problems in Turkey:

- i. *Demands for cultural identity cannot be sorted out with denial, suppression or ignorance.*
- ii. *An attempt to understand cultural demands only from the perspective of economic, political elements and relations is problematic and would be quite restrictive both theoretically and methodologically. They would fail in finding solutions to conflicts and demands for identity.*
- iii. *Politicization processes of identity may occur both in the axis of pluralism/democratization and radicalism/nationalism.*
- iv. *As long as, for the solution of the problems based on identity demands and conflicts, identity-state and identity-identity relations are taken as the main criteria, it will not be possible to debate and put critical analysis over the arrangement of intra-identity relations. This, in turn, will increase the probability that recognition policies gain more and more nationalistic and radical attributes. Likewise, this will decrease the opportunities of producing democratic solutions to identity demands.*
- v. *Rather than adopting a whole and a general look to the phenomenon of cultural identity, a differentiated and multidimensional debate and analysis on identity have to be assumed. This, in turn, will provide the chance of understanding, discussing and seeking solutions for different cultural identities, different demands for identity and conflicts in their own contexts.*
- vi. *In order to adopt a differentiated and multidimensional method for conflicts and demands on cultural identity and in order to offer democratic solutions to these conflicts and demands as well, what is needed is a common dialogue atmosphere, a common movement area and a political conciliation.*

⁷ Keyman. It has been cited from the a.m.w. Keyman states that he collected the suggestions for solution from the following sources: A. Sen, **Identity and Violence**, W.W. Norton and Company, New York, 2006; K.A. Appiah, **Cosmopolitanism**, W.W.Norton and Company, 2005; S. Benhabib, **The Rights of Others**, Cambridge, Cambridge University Pres, 2004; C.Moufle, **On The Politics I**, London, Routledge, 2005; A. Appadurai, **Fear of Small Numbers**, Durham, Duke University Pres, 2006; C. Taylor, **Modern Social Imaginations** (Modern Toplumsal Tahayyüller), Istanbul, Metis, 2006.

SOCIAL PERCEPTIONS

The Perception of Discrimination as a Problem Indicator Among Kurds⁸

Some wrong policies of the state related to the region, mistakes by public officials and already existing conditions in the region, have resulted in negative propagandas on the Kurdish identity, and ultimately such a claim that “all suffering is intentionally done by state just because people are of Kurdish origin in the region” has come to the forefront.

Today, vast majority of the Kurds in the region have no problem with shared values and symbols. However, they consider being a citizen of Turkish Republic different from being Turkish and do not regard Turkishness as a common superordinate identity for people living in the country. Due to the official discourse that Turkishness is the subordinate identity, people think that there is pressure on denial of the Kurdish identity and they regard this official discourse as the source of the problems until present day. At this point, a considerable number of people -be it conscious or as a consequence of propagandas- consider some expressions as a threat to their identities and as the elements of pressure. Among these are the recitations of morning pledge by Turkish primary school students and the popular saying “How happy is he who can say I am a Turk” which is written on some hills and the mountains in Turkey.

A survey study⁹ conducted by Wise Men Center for Strategic Studies (BILGESAM) reveals that almost half of the Kurds in the (southeastern?) region have the feeling of being discriminated on socio-cultural basis. The rate of those attributing the reason of discrimination to ethnicity is only 16%. From this data, it can be said that people in the region are exposed to discrimination that is based on social class due to poverty and poor levels of education and social life; while they are exposed to discrimination in daily life because of cultural differences language and dialect.

The results of the same survey suggest that the rate of perception of discrimination on socio-cultural level among the Kurds is 60% in the provinces with intensive PKK actions (Ağrı, Batman, Bitlis, Diyarbakır, Hakkari, Mardin, Muş, Siirt, Şırnak, Van, Tunceli) while this rate is 54% among the Kurds in the suburbs of such provinces as Mersin and Istanbul, which are

⁸ Findings under this title are based on two different field works and the reports of these studies, “**Sociological Analysis of the Southeast Problem (October 2009)**”, “**Sociological Analysis of the Southeast Problem: Interview Report (May 2010)**”. The report of the first study has been published in summary at www.bilgesam.org. The interview report of the second report has not been published on the website, yet, there is ongoing work for its publication in book form.

⁹ BILGESAM, “**Sociological Analysis of the Southeast Problem**”, p. 157, October 2009, Its summary has been published at www.bilgesam.org

formed by migration and it falls to 37% among the Kurdish people in the eastern and southeastern provinces where there is not much PKK activity.

The claim for ethnicity-based discrimination is a discourse shaped by the personal positions and jealousy of incompetent actors who do not put out something in practice. Another important factor in the formation of the ethnicity-based discrimination is the negative propagandas built upon the problems in the region. It isn't possible that the concerns and fears of those who say that doors are closed to them upon uttering their Kurdish ethnicity, are ignored or described as illusion either.

Since both immigrant Kurdish people in other cities and the Kurdish people in the (southeastern?) region can not get adequate education, they are not assessed within the scope of qualified workforce and this complicates their process of finding jobs. Moreover, this results in a slowdown in their integration with social structure of the western Turkey. During this process, due to negative propagandas as well, the perception of discrimination is strengthened. Furthermore, the unemployed may have a recourse to pursue improper ways of finding jobs and may be abused by ill-intentioned people. These all inevitably result in people feeling excluded and thus feeding the perception of discrimination. Nevertheless, for the Kurds able to acquire a good education and qualified job the perception of discrimination is considerably less in this group compared to those more disadvantaged Kurds.

Discriminatory propagandas and the related events have profound effects on the formation of discrimination perception. Given this fact, it is crystal clear that the perceptions are as effective as the events and phenomenon themselves. The thing to analyze and contemplate upon is the fact that people have adopted and possessed such perceptions, whatever their reason or origin. As long as these perceptions are not changed, they will constitute the reality for people in the region and again will dominate the events. Besides, it has to be noted that with the abuse of these perceptions by the PKK organization, the process of enhancing the ethnic consciousness has been negatively influenced. Thus, the perceptions may not be true both origin-wise and formation-wise, but given their huge effects, they are quite influential in practice.

Another important factor that constitutes and feeds the perception of discrimination is the intensive propagandas of the PKK organization. These propagandas are effectively run via ROJ TV¹⁰ and their extensions in the region. It has been found that these propagandas conducted via ROJ TV has led to a 5% increase in the discrimination perception rate among

¹⁰ Denmark-based television channel.

people in the region and had also led to a 17% increase in trust towards PKK and their leader Abdullah Öcalan.¹¹

Therefore, certainly self-criticism has to be made both at state level and social level. At the same time, this perception of discrimination and all the suffering cannot simply be attributed to identity. If it is done so and the parties find themselves in an anti-dialogue political discourse, it would be one of the biggest mistakes for the Kurdish movement and Kurdish intellectuals.

Kurds in the Eyes of the Turks and Discrimination

Recently, it has been much more obvious that Turks living in the western parts of Turkey automatically regard anyone living in the East as Kurdish. By simply viewing their way of dressing, speaking and other behaviors, western-oriented Turks have a stereotype of a typical 'eastern' man in their minds and this picture is directly identified with being Kurdish.

Another vital illusion derives from the increasing tendency among the Turks living in the West that anyone of Kurdish origin is a separatist or a member of the PKK. Turks, in forming their perceptions towards the Kurdish people, are also heavily influenced by those Kurds of lower social class and those who are close to illegal groups such as the mafia. As a result, many stereotype all the Kurds with negative attributes.

Recent tensions in the western parts of Turkey have resulted in an increase of negative views and perceptions among the Turks about the Kurds and in particular, acts of discrimination have escalated in the western provinces. Accordingly, these acts of discrimination have led to an increase in Kurds' perception of being discriminated against since immigrating from the east, many of whom are often arriving for employment..

These Turkish prejudices of those living in the west towards the Kurds are negative bias that are not seen in the east, where people of Turkish and Kurdish origin live together. For instance, such provinces as Gaziantep, Kahramanmaraş, Adıyaman, Elazığ, Erzurum, Urfa, etc. are heavily inhabited by people of both ethnicities. Yet, ethnicity-based fight and conflicts aren't frequently seen. Therefore, it poses something quite promising. Moreover, it is not the Kurds who had migrated to the west many years ago (and integrated with Turks in the region) that are exposed to discriminatory acts, but instead those who have recently migrated to the west who are experiencing greater problems.

¹¹ BILGESAM, 2009, a.m.w., s. 245-249

In Turkey, there are groups which are in favor of tension, which try to spread hatred and hostility among people and try to get benefit from any act of polarization. There are also some groups which cannot see the reality because of these instigative groups. Therefore, apart from the PKK and their extensions, which are in search of disseminating hatred among the Turks and enlarging its organization, there are Turks doing just the same thing and formations that are in line with this direction.

Distrust towards Public Officials

Using force brings about many inevitable negative repercussions. As the fight against terrorism has required the long term use of force, this has caused many traumatic results. In a survey,¹² it has been revealed that the rate of trust towards the security forces among the Kurds in the region is about 55% while this rate falls to 48% in the provinces of intense PKK activities. More interesting is the fact that this rate falls to 30% amongst Kurds who say they voted for DTP- Democratic Society Party (later renamed the Peace and Democracy Party - BDP). Compared with the provinces of the west, this situation underlines the declining trust towards the state security forces in the region.

As a result of untrained security forces, many acts of improper behavior have been displayed in the region. Although these improper acts have decreased as of today, they most often lead people to feel fond of the PKK organization and have a recourse to it. In the past, people had to be either on the side of the security forces or that of the PKK. The organization had taken an advantage of this situation. In 1990s, it was difficult to distinguish the public from the PKK organization's members, and some malpractices and misbehaviors during this period in the region at the hand of the state, raised distrust towards the government armed forces.

Despite these problems of trust towards the army, it has to be noted that positive views among the Kurds in accepting Turkish army as their own do exist. A survey¹³ (posing the question whether 'the Turkish army is our army') suggests that the rate of accepting the Turkish military is 75% in the provinces with intensive terror, compared to 90% in the provinces of the east and southeast Anatolia with rare acts of terror. These findings may look contradictory with the rate of trust indicated above. However, these lower levels of trust among people towards the security forces derive from both the misbehaviors of the army on duty and the inevitable results of the fight against terrorism. Therefore, it is quite clear that

¹² BILGESAM, 2009, a.m.w, p.21,238

¹³ Salih Akyürek, "What are the Kurds and Zazas thinking about? A look to the Shared Values and Symbols", BILGESAM Report No:26, January 2011. It has been published at www.bilgesam.org.

among people in the region, there isn't any problem in accepting the army as the common security institution.

The results of a study¹⁴ show that a similar case applies to other public corporations and government executives. Trust towards the state, which is about 61% among the Kurds in the region declines to 56% in the provinces with intensive terror, with the same rate falling to 34% among Kurds saying that they voted for BDP. The rate of trust towards governors and district governors among the Kurds in the region is 56% while it is about 52% in the provinces with intensive acts of terror. Nevertheless, the same rate is only 40% among the Kurdish people who say that they voted for BDP. As for the trust rate towards the judiciary, it is about 40% among the Kurds, 40% in the provinces with intensive acts of terror and it declines to 29% among the Kurds who say they voted for BDP.

It is well known that in the region, the attitudes of the public officials immensely influence public opinion regarding the state. In a study,¹⁵ the perception of being content (this perception has a different value than that of trust scale) with public officials has been about 40%. It can be envisaged that when the wrong policies of the state are corrected and personal mistakes of public officials are prevented, there will be remarkable progress in finding solutions to the problems in the region. Given the fact that all people in general expect public officials be close to public, concerns over security should not be the reason for public officials draw away from the public.

Recently, there have been hugely positive improvements in the behavior of public officials in the whole region. Compared to former governors, district governors and security directors (who had never been in touch with public), today's officials are now in close touch with the public, and the attitudes of the public officials have started to improve. Yet, problems are still emerging between people and public officials on the lower levels. Besides, people believe that as long as positive policies and practices are constantly maintained, well-established negative perceptions will change in time.

Although mistakes of public officials have sometimes resulted in the death of some people in the region, and even they are perceived as a root of ethnically-based discrimination, these faults do not turn into ethnicity-based hostility and add to the hatred towards Turks. Likewise, the vast majority of the Kurds are not resentful of Turks, but have instead directed those hostilities towards the state and those public officials accused of misconduct. This resentment has not yet turned into hatred among the people.

¹⁴ BILGESAM, 2009, a.m.w

¹⁵ BILGESAM, 2009, a.m.w

Demands for Independence and Federation

Kurds once supporting the separatist stance now express that they believe in the fact that, without independence, they can live freely as well. In this context, a mental change, or mental transformation, can be seen. The rate of demand for an Independent Kurdish State among those whose native language is Kurdish is 9.9%, it is 7.8% among those whose native language is Zazaish and considering the two groups together, it averages to 9.7%. The demand for a federation is 5%, taking into account both the Kurds and Zaza people.¹⁶ Considering the demands for independence and federation together, the total rate of those seeing independence and/or federation as a solution is 14.7%. Given this data, despite some problems in the region and radical and separatist demands for addressing these problems, there appear such a result that 85% of the Kurdish and Zaza people have no demand for an independent state or federation or any demand that threatens the integrity of the country.

It can also be said that, among people in the region, there exists a general consensus on living together as a part of the Turkish Republic and on maintaining the cultural values. People believe that current problems will be solved under such an atmosphere.

Almost all the Kurds and many Turks lay stress on the fact that cultural rights to be given will not establish a ground for independence. But instead, they say, these rights will enhance socialization. Nevertheless, some Turks have some concerns that these rights will trigger discrimination and such demands will never come to an end, possibly encouraging similar demands to be uttered by different separatist groups in the future.

Views on the PKK/Öcalan and BDP

The rate of trust towards the PKK/Öcalan among the Kurds in the region is only 20%. In some subgroups and regional-wise, trust in the PKK/Öcalan may rise and they may be more in favor of Öcalan/PKK compared with the former one. The rate of being in favor of Öcalan may be higher compared to that of trusting the longtime PKK leader. Yet, many Kurds negatively react to instigative efforts to identify Kurdish nationalism with the PKK/Öcalan movement and discourses that Öcalan is the representative of the Kurdish people.

Today, there lie propagandas such as all the rights granted or discussed to be granted to the Kurds that have been attained thanks to the PKK; the state has had to grant these rights; and the PKK/Öcalan poses as a security guarantee for the Kurds. Likewise, there exist similar

¹⁶ Akyurek, a.m.w

opinions and discourses that are parallel to these propagandas. All these in turn stand as one of the main reasons for identifying the Kurdish nationalism with the PKK/Öcalan.

Some people in the region who have dealt with enough terror and tension see the BDP as a means for solution. To these people, since BDP has come up with the claim that it would defend the Kurdish identity and their rights, it has become another important player for the solution to contend with the ruling party in the region.

In various electoral areas, there are many complaints about the BDP. These criticisms include:

- Advocates of the BDP applied pressure on people in many ballot boxes in the last local elections,
- The same people coming together in the electoral areas of the provinces and districts tried to influence the freewill of the public by interfering both verbally and physically.
- Polling clerks applied irregularities during the elections or they ignored these irregularities for some reason or another.
- Sympathizers of the BDP and PKK, both before and after the elections, made propagandas and applied many strategies with the intention of forming psychological pressure on people. Among these were calling those who did not vote for the BDP as traitors and sealing them with many other negative attributes. Unless necessary precautions are taken, similar cases are very likely to appear in the 2011 elections and consequently, the results of the elections may not reflect the free will of the public.

*Kurdish politics has the potential of producing an addressee of pro-peace negotiations as well; yet, to the extent that ethnic organization blocks such potential, peace process will not be achieved.*¹⁷ Today, due to the PKK, it is not any easy for an efficient political formation in the region that is alternative to the BDP to arise either.

The Views of the Kurdish and Zaza People on Shared Values and Symbols¹⁸

Related to the acceptance of the country's shared symbols such as Turkish flag and Turkish national anthem and living together on Turkish lands, high enthusiasm and consensus exists (80% and even 90% in some cases) among the Kurd, Zaza and Arab ethnicities.

¹⁷ Kömeçoğlu, a.m.w

¹⁸ These findings are based on the conclusion part of the report of BILGESAM "What are the Kurds and Zazas thinking about? A Look to the Shared Values and Symbols" PREPARED BY Salih Akyürek.

Besides, a high percentage of people have no problem with Turkish shared values and symbols.

For the issues of accepting shared values and symbols, in addition to living together on Turkish lands, enthusiasm and positive results (85% and above) in the provinces with rare acts of terror (such as Adiyaman, Elazig, Erzurum, Gaziantep,-Kahramanmaras, Malatya, -Şanlıurfa) could also be seen within the provinces with intensive terror and districts formed by migration, but in a relatively lower rates.

The tendencies on agreeing on shared symbols and values do not differ on a regional basis among the Arab citizens, who have the highest positive percentage in every question. Regardless of the intensity of terror per region, Zaza citizens have little differentiation rates in this sense. The differentiation of the regions in terms of shared symbols and values had been clearly observed in Kurdish ethnic nationals. The perceptions of the people living in the provinces with intensive terror and districts formed by migration are highly negative compared to the people living in the provinces with rare acts of terror. It is also important to note that the tendencies and behaviors of the people living in the provinces with intensive terror and migration-based districts are remarkably similar to each other.

Considering the issues of shared values and symbols and living together in Turkey on the grounds of the variables of ethnic background and religious sect, it is evident that the most negative attitude in these issues come from the Kurdish and Zaza Alevis. However, with regard to the fact that the Kurdish Alevi tendencies are higher than 80% (in the provinces with rare acts of terror) and Turkish Alevi tendencies are positive with a rate of 90% and above, it is also evident that the negative attitude among the people could not only be explained on the grounds of ethnicity and sect but the conditions of the region and effects of the traumatic past are also critical parameters for the emergence of this attitude.

A much more positive tendency (about 75%) has been recorded for the question of “Turkish and Kurdish people have a shared future together” from the Kurdish and Zaza Alevis, compared to that of “shared values and symbols.” This suggests an important finding that even the most negative groups are willing to live together. This finding, likewise, underlines the need for the application of the rules that could further facilitate living together. It also indicates the importance of sustaining the “Alevi Opening” with more contributions and support.

Relations between Kurds, Turks and the Perception Differentiation

Among the Kurds living both in the eastern, southeastern, and western provinces of Turkey, there has come into being the sensitivity of the Kurdish identity, which is beyond beliefs, parties and policies. This sensitivity of the Kurdish identity has been accompanied by the perceptions of being injured and discriminated, and this with time, has turned into a political discourse and attitude. Conducting ethnicity and identity-based policies, BDP has tried to take advantage of this sensitivity and has partially been successful as such. This, accompanied by the increasing ethnic sensitivity, has resulted in the evolution of the Kurdish problem into 'Kurdism' as well.

Studies conducted show that the Turks living in the eastern and southeastern provinces of Turkey have no problem living with the Kurds. This tendency is applicable to those of Kurdish origin as well. However, the Turks living in the western parts of Turkey have immensely negative views about the Kurds. It is of utmost importance to analyze the reasons of these negative perceptions and prejudices and there is a need for new researches on this issue. Here, it has to be noted that there is such a possibility that with the demands of the DTK (Democratic Society Congress) and BDP and their threatening tone of the language, the negative perceptions in Turks related to people of the Kurdish origin may worsen and there may be a big rupture as a result. Such a rupture in social perceptions may render the relations in many western cities, where Turks and Kurds live together, vulnerable to provocation and clashes, likely sabotaging the ways for finding solutions. Thus, some extreme demands proposed with the declarations and discourses, which have themselves created ruptures in social perceptions, do not serve for the benefit of social peace and solution.

Even though declarations and discourses published by DTK and BDP attach great importance to the expression of "living together," demands related to flag, language and other symbols are certain to serve for polarization purposes rather than the acceptance of differences. Putting these demands into practice gives birth to new concerns on the basis of legality. If the Kurdish language is transferred to the public domain, this, accompanied by the tension policies by BDP itself and PKK threats, may lead to new polarizations on the basis of language in some provinces.

Under such an atmosphere in Turkey, apart from the Kurdish problem, a Turkish problem may be defined, which is based on the perceptions nourishing hatred and hostility, hindering the solution of the Kurdish problem. At this point, solutions for the Kurds, unless the necessary sensitivity is shown and they are not clearly explained, carry the risk of resulting in greater social tensions and clashes.

There lies such a fact that Kurds in the past had experienced problems on non-recognition and non-acceptance of their identities and languages. Some had even called this process as assimilation. However, in today's Turkey, demands and sensitivity towards their identity are at high levels. In contrary to outsider claims, it is impossible to suggest that Kurds have concerns with being assimilated. So, what are the concerns of Turks in this sense? This is another issue that needs enlightening. In this context, it can be said that the Turks living in the west have concerns and prejudices regarding co-habitation with Kurds who have settled in the west as a result of migration waves. In the same context, Turks have concerns over the transfer of the traditional Kurdish feudal structure and the patterns of violence accompanied by migrations into the western parts of Turkey.

People of both Turkish and Kurdish origin have some similarities in relation to an amnesty, which will include the PKK members.. Turks, under no circumstances, consider a general amnesty within possibility, which will apply to the terrorists who have been involved in terrorist acts in the mountains. It is not only Turks, but also many Kurds that utter their fears over the general amnesty, and they suggest that those PKK members have to suffer the consequences of being involved in terrorism. They also claim that, in the event these people descend from the mountains and are consequently released as a result of a general amnesty, they will always bring forward their demands for concession either by force or any means necessary.

Additionally, some people regarding themselves as Kurdish nationalists even react to calling those in the mountains as criminals or terrorists, reacting as well to calling the legal arrangements as 'amnesty' in this scope. Both Kurds and Turks of nationalist stances largely disagree with each other and exhibit persistence in their respective amnesty stances.

Combined with field work conducted by BILGESAM and many other institutions and people, and their findings concerning this issue, the following similarities and differences among the Turks and the Kurds in Turkey (excluding the radical group which is not more than 10%) appear regarding autonomy and fundamental rights:

Citizens of Kurdish Origin	Turks Living in the Western Provinces of Turkey
<i>They welcome the recent positive developments carried out in recognition of the Kurdish identity. To live in conciliation and together, they find it sufficient that the state express the mistakes done in the past.</i>	<i>They welcome the recent positive developments carried out in recognition of the Kurdish identity. They think that the recognition of the Kurdish identity within the constitutional framework will lead to wrong and negative results.</i>
<i>They demand for the recognition of their identities and for the inclusion of the Kurdish language in official curriculum as an elective course.</i>	<i>There is an agreement which is compatible with the views of the Kurdish people.</i>
<i>They consider that the acceptance of the Kurdish language as the language of education will not grant any economic or social contributions to the Kurdish people. They do not regard this a preferable and applicable suggestion.</i>	<i>They are of the opinion that the acceptance of the Kurdish language as the medium of education will deepen the polarization and drift the country into separation. They do not consider this as an applicable suggestion.</i>
<i>They believe in the necessity of granting more cultural rights to the Kurds and these rights will not in any way impair the unity of Turkey but instead enhance the sense of belonging in the Kurds.</i>	<i>They consider that granting more cultural rights to Kurds will impair the unity of Turkey and there exist such fears that more and more demands will be put forward in the event that these are met.</i>
<i>They state that they do not aspire to establish an independent state.</i>	<i>There are those thinking that the ultimate goal of Kurds is to establish an independent state.</i>
<i>They think that demands of federation and independence will drift Kurds into a more totalitarian and less prosperous state and they do not advocate this view.</i>	<i>Considering the increase of the Kurdish population, they think that Kurds may take the leading role in Turkey and Turkish policy in the future and there exists such a hidden intention that there will be a rapid transition to an independent Kurdistan.</i>
<i>They demand a life in Turkey without disguising their identities and languages and without being exposed to discrimination.</i>	<i>They fear that with intensive rates of Kurdish migration, traditions and customs, which include violence being transferred to western provinces that such people will impair the social structure in these regions with formations such as the mafia and other repressive acts.</i>
<i>They think that although both societies have joint contributions to the formation of today's Turkish history and civilization level, Kurds are excluded from these contributions.</i>	<i>In terms of the contributions of Kurds to today's Turkish history and civilization level, they have serious disbelief as a result of official educational curriculum. They view Kurds as group of people who are difficult to be governed.</i>
<i>They believe that they stay in between the state and PKK, and they are not wholly represented by the state. Besides, they do</i>	<i>They state that the BDP does not represent Kurds. Yet, a considerable number of people tend to regard every man from eastern Turkey as Kurdish and thus every</i>

<i>not want to be represented either by the PKK or BDP.</i>	<i>Kurd as the member of the PKK organization.</i>
<i>They have quite positive perceptions over the acceptance of the shared values and symbols of the country and the sense of belonging.</i>	<i>They think that the Kurdish radical groups and public have similar or the same stance in terms of acceptance of the shared values and symbols of the country.</i>
<i>There exists highly positive views on living with Turks and establishing joint ties.</i>	<i>The rate of positive views on living with Turks and establishing joint ties is lower than that of Kurds. Particularly in the western provinces of Turkey, negativity in this respect increases.</i>
<i>There is a dominant view that people identifying their Kurdish origin are exposed to discrimination in their attempts to participate in state institutions, and subsequent difficulties with job promotion within these institutions.</i>	<i>They think that there isn't any discrimination based on identity and problems among the Kurds, in this sense, derive from insufficiencies in education and competence.</i>
<i>They claim that there had been efforts to assimilate Kurds in the past.</i>	<i>They acknowledge that some wrong strategies and policies had been executed by the state in the past.</i>
<i>They claim that Kurds had been exploited in the past both by the state and Turks.</i>	<i>They claim that Kurds had not contributed much to Turkey in the past and it was the Turkish people in the western parts of the country who had contributed much more to the region, both in terms of production and taxes. Besides, they think that Kurds are basically exploited by their feudal structure and the Kurdish actors.</i>
<i>They think that people in the region have always had high opinions of the statesmen assigned to the region and those governed tried to be like them. Yet, they think they have been exposed to discrimination, humiliation and injustice that they have never deserved.</i>	<i>They accept that Kurds had suffered from discrimination and humiliation in the past, yet they believe the underlying reason for this is that people in the region have had low levels of education/culture and the resultant lifestyle and the customs in general.</i>

THE PROCESS OF DEMOCRATIC OPENING

The process of 'democratic opening' was initiated in July of 2009 with the purpose of strengthening unity and solidarity in Turkey, taking steps for fundamental rights and freedoms, with the intention of putting an end to terror.

"Turkey has been heavily influenced by two different types of repression formed by horizontal and vertical strategies. As the Kurdish movement, which aspires to be the antithesis of authoritarian nationalism, has turned into a strategy based on violence, people in the region have suffered greatly from the pressures of two different types of authoritarianism. In other words, the society has been negatively affected by the strategies against dialogue."¹⁹ Thus, the process of democratic opening, all the rights to criticize being reserved, has to be defined with such a strategy that will open the doors of democracy.

Prior attention has to be given to the fact that Turkey has the problem of democratization and the precautions for this end should not be based on ethnicity. This problem, at the outset of the process, has been defined by higher authorities as 'the Kurdish Problem,' which is not that appropriate itself. However, this expression providing the recognition of their identity and the problem itself, has pleased many people of Kurdish origin.

Improvements made in 2000s, in the recognition of cultural identities and democratization and regulations made in the context of democratic opening, can be summarized as follows:

- i. *Expansion of the definition of torture and maltreatment with the legal amendments within the framework of the policy 'zero tolerance for torture,' an increase in penalties and abolishing the possibility of punishment suspension s and their negotiation.*
- ii. *Abolishing the restrictions on the right of association within the scope of Association Law (numbered 5253) and enhancement of freedom of organization, pursuant to European Convention on Human Rights.*
- iii. *Making the required amendments on the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations (numbered 2911) so that the right to congregate and demonstrate is based on a more democratic ground.*
- iv. *Passing the 3/5th quorum so that the Constitutional Court can dissolve political parties.*
- v. *Enactment of the Right to Information Act (numbered 4982) as the requirement of an open and transparent administration.*

¹⁹ Kömeçoğlu, a.m.w

- vi. *Abolishment of State Security Court, which has been matter of debate.*
- vii. *Initiation of institutional and legal arrangements, whose preparatory works are underway with the name of 'quad mechanism' aiming at the violation of human rights. (Human Rights Foundation of Turkey, Anti-Discrimination Committee, Draft Law for the approval of the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture.)*
- viii. *Putting into force and application of the Law (numbered 5233) on the compensation of damages that occurred due to terror and fight against terror in 2004.*
- ix. *Explanation of the Regional Development Plan of 26.7 billion TL, which is also named as "The Project for Social Restoration and Friendship."*
- x. *Realization of such projects in the fields of education, health, socioeconomic and cultural areas as KOYDES, BELDES, SODES, Return to Village and Rehabilitation Project.*
- xi. *Taking steps for the normalization of the daily lives of the citizens that will not disturb the fight against terrorism. (Minimizing the control on the roads and reducing the bans on pedestrians to minimum.)*
- xii. *Putting into force the regulation that provides the prisoners and the convicted with the opportunity of communicating with their relatives in the native language.*
- xiii. *Taking administrative measures by governorates with the purpose of assisting those who do not know Turkish and have difficulty in conducting their transactions within state institutions and organizations.*
- xiv. *Providing opportunities for special courses on teaching different languages and dialects.*
- xv. *Starting the broadcast of TRT Şeş (2009), a state-operated Kurdish language channel.*
- xvi. *Enactment of the regulation that enables the private televisions and radios of the Supreme Board of Radio and Television to broadcast in different languages and dialects all day.*
- xvii. *Formation of academic units and departments in the universities for different languages and dialects. Within this scope, the followings have been executed:*
 - *Establishment of Turkey's Living Languages Institute at Mardin Artuklu University. (Postgraduate education is available in Kurdish, Arabic and Syriac languages).*

- The “Living Languages Center” was decided to be established at the Diyarbakır-based Dicle University by their university senate. (The approval of the YÖK, the Higher Education Council, is awaiting). Within the center, elective courses of Kurdish, Zaza, Syriac, Armenian and Arabic are planned to be offered to students, in addition to courses in these languages available for both students and the public. Following the satisfaction of the required minimum number of academic personnel (three), the center is intended to be eventually converted into a department.²⁰
- The decision of opening a four-year department of Kurdish Language and Literature at Muş Alparslan University was approved by YÖK on the November 23rd 2010.²¹
- The decision of opening a Zaza Institute at Bingöl University was approved by YÖK on the November 23rd 2010.²²

Apart from the above-mentioned positive steps, there have been some insufficiencies and negative developments within the scope of opening process and its management. For instance, entrance of some PKK organization members through Habur Border Gate and the subsequent social tension that followed is among these negative developments. Kurds as well had reacted to these events just as much as the Turks did. The state’s shortcomings during this process, to the extent that they were reflected on the public opinion, resulted in wide-ranging reactions. Given the welcome of the PKK members and their resultant behaviors and attitudes, it can be suggested that all the happenings during this process, generally serving for the increase in legitimacy of PKK, turned into negative propaganda.

BDP and PKK put their efforts into celebrating the descent of the PKK from the mountains and they intended to give the message that “it is as a result of the efforts of the PKK that the opening process commenced.” All these were done with the intention of eradicating and compensating the negative perceptions about the dissolution of the organization. With these, terrorist organization PKK and its’ figurehead BDP intended to emphasize their power and send a message to people. Similarly, these occurrences demoralized the eastern security forces while they provided PKK with psychological priority, enhancing the advantage towards the organization and those in the mountains.

²⁰ “Living Languages Center at Dicle University”, Hürriyet, January 18th 2011

²¹ “Department of Kurdish Language and Literature is coming”, Hürriyet Kampüs, January 8th 2011; “Kurdish Language and Literature for Muş, Zaza Institute for Bingöl” Star, January 3rd 2011.

²² “Department of Kurdish Language and Literature is coming”, Hürriyet Kampüs, January 8th 2011; “Kurdish Language and Literature for Muş, Zaza Institute for Bingöl” Star, January 3rd 2011.

In addition to PKK's descent from the mountains, the possibility of general amnesty naturally resulted in the overreaction from martyrs' relatives and somehow aggravated this process. This possibility has negatively influenced those who are in line with the opening too.

Furthermore, since the dissolution of the PKK organization has been put forward as one of the basic goals of the opening, the organization started to defend itself and developed new arguments with the purpose of legitimizing its fight and being the active player in the process. Parallel to this, the same thing applied to the BDP. Assuming that this process might result in the dissolution of their entities, they formed psychological resistance against many things in practice and created negative discourses in this sense.

It is generally assumed that there has been delays in some respects during the process of democratic opening. Firstly, it was only in 2009 that democratic opening was added to the official discourse although its de facto start dates back to former years. Secondly, there has been delays in taking steps that would respond to people's sensitivity to Kurdish language issue and that would not subject them to political discourses which are ethnicity-based and discriminatory in nature. Likewise, the negative attitude of the government towards accepting the Kurdish a language medium of education, which had reasonable grounds, was also seen by the inclusion of Kurdish language among elective courses. Units and departments on Kurdish language have been restricted to a few universities, although being initially delayed in this process. There have been failings in the release of these new departments to the public. All these factors have established the ground for social tension and the abuse of the matter by certain people.

In conclusion, it can be said that theoretically, the process of democratic opening is positive and constructive, for it has been proposed as the right strategy for it has initiated the process of dialogue and paved the way for new aforementioned arrangements in many fields. However, it has not attained the ideal and the expected goal in practice for various reasons. Firstly, the scope of it was not made public in the right manner and at the right time. Secondly, although it aimed at a long term solution, it has instead established short term solutions and it has not been conducted in compliance with the opposition parties. Besides, the democratic opening has focused more on actual and long-run solutions which are politically risk-free. The initiative, which was at the hands of the state on the outset of this process, has shifted towards PKK and BDP. As a result, on the one hand, the opening process has increased expectations in Kurdish people. On the other hand, it has further radicalized the radical populations within both Kurds and Turks.

DEMANDS FOR DEMOCRATIC AUTONOMY

The concept of 'democratic autonomy' has started to be intensely debated with the declarations prepared by Democratic Society Congress (DTK) and BDP. In fact, these declarations trace back to past years, but it was in 2010 that they came to the fore. Terms and demanded rights within the scope of these declarations are open to debate and have to be so anyway. It is highly beneficial that every individual and organization is able to put forth what is in their minds and hearts. In addition, as a requirement of democracy, separatist opinions need to be expressed as long as they do not turn into violence. Yet, putting forward the views and demands like a threat or their reflections on the discourses in this way lead to a clash prone atmosphere rather than an reconciliatory one. Under such an atmosphere, in turn, people who are sensitive in some respects within both societies may find themselves resisting against each other.

The draft declaration put forward by DTK has been prepared by one person and there has not been any discussion over it before the congress and despite many criticisms during the congress, there has not been any regulations made on it. It includes many contradictory statements, incoherency, and it is far from being even a draft declaration text, as it is, in a sense, a premature one.

In the draft, such demands have been included: an autonomous region under the name of Kurdistan, a different parliament, a different flag and symbol, all of which were demanded to be recognized within constitutional framework and dictated to be approved by the EU. With the style of the language, the draft took on a defiant tone. Likewise, demands on this issue are parallel to those PKK demands that were declared in the past.

In the past, political solution alternatives that were put forward by Öcalan under different names (contradicting in themselves: Democratic Republic, Democratic Confederalism, Democratic Socialism, Democratic Ecological Society) have today been put on the agenda again. The draft of 'democratic autonomy' was set forth as the project of Öcalan and was again criticized by very himself. Discourses on the official language and the symbols which took place in this draft (but later claimed to be misunderstood) make out the characteristics of the Kurdish movement. Again this draft puts under question the Kurdish movement which is Öcalan-centered, not liberal anyway including ambiguities and contradictories. In a parallel fashion, debates over the draft during the course of the congress, which were reflected through the press as well, verify the contradictory status of the draft and also creates the ground for debate among Kurds.

The thing that should be noted by all Kurds is that the ‘democratic autonomy’ draft put forward by DTK – the content and the contribution of which is open to question- is the political demand of Öcalan, and thus PKK. Likewise, another thing to be noticed by all Kurds is that the demanded model, by talking about the democratic rights, will provide Kurds with less liberal administration than the present model. What this model intends is also a more totalitarian administration under the domination of the PKK organization and those who allegedly greatly suffered.

Furthermore, the policies and demands proposed by the Kurdish movement are, to some extent, the imitation of the strategies and shortcomings of the state (which are themselves criticized by Kurds). “...[Kurdish people] Carry the risk of creating “theirs own subordinates” in their own melting pot by not accepting the differences of the social patterns other than that of their own. Serious threats against some Kurdish intellectuals who criticize the methods of violence could be considered in the same context...”²³

As for the models and demands put forth within the framework of democratic autonomy there exist such designations made by different people and institutions in the public opinion:

- i. *The demands imposed by Öcalan, appropriated by the BDP and published on the party’s website with a different version do not belong to the Kurdish people. Yet, presenting and discussing these extreme demands should be regarded as a democratic right rather than an element of offence.*
- ii. *Almost half of the Kurdish people are settled in the western provinces of Turkey, and in many eastern and southeastern cities, heavily inhabited by the Kurds, many ethnicities such as the Turks, Arabs and Zazas live together. However, the concept of autonomy is considered as regional and ethnicity-based and it is called the ‘Democratic Autonomous Kurdistan’ and this is nothing but a contradiction in itself. Besides, it looks like the contradictory imitation of the monist identity, which is put forward as criticism towards the Turkish Republic. The eastern and southeastern provinces of Turkey, which house more Kurdish people compared to other provinces, are not only made up of the Kurdish people, the same case applies to Kurds in Turkey. They do not consist of people from PKK or BDP.*
- iii. *The borders of the region called ‘Democratic Autonomous Kurdistan’ are not drawn. Although a map encompassing almost 20 provinces of the eastern and southeastern exists in their mind, it is not clearly made out. Yet, those actors who prepare and support such a model do disregard the fact that the Kurdish population, which is about 80% in the*

²³ Kömeçoğlu, a.m.w

provinces of high rate of terrorism and emergency state, falls to 30%²⁴ in the neighboring provinces where the Kurdish population is in the status of minority.

- iv. In the draft declaration there lies statements such as: ‘The common countries are Turkey and Kurdistan’ and the concept of ‘Democratic Autonomous Kurdistan’ with its definition. Here, the intended emphasis is on the existence of two separate countries and societies, which are different but came together just for cohabitation, although they may separate from one another at their will, and the emphasis is on the fact that the lands of Turkey do not include the borders of Kurdistan.
- v. The proposed model of autonomy and decentralization are no different from the applications of people’s assemblies/committees that had been put into practice in the Soviet Union, Albania and that is being applied in Libya under a different name today. These models totally failed and had been criticized because of their totalitarian nature. Very similar to these models, the proposed model of autonomy and decentralization are not likely to lead to positive consequences.
- vi. Options like the models of federation and autonomy will not allow for much further development of democratic values since they will be dependent on backward social structures. Such models are much more likely to enhance the feudal structures and will impair the flow of capital into the region.²⁵
- vii. The demand to be an autonomous region within the borders of Turkey and making calculations over a new formation with Kurds in other countries (although not explicitly stated) are the clear implications of a united Kurdistan and the fact that autonomy is regarded as the transition period.
- viii. The draft text, which shows distrust of the state and other ethnic origins, under the concept of ‘Self Defense,’ gives way to a paramilitary organization. This concept can not be included within the self defense concept. What’s more, this paramilitary organization can be considered as a solution for people who were involved in the organization or who had paid the prices for their acts.
- ix. The declaration, by (implicitly) not defining Kurds in the region [who have suffered from feudal structure and have been exploited so far] as the ones who are done with the processes of individualization, modernization, and have internalized democracy and democratic rights, is based on an unsound ground. It again calls for Kurds to be aware of the fascist, reactionist and genocidal attacks from people of other ethnicities and other

²⁴ Kömeçoğlu, a.m.w

²⁵ Akyürek, a.m.w

states and because of all these, this declaration has the characteristics of a message meant for other countries other than Turkey. Likewise, it has to be noted that this caution is doing nothing but otherizing anyone who is not in line with their own views.

- x. *The Kurdish movement, which places the PKK at its center, proposes models of participatory democracy and democratization. Both legal and illegal actors in this movement have been built upon totalitarian and antidemocratic structures. The very structure of this movement is in itself contradictory.*

BDP and other actors in line with this formation, which charge the Turkish Republic with imposing, assert the claim of a participatory and pluralist local administration under the slogan of ‘Democratic Autonomy.’ Nevertheless, given the fact that they haven’t been able to put into practice whatever they claimed, even within their party rule, and given the 2009 elections and the threats on the ballot boxes, it becomes more clear that all proposed by BDP and similar actors in this context disprove their discourse in turn.

It is not only Turks that heavily oppose to the proposals presented within the framework of democratic autonomy, but also Kurds living in the western parts of Turkey and in the neighborhood of the provinces which are within the emergency state (OHAL), similarly including people of other ethnicities in the region. They are all uneasy about the proposals for democratic autonomy. Besides, these proposals basically do not reflect the views of Kurds, but instead, a small group of people not at the grassroots level. On the one hand, these proposals will positively contribute to the dialogue process. On the other hand, as a result of the tone of the proposals, it is certain that they will increase prejudices among Turkish people (who live in the western parts of Turkey) who are already biased towards Kurds.

DEMOCRATIZATION PROBLEM IN KURDISH MOVEMENT

It is ethically vital that although they may sympathize with PKK, people and actors speaking on behalf of the Kurds have to be able to criticize PKK and its implementations just as much as they criticize the state and its respective implementations. Otherwise, these actors will find themselves in the dilemma of being in the control of people and organizations, that cannot even bear the smallest opposing discourse of a low level mayor, while they themselves hope to acquire more democratic rights. Additionally, Kurdish politicians have to realize that they won't be able to find the democratization level which they disapprove of in Turkey –in essence which is inadequate- in the political models proposed by the PKK or similar organizations. Hence, the geography-based models and solutions to be produced for the Kurdish people -almost half of which live in western cities of Turkey- will not be of any use. They, being the instrument of those obsessed with ethnicity, will even damage all Kurds.

At this point, before suggesting democratic models to Turkey, Kurdish origin politicians and actors have to democratize the Kurdish movement in itself and liberate the movement from anti-democratic and feudal structure.

On the one hand, BDP and other similar actors criticize the role of the military in Turkey and lay great stress on the fact that the Turkish Armed Forces have to opt out of any political argument including the Kurdish problem. On the other hand, they demand that the armed terrorist organization PKK and their leader Öcalan be included in the peace process and be addressed accordingly. This crystal clear contradictory situation has to be underlined as well.

Turkish people heavily react to Öcalan's being taken as the addressee for the dissolution of the PKK and solution of the problem in general. Here, it is well known that the intended purpose, under the demand of seeing Öcalan as the addressee, is to recognize Öcalan as a legitimate leader before the state, to depict him as a hero before people thereby lending impetus for the Kurdish movement. People struggling for this purpose, drafting the problem into a deadlock, believe that the Kurdish movement will expand under this tension.

DTK and the draft declaration have been criticized in many respects after the congress. Here, it is important to point out that similar criticism came from the participants, particularly from those of Kurdish origin, during the congress. Among these criticisms are: (1) *To discuss autonomy, one has to be autonomous before Imralı (the small Turkish island where Öcalan is held)*²⁶ (2) *I do not want such a regime both for myself and my children.* (3) *Are you in*

²⁶ Aktaran; Ali Bayramoğlu, "Diyarbakır'da ne tartıştık? Ya da Türkiye bölünüyor mu?" (What did we discuss in Diyarbakır? Or is Turkey divided?) Yeni Safak, 22 Aralık 2010.

search of disciplining the Kurdish society via these defense organizations?” Such criticisms in the press are significant in the sense of introducing discourses and policies independent of Öcalan. Such discourses will shed light on the roads of Turkey, the Kurdish politicians and the Kurdish intellectuals. Likewise, criticism towards the draft declaration in the congress by the Kurdish people themselves will be an initial step in overcoming the PKK and Öcalan’s pressure and hegemony imposed on the Kurdish intellectuals. Criticisms made by Öcalan two weeks following the congress in fact clarify the existing concern and manoeuvre in this regard. It is also critical and somewhat positive that similar behaviour came from BDP, which published a more reasonable declaration on its website and made an explanation that the demands had been misunderstood.

The fact that the Constitutional Court considered the defense of federation within the scope of freedom of thought and its resolution in favor of the party, concerning the closure of HAK-PAR, have been to the point. It does not constitute any threat or source of concern either. But instead, it is the resolutions that were taken totally against this line of thought that promoted the existence of PKK and provided Kurds with the opportunity to introduce its representatives on a legal basis.

Today, many people and organizations speak on behalf of the Kurdish people. This is something acceptable on a democratic platform. Yet, no person, no party or no formation hold the right of representing Kurds. The number of Kurds (13-15 million people,²⁷ making up almost 15% of Turkey’s given population), half of which live in the western provinces of Turkey, compared to the Turkish population may be small. Yet, actors speaking on behalf of Kurds do not receive the support of the public to such an extent that they can represent Kurds. Here, what the state needs to do is, by taking into consideration the social demands and without the need of any intermediary actor, to meet fundamental rights of freedom and the rights of cultural identity in a way that will enhance the integrity of the country and support cohabitation.

²⁷ Akyürek, a.m.w; Bekir Ağırdir, *The Kurds and the Kurdish Problem* KONDA Publications, November 2008

CONCLUSION AND POLICY PROPOSALS

In Turkey, both politicians and statesmen may not be solution-oriented for some reasons. One of them is that the belonging of ethnicity, religion and sect may be regarded as a political instrument for coming to power in Turkey. Another reason is the fact that, in their decisions, politicians and statesmen may not say 'stop' to their senses of belonging because of the effects of the communitarian culture. Besides, restricted to the dilemma of seeing everything either as black or white, they tend to regard differences as the implications of weakness and the cause of clashes. Additionally, if problems of competence exist, these all stand as the stumbling blocks to a solution-oriented decision making process for both the politicians and statesmen. Hence, it is important to note that anyone involved in the processes of administration and decision-making needs a paradigm change in their views towards diversifying cultural identities.

Considering Turkey, it has come to be obligatory to form a more democratic and liberal constitution and to put it into force during the term of the new parliament with the contributions and the consensus of political parties, non-governmental organizations and people from all parts of the society. Within this scope, from now on, debates on the general principles of the new constitution should commence and be grounded on an accurate base.

From the perspective of systems, Turkey is in need of a local administrations reform. A centrist understanding in administration restricts the efficiency of the local administrations. That's why, with a broad-based consensus, a new law for local administrations has to be prepared taking into account the European Charter of Local Government, one of the signatories being Turkey as well.

Another point having an impact on the negotiation processes on the basis of systems is the Political Parties Law. This law is in dire need of an amendment that will lower the election threshold and rearrange it. This need awaits to be met after the enactment of the legislation and even the new constitution. It could be said that, unless this regulation is not enforced, BDP may seek new prospects and even have a recourse to a more radicalization process. Contribution of the current regulation to the principle of 'Stability in Administration' is controversial let alone that of 'Justice in Representation.' Not making a regulation may have positive effects on the number of the seats of the other parties. This may also result in BDP, which by playing better the role of the injured party, possibly increasing its voter rate.

Prior to many probable precautions, the first step has to be taken towards the determination of the preferences of both Kurds and Turks on living together. Likewise, based on the findings of the studies conducted in this direction, it has to be explicitly declared that both

sides agree upon living together. Following such a declaration, it is urgent to decide on a model which will provide both sides with cohabitation in a more democratic and flexible atmosphere. Accordingly, upcoming reforms should be implemented in accordance with this model. These reforms have to encompass many subjects such as cultural rights and decentralization. At this point, the initiative, which was missed during the process of democratic opening and the subsequent declarations by DTK (Democratic Society Congress) and BDP, has to be retaken by the state.

In Turkey, the main problem in seeking solutions including that of the democratic opening process, derives from the insufficiencies in recognition and the identification of the problems and the lack of emphasis on this process. In this sense, *“Rather than an approach which only aspires to solve the problems, an approach has to be developed which strives to make out the problem and clarify it.”*²⁸

Apart from the researches conducted on the willingness of Kurds and Turks to live together under the umbrella of the Republic of Turkey, with the participation of the both sides, there has to be further studies on the demands of autonomy and even independence set forth on behalf of Kurds on a more scientific basis. Studies to be done with this purpose will encourage those politicians who act timidly because of political reasons. In addition, these studies will be quite enlightening for a Turkish society in which many speak with no basis and which is controlled by both its instincts and therefore find themselves manipulated by others. Likewise, such studies will provide the chance for the producing solutions with which the vast majority of Turks and Kurds will agree, at the same time, which will block all the political formations and the efforts that are ethnic-based and that may lead to polarization.

Within the scope of the above-mentioned ideal model, it is considered that the rights related to cultural identity and regulations in relation thereof will be of utmost significance. Education in the mother tongue seems to be far from a realistic model. Researches conducted reveal that people do not prefer education in the native language due to its negative economic consequences and the demand among public is quite low as a result. However, in order to create an opportunity for teaching the native language, it can be regarded as an appropriate model to establish elective courses after the necessary preparations. Besides, for those wishing to receive the whole education in the native language, it could be seen as an optimal model to permit the establishment of private schools in the region.

²⁸ Kömeçoğlu, a.m.w

On the acceptance of Kurdish as the language of education, there are many divergent views among the extremists. Yet, the vast majority of both Turks and Kurds agree upon the acceptance of languages other than Turkish as the language of the elective courses. Thus, application of the elective courses may, to a large extent, meet the expectations of the people in the region and revive the process of opening and may, to a certain extent, also cease the effects of propagandas and abuse of public.

For now, it can be envisaged that the units and departments on Kurdish and other languages existing in four universities will increase both in quantity and quality in the near future and will meet the expectations on a large scale. Besides, graduates of these departments and units will help in the formation of elective courses for primary and even secondary school education. This, in turn, will be an important step in meeting the demands of people belonging to various cultural identities.

Another issue in relation to cultural identity is the change of location names. Although it is not something region-specific, it has been perceived from the perspective of ethnicity. People in the region continue using the old place names and do not consider this as an urgent problem to be solved. Nevertheless, there may be voting held on the return of the former location names and the finalization of the existing applications on this issue may be accelerated. This is considered to be a crucial step for the maintenance of cultural rights.

Non-recognition of the elements of the cultural identity, including that of language and likewise not satisfying the demands concerning this, has led to the perception of discrimination among half of the people in the region. Here, there has to be consensus on the fact that the perception of discrimination among people poses a big problem. Furthermore, there has to be scientific studies searching the underlying reason of the problem and bringing into light the necessary measures to be taken without any delay.

Another important factor in the formation of this perception are the mistakes of the public officials. Apart from the recent positive progress concerning this problem, there has to be new measures taken for a better quality of service and for the improved competency of public officials in the region. It is crucial to note that the public officials who are, in particular, directly in touch with the public, are as important as the senior officials in the provinces.

There may exist somehow a high rate of perception of discrimination among some sub-groups. Yet, the vast majority of the Kurds, Zazas and Arab people have no problem with the sense of belonging and living together. Therefore, it is crystal clear that demands and claims presented on behalf of Kurds in many platforms concerning living together, shared values

and symbols do not reflect the real demands and claims of Kurds. But instead, they are the ones that are set forth just because of ideological motives.

For the social peace, it will be hugely beneficial to bring into light the joint contributions of the ethnical and sectarian sub-groups to the common history, culture and the civilization. Likewise, redefinition of social ties, from the context of shared values, will greatly contribute to social peace and stability. It is of utmost importance to maintain the process of democratization with new openings and without any interruption. In a parallel fashion, it is significant to sustain the search for the solution of the Kurdish problem and to sincerely maintain Alevi opening and to meet the social demands in this direction.

It should be acknowledged that similar to Kurds, among Turks there are some people and behaviors that may trigger disintegration and discrimination. Therefore, as long as the emphasis is on the elements of disintegration rather than that of integration, the solution of the problem will get more and more complicated.

“If Kurdish politics undergoes a shift towards the structure of a single party, single mindset and imperious one, it will be increasingly alienated from the dynamics of the civil society and have the risk of transforming into a small scaled–authoritarian one, which it opposes itself...Only when the political elite in the region, instead of purely opposing the state, adopt an alliance with different actors thereby internally and structurally aiming at a change, will they be able to proceed into peace.”²⁹

“From this point of view, as long as democracy and the rights on this basis are tried to be attained through threat and blackmail, that was seen in the case of withdrawal of weapons, it will serve for sabotaging itself rather than for peace. In the most plausible permanent atmosphere of inaction, multiple intermediary organizations have to be involved in the process and the society has to be open to liberal civil competition excluding any act of violence.”³⁰

Dissolution of the PKK organization alone, which considers satisfying the demands for cultural rights and democratization as a threat to its' very existence and which rejects any kind of development in any platform in which it is not regarded as the legitimate entity, will serve for nothing but the problem itself, unless it leads to the emergence of new and efficient actors.

²⁹ Kömeçoğlu, a.m.w

³⁰ Kömeçoğlu, a.m.w

During the dissolution process of the organization (for the leading staff which cannot be considered within the scope of amnesty and which has expectations from that struggle but is weary of it) producing alternatives poses one of the most critical steps during this dissolution process. At this point, given those PKK members of foreign origin hiding in the mountains, it can be said that solutions which are not produced in cooperation with the origin countries of these foreign PKK members would not be sufficient. Making out the possible alternatives, that will enable the PKK's senior staff to take refuge in a third country and settle there, is among the vital precautions within the dissolution process. Moreover, it has to be noted that the dissolution process of the organization will last long and even after its dissolution, some radical elements will be left or new formations may emerge.

Another point to be underlined is that it is not only the people who took part in the PKK's activities or Kurds in the region that need rehabilitation services, but also the woodmen, security forces serving in the region, and Turkish people with escalating prejudices in the Central and Western Anatolia.

In conclusion, by deriving lessons from mistakes of the past and by shaking off the dilemma of security, it is the most essential and obligatory step to maintain new and common conciliation means based on trust and to strengthen the dialogue process based on equal citizenship among social groups and political actors. *"The creation of democratic negotiation processes that will provide the chance of living together in safety will not only respond to the demands for cultural identities but also create a room for manoeuvre in preventing violence and war originating from identity."*³¹

³¹ Keyman, a.m.w

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